In this talk, I present an analysis of imperatives which combines insights from both the minimal (Portner 2004, 2007, von Fintel & Iatridou 2017 a.o.) and the modal approach (Kaufmann 2012, Grosz 2009, Condoravdi & Lauer 2012 a.o.). Using primary evidence from Greek, I show that none of the existent analyses alone suffices to capture a range of data which has not received attention so far. I suggest that **imperatives are mood-Phrases which denote properties of worlds**. The special meaning of imperatives is due to the presupposition contributed by the imperative mood. As I show, this analysis results in modal semantics but without the modal operator constituting an integral part of the imperative form itself. First, I present the crucial data points and then I show how the present analysis can account for them.

A. **Evidence for existential force in imperatives** It is indisputable that imperatives can express possibility (e.g. in permission or indifference). However, these cases both in the minimal and the modal approach (modulo Grosz’s 2009 ambiguity approach) are treated as special. Below I show that the existential character of imperatives is more pervasive than previously thought and therefore cannot be accounted in the previous frameworks.

i) **Scope of only** Imperatives with only have been shown to be ambiguous (Haida & Repp 2011). (1a) can mean that i) the addressee (A) is allowed to read the notes and not read the books and ii) A is allowed to read the notes and is not allowed to read the books, as shown by the fact that both (1c) and (1d) are compatible with (1a). (1b) only differs in that there is fronting of the only-phrase. Critically, the only reading surviving when only fronts, is that A is allowed to read the notes and is not allowed to read the books. (1b) is only compatible with the continuation in (1d):

(1) a. Diavase mono tis simiosis. b. Mono tis simiosis diavase.
   
   Read.IMP only the notes Only the notes read.IMP
   
   ‘Read only the notes.’
   
   c. It would be good to read the books but it’s not obligatory.
   
   d. You are not allowed to read the books.

The data in (1) can only be explained if imperatives involve an existential modal. Fronting only in general results in wide-scope of only as can be shown with overt modals in Greek. (2a), which involves an overt possibility modal, is compatible with both continuations in (1c,d) whereas (2b) is only compatible with the continuation in (1d), suggesting that after fronting, only cannot scope below the modal (see Oikonomou 2016).

(2) a. Boris na diavasis mono tis simiosis.
   
   Can.2SG SUBJ read.2SG only the notes
   ‘You can read only the notes.’
   
   b. mono tis simiosis boris na diavasis.
   
   only the notes can.2SG SUBJ read.2SG

ii) **Scope of even** The same argument can be made for the interpretation of imperatives involving the scalar additive particle akomi ke ‘even’ as in (3a). even in (3a) can only scope above the
imperative operator because the additive presupposition cannot be satisfied otherwise due to the semantics of vote. The unlikelihood presupposition gives us the meaning that Clinton is among the least likely persons such that the speaker would be o.k. with the addressee voting. Crucially only a possibility modal is felicitous in such contexts as shown in (3b) vs. (3c).

(3)  a. Psifise akomi ke Clinton.  b. You can vote even for Clinton.
     Vote even and Clinton ‘Vote even for Clinton.’  c. #You should vote even for Clinton.

B. Imperatives with an overt universal adverbial The data in A vouch for an existential analysis of imperatives. Indeed, we could assume that there is an existential modal and derive the stronger readings (commands/requests) via a strengthening mechanism (e.g. as an implicature). However, there is clear evidence against the permanent presence of an existential modal in imperatives. As shown in (4), a universal adverbial oposdipote can combine with an imperative to give an unambiguously necessity interpretation. For example, fronting only as in (4b) derives the interpretation that A must read the notes and is not obligated to read anything else (wide-scope of only). Therefore, in contrast to (1b), only the continuation in (1c) is o.k with (4b).

(4)  a. Diavase oposdipote tis simiosis.  b. Mono tis simiosis diavase oposdipote.
     Read.IMP definitely the notes     Only the notes read. IMP definitely
     ~ You must read the notes.      ~ Only the notes are such that you must read them.

C. Better-Imperatives Whereas the data in A vouch for an existential and the data in B for a universal modal, we also observe that the imperative can combine with the adverbial better (kalitera) which as shown in (5b,c,d) is not compatible with an existential, a necessity or even a weak necessity modal in English (and in Greek). (5a) has a comparative interpretation. It suggests that there is an alternative (e.g. A stays) and that the prejacent is preferred (by the speaker) over the alternative.

(5)  a. Kalitera fige.  b. #You must better leave.
     Better leave.IMP     c. ??You should better leave.
     ‘Better leave.’     d. #You can better leave.

A minimal but modal analysis Putting all the data together forces us i) to abandon the minimal approach and ii) to abandon the idea of an all-universal or an all-existential analysis. What about an ambiguous analysis (Grosz 2009, 2011)? Perhaps it would work but we would need a three-way ambiguity, e.g. existential, universal and comparative preference. But still it would be very difficult to explain why in certain structures only one of the readings is available. Instead, I suggest that the imperative form represents a special type of verbal mood, the imperative. As such I treat the imperative as a proposition with a special mood feature, with the meaning in (6b):

(6)  a. [MoodP Mood[+IMP] [TP T [VP A open the window]]]  b. λw’. A opens the window in w’

The difference with a plain declarative lies in the contribution of imperative mood. Following Schlenker’s (2005) insight, I argue that imperative mood triggers a presupposition restricting the set of possible worlds to those compatible with the speaker’s desires, where desire is used technically to encode desire for future possible events (cf. Iatridou 2000, for arguments in favor of a bouletic component in the core meaning of imperatives see Condoravdi & Lauer 2012, 2016). Using Heim & Kratzer’s (1998) notation, we can represent the meaning for (6) - including the presupposition - as in (7):
(7) \( \lambda w' \). \( w' \) is compatible with speaker’s desires at \( w \). A opens the window in \( w' \).

As I discuss, with the meaning in (7), we can account for all the patterns in A-C. The existential character of imperatives shown by the data in (A), is the default. When there is no overt operator existential closure applies so that the presupposition is satisfied and derive the meaning in (8):

(8) \( \exists w' \). \( w' \) is compatible with speaker’s desires at \( w \). A opens the window in \( w' \).

In the presence of an operator, as in the case of the universal *opos dipote*, the quantifier will quantify over (7) and derive a necessity interpretation:

(9) \( \forall w' \). \( w' \) is compatible with speaker’s desires at \( w \). A opens the window in \( w' \).

Finally, I analyse *better* as taking two propositions as its arguments and comparing them in a scale of desirability/preference (cf. Condoravdi & Lauer 2012). Again it is critical that the propositions which *better* takes as arguments do not involve any modal.

**In conclusion**, the present analysis can account for the diverse meanings of imperatives and also explain their compatibility with adverbials encoding distinct quantificational force. In addition, by treating imperative as a special mood inducing a presuppositional restriction to the set of the worlds, it provides new perspectives in understanding the performative character of imperatives (cf. Kaufmann 2012, 2016).

**Selected References**


http://dx.doi.org/10.3765/salt.v26i0.3949

http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11050-007-9022-y.