

1 *Introduction*

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter begins with a discussion of the imperative clause and a review of earlier studies of imperatives in generative grammar (1.1). The imperative clause appears to require recourse to conditions seemingly outside the realm of narrow syntax, such as “the subject of the imperative clause must be the addressee.” Faced with this challenge, earlier generative studies have struggled to provide a principled syntactic account of the imperative type.

We claim that an adequate account of the syntax of the imperative clause must represent the *context of utterance* (1.2). More narrowly, imperatives require access to *indexicality*: speaker, hearer, time and world of utterance. Such referential categories have not played a formal role in the computation of the clause in narrow syntax. Accordingly, computational compliance would call for a derivational interface between syntactic categories (*content*), such as the subject of the imperative clause, and its binding thematic categories (*context*), such as addressee.

Before this interface challenge, earlier generative studies attempted to provide a principled syntactic account of the imperative type with the performative hypothesis (PH) (Ross 1970). In the spirit of PH, our proposal (Chapter 4) may be considered a recasting of Ross’s conceptual bases implemented within the minimalist program (Chomsky 1995–2008), but focused on the imperative clause. We propose that the speaker and addressee of the utterance are encoded in a phase-theoretic context-to-content perspective: CP(vP).

Beyond the imperative clause type, diverse phenomena argue that syntax may be context sensitive. For example, indexical shift (Schlenker 1999, 2003, 2004; Baker 2008), logophoric pronouns (Hagège 1974; Clements 1975), complementizer deletion in Italian (Giorgi 2010) and conjunct-disjunct systems (Hale 1980; DeLancey 1986, 1992) suggest that the speaker and addressee must be syntactically present.

2 Introduction

Other scholars have put forward alternative proposals to represent indexicality in syntax by means of accounting for context-sensitive phenomena, but without specific attention to imperatives (Speas and Tenny 2003; Bianchi 2003; Sigurðsson 2004). For a comprehensive review of generative studies on imperatives the reader is referred to the extensive introduction by van der Wurff (2007b).

1.1 Imperatives in generative grammar

This section presents a succinct overview of the imperative clause (its characteristics are discussed at length in Chapter 2) along with previous generative studies.

Compared to declarative and interrogative clauses, imperative clauses have distinctive morphosyntactic properties that set them apart as a basic clause type (1.1.1). We broadly characterize the previous generative analyses in relation to working assumptions that have remained constant across generative syntax (1.1.2). Emerging typological data, nonetheless, suggests that a reassessment is in order. At the same time, new empirical data may lead to alternative hypotheses with enhanced descriptive as well as explanatory advantages.

1.1.1 *The imperative clause*

The imperative clause is a basic sentence type (Sadock and Zwicky 1985) along with the declarative and interrogative. Each type differs in its communicative function¹ (orders, statements, questions) and often displays salient morphosyntactic differences. Consider English for illustration. Imperatives need not express an overt subject (“go!”). Yes/no-questions display subject–verb inversion with certain verbs (“Are you the manager?”) or do-support (“Do you carry this brand?”). Wh-questions, in turn, typically feature movement of the interrogative pronoun to a sentence-initial position along with do-support (“Who did you see?”), except in the case of echo-questions, where the wh-element remains in situ (“You saw who?”). Declaratives display neither subject–verb inversion nor the verb *do* in this auxiliary role, and the subject is in most cases obligatorily expressed (“Peter saw Mary.”). These morphosyntactic differences help us recognize and identify basic sentence types in English.

A closer look at the morphosyntax of basic clause types reveals that the imperative clause has distinctive characteristics that set it apart from both declaratives and interrogatives (henceforth D&I). While this is also arguably true of each type, in the imperative these distinctive properties appear to resist

principled syntactic or morphological explanation without recourse to specific pragmatic conditions, such as “the imperative subject must be second person.” By contrast, subject–verb inversion and do-support in interrogatives can be studied independently of pragmatic considerations. In the remainder of this section, we are going to briefly examine some of these differences between imperatives, on the one hand, and D&I on the other.²

Perhaps the most salient characteristic of imperatives is that their subject must be the addressee of the speech act (“you/you guys/you all go!”). Other person and number combinations in English are normally disallowed (*“I/*he/*she/*it/*we/*they go!”), but see Potsdam 1998; Zanuttini 2008 for exceptional cases; on *let* forms, see 1.1.2). By contrast, in D&I the subject can be any number and person combination. This first asymmetry appears to indicate a pragmatic constraint in the interpretation of the imperative clause. Because the grammatical category person cannot be first or third person, it may seem unnecessary or even redundant to express a subject (a rationale offered by many scholars, see van der Wurff 2007b).

A similar restriction holds of the tense of the imperative in that the grammatical category features fewer possible values. Imperative tense is limited to a present or (near) future interpretation (“do it now/tomorrow/next year!”); the past tense is not attested in English (*“do it yesterday!”). A counterfactual past imperative is possible in some languages (Spanish: *¡haber-lo hecho antes!* [have.INF-it do.PART] ‘You should have done it before’ (Bosque 1980); also in Dutch, Beukema and Coopmans 1989, and other languages, Aikhenvald 2010). A true imperative past is seemingly not attested. By contrast, D&I display rich tense paradigms that include reference to the factual past (declaratives: “You work/worked/will work.”). While English imperatives can refer to the future, they lack a distinct verb form (“(*will) work tomorrow!”). The tense value of imperatives is thus limited to the present and future/irrealis. This gap could be grounded in context-sensitive constraints or historical evolution similar to the interpretation and optionality of the imperative subject. Mainstream proposals, on the other hand, have argued that imperatives lack tense (Zanuttini 1996), along with other grammatical categories (1.1.2).

These properties of imperative clauses (i.e., second person subjects, optionality of the subject, limited tense values) seem to suggest that the imperative subject and tense are sensitive to the context of the speech act. On standard assumptions, this would constitute a descriptive argument for extended functional phases of CP(vP) syntax. Hence, beyond narrow imperative syntax, reference to speaker and addressee makes context sensitivity a conceptual necessity (1.1.2).

4 Introduction

With regard to morphology, imperative verbs can be bare roots or minimally inflected forms. In Romance, exceptionally for five verbs, bare roots constitute second person singular imperative forms (Spanish: *¡sal!* [get.out.VROOT] ‘get out!’). More generally, the root is flanked by a thematic vowel (*¡cant-a!* [sing-THV] ‘sing!’, Rivero and Terzi 1995; Zanuttini 1997). These uninflected forms stand out in synthetic-fusional languages that feature rich paradigms for indicative and subjunctive forms. All person and number combinations in the subject may be distinguished for most tenses and moods (Spanish: *cant-a-s* [sing-THV-2SG] ‘you sing (indicative form)’; *cant-e-s* [sing-SUBJ-2SG] ‘you sing (subjunctive form)’). The prevalence of bare forms raises the question of whether the imperative verb is finite (i.e., whether it lacks a syntactic projection) in comparison to D&I. Platzack and Rosengren (1998) defend the view that imperative clauses are defective. Among other projections, they lack a finite phrase (Rizzi 1997).³ As a result, imperative verbs are bare forms. More generally, the lack of morphological distinctions is attributed to the context-sensitive constraints of the imperative clause (van der Wurff 2007b), but with no attempt to implement context syntactically, and they are thus left unanalyzed.

Two important syntactic characteristics of imperatives concern resistance to negation and embedding. In some languages, negative imperatives require substitution with other moods or non-finite forms (called *surrogate* forms in the specialized literature) or special negators (cf. Rivero and Terzi, Zanuttini above). The Romance family is well studied on this issue. For instance, the negative of *¡cant-a!* [sing-THV] ‘sing!’ in Spanish is not **¡no cant-a!* [NEG sing-THV] ‘don’t sing!’, but rather the subjunctive form *¡no cant-e-s!* [sing-SUBJ-2SG] ‘don’t sing!’. In the same languages, nonetheless, D&I verb forms can be negated (but see Zeijlstra 2006).

The second syntactic characteristic is that imperative clauses rarely appear in dependent clauses (*“Mary said that John/you go!”, see Platzack 2007; Kaufmann 2012). Yet interrogatives can be indirect (“David wondered who came to the party.”) and declaratives can function as complement clauses (“Mary said that it was a cold winter.”). On the other hand, there are cases where imperative verb forms appear to serve other functions as well. However, these seem to be cases where imperative morphology does not express the same meaning expressed in root imperative clauses. A prominent example is the Russian dramatic past (a vivid rendition of an unexpected event (А он и побери ‘he suddenly run,’ cf. Gronas 2006: 89, in-text example). These uses fall outside the scope of our proposal for they do not express the functional meaning of the imperative clause as an intentional expression of a speech act.

Imperative verbs additionally observe a restriction to controllable processes and require animate subjects (Xrakovskij 2001; Aikhenvald 2010), excluding wishes. For example, compare the felicity of the imperative “fall to the ground!” with “slip to the ground!” When predicates that denote non-controllable processes are used in imperatives, they tend to be coerced into controllable actions (“hear me now!” = “listen to me now!”). Such restrictions and coerced interpretations are not observed in D&I.

In sum, we have seen a representative sample of properties that uniquely define the imperative type. On first impression, the imperative clause seems impoverished (not fully grammaticalized). Alternatively, these restrictions may follow from the absence of some grammatical categories altogether (e.g., tense, mood, finite phrase). Negative imperatives may not exist. The syntactic distribution of the imperative clause is uniquely limited. Finally, predicates denoting non-controllable processes are normally banned. In the next section, we review previous accounts of imperatives in generative grammar. These earlier analyses may have fallen short at the interface by ignoring the alternative of syntactic access to context.

1.1.2 *Earlier analyses*

Research on imperatives can be characterized according to assumptions about the form of grammar that have remained relatively unchanged over the years. They share a methodological compromise that considers imperatives to be second person forms (to the exclusion of related forms where the performer of the action is not the addressee, such as “let them go!”). Beyond what constitutes an imperative, there is a lack of consensus concerning what exceptional characteristics are syntactically analyzable. In this conceptual conundrum, scholars have attributed the majority of divergent characteristics of imperatives to context restrictions (van der Wurff 2007b). The only exception is the incompatibility with negation, often considered a morphosyntactic phenomenon independent of context, which has led to a productive research program expanding over two decades. In the remainder of this section, we elaborate on the above-mentioned characteristics.⁴

Regarding the first research question “what constitutes an imperative?”, in earlier work, the imperative clause is often reduced to the canonical imperative, that is, the second person form (“go!”). Other person and number combinations exist, however, contingent on the language. In English, these forms require the auxiliary *let*: third person singular and plural (“let him/her/it/them go!”), or first person plural (inclusive exhortation: “let’s go!”). Following the term chosen in van der Auwera et al. (2004), first and third person forms can

6 Introduction

be grouped under the label *hortative* (although, as they note, in some traditions they are referred to as *imperative* forms, e.g., Azkue 1925 on Basque).

In previous analyses, hortatives are not considered to be imperative forms proper for the following reasons. Hortatives typically involve indirect address (“let them go!”); the addressee mediates between the speaker and a third party. Importantly, the subject of the lexical verb need not be second person in hortatives, which may be considered sufficient grounds for treating these expressions separately from imperatives. Birjulin and Xrakovskij (2001) and Aikhenvald (2010) observe semantic differences based on person between imperatives and hortatives, such as invitation in first person forms. Morphosyntactically, hortatives may be different from imperatives. This is the case in English, where hortatives require the auxiliary *let*. Alternatively, first and third person forms are considered related, but spared for further research, following an elucidation of the properties of the canonical paradigm. Consistent with this trend in generative syntax, Kaufmann (2012), a recent monograph on the interpretation of imperatives, is also concerned mainly with second person forms.

In recent typological surveys, by contrast, imperative sentences include hortatives (Xrakovskij 2001; van der Auwera et al. 2004, 2008; Aikhenvald 2010). Two implicational hierarchies of number and person markedness (cf. van der Auwera et al., Aikhenvald above) show that imperatives and hortatives behave as a group. For instance, if a language has hortatives it also has imperatives; if dual is distinguished in hortatives, so it is in imperatives. Consistent with these hierarchies, Aikhenvald notes that hortatives present fewer morphological distinctions than imperatives for various grammatical categories (e.g., tense, aspect). One challenging question concerns a reversal in person markedness. In hortatives, third person is often marked (Spanish: *¡que salga!* [COMP get.out.3SG.SUBJ] ‘let him/her get out!’) relative to second person in imperatives, which is unmarked, particularly in the singular (*¡sal!* [get.out.VROOT] ‘get out!’). Semantically, Birjulin and Xrakovskij (2001) propose that imperatives and hortatives are rather homogeneous, if first person forms are excluded. Upon closer scrutiny, hortatives replicate most of the restrictions observed in imperatives, such as an irrealis temporal interpretation (*“let them go yesterday!”), or their resistance to serving as a dependent clause (*“John ordered let them go!”).

Future generative studies face the task of elucidating a pivotal difference in the distribution of person: second person (imperatives), first/third person (hortatives). Hortatives featuring an auxiliary verb can also refer to second person with reflexives (“let yourself go!”).

In addition to the lack of consensus on the ontological meaning of the imperative, there is a lack of consensus on what context-sensitive properties of the imperative clause are syntactically analyzable. Consider the second person restriction by way of example. This property is unanalyzed or it is presumed to follow from the (as yet undefined) meaning or nature of the imperative. Accordingly, van der Wurff concludes that this may be an irreducible property. Some scholars have attempted a formal analysis, however. For Jensen (2004a), it is a particular property of imperative tense, which can introduce a second person argument. For Zanuttini (2008), imperatives have a unique phrase, the Jussive Phrase, which has a second person specification and ordinarily forces agreement for second person with the imperative subject. For Portner (2004), the imperative subject in English may be an addressee logophoric pronoun in a root context. Among the issues discussed, the prevalent research line remains the study of negative imperatives, which will be discussed below.

In the absence of a consensus on the yet to be defined meaning of the imperative, legitimately valid but disparate accounts are available (see van der Wurff 2007b). Some share similar assumptions to do with the deficiency, defectiveness or uniqueness of the imperative type. The imperative clause may lack certain syntactic projections, or these may not be licensed by imperative verbs that are morphologically defective (Zanuttini 1996, 1997; Platzack and Rosengren 1998; Portner and Zanuttini 2003, among others). By way of example, Zanuttini (1996) proposes that negation must select tense and that imperatives are tenseless (but see Zeijlstra 2006; Alcázar and Saltarelli 2007b). Other researchers have proposed or assumed that imperatives should conform to structural uniformity (e.g., Potsdam 2007). While this may be a desirable result, the more challenging characteristics of imperatives are generally unaccounted for or unaddressed in these studies.

Various characteristics of imperatives point to strict observance of grammatical principles in syntax and morphology, and thus press for the need to give full consideration to their syntactic analysis. While imperatives do not ordinarily serve as a dependent clause, they participate in coordination (“hold the bat tight and hit the ball hard!”; paratactic cases also exist, but it is doubtful that these are imperatives).⁵ Furthermore, the subject of imperatives may be restricted to the addressee, but from this position the reference of lower subjects can be obligatorily controlled (ADDRESSEE promise PRO_{*1/2/*3} to visit Grandpa!). In the few apparently genuine cases where imperatives embed, the embedded subject must still be interpreted as the addressee of the utterance context (vs. the reported context, which could be different: Kaufmann 2012

8 Introduction

on Germanic). This restriction is reminiscent of the behavior of indexicals, which are interpreted relative to the utterance context even in reported speech. Thus, in this particular way, the subject of imperatives behaves as is normally expected of indexicals (but see Schlenker 1999, 2003, 2004).

Regarding verbal morphology and finiteness, imperatives may be bare, uninflected forms, but they may also be complex. Basque is a good example. Basque imperatives can be verb stems with or without the infinitival mark (*etor(ri)!* [come-INF] ‘come!’), similarly to Romance verb stems with or without the thematic vowel. But Basque imperatives can also be complex forms that require agreement for number and person with the subject, object and dative (*eman iezaizkiozu!* [give.INF AUX.2SG(S).3PL(DO).3SG(IO).IMP] ‘give them to him/her!’), as root D&I forms do elsewhere in the language (*ema-ten dizkiozu* [give-IMPF AUX.2SG(S).3PL(DO).3SG(IO).IND.PRES] ‘you give them to him/her’). This indicates that the imperative clause may be finite, even if a strong preference across languages, including Basque, is to use bare or minimally inflected forms.

The characteristics discussed above invite a partially revisionist context-sensitive syntax of imperatives along the functional lines of the CP(vP) phase-theoretic derivational framework. This research program has already been staked out in generative syntax with the functional projection CP (Chomsky 1986) and the course extended into the left periphery (Rizzi 1997; Cinque 1999). In the next three paragraphs, we briefly define the phenomena of indexical shift, logophoricity and conjunct-disjunct person-marking systems, which suggest that properties of indexicality, specifically, speaker and addressee, have a legitimate role in syntax.

Consider the phenomenon of indexical shift (Schlenker 1999, 2003). In languages like Amharic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic), first and second person pronouns are ambiguous in certain dependent clauses, where they can refer to the speaker and addressee (as in English), or to the speaker and addressee of the reported context. By way of approximation, in an utterance like “John said that I bought a car,” “I” could be interpreted as “John,” the speaker of the reported context. Indexical shift is not generally possible across dependent clauses; instead, it seems to be restricted to propositional attitude verbs – speech predicates, psychological predicates and verbs of direct perception, or only possible with the verb *say*: Zazaki (Anand and Nevins 2004). Hence, the reference of the indexical pronouns may be syntactic in the limited domain of propositional attitude verbs. Other languages with indexical shift include Navajo (Athabaskan, Speas 1999), Catalan sign language (Quer 2005), and Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages (Sigurðsson 2004: 21, fn. 40).

Logophoric pronouns in certain African languages (e.g., Mundang, Tuburi; Niger-Congo) are generally restricted to indirect discourse. Similarly to indexical shift, logophoric pronouns appear in the complement clause of propositional attitude verbs. They obey a pragmatic constraint as well: their antecedent must be the person whose speech, feelings or perspective is reported (Hagège 1974; Clements 1975). Logophoric pronouns most frequently refer to the subject of the main clause (Sells 1987; Culy 1994, 1997), the *speaker* of the reported context. But there are addressee logophoric pronouns as well (e.g., Banda Linda (Niger-Congo), Donno So (Niger-Congo), Ewe (Niger-Congo); see Culy 1997: 849–50 and references therein).

Conjunct-disjunct person-marking systems refer to verbal inflections whose interpretation is contingent on the epistemic authority of the speech act (Hargreaves 1990, 1991, 2005). In a declarative, the speaker is the epistemic authority because he or she takes responsibility for the information; while in an interrogative the epistemic authority is the addressee. A morpheme denoting first person in a declarative (the conjunct) is interpreted as second or third person in an interrogative. The morpheme denoting second person and third person in a declarative (the disjunct) is interpreted as second person in an interrogative. If the interrogative is rhetorical, however, the conjunct is interpreted as first person only, as in the declarative. Additionally, conjunct-disjunct morphology is used logophorically under propositional attitude verbs. Languages with conjunct-disjunct systems include Newari (Sino-Tibetan, Hale 1980), Northern Akhvakh (Nakh-Daghestanian/“languages,” Creissels 2008) and Awa Pit (Barbacoan, Curnow 2002b).

The list of context-sensitive indexical phenomena is extensive (see Speas and Tenny 2003; Chapter 3). We contend that the imperative clause is a good fit as a context-sensitive phenomenon for descriptive as well as explanatory adequacy in syntactic analysis. In this volume, the cross-linguistic centrality of encoding the role of speaker and addressee is underscored by the interaction of imperatives with allocutive agreement in Basque (i.e., non-argumental second person agreement, Oyharçabal 1993; Chapter 5).

When the diversity of these phenomena is taken into consideration, pressure mounts for syntactic theory to provide a principled account of clause structure that is accessible to the context of utterance. The syntax of the imperative clause, we argue, is more precisely understood under this derivation scenario (Chapter 4).

As noted, the analysis of negative imperatives (e.g., Spanish *¡no com-a-s!* [NEG eat-SUB-2SG] ‘don’t eat!’ vs. **¡no com-e!* [NEG eat-THV]) is the only exception to the absence of consolidated research lines. This is sometimes referred

10 Introduction

to as the ban on true negative imperatives. Two basic premises can be identified. The first is that a morphologically dedicated imperative verb form (or *true* imperative, like Sp. *come*) requires syntactic licensing of some kind. The second is that negation may prevent the verb movement necessary for this licensing to take effect. Starting with the contributions of Zanuttini (1994, 1997), Rivero (1994), Rivero and Terzi (1995), permutations on the theoretical execution of these assumptions and further probing into additional empirical data have led to a consolidated research line (see Chapter 2 for extensive discussion).

This consolidated line, however, needs to be reassessed in light of new data. Typological evidence has emerged (van der Auwera 2005, 2006, 2010; van der Auwera and Lejeune 2005b) that undermines the basic premises of the analysis. Under the above-mentioned assumptions, it is not expected that non-dedicated forms may also have to resort to surrogate forms, effectively creating a parallel ban on *false* negative imperatives. In addition, non-dedicated forms may also have a special negation, in the form of prohibitive constructions. Yet prohibitives may also retain the original affirmative dedicated imperative form.

The syntactic approach to the true negative imperative ban was developed prior to this data becoming available. Pending forthcoming revisions, the aforementioned premises may no longer be tenable. This state of affairs opens new avenues to consider for an analysis of the apparent incompatibility with negation. The current consensus has not considered that a path that splits affirmative and negative paradigms in imperatives is not (always) solely syntactic. Other explanations are possible.⁶ Prohibitives are a major source of split paradigms. The bulk of these are verbs that make it unnecessary to negate the imperative (e.g., “see to it that this does not happen again!” vs. “don’t do it again!”) or lexically include it (Latin *noli* ‘be unwilling to’). In Basque, certain processes of phonological reduction apply in the affirmative but not in the negative. Over time, the same imperative form becomes morphologically distinct in the affirmative paradigm in the spoken language. A problem for a syntactic analysis of split paradigms is that the true negative imperative ban respects the implicational hierarchy for person and number alluded to earlier. That is to say, we know of no case in Romance where imperatives do not surrogate under negation but hortatives do. If split paradigms signal a genuine failure of licensing conditions, they need not observe this hierarchy.

In conclusion, the typological surveys question the adequacy of focusing on imperatives to the detriment of hortatives. Hortatives appear to behave as a group with imperatives. They share most of their characteristics, but crucially differ in at least the person restriction and mediation. The pragmatic restrictions of the imperative clause have not been investigated in the broader context