Necessity, Directives, and Three Types of Imperatives

Introduction: This study investigates properties of three types of imperatives in Japanese: Morphological Imperatives (MIs), Dictionary form Imperatives (DIs), and Yooni Imperatives (YIs). In Japanese, dictionary (i.e. end) form sentences and yooni-sentences can represent ‘directive’ speechacts, just like typical imperative form imperatives (= MIs), as exemplified in (1).

(1) a. Hayaku ik-e! ‘Go quickly!’ [Morphological Imperatives (MIs)]
   quickly go-IMP

   b. Hayaku ik-u! ‘Go quickly!’ [Dictionary form Imperatives (DIs)]
   quickly go-DIC

   c. Hayaku ik-u-yooni! ‘Go quickly!’ [Yooni Imperatives (YIs)]
   quickly go-PRES-YOONI

What is the difference between MIs, DIs, and YIs? Specifically, (i) how do they semantically differ from one another? and (ii) what makes the difference between these three imperatives? In the current study, I argue that the difference depends on whether they encode weak necessity modal (Silk 2016) and directive operator (Kaufmann 2012) or not.

Motivating the proposal: I motivate the proposal in terms of (a) the property of weak readings, (b) embeddability, (c) addressee-orientation, and (d) immediacy. First, it has been accepted that English imperatives can pattern with ‘weak’ necessity readings (e.g. Open the window, if you are hot! [permission]) unlike ‘must’, which can only pattern with ‘strong’ necessity readings (e.g. #You must open the window, if you are hot!) (Portner 2007). Similarly to English imperatives, both MIs and YIs can pattern with weak readings, while DIs do not. Second, both MIs and YIs can be embedded in an indirect quotation (cf. Saito & Haraguchi 2012) whereas DIs cannot; the embedded DIs cannot be interpreted as an imperative but can only be interpreted as an assertion. Third, in MIs and YIs, the subject can be co-indexed not only with the addressee (2nd person), but also with the 3rd person. On the other hand, in DIs, the subject can be co-indexed only with the 2nd person addressee. Finally, while it is felicitous for the speaker to use MIs and DIs in immediate (or urgent/pressing) contexts (i.e. situations where the speaker gives the addressee an immediate order), it is infelicitous for him/her to use YIs in such contexts. How can we capture these differences?

Proposal: I propose that: (i) DIs clause-externally represent a directive operator (‘dir’), which enforces the presuppositions of directive speech-acts, and derives the performative effect of directive imperatives (Kaufmann 2012); (ii) YIs clause-internally encode a weak necessity modal (‘□wn’), which is roughly equivalent to “ought” or “should” in their interpretation (Medeiros 2013, Silk 2016), and; (iii) MIs encode the both. The LF of the three imperatives (in directive contexts) are given in (2).

(2) a. [SpeechActP dir [TP(or ModalP) □ wn [ p: [ ... v_imp ... ]]]] [LF of MIs]

   b. [SpeechActP dir [TP [ p: [ ... v_dic ... ]]]] [LF of DIs]

   c. [SpeechActP [TP(or ModalP) □ wn [ p: [ ... v_yooni ... ]]]] [LF of YIs]

Analysis: First, unlike MIs and YIs, DIs cannot pattern with weak readings because they do not encode □wn. Second, since MIs and YIs contain □wn clause-internally, they can induce imperative-like meanings even when they are embedded. On the other hand, since DIs do not encode □wn, they cannot be embedded in indirect discourse with imperative meanings (Note that dir operates at the level of Speech-Act Phrase (Speas & Tenny 2003, a.o.) and thus not be embedded). Third, the subject in DIs can be co-indexed only with the 2nd person since they must come with dir, which enforces the presupposition of the existence of addressee. In contrast to DIs, since the existence of dir is not a necessary condition for realization of MIs and YIs, their subjects can be co-indexed not only with the addressee, namely the 2nd person, but also with the 3rd person. Finally, the fact that both MIs and DIs can occur in immediate contexts, whereas YIs cannot is explained by assuming that the existence of dir enables sentences to be immediate directives.

Conclusion: The current study is theoretically important because it indicates that differences among various types of imperatives can be captured by focusing on the two operators, namely dir and □wn.