IMPARFAIT VS. CONDITIONNEL LESSON FOCUS

OBJECTIFS DE LA LEÇON

1. to understand the difference between the **imparfait** (imperfect) and the **conditionnel** (conditional) and when to use them.

NIVEAU

B1 - niveau seuil (intermediate)

RAPPEL : IMPARFAIT

The **imparfait** is a past tense. The closest translation for it is the Imperfect or Past progressive or continuous.

It is used to describe an action which used to happen (habit) or was happening and carried on over a period of time (ongoing action):

- Je **jouais** au tennis tous les mercredis.
  I used to play tennis every Wednesday.

It is used to describe an action that was going on when an event suddenly happened:

- Je **regardais** la télévision lorsque quelqu'un a frappé à la porte.
  I was watching TV when someone knocked on the door.

It is used in landscape, weather descriptions, etc.:

- Il **faisait** beau et les oiseaux **chantaient**.
  It was sunny and the birds were singing.

It is used to describe memories, feelings:

- Quand **j'étais** enfant, je **rêvais** de devenir chanteur.
  When I was a child, I used to dream of becoming a singer.

RAPPEL : CONDITIONNEL

The **conditionnel** is a tense which describes an action that may happen if another action takes place:

- Je **sortirais** s'il faisait beau.

I **would go out** if the weather was nice.

Note:

- In French there isn't such a thing as the modal verbs '**would**' '**could**' or '**should**', so it is necessary to use the **correct endings** for the conditional.
- When you use a conditional tense with a clause introduced by **si** (if), remember to use the imperfect after **si**.

IMPARFAIT VS CONDITIONNEL

Why compare these two tenses? Well, it is because the endings of the imperfect and conditional are exactly the same.

- je ...-ais
- tu ... -ais
- il, elle, on ... -ait
- nous .... -ions
- vous .... -iez
- ils, elles .... -aient

DIFFÉRENCE ?

How to distinguish between these two tenses? The sound varies. You will hear **R** for the conditional, because the **stem used in the conditional** is the **same** one as in the **future tense**.

Example with a Group 1 verb:

- je **march**ais (imperfect) - I used to walk
- je **marcher**ai (future) - I will walk
- je **marcher**ais (conditional) - I would walk

Example with a Group 2 verb:

- ils **finiss**aient (imperfect) - they were finishing
- ils **finir**ont (future) - they will finish
- ils **finir**aient (conditional) - they would finish

Examples with Group 3 verbs:

- vous **ét**iez (imperfect) - you were
- vous **ser**ez (future) - you will be
- vous **ser**iez (conditional) - you would be

- je **fai**sais (imperfect) - I was doing
- je **fer**ai (future) - I will do
- je **fer**ais (conditional) - I would do

- nous **av**ions (imperfect) - we had
- nous **aur**ons (future) - we will have
- nous **aur**ions (conditional) - we would have

- nous **envoy**ions (imperfect) - we used to send
- nous **enverr**ons (future) - we will send
- nous **enverr**ions (conditional) - we would send

- nous **vend**ions (imp) -we were selling
- nous **vendr**ons (future) - we will sell
- nous **vendr**ions (conditional) - we would sell

EXEMPLES

I would buy a house if I had the money.
J'achèterais une maison si j'avais l'argent.

Tom would go to France if his friends came with him.
Tom irait en France si ses amis venaient avec lui.

Tom and I would come with you if we had the time.
Tom et moi viendrions avec vous si nous avions le temps.