

**EMBEDDING IMPERATIVES**  
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**1. Observations**

**1.1. English has instances of embedded imperatives**

It has been claimed that imperatives do not occur in embedded positions (Rivero and Terzi 1995, Platzack and Rosengren 1998, Han 1998, among others). Counterexamples have been pointed out for a small number of languages—e.g. Slovenian, Old Scandinavian (Platzack 2007), Korean (Portner 2007)—but it has been universally assumed that English does not have embedded imperatives. This assumption is supported by data such as (1) and (2). However, (3a) shows that the verb *say* can take an imperative as its object. A similar fact holds in German, as shown by (3b) which is a literal translation of (3a).

- (1) a. Give me the book!  
b. \* I demand that give me the book (Han 2007)
- (2) a. Call Mary!  
b. \* John said that call Mary
- (3) a. John said call Mary  
b. Hans sagte, ruf Maria an

**1.2. English embedded imperatives are not quotations**

Several facts show that imperatives under *say*, such as *call Mary* in (3), are genuine instances of indirect discourse, not quotations. First, deictic elements in embedded imperatives are evaluated with respect to the actual utterance situation. This is not the case with quotations.

- (4) a. John said: "Hey, call my<sub>2</sub> mom!" [2 = John]  
a'. John said call my<sub>2</sub> mom [2 = the actual speaker]  
b. # John said: "Hey, buy that book!" [speaker pointing at a book nearby]  
b'. John said buy that book [speaker pointing at a book nearby]

Second, elements inside a quote cannot associate with a focus-sensitive operator outside the quote. Embedded imperatives do not show this restriction.

- (5) a. # John only said: "Hey, call Mary<sub>F</sub>!" [#  $\forall x((\text{John said: "Call } x!") \rightarrow x=\text{Mary})$ ]  
b. John only said call Mary<sub>F</sub> [ $\checkmark \forall x((\text{John said call } x) \rightarrow x=\text{Mary})$ ]

Third, NPIs inside an embedded imperative can be licensed, to a certain extent, by elements outside of it. This is not possible in the case of quotations.

- (6) a. ? You should relax. No one said read anything.  
b. # You should relax. No one said: "Read anything!"

Finally, (7a) does not imply (7b), but (8a) does imply (8b) (cf. Sudo 2007).

- (7) a. John said: "Call Bill and Mary!"  
b.  $\nrightarrow$  John said: "Call Mary and Bill!"
- (8) a. John said call Bill and Mary  
b.  $\rightarrow$  John said call Mary and Bill

**1.3. English embedded imperatives are not elliptical to-infinitives**

There is evidence that embedded imperatives are not *to*-infinitives with an elided *to*. First, *wh*-movement out of *to*-infinitives is unrestricted, but not out of embedded imperatives.

- (9) a. ?? Who did John say to call at 3pm?  
b. ?? Who did John say call at 3pm?

QR is possible out of *to*-infinitives, but not out of embedded imperatives.

- (10) a. Some professor said to buy every book [ $\exists > \forall, \forall > \exists$ ]  
b. Some professor said buy every book [ $\exists > \forall, \# \forall > \exists$ ]

Finally, negated *to*-infinitives are different from negated embedded imperatives.

- (11) a. John said not to buy the book  
b. John said don't buy the book

**1.4. Requirement on the reported situation: performativity**

Suppose S says to Bill: "John said call Mary." S is **not** being truthful if John's original statement was merely a **description** of an obligation, as in (12a). But S **is** being truthful if John **created** an obligation with his utterance, i.e. if he uttered something like (12b).

- (12) a. "Bill has an obligation to call Mary"  
b. "I hereby declare that Bill must call Mary"

This suggests that what is embedded under *say* must be such that, were it not embedded under *say*, it would be something that creates an obligation, i.e. an imperative. However, the obligation is **not** created when the imperative is embedded.

- (13) a. # Call Mary! But I don't think you should (cf. Ninan 2005)  
b. John said call Mary, but I don't think you should

### 1.5 Restricted distribution

In English (and German), imperatives can only be embedded under *say* and cannot be introduced by *that*.

- (14) a. \* John believed/claimed call Mary  
b. \* John ordered that call Mary

### 2. Proposal

Imperatives – matrix and embedded – are CPs headed by an imperative operator, IMP (Han 2001, Zeijlstra 2007). English *that* cannot be identified with IMP. It follows that verbs which can embed imperatives must satisfy two conditions: (i) their semantics must be compatible with IMP (cf. 14a), and (ii) they must be able to take *that*-less complements (cf. 14b). It also follows that if a language has an overt C that **can** be identified with IMP, the class of imperatives embedding verbs should be larger because these must only satisfy (i). This is the case with e.g. Korean, Slovenian and Vietnamese. For the semantics of IMP, we follow (Schwager 2005, 2006); the IP-complement of IMP contains an explicit subject, *pro* (Potsdam 1998); *pro* has [+2<sup>nd</sup>], the second person feature (Bennis 2007). We assume that LFs contain explicit representation of contexts (Schlenker 1998, 2003), which are tuples of the form <speaker, hearer, conversational background, common ground, time, world>. The definition of IMP is based on Schwager (2005, 2006). The pseudo-LF and simplified truth-conditions of (2a) are given in (15), where only one of the requirements on IMP is explicitly stated (cf. Schwager 2005 for discussion).

- (15) a.  $C^* \lambda c [\text{IMP } c [\text{pro}_{1, \{+2\text{nd}\}} \text{ call Mary}]]$   
b.  $\|(1b)\|$  is defined only if the speaker in  $C^*$  is an authority on all parameters in  $C^*$ . If defined,  $\|(1b)\| = 1$  iff in all ideal worlds accessible from the world of  $C^*$  it holds that the hearer in  $C^*$  calls Mary.

The [+2<sup>nd</sup>] on the *pro* subject presupposes that it denotes the hearer of a context. Whether this context is the actual or the reported one depends on the value of another feature on *pro*, [actual speech act] (cf. Schlenker 2003). It is then expected that languages with embedded imperatives can vary with respect to the interpretation of *pro*, which is indeed the case (e.g. Slovenian *pro* is [+actual speech act], English *pro* is [ $\pm$ actual speech act]). The denotation of *say* and the simplified truth-conditions of (3) are given in (16).

- (16) a.  $\|\text{say}\| = \lambda c_1 \lambda p_{kt} \lambda x_e. \forall c' \in K^{\text{say}}(x, c) [p(c') = 1]$   
b.  $C^* \lambda c_1 \text{ John } \lambda z [z \text{ says } c_1 \lambda c_2 [\text{IMP } \langle z, h(c_2), f(c_2), t(c_2), w(c_2) \rangle \text{ pro}_{5, \{+2\text{nd}\}} [\text{call Mary}]]]$   
c.  $\|(2b)\|$  is defined only if John is an authority in all contexts compatible with what he said in  $C^*$ . If defined  $\|(2b)\| = 1$  iff in all contexts  $c$  compatible with what John said in  $C^*$ , in all the ideal worlds accessible from the world of  $c$  it holds that the hearer in  $c$  (or  $C^*$ ) calls Mary.

An alternative analysis of these facts – inspired by Hooper & Thompson (1973) (cf. Meinunger 2006) – is possible, in which certain verbs provide for an evaluation of their complement clause in a context distinct from the one in which the matrix clause is evaluated. This can be formalized along the lines of (Schlenker 2004).

### 3. Further Work

A correlation between embedded imperatives and the nature of the respective complementizer phrases obtains in English. This should be explored in more detail. Furthermore, analogous limitations on context-shifting attitude verbs have been noticed in languages like Amharic (Schlenker 1998, 2003), Slave, and Zazaki (Anand and Nevins 2004). A further inquiry into this issue should also shed light on why embedded imperatives are not more widely attested in world languages.

### 4. Selected References

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