

7. Imperatives and imperative speech acts

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I. The form-meaning mismatch

- Imperatives express different but related speech acts such as commands, warnings, requests, advice or pleas, among others.
- (1) a. Stand at attention! (command)
b. Don't touch the hot plate! (warning)
c. Hand me the salt, please! (request)
d. Take the pills for a week! (advice)
e. Please, lend me the money! (plea)
- Since these different usages lack a clear morpho-syntactic marking, imperatives are a 0:1 form-meaning mismatch.

Question → Can all different speech acts be derived from one underlying semantic representation (imperative sentence mood)?

II. Motivation

- If imperatives are an example of a 0:1 form-meaning mismatch, then typical speech act indicating devices such as particles, intonation, and gestures are expected not to be grammatical (sentence-type) markers.
- Recently, competing theories of a unified semantics of imperative sentence mood have been developed (Portner 2007; Condoravdi & Lauer 2012; Kaufmann 2012; von Stechow & Iatridou 2017).
- However, first experimental studies show that prosodic and gestural markers play an important role in speech act detection (Hellbernd & Sammler 2016; Domaneschi et al. 2017; Brentari et al. 2018).
- The integration of gestural markers as speech-act indicating devices provide new evidence for (i) theories of imperative mood and (ii) new semantic models of visual meaning.

III. Research questions

- What is the status of manual and nonmanual gestural markers of imperative speech acts (i.e. pragmatic speech markers vs. grammatical sentence type markers)?
- Do we have evidence that these markers undergo a specific process of pragmaticization or grammaticalization?
- Do these markers provide evidence for a specific theory of the meaning of imperative sentence mood?
- How can these markers be integrated into a multimodal theory of (visual) meaning?

IV. Hypotheses and method

Hypothesis → DGS uses gestural speech act indicating devices to mark imperative speech acts at the semantics/pragmatics interface.

- First step: Evaluation of
 - typological studies on imperatives,
 - semantic theories of imperatives, and
 - empirical studies on lexical, prosodic, and gestural markers of speech acts in spoken and sign languages.
- Second step: Fine-grained description of form and function of imperatives in DGS with a focus on imperative speech acts:
 - Controlled elicitation of imperatives
 - Corpus-study (Hamburg DGS corpus)
 - Experimental study on the impact of manual and non-manual markers
- Third step: Development of an analysis of the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of imperatives in DGS, the grammaticalization of gestural markers, and more generally a cross-modal semantics of 'visual' meaning.



Figure 1: Video stills showing different facial expressions used as speech act indicating devices

V. Connections to other research projects

- Type of form-meaning mismatch: **8, 9** (0:1 form-meaning mismatch)
- Empirical domain: **1, 4, 10** (language variation across modalities)
- Content: **1, 2, 6, 10, 11**
- Methods: **1, 3, 6, 9** (experiments)
virtually all (corpus study)

VI. Possible follow-up studies

- Manual and nonmanual markers of different kinds of questions in DGS
- Speech acts and co-speech gestures in spoken languages
- The processing of speech act indicating gestures across modalities