The function of non-canonical imperatives in the languages of Europe

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Abstract

This thesis deals with analysis of the forms and functions of non-second person imperatives as well as the phenomenon of imperatives itself. Through investigation in the languages of Europe and consultation of linguistic theory regarding the subject, the functionality of non-canonical imperatives has been mapped, revealing a great variation in function along with an intricacy of formal correspondence. The imperative speech act, paragon to direction and command, expresses, when used with non-second person subjects, a multitude of non-directive functions, from encouragement to requests for permission, and even encroaches on the territory of optativity.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1INF</td>
<td>First infinite</td>
<td>IMPRS</td>
<td>Impersonal pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>First person singular</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>Indicative mood</td>
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<td>1P</td>
<td>First person pronoun</td>
<td>INF</td>
<td>Infinitive</td>
</tr>
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<td>1PL</td>
<td>First person plural</td>
<td>JUSS</td>
<td>Jussive mood</td>
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<td>2SG</td>
<td>Second person singular</td>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>Verb of negation</td>
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<td>2P</td>
<td>Second person pronoun</td>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>Optative mood</td>
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<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>Second person plural</td>
<td>PART</td>
<td>Partitive case</td>
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<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>Third person plural</td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>Passive voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Accusative case</td>
<td>PAST</td>
<td>Past tense</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>Definite form</td>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>Past participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>Definite conjugation</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural number</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIS</td>
<td>Disjunctive form</td>
<td>POS</td>
<td>Possessive pronoun</td>
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<td>ELA</td>
<td>Elative case</td>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>Present tense</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>Genitive case</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM</td>
<td>Feminine noun</td>
<td>SBJV</td>
<td>Subjunctive mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td><em>go</em> particle</td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Singular number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILL</td>
<td>Illative case</td>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Verbal stem</td>
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<td>IMP</td>
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1. Background and purpose

The imperative is together with the indicative a feature existent in most of the world’s languages. As Aikhenvald (2010) explains, every language possesses the ability to express commands and directives; a practical way to do this is through the imperative. The various forms that exist in the imperative vary greatly from one language to another, but there seems to be a universal tendency for imperatives to follow a certain hierarchy regardless of their genetic or geographic orientation. Aikhenvald illustrates this hierarchy as follows:

Table 1.1: Personal hierarchy and canonicity of imperatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-canonical values</th>
<th>Canonical values</th>
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<tr>
<td>1sg and/or 1P exclusive (a)</td>
<td>2P (sg, pl, or non-singular) (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg and/or pl (b)</td>
<td>1P inclusive; non-singular (c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table is read as follows: if a language possesses a third person singular and/or plural (b) imperative form, then it can also express the first person inclusive or non-singular (c) in the imperative and in extension the second person singular and non-singular (d).

The canonical values denote the second person imperative, which is present in all of the world’s languages in at least the singular. What is meant with “canonical” is that it most closely represents the typical function associated with the imperative, that of a command or direction.

The non-canonical values, seen in the table above as moving towards the leftmost end, carry personal-specific functions that have less to do with the archetypal function of the imperative, commonly filling a hortative function in the first person plural (or inclusive) and a more optative function in the third person forms. These non-canonical functions make up the subject of this thesis, and will be dealt with, analyzed and discussed in detail.

It is important however, to know the workings of the second person imperatives, or the canonical imperatives, to understand how the non-canonical values diverge in usage and form. The term “imperative” is loosely defined, and as far as speech acts go, it is somewhat of an enigma and subject to investigation. While there are several publications that investigates this linguistic feature, Bybee and Fleischman (1995), Palmer (1986), and as mentioned above Aikhenvald (2010) to name a few, the mapping of the imperative’s functions focuses mainly on its usages in English, which is of course helpful, though inevitably incomplete and
defective, since English, like other Germanic languages, does not possess forms (by which I mean inflected forms) for any of the non-canonical imperatives.

In this paper, I will attempt to describe the functions of the non-canonical imperatives in languages found in Europe, mainly through Finnish (Finno-Ugric, Uralic) and Irish (Celtic, Indo-European) but not without examples of anything in between. These two languages are all genetically very different from one another, but are both very rich in grammar concerning the imperative.

Also, I will deal with the nature of imperatives, how they correspond to other moods and sentence types, and discuss how different portrayals of the imperative affect the definitions of these linguistic elements. This is not as clear-cut as one could imagine, and so I will do my best to straighten out the complications that arise.

1.1 Speech acts
In order to fully understand the spectrum of the imperative, it is important to at least rudimentarily grasp the concept of speech acts, defined by Saeed (2009) in accordance with Austin (1975) as the social functions of utterances, in other words how an utterance is functionally pitched and perceived. Much can be said, and indeed has been said, about speech acts, but I will focus primarily on the parts of this topic that is of relevance to imperatives and related linguistic elements.

As proposed by Austin, there are three elements of the speech act: the utterance itself, referred to as the locutionary act, an intended effect of the utterance, called the illocutionary act, and the actual effect of the uttered sentence, or perlocutionary act. These parts are independent but connected, and there is no guarantee that an illocutionary act yields the result desired by the speaker. That is to say that even if the intention or illocution of the speaker is to command the listener to do something, there is no insurance that the listener will obey (although depending on various factors, there is a greater or lesser probability and expectation of compliance). Indirect speech acts in particular display a discrepancy between the intent and effect of an utterance, due to the speaker lending a greater freedom of interpretation to his listener(s).

Indirect speech acts are defined as being a supersession of the conventional meaning or direct speech act, for instance the use of an interrogative sentence to ask a question or a declarative sentence to convey information, by an extra, more immediate interpretation. In other words, indirect speech acts do not necessarily match sentence types to their respective conventional meanings. For instance, if a question is used to make a request, as in “would you
mind passing me the salt”, or a statement “you are going to show up at the rehearsal tomorrow” is used in lieu of a direct order (this last example, future declarative instead of an imperative, is found around the world in expression of commands), one is dealing with indirect speech acts.

Searle (1975) approaches the phenomenon of direct and indirect speech acts by casting the direct use as the literal use of the speech act and the indirect use as the non-literal use. Additionally, Searle argues that the literal act is backgrounded or secondary, while the non-literal act is primary. In his own words: “When one of these sentences is uttered with the primary illocutionary point of a directive, the literal illocutionary act is also performed” (1975: 70). Thus, if an indirect command is made through a direct statement, both a literal statement “you will scour the pots” and a non-literal command, (“scour the pots!”) is made.

How these indirect speech acts correspond to imperatives requires further explanation, and social register is an integral part of how, why and when, and most importantly, to whom imperatives are used. After all, as Searle wrote (1975: 64): “In directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness”.

Ervin-Tripp (1976) suggests that the usage of interrogative requests is useful as it allows the listeners to provide grounds by which compliance to the proposed command would be rendered impossible. This element of politeness is given further depth when set in the social hierarchy, and as per Ervin-Tripp’s study, where she found that when directed upwards in the social register, framing a request was preferably done by polite modals, such as may, could or would (an employee asking his superior: “may I have the salt, please?”), whereas imperatives or modals of necessity like need or must have were more common when going the other way (such as a surgeon telling his assistant: “I need suction on the aortic valve”).

Ergo, whether we use direct commands or indirect requests depend on the addressee and the forms of these directives are reflected differently in various languages. One’s peerage to the addressee is of significant importance. To directly command a superior would seem presumptuous and insolent, possibly jeopardizing one’s social position, and conversely to treat a familiar peer as though he or she was a non-peer or addressing them through a formal filter would come across as cold and distancing and so one must be mindful of breaches of this conduct, no matter if it is through poor choice of words or the incorrect imperative form.

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1 The illocutionary point is the purpose or aim of the speech act.
2 Directives make up the type of speech acts intended to elicit action.
Furthermore, to shed light on the intricate workings of social interaction and how it impacts on our use of language, and indeed dictates its protocol, the concept of face needs to be explained.

Erving Goffman (1967, 1971, 1981), a sociologist, established the concept of face, which may roughly be defined as the public image that an individual wishes to project, that is to say how he or she wishes other people to view him/her. This concept was elaborated on by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) where it was further split in two subsections, positive and negative face respectively, where positive face represents the individual’s wish to be viewed as worthy of approval by others and/or to be part of a community, and negative face in turn representing how the individual wants to be recognized as autonomous and independent.

Depending on the face that a person wishes to project, certain actions or utterances directed towards said person can have an adverse impact on his face, something which Brown and Levinson has named face-threatening acts. Threats to a positive face arise when the person in question is overtly disagreed with, interrupted or accused for something unfavorable to his image, possibly lowering his social or self-esteem. Threats to negative face include commanding, requesting from or advising the person, and thus conflicting with his sense of autonomy.

The acts that threaten the negative face are the ones that commonly relate to imperatives, and it is here circumlocution, paraphrase or a different person of imperative is warranted. This will be further discussed in the sections regarding third person imperatives, since it is these forms that most closely relates to this phenomenon.

1.2 Manipulation and authority
An important feature of imperatives, I daresay one of the most central, is that of command, direction and elicitation of action. As mentioned earlier, every one of the world’s languages have some way or another to express desire that something is to be done, and this is typically done with imperatives. Givón (2001) defines the imperative in the following locution:

Under the generic umbrella of imperative fall a potentially large number of manipulative speech-acts. The common denominator of all of them has to do with intended manipulation. They are all verbal acts by which the speaker attempts to get the hearer to act.
There is a depth in using language to tell others what to do that is not domain-specific to imperatives however, and depending on how forceful one wishes to come across in one’s direction there are several ways of either softening or strengthening one’s force of command.

Givón gives an account on manipulation and prevention verbs and whether they are implicative of success or attempt. How these verbs are used depends on the context and the addressee or object. For example, words like *make, force or cause* are in Givón’s rendition called successful manipulative verbs, since they, in discourse, implies that manipulation, whatever form it may have taken, was successful (so for example “Sarah made John leave” implies “John left.”) Conversely, words such as *tell, expect or order* does not imply successful manipulation (“Sarah told John to leave” does not imply “John left”).

How these verbs are used in commands and imperatives-by-proxy (i.e. person A tells person B to pass on a command to person C; Aikhenvald, 2010) varies, but a rule of thumb would be that successful manipulative verbs are more common when the action proposed is expected by the speaker to happen (so that “Make him leave” is more forceful than “Tell him to leave”; the desired action in the former is the departure of the object, while the telling of the object is the desired action of the latter, or if viewed by virtue of resignation, the telling, if pitted against the leaving, is more likely the successfully performed action of the two).

There are several conventions governing the use of manipulative speech-acts, when one form may be used and not another, divided into epistemic conventions and deontic ones. The former implies the present state of the world, as presupposed by the speaker, versus an intended state, that is to be brought about by the manipulation in question. The latter, deontic criteria regard the addressee’s ability to perform said action, as well as the speaker’s ability or authority to command the addressee to act. When either of these criteria, epistemic or deontic, fails, then the manipulation is unsuccessful.

Now, to reconnect with social factors, there exists a correspondence between authority and deference/compliance. Givón considers this a tendency among languages which at times conflicts with cultural social conventions, refraining from dubbing it a universal rule, and presents a set of conditional implications that can be summarized as such:

**Higher speaker’s power/status ⇒**
- Greater hearer’s obligation to comply
- Lesser speaker’s need to be deferent
Higher hearer’s power/status ⇒

- Lesser hearer’s obligation to comply
- Greater speaker’s need to be deferent

Grammatically, verbal manipulation tends to merge with grammatical elements regarding honorification, deference and, Givón argues, even epistemic certainty, which ties in with Searle’s indirect speech act duality mentioned earlier (i.e. a command made through a question is both a command and a question). That is to say, the speaker reserves himself if he doesn’t know how capable the hearer is of performing said action, so a question like “do you think you could fix the pipes” also doubles as a command, and an answer to the question (“yes, I think I can”) or a response to the command (“alright, I’ll give it a try”) is equally valid.

Weakening or softening a command is typically done with a number of devices. A command is generally considered less direct when produced in declarative, interrogative and, as we’ll see later on, optative sentences than when given in the imperative. According to Givón, sentence length, questions, overt mention of the manipulee in any form, negation, and usage of irrealis, modal or cognitive verbs all contribute to a less direct command. So, from the extremely direct “Shut up!” these devices may be used to transition all the way over to the polar opposite, the extremely indirect “wouldn’t it be awfully nice if you could perhaps be quiet?” Note that indirectness affects the manipulative force of a command; a direct order is much more forceful and effective than is an indirect one. However, it is not hard to imagine that asking your superior to do something for you is more effective if you by circumlocution bring out the deference in long, negative modal questions than if you essential were to tell him to do it. In other words, the rules governing the use of imperative and their correspondence to direct or indirect commands, regardless of complexity in different languages are universally and uniformly complex.

1.3 Optativity in imperatives

Historically plentiful but rather uncommon in modern-day European languages, the optative mood is used to express wishes as well as the giving and requesting of consent for an action. As many of the non-canonical forms of the imperative have optative-like functions, a bit of background on optativity may be warranted.

In many languages, certainly in Europe, the optative mood supplements the imperative. In Finnish and Estonian, the third person and passive imperatives takes their forms from the
optative paradigm (called the jussive in Estonian; see Erelt (2002) and Erelt and Metslang (2004)). In Irish, the jussive-like past subjunctive provides the imperative paradigm with forms in the first person plural and third person singular and plural. In Turkish, the optative (what Göksel and Kerslake (2005) call Group 3) lends the third person forms to the imperative (called Group 4 by Göksel and Kerslake). Interestingly enough, Turkish does not lend the first person forms to the imperative, and while optatives can used in questions in Turkish, only these first person forms, i.e. the non-imperative forms, may be used in this manner.

In this paper, the terms jussive and optative are used more or less interchangeably, and there is no real consensus which term is preferable to the other (in Finnish, Karlsson (2008) and Heinonen talk about the optative mood (fi. optatiivi), while Hakulinen et al. (2004) and Tommola (Rothstein and Thieroff (2010:511-27)) refers to the same mood by the term “jussive” or jussiivi). A few languages, such as Albanian for instance (see Walter Breu in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010:447-72) for a detailed analysis on Albanian modality), keep the two moods distinct, although none of the languages relevant to this thesis do (Albanian, albeit a European language, has its imperative paradigm limited to the second person forms).

I will use the term “jussive” to refer to the typical let X do Y functions occupied by the first person singular, third person and impersonal (passive) forms, reserving the term “optative” only for the mood or sentence type in languages where this is the preferred term, as well as for wish-like functions.

2. Data and Research Method

In order to conduct the research for this thesis, the first step was to establish the sampling range. The languages would have to be different enough for variations to be significant, yet not so diverse as to warrant a worldwide survey on imperatives; that would be out of the scope of this paper and potentially shift the focus away from the functional analysis of imperatives, which is what I wish to investigate, towards a more typological analysis. While this paper is for obvious reasons inclusive of typological features, these are secondary to the study of the grammatical qualities of imperatives.

I decided to look for languages closest to home, focusing on those in which I possess at least some rudimentary proficiency, all of which are found in Europe. The languages of Europe possess great disparity, not only between language families, but also within the
continentally predominant language family, i.e. Indo-European. Before a proper sampling base from European languages could be established however, the amount of languages available had to be managed through a process of elimination, as it would be well outside the scope of this thesis to scrutinize all 200+ of them.

First, it was important to look at each sub-branch of the Indo-European language family for relevant features, namely for first and third person (and passive) imperatives. At this stage the functions of a language’s imperatives was irrelevant, and just having a first person plural form, better yet the other personal forms, in the imperative was deemed sufficient for a language group to be eligible.

Secondly, I decided to look at a number of sister languages in each of the chosen subdivisions (the number of sample languages of one branch compared to another is variable) with the exception of Celtic languages, where I decided to solely focus on Irish, a language in which I possess some proficiency. Only the Goidelic branch of Celtic languages possesses non-canonical imperatives, and within this branch, the grammatical properties of imperatives vary very little between the constituents (i.e. Irish, Scots-Gaelic and Manx). As for the other subdivisions of Indo-European, my choice of languages in each of them was made on merit of them having at least the first person plural, inclusive, imperative. Another point of importance was picking languages in each group that display as much grammatical diversity as possible, for obvious reasons.

Lastly, after having looked through each subdivision and gathered information on imperatives, I opted to add a number of languages to the research, in favor of two language families in particular, namely Finno-Ugric languages and Altaic languages, both with highly relevant imperative-optative grammar, and thus ended up with a geographic range encompassing Europe and stretching into Asia Minor.

The next step was to compare grammars to first identify which functions non-canonical imperatives served in each language and then to connect these functions in different languages to each other and see how they correspond, to see if there was a pattern followed by these imperatives in regard to function. For the major languages featured in this paper, I used Karlsson (2008) and Hakulinen et al. (2004) for Finnish, Stenson (2008) and Ó Siadhail (1995) for Modern Irish, Göksel and Kerslake (2005) for Turkish, and Erelt (2002) and Erelt and Metslang (2004) for Estonian. Examples in other languages were checked against their corresponding grammars (Falk, Sjölin and Lerat (2010) for Spanish, Holmberg, Klum and Girod (2011) for French, and Hutchinson and Lloyd (1996) for Portuguese). Data for the other language featured in this work were largely provided for in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010).
Now, what I found were tendencies in this particular geographic setting that seemed unclear, and after having consulted a number of volumes on the subject of the imperative and the modality relative to it, primarily Aikhenvald (2010) and Palmer (2001), both to which I make references in this paper, I was ready to start analyzing the data, which I will account for henceforth.

3. Imperative: Mood or sentence type?

The first issue that I will address is that of the nature of imperatives and whether they are modal or sentential, a definition that is of importance for the mapping of functions in the non-canonical imperatives, i.e. the first and third person forms. If verbs conjugated in other moods, tenses and aspects are as indirect as those verbs used in different sentence types, not to mention verbs that incorporate both verbal-grammatical and sentence-type features, what exactly then is the imperative?

Most grammars treat imperatives as a mood not unlike the indicative, subjunctive or conditional, and yet it would seem that, under the magnifying glass, imperatives are nothing like these other moods. As Aikhenvald (2010) puts it: “Imperatives are a law unto themselves”, and I am compelled to concur this to be true, since there are so many parts of this linguistic phenomenon that fails to adhere to the norms that are so effortlessly imposed on other moods.

This is to consider a definition dilemma: Imperatives could be conceived as moods since they cannot be conditional or subjunctive or any other mood (although, as we’ll see, subjunctives can indeed be posed as imperatives, though not as part of any modal distinction). But conversely, neither declaratives nor interrogatives, nor any other sentence type for that matter, can be imperative (but may function as such in indirect speech). Imperative sentences have their own syntax, intonation contour and system for negation which by analogy to the situation in declaratives or interrogatives mean that they ought to constitute a sentence type in their own right.

An issue that arises in defining imperatives as a type of sentence rather than a mood, as is done by Aikhenvald (2010), Thieroff (Rothstein and Thieroff, 2010) and Abraham (in Abraham and Leiss (2009:251-302)) is the grammatical applicability of imperatives. Unlike declaratives and interrogatives, imperatives do not allow for modal distinction, and are very
limited in regards to tense and aspect. By virtue of these factors, can one justify calling the imperative a sentence type?

One can, I would argue. It is incorrect to assume that all sentence types need to be balanced and have the same conditions and possibilities, since they aren’t, and they don’t. While declarative and interrogative sentences may take just about any mood, imperative and optative ones may not. Aikhenvald (2010) highlights the features which differentiate imperatives from other clause types, and I will attempt to summarize these to the best of my ability without compromising the overview.

Imperatives have their own distinct intonation contour as I mentioned earlier, typically a sharp and forceful tone, and this is sometimes coupled with other, imperative-specific phonological processes.

Also, the constituents follow a specific order in imperatives and may in some languages be more rigid in these types of sentences, for instance in Swedish, where words in declarative and (to a lesser extent) interrogative sentences can be placed more freely without impacting on the semantics or come across as grammatically incorrect. This can be illustrated in the following example where subsequent sentences have their word orders jumbled, all without becoming grammatically odd.

Swedish:

Han är ute på fältet nu.

Han är ute på fältet nu
He is out on field-DEF now

“He is out in the field now”

Each constituent in the example above can be repositioned without affecting the semantic meaning of the sentence. Thus, jumbled sentences, variations of the example, like “ute på fältet är han nu” or ”nu är han ute på fältet” has the same meaning. Imperative verbs on the other hand, require in most languages of Europe a clause-initial position, whereas declaratives do not. A notable exception to this can be found in Irish, where all sentences follow a rigid VSO word order.
Irish:

*Labhraím leis anois.*

Labhraím leis anois  
talk/1SG/IND with/him now  
“I’m talking to him now.”

*Labhair leis anois!*

Labhair leis anois!  
talk/2SG/IMP with/him now  
“Talk to him now!”

Another restriction on imperatives is the number of verbs that can be, as it were, “imperativized”. Stative verbs or verbs beyond the listener’s control cannot be posed through imperative sentences; at least not without being grammatically dubious (it would seem strange to tell someone “be left alone!” or “know how to fix the car so we can be off!” and equally ineffective to tell a person lying in an ice bath to “stop freezing!”).

But by far the largest number of features unique or at least more common to the imperative is found in regards to how verbs interact with it. Politeness is the most striking of these features and manifests itself more in imperatives than in other clause types, mainly because imperatives by nature are more forceful and brusque.

Now, I’ve already touched on the subject of politeness and deference earlier, but a few points are worth adding. Imperatives can be made more polite either through verbal particles or diminutives, such as “a little bit” or “a tad more”, or by using aspects like the continuative or imperfective. Aspectuality are generally simpler in imperatives, typically distinguishing only between the continuative/progressive and punctual aspects, as opposed to the greater variety found in declaratives/interrogatives.

The tenses of imperatives are also more scaled-down, and for most parts, there exists only a distinction between doing something now and doing something later. While it is possible to use the perfect in imperatives, it tends here to imply posteriority rather than the anteriority proposed in declaratives; that something is to be done later rather than having been done already, so a sentence like “have it done by Monday” is basically a rephrase of “do it so that by Monday, it is done”.

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Finally, reported evidentiality is the only such specification attested in imperatives, connected to imperatives-by-proxy, while other clause types may discriminate between numerous options.

One point of particular interest is that of negation, which in some languages is expressed differently in the imperative than in other clause types (this is not always the case; I’ll explain why shortly) and the negative imperative, or prohibitive, can be radically different from positive imperatives, while polarity in the declarative tends to work on a more “does/does not” basis without tampering with the verbal form to any greater extent. This point can be illustrated in French, using the verb donner, “to give”:

Table 3.1: the differences between declarative and imperative polarity in French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td><em>Tu me le donneras.</em></td>
<td><em>Tu (ne) me le donneras pas.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tu me le donneras</td>
<td>Tu (ne) me le donneras pas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you 1SG/ACC it give/2SG/FUT</td>
<td>you NEG 1SG/ACC it give/2SG/FUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You will give it to me”</td>
<td>“You will not give it to me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td><em>Donne-le-moi!</em></td>
<td><em>Ne me le donne pas!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donne-le-moi</td>
<td>Ne me le donne pas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>give/2SG/IMP-it-1SG/DIS</td>
<td>NEG 1SG/ACC it give/2SG/IMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Give it to me!”</td>
<td>“Don’t give it to me!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see in the imperative, the word order is different depending on the sentence polarity; in the positive, we see a VO (specifically, verb-accusative-dative) order whereas in the negative this word order is instead OV (dative-accusative-verb to be exact). Also, the prohibitive warrants a change from the disjunctive moi to the accusative-dative me, mirroring the situation in the declarative.

Another example to highlight the variance in negation between imperatives and non-imperatives can be made in Finnish, here with the verb mennä, “to go”:
Table 3.2: the differences between declarative and imperative polarity in Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declarative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td><em>(Sinä) menet nyt kotiin.</em></td>
<td><em>(Sinä) et mene nyt kotiin.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you go/2SG now home/ILL</td>
<td>you NEG/2SG go/STEM now home/ILL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;You’re going home now&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;You’re not going home now&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td><em>Mene nyt kotiin!</em></td>
<td><em>Älæ mene nyt kotiin!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Mene nyt kotiin</td>
<td>Älä mene nyt kotiin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2SG/IMP now home/ILL</td>
<td>NEG/IMP/2SG go/STEM now home/ILL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Go home now!&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Don’t go home now!&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the second person singular negation is *et* for the declarative (and also for the imperative, though for the latter with the additional –*kO* yes/no question marker) and *älæ* for the imperative. Where the word order was affected in French by the negation, it is here a matter of morphology.

Table 3.3: the negation verb in Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>3SG³</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>2PL</th>
<th>3PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declarative</strong>¹</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>et</td>
<td>ei</td>
<td>emme</td>
<td>ette</td>
<td>eivät</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
<td>älä</td>
<td>älköön</td>
<td>älkäämme</td>
<td>älkää</td>
<td>älkööt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optative</strong></td>
<td>ällön</td>
<td>ällös</td>
<td>älköön</td>
<td>älköömme</td>
<td>älköötte</td>
<td>älkööt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹The interrogative form is created by adding the question suffix -*kO*: *enkö tiedä?* "Don’t I know?"

² Heinonen argues that there is a first person singular form as well, being *älkäämi* or *älkääm* for the negation form, although neither Hakulinen et al. (2004) nor Karlsson (2008) mentions this form when addressing the imperative. Its usage is highly archaic and unfamiliar to most native Finnish speakers

³ The third person singular negation is also used to negate the passive

Is it then possible to define what constitutes a sentence type? If we are to accept that, in light of the evidence we’ve been given, imperatives are types of clauses/sentences rather than moods, we will need to know what exactly a sentence type is. Saeed (2009) refers to and modifies the theory put forth by Sadock and Zwicky (1985) to provide the following guidelines:
a. The sentence type should form a system, so that there should be corresponding versions of a sentence in each type.

This means that if there is a declarative sentence like “You speak the truth”, there ought to be an interrogative counterpart like “Do you speak the truth?” and an imperative ditto “Speak the truth!” and, maybe also an optative “may you speak the truth!”

b. Similarly, the types should be mutually exclusive, i.e. there should be no combinations of two sentence type markers in the same sentence.

Sentences cannot be both declarative and interrogative or imperative at the same time. For practical reasons, it is not possible to tell someone what to do and convey truth in one and the same sentence (this however is a matter of discussion, what exactly each clause in a sentence represents when several types are used, for instance whether the subordinate clause in “tell him [that I saw him last night]” is declarative or part of the command in the main clause).

c. As we have noted, there should be a conventional association with a speech act.

This is more straightforward; imperatives are usually associated with commands and requests, interrogatives with questions or inquiries, and declaratives with statements or judgments. Indirect speech acts, as we’ve seen, transcend these boundaries somewhat, but this line of distinction holds quite well for direct speech acts.

What constitutes a sentence type varies from one language to another; while all languages in Europe have declarative, interrogative and imperative speech acts, not all of them allow for optative or potential speech acts, for instance. In Romance languages, the optative or rather its function tends to be expressed in the subjunctive mood, while in Finno-Ugric languages like Finnish and Estonian, the optative is a speech act in its own right however archaic its usage (as mentioned earlier, this is referred to as the jussive in Estonian, although its functions overlap to a great degree with those of the Finnish optative).

In light of all the material accounted for above, it would seem that imperatives are to be discussed as speech acts, and not moods. To quickly recap: Imperatives have an intonation contour, morphology, word order, and/or negation different from other speech acts, and grammatically possess both limitations and possibilities unavailable to declaratives or interrogatives.
So how do non-canonical imperatives correspond to this speech act? As we will see, the reason why we even call these jussive (Palmer, 2001) functions imperatives in the first place is because of their adherence to the features associated with the imperative.

4. The first person plural imperatives

Following the second person imperatives in frequency in the world’s languages is the imperative in the first person plural. Outside of the Germanic and Slavic languages, most languages in Europe feature this personal, inflected form of the imperative, as do many other languages outside of this geographical region. It is sometimes referred to as an inclusive imperative, as a command where the speaker includes himself. Sometimes, this inclusivity is seen as a “I am doing this, and so are you” type of sentiment, and including a second person, the listener, in doing a task would be expected, as this signifies the standard or canonical function of the imperative. If one contrasts this with the exclusive, first person singular, imperative this way, it would make sense to consider this viewpoint. Regardless of how one views it however, the inclusive refers to the imperative functions in the first person plural.

The functionality of this form of the imperative differs somewhat from that of the second person forms. As I am going to illustrate in following subsections, the most common functions it takes are either hortative, voicing a suggestion to the group in which the speaker is included to perform an action, or issuing a command to the group with the reassertion that the speaker himself is going to perform said task, i.e. an inclusive command, thus differentiating the command from that of the second person imperatives.

There are several functions attached to the first person plural imperative expressed differently through means not quite as overt as their grammatical inflection. Sometimes, all that separates an encouraging, hortative first person imperative from an indirect command is super-segmental, the intonation contour and eye contact, for example, as proposed by Aikhenvald (2010), among others. The difference between a statement like “let’s all go have fun at the beach!” and “come on, let’s clean this rotten mess up!” is apparent in the speaker’s attitude through factors such as body language, intonation and tone of voice.
4.1 The forms of the first person plural imperative

One formal feature found in certain languages, Finnish and French for instance, is the representation of this form by the passive present indicative. In Finnish, the passive is used in both the imperative and the indicative in lieu of the first person plural form, in the latter in all tenses. This relation is exemplified below in Table 4.1, demonstrating the verb puhua, “to speak, to talk” together with rakkaus, “love” (which, as always when it is talked about is in the elative case) in the situations where this colloquial construction is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 The passive as an alternative form in Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perfect indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pluperfect indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In French, the impersonal pronoun on is sometimes preferable to the first person plural when voicing suggestions, and provides at other times at least an alternative to this non-canonical
imperative. French is further dissimilar from other Romance languages in that this imperative form is based off the indicative, as opposed to the subjunctive in Spanish, Italian (albeit this is arguable, since the first person plural forms here are the same in the indicative and subjunctive) or Portuguese.

French:

\[\text{Allons-y!}\]

\[\text{Allons-y}\]

go/1PL/IMP-there

“They go there!”

\[\text{On y va!}\]

\[\text{On } y \text{ va}\]

IMPRS there go/3SG/IND

“They go there!” (lit. “one there goes!” and possibly also “thither [to that aforementioned place] it is gone”)

The reason behind the usage of the passive instead of these other forms is to distance the speaker and those he includes in “we” in order to make the suggestion less direct or to remind the party involved that it is in line with the norm, and as such good conduct. This is common in the negative.

\[\text{On (ne) le fait pas!}\]

\[\text{On (ne) le fait pas}\]

IMPRS NEG it do/3SG NEG

“One does not do it!/Let’s not do it!”

The usage of the passive is thus language-specific rather than a trait common to certain language groups. The French example can be contrasted with how this imperative is formed in Spanish, another Romance language, here with the verb \textit{cantar}, “to sing” in the subjunctive mood:
Spanish:

_Cantemos una canción!_

Cantemos una canción
sing/1PL/SBJV a/FEM song!

“Let us sing a song!”

Similarly, the (past) subjunctive is also the basis for the first person plural (but not the singular) imperative in Irish (see Table 5.6 for the paradigm overlap). As Stenson (2008) provides, the past subjunctive is used for indirect commands while the present tense is used for optatives (as it is in several other European languages, such as English and Swedish, give or take the conditional element), but this is just as reliable as an encouragement. In Irish, she adds, this form of the imperative is not commonly used, as opposed to the third person forms, which are.

Irish:

_Cuirimis ceist air!_

Cuirimis ceist air
put/1PL/PAST/SBJV question on/him

“Let’s ask him!” (lit. “let us put a question on him”)

In English, as opposed to other Germanic languages, the device for creating first person plural imperatives has assumed a more grammaticalized form, namely through the _let’s_ particle. This form is defective in that it may only be applied to the verb “to let”; it is grammatically incorrect to render “ask us anything” as *“ask’s anything” or “tell us why” as *“tell’s why”. In comparison, the Swedish equivalent _låt oss_, “let us” or the German _lass uns_ cannot be contracted (to *låt’ss or *lass’ns, respectively) the way English capably and frequently contracts “let us” to “let’s”.

Also, this contraction cannot apply to other persons; while “let them” may be produced as “let ‘em” in casual speech, this practice is generally avoided in written language. Also, any verb will do for this purpose; where *“ask’s anything” is incorrect, “ask ‘em” is acceptable (in casual contexts).
4.2 The hortative functionality of first person plural imperatives

Having said that, what functions can be expected from the first person plural imperative? Perhaps the most common function of the first person imperative is to suggest an action to be brought about. The inclusion of the speaker himself in the imperative also hints to a somewhat optative element, since the speaker in the utterance obviously voices his desire for something to be done.

A sentence like “let’s go to the museum tomorrow”, an utterance of suggestion, contains the desire of the speaker to perform an action, as well as expressing his unwillingness to perform this action alone. Since the action proposed is not an impossible one to perform, one of distant longing, or a plea for or giving of admission, it would not qualify as an optative (or jussive, if distinctions are made) in most European languages. In Turkish however, it is indeed expressed through the optative and not the imperative (and can hence be used in questions, as the optative here is a mood rather than a sentence type):

Turkish:

*Biraz konuş-alım!*

Biraz konuş-alım

a little speak-1PL/OPT

“Let’s have a bit of a chat!”

*Hedeyeleri Mehmet’e göstermeyelim mi?*

Hedeyeleri Mehmet’e göster-me-ye-lim mi

presents Mehmet/to show-NEG-OPT-1PL Q

“Should we not show the presents to Mehmet?/Don’t you want us to show the presents to Mehmet?”

On the other hand, a phrase like “Come on, let’s clean up this mess up” could hardly be interpreted as a form of encouragement to commence a potentially enjoyable activity unless the speaker is ironic, and so comes across more as an inclusive command. Since the action is mutually undesirable, as the speaker’s related tone and/or facial expression, the two elements that specifies the nature of the utterance as either labor or leisure, could further assert, the imperative here is only practical as a command if the action is expected to be performed at all, more so if the speaker has less authority over the listener(s), made indirect by circumlocution.
A third reading which is unrelated to the other two in that the message would be interpretable without taking into account super-segmental information, is that of permission or rather its request. While this is theoretically possible as an interpretation, based on analogy with other personal forms, it is unclear just how productive or grammatically viable speakers of languages where this imperative exists would consider it. Also, in such cases where this function may occur, there may be other elements involved that complement it, such as socially ameliorative words like “please”, for instance. In other words, sentences like the ones that follow are highly speculative:

Finnish:

7 Olev hyvä ja menkäämme, emme halua jäädä täällä!
Ole hyvä ja men-kää-mme emme halua jäädä täällä
be/IMP/2SG good and go-IMP-1PL NEG-1PL want/STEM stay/INF here
“Please let us go, we don’t want to stay here!”

Irish:

7 Canaimis, le do thoil!
Canaimis, le do thoil
sing/1PL/IMP with 2SG/POS will
“Please, let us sing!” (lit. “Let us sing, with your will!”)

5. The first person singular, third person and passive imperatives

The functions of the first person singular, third person and passive imperatives are on some levels more akin to the canonical imperative-as-command than is the first person plural. However, among the multiple functions assumed by third person forms, most are nothing like the commands that we’d expect from imperatives, so while they are more “imperative” than the first person plural, they are far from canonical in this regard.

A handful of languages allow for the imperative to be in the first person singular, where it is used as an appeal for permission; using it as a command here would be redundant, as the speaker is always control of his own actions and needn’t tell himself what to do. This situation may be clarified through illustration of its usage in Irish:
Irish:

*Ithim bia*

Ithim  bia

eat/1SG/IMP  food

“I must have some food”/”Let me have some food!”

The first person singular is a rather uncommon form. Functionally, it is more akin to the third person imperatives than to the inclusive first person plural, being a request for permission rather than a suggestion or encouragement for action. The jussive functions of the third person and passive/impersonal forms described in this section are thus attributable to the first person singular as well.

There is one function that third person, first person singular and impersonal imperatives saliently occupy, namely the jussive. Exceedingly few languages in Europe have what can be considered a true jussive mood or sentence type on par with the imperative. The same can be said about the optative mood (“may X happen”), which is subsumed under the declarative, and expressed (most often) through the subjunctive mood. In a small number of languages however, the optative coincides in part with the imperative, where it forms the non-canonical third person and sometimes also impersonal imperatives. One such language is Finnish, where the optative is disconnected from the declarative without merging wholly with any other sentence type.

In table 5.1 below, I demonstrate how the verb *ajatella*, “to think” together with *sitä* (the partitive of *se*, “it”) manifests in different sentence types in Finnish.

While the positive column offers little information in isolation, the negative column is more comprehensive. As shown in Table 3.3, Finnish uses one negation verb, which in declarative and interrogative is the same in all moods, conjugated only for person, and another verb to negate imperatives and optatives (a feature shared with Estonian and Sami languages). This verb coincides in form in the third person imperatives and optatives as *älköön* (singular) and *älkööt* (plural) but is otherwise different and contingent on the sentence type. Finnish, along with other Finnic and Sami languages, sets itself apart in this respect in Europe, as it does not subsume the optative under neither the declarative sentence type nor any other. While its form in the third person singular and plural is the same as those of the imperative, all other forms are different. Note that the third person forms, while identical in form, are

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3 The optative and imperative are separate in non-third person forms in Finnish
different in function; the optative expresses a wish for something to come about, while the imperative addresses a resignation or appeal for permission.

Table 5.1 Sentence types in Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declarative</strong></td>
<td>Ajattelit sitä.</td>
<td>Ette ajatellut sitä.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think/PAST/2PL it/PART</td>
<td>NEG/2PL think/PRC it/PART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>”You thought about it”</td>
<td>”You did not think about it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interrogative</strong></td>
<td>Ajattelittekö sitä?</td>
<td>Etekö ajatellut sitä?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think/PAST/2PL/Q it/PART</td>
<td>NEG/2PL/Q think/PRC it/PART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>”Did you think about it?”</td>
<td>”Didn’t you think about it?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
<td>Ajatelkaa sitä!</td>
<td>Älkää ajatelko sitä!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think/IMP/2SG it/PART</td>
<td>NEG/IMP/2SG think/OPT/NEG it/PART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>”Think about it!”</td>
<td>”Don’t think about it!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optative</strong></td>
<td>Ajatelkootte sitä!</td>
<td>Älköötte ajatelko sitä!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think/OPT/2PL it/PART</td>
<td>NEG/OPT/2PL think/OPT/NEG it/PART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>”May you think about it!”</td>
<td>”May you not think about it!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another language in which this variance of negations is found is Irish, where the difference between negations is even greater than in Finnish. The following table might shed some light on this, where the verb glan “to clean” is used. All the verbs are in the present tense.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declarative</strong></td>
<td><em>Glanann sí.</em></td>
<td><em>Ni glannan sí.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glannann sí</td>
<td>Ni ghlannan sí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clean/PRES/IND she</td>
<td>NEG clean/PRES/IND she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“She cleans”</td>
<td>“She doesn’t clean”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interrogative</strong></td>
<td><em>An nglannan sí?</em></td>
<td><em>Nach nglannan sí?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An nglannan sí</td>
<td>Nach nglannan sí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q clean/PRES/IND she</td>
<td>Q/NEG clean/PRES/IND she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Does she clean?”</td>
<td>“Doesn’t she clean?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
<td><em>Glanadh sí!</em></td>
<td><em>Ná glanadh sí!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glanadh sí!</td>
<td>Ná glanadh sí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clean/3SG/IMP she</td>
<td>NEG/IMP clean/3SG/IMP she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Let her clean!”</td>
<td>“Don’t let her clean!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optative</strong></td>
<td><em>Go glana sí!</em></td>
<td><em>Nár glana sí!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go glana sí!</td>
<td>Nár glana sí!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GO clean/3SG/PRES/SBJV she</td>
<td>NEG/SBJV clean/3SG/PRES/SBJV she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“May she clean!”</td>
<td>“May she not clean!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The negation pattern from one speech act to another is as follows: the declarative uses the independent negative article *ni* in all tenses as well as in the conditional, the interrogative the dependent negative article *nach* (which, as an aside, is also used to negate subordinating conjunctions), again in all tenses, while the imperative uses the *ná* negation and the optative the negation *nár*. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the past subjunctive, the basis for the imperative, does not share any negations with the present subjunctive, the basis for the optative, despite the superficial difference being only that of temporal distinction.

So the difference between Finnish and Irish is that while the optative in Irish is subsumed under the present subjunctive, which fills other functions in addition to expressing optativity, it is more independent (and functionally more specialized) in Finnish.

Not all languages have an overlap between the optative and the imperative. One language in which this overlap does not occur is Albanian, which, while only presenting the second person forms in the imperative, possesses a full paradigm for optatives in both the present and perfect:
Table 5.3 The imperative and optative paradigms of the verb çoj, “to send” in Albanian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2P</td>
<td>ço</td>
<td>çoni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytic forms of the optative</th>
<th>Present active</th>
<th>Present mediopassive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P çofsha</td>
<td>çofshim</td>
<td>u çofsha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P çofsh</td>
<td>çofshi</td>
<td>u çofsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P çoftë</td>
<td>çofshin</td>
<td>u çoftë</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthetic forms of the optative</th>
<th>Present perfect active</th>
<th>Present perfect mediopassive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P paça çuar</td>
<td>paçim çuar</td>
<td>qofsha çuar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P paç çuar</td>
<td>paçi çuar</td>
<td>qofsh çuar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P pastë çuar</td>
<td>paçin çuar</td>
<td>qoftë çuar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Third person imperatives

One might argue whether third person imperatives are imperatives at all. There are several points to take into consideration, which I will attempt to elucidate.

Semantically, to ascribe their function as optative would not be incorrect, since the speaker does not directly order the subject so much as expresses a wish that something is to be done by someone else (albeit sometimes with the intention that the listener is to pass that command on to the subject of the third person imperative in question; a chain of command Aikhenvald (2010) calls imperative-by-proxy). But this only rules out the possibility that these forms are canonical, and we already know that they aren’t.

However, this only accounts for one function, and there are other functions in the third person forms that are less optative, at least if seen from a functional viewpoint. One such thing is the usage of the third person imperative to nullify a sanction imposed on the subject(s), i.e. to let someone do something that they previously were not allowed to do:

Menkööt kauppaan, jos he haluavat!

Menkööt kauppaan jos he haluavat
go/3PL/IMP store/ILL if they want/3PL

“Let them go to the store if they want to!”
This function arguably is more imperative, since it basically means, in paraphrase, “if they want to go to the store, you are not to prevent them”. But then the counterargument would be that the addressee is the listener, and so it is not a third person imperative at all, if one looks under the surface. The above example can be rephrased thusly:

Anna heidän mennä kauppaan, jos he haluavat!
Anna heidän mennä kauppaan jos he haluavat
give/2SG/IMP 3PL/ACC go/1INF store/ILL if they want/3PL
“Allow them to go to the store if they want to!”

The message is clearer here, the speaker’s intention more obvious, albeit at the cost of economy of speech (which is by no means uncommon in paraphrases). In substituting the second person imperative for the third person form, the addressee becomes openly identifiable as the listener. This kind of periphrastic imperative is common in the languages of Europe, for most parts done with the verb “to let” or “to give”; this is further addressed in section 5.3.

Interpreting the third person forms as a form of resignation or allowance is arguably the most frequent in Finnish.

Okei, menkööt kauppaan; en välitä.
okei menkööt kauppaan en välitä
okay go/3PL/IMP store/ILL NEG/1SG care
“Okay, let them go to the store; I don’t care.”

This fact aside, it is evident in Finnish that the third person imperatives are noticeably differentiated from the other two persons on a syntactic level. Where the subject in the first and second person is embedded as it were in the verbal form (although the first person plural carries a first person plural ending, the actual subject is omitted and adding it to the phrase would be syntactically odd), in the third person imperatives, the recipient of the order can be overtly mentioned if the listener needs further indication to whom the imperative is directed, especially in the case of a specific referent. If context provides sufficient background however, the subject may be omitted, which is often the case when the subject would be referred to by the pronoun hän (if singular) or he (if plural), which in Finnish doesn’t provide any additional information anyway, since the pronouns are gender-neutral.
It ought to be noted that while the third person imperative here is viewed from a Finnish perspective, other languages in other language families view these imperative functions similarly, such as Irish, one of the few European, and to separate it from Finnish one of the few Indo-European, languages with personal distinctions in all six persons as well as the impersonal form. The examples are glossed in their subjunctive correspondences to illuminate the difference; both are to be considered imperatives. Regard the following:

Irish:

(Go) fantar anseo; tá sé go fuar amuigh!

(Go) fantar anseo tá sé go fuar amuigh
GO wait/IMPRS/PRES/SBJV here is it GO cold outside
‘Let one wait here/let it be waited here; it is cold outside.’

Labhraíodh sí liom!

Labhraíodh sí liom
speak/3SG/PAST/SBJV she with/me
‘She is to speak with me/let her speak to me!’

The go particle preceding the adjective fuar is unrelated to the go preceding the present subjunctive; in Irish, the go particle is used in front of certain predicatives (its usage is irregular), and in subordinating conjunctions. It also denotes the prepositions “to”, “till” and “until”. See Stenson (2008) for more information on the usage of go.

As is evident in these languages, the forms of the third person imperatives overlap with other moods or speech acts, that is the past subjunctive (Irish; Ó Siadhail 1995; Stenson 2008; Ó’Baoill in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010:273-91)) the optative (Finnish; Karlsson 2008 and Turkish; Göksel and Kerslake 2005) or the jussive (Estonian; Erelt 2002; Erelt and Metslang 2004). These forms and subsequent paradigms, demonstrated below in their entirety, may be considered imperatives on virtue of their directive character (however indirect they actually are), and do not fit the definitional framework of the optative.

Illustrated below are the forms of the third person imperatives in Finnish, Estonian and Irish. The sample verb here is “to walk”, its equivalent infinitive form being in Finnish kävellä (verbal stem kävele-), kõndima (verbal stem kõndi-) in Estonian and siúil (verbal stem siúl-) in Irish. Words in the tables are italicized where their forms overlap.
Table 5.4: Forms of the imperative and active optative in Finnish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>3SG</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>2PL</th>
<th>3PL</th>
<th>Passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>kävele</td>
<td>kävelköön</td>
<td>kävelkäämme</td>
<td>kävelkää</td>
<td>kävelkööt</td>
<td>käveltäköön</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>kävellön</td>
<td>kävellös</td>
<td>kävelköön</td>
<td>kävelköömme</td>
<td>kävelköötte</td>
<td>kävelkööt</td>
<td>käveltäköön¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The passive imperative is based off the third person singular passive optative.

Table 5.5: Forms of the imperative and present jussive in Estonian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>3SG</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>2PL</th>
<th>3PL</th>
<th>IMPRS¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>könni</td>
<td>köndigu</td>
<td>köndigem</td>
<td>könide</td>
<td>köndigu</td>
<td>könnitagu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>ma köndigu</td>
<td>sa köndigu</td>
<td>ta köndigu</td>
<td>me köndigu</td>
<td>te köndigu</td>
<td>nad köndigu</td>
<td>könnitagu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The impersonal is sometimes also referred to as the passive.

Table 5.6: Forms of the imperative and active past subjunctive in Irish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>3SG¹</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>2PL</th>
<th>3PL</th>
<th>Autonomous²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>siúlaim</td>
<td>siúil</td>
<td>siúladh sé/sí</td>
<td>siúlaimis</td>
<td>siúlaigí</td>
<td>siúlaidís</td>
<td>siúltaí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST/SBJV</td>
<td>siúlainn</td>
<td>siúltá</td>
<td>siúladh sé/sí</td>
<td>siúlaimis</td>
<td>siúladh</td>
<td>siúlaidís</td>
<td>siúltaí</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The third person singular forms in all moods require overt mention of the subject, whether pronoun, noun or proper noun.
² The passive voice is not recognized as part of Irish grammar, but is expressed through, and subsequently called, the autonomous (i.e. impersonal) form.
³ The autonomous imperative is the same in form as the present subjunctive and present indicative.

The situation in Estonian needs some elaboration. As table 5.5 suggests, the forms of the third person singular and plural are identical and as such subject to ambiguity. However, context can contribute to disambiguate this to some degree, and as in Finnish, overt mention of the subject in the third person imperative is not as much a do-not as it is in the other persons (in fact, it is quite common that the subject here is explicitly pointed out). In these cases, the forms of the imperative and jussive not only partially overlap, but are identical, although here there is less room for ambiguity (and if there is no context to disambiguate, the two are functionally similar enough that context might not be needed to begin with; still, some examples to clarify the point would be helpful):
Estonian:

(Ta/nad) kõndigu minu kaubanduskeskusesse!

he/she / they walk/3SG/IMP 1SG/GEN shopping mall

"Let him/her/them walk into my shopping mall!"

The first example is intentionally pre-interpreted as the jussive and the second example as the imperative. The difference in the functional analysis is evident; in the first example, the jussive does not bear a personal marker. This, as we know from table 5.5 is due to the fact that it does not conjugate after person, meaning that the subject must consequentially be explicitly mentioned. The only vagueness here is whether the subject ta is male or female (provided the subject is a single person).

The second example has its subject left out, and the imperative is marked in the third person, since unlike with the jussive paradigm, imperatives in Estonian vary formally depending on person (this variation is generally true in all languages, at least in Europe). However, here exists not only vagueness of gender, but also an ambiguity of person; does the imperative concern a male or female or even a number of people? Mentioning the subject here might be necessary after all. The only difference, it seems, between the third person forms in the jussive and the corresponding forms in the imperative is how much mention the subject needs, which, if one wants to avoid ambiguity, may very well be of importance.

5.2 Passive imperatives

There exists in certain languages an imperative form not only for the third person singular and plural, but for the passive imperative as well, typically inheriting their forms from the same place. In Finnish, the passive particle -(t)jA- is affixed to the verbal stem followed by the third person singular active optative ending -kOOn to form the passive imperative. So, for example, we end up with the following, using the word kysyä, “to ask”, as an example:
Finnish:

\[(Hän)\text{ kysyöön kysymyksiä!}\]

\[(Hän)\text{ kysy-köön kysymyks-iä}\]

he/she ask-3SG/IMP questions-PART/PL

‘Let him/her ask the questions!’

\[Kysyttäköön sitä!\]

\[Kysy-täköön sitä\]

ask-PASS/IMP it/PART

‘Let it be asked!’

As opposed to the third person forms, the passive imperative may not, for obvious reasons, take an overt subject. Its optative character is arguably even more evident than is the third person forms, solely on the distinction that here, the expected manipulatee of the speech act is left unspecified, and the speaker expresses his desire that something is to be done, regardless of whoever actually performs said action.

\[Tehtäköön jotakin!\]

\[Tehtäköön jotakin\]

do/PASS/IMP something!

"Let something be done!"

Another way of rendering this message, somewhat closer to how it is realized in English, would be:

\[Joku tehköön jotakin!\]

\[Joku tehköön jotakin\]

somebody do/3SG/IMP something

“Somebody do something!”

In form, they are at their most candidly non-canonical. The passive together with the third person imperatives in Finnish coincide with the corresponding forms in the optative (the passive imperative coinciding with the passive third person singular optative).

As such, passive imperatives are almost universally optative in their production. If there is no addressee whatsoever, the utterance as a command or direction is lost to the wind, as
compliance cannot be expected without a definite manipulee. As mentioned in Table 5.4, the passive imperative is derived from the optative, just as the impersonal imperative in Estonian derives from the jussive and the impersonal imperative in Irish comes from the present subjunctive, all of which are functionally wishful. In Finnish, one could pose the following wish through the passive imperative:

\[
\text{Juotakoon tämän kahvin; en halua sitä.}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Juo-takoon} & \text{tämän} & \text{kahvin} & \text{en} \\
\text{drink-PASS/IMP} & \text{this/ACC} & \text{coffee/ACC} & \text{NEG/1SG}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{halua} & \text{sitä} \\
\text{want/IND} & \text{it/PART}
\end{array}
\]

“May/let this coffee be drunk (or finished); I do not want it.”

Or in the Indo-European family, the impersonal imperative can be demonstrated with Irish, one of few languages, possibly the only one, in this family in Europe that allows this construction.

Irish:

\[
\text{In ainm Dé, déantar an fírinne!}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{In} & \text{ainm} & \text{Dé} & \text{déantar} \\
\text{name} & \text{God/GEN} & \text{make/IMPRS/IMP} & \text{the}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{fírinne} & \text{truth} \\
\text{} & \text{}
\end{array}
\]

“In God’s name, let the truth be spoken!”

The imperative can be contrasted with the present subjunctive, producing a slight difference in form but a large difference in meaning, which turns the command into a less direct (and less directive) wish:

\[
\text{In ainm Dé, go déantar an fírinne!}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{In} & \text{ainm} & \text{Dé} & \text{go} \\
\text{name} & \text{God/GEN} & \text{GO} & \text{make/IMPRS/PRES/SBJV}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{déantar} & \text{an} & \text{fírinne} & \text{the} \\
\text{make/IMPRS/IMP} & \text{the} & \text{truth} & \text{}
\end{array}
\]

“In God’s name, may the truth be spoken!”

In keeping with the imperative, what is to be done is arguably more important than the identity of whoever does it, and if a directive speech act is made to elicit action, this is to be expected. Resignations, admissions, wishes and curses and even indirect orders are all plausible as passive or impersonal imperatives, whereas mutual suggestion, direct commands
and requests for permission are not as viable in this form. This Irish aptly demonstrates, as its impersonal imperative is created from the optative-like present subjunctive as opposed to the indirect commission of the past subjunctive, from which the language gets the third person forms (along with the first person plural) of the imperative.

5.3 Polite and indirect commands

If we put all construal of optativity aside, the role of the third person imperative in Irish would be to express an indirect command, but there is another, related, function that in Europe is, I daresay, more common, namely that of the moderated or polite command.

Romance languages like Spanish and Italian use the subjunctive mood to present a command or request as less forceful or direct than one made through the imperative. While this could rightfully be called an indirect command, as the order posed through an indirect speech act rather than a direct one, it is not put forth by an imperative by proxy, and so it is prudent to keep these two terms separate for now.

In Spanish and Italian, the third person imperative as a polite command is preferable to the second person form when addressing a person whom the speaker considers being superior in address, and is a good default to use with people with whom your familiarity is uncertain. The form used in this case is that of the present subjunctive, which in Italian and Portuguese (although not in Spanish) is also used for the first person plural.

Portuguese:

Fale/falem comigo!

Fale / falem comigo
speak/3SG/SBJV speak/SBJV/3PL with/me
“Talk to me [please]!”

Italian (Squartini in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010:239)):

lo legga/leggano qui!

lo legga / leggano qui
it read/SBJV/3SG read/SBJV/3PL here
“Read it here (please)!”

This function of the third person imperative is also found in Hungarian, which sets it apart from how other Finno-Ugric languages like Finnish and Estonian, which treats the third
person form as a suppletive, indirect command or wish. Hungarian lists all non-declarative, non-interrogative speech acts under the “Behavioral” paradigm, which encompasses the imperative, hortative, prohibitive (negative imperative), dishortative (negative hortative), admonitive (which is somewhat disputed) and supplicative (in de Groot’s (Rothstein and Thieroff, 2010:551-68) opinion doubtful as a separate locution, all marked with what de Groot calls the Subjunctive, formed by the affix –j, giving imperatives and jussives (to use Palmer’s denotation) an analogical common ground.

Hungarian (de Groot in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010: 551-68)):

\[ \text{Várja Pált!} \]
\[ \text{Vár-j-a Pált!} \]
\[ \text{wait-DEC/SBJV-3SG Paul} \]
“Wait for Paul!”

Hungarian may use the supplicative form \textit{hadd} to formulate a speech act in the third person (and in fact all persons) by combining it with the subjunctive, either with the definite or indefinite forms, to create something more reminiscent of other Finno-Ugric languages:

\[ \text{Hadd beszéljenek tovább!} \]
\[ \text{Hadd beszél-j-enek tovább} \]
\[ \text{let/DEC/SBJV/2SG talk-DEC/SBJV-3PL further} \]
“Please let them speak further!”

5.4 \textit{Periphrastic imperatives}
As I mentioned earlier, the periphrastic “imperative” is certainly not uncommon in European languages. Germanic languages do this to a greater or lesser extent (English, as we’ve seen, uses this form to approximate most non-canonical imperatives not found in the language), using the verb “to let” (which in German is \textit{lassen}, in Swedish \textit{att låta} and in Dutch \textit{laaten}, to give a few examples).

Another group of languages particularly prolific in the usage of such analytic constructions are Slavic languages, especially Polish, Sorbian (spoken in Lusatia in the east of Germany) and the Balkan Slavic languages. An example in Russian where the verb \textit{давать (davát’)}, “to give/to allow” is frequently used for these constructions:
Russian (courtesy of Hansen in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010:325-41)):

дай спою́ (daváj spojú)!

dáváj спо́ю

give/2SG/IMP sing/1SG

“Let me sing!”

In Polish, inflected imperatives exist only in the first person plural apart from the second person forms (singular and plural), with the third person imperatives, polite (also called distant by Hansen in Rothstein and Thieroff (2010:342-57)) second person forms and the first person singular using the particle niech together with the present tense of the imperfective verb in question. A consensus regarding these non-canonical forms as being actual imperatives has not yet completely been established, and so I will not overextend myself to elaborate too much on this, but suffice to say that if they conform to the boundaries inherent to imperatives (not being able to be in any other tense or aspect, for instance), then they are, despite their analytic form, imperatives. These non-canonical imperatives can express orders, desires (may he live a hundred years), permissions (have a seat, if you like), advice (sell your car, then you’ll have the money you need) and requests (let me go the cinema).

6. Summary and conclusion

What can thus be said about non-canonical imperatives, based on what we’ve seen? What functions are generally observed in the languages of Europe, and how are these functions conveyed formally? Also, there exists no consensus on what these non-second person forms are to be called, so if they aren’t imperatives in the sense of the word, then what are they?

The first person plural, inclusive imperative, also called the hortative (or jussive, in Palmer’s definition) exists in most languages, or at least in most sub-branches of the Indo-European language family (as well as the Finno-Ugric languages), and is possibly the most common non-canonical imperative (as per Aikhenvald’s hierarchy). There are two major functions of this form, obviously related to each other since as I’ve argued that the only differentiating factor is often super-segmental (i.e. pertaining to tone of voice, intonation contour and/or body language) as these are non-vocal ways of projecting your attitude towards the situation at hand, attitude which in turn tells the listeners how to interpret the statement.
• Mutual encouragement to perform any given action (generally if the speaker is positive towards its performance)
• Indirect order to carry out a task (where the speaker usually views the situation more negatively and where he is included as an agent)
• Arguably, the first person plural form can signify request for permission the way the first person singular form can, though I do not know of any language in Europe where this is done with any particular frequency. The possibility of such interpretation is certainly there though

This form may have its own dedicated form (to what extent one would consider it dedicated is subject to discussion, but the idea here is that it does not coincide in form with the first person plural in any other mood in either the declarative or interrogative, if the language in question formally discriminates between these two speech acts) or have a formal correspondence in another mood, such as the subjunctive and/or the indicative.

The third person forms, as well as the first person singular form, exist in a few of those languages in which there is a first person plural imperative (with the exception of Turkish, none of the languages in Europe have a third person form but no first person plural form, and this is in agreement with the Aikhenvald hierarchy of canonicity). The functions of the third person form are quite diverse and allow for a number of analytical possibilities.

• Jussive functions (this is certain in languages where the third person forms coincide with optatives or jussives that express just this)
• Indirect commands, either as non-confrontational (such as imperatives-by-proxy) or polite requests, where deference and lowered expectations of compliance are due
• Requests of permission and its corresponding authorization (here, as opposed to the situation with the first person plural, it is attested and functionally prolific)

Lastly concerning forms is the impersonal or passive (or in Irish the autonomous) form of the non-canonical imperative. This form exists only in a handful of the languages in the samples. Languages having this form tend to also have the third person forms as well, and while there is a functional overlap between the forms, certain functions of the third person forms are not available here.
- Resignation and admission of the speaker towards the target and action (as in “let it happen; what do I care?”)
- Optative or jussive functions (“may it be done” or “let the truth be spoken”; again, as with third person imperatives, this is especially noticeable in languages where this form corresponds to an optative counterpart)
- Indirect commands, where the speaker only hints at the completion or performance of the action, without actually mentioning the performer (either by willful omission or by indifference to the identity of the agent(s)). This is very similar to the optative function however and may ultimately only be a matter of interpretation
- Request for an event to be brought about. This reading is similar to the optative or indirect command functions above, with the difference that it implies that the listener is in authority to allow said action to be performed. Again, this is subject to interpretation

Now, in light of the information, Aikhenvald’s hierarchy can be expanded somewhat for the benefit of detail, to account for the variation of certain elements and the inclusion of the impersonal/passive forms.

Table 6.1: Personal hierarchy and canonicity of imperatives (expanded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-canonical values</th>
<th>Canonical values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG and/or 1P exclusive</td>
<td>Impersonal/passive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ In Turkish, the first person forms, singular and plural, are not imperatives. This is in spite of the fact that third person imperatives exist in this language; as such, Turkish constitutes an exception to this hierarchy.

Thus to elaborate on the earlier hierarchy, if the language has the impersonal or passive imperative, it also has the third person plural, which in turn means that it has the third person singular (Sorbian has a third person singular form of the imperative but not the corresponding plural, for instance). First person singular forms, as we’ve seen, are exceedingly (and relatively, in respect to other personal forms) rare in Europe.

As for the term “imperative”, it is established that it refers to a speech act, rather than a mood (although many if not most grammars choose to regard the imperative as a mood on
formal grounds, which is demonstratively invalid). Whether some of its forms correspond to those of certain moods (predominantly the subjunctive) or not, the imperative is a speech act since the purpose of making an imperative utterance is to elicit action (this would be the canonical use of it) rather than convey or request information. The unique limitations imposed on imperatives as well as the few features that it may have in exclusion compared to other speech acts makes calling it a mood highly dubious.

The reason behind why we call first and third person and impersonal forms imperatives to begin with is because they adhere to the same principles, to the same restrictive framework as canonical imperatives do. For instance, the subjunctive in Spanish may form the first person plural imperative, but it may not, as opposed to the subjunctive in subordinate clauses (where it complements the expression of doubt in the main clause, to name but one function) be posed in the imperfect or future subjunctive and retain the same function at a temporal variation. The reason why we call them non-canonical is because where all languages have the ability to directly command someone through the second person imperatives, the first and third person forms, where they exist, do not generally allow for this canonical function. So lastly, I would close by remarking that irrespectively of one’s term for these non-canonical, these first and third person and impersonal imperatives, whether jussive, hortative or by any other name, they are for all intents and purposes imperatives.
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