Difficult Imperatives in Turkish

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Introduction: Imperative forms are canonically associated with speech act functions like commands, requests, wishes, invitations, etc. However, this is not always the case. For example, in the Imperative and Declarative (IaD) construction (Han 2000, Kaufmann 2012, von Fintel & Iatridou 2017), the imperative form in sentences like 'Ignore your homework and you will fail.' clearly cannot convey what it would convey when uttered in isolation. In this study, we discuss another exceptional use of imperative forms from Turkish that lies outside its canonical speech act function.

Data: In what we will refer to as Difficult Imperatives (DIs), the utterance conveys the speaker's attitude that the event described by the imperative form is **difficult** to actualize and its overall semantic contribution is truth conditional. The interpretation that we associate with DIs in Turkish is facilitated by a range of idiomatized expressions, illustrated in (1). These expressions co-occur with the imperative form and do not seem to be amenable to a compositional treatment. Even though the imperative form uttered in isolation with the right intonation and within the appropriate context might give rise to the DI construal, the truth conditional DI interpretation most naturally arises when one or more of these facilitating expressions co-occur. To illustrate, the DI example shown in (2) features three of these expressions.

(1) a. **Gel   de**   bu gürültü-de çalış
         come.IMP ADDITIVE this noise-LOC study.IMP
         Lit: 'Come and study with this noise'

     b. **Hadi**   bu gürültü-de çalış
         come.on this noise-LOC study.IMP
         Lit: 'Come on, study with this noise'

     c. Bu gürültü-de çalış   **işin**   **yok-sa**
         this noise-LOC study.IMP something.2SG.POS not.exist-COND
         Lit: 'Study with this noise if you don't have anything to do'

     d. Bu gürültü-de çalış   **şimdi**
         this noise-LOC study.IMP now
         Lit: 'Study with this noise now' → **It is difficult to study with this noise.**

(2) [**Gel   de**]$_1$ bu gürültü-de çalış   [**şimdi**]$_2$ [**işin**   **yok-sa**]$_3$
      come.IMP ADDITIVE this noise-LOC study.IMP now   something.2SG.POS not.exist-COND
      Lit: 'Come and study with this noise now if you don't have anything to do'
      → **It is difficult to study with this noise.**

Our main proposal is that DIs are truth conditional involving a modal operator expressing difficulty. This correctly predicts that an addressee hearing (2) can respond as in (3). Clearly, this response would not be felicitous if (2) had a speech act function canonically associated with imperative forms. To put it in Portner's (2004, 2007) terms, the utterance in (2) does not update the addressee's To-Do-List. In fact, (2) can be uttered even if it is known in the context that the addressee is not going to study. Rather, (2) in effect is a declarative assertion and conveys the speaker's belief that it is difficult to actualize the event described by the imperative form.

(3) **Aynen/Evet ya**! (Mümkün görün-m-üyor.)/ (Bu ne   gürültü böyle)
      Exactly   possible seem-NEG-IMPF this what noise   so
      'Exactly/Yeah! (It doesn't seem possible.)/(What is this noise!?)'

Analysis The question arising is how an imperative form gives rise to a truth-conditional meaning deviating from the core function of imperatives. One possible hypothesis is that this interpretation is in fact an implicature of some sort derived by the fact that the speaker challenges the addressee. We show that this hypothesis cannot be correct and that the difficulty interpretation is part of the asserted meaning. DIs contrast with true imperatives like in (4), where the speaker is challenging the

addressee to study with the noise in the room. It can be argued that (4) merely implies what (2) asserts. Indeed, the addressee of the sentence in (4) cannot felicitously respond as in (3). This state of affairs falls out if (2) but not (4) conveys a truth-conditional meaning.

(4)   Bu   gürültü-de çalış   **da**   **gör-elim**!
        this noise-LOC study.IMP ADDITIVE see-OPT.1PL
        Lit: 'Study with this noise! let us see it!'

Since an implicature analysis is not tenable, we argue that DIs arise as a result of a designated modal operator, as signalled by idiomatized expressions that might constitute its PF-signals. We take imperative forms to denote propositional meaning units that impose certain restrictions in what they combine with. More specifically, in the spirit of Villalta (2008), we argue that the imperative/optative form is the morphological spell-out of a subjunctive-type moodP, which we label Mood_{IMP}P. Importantly, Mood_{IMP}P brings in the requirement that *a modal operator with comparative semantics* combines with it. In the case of prototypical imperatives comparative semantics is contributed by *a prioritizing ordering source* (Kaufmann 2012, Condoravdi & Lauer 2012) whereas in DIs the culprit is an operator conveying relative difficulty, as we explicate below. Hence, this analysis provides a principled answer to the question why imperative forms are used in DIs.

We take the imperative form (Mood_{IMP}P) to denote a proposition, modelled as a set of situations (Kratzer, 1989). MoodP brings in the requirement that it combine with a modal operator with comparative semantics. We argue that this requirement is satisfied in DIs as the operator in DIs compares two situations in terms of difficulty. Hence, its meaning is similar to the meaning of *tough*-predicates (e.g. Keine & Poole 2015; Gluckman 2017). As can be seen in (5), the operator is interpreted relative to a *judge* (j) parameter (Lasersohn 2005). The operator combines with a proposition p and returns the proposition that all situations consistent with the doxastic alternatives of the judge j and where p is true are more difficult to j than situations where p is false, granting that the compared situations are minimally different. [Simplifying, we represent the doxastic component as part of the denotation of the operator instead of treating it as a modal base f combining with the operator.]

(5) $[\![\text{OP}]\!]^j = \lambda p_{<st>}.\ \lambda s.\ \forall s', s'' \subseteq \text{DOX}_{<j,s>}$ such that $p(s') = 1$ & $p(s'') = 0$ & $\text{MIN}(s')(s'')$,
        $\text{MAX}(\lambda d.\text{TOUGH}(d)(j)(s')) > \text{MAX}(\lambda d.\text{TOUGH}(d)(j)(s''))$
        where $\text{MIN}(s)(s') =_{\text{def}} s$ and s' are minimally different from each other

With (5), we derive a meaning of utterances as in (1) that all situations consistent with the speaker's beliefs in which the subject studies with this noise are more difficult than those in which he doesn't.

Concluding remarks & further questions Our analysis accounts for DIs without positing a polysemy analysis of imperative forms. Instead, we argue that imperative forms correspond to $Mood_{\text{IMP}}Ps$ which require a modal operator to combine with. As different modal operators can satisfy this requirement, different interpretations arise. The operator can involve a prioritizing ordering source as in default imperative meanings, a *tough*-operator as in DIs or a conditional operator in the case of IaDs. DIs present a challenge for analyses of imperative forms as a distinct type of speech act (e.g. Portner's 2004, 2007 analysis of imperatives as updates of a To-Do-List) as they appear to be more declarative-like. On the other hand, in our case, we need to explain why default imperatives can only be performative (non-truth conditional) associating the operator with certain presuppositions which ensure its performative character as in Kaufmann (2012, 2016). Finally, it should be mentioned that DIs are not a peculiarity of Turkish but also appear in other languages of the region (e.g. Greek, Bulgarian, Russian, Hebrew). We hope that by shedding light on this deviating type of imperatives we can also gain further insights into the meaning of default imperatives.

Selected References • **von Fintel, K. & S. Iatridou**. 2017. A modest proposal for the meaning of imperatives. In *Modality across syntactic categories*, OUP • **Kaufmann M**. 2012. *Interpreting imperatives*. Springer • **Villalta, E**. 2008. Mood and gradability: an investigation of the subjunctive mood in Spanish. *L&P* 31:467