ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Communicative Components Of Imperatives As Speech Acts

1. Introduction
Speech act theory brought in a diversity of communicative components associated with the Imperative (viewed as an actualization of a Directive) and initiated debates about the importance of these components for defining Imperative meaning (see the review of these debates in Hamblin, 1987).
I propose a systematization of the communicative (speech-act related) components associated with Imperative meaning. My approach to this systematization is based on separating the (variable) "pragmatic" components which reflect the meaning of an imperative utterance in context from the (invariant) "basic" components which constitute the meaning of an imperative construction independent of context and should be regarded as the grammatical meaning of the Imperative. Furthermore, I propose to interpret the basic imperative meaning by treating the Imperative as a speech-act category rather than a verbal Mood.
I claim a) that the basic imperative meaning is a speaker-oriented entity and not just a relation between the Sb and Pr of a content proposition, and b) that this meaning is not a semantic primitive, but a highly complex entity. I argue that it includes three situations (appellative, causation/volition, and content/proposition), where each situation in turn contains a specific predicate with its sets of arguments, and also a 'framing-framed' relation reflecting that the content proposition is not an actual one.
Finally I claim that my approach allows us to present the meaning of an imperative utterance not as a chaos of communicative components, but as an organized system. This system gives ground for defining the "logical form" of any imperative utterance. *2. Traditional vs. post-speech-act approach to imperative*
Traditionally (in pre-speech-act frameworks) the interpretation of the Imperative attracted the attention of diverse scholars: linguists, philosophers, logicians. But the interests of different disciplines in the study of the imperative were quite far

apart, sometimes hardly commensurable. The Imperative was dealt with both as a part of grammar and as a logical/semantic entity. On the grammatical side the more or less general consensus was that the Imperative is a special verbal category – one of the Moods, clustered with Indicative, Subjunctive, Irrealis, Optative, etc. Grammatical semantics was perceived by linguists as a relation within the proposition (actualizing the 'imperativized' event) between the Sb and the Pr – see discussion in (Jespersen, 1924), which was the first to point out explicitly that the Imperative is a category different in principle from other Moods. Besides, linguists treated the meaning of the Imperative holistically as a single unit and did not try to break this unit into components. The imperative forms discussed in connection with the Imperative followed the Imperative person number paradigm, where disagreements concerned whether to exclude non-second-person Imperative, on the ground either that the Imperative cannot refer to any other person than an interlocutor (that is, second-person forms) or that periphrastic constructions like "Let me go!", "Let's go!", "Let him/them go!" cannot be recognised as verb-forms.

Philosophers and logicians concentrated on different issues: on the semantics of the Imperative from the point of view of its reducibility to indicative meaning; on the analysis of the deontic and inferential properties of imperatives; on moral, legal, etc. inferences following from imperatives. Logicians offered different models of logical language for the Imperative which could grasp the elusiveness of imperative meaning, which was fully dependent on the context (see review in Moutafakis, 1975). They also discussed completely different types of data than linguists did, predominantly the contrast between imperative, modal and indirect constructions: "Show your documents! You must show your documents! I order you to show your documents!"
Speech act theory (as discussed in Austin, 1962, and Searle, 1969, 1976; cf. Grice, 1957 and Hamblin, 1987) influenced deeply the study of the Imperative on new grounds from a communicative perspective by bringing together the interests of different fields. Special attention began to be paid to the communicative components of the semantics of the Imperative as a language actualization of a Directive, i.e. to such aspects of meaning as the motivation of the participants (who is willful, who is accountable, who has the authority, etc.), the types of functions carried on by imperatives {commands, requests, etc.), language forms other than straightforward imperatives which actualize a Directive (like "Close the window!" vs. "Would you mind closing the window?" "Close the window,

would you!”), the politeness factor as a part of imperative meaning and form, and lots of other issues (starting with Fillmore, 1970; Lakoff, 1973; Gordon and Lakoff, 1971; Sadock, 1970; Schachter, 1973; Vendler, 1972; Wierzbicka, 1972; etc.). These discussions to a large extent broke the boundaries between the “disciplinarian” approaches and put the discussion of the Imperative on common basis with a possibility of using common or at least “translatable” concepts (Bybee, 1985; Birjulin, 1994; Paducheva, 1985; Wierzbicka, 1972).

This influx of new ideas about the nature of the Imperative had two types of consequence. On the one hand, it gave new theoretical possibilities for discussion and widened the range of topics under consideration, and also defined a new set of points of interest in discussing grammatical, semantic and pragmatic features of the Imperative. But on the other hand, it resulted in putting forward such a variety of communicative components of imperative meaning that the latter began to seem even more elusive than ever. So, a task of ordering all the data in some intellectually digestible system became a theoretical imperative. We know a lot about the Imperative, but we do not know how the aspects of this knowledge are related to one another.

3. The goals of the paper

In this paper I propose to organize the existing chaotic diversity of what is referred to as the communicative components of imperative meaning into a system and suggest that this system includes different layers and sub-layers of meaning. To accomplish this, I make the following preliminary claims:

1. I argue that the overall imperative meaning of an utterance contains two separate and actually autonomous domains of meaning – a ‘grammatical’ and a ‘pragmatic’ one. The first refers to the imperative construction per se, which is the centre of any imperative utterance, and represents the meaning of the Imperative as a grammatical category. This meaning is invariant, and is present in any imperative utterance. The second domain of meaning(s) refers to particular additions to the basic meaning which are related to specific pragmatic conditions of a speech situation. They constitute “accompanying” variable components in the meaning of an imperative utterance .

2. I argue that speech-act-oriented descriptions of the Imperative predominantly concentrated on meanings of the second type – purely pragmatic and discourse related, and often dealt with as a set of entities which are not mutually organized. I argue that they can be organized along the lines of their sub-meanings, and thus presented as different aspects of ‘pragmatic’ meaning itself.

Though a lot was said about the communicative components of pragmatic meaning, no serious attention was paid to analysis of grammatical meaning and to its communicative components.
3. I propose a model of the grammatical semantics of the Imperative. I treat the Imperative as a grammatical category of speech act, and argue that its semantics is not a primitive, but a complex one.
4. I argue that my treatment of an imperative meaning as a complex system of components can explain a whole range of the peculiarities of both imperative utterances and "imperative forms". Thus it can separate imperative constructions which constitute the imperative paradigm as a grammatical category, explaining why there is a difference in the way Imperative meaning is marked, and it can explain what type of form imperative utterances can have when diverse pragmatic/communicative components are added to the basic meaning.

4. Types of semantic components of imperative utterances

The range of semantic components discussed in attempts to define the meaning of imperative utterances is extremely wide, especially after the speech act revolution. So it is not surprising that researchers complained even more than before about the elusiveness of "Imperative meaning", and claimed that it is practically impossible to define it when trying to create a formal language for it. This explains why there appeared and were so popular numerous reductionist theories**[i]** which proposed to single out (what can be referred to in linguistic terms as) the dominant meaning of an imperative and to reduce Imperative meaning to it. Thus these were proposals to reduce the Imperative to the Indicative, that is to the proposition describing the action which does not exist prior to a directive; to modals of obligation on the part of the doer, or his ability; to causation by the speaker, etc. As I will show later, all these components are important for understanding the meaning of imperatives, but none of them is the unique dominant to which the meaning can be reduced.
I argue that, elusive as it is, "Imperative meaning" can be treated not as a chaos of numerous components or arbitrary interpretations, but as a multi-layered system of communication in which each of the layers makes a definite contribution to an overall resulting meaning.
As I have already mentioned, I suggest distinguishing between the meaning of the imperative construction and the meaning of an imperative utterance. The first represents a primary grammatical meaning of the Imperative, the second – diverse additions to the basic meaning in particular contexts of different speech

situations. Thus the meaning of an imperative utterance includes the primary/basic meaning of the Imperative plus all the pragmatic additions to it**[ii]**. The study of pragmatic components was paid a lot of attention to in the literature, as for the study of the basic/primary semantics of the Imperative as a grammatical category there were only very few explicit discussions of the issue even within contemporary theoretical frameworks (Wierzbicka, 1973, 1985; Bybee, 1985: Bybee et al., 1994; Khrakovskij, 1992; Dolinina, 1992, 2002).

In the next two sections I will first discuss my proposal for classification of ‘pragmatic’ components of imperative utterances, and then elaborate my interpretation of the primary Imperative meaning.

5. Pragmatic components of the imperative utterance

The semantics of imperatives as actualizations of a Directive includes at least the following co-existing layers of pragmatic components.

a. The functional semantics of an imperative (as systematized by Hamblin) includes four major groups, each of which reflects a specific communicative goal of the Directive: a command (order, demand), a request, a piece of advice, an invitation. The distinctions between these functional types of imperatives are based on communicative components which reflect the relations between Speaker (S) and Addressee (A): ‘in whose interests the action is carried out’, ‘who benefits from the action’, ‘who initiates the directive’, or such qualities of the participants as wilfulness – non-wilfulness, authority/power to issue the directive, accountability, sanctions, obligations, etc.

From this perspective a Command refers to a Directive where S initiates the directive, has the authority to do so, benefits (in a broad sense) from an action, has institutional power to issue the Directive, and carries out sanctions in case of A’s non-compliance. Addressee in his turn is not wilful, has no authority to refuse, and is obliged to act. Unlike the other imperatives, it is usually a practically bare imperative construction: “Read this letter!” Order differs from Command on the parameter of authority vs. power” (a gun in the hands of a robber: “Give me your wallet!”); Demand differs from the previous two by S’s (-) authority/power and (-) ability for sanctions: “I do not want to see you anymore. Get out!”.

Request differs from the previous group on the parameters that S has no authority to issue a directive, though the action is in his favour, and A is not obliged to carry out an action. Request normally must have some context, some clarifying “hedges”: “Read this letter, will you!”

Advice is issued on the will of A, and for A’s benefit, but A is free not to comply; S

has only moral authority and responsibility for the benefits for A, if A complies. “Read this letter! It might clarify the situation for you”.
Invitation is characterized by the parameter of mutual benefit: “Read this letter! Then we can discuss your plans, otherwise it’s too difficult to judge.”

b. The “presumptive” semantics refers to the state of affairs in the real world at the moment when the Directive was issued. Here such components as the following are important: A. is carrying on some action and the speaker directs him to carry on/stop the action, to shift/not to shift to another action. This layer of pragmatic meaning of the utterance is represented as denotative realities beyond the situation of speech in general and the speech act in particular. This component of meaning influences the understanding of how the expected action is related to the current activity of the “Doer”. This issue is discussed in (Birjulin, 1994) as the continuation of a more general discussion referring to the “presumptive” meaning of a declarative and a question (Hintikka, 1974; Paducheva, 1985).
This is an important component of meaning of the imperative utterance, but it is interpreted by Birjulin as part of the basic/primary imperative meaning. I disagree, because this component becomes clear only if an imperative utterance is positioned in the context.

c. “Politeness” components of the Imperative refer to the pragmatic layer which is aimed to moderate the semantic conflict between the basic principle of politeness, which is a prohibition on imposition (Lakoff, 1973, etc.), and the prescriptive meaning of the Imperative, which violates this principle. A number of semantic components and of discourse strategies to help the Speaker to moderate (or reinforce) the pressure of an Imperative/Directive have been identified (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Clyne, 1994; Marquez Reiter 2000). The major components discussed in respect to politeness were the so-called “face work”components. They were interpreted as one system, reflecting three real-life hierarchies: the mutual social status of interlocutors (professor – student, host – guest, old – young), the power relations between interlocutors (boss – employee, officer – junior rank) and the closeness of relations between interlocutors (close friends, siblings).

My investigation of the grammatical encoding of politeness in the Imperative from a cross-linguistic perspectives permits a broader understanding of politeness. I claim, first, that politeness refers to a wider range of components of an

imperative situation than the ones named above, and, second, that some of these components can be explained within the concepts of a more general semantic framework. I think that there are three semantic areas relevant to politeness.
The first represents how the Speaker(S) verbally treats the Addressee/Doer (A/D) – expressing his high respect towards him (e.g. through honorific forms or Pl when addressing a singular person), or coaxing him into action by marking lexically/grammatically that A/D's compliance will be appreciated (e.g. "Please" semantically going back to the verb "confer pleasure"), or asking for A/D's opinion and agreement to comply, as in Tag-questions :"Go there, will you!".
The second domain is lowering of the deontic modality imposed on the A/D. It consists in substituting ought/must by can/able: "Can you pass me the salt?".
The third domain is lowering of the epistemic modality, by reducing the level of probability of the action taking place: "Would you pass me the salt!". In English these components of politeness are often expressed indirectly by replacing straightforward imperative constructions by questions, tags, indicatives, or modal expressions, but cross-linguistically they are often a grammatically marked part of an imperative construction.

d. The layer of sincerity concerns whether S really wants A. to carry out an action. This parameter is often discussed in connection with Prohibitives, e.g. "Don't' tell anyone!" with the hope that the information will spread around.

All the above described layers of meaning of an imperative utterance are important, but they are only additional modifications (or maybe specifications) of the basic imperative meaning. Their presence makes the surface meaning of an imperative utterance seem quite messy, but if we adopt the scheme I put forward, at least there appears to be an ordering frame of what to look for in defining the meaning of the utterance.
None of these semantic components is part of the basic meaning of the imperative construction as an actualization of the Imperative as a grammatical category.
In contrast to the vast research on the pragmatic components of Imperative meaning discussed above, not much attention has been paid to the analysis of basic Imperative meaning. The dominant approach in grammars was to describe the semantics of the Imperative as a semantic primitive – just "Imperative", "Prescriptive", etc. without breaking it down into components**[iii]**. The speech-act-based understanding of an imperative as a speaker-oriented entity and the analysis of the forms of "imperative constructions" (which constitute an

imperative paradigm) require reconsideration of both the grammatical status and the meaning of this category. Being a speaker-oriented entity, it has to include at least such components as the meaning of the proposition representing the action/event to happen and the "attitude" of the speaker to this event.
I claim that the Imperative is not a verbal category, because such an interpretation does not incorporate the speaker-event relations (which are outside of the proposition), and besides it cannot explain features of imperative forms which are unusual for a verbal category**[iv]**. It is a category of speech act, and consequently its meaning can be broken into the components characterizing speech acts in general and Directives in particular.

6. Speech-act-based interpretation of the imperative
The peculiarities of imperative constructions (see note 4) can be easily explained within a framework where the Imperative is interpreted as a category of speech act. The speech-act nature of the Imperative was widely discussed – it is considered an actualization of Directive (Searle, 1975, 1976). Within a speech-act approach to the Imperative three specific claims are made.
First, the Imperative does not modify the verb but a proposition.
Second, the semantics of the Imperative is not a matter of subject-predicate relations inside a proposition, but is speaker-oriented and thus at least to a large extent is outside the proposition: the speaker has certain intentions towards the existence of the imperativized event (wants, causes, expects cooperation or willingness of the doer, etc.).
Third, the semantics of the Imperative is not a simple primitive, but is a complex of semantic components (Wierzbicka, 1972, 1995; Khrakovskij, 1992; Hamblin, 1987; Moutafakis, 1976). But these three claims were made as separate considerations and have never been put together as a system of interconnected properties (before Dolinina, 1992, 2002). The proponents of the speech-act approach actually have never proposed that we should consider the Imperative as a special type of grammatical category with a categorial status and a categorial paradigm (not a loose set of syntactic constructions) which naturally unites such synthetic forms as "Go!", "Read!" and constructions like "Let's read!", "Let him read!" and refers to all three persons and both numbers.

I propose to incorporate the discoursal features of the Imperative in one system and to claim that the Imperative is a regular grammatical category of a proposition (not of a verb). I propose to call it a "frame-forming" type of category, because such categories are formed by the introduction of additional predicates which specify the content of the proposition in certain ways**[v]**.

7. Components of basic imperative meaning

I claim that the semantic structure of the Imperative (considered as a marked member in the opposition Indicative/Declarative–Imperative) includes at least the following components, reflecting its general speech-act features and its Directive's peculiarities in particular:

1. *an appellative component*: The Speaker addresses his speech to a direct interlocutor – Addressee (feature common for all speech acts). In a variety of languages (e.g. Spanish, Russian) this component is marked explicitly by marking the category of Number on an auxiliary with respect to the number of Addressees.
2. *a causative/volitional component*: The Speaker expresses his causation/volition that some situation/event will take place (particular feature of a Directive). In a wide variety of languages causative auxiliaries are used to mark periphrastic imperative constructions: English "let", German "lassen", etc.
3. *the proposition*: This components is represented by a content verb and it explicates what is the caused/desired situation and who will be bringing it about. This component of meaning is present also in other speech acts as the content of the speech act, but the peculiarity of it in a Directive/Imperative is that it can take place only after the situation of speech.
4. *"framing-inclusion" relations* (to frame and to be framed): This component is specific to any directive, but in the Imperative is signals the temporal priority of the Directive to the situation: the situation has a doubly dependent status – it is embedded in a speech act, but it also is a projection of a future possibility, as something triggered by the Directive/Imperative. What's more, the probability that it will come into existence is not absolute. That is why in many languages at least some imperative constructions are marked by Irrealis, Subjunctive, etc. forms of the verb.

Identification of these components is supported not only by insights into possible semantics of the Imperative in discourse studies, by attempts of logicians to single out what Imperative meaning implies, and by diverse suggestions of logicians of the dominant component of Imperative meaning in order to build reductionists models**[vi]**, but also and most importantly by cross-linguistic data which provide a list of types of marking mechanisms, reiterated in different languages, where each of these components is explicitly marked in an imperative construction.

8. Mechanisms of marking basic imperative

So, according to my interpretation of basic Imperative meaning, the imperative situation is a semantic hybrid, and consequently a syntactic hybrid, of diverse components. It encompasses three component situations: the appellative situation, the causative/volitional situation, and the content situation. This complex of semantic components is present in every imperative construction. When the basic construction is used as/in an imperative utterance, any of the relevant pragmatic components described above (functional, politeness, sincerity, etc.) can be added to it.

Each component situation has its own predicate and its own set of arguments. As in any hybrid, the component situations interact and overlap. Arguments interact, and predicates interact, including first-order predicates in the framed situation and second-order predicates in the framing situation. Arguments interact in the following way. The appellative situation includes two arguments: Addresser and Addressee. The causative/volition situation includes a Causer (issuer of causation and bearer of volition) and a Causee (someone who is caused to act, but can have wilfulness of his own). The content situation has at least one argument – a "Doer". Blending the three sets of participants results in a new set with three macroroles: the speaker S, the listener L, the third party T. The Doer does not exist on its own; it overlaps with any one of the first three roles.

The first macrorole S (Speaker) must combine the roles of an Addresser and a Causer, and can overlap with the Doer (D) role. Since it is always associated with the 1SG, it does not need marking, unless it overlaps with the Doer (D) role. The macrorole L (Listener) must include the Addressee role, and can also include the roles of Causee and Doer; this combination is the prototypical combination in the imperative situation. The macrorole L (Listener) is associated with the 2nd person and is part of a central specialized form of the Imperative. The third macrorole T (third party) becomes part of the imperative situation only if it overlaps with the Doer role D; this role must be explicitly marked. Thus, the marking of the Imperative must obligatorily include marking the Doer if it is not the Addressee. So, the marking of the Doer D is an indispensable component of an imperative construction, not an agreement category as in verbal categories.

The predicates constituting an imperative situation are of two types, "framing" (appellation, causation/volition) and "framed" (content verb). The framing

predicates define the nature of the speech act; the framed predicate defines its content. The framed predicate must be actualized by the content verb; the only variation is in the morphological form of this verb.
The framing part must also be actualized. But the way it is actualized varies. It can be encoded by a special inflection on the content verb, as is the rule for 2nd person imperatives and sometimes for other synthetic constructions. In 1st and 3rd person constructions it can take the form of an actualization of one of the framing predicates**[vii]**.
The appellative predicate can be actualized directly by a special auxiliary or by a particle (e.g. Russian “davaj”), or more commonly indirectly via its arguments: by vocatives, or number-agreement, etc.
Actualization of the appellative predicate evidently highlights the recognition of the existence of L or of the need for L’s cooperation/agreement. The fact that the address function of the Imperative is explicitly encoded in many constructions is evidence that it is inherently present in each of the three-person forms or constructions of the imperative paradigm.
Causation/volition predicates are more commonly actualized than the appellative predicate in imperative constructions. They can be marked straightforwardly by grammatical causatives, by particles, by other delexicalized verbs, or by other auxiliaries which go back to grammatical Inchoatives originating from “movement” verbs.
In summary, the framing predicates must be actualized, but the way they are actualized depends on the selected dominant level of grammaticalization, or paths of grammaticalization (Bybee et al., 1994; Hopper & Traugott, 1993). There can even be zero actualization marked only as the demonstrated dependent status of the content verb (e.g. in Spanish *que*-constructions).

Considering all these facts, the imperative paradigm includes forms which satisfy the above-mentioned semantic qualities. All other imperative forms place these basic constructions with basic Imperative meaning in a discoursal context.

The proposed interpretation of communicative and basic components of the Imperative offers a reliable framework for interpreting the semantic components of each imperative utterance.

NOTES
[i] Among them are the “you will…” theory, which reduces ‘Read this article!” to “You will read this article” and thus reflects the component of Imperative

meaning which refers an action to the future; the “you should…” theory, which chooses as the major semantic component deontic modality: “Read this article!” – “You should/ought to/must read this article”; and the “I order you to…” theory, which puts forward as a semantic dominant causation: “Read this article!” as an equivalent to “I order you to read this article”.

[ii] As far as I know, no one has previously suggested making this distinction. Failure to make it is responsible for a lot of arbitrariness in what particular components are associated with the Imperative.

[iii] Such an attitude is partially understandable, because traditionally the Imperative was treated as a verbal category (Mood) and the semantics of such categories was generally presented as a unity.

[iv] These features are discussed in (Dolinina 2002). They are 1) the inclusion of verb-forms and periphrastic constructions in a single paradigm, 2) the multiple constructions used by different languages to mark each person-value, 3) the frequent difference in marking of Imperative meaning in 1, 2, and 3 persons, 4) the frequent use as markers of the Imperative in non-2-person synthetic forms of forms associated with other verbal categories–Causativity, Modality, Subjunctive, Hortative, Future Indicative, 5) the reconciliation of the need for an addressee with the fact that the Directive is issued to the 1st or 3rd person.

[v] The composite meaning of the Imperative explains why it can be (and actually is) encoded differently in different person-value constructions, why it uses “alien” forms in non-2-person constructions, and how the addressee’s role is preserved in all constructions.

[vi] The drawbacks of these studies were that each researcher singled out generally only one of the components, and not the whole set of them, thus never offering a full range of components of basic imperative meaning.

[vii] Selection among these predicates evidently is based on what was diachronically chosen as a semantic dominant of a directive: causation, or volition, or the need for approval on the part of the addressee, etc.

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