



What do imperatives mean?

Imperio!

- (1) Read this book!
- (2) Lies es!
- (3) dhiavase to!

Imperative = Command?

- Romance 'imperative' from Latin 'imperare', "to command"
- Greek 'prostaktiki' from 'prostazo', "to command"
- Turkish 'emir kipi', "command" (noun)
- Slovenian 'velelnik' from 'veleti', "to command"
- Hebrew 'civuy', "to command"
- Albanian 'urdherore' from 'me urdheru', "to command"
- Arabic 'fi'l ʔamr', "to command"

Upshot

The meaning of imperatives:

Bring into existence an obligation on the part of the addressee to carry out the action picked out by the prejacent

Model

The meaning of imperatives:

- a context change potential
 \rightsquigarrow a function from input contexts to output contexts

model of the context:

- to-do list
- permissibility sphere

Read this book!

The meaning of “Read this book!” =

a function that maps any input context into one where the to-do list of the addressee contains the action read this book

Are we there yet?

What else is there to do?

- Q₁ What are the morphosyntactic parts of imperatives?
- Q₂ How does the meaning of imperatives arise compositionally?
- Q₃ What is the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics?

Some options

From semantic minimalism to full-blown dynamic semantics:

- simple property (read the book)
- addressee-restricted property (you read the book) Portner
- speaker attitude (it's my preference that you read the book)
Magda Kaufmann, Condoravdi & Lauer
- CCP (add read the book to addressee's to-do list) Veltman etc.

How to choose

Accounts

- in the end deliver a command-force CCP as the meaning of imperatives
- differ in how much of that is encoded in the semantics of the imperative vs. the pragmatics

Are there ways to choose? \Rightarrow look at non-command uses of imperatives

Permission

(4) A: May I open the door?

B: Sure, go ahead, **open the door!**

PERMISSION

⇒ The Problem of Functional Heterogeneity (Schmerling 1982)

All kinds of non-command uses

- (5) A: Excuse me, I want to get to the station.
B: Take a number 3 bus. ADVICE
- (6) Go on. Throw it. Just you dare. DARE
- (7) Get well soon. WISHES
- (8) a. Please don't rain.
b. Start, damn you. AUDIENCELESS
- (9) a. Please be out.
b. Please don't have made things worse. PREDETERMINED

IaDs

- (I0) Study hard and you will pass the class.
- (I1) Ignore your homework and you will fail the class.

Imperative **and** **D**eclarative

Today's question

What can we learn about the meaning of imperatives from

- permission uses and
- their occurrence in IaDs?

Cross-linguistic connection

If an imperative-like verb form can be used in IaDs,
→ it can also be used as a permission imperative.

not quite a biconditional

WHY?

Section I

Permission

Three ways of giving permission

- (12) I hereby allow you to stay out with your friends until 10pm tonight.
- (13) You may stay out with your friends until 10pm tonight.
- (14) Stay out with your friends until 10pm tonight!

The permission puzzle

How can it be that an expression that is used to impose an obligation can also be used to merely permit something?

Strong meaning weakened in context?

- Expressing what the hearer wants Wilson & Sperber, Kaufmann
- Commanding what the hearer wants Condoravdi & Lauer
- Conflicting commands \rightsquigarrow permission Portner

There are other proposals, such as Charlow's indirect speech act analysis ...

Wilson & Sperber

IMP ϕ = X considers ϕ to be desirable to Y and to be a valid option

Command use: X = Y = Speaker

Permission use: X = Speaker, Y = Hearer

Kaufmann

IMP

- is a necessity modal with presuppositions that force it to be used performatively
- expresses that ϕ is a necessity with respect to a deontic ordering source g and a modal base f
- has an underspecified ordering source: “what the speaker commands” or “what the hearer wants”

Condoravdi & Lauer

IMP ϕ expresses

- that the speaker wants ϕ
- and that the expression of this want exhaust the speaker's plan to realize ϕ (deriving performativity, we think)

[NB: their analysis is so far only available on handouts]

The main problem

The relevant weakening of strong meanings in context doesn't happen with other expressions in the same semantic field:

- performative necessity modals
- desideratives (“I want you to”)
- “strong” imperative-like expressions

Performative necessity modals

Performative necessity modals cannot be used to grant permission:

(15) A: May I open the door?

B: Sure, go ahead, open it!

B': Sure, go ahead, #you must open it.

B'': Yes, in fact: you must open it!

C: Sure, go ahead, you should open it.

(16) You $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{must} \\ \text{should} \end{array} \right\}$ stay out until 10pm tonight!

Desideratives

- (17) A: Can I go out and play?
B: Okay, go out!
B': Okay, I want you to go out.

Strong command expressions

German:

(18) Geh raus! imperative

(19) Rausgehen! infinitive, expresses command

Permission?

(20) A: Kann ich rausgehen und spielen?

B: Na klar, geh raus! permission reading

B': Na klar, rausgehen! no permission reading

Indifference

- (21) Go left! Go right! Either way is fine with me.
- (22) #You must go left. You must go right. Either way is fine with me.
- (23) #I want you to go left. I want you to go right. I don't care.

- (24) Sure, open the window! I don't care.
- (25) #Sure, you should open the window. I don't care.

Concessive imperatives

- (26) Say what you want, I'll vote for Obama.
- (27) You can say what you want, I'll vote for Obama.
- (28) !! You should say what you want, I'll vote for Obama.

Connection to hearer's wants?

The hearer wanting the prejacent to be true is neither necessary nor sufficient for permission readings to arise:

(29) Stay out with your friends until 10pm tonight!

(30) Order up to three accompaniments for free with any entree!

(31) A: I want to write a novel.

B: So, write a fracking novel! (exasperated life coach)

Portner

- use of imperative adds a property to hearer's to-do list (TDL)
- the hearer should act so as to make as many items on the TDL true as feasible
- any contradictory items on the TDL \rightsquigarrow choice
- so, if ϕ was previously forbidden ($\neg\phi$ on the TDL), IMP ϕ getting added to TDL amounts to giving a choice between ϕ and $\neg\phi$

Problem for Portner

Imperatives that conflict with previously imposed obligations create conflict rather than choice:

- (32) A to B: (at 6pm) Bring beer to the party tomorrow!
 A to B: (at 8pm) Bring wine to the party tomorrow!
 B to A: Could you make up your mind, please?

Portner's solution: marking imperatives for whether they create an obligation or a permission.

ruhig vs. bloss

Patrick Grosz:

- (33)
- a. Iss *bloss/ruhig den Spinat! Das stört mich nicht.
eat bloss/ruhig the spinach that disturbs me not
'Eat bloss/ruhig the spinach! That doesn't disturb me.'
 - b. Iss bloss/*ruhig den Spinat! Sonst wirst du bestraft.
eat bloss/ruhig the spinach or.else will.be you punished
'Eat bloss/ruhig the spinach! Or else you'll be punished.'

Lessons from permission use

- None of the “strong gets weak in context” approaches seem to work.
- Open options:
 - necessity/possibility ambiguity (Grosz)
 - “weak gets strong in context”
 - can permissions become commands in context?
 - underspecified meaning
 - à la Portner, but without the tight connection to strong dynamics

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(34) You may clear the table now.

A/E

- bare plurals
- modals in Salish (Rullmann et al.), Nez Perce (Deal)
- infinitival relatives: $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} the \\ a \end{array} \right\} man\ to\ consult$ (Hackl & Nissenbaum)

BUT: IaDs !?

Section 2

laDs

IaDs

Type I: desirable first conjunct

(35) Study hard and you will pass the class.

Type II: undesirable or neutral first conjunct

(36) Ignore your homework and you will fail the class.

(37) Open the paper and you will find 5 mistakes on every page.

Splitters

Type I: true imperative plus modally subordinated will

Type II: non-imperative bare verb form feeding a restriction to a modal

↪ If this works, then IaDs are not a problem for strong meanings

(Almost) consensus on Type I

According to Kaufmann, Russell, and others, Type I IaDs work like this:

- they are conjunctions of speech acts (à la Krifka)
- their first conjunct is a true imperative
- their second conjunct is interpreted via modal subordination (à la Roberts)

Sequencing: I.D and M.D

(38) a. Invest in this company! You will become rich. =

b. You $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{must} \\ \text{have to} \\ \text{should} \end{array} \right\}$ invest in this company!

You will become rich.

- (39) a. Speak to them in French! They will hire you. =
b. You must speak to them in French! They will hire you.

Modal Subordination

will in the second conjunct is restricted to worlds where the prejacent of the imperative or necessity modal is satisfied.

- (40)
- a. You will become rich.
= if you invest in this company, you will become rich.
 - b. They will hire you.
= if you speak to them in French, they will hire you.

The claim

- (41) Invest in this company and you will become rich. =
- (42) Invest in this company! (and)
if you invest in this company, you will become rich.

Problem I

Modal subordination is actually not possible across and!

(43) */?/?You { have to
must
should } invest in this company

and you will become rich.

But then why is there putative modal subordination in Type I IaDs across and?

(44) Invest in this company and you will become rich.

(45) */??You { have to
must
should } speak to them in French
and they will hire you immediately.

vs.

(46) Speak to them in French and they will hire you immediately.

Problem 2

Modal subordination involves a pragmatic resolution of the understood restriction of a modal. This indirectness is most vivid in “polarity switch”:

- (47) Don't park there! You will be towed. =
Don't park there! if you do, you will be towed.

No polarity switch in IaDs:

- (48) Don't park there and you will be towed. \neq
Don't park there! if you do, you will be towed.

- (49) Conserve your energy! You will run out of breath. =
Conserve your energy! If you don't, you will run out of breath.
- (50) Conserve your energy and you will run out of breath. \neq
Conserve your energy! If you don't, you will run out of breath

Problem 3

Modal subordination (again b/c of its indirectness) allows mood choice:

(51) Read that book by Max. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{If you do} \\ \text{If you did} \end{array} \right\}$, you $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{will} \\ \text{would} \end{array} \right\}$ like it.

(52) You $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{have to} \\ \text{must} \\ \text{should} \end{array} \right\}$ read that book by Max.

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{If you do} \\ \text{If you did} \end{array} \right\}$, you $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{will} \\ \text{would} \end{array} \right\}$ like it.

laDs do not allow mood choice:

(53) Study hard and you $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{will} \\ \text{*would} \end{array} \right\}$ pass the class.

Type I laDs do not involve a true imperative + modal subordination.

Unified account?

So, maybe we should explore how Type II laDs work and try to subsume Type I laDs under them.

Bolinger 1967 → Russell 2007

Bolinger:

(54) ([If] you) tell him anything, (and) he just looks at you blankly.

“there has been an aphasis of the initial if or if you, which produces something with all the appearance of an imperative and **accounts for those supposed conditional imperatives that least resemble commands**”

Russell: “the VPs in [laDs] are optionally non-imperative second person sentences”

Jespersen 1924

“As the imperative has no particular ending in English, one might perhaps feel inclined to think that these sentences contained infinitives (though how used?). Parallel uses in other languages show us, however, clearly that they contain imperatives.”

- (55) Sage das, und du wirst verhöhnt.
say:IMP that and you will.be heckled
'Say that and you'll be heckled.'

Greek IaDs

- (56) Kane ta mathimata su ke ola tha pane kale
do.IMP the lessons your and all FUT go well
- (57) Fae ena apo afta ke tha pethanis mesa se 24 ores
Eat.IMP one from these and FUT die within 24 hours
'Eat one of these and you will die within 24 hours'
- (58) Anikse tin efimeridha ke tha vris 5 lathi se kathe
Open.IMP the paper and FUT find 5 mistakes on every
selidha
page

Unified account?

Han:

- imperative is stripped of [directive] feature in both types
- simply serves as a conditional antecedent for the second conjunct
- pragmatics predicts whether first conjunct is perceived as desired/commanded or contra-indicated or neutral

Deducing force

- (59) If you study hard, you will succeed.
- (60) If you goof off, you will fail.

Marking positive force

- (61) Studiere bloss fleissig und der Test wird ganz einfach.
study:IMP bloss busily and the test becomes totally easy

A couple of mysterious markers in English

Type I IaDs (but not Type II) allow do-emphasis and quantified subjects (Russell, Scontras & Gibson):

- (62) a. Do study hard and you will succeed.
b. *Do ignore your homework and you will fail.
- (63) a. Nobody goof off and all will go well.
b. *Nobody work hard and all will be lost.

Not command markers

NB: do-emphasis and quantified subjects might be markers of desirability (and thus infelicitous in Type II IaDs with undesirable consequents) but they are not command markers. They seem fine in permission uses (?):

- (64) A: Can I open the window?
B: Sure, go ahead, do open it!
- (65) A: Can we sit down?
B: Sure, go ahead, everyone sit down!

Distinguish desirability markers

- strong imperative meaning
- underspecified at-issue meaning + second dimension marker of desirability

Strong imperatives

Our language sample contains imperative-like constructions that seem to express strong meanings (command only?). For example, Hebrew can use the future or the infinitive to convey commands:

(66) la-shevet!
INF-sit
'Sit!'

(67) te-xabek ot-o!
FUT.2-hug(sg.M) ACC-3sg.M
'Hug him!'

Only the future can have permission readings. Only the future occurs in any type of laDs.

Interim summary of our survey

- Some imperative-like constructions (Hebrew and Catalan infinitives, Slovenian subjunctives) can only be used in commands (not in permission, not in laDs).
- Mostly, anything that can be used in permission can also be used in laDs, and vice versa.
- One case of a construction that can express permission but cannot be used in laDs: Palestinian Arabic negated present imperfectives.
- In most cases, imperative-like constructions that can appear in laDs can be used in both Type I and Type II laDs, bolstering the case for a unified account.

Catalan negated subjunctives

- (68) No dormis!
Not sleep-subj
'Don't sleep'

This can express permission ("Mama, I don't want to sleep yet, is that OK?"). OK in Type I laDs but not in Type II:

- (69) No vagis a fisioteràpia i t'estalviaràs diners
don't go to physiotherapy and you will save money
- (70) ??/*No vagis a fisioteràpia i quedaràs coix
don't go to physiotherapy and you will stay crippled

So, this is a case of a morphological verb form that seems to carry (mild) desirability (but not command) in its meaning (cf. English do).

Conclusion

- Imperatives have uses with no trace of a command meaning
- This favors semantic minimalism (à la Portner)

TDL

- Explain context dynamics of stand-alone imperatives (command vs. permission, etc.)
- Explain the composition of IaDs
- Explain the semantics of (un)desirability markers
- Explain conditional imperatives: if John calls, tell him I'm out!

What's in an imperative?

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(joint work in progress with Sabine Iatridou)

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