# THE ENGLISH IMPERATIVE: A CONSTRUCTION-BASED APPROACH

ANATOL STEFANOWITSCH
*Universität Bremen*

## 1    INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Aim*. The aim of this account is to address some issues concerning the status and nature of sentence types in a construction-based approach to language through a detailed constructional analysis of the English imperative (cf. also Ginzburg and Sag 2000 for an account of English interrogatives in a related framework).

1.2 *Theoretical background*. The analysis is based on a generic construction-grammar framework, and thus, crucially, on three assumptions: (a) language consists exclusively of constructions, i.e. form-meaning pairs (cf. Kay and Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995, Wierzbicka 1991); (b) constructions may have different degrees of specificity, ranging from very general to very specific (Kay and Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995); and (c) more specific constructions may inherit (part of) their formal and semantic specifications from more general constructions; if they do so, they inherit *all* of the specifications, but may add their own formal and semantic specifications (Kay and Fillmore 1999; cf. Goldberg 1995 for a different view). Like all versions of CxG, the one I am assuming is non-transformational; complex constructions may be 'derived' from simpler constructions only in the sense that they inherit them. In this framework, the acceptability/grammaticality of an expression (or perhaps the likelihood of encountering it in a corpus), depends on whether or not (or to what degree) it satisfies the constraints imposed upon it by the formal and semantic specifications of the construction(s) it inherits. Finally, note that constructions are assumed to be language-specific; the analysis below is meant to apply to English only. To the extent that there are similarities between languages with respect to a particular construction type, these are assumed to be due to general functional (communicative) and cognitive principles.

1.3 *Notation*. I will use an informal notation here, using brackets to show constituent structure and descriptive labels to show relevant features of these constituents or the elements occurring in them. I will use traditional terminology like VP, AuxP, etc., but I assume that the constituents so labeled can be analyzed as constructions in a more formal account.

## 2    FORM AND MEANING OF THE ENGLISH IMPERATIVE

2.1 *Form*. Any analysis of the English imperative 'mood' or 'sentence type' has to account for the following, well-known properties of sentences instantiating it:

–    they cannot bear tense and cannot contain modals:

(1)  a. **Pass** the sour cream please (ICE-GB:S1A-071 #196)
     b. ***Passed** the sour cream please.
     c. ***Will pass** the sour cream please.

- they require *do*-support for emphasis/contrast and negation, even for *be* and *have*:

(2)  a. **Do** take it. (BNC: D97 #1463)
   b. **Don't take** it personal Bill. (BNC: F7V # 374)
      (cf. *****Take** it **not** personal, *****Take not** it personal, * **Not take** it personal)
   c. So **do be** very wary please about buying anything from a street trader (BNC: FUT #298)
      (cf. *****Bé** very wary…)
   d. **Don't be** silly. (BNC: HMH #087)
      (cf. *****Be not** silly, * **Not be** silly)
   e. Right **do have** a seat (BNC: G5L #001)
      (cf. *****Háve** a seat)
   f. Okay, you want the body temperature kept at an even level, **don't have** it too high, **don't have** it too low. (BNC: F8D #278)
      (cf. *****Have** it **not** too high [not a negation of (2e)], *****Have not** it…, *****Not have** it…)

- the phonological realization of subjects seems to be optional (but it is not immediately clear what kind of subject may occur under what conditions):

(3)  A: Some people decided they were going to work as a, as a group on their table, to gather information and when you were doing the tallies last week, you helped each other didn't you, some of you helped, you were talking to one another to help make sure that you got the right number of tallies, if you worked with some other people to get the survey questions and do the tallies, *sign it*, if you did everything on your own, *leave it blank* … is anyone not sure what to do there?
   B: I helped you.
   A: Oh I don't want the arguments of about who was helped, okay *you* **carry** *on*, *you* **argue**, that's alright … number five, *read it* and then *somebody* **tell** *me what it means*. *Read it*, number five, and *someone* […] **tell** *me what it means*. (BNC: F7R #122-127)

- there seems to be optional subject-auxiliary inversion; if this option is taken, then negative inversion is obligatory:

(4)  a. Sit at the table, **don't move**.  (BNC: FXT #0320)
   b. **Don't** you **move** from your seat. (BNC: HEM #090)
      (cf. *****Do**  you **not  move** from your seat; contrast the interrogative *Do you not move from your seat?*)
   c. Well, **don't worry** if you don't know (BNC: FMH #011)
   d. **Don't** you **worry**, my girl. (BNC: HEM #040)
      (cf. *****Do** you **not worry**, my girl)

Numerous other 'formal' properties that are sometimes claimed to apply to the English imperative turn out to be semantic restrictions at best, for example the claim that its subject, realized or not, is always interpreted as having 2$^{nd}$ person reference (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985, §2.57), that adverbials like *maybe, perhaps,* and *certainly* cannot occur in it (e.g. Sadock 1974), that statives cannot occur in it (e.g. Stockwell et al. 1973), and that perfect aspect is excluded from it (e.g. Lees 1963); see Davies (1987: 6f, 11ff) for arguments why none of these are absolute restrictions and how, to the extent that they do hold, they are due to the semantics of the imperative.

2.2 *The imperative sentence type as a construction*. The facts listed in §2.1 could be summarized in the following structural description of the imperative:

   *Imperative*: [$_S$ {(Aux), (NP$_{subj}$)} [$_{VP(finite)}$ V$_{base}$ (XP)]]

However, this description is overly general, as it portrays the presence or absence of subjects and subject-aux inversion as cases of free variation. I posit the following construction instead, excluding for now details regarding imperatives with subjects and completely ignoring thie issue imperatives with subject-auxiliary inversion (both points will be taken up and integrated into the account in §3.1 below):

   IMP:       [$_S$ (NP$_{subj}$) [$_{AuxP}$ ( ) [$_{VP(finite)}$ V$_{base}$ (XP)]]]

This representation captures the first two facts mentioned in §2.1 above: the fact that the VP

is finite captures the fact that IMP requires *do*-support for emphasis/contrast and negation (finite VPs always do, non-finite VPs do not), and the fact that this finite VP contains a verb in the base form captures the fact that IMP cannot bear tense and cannot contain modals (which have no base forms, i.e. which are inherently finite), that it needs do-support even for *have* and *be* (note that the base forms of these verbs never take negation directly.)[1] The fact that the subject slot is simply shown as optional is of course not an improvement over the first formulation, but as just mentioned, I will return to this point presently.

First, let us look at how exactly the properties of IMP account for the facts about *do-support*, especially, why *do*-support is required even for auxiliaries. Clearly, only auxiliaries occurring in the Aux position will be able to bear negation, since this position does not have the requirement that any verb occurring in it appear in its base form. Thus, the question is why *do*, but **not** *have* and *be* can occur in the Aux position of English imperatives; why do we get (5a), (6a), (7a), (8a), and (9a), but not (5b), (6b), (7b), (8b), and (9b):

(5)　a.　***Don't be** silly*, go and get a job, you know (BNC: HMH #087)
　　　b.　\***Be not** silly…

(6)　a.　However, rather than produce a plain language version as proposed by motion one eight two, erm, we prefer to take the next appropriate opportunity and ***don't be** reading an awful lot into that*, but there will be an appropriate opportunity to simplify the wording as we accept the principle behind the motion. (BNC: HDR 018)
　　　b.　\*…**be not** reading an awful lot into that…

(7)　a.　**don't be** fooled by the healthy appearance. (BNC: F8L #199)
　　　b.　\* Be not fooled by the healthy appearance.

(8)　a.　I don't mind if you write to all the tenants and say please ***don't have** foxes on your land*, we don't like it. (BNC: JNB #700)
　　　b.　\*… have not/haven't foxes on your land.

(9)　a.　Please don't have read chapters one and two.[2]
　　　b.　\*Have not/haven't read chapters one and two.

The reason is that in all these examples, if *have* and *be* occurred in the Aux position, there would be no element left that could satisfy the constraint that a base-form verb appear in the $V_{base}$ slot of the verb phrase (as shown in 10a-14a):

(10)　a.　\*$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ ***be*** $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(\textbf{base})}]$ ***silly***$]]]$ (no verb in $V_{base}$)
　　　b.　$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(base)}$ *be* $]$ *silly*$]]]$

(11)　a.　\*$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ ***be*** $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(\textbf{base})}$ *read**ing***$]]]]$
　　　　　↣ verb in $V_{base}$ is not a base form
　　　b.　$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(base)}$ *be* $]$ *reading*$]]]$

(12)　a.　\*$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ ***be*** $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(\textbf{base})}$ *foo**led***$]]]]$
　　　　　↣ verb in $V_{base}$ is not a base form
　　　b.　$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(base)}$ *be* $]$ *fooled*$]]]$

(13)　a.　\*$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ ***have*** $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(\textbf{base})}]$ ***foxes***$]]]$
　　　　　↣ no verb in $V_{base}$
　　　b.　$[_S$ ( ) $[_{AuxP}$ $[_{VP(finite)}$ $[_{V(base)}$ *have* $]$ *foxes*$]]]$

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[1] This part of the analysis owes much to Davies (1987: 125); that tenseless forms cannot bear negation is presented as a stipulation in Davies (1987: 125), but it seems uncontroversial; consider as evidence the position of the negative particle in non-finite clauses: *To be or not to be, that is the question*, not \**To be or to be not* (or *ben't*).

[2] Most, but not all authors agree that the present perfect can occur in the imperative at all. The BNC does not contain an example of a negated present perfect imperative, but it contains a non-negated one: *What I would like you to do for the next, by the time we meet next time, that's on Monday the next lecture, please have read chapters one and two of that book.* (BNC:JSL #007).

(14) a. *[$_S$ ( ) [$_{AuxP}$ **have** [$_{VP(finite)}$ [$_{V(base)}$ *rEd*]]]]
        → verb in $V_{base}$ is not a base form)
   b. [$_S$ ( ) [$_{AuxP}$ [$_{VP(finite)}$ [$_{V(base)}$ *have* ] *rEd* ]]]

As they are the only available candidates, *have* and *be* must occur within the VP (as shown in (10b-14b), where, as should now be clear, they must occur in their base form and hence cannot bear negation. Thus, where negation is needed, the '*do*-support construction' kicks in, as expected.

    The question now is, however, why *do* cannot bear tense marking (cf. 15) or person marking (cf. 16, 17), since it occurs outside of the VP and is thus not subject to the base-form constraint:

(15) a. *By next week, please **did read** chapters one and two.
   b. By next week … please **have read** chapters one and two. (BNC: JSL #007)

(16) a. ***Does not** anybody think this is my swan song!
   b. Ah, what I'm going to say today, this is not me swan song … ***don't*** *anybody* ***think*** *it's me swan song*. (BNC: HDN #241)

(17) a. *(Everybody) does sit down!
   b. (Everybody) do sit down!

The answer, though I cannot formalize it with any finality here, will be found along the following lines: the *do*-support construction crucially specifies that the agreement features semantically associated with the VP appear on the auxiliary *do* instead:

    *Do*-support:   [$_{AuxP}$ *do*$_{(\oplus agr\ \alpha)}$ [$_{VP(\ominus agr[\alpha])}$ V (XP)]]

Thus, *do* will take over the (finite) agreement features of the VP, and can thus not take additional agreement features (note that it does *not* take over the feature [base] from the V inside the VP; usually, V and VP would of course have the same features, but this mismatch is precisely one of the properties making the imperative a construction).

    The unexpected behavior of *have*, *be*, and *do* thus follows from the specification of the imperative verb phrase as a finite VP containing a verb in the base form.[3]

2.3 *Meaning*. Any complete analysis of the imperative also has to account for its meaning, and thus, crucially, for the fact that it can be used in performing a variety of speech acts, for example those in (18):

(18) a. *Request*: **Pass** the sour cream please (ICE-GB:S1A-071 #196)
   b. *Advice*: If you feel uncomfortable with your fellow passengers, **move** to another carriage at the next station (ICE-GB:W2D-009 #129:1)
   c. *Instruction*: **Melt** the butter and the remaining oil in a separate saucepan (ICE:W2D-020 #119)
   d. *Permission*: Uh yeah **go** on then (ICE-GB:S1A-074 #206)
   e. *Good wishes*: **Have** a great birthday (ICE-GB:W1B-006 #127)
   f. *Invitations*: Please **let** me know if there is anything else that you need. (ICE-GB:W1B-017 #10)
   g. *Pleas*: Please **write** soon. (ICE-GB:W1B-002 #157)
   h. *Warnings*: Just **be** careful (ICE-GB:S1A-044 #102)

I assume that the imperative conveys the following relatively abstract meaning, which is

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[3] Some authors (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985, §11.30, cf. also Akmajian 1984) claim that imperative *do* and *don't* are exceptional because they do not 'fulfil[] the strict conditions of *do*-support …; they are not introduced to make good the lack of an operator, but indeed are added to the front of an operator if one is present' (cf. *be* and *have* in (2c-f) above); these authors analyze imperative *do*/*don't* as 'introductory imperative marker[s]' (Quirk et al.), or 'imperative particles' (Akmajian). In the present analysis, the facts about *be* and *have* follow from the fact that imperative verbs are finite but tenseless, and thus there is nothing special about imperative *do/don't*. Note also that semantically, negation of imperatives also parallels negation of other sentence types, for example in that it displays the same scope ambiguity: *Do not take it personally* can mean 'Do (not take it personally)', i.e. 'S takes an affirmative stance towards H not taking sth personally' or 'Do-not (take it personally)' i.e. 'S takes a negative stance towards H taking sth personally' (cf. also Davies 1987: 72).

compatible with all of these speech acts:[4]

> IMP:   a. S refers to an event that can potentially be brought about by H
> b. S takes an (affirmative) stance towards the actualization of this potential
> c. S presents this stance as relevant to H's decisions about H's future course of action

Determining the precise nature of the speech act being performed is then a pragmatic problem (an account along the lines of that suggested in Sperber and Wilson 1986 seems plausible and able to handle the data, but other accounts presumably work as well).

## 3   CONSTRUCTIONS INHERITING THE IMPERATIVE

3.1 *The obligatory-subject imperative (OSI)*. Let us now return to the issue of imperatives with subjects and imperatives with subject-auxiliary inversion. Recall that the IMP construction posited in §2.2 was left unspecified with respect to the subject slot. It was assumed that the ability of IMP to occur without a subject is an idiosyncratic property of IMP. A complete account, though, has to specify under what conditions the subject slot may actually contain overt phonological material.[5] Essentially, IMP allows subjects under two conditions; contrastive reference and non-second-person reference. Where these combine with emphatic or negative *do*, no subject-aux inversion occurs:

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[4] Traditional definitions typically ascribe a requestive meaning to the imperative, e.g. Jespersen (1954: 468): '[T]he proper meaning of [the imperative] is a request (brutal or humble) to the hearer(s) to do something', reflected more recently in Wierzbicka's (1991: 205) '(a) I say: I want you to do this … (b) I say this because I want you to do it (c) I think: you will do it because of this'. This kind of definition clearly fails to account for the non-requestive uses in (6). Sperber and Wilson (1986: 251), recognizing this, suggest that the imperative presents 'a description of a desirable state of affairs', leaving open whether it is the speaker or the hearer for whom this state of affairs is desirable. This covers most uses, but it seems to me that it does not cover *permission* very well; here, the point that the permitted action is desirable to the hearer cannot be at issue, since this is already known to speaker and hearer. Better definitions are suggested by Leech, for whom imperatives 'present the propositional content as a candidate for fulfillment by *h*' (1983: 119), and Davies, who suggests that in using an imperative 'the speaker is always understood to be putting forward the idea of the addressee's realising the possibility presented' (1987: 145), and that 'the utterance of an imperative is understood as an expression of acceptance of the proposition's being made true' (1987: 72).

[5] Subjectless imperatives are typically assumed to contain phonologically-null subjects that are specified for 2nd person, on the basis of data such as the following (where the reflexive *yourself* is assumed to require an antecedent to license its occurrence):

(i)   We've got a folder for each of you. ***Please*** *help* <u>yourself</u> it contains quite a lot of er information leaflets and whatnot. (BNC: FUE #062)

This could be incorporated into the specification of IMP by stating that there is an unfilled subject slot that is specified for second person (or that the VP is internally specified as having a 2nd person subject, or some similar mechanism):

(ii)   a.  $[_S (\ )^{2p} [_{AuxP} (\ ) [_{VP(finite)} V_{base} (XP)]]]$
b.  $[_S (\ ) [_{AuxP} (\ ) [_{VP(finite, 2p)} V_{base} (XP)]]]$

This would nicely account for the fact that overt 3rd person subjects may appear with 2nd person reflexives, where IMP could be said to coerce a 2nd person reading of the subject:

(iii)   Please <u>everybody</u> **help** <u>yourselves</u>.

However, overt 3rd person subjects may also occur with 3rd person reflexives, which is inexplicable under this analysis:

(iv)   Please <u>everybody</u> **help** <u>themselves</u>.

Thus, it may be more useful to assume that the ability of 2nd person reflexives to occur with zero or 3rd person subjects is conditioned pragmatically (alternatively, genuine 3rd person imperatives like (12) may constitute a separate construction; this would make sense to some degree, since they are semantically different in that they do not have to be addressed at a hearer, and in that many (most?) languages do not allow such imperatives).

(19) a. You fell from 8 to 9. *Everybody* **don't forget** *to vote*. Still shooting for #1!! Amy (pub54.ezboard.com)

    b. <u>Someone</u> **do tell** me what "spoils of war" we Brits took out of World War 2! (dspace.dial.pipex.com)

Interestingly, where subject-aux inversion is present, these constraints do not hold. Consider (20, from the conversation in 3 above):

(20) Okay *you* **carry on**, *you* **argue**, that's alright (BNC: F7R #124)

Here, the subject is neither contrastive, nor is it non-$2^{nd}$ person. What is more, this use conveys a meaning that differs from the meaning posited for IMP. Consider the contrast between the imperatives in the (20) and the ones in (21) (also from the conversation in (3) above

(20) If you worked with some other people to get the survey questions and do the tallies, **sign it**, if you did everything on your own, **leave it blank** (BNC: F7R #122)

The difference to me seems to be that with subjectless imperatives, there is no suggestion that the hearer is already (thinking about) bringing about the event referred to. With the type of imperative in (20), this is precisely what *is* suggested. The same distinction holds between negated subjectless imperatives and negated and inverted non-contrastive $2^{nd}$ person imperatives:

(22) a. Erm but the most unfortunate thing that Old Edward NAME, the-- the old chap who owned the place he was living in part of the house and Old Jane NAME, his housekeeper, my mother she could bake bread and wash, her mother had taught her that, but it was making butter that was the problem. And old Jane NAME said, **don't** *you* **worry** my girl, er I'll make the butter for you. (BNC: HEM #39-40, cf. [4d] above)

    b. A: Do you know what fraction that would be of a whole pizza?
       B: Er …
       A: What fraction's that? … Well, **don't worry** *if you don't know*. How many of those would you need to make a whole pizza? (BNC: FMH #008-012, cf. [4c] above)

In (22a) it is clear that the mother *is* worrying about not being able to make butter; in (22b), there is no reason for the teacher to assume that the student is worrying about not being able to answer the question.

    To capture these semantic facts and at the same time account for the unexpected property of subject-aux inversion, I suggest positin a construction inheriting IMP but adding an obligatory subject:

OSI:        *[$_S$ (don't)* NP$_{subj}$ *[$_{VP(finite)}$ V$_{base}$ (XP)]]*
             (= [NP$_{subj}$$^{2P}$/inherit IMP/inherit SAI/inherit Neg-Inv])

    a. S refers to an event that can potentially be brought about by H (➤ IMP)
    b. S thinks this event will be brought about by H (➤ OSI)
    c. S takes a stance towards the actualization of this potential (➤ IMP)
    d. S presents this stance as relevant to H's decisions about H's future course of action (➤ IMP)

Positing the OSI as a separate construction allows us to account for its specific formal and semantic properties, while at the same time capturing the aspects it shares with IMP. Note that the existence of such a construction accounts for the 'optionality' of the subject and of SAI in imperatives, as well as the restrictions connected to the various options (they are simply arrived at via different constructional processes).

3.2 *Imperative conditionals (IMC)*. The structure instantiated by (10a-c) has often been viewed as problematic because it partly shares the form of IMP but not its meaning (e.g. Bolinger 1967: 340ff):

(23) a. The partnership wants more firms to take on people like Glen to tackle crime at its source. He says unemployment is to blame. ***Give** someone a job <u>and</u> they won't be tempted to steal cars.* (BNC: K20)

b. Cynthia Sludgebucket — The major's daughter, and the second person to die when a piano decides to commit suicide. She's a total airhead: ***ask** her about other characters <u>and</u> she'll respond with, "Yes I totally agree."* (BNC: C87)

c. … then one must deplane, pick up the seat and re-position one of four pairs of locating holes on each lower seat tube, spaced about an inch apart, on to two floor-mounted prongs. ***Get it** wrong again, <u>and</u> it becomes a trifle tiresome!* (BNC: BNV)

The first problem for some authors seems to be that such sentences do not generally express requests (Quirk et al. 1985, §13.25, note a; Bolinger 1967) — they may, as (23a) shows, but they do not have to, as (23b), and especially (23c) show. This is not a problem in the present account, which does not assume the imperative to have a requestive meaning (see further below). The second problem seems to be that the first conjunct of such sentences receives a conditional interpretation, and shows a formal property of conditionals; unlike standard imperatives, it allows the occurrence of *any*:

(24) a. Pay any attention to people like that, and they never let you rest. (Bolinger 1967: 344)
b. *Let me have any of your time tonight, will you? (Bolinger 1967: 344)

In the present analysis, these facts are unproblematic; note that English has a general *Conditional-'And' construction* (CAC), where the first conjunct (which is not limited to IMP, but allows a variety of structures (cf. 25)) encodes a condition and the second (which is always a main clause) encodes a potential consequence (cf. Quirk et al. 1985, §13.25):

CAC:  [{S$_{decl}$, IMP, NP}$^{condition}$ and S$^{consequence}$]
  a. S refers to a situation or event
  b. S says that the realization of this event has a consequence

(25) a. *Declarative*: Macy's advertises a sale and the whole town goes crazy. (Bolinger 1967: 340).[6]
b. *Imperative*: Give me some money and I'll help you escape. (Quirk et al. 1985, §13.25)
c. *NP*: One more word from you, and I phone the police. (Quirk et al. 1985, §13.25)

Thus, the IMC is not actually a construction in its own right, but simply an instance of the CAC with IMP as its first conjunct. The fact that *any* can occur in the first conjunct of this combination is naturally explained as a property inherited from CAC.

*IMC*:  [inherit IMP/inherit CAC]

Since IMC is not a construction, its meaning must be fully compositional, and indeed this seems to be the case (cf. Davies 1987: 193ff for remarks in the same direction):

*IMC:*  a. S refers to an event (↝ IMP/CAC) that can potentially be brought about by H (↝ IMP)
  b. S takes a stance towards the actualization of this potential (↝ IMP), which is spelled out as a claim regarding what happens if the potential is actualized (↝ CAC)
  c. S presents this stance as relevant to H's decisions about H's future course of action (↝ IMP)

3.3 *Imperative threats (IMT).* A second structure that has caused some authors problems is the one instantiated by (26a, b):

(26) a. Give me some money or (else) I'll shoot. (Quirk et al. 1985, §13.30)
b. Don't be too long, or you'll miss the bus (Quirk et al. 1985, §13.30)

In the present analysis, this structure can be analyzed in the same way as the IMC. Again, English has a general *Conditional-'Or' construction* (COC), where the first conjunct encodes a condition and the second a potential result of the non-fulfillment of the condition (cf. Quirk et al. 1985, §13.30). Again, he first conjunct is not limited to imperatives (cf. 27):

COC:  [{S$_{decl}$, IMP, NP}$^{condition}$ or S$^{result of non-fulfilment}$]
  a. S refers to a situation or event

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[6] Strangely, Quirk et al. claim that declaratives cannot occur in this construction (1985: §13.30).

b. S says that the non-realization of this event has a consequence

(27) a. *Declarative*: They (must have) liked the apartment, or else they wouldn't have stayed so long.
b. *Imperative*: Give me some money or I'll shoot (see 13 above).
c. *NP*: Your money or I'll shoot. (Quirk et al. 1985, §13.30, note)

Like the IMC, then, the IMT is not actually a construction in its own right; instead it is a combination of COC and IMP:

*IMT*:        [inherit IMP/inherit COC]

Again, the meaning of the IMT is fully compositional (cf. again Davies 1987: 216ff for a similar view):

*IMT:*        a.   S refers to an event (↗ IMP/COC) that can potentially be brought about by H (↗ IMP)
              b.   S takes a stance towards the actualization of this potential (↗ IMP), which is spelled out as a claim regarding what happens if the potential is not actualized (↗ COC)
              c.   S presents this stance as relevant to H's decisions about H's future course of action (↗ IMP)

3.4  *Whimperative tags (WIT).* Finally, consider (wh)imperative tags, like those in (28):

(28) a. **Turn** that off, <u>will you</u>? (BNC: KBN #1213)
b. "I think you're lying to me." His voice could have been used for the skating rink at the Winter Olympics. "Well, then," I said peevishly, "just **work** *me over with a rubber hose, <u>why don't you</u>.* I'm sure you have one in your desk drawer." (D. Powell, *Bayou City Secrets*)
c. **Excuse** me <u>won't you</u>. (ICE-GB:W1B-003 #160)
d. Don't bother me, [his gesture] said, *leave me in peace, <u>can't you</u>,* why do I have to put up with this? (CSB)

At first sight, it may seem plausible to analyze such examples as whimperatives with a preposed VP, such that, for example, (29a) is 'derived' from *Will you turn that off?* (cf. Sadock's [1970] notion of 'fractured whimperatives'). This would be an elegant solution, since a VP-preposing construction has to be posited anyway in order to deal with examples like (30a, b):

(30) a.   I've promised to help them and <u>help them I did</u>. (Ward et al. 2002)
b.   It's odd that Diane should have said that, if <u>say it she did</u>. (Ward et al. 2002)

However, such an analysis has two problems. First, it does not freely apply to interrogatives (cf. 31), which means it is less general than it may seem. Second, it simply does not make the right predictions; the constituent preceding the tag is clearly not a verb phrase but an imperative main clause, as it may contain a subject (cf. 32):

(31) a.   Why don't you work me over with a rubber hose?
          = Why is it not the case that you work me over with a rubber hose? (Question)
          = I suggest you work me over with a rubber hose. (Suggestion)
b.   Work me over with a rubber hose, why don't you?
          ≠ Why is it not the case that you work me over with a rubber hose? (Question)
          = I suggest you work me over with a rubber hose. (Suggestion)

(32) a. **Don't** <u>you</u> **dare** to subvert her beliefs, <u>will you</u>? (F. Fyfield, *Staring at the light*)
b. '<u>*You* **leave** *me alone, <u>will you</u>*</u>?' she roared out, her smitten cheek in a flame. 'Do that again, an' I'll give you something' for yerself! See if I don't! You just try it on!' (G. Gissing, *Nether World*)

Therefore, I suggest an alternative analysis, positing the existence of a Whimperative-Tag construction (WIT):

WIT:        [<sub>S</sub> IMP WIT]

Analogous to the IMC and the IMT, the imperative contributes its regular meaning ('S takes a stance towards the actualization of a potential act of H') and the specific whimperative tag specifies the precise nature of this stance (a particular illocutionary force), for example, *why don't you*/'suggestion', *will you*/'request', *can't you*/'plea', etc.

## 4 Two constructions *not* inheriting the imperative

**4.1** *'Mad Magazine' sentences (MMs)*. Akmajian points out some superficial similarities between the construction in (33a) and imperatives like (34b) (optional subjects, lack of AUX, restrictions on topicalization, control interpretation, irrealis interpretation, 1984: 11ff):

> (35) a. A: Ted's going to write the music.
>     B: Ted **write** the music? What a splendid idea! (Quirk et al. 1985, § 11.37)
>   b. Ted **write** the music!

The fact that MMs do not have the semantics expected of imperatives is used by Akmajian in order to argue generally against a form-function correlation for sentence types. However, not all of these properties are in fact shared by MMs and IMP (cf. Lambrecht 1986 for discussion). Lambrecht suggests that MMs of the type in (36a) have the something like the following structure (adapted from Lambrecht 1986: 223):

> MM:    [$_{SFrag}$ NP$_{accusative}$ [$_{VP(infinitive)}$ V$_{base}$ (XP)], (S)

I agree with this analysis, which crucially involves a non-finite VP rather than the finite one I posit for IMP. This difference between the two constructions also accounts for their different behavior under negation:[7]

> (37) a. A: Ted shouldn't write the music this time.
>     B: Ted **not write** the music? He would never agree!
>   b. Ted **don't write** the music! (cf. *Ted **not write** the music!)

**4.2** *(Mandative) subjunctives*. It has been suggested that imperatives be analyzed as main clause variants of subjunctives (cf. e.g. Ginzburg and Sag 2000: 44f.):

> (21) a. I demanded that the committee **reconsider** its decision (Quirk et al. 1985, §3.59)
>   b. **Reconsider** your decision!

This proposal is intriguing in light of the semantic parallels between the two structures (the subjunctive is used with words referring to speech acts often realized by an imperative, such as *order, prefer, request, advisable, desirable, requirement, decision*). However, differences in negation show that subjunctives, unlike imperatives, have a non-finite VP (a further difference is that they require subjects under all circumstances:[8]

> (22) a. They insisted that we **not eat** meat. (Quirk et al. 1985, §3.59)
>   b. **Don't eat** meat! (cf. *Not eat meat!)

> SJC:    [$_{S'}$ [$_S$ SUBJ [$_{VP(infinitive)}$ V$_{base}$ (XP)]]]

## 5 Constructions inherited by the imperative

IMP itself inherits a number of more general constructions, which partially determine its meaning, and which it shares with other constructions, accounting for partially shared meanings.

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[7] Akmajian (1984: 14f) actually acknowledges this difference, but deems it irrelevant because in his view '[i]mperative *do* and *don't* have proven notoriously difficult to analyze in that their distribution in imperative constructions cannot be made to follow in any natural way from the distribution of auxiliary *do* and *don't* in declarative sentences' and should hence be disregarded as far as any general theory of English sentence types is concerned. As I have argued in §2 above, the behavior of *do(n't)* in standard imperatives can naturally be explained in terms of the general rules of English, and the apparent irregularities are in fact due to the fact that IMP contains a finite VP with a base-form verb; thus, Akmajian's argument simply does not hold. The shared irrealis interpretation can be partially explained by the fact that both the MM and IMP contain base-form verbs.
[8] This argument for distinguishing imperatives from subjunctives is also made by Davies (1987: 118-124). The semantic similarities between IMP and SJC can partly be accounted for by the fact that they both contain non-tensed (non-grounded) verbs, and thus convey a sense of potentiality/non-realized-ness (just as in the case of MMs).

5.1 *S (Main clause).* IMP is a type of main clause (it is in this function that it contrasts with declaratives, interrogatives, etc.). Although I do not have an account of the English 'main-clause construction', it seems to me that what all main clauses have in common is at least that they convey a particular 'stance' of the speaker (affirmative by default, negative in negated clauses). Thus, the 'stance-taking' aspect of IMP may be inherited from S (so may the 'relevance to H' aspect).

5.2 *Subject-Predicate*. Where IMP takes a subject, this subject behaves like all other subjects, suggesting that its properties are inherited from a general 'subject-predicate construction'. However, the fact that IMP does not require a subject (and indeed does not allow one except under specific circumstances) needs to be posited as a non-predictable property of IMP (it is motivated by, but not strictly predictable from its meaning/use; note that the ability to leave the subject phonologically unrealized is a typological tendency, but not a true universal, cf. e.g. Payne 1997: 303).

5.3 *Finite VP*. In the present account, the imperative inherits the 'finite-VP construction'; this may be seen as a minimal grounding (in the sense of Langacker 1991) and account for the fact that the imperative is used to refer to potential, but not to hypothetical situations.

5.4 *$V_{base}$*. Finally, the imperative inherits the '$V_{base\text{-}form}$ construction'. The fact that the verb appears in its base form, and thus not anchored ('grounded') with respect to time, event structure, or participants, presumably contributes the 'non-realized-ness' or potentiality of the event to IMP's semantics (note that languages often recruit some minimally grounded form (bare verb stems, infinitives, subjunctives), or a future tense form for their versions of IMP (cf. Payne 1997: 304, König and Siemund, in press)).

## 6 WHITHER SENTENCE TYPES?

If there is such a thing as 'mood' or 'sentence type', it is not different in nature from other constructions of a language: it is encoded by form-meaning pairs that may consist of and/or combine with other form-meaning pairs.

However, English IMP and, presumably, other English 'mood/sentence type constructions' (say, DECL, INT, and EXCL), determine the form of an utterance at a very general level (perhaps the most general); this may give these constructions a special status. Other languages may accord the expressions corresponding to English IMP, DECL, etc. a less central status, or it may place them in a very different relationship to each other and to other constructions.

Ultimately, though, the defining characteristic of IMP and the constructions it contrasts with is that they encode a relationship between speaker and hearer, and can thus be seen as serving primarily an 'interactional' function (cf. Wierzbicka 1991) or the expression of 'interpersonal meaning' (cf. Halliday 1985.); it is the need for expressions serving this function that motivates speakers to assemble constructions like IMP from the grammatical inventory provided by their languages in the first place.

While IMP (and, I would claim, DECL, INT, and EXCL) do not encode specific illocutionary forces, but rather are each *compatible* with a range of illocutionary forces determined by situational context, they are members of a class of constructions whose members also include constructions encoding illocutionary forces with various degrees of specificity, like *Why not do X?; How about X?; Tell you what, S!; S, OK; You X!* (cf. Wierzbicka 1991, Ch. 6), and even fixed expressions like *It's not what you think*, *This hurts me more than it hurts you*, *It takes one to know one*, *Present company excepted*, etc. (cf. Fillmore 1984) (note that some, but not all, of these expressions inherit a more general sentence-type).

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