

# Teaching The Communicative Aspects of Simple Tense and Modals in EST

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## I. Introduction

One of the major trends influencing ESP/EST course designers and instructors is today's fashionable communicative approach to language teaching as expounded by Widdowson and later incorporated in pedagogical textbooks. (1) This approach came into being as a consequence of the rise of the national/ functional strategy in TEFL, when it became evident that the students needs at tertiary level of education differed a great deal from those of secondary schools.

Few EST textbooks pay attention to the teaching of the communicative use of English tenses and modals . In the available teaching material , tenses and modals are mostly treated 'for their "usage" value rather than "use" (2) The ultimate aim in this type of teaching is embodied in drills provided by textbooks such as:

- a. distinguish between correct and incorrect verb forms.
- b. fill in blanks with the right word between brackets,
- c. change a sentence from tense to tense,
- d. change sentences from active to passive. (3)

Although ESP specialists have repeatedly called for the "functionalising" of linguistic structures and items, to my knowledge no ESP textbook takes the use ' value of tenses and modals, i.e., the communicative functions expressed through them as its primary aim (4).

argument connects the three poles, and since all the contrasted pairs in the poem are associated to one or another of these poles, hence these pairs are interrelated. Likewise, the sense of indignation which is a result of refusing the parents' cruel behaviour and of the silence of the establishment is another line that connects these pairs. Thus, the underlying structure of the poem emerges.

To conclude, these contrasting pairs constitute a skeleton which gives shape to the body of the poem. Similarly, these pairs are the means through which ideas and emotion are expressed. Thus, Blake's cast of mind manifest itself in terms of contrasts which serve to create a structural frame and give unity to the poem. And although the poem is usually considered a piece in a kind of sequence of songs, yet it is possible to view it as an independent whole.

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### **Bibliography**

1. Bateson, F.W. ed. *Selected Poems of William Blake*. London 1965.
2. Gillham, D. G. *Blake's Contrary States: "The Songs of Innocence and of Experience" as Dramatic Poems*. Cambridge 1966.
3. Noyes, Russell. *English Romantic Poetry and Prose*. New York, Oxford University press, 1956.

“And because I am happy and dance and sing,  
They think they have done me no injury,  
And are gone to praise God and His Priest and King,<sup>1</sup>  
Who make up a Heaven of our misery”.

“God and His Priest and King” stand for authority which crushes freedom and happiness. It is an unlimited freedom which Blake seems to associate with childhood. The parents are praying and praising “God and His Priest and King”, or Church and State, and simultaneously forcing their child to do a dangerous and dirty job in painful conditions. The hypocrisy of the parents, resulting from experience, is placed in opposition to the innocent sincerity of the child. In other words, the physical dirt of the sweep hides innocence, purity and sincerity, while the moral dirt of the parents is covered with clean appearance. Moreover, the sweep seems to lack vigour and initiative. The church and state as institutions have destroyed these qualities. Hence, the inventiveness of the individual is contrasted with static establishments. Furthermore, the child's helpless obedience to unjust authority unleashes the rebellious anger and frustration of the reader.

The various types of contrasted pairs that emerged from the discussion are interrelated through a violent argument and a sense of indignation. The argument of the poem runs around three poles—the child, the parents and the static church establishment. The parents allow themselves to maltreat their child as long as they are doing their religious and secular duty. The state–church establishment is silent on the subject of child maltreatment as long as parents attend religious services and the fire–places of the wealthy remain burning (8). This

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(8) My understanding of the poem is somewhat different from that of Gilham, pp. 44–48.

destroy the carefree life and tender body of the child. The second stanza offers other contrasting pairs:

“Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smiled among the winter’s snow,  
They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe”(7)

This severe accusation, gently uttered, arouses a sense of indignation towards the cruelty and stupid authority of the parents. Furthermore, the accusation is directed against the society at large which allows parents to behave in such a way and witnesses indifferently the employment of children in dangerous jobs. Hence the stanza becomes a painful cry against social injustice. The line “taught me to sing the notes of woe” is bitterly ironic. The parents teach their child “notes of woe” instead of happy singing. For them, these notes are singing which brings in money. The happy state of the child in the past, or as it should be, is opposed to his distressed present condition. The past is placed against the present or the ideal is compared with the actual. The child’s “clothes of death” are contrasted with those the parents wear when they go to church. Moreover, the child as a victim of society embodies another pair of contrast which is that of the individual versus the group. The teaching of parents done on purpose, is opposed to the spontaneity of children, and smiling is a contrary state to crying. The “heath” where the child was playing is opposed to the city where he is working.

The last stanza shows how oppressive authority is opposed to joyful freedom.

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(7) „ Snow,,here is a benevolent natural element . This is an example of Blake’s inconsistent way of using symbols .

cannot pronounce "sweep" correctly. Hence the opening lines establish a mood of melancholy and suggest something ominous.

The first two lines offer pairs of contrast which initiate the mood and hint at the dominant idea of the poem . The "blackness" of the sweep is juxtaposed with the whiteness of the snow. (6) The fragility of the child is a victim to the roughness of the cold weather and to the dangers of the working conditions. The coldness the child feels is opposed to the warmth he makes possible for others to enjoy through his work. The third and fourth lines offer other contrasting pairs :

"Where are thy father and mother, say?"

"They are both gone up to the church to pray".

The reference to the father and mother puts the child in focus. We think of him and of the conditions in which he works. And here the working child is contrasted with the father and mother who have gone to the church to pray . But this child was not a single case; there were many like him at that time. And what is implied in the first stanza is not the working children only but the state of childhood also. But if the child is representative of the state of childhood , so are the father and mother who stand for the state of parenthood. Childhood and parenthood become another pair of contrast . Still another pair is the working of the child and the praying of the parents, or work as opposed to praying.

When people go to church they are usually clean and well dressed. Here again the dirtiness of the child is contrasted with the cleanness of the parents. Furthermore, the malignant natural element "snow". the difficult working conditions and the carelessness of the parents are conspiring to

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(6) Blake uses "snow" here as a malignant natural element.

Love and Hate are necessary to human existence”(3). Here is another evidence to how Blake’s mind works and how he expresses himself. Contrasted pairs like innocence and experience, heaven and hell, tiger and lamb point to his way of thinking. This tendency reveals his ideas and attitudes and allows the expression of his emotion or the discovery of where his sympathy and antipathy lie. Such antithetical pairs and the various concepts and qualities associated with them form the underlying structure of some of his poems. Such a poem is “The Chimney Sweeper” (“Songs of Experience”, first published in 1794) which has a structural unity based on contrasted pairs.

The poem opens suddenly with a shocking image that reveals the miserable condition of a down-trodden sweep:

A little black thing among the snow,  
Crying “weep’ weep” in notes of woe, (4)

The sweep is a mere thing, not as we should think of him. He is a child whose lot is to clean chimneys and hence he becomes dirty; “black”(5). He wanders along the snow-covered streets shouting, “crying... in notes of woe”. He is doing a dangerous job for money. The “little black thing” is working instead of playing and the difficult working conditions make him a mournful figure. He is so young and petrified that he

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(3) Russell Noyes, *English Romantic Poetry and Prose* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1956), P. 210.

(4) Bateson, p. 26. Further references to the poem are made to this edition.

(5) The qualities, objects, people, institutions or concepts referred to in this paper are either actually used in the poem or suggested by the text.

## STRUCTURAL UNITY IN BLAKE'S "THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER"

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The drift of Blake's thought takes the direction of contrasts. Within the "diversity in the attitudes presented" by his characters and the 'different qualities of experience' (1) which appear in the Songs, for example, antithetical pairs of objects and concepts are noticed, Bateson's comment on the basis of Blake's way of thinking explains this point.

In Blake's case an almost complete mental hiatus seems to have developed between the ideal golden world that he created for himself on his solitary country walks and the urban realities of the chartered streets and the drab, puritanical hosiery shop. But with Blake, as with Wordsworth, the division was not simply a case of escapism. It had its roots in reality, the reality of a moral protest against unbearable human conditions... (2)

In an early passage of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1790) Blake himself declares that "without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion Reason and Energy,

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(1) D. G. Gillham, *Blake's Contrary States: The "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" as Dramatic Poems*. (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 3, 6 (footnote).

(2) F.W. Bateson, ed, *Selected Poems of William Blake* (London 1965), Introduction, P. xiv.