

Imperatives: How minimal are they?

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In this talk, I present an analysis of imperatives which combines insights from both the minimal (Portner 2004, 2007, von Stechow & 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

(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 *oposdipote*, 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

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