

Pseudo-imperatives as Weak Modalized Assertions*

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1 Introduction

In Japanese, the inflectional endings *-e/-ro*, *-nasai*, and *-te* (*kudasai*) are considered subtypes of the imperative clause type, which I call *morphological imperatives* (MIs), as shown in (1). Some Japanese sentences can function as imperatives without including an imperative morpheme. As in (2), sentences with *yooni*, which basically plays a role as a subjunctive complementizer, are also considered to be varieties of imperatives (Uchibori 2000, Nihongo Kijutsu Bunpoo Kenkyukai 2002, among others).

- (1) Hayaku kaer-**e!**
quickly go.home-IMP
'Go home quickly!'
- (2) Hayaku kaer-u **yooni!**
quickly go.home-PRES YOONI

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‘Go home quickly!’

Although the literature is rich in data and insights into the semantics and the pragmatics of canonical form imperatives in many languages (Portner 2007; Kaufmann 2012; Condoravdi & Lauer 2012; von Stechow & Iatridou 2017, among many others), particularly in Japanese, accounts for ‘non-canonical’ form imperatives like *yooni*-imperatives (YIs) are not typically presented in a formal linguistic theory. The central interest of this study is to explore the difference between MIs and YIs, and to account for this difference. This paper investigates these two purposes, and by proposing semantic (and syntactic) structures for the two types of imperatives, argues that YIs are varieties of *psuedo-imperatives* which lack the imperative presupposition operator, unlike MIs. What I mean by “pseudo” here is that YIs are better analyzed as assertions rather than imperatives with respect to their semantics/pragmatic behavior.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I will show some key data of the two imperatives which would motivate my proposals. Section 3 lays out the semantic component for the modal analysis of imperatives. In Section 4, based on the discussion in the foregoing sections, I will present my proposal on semantic/pragmatic (and briefly, syntactic) structures for the two types of imperatives. In Section 5, I will demonstrate how the proposal accounts for the puzzles shown in Section 2. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2 Data

2.1 Weak and Strong Readings

In the literature on imperatives, it has been pointed out that imperatives can be read differently depending on the context (Kaufmann 2012; Portner 2007; Condoravdi & Lauer 2012, among others). For example, English imperatives can pattern with both strong readings (i.e. command) and weak ones (i.e. permission/acquiescence), as shown in (3)-(4). Note particularly that the imperative in (4a) is contextually forced to be construed as a permission, and in (4b), the free choice item (FCI) *any* ensures the imperative to pattern with an acquiescence reading (Halm 2018).¹

(3) [out-of-the-blue context]

¹ While (i) is clearly unacceptable as an out-of-the blue command-type imperative, (ii) shows that the FCI is licensed in a context where the imperative is a permission. Halm (2018) further observes that some languages (such as Hungarian) have grammaticalized markers of permission/acquiescence which make it possible to elucidate this contrast sharply in standalone sentences as well (See Halm 2018 and references therein for some relevant data).

(i) #Bring me any chair. (out of the blue)

(ii) A: What chair do you want?

B: Oh, bring me any chair. It doesn't matter.

- Go to bed! (command)
- (4) a. A: May I drink this beer? (permission)
 B: Sure, drink it (if you want to).
 b. Drink any beer. (acquiescence)

Let me now observe how Japanese imperatives behave with respect to strong and weak readings. In Japanese, both MIs and YIs can show weak and strong readings as do English imperatives, which indicates that there exists no difference between the two imperatives in terms of the strength of the meaning. Relevant examples are shown below; they both are compatible with ‘weak-to-strong’ readings.²

- (5) [out-of-the-blue context]
 Hayaku { ne-ro / ner-u yooni } !
 quickly sleep-IMP / sleep-PRES YOONI
 ‘Go to bed quickly!’
- (6) A: May I drink this beer?
 B: Motiron. Nomitai-nara { nom-e / nom-u yooni }.
 sure want.to.drink-then drink-IMP / drink-PRES YOONI
 ‘Sure, drink it if you want to.’
- (7) Doredemo nomitai biiru-o { nom-e / nom-u
 any want.to.drink beer-ACC drink-IMP / drink-PRES
 yooni }.
 YOONI
 ‘Drink any beer that you want to drink.’

The present observation seems to suggest that the two imperatives encode the same semantic content, but this is not the case; what we can say from these data is that at least they share the same ‘modal meaning’ that can pattern with both strong and weak contexts.

2.2 Temporal Immediacy

The first intriguing difference between the two imperatives is temporal immediacy, the (in)felicitousness of utterances with respect to immediate contexts. As the examples in (8a) and (9a), it is quite natural to utter MIs in contexts where the speaker gives the addressee an immediate/urgent order. In contrast to MIs, (8b) and (9b) below show that YIs cannot be used in such contexts; they can indeed be uttered as commands (See (5)), but the data suggests that

² It should worth noting that cross-linguistically, some imperatives with non-canonical forms can only be used as commands, not allowing the weak readings (See von Stechow & Iatridou 2017). For Japanese data, see Ihara & Noguchi 2019).

contexts in which they can be felicitous are restricted to non-immediate situations.

- (8) [The speaker is a college football coach. During the game, he yells to his team player]
 (Sassato) { a. pasushi-ro / b. #pasusu-ru yooni }!
 right.now pass-IMP / pass-PRES YOONI
 ‘Pass it over there (now)!’
- (9) [Children are fighting. The mother of one of them yells,]
 Anta-tachi { a. yame-ro / b. #yame-ru yooni }!
 you-PL stop.it-IMP / stop.it-PRES YOONI
 ‘You guys stop it!’

It should be noted that the non-immediacy property of YIs is also observed in performative modalized sentences. The performative use of deontic modals like *beki* ‘should’ in Japanese cannot fit in the immediate contexts, as shown in (10) and (11).

- (10) [the context in (8)]
 #(Sassato) pasusu-ru beki(-da)!
 right.now pass-PRES should(-COP)
 ‘[Int.] Pass it over there (now)!’
- (11) [the context in (9)]
 #Yame-ru beki(-da)!
 stop.it-PRES should(-COP)
 ‘[Int.] Stop it!’

2.3 Quotative/Subordinated Readings

The second difference between the two imperatives arises in embedded contexts. It has been recognized in the literature that MIs in Japanese can be embedded both as direct and indirect quotations, which are headed by the quotation marker *to* (Kuno 1988; Saito & Haraguchi 2012, Kaufmann 2012). In (12), the embedded imperative allows both quotative readings (R_{quote}) and subordinated readings (R_{sub}); *ashita* ‘tomorrow’ can refer both to the day after the utterance of the entire sentence (= R_{quote}) and to the day after the embedded sentence by Taro (= R_{sub}).

- (12) Taro-ga ototoi Aya-ni [ashita tookyoo-ni
 Taro-NOM day.before.yesterday Aya-to tomorrow Tokyo-to
 ik-e] to it-ta.
 go-IMP COMP say-PAST

- \rightsquigarrow R_{quote} : ‘Taro told Aya two days ago: “Go to Tokyo tomorrow!”’
 \rightsquigarrow R_{sub} : ‘Taro told Aya two days ago that she should go to Tokyo tomorrow.’

(13) indicates, in contrast, that only the subordinated interpretation is available for embedded YIs; *ashita* ‘tomorrow’ in (13) can only be interpreted as the subordinated reading, namely as the day after Taro’s utterance, not the day after the utterance time (Kaufmann 2012, footnote 14). Interestingly, however, when *to* attaches to an embedded YI, the possible interpretation is reversed; the embedded YI in (14) only has the quotative reading interpretation.

- (13) Taro-ga ototoi Aya-ni [ashita tookyoo-ni
 Taro-NOM day.before.yesterday Aya-to tomorrow Tokyo-to
 ik-u] **yooni** it-ta.
 go-IMP YOONI say-PAST
 $\not\rightsquigarrow$ R_{quote} : ‘Taro told Aya two days ago: “Go to Tokyo tomorrow!”’
 \rightsquigarrow R_{sub} : ‘Taro told Aya two days ago that she should go to Tokyo tomorrow.’
- (14) Taro-ga ototoi Aya-ni [ashita tookyoo-ni
 Taro-NOM day.before.yesterday Aya-to tomorrow Tokyo-to
 ik-u] **yooni to** it-ta.
 go-IMP YOONI COMP say-PAST
 \rightsquigarrow R_{quote} : ‘Taro told Aya two days ago: “Go to Tokyo tomorrow!”’
 $\not\rightsquigarrow$ R_{sub} : ‘Taro told Aya two days ago that she should go to Tokyo tomorrow.’

2.4 Question Answering

We finally observe properties of the two imperatives with respect to question answering. If we take a look at the literature on questions, what is generally considered fruitful in order to understand them is their relation to true answers (Groenendijk & Stokhof 1984). This makes the type of question dependent on the type of assertion. But upon closer inspection, pairs of questions and answers as constituted by interrogatives and assertions are paralleled by cases in which imperatives answer questions (as in (15)), which may have been first pointed out by Kaufmann (2012: 67–69).³

³ Groenendijk & Stokhof (1984) argue that semantic and pragmatic answers to interrogatives differ in whether they depend on particular information states. For a pragmatic answer that is not a semantic answer, it should be possible to find an information state with respect to which it does not answer the interrogative. For example, the answer (i) does not constitute a semantic answer to the question, but it gives an answer to this interrogative in an information state that already entails that ‘he won’t come to the party if it is raining.’ If no such relation is presupposed

- (15) A: What will you order me to do?
 B: Call him.

It is quite clear that Japanese MIs and YIs can also be a felicitous answers to the question, as in shown in (16),

- (16) A: Ore-ni nani-o meiji-ru no?
 I-to what-ACC order.PRES Q
 ‘What will you order me to do?’
 B: Biiro-o { nom-e / nom-u yooni }.
 beer-ACC drink-IMP / drink-PRES YOONI
 ‘(You) Drink some beer.’

However, while MIs can be an answer to the question that the subject of the imperative is the questioner, i.e. the addressee, they cannot do so when the subject is the non-questioner, i.e. the 3rd person. In contrast, YIs can serve as answers to both types of questions.

- (17) A: Kare-ni nani-o meiji-ru no?
 he-to what-ACC order.PRES Q
 ‘What will you order me to do?’
 B: Biiro-o { #nom-e / nom-u yooni }.
 beer-ACC drink-IMP / drink-PRES YOONI
 ‘(I order him to) Drink some beer.’

2.5 Interim Summary

So far, we have confirmed that there exist empirical asymmetries between the two types of Japanese imperatives. Those asymmetries are organized into TABLE 1. Considering that those asymmetries are crucial, in the following section we propose semantic structures for the two types of imperatives.

(or can be accommodated), the sequence in (i) results in infelicity. In such a case, the answer sounds incoherent and can be rejected along the lines of *That’s not what I was asking you, / So what?/etc.* In contrast, it is impossible to set up an information state that allows such a rejection for a semantic answer like (ii).

- (i) Q: Will he come to the party?
 A: It’s raining. (pragmatic answer)
 (ii) Q: Will he come to the party?
 A: No, he won’t. (semantic answer)

Going back to the imperative answers, Kaufmann (2012: 68) finds that they behave like semantic answers; in (15), independently of the context of the conversation, they give an answer to the interrogative.

	Weak readings	Immediacy	Quot/Sub-readings	Q-answering
MI _s	✓	✓	✓/✓	SUBJ: 2 nd / *3 rd
YI _s	✓	*	*/✓ (✓/* with <i>to</i>)	SUBJ: 2 nd /3 rd

TABLE 1: The Properties of MI_s and YI_s in Japanese

3 Proposal: Imperative with/without Directive Presuppositions

In this section, I propose an analysis of the two imperatives, MI_s and YI_s. First, for the analysis of MI_s in Japanese, I basically maintain Kaufmann’s (2012) modal (or strong) theory for imperatives and the extended version of her model given by Medeiros (2013) and Ihara & Noguchi (2019), as in (18).

$$(18) \quad [_{SAP} \textit{dir} [_{TP(\textit{or ModalP})} \Box_{wn}^{IMP} [p : [\dots v_{imp} \dots]]]]]$$

$$(19) \quad [[\Box_{wn}]] = \lambda p \lambda w. \forall w' \in \mathcal{H}(w, \chi) : \cap P(w') \subseteq p$$

where $P(w)$ is a *premise set* which simplifies the interaction of Kratzerian modal base and ordering source in w , and \mathcal{H} is a selection function which selects a set of χ -worlds that are closest to w . (Silk 2013)

- (20) *dir* is defined iff:
- a. **Temporal:** imperative is satisfied at or following utterance time;
 - b. **Authority:** the speaker is in an ‘epistemically privileged’ position with respect to conversational backgrounds;
 - c. **Epistemic Uncertainty:** the speaker believes the fulfillment of the imperative is possible but not a foregone conclusion, and;
 - d. **Ordering Source Restriction:** restricts the types of ordering sources available for the interpretation of the imperative (generally, only ‘prioritizing’ ordering sources, in the sense of Portner (2007))

The weak necessity \Box_{wn} in (19) makes a claim about the necessity of p at all closest relevant χ -worlds, for some contextually supplied condition χ (Silk to appear).⁴ *dir* in (20) is a presupposition operator of imperatives which ensures the performative effect of directive speech acts (Kaufmann 2012). I do not go into formal detail due to limitations of space, but this line of approach works well enough to derive the difference between the two imperatives. The

⁴ Within this model, the strong necessity *must* is defined as in (i). That is, the truth of strong necessity thus simply depends on the value of P at w .

(i) $[[\textit{must}(p)]] = 1$ iff $\cap P(w) \subseteq [p]$ (Silk 2013, to appear)

(9)). To capture the contrast between MIs and YIs, I suggest that the weak necessity modal that MIs contain is a modal which presupposes **temporal**, whereas the one that YIs contain is an ordinary weak necessity which does not presuppose **temporal**. I thus define the weak necessity *for imperatives* in (22), and modify the presuppositions of *dir* in (23).

$$(22) \quad \llbracket \Box^{\text{IMP}} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda w. \forall w' \in \mathcal{H}(w, \chi) : \cap P(w') \subseteq p$$

presupposes: *p* is satisfied at or following utterance time.

(23) *dir* is defined only if the presuppositions, namely (a) **authority**, (b) **epistemic uncertainty**, and (c) **ordering source restriction** are met.

Then why are YIs infelicitous in immediate contexts? I claim that there may be a general principle at work.

(24) Non-imperative commands (i.e. commands without imperative operator) cannot be uttered in immediate contexts.

I emphasize that (24) is not an ad hoc principle since typical modalized propositions such as *should(p)* are also infelicitous in immediate command contexts (See (10), (11)). Given these settings, we can now derive the difference between MIs and YIs with respect to temporal immediacy; while MIs can be obtain immediacy thanks to the existence of \Box^{IMP} , YIs cannot since they contain ordinary weak necessity modals (in (19)) which have no presuppositions that ensures temporal immediacy.

The difference between quotative/subordinated readings can be derived by the difference in syntax. First, they both can induce subordinated readings (even when they are indirectly embedded, see (12), (13)), since they clause-internally contain the weak necessity modal. The quotative reading in embedded MIs can simply be explained by assuming that Japanese *to* attaches to the clause-external level (above SAP-level) when conveying quotative readings. For sentences with embedded YIs, however, only the subordinated reading is available (see (13)). This is because *ni* obligatorily plays a role of a clause-subordinator, namely C. The current analysis correctly predicts that for a YI which is embedded by *to*, only the quotative interpretation is available (see (14)); in this case, since *ni* already arises as C, *to* can only attach above the C-level, namely clause-external level, which induces the quotative reading. The situations here are schematized as in (25)–(27).

(25) embedded MIs

$$\text{a. } R_{\text{quote}}: \dots [\text{SAP} [[\text{TP} \dots [\text{VP} \dots] \Box^{\text{IMP}}] \text{C}] \textit{dir}] \textit{-to} \dots$$

$$\text{b. } R_{\text{sub}}: \dots [[\text{TP} \dots [\text{VP} \dots] \Box^{\text{IMP}}] \text{C-to}] \dots$$

(26) embedded YIs

$$R_{\text{sub}}: \dots [[\text{TP} \dots [\text{VP} \dots] \Box_{\text{wn}}^{\text{yo}}] \text{C-ni}] \dots$$

(27) embedded YIs (with *to*)
$$R_{quote} : \dots [SAP \dots [[TP \dots [VP \dots] \square_{un}^{yoo}] C-ni] ORDER] -to\dots$$

Finally, let me derive the fact that MIs can only be an answer to the question that the subject is the 2nd person. This is not surprising since MIs are true imperatives, which invariably contain the addressee as the subject. There are a lot of ways to capture this fact; from a syntactic point of view, an imperative subject has to be different both from *PRO* and *pro*, and has to be *IMP-PRO*, which is restricted to the subject position of imperatives. For the semantics it is only relevant that it is a covert variant of the second person pronoun and comes in a singular and a plural variant.⁸ YIs, in contrast, do not have such restrictions since they are not true imperatives; they contain neither an imperative morpheme nor imperative presupposition operator, just as performative modals do not have such restrictions.

5 Conclusion

In this study, I have proposed a new analysis for non-canonical form imperatives that certain types of imperative(-like) sentences can lack presuppositional content. What we need to capture their behavior is to focus on the two operators: the weak necessity operator and the directive operator.

The present analysis thus supports the view that a certain type of imperatives *does* denote an operator which is interpreted as a necessity modal (Kaufmann 2012). Primary goals for future development of this account are to unify the account of YIs more fully with some non-canonical imperatives in the other languages. Cross-linguistically, for instance, some non-canonical form imperatives can only be used as strong directives, not allowing weak readings (von Fintel & Iatridou 2017, Ihara & Noguchi 2019). Moreover, examining how the contrast between the two imperatives could be accounted for from the viewpoint of a minimal analysis of imperatives (Portner 2007), which does not assume any modal content for the denotation of imperatives, will be implemented in the future.

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⁸ See Kaufmann (2012: 105–122) and references therein for a detailed discussion.

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