

[Grammar] Mood Tags

An overview

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PRINTOUT AVAILABLE AT: [http://www.spence.saar.de/
/courses/grammar/unit04a/moodtags-druck.pdf](http://www.spence.saar.de/courses/grammar/unit04a/moodtags-druck.pdf)



Figure: A gazebo is a pavilion structure commonly found in parks, gardens, and spacious public areas. Gazebos are freestanding, roofed, and open on all sides; they provide shade, basic shelter, ornamental features in a landscape, and a place to rest. — Wikipedia

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Structure

Sir Christopher Wren was building a gazebo.

Mood		Residue	
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement

Structure

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Sir Christopher Wren was building a gazebo, wasn't he?

Mood		Residue		Mood Tag	
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Tag Finite/ Polarity	Tag Subject

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 - “You didn’t INTEND to kill him, did you?”

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- A way of inviting your addressee to respond to what you are saying
- A way of letting your addressee know what response you expect (!)
 - “You didn’t INTEND to kill him, did you?”
 - —“NO!”

Comparison with French and German mood tags

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- French:

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- German:
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 - ... , n'est-ce pas?
- German:
 - ... , nicht wahr? / ... , oder? / ... , gell?
- English:
 - ... , didn't you?
 - ... , have they?
 - ... , shall we?
 - ... , won't he? (etc. etc. etc.)

Variables and problems: Summary

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- **SPEECH FUNCTION**

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- SPEECH FUNCTION (vs. grammatical MOOD)

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 - Statement,

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- SPEECH FUNCTION (vs. grammatical MOOD)
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 - Statement, Command, Suggestion,

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 - Statement, Command, Suggestion, Offer

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- Polarity of Tag

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- Polarity of Tag
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- Intonation of Tag

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- SPEECH FUNCTION (vs. grammatical MOOD)
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- Polarity of Tag
 - same?
 - different?
- Intonation of Tag
 - rising?

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- SPEECH FUNCTION (vs. grammatical MOOD)
 - Statement, Command, Suggestion, Offer
- Polarity of Tag
 - same?
 - different?
- Intonation of Tag
 - rising?
 - falling?

Variables and problems: Summary

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 - Statement, Command, Suggestion, Offer
- Polarity of Tag
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 - rising?
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- N.B.: There can be problems with

Variables and problems: Summary

- **SPEECH FUNCTION (vs. grammatical MOOD)**
 - Statement, Command, Suggestion, Offer
- **Polarity of Tag**
 - same?
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- **Intonation of Tag**
 - rising?
 - falling?
- **N.B.: There can be problems with**
 - the underlying **SPEECH FUNCTION**

Variables and problems: Summary

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 - Sir Christopher Wren built a gazebo. + **didn't he?**
- Command (+ Request for compliance)
 - Build a gazebo!

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 - Sir Christopher Wren built a gazebo. + **didn't he?**
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- Offer (+ Request for acceptance)
 - I'll build you a gazebo! + **shall I?**
- Suggestion (+ Request for participation)
 - Let's build a gazebo! + **shall we?**

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- Example:
 - “Shall I build you a gazebo?”

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- Example:
 - “Shall I build you a gazebo?”
 - is grammatically ‘interrogative’, but
 - is really an Offer (Response: “Oh yes please!”)

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- Example:
 - “Shall I build you a gazebo?”
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- Example:
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- Example:
 - “Shall I build you a gazebo?”
 - is grammatically ‘interrogative’, but
 - is really an Offer (Response: “Oh yes please!”), not a Question (*Response: **“Yes you shall.”*)
- Always identify the underlying speech function!!

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Problems (2): Subject

- Which pronoun to choose for the Tagsubject?
 - the English system of GENDER is problematic!
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- Which pronoun to choose for the Tagsubject?
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 - the English system of NUMBER can be a problem, too!

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 - No one rang while I was out,

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Comparison with French and German mood tags

Structure and Function

Variables and problems

Typical exam questions

Summary and Feedback

Variables and problems: Summary

Variables

Problems

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- Here the MoodTag has rising intonation:

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 - The manager's left the factory already,

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- Here the MoodTag has rising intonation:
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Typical exam questions (1)

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 - The manager's left the factory already, **hásn't he?**
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Typical exam questions (2)

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- Here the MoodTag has rising intonation:

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 - Surely the United States won't agree to the French proposal,

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Typical exam questions (2)

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- Here the MoodTag has rising intonation:
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Typical exam questions (3)

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- Here the MoodTag has falling intonation:
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- Here the MoodTag has falling intonation:
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Typical exam questions (3)

- Here the MoodTag has falling intonation:
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 - The President will know mother has two bravery medals alrèady,

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- Here the MoodTag has falling intonation:
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Typical exam questions (4)

- Here the MoodTag has falling intonation:
 - I wouldn't say he's the worst teacher we've ever had, though, **is** **he**.

Typical exam questions (4)

- Here the MoodTag has falling intonation:
 - I wouldn't say he's the worst teacher we've ever had, though, **is** **he**.
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- Identify the real Polarity (be careful with those special adverbs and with those 'metaphorical' expressions of MODALITY!)

Feedback

- Did you find this treatment of Mood Tags useful?
 - was it too simple?
 - was it too abstract?
- Did you find the use of data-projector slides as a teaching medium useful?
 - was the experience too “passive”?
 - could the same results have been achieved using other means?