On the Syntax of Embedded Imperative Clauses in English*

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Abstract

Although imperatives have been considered as a main clause phenomenon in English, we first show that imperatives can occur in a certain subordinate environment. Based on Potsdam's (2007) CP analysis for imperatives, the peripheral hierarchy of embedded and matrix imperatives is examined by the embeddability of several discourse-related items. Our proposal is that embedded imperatives have smaller-sized peripheral hierarchies without topic phrase and speech act phrase as compared to matrix imperatives.

1 Introduction

Since Emonds (1976), a set of syntactic phenomena called main clause phenomena (MCP) have been studied for decades. As the name implies, MCP are typically observed in main clauses.[1] Observable MCP in English include subject-auxiliary inversions (SAI), locative inversions (LI), and imperatives, to name a few. Some examples of such MCP in English are illustrated in (1).

(1) a. Has John fed the cattle this morning? (SAI)
 b. Into the room came a tiny old lady. (LI)
 c. Put the gun down! (Imperatives)

Since the occurrence of these phenomena is limited to main clauses, they are generally disallowed in embedded environments, as evidenced in (2) below.

(2) a. *Mary does not know whether *has John fed the cattle this morning* or not.
 b. *John told his friends that *into the room came a tiny old woman*.
 c. *The police persuaded a drunk man that *put the gun down*.

This study focuses on imperatives such as in (1c) and (2c). The purpose of this study is twofold: to re-examine the embeddability of imperatives and to identify their clause structures along the recent research lines of left periphery (Rizzi 1997, Speas & Tenny 2003, Haegeman 2004). Our main proposal is described in (3) below.

(3) a. In English, imperatives are embeddable.
 b. Compared to matrix imperatives, embedded imperatives have a narrower peripheral structure lacking topic phrase (TopP) and speech act phrase (SAP).

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we will see that English imperatives can be embedded contrary to the standard view that they cannot be embedded. Section 3 reviews Potsdam's (2007) proposal that the structure of imperatives is CP, based on his analysis of negative imperatives. Section 4 examines the peripheral hierarchy of imperatives based on the embeddability of discourse-related items into imperative clauses. Section 5 concludes this study.

2 Embedded Imperatives

English imperatives are characterized by several distinctive grammatical properties, as listed in (4).

(4) a. Imperatives are normally restricted to main clauses.
 b. A 2nd person subject is omissible.
 c. The verb is in the plain form.
 d. In verbal negation, emphatic polarity, and code, supportive *do* is required even in combination with *be*.
 e. Verbal negatives with *you* as subject usually have the order *don't + you*.[2]

(Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 857)

As is clearly stated in (4a), it is generally agreed that imperatives are not embeddable.

   Contrary to this general view, Crnič and Trinh (2009a) (C&T) present several counter examples against nonembeddability of imperatives and argue that imperatives are in fact embeddable. Let us observe C&T's data in (5).

(5) a. John said *call Mary*.

   b. My girlfriend said *don't call her*.

      (C&T 2009a, their (2) and (13); italicized by the author)

The two italicized parts above might not look like embedded imperatives but just quotations embedded by the reporting verb *say*.[3] C&T deny the possibility of regarding them as embedded quotations by providing empirical support for their embedded-imperative analysis. Some sets of their supporting evidence are illustrated in (6).

(6) a. (i) #John$_1$ said: "Hey, call his$_1$ mom."

   (ii) John$_1$ said call his$_1$ mom.

   b. (i)*Who did John say, "Call at three!"

   (ii) Who did John say call at three?

   (C&T 2009a, from their (4), (6), and (7))

(6a-i) sounds strange if *his* within the quote refers to *John*, while (6a-ii) perfectly allows this interpretation. Also, (6b-i) shows that *wh*-movement from inside a quote (i.e., *Call who at three*) is impossible, but in (6b-ii), the movement is possible from an embedded imperative. These differences in the data sets in (6) suggest that the italicized parts in (5) are embedded imperatives rather than direct quotations and embedded imperatives are structurally distinguished from quotations.[4]

3   CP-hypothesis for Imperatives

   In the previous section, we saw that English imperatives are embeddable contrary to the general view that they are not. Next is to investigate what an internal structure of embedded imperatives is like.

   Focusing on one of the inverted word orders in negative imperatives (as described in (4e) above), Potsdam (2007) proposes that the structure of imperatives is CP, just like other clause types such as declaratives or interrogatives. His structure for both a negative imperative (7a) and a negative interrogative (7b) is shown in (7c).

(7) a. Don't you help them!

   b. Don't you help them?

   c.

      (Potsdam 2007: 252)
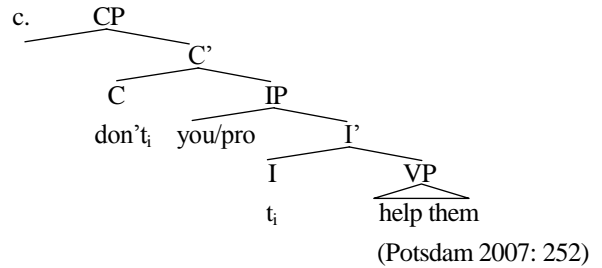
   Scope interactions between negation and universal quantifiers support Potsdam's CP structure for imperatives. As (8) shows, it is known that quantified subjects/objects (subject/object QPs) in declarative clauses may scope over and under negation in I.[5]

(8) a. All the children didn't sleep.

   = Not all of the children slept.   (NEG > ALL)

   = None of the children slept.   (ALL > NEG)

                  (Kuno & Takami 2007: 54–61)

   b. Pat didn't believe every rumor.

   = Pat believed not every rumor.   (NEG > EVERY)

   = Pat believed no rumor.   (EVERY > NEG)

                     (Potsdam 2007: 259)

However, in inverted imperatives, subject/object QPs must take a narrow scope with respect to negation. Contrary to (8), (9) illustrates that a wider scope reading is impossible.

(9) a. Don't everyone expect a raise!

   = Not everyone should expect a raise. (NEG > EVERY)

   ≠ Nobody should expect a raise.   (EVERY > NEG)

                     (Potsdam 2007: 257)

   b. Don't you believe every rumor!

   = Believe not every rumor!   (NEG > EVERY)

   ≠ Believe no rumor!   (EVERY > NEG)

                     (Potsdam 2007: 259)

   Potsdam points out that an anti-CP approach where an additional functional projection FP between IP and VP is assumed in order to host imperative subjects (e.g., Rupp 1999) does not provide a uniform account for the above scope facts in inverted interrogatives and negative imperatives.[6] This is because the differences in the quantifier scope between (8b) and (9b) cannot be predicted correctly by assuming the same internal structure for (8b) and (9b) (i.e., [$_{IP}$ Don't [$_{FP}$ [$_{VP}$ V QP]]]). Alternatively, Potsdam

observes a pattern of scope interactions as found in other constructions with an inverted word order, shown in (10), and then reached the generalization (11) below.

(10) a. [CP Why [C' didn't$_i$ [IP every runner t$_i$ finish]]]?

(NEG > EVERY, *EVERY > NEG)

   b. [CP Only on Fridays [C' doesn't$_i$ [IP everybody t$_i$ come]]].

(NEG > EVERY, *EVERY > NEG)

(Potsdam 2007: 261)

(11) a. Negation in C always takes the widest scope.

   b. *[CP QP$_i$ [CP [C' NEG [IP … t$_i$ …]]]]

(Potsdam 2007: 262)

A negative interrogative in (10a) and a negative preposing sentence in (10b) are both considered to involve I-to-C movement and also show a scope restriction for negation scoping over QPs within IP. Since the same scope restriction is observed in inverted imperatives in (9), there seems to be a high possibility that the structures of inverted imperatives are also based on CP and their scope restriction is attributed to the more general constraint on negation in C.

4 Periphery of (Embedded) Imperatives

So far, we have reviewed Potsdam's (2007) CP-hypothesis for imperatives. Potsdam mainly discusses inverted imperatives in matrix clauses and does not deal with embedded imperatives such as the one we saw in (5) and (6). However, we assume that his CP hypothesis holds true for embedded imperatives as well. The reason for this assumption is that negative imperatives with overt subjects can appear in embedded clauses, as shown in the italicized parts in (12).

(12) a. That's why I say *don't you worry about no artificial*
      things. (*I. M. Survivor*, by T. Lichtenberg, p.11)

   b. I remember the sinking feeling, and I said I'm on my way. She said *don't you dare.* You have a live show to do. She's selfless. (A news on the Web)[7]

Assuming that the structure for embedded imperatives is CP, our next investigation is whether an imperative CP includes multiple functional projections or not. Many authors have proposed that the unitary CP-layer should be replaced by a hierarchy of functional projections. From Rizzi (1997), (13) is one of the most influential studies in this research direction.[8]

(13) ForceP > TopP* > FocP > TopP* > FinP > IP

(Rizzi 1997: 297)

For English CP, a slightly different hierarchy from (13) has also been proposed by some researchers (e.g., Haegeman 2004, Totsuka 2013), who present a multiple layered structure lacking a lower TopP. (14) is Totsuka's (2013) English CP structure, which allows a single XP for each functional projection. We adopt this structure in the following discussion.

(14) ForceP > TopP > FocP > FinP > TP

(Totsuka 2013: 205)

4.1 Non-contrastive Topics

First, let us observe whether embedded imperatives can include topicalized elements or not.

(15) a. John said [buy a book].

   b. *John said a book buy __. (Cormany 2013: 108)

   c. *John said [TopP a book [TP pro buy ~~a book~~]]

   d. cf. *The book, buy __! (Cormany 2013: 101)

The bracketed part in (15a) is an embedded imperative clause, but (15b) and its structure (15c) show that topicalization within the clause is disallowed. Also, notice that this is also true for a matrix imperative clause, as (15d) indicates. Given that Spec-TopP serves as a position to host topicalized elements, these facts suggest that embedded imperative clauses (and matrix clauses as well) lack TopP to host topicalized elements.

4.2 Contrastive Topics

Second, let us see if contrastive topics are included within embedded imperative clauses in the same way as we observed noncontrastive topics in 4.1. Here, following Cormany (2013), we assume that contrastive topics move to Spec-FocP.

(16) a. John said [buy these stocks].

   b. John said THESE STOCKS buy __. (… those avoid.)

(Cormany 2013: 109)

   c. … [FocP THESE STOCKS [TP pro buy ~~these stocks~~]]

   d. cf. THESE STOCKS, buy __ immediately!

(Those avoid at all cost!) (Cormany 2013: 101)

Contrary to (15), there is evidence in (16) that contrastive topics can be fronted within the embedded clause. Again, the same is observed in the matrix imperative clause in (16d). It seems that embedded imperative clauses (and also matrix clauses) include FocP as one of their functional projections.

Given that there is FocP in the imperative clauses, the position of *don't* assures that FinP should be located below FocP. As we have already observed in Section 3 (see (11), especially), negation must take the widest scope over QPs, and thus, QPs are not allowed to precede *don't* in CP. (17) below shows that *don't* appears in a higher position of subject QPs, which are presumably located in Spec-TP.

(17) a. *Everyone don't do that!

  b. Don't anyone do that!

Then, let us see more data (18) from Cormany (2013), which show that contrastive topics cannot be preceded by *don't*.

(18) a. These stocks don't anyone/everyone buy __!

  b. *Don't these stocks anyone/everyone buy __!

(Cormany 2013: 106)

This indicates that there is a vacant but structurally fixed position between FocP and TP. We assume that there is FinP based on the above evidence.
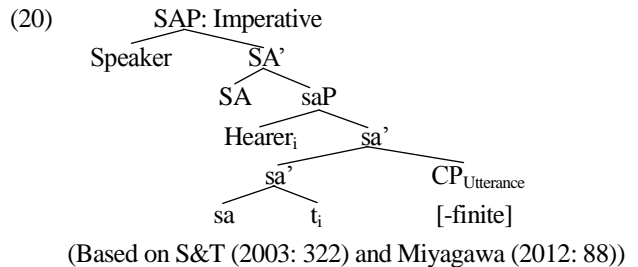
4.3 Speech Act Phrase

Finally, we will observe some speaker/hearer-oriented expressions relevant to the SAP, a functional projection higher than CP. Before observing the data, let us look at what SAP is like and how the structure of imperatives is represented with SAP.

Speas and Tenny (2003) (S&T) propose that above an actually pronounced utterance, there is an abstract structure containing discourse information about the participants of the utterance: speaker, hearer, and their relationship. SA, a head of SAP, is assumed to be a predicate in nature. So, as a predicate, it takes a Speaker as the agent of a speech act, Utterance Content as its theme, and a Hearer as its goal. A structural representation for declaratives based on S&T is illustrated in (19).

(19)

SAP: Declarative
Speaker SA'
SA saP
Utterance Content sa'
sa Hearer

c-command (Based on S&T 2003: 320)
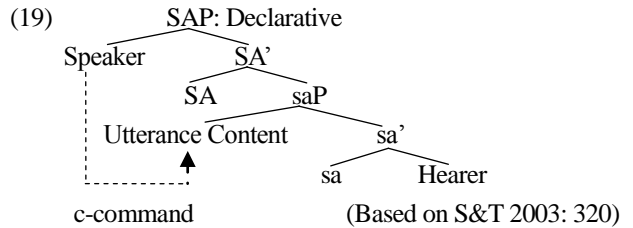
The above structure is double-layered and similar to ditransitive verb constructions (e.g., *give*: *Mary gave the book to Bill*). Speaker's c-commanding of Utterance Content makes the Speaker the point-of-view holder of declarative utterances.

Turning to the SAP structure for imperatives, it is represented as (20) below.

(20)

SAP: Imperative
Speaker SA'
SA saP
Hearer$_i$ sa'
sa' CP$_{Utterance}$
sa t$_i$ [-finite]

(Based on S&T (2003: 322) and Miyagawa (2012: 88))

In (20), the imperative SA is assumed to select nonfinite Utterance Content, which is represented as CP[-finite].[9] The Hearer moves to Spec-saP and from there it c-commands the CP of Utterance Content, which makes the Hearer responsible for realizing the irrealis (nonfinite) proposition.

Assuming that there is a SAP structure above the imperative CP, now let us observe whether speaker-/hearer-oriented expressions can be included within matrix and embedded imperatives or not. The first set of data (21) contains a speaker-oriented evaluative adverb *unfortunately*.

(21) a. *Unfortunately, call Mary.

  b. *John said [unfortunately call Mary].

(21a) is a matrix and (21b) is an embedded imperative. They are both ungrammatical and their ill-formedness can be explained with respect to the SAP structure in (20). Since CP corresponding to Utterance Content is c-commanded by the Hearer, it is possible to assume that CP should become a hearer-oriented discourse and allow the occurrence of hearer-oriented, not speaker-oriented, expressions.

However, our explanation of (21) turns out to be insufficient if we try to cover another set of data shown in

(22) below.

(22) a. John said, "Call Mary, man."
    b. *John said [man call Mary].
    c. ??John said [you idiot call Mary].

Man and *you idiot* are the spoken expressions used to speak to hearers, so these expressions must be hearer-oriented expressions. If they are hearer-oriented, then they should be included within matrix and embedded imperative clauses. However, (22) shows that *man* and *you idiot* are allowed only in the matrix imperative clause (a quoted part in (22a)) and not in embedded imperative clauses (bracketed parts in (22b) and (22c)). The same is also true for (23), where another hearer-oriented word *please* is used.

(23) a. John said, "Call Mary, please."
    b. ??John said please call Mary.

The data from (21) to (23) strongly suggests that embedded imperatives lack their SAP structure, while matrix imperatives do not. Lacking SAP, embedded imperatives are given no formal strategy (i.e., c-command) to connect their Utterance Content to Speakers not Hearers; thus, no speaker-/hearer-oriented expressions are allowed to occur within the clauses. Conversely, matrix imperatives have a full SAP structure and make their Utterance Content hearer-oriented by Hearer c-commanding CP, which licenses any hearer-oriented expressions occurring within CP.[10]

4.4 Summary

We have discussed the internal structure of embedded and matrix imperatives with reference to split-CP and SAP structures. What we have observed so far will be summarized as (24) below.

(24)

	Embedded IMP	Matrix IMP
Topic	*	*
Focus	OK	OK
Speaker/Hearer	*	OK

Our observation summarized in (24) leads us to propose that matrix imperative clauses consist of multiple-layered functional structures (25a) lacking TopP and embedded imperative clauses (25b) lacking TopP and SAP. (25c) is a full-fledged peripheral hierarchy shown for comparison.

(25) a. SAP > ForceP >   FocP > FinP > TP
    b.   ForceP >   FocP > Finp > TP
    c. SAP > ForceP > TopP > FocP > FinP > TP

5　Conclusion

Throughout the discussion, we have observed embedded imperatives as well as matrix imperatives in English and found that embedded imperatives are different from matrix imperatives in the size of their peripheral structure. Based on Potsdam's (2007) CP analysis for imperatives and the data concerning the embeddability of discourse-related linguistic items such as noncontrastive topics and speaker-/hearer-oriented expressions, we have proposed that embedded imperatives have a limited peripheral hierarchy without TopP and SAP, while matrix imperatives have almost full-fledged peripheral hierarchies except for TopP.

For future research on this topic, we will need to collect more supporting evidence for our proposal summarized in 4.4 because there the amount of data shown in our discussion is limited. In addition, we believe it theoretically interesting to do a comparative study on negative imperatives between English and other languages, for example Japanese, since Japanese also allows embedding imperatives in some types of subordinate clauses. (26) is one such example where imperatives are embedded within a *to iu* "say/tell that" clause.

(26) Taro-ni jooshi-ga kinoo madeni yar-e to itta
    Taro-to boss-Nom yesterday by do-IMP Comp said
    shigoto-wo Hanako-ga hikituida
    work-Acc Hanako-Nom took.over
    "Hanako took over the work that their boss told Taro to
      finish by yesterday."

In the future, we will conduct a detailed investigation of this type of data from a comparative perspective.

Notes

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1) It has been reported that some types of embedded clauses allow MCP (by Hooper & Thompson 1973). The characterization of syntactic/semantic properties of such clauses is an important topic for the research of MCP.

2) Although (3e) states that a negative imperative sentence will be like *Don't you call Mary!*, my informant judged this type of negative imperatives with an overt subject *you* following *don't* to be unacceptable. We should keep in mind that *don't you* imperatives cannot be used by some native English speakers and the usage should be investigated for our future research.

3) Some verbs taking *that*-clauses as complement do not allow imperatives to be embedded.

(i) a. *John claimed (that) call Mary.

 b. *John knows (that) call Mary.

(Crnič & Trinh (2009b): 114)

What types of verbs (dis)allow the embedding of imperatives needs to be explained in our future research.

4) C&T (2009a) also take into consideration that it would be possible to derive (4) by the deletion of an infinitival *to* as in *John said to call Mary*, but they conclude it is not the case. See their original paper for the details of their analysis.

5) Johnson (2001) argues that the scope ambiguity observed in (i) can be analyzed by letting Quantifier Raising bring objects QPs to Spec-AgrOP over negation.

(i) I haven't read almost everything.

= It is not the case that I have read almost everything.

(NEG > EVERY)

= There is almost nothing which I have read.

(EVERY > NEG)

6) The "FP-structure" for imperatives, which is rejected in Potsdam's discussion, is represented as follows.

(i) [IP [I' do(n't) [FP DP [F' F VP]]]] (inverted)

(ii) [IP DPi [I' do(n't) [FP ti [F' F VP]]]] (noninverted)

One of the striking differences of the above structures from Potsdam's CP structure is that *do(n't)* stays in I

in-situ either in inverted or noninverted imperatives.

7) This data is from an entertainment news article posted on November 15, 2013 at www.entertainmentwise.com. Browsed as of February 10, 2014.

8) An asterisk means that XP* can occur more than once. Rizzi's configuration is mainly based on Romance data and may be different from language to language whether a lower topic position is available or not.

9) Following Miyagawa (2012), we assume here that Utterance Content corresponds to CP, and above it there is a double-layered SAP structure.

10) In this study, we will not go further into how to license speaker-/hearer-oriented expressions through the interaction of CP and SAP. Miyagawa's (2012) analysis of allocutive agreement in Basque and politeness marking in Japanese is suggestive in this respect. This licensing mechanism will be explored in our future research.

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