

## THEORETICAL DELIMITATIONS IN THE SYNTAX OF THE IMPERATIVE

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**ABSTRACT.** *Theoretical Delimitations in the Syntax of the Imperative.* This present article follows a few theoretical delimitations about the syntax of the imperative based on some theses about the imperative. Firstly, the imperative mood is presented from the traditional grammatical point of view, starting from the GALR, followed by some explanations about the meaning of the imperative enunciation and ersatz imperative. Then, follows a generational approach through a succinct presentation of some theories, which offer new perspectives on imperative, arising a series of questions for which valid answers are still under investigations, for instance, the subject of imperative, the negative imperative, embedded imperatives. We will see if any of these theories apply to the Romanian language, too.

**Keywords:** *imperative, subject of imperative, negative imperative, embedded imperatives.*

**REZUMAT.** *Delimitări teoretice în sintaxa imperativului.* Articolul de față propune delimitări teoretice privind sintaxa imperativului, pe baza unor lucrări având ca temă (și) imperativul. Mai întâi se prezintă modul imperativ din perspectiva gramaticii tradiționale, pornind de la GALR, după care se fac precizări referitoare la ce înseamnă enunțul imperativ, respectiv imperativele surogate. Apoi, urmează o abordare generativistă, prin prezentarea succintă a unor teorii care oferă perspective noi asupra imperativului, propunând o serie de întrebări la care încă se caută răspunsuri valabile, de exemplu în ceea ce privește subiectul imperativei, imperativa negativă, imperativele încastrate. Rămâne de văzut dacă vreo teorie se aplică și limbii române.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *imperativ, subiectul imperativei, imperativ negativ, imperative încastrate.*

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Covering some parts of the research, which approaches more or less the problem of the imperative in Romanian language, we can make some observations considering a certain ambiguity in the use of terminology which springs in most of the cases from the lack of clear approach: grammatical and discursive.

Generally, we can observe that the attention paid to the imperative has been quite low for a long time, not only in the specific Romanian literature but also in foreign literature, that is what Van Der Wurff (2007:2) observes, too. It is possible that this fact can be owned to the poorness of the forms of imperative verbs, anyway, in Romanian grammar, the imperative was treated like an aspect of verb basis in predicative mood. Similarly, the approached view in most of the situations is of the descriptive or functional grammar, approaches from the generative syntax point of view are much less.

According to the traditional classifications the imperative is a verbal mood which opposes to the conditional, competing with the conjunctive, infinitive and supine. In one of the oldest Romanian grammar, Ion Heliade Radulescu, talks about the imperative, registered only one time and named „commanding mood” (Radulescu:1828, [1980]: 230), referring to the basic function of imperative.

In the following part we are going to approach the imperative plurilinguistically, especially based on GALR (2005). The imperative mood is a personal mood, consequently it disposes of „enunciative autonomy” (GALR, I. 2005: 358), represents possible processes, just like the presumptive, conjunctive and the conditional. Being able to make the difference between these moods we are approaching the speaker’s attitude on a scale of an epistemic (to imagine – to believe – to know – to be, GALR, I.2005:359) and deontic method (want – can – must – do, GALR, I.2005:360). Thus, the imperative means a compulsory/prohibitional process (a must).

The paradigm of the imperative includes two forms for second and fifth person. The affirmative structure is different from the negative structure, however certain verbs have different forms opposing to the rest of the paradigm. The affirmative imperative has homonym forms with the present indicative, making a distinction only on suprasegmental level. Imperative enunciations have a descending intonation, the stressed syllable of the imperative verb is pronounced melodiously and dynamically, followed by the sheer descent of the height of the voice in the next syllables, however a melodious descending pattern is realised even using the conjunctive with an imperative value. The fifth person form is homonymic with the present indicative form. The second person form can be homonymic with the second person present indicative or in the case of some verbs with the third

person form. The homonymy with the third person form is conditioned morphological, and in the case of verbs followed by infinitive and ending in *-i* with the  $\emptyset$  suffix in present of the verbs ending in *-ea* and *-e* as morphological and syntactic. The negative imperative paradigm is asymmetric. The fifth person form is formed in the same way as the affirmative form, but the second person forms are homonyms with the infinitive ones. Mioara Avram (2001:241) specifies that the imperative is the only verb mood where „the negative is part of the conjugation”.

Nevertheless, we have to point out that homonymity and ambiguity of these forms develop especially in written forms, less in oral aspect, since these homonyms are not homophones because of intonation, accent and pause.

There are certain verbs which because of intrinsic semantics cannot be used in imperative (meteorological verbs, state verbs etc.).

If the verb is accompanied by clitic, the imperative imposes inversion in affirmative form but it does not apply in the case of coordinate imperatives. Alexandru Nicolae (2015: 8) reflects upon this type of inversion preserved from the old Romanian language which shows a persistent effect, in the old phase of the literary Romanian language, of a *V<sub>2</sub> relaxed* grammar, introduced by Ledgeway (2007), (The *V<sub>2</sub>* grammar concept was proposed by den Besten in 1983), this grammatical system is characterised by displacing the verb in direct object domain, associated with an optional word order of one or more constituents on the left of the verb.

The imperative mood hasn't got any tenses. The imperative and the concept of temporality is going to be discussed further in generative acceptance.

The imperative implies interaction, expresses command, permission, interdiction, advice or request. As direct addressing, it can be used accompanied by nouns or pronouns in vocative case, interjections with connotative functions, pronouns expressing politeness. It is used in independent clauses or in enunciations consisting of clauses connected with linkers such as *and* or *to*, in the regent main clause.

The infinitive is an essential allocutiv element, appearing in prescriptive enunciations in different forms of addressed discourse (dialogue, direct speech, free reported speech). Its directive value can be modified by using different appellatives.

Imperative verb forms can have a discursive role.

Considering the relationship of imperative with other verb moods, it shows that certain verb forms can be used with „imperative value” (GALR. I:383), thus the conjunctive, the infinitive, the supine, the indicative present and the future and also the conditional in imprecations. In this way we can talk about imperative enunciations, imperative constructions which include

not only enunciations with the verb in imperative mood but also other forms of this content. Besides the mentioned synonym constructions we can add the deictic interjections (*iată, uite*)(here it is, there), the imperative ones (*hai, na, poftim*) (come on, there you are!, here), which marks the predicativity through imperative intonation just like the imperative enunciations *Jos!, Sus!* (Down! Up!) in nominal imperative enunciations *Gura!* (Shut up!), where the absence of the predicate can be decoded. In the same way the prophrase (do not) substitutes sentences which fulfill the imperative function.

The usage of some moods with imperative value can be detected even in the 16th century. Thus, Camelia Stan (2013) is making a reference to the usage of the infinitive in main imperative clauses not only in impersonal structures but also limitedly in personal structures under the influence of the foreign models, sometimes in syntactic parallel with the conjunctive. The syntactic impersonal pattern is mentioned till today in the cult register. What is more in the Voronețean Codices we can find gerund with imperative value, although Stan (2013: 110) observes that those are not really clearly interpreted as the infinitive constructions.

On the other hand, the imperative can function as an intention to make questions or can get an own value of the indicative. Thus, Mioara Avram (2001: 208) mentions the narrative and dramatic imperative with an indicative past value, with limited occurrence in narratives, with an oral character, belonging to the informal/popular. („*A început s-o bată și dă-i și dă-i.*”)

However, related to these forms with imperative value we usually add certain supplementary explications ment to offer a clearance of the usage instead of the imperative form. We can point out situations where these can be replaced and sometimes for instance it is mentioned that the imperative enunciations with an infinitive verb are characterised by a certain level of generality or the hortative conjunction expresses an urge, a command addressed to a third person who is not taking part in the discussion. The conjunctive can attenuate the idea of compulsoriness. The supine constructions are elliptical structures, with suppressed verbs with no generic value, as the infinitive, the recipient is recovered from the context. All these constructions with imperative value are named by few authors surrogate imperatives.

Imperative expressions represent „prototypical manifestation form of the directive act ” (GALR. II: 28).

GALR makes difference between direct imperatives, realised without mediating other acts, and indirect imperatives, which are formulated through performed mediated acts, assertive acts and of certain questions or certain exclamations.

In indirect style transposed imperatives are rendered through subordinates with an included conjunctive.

The imperative sentence is included in the enunciative sentence category, with the scope of communication. The generative approach offers new perspectives upon the imperative and opens a series of questions which have no valid answer.

According to Sadock and Zwicky (1985), who laid down the hypothesis, there are three types of enunciations in the searched languages: assertive, interrogative and imperative. All the other types were specific to certain languages, as long as you cannot find distinctive syntactic enunciations in all the languages.

As for the structure of the imperative enunciations it looks like they are determined by the fact if that language has negative imperative sentences with imperative verb or uses infinitive or conjunctive constructions. Thus a series of theories were born for explaining these differences between languages (Laka 1990, Rivero 1994, Rivero and Terzi 1995, Zanuttini 1991, 1994, 1997, Han 1998, 2001), but neither of them could provide a valid explanation for all languages, anyway the explanation lays in the difference of the syntax of these languages. An increased attention had been payed to the negative imperative only after the idea of a functional projection NegP existence was spread at the end of the 1980s, beginning of the 1990s. Several studies consider that elusiveness of negative imperatives results from a specific displacement of the imperative, a process which is blocked by the denier's presence. This idea was developed in different ways. One of them would be that the imperative element and the negative one contest for the same syntactic position where the reciprocal incompatibility comes from (Laka 1990). An other idea explores the lack of one or more functional projections, without the existence of an accord with these projections.

Postma and Van Der Wurff (2007:65) distinguish two types of languages: languages with elusive negative imperative and languages where the negation of the clause has the same form as the anaphoric type. Thus they distinguish the epistemic and the deontic negation (in imperative form). The identity of these two negators means that these two projections converge into one forming a minimal barrier for the displacement of the imperative verb in C<sup>0</sup>.

Zeijlstra (2006) introduces the distinction of True Negative Imperatives which contain an imperative form, and Surrogate Negative Imperatives where the verb is in conjunctive or infinitive mood.

Consequently, the attitude of the negative imperatives is still an unclear problem. Furthermore, it is interesting to follow the nature of the subject in

imperative phrases, peculiarities of the imperative verbs, the constituents order in imperative enunciations.

A great number of authors consider that the structure of the imperative phrase is elliptical (Zanuttini, Platzack, Rosengren), others believe that it has a similar structure to other enunciations. Some authors support the inexistence of an embedded imperative clause, however around 2000 it was indicated that there are languages where such enunciations exist.

Regarding the subject of imperative sentences generally we can observe that it can be a null subject, theoretically, in all languages, even in those which are not pro-drop languages. A number of interpretations related to the subject of the imperative sentence were born, among which three principal directions can be determined. Further on we are going to summarise these directions. Some theories talk about one special subject of the imperative, which might be null, and so this can lead to interpretative restrictions (Schmerling 1982, Platzack and Rosengren 1994, 1998). Other theories consider that a nominal structure in a higher position controls the interpretation and permits the null subject (Downing 1969, Han 1998, Beukema and Copman 1989). A third direction talks about a functional projection which determines interpretation and permits the null subject. As for the functional projection there are various approaches (Rupp 1999, Jensen 2003b, Bennis 2006, 2007, Zanuttini 2012).

An article from 1997 by Rizzi suggests the idea that the syntactic projection (Complementisator) can be divided into two separate hierarchical projections ForceP and FinP. In the syntactic space between these two projections there is the left sentence periphery which includes TOPIC and FOCUS type projections including constituents with relevant pragmatic. The sentence type can be determined by CP, this feature can be found in ForceP. Also, CP is responsible for the tense. Platzack and Rosengren (1998) rely on Rizzi's theory, saying that FinP is missing from the structure of the imperative sentences and so do TP and ModP, too. They consider that the subject of the imperative differs from the other types of sentences, the main difference is that in the case of the subject in other type of sentences we talk about something or someone whereas in the imperative case we talk about to someone. Varga Diana (2013) shows, in her work, that the analysis of Platzack and Rosengren does not apply for all languages, it neither functions in the Hungarian language. Taking into consideration Han's idea, Varga applies to the Hungarian language an analysis which starts from the presumption of the existence of FinP, and thus TP and ModP, also and implies the existence of an allocutiv operator, directive in ForceP.

It is an accepted theory that imperative sentences are defective, in many cases it is considered that the TP is missing (Beukema and Coopmans 1989, Zanuttini 1991, Platzack and Rosengren 1998, Rupp 1999, Han 1999, 2000, Zeijlstra 2004), since the imperative verbs have got only one form, and the nature of the imperative meaning projects the tense into the future. However, there are languages where the imperative has got different forms according to their tenses (according to Van der Wurff ed.,-2007), which might suggest that these languages have got a TP. Thus, in 2004 Jensen suggests the idea that all languages have TP bringing up semantic arguments in favour of this supposition. He makes a difference between the utterance time and the time when the speaker wants the event to be realised by the recipient, which follows the first one. So, Jensen considers that the temporal information is inherent for the imperative. Taking further this idea, he suggests that the subject of the imperative is an Agent situated in Spec<sub>v</sub>P.

The previous paragraphs present the main directions of negative imperative interpretations and the subject of the imperative sentences. We will see if any of these apply to the imperatives in the Romanian language and which of them and which forms. Being able to answer these questions we need to do a more detailed research, starting from a generous corpus, which might permit the forming of decisive ideas regarding the syntax of the imperative sentence in the Romanian language.

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