Advisory Board

CONTENTS

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A Comparative Study of the Imperative Structures in French and English

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Introduction:

In linguistics, many grammars have the concept of grammatical mood which describes the relationship of the verb with reality and intent. Many languages express distinctions of mood through morphology, by changing (inflecting) the form of the verb (Warriner,1982:159, Palmer, 1988:151 and Crystal, 1991:223)

Currently identified moods include: conditional sentences, imperative, injunctive, negative, optative, potential, subjunctive and so on. Infinitive is a category apart from all these finite forms, and so are gerunds and participles.

It should be noted that not all of the moods listed above are clearly conceptually distinct and that individual terminology varies from language to language even when two different moods exist in the same language, their respective usages may be blurred, or may be defined by syntactic rather than semantic criteria. We can determine some common characteristics of the imperative mood found in this kind of structures in French and English.

Aims of the Study and Procedure:

Our intention in this research is to treat the subject by discussing the principle axes which constitute a deep one.

We oriented our work to many distinctive directions which seem very fundamental. First of all, it is very necessary to explain the elements of the use of the imperative structures in each language, then we will find the differences and similarities in the above- mentioned languages.

We use the imperatives for different reasons, such as telling people what to do, giving instructions and advice, making recommendations, suggestions

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and offers (Downes, 1977:35). The imperative mood expresses commands, direct requests and prohibitions. Many languages, including English use the bare verb stem to form the imperative. So, in many circumstances, directly using the imperative mood seems blunt or ever rude, so it is often used with care. Muir (1972:93) mentions that it seems clear that the features of mood are realized at clause rank, not at verb or sentence rank: the mood features are realized, in fact, by particular arrangements of (some of) the elements of clause structures, and features of mood are not in a one-to- one relation with contextual classes of the sentence.

In French, the imperative is a mood of action, we don't use it only for narration and description but also for arrangement, invitation, forgiveness and persuading(Wagner and Pinchon, 1962:338)

It also important to indicate that the traditional grammar considers the imperative sentences to be elliptical forms. The analysis of the following sentences, is just a classification of the conditions which determine the use of the imperative structures in English and French.

1. <u>Specification:</u>
This kind of imperative structures is called imperatives with subject without" let". They are either specific or not specific.

a. <u>Specific:</u>
The imperative structure is specific when it is preceded by a vocative as in the following formula with illustrating examples in the sentences below.
        Formula: vocative/ imperative verb + noun
(1)   You be quiet.
(2)   You! Come soon.
(3)   Toi! Viens vite.
The noncontrastive stressed ' You' as an imperative subject in sentence (1) above, may be contrastive in the sense of addressee-distinguishing in sentence(2) and (3), singling out one person or one setoff persons. The identity of the persons may be made clear by a vocative or by some gesture, such as pointing. Third person subjects are also possible as in sentences (4) and (5) below:
(4)   Jean, come soon!
(5)   Jean, viens vite!
 Wagner and Pinchon (1962: 12) mention that the noun or the pronoun" Vous/ toi" is perhaps at the beginning or at the end as in sentence (6).

(6) Viens – vite Jean!

 In accordance with the previous exemplification, it is known that if the person being given the imperative needs to be told who he is, the name is said first or last, as in sentence (7) below:

(7) Come soon, Jean!

Broughton (1990: 128) exemplifies that we include the subject to avoid ambiguity or to give emphasis. This can take both front-and- end position.

To Eastwood (1994:21) the subject ' You' is mentioned when it contrasts with another person or to make an order emphatic or even aggressive, though a few other phrases can be the subject such as ' all of you' and ' everyone'.

It is possible in in English and French for names in the form of a vocative to be a single name with or without a title such as Mr. Smith, Dr. John, or markers of profession or status like Dr., Mr./ Madam, Mr. President, as in the sentences below:

(8) Ali/ Dr. Ali Sir push the button.

(9) Ali, Dr. Ali Monsieur Ali pousser le bouton.

a.   Non Specific:

This kind of sentences is marked by the absence of the vocative, i.e. the intended message by the imperative is direct as in sentences (10) and (11). The meaning of the directive   implies that the omitted subject is the 2nd person pronoun' You'.

(10)   Come soon.

(11)   Viens vite.

Warriner (1982:159) explains that orders demands obedience. Often they are given by important people to less important people. An instruction (also called an order or an imperative) is always in the infinitive without 'to'. So, it is rather like a present simple tense, because English people like to think that they are independent, they often get angry with people who give them orders. So, usually we use the grammar of requests. However, English people do not mind (and usually obey) written instructions, so 'Click here' for example 9 on web pages), 'push/ pull' (on doors), ' no smoking', also the instructions in manuals (e.g computer manuals), or from government employees, such as policemen, you might get the instructions at work in the previous situations.

Eastwood (1994:20) justifies the use of the imperative non- specifically to be informally between equals.

b. Impatience
a. Impatient:

The use of the imperative is motivated by different affected measurements, we mean by that the tone of the voice (intonation), the impatient and requirement…. etc. This kind of sentences is then marked by the usage of certain words placed after the verb as '*donc', ' un peu moi' in French, as in:

(12)   Donc! Repodez- moi (So1 Look at me)
(13)   Donc! Un peu ca! (So a little bit!)

Eastwood (1994: 21) mentions that an imperative can sound abrupt, so in order to avoid this, we often make an order less abrupt by expressing it as a request in question form as in sentence(14), or there are other ways of expressing orders (i.e. I want you to…./ you must…./ mustn't, ought to/ should). For the difference between requests and instructions, register of requests and instructions) (Leech, Cruickshank and Ivanic, 2001:2012)

(14)   Could you get out your books, please?

The words 'please' and " s' il vous plait" are often used to make requests more polite, " please" comes at the beginning or end of the sentence, as with names, but it does not usually come before the name at the beginning or after the name at the end, as in sentences(15), (16), (17), (18) and (19):

(15)   Samantha, please come here.
(16)   Samantha, come here please.
(17)   Come here please Samantha.
(18)   Please, come here Samantha.
(19)   Ouvre la porte s' il te plait.
             Ouvrez   s' il vous plait.

Eastwood (ibid:22) mentions that other ways of expressing orders, are by using the indirect requests, suggestions or very polite requests, according to the register, for example

(20) Excuse me, That's my foot. (translation Get off my foot. Now)

(21) Would you leave now , please sir?

  *Donc: thus,then,so,therefore

The informal or clausal register is used with people we know well. This illustrates the other uses of the imperatives: 1. Sign and Advertisements:

(22) Save the rain forests.

(23) Visit historic Bath.

2. Suggestions and Advice:

(24) Take a year off from your studies and learn something about the real world.

3. Warning and Reminders:

(25) Look out! There is a car coming.

4. Instructions and Directives:

(26) Select the program you need.

5. Informal offers and Invitations:

(27) Have a chocolate.

6. Good Wishes:

(28) Enjoy yourselves.

 b. **Patient:**

This kind of sentences is marked in French by the absence of these words (un peu, donc, moi).

c. Person:

This type of sentences is called directives with " Let" in English and with " Lassie" as introductory particles followed by a subject in the objective case as in:

(29) Let us write the lesson.

(30) Lassie- nous ecrire la lecon.

(31) Let each man decide for himself.

(32) Lasise chacun prend sa décision.

Except for the " let me" type, these are generally archaic and elevated on tone. A colloquial alternative to " let us", is the abbreviated form ' let's'. It is important to mention that there are no 2nd person imperatives with 'let', as in table (1).

Table (1) The Structural Types of English and French Imperatives

		1st person/ 1 ere personne	2nd person/ 2eme personne	3rd person/ 3 eme personne
Without Subject/ Sans Sujet		—	(i)Open the door. (i)Ouvre la porte.	—
With Subject/ Avec Sujet	Without Let/ Sans laisse	—	(ii) 'You open the door. (ii) ' Toi, ouvre la porte.	(iii) Someone open the door. (iii)Quelqu'un ouvre la porte.

■ **Let us** expresses a suggestion of an action by the speaker and the hearer.
■ **Let me think**: the speaker is telling him/herself what to do
■ **Let + Noun Phrase**: Let the person who made this mess clean it up.

3. Insistence:

a. Insistent:

In this type, the stressed subject " You" is added with the vocative. "You" may be noncontrastive and admonitory. " You" expresses insistence in sentence (33).

(33). ' You mind your own business.

Greenbaum and Quirk(1990:242) mention that there is a blurring of subject and vocative, whereas the subject always precedes the verb, the vocative is an element which can occur in final, medial and initial positions in the sentence. Another difference is that the vocative when initially placed, has a separate tone unite (typically fall- rise), the subject only receives ordinary word stress as in sentences (34), (35) and (36).

Vocative:

 (34) MARY, play on 'MY side**.**
 (35) Play on 'MY side MARY.

Subject:

(36) 'MARY play on 'MY side.

The distinctness of vocative and imperative stressed subject " You" is confirmed by the possibility of their co-occurrence as in: **(37)**
John, ' You' listen to 'ME'

In French, this type of sentences is characterized by the usage of the personal pronouns (vous, toi) +noun+ imperative verb, as in sentence (38) below. It is indicated here that the intonation and situation characterize this kind of sentences (see Robins. 1973:25)   **(38)** Jean, toi surveills la porte.

Quirk et al. (1985:833) describe that a positive imperative can be made more persuasive or insistent by adding 'do' (with a nuclear tone) before the verb. 'Do ' reinforces the positive sense of the imperative. This is more typical of female than male speech, as in sentences (39) and (40), where the uses of 'Do' can be applied to classes (i) and (iv) in table (1).

(39) Do have some tea.

(40) Do let's go for a walk.

  b.**Non-insistent**:

They (ibid) realize this kind of sentences by the absence of the emphatic forms as in sentences (41) and (42).   **(41)** Close the door.

(42) Surveille la porte.

[Never speak loudly to one another, unless the house is on fire]

Negation of Imperatives:

a.   Negative Imperatives:

An initial " Don't" or " Do not" can be added to negate the first three classes of imperative in table (1), and change the non-assertive items where necessary as in sentences (43), (44) and (45). "Do and " Don't" are introductory markers and not dummy operators.

First person imperatives are negated by the insertion of " not" after the pronoun following "let" as in sentence (46). Third person imperatives with "let" are negated by "not" after " let" or informally (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:243) by an initial don't as in sentence(48), where the negative form sentence(44) is not frequently used and the noncontracted form "not" is used for more emphatic or formal commands.

(43) Open the door ~ Don't open the door.

(44) 'You open the door ~   Don't you open the door.

      Or You don't open the door.

(45) Someone open the door.~   Don't anyone open the door.

      No one open the door.

(46) Let's not say anything about it.
 (47) Let not anyone fool himself.
      Don't let anyone fool himself.
In French (Gross, 1978:33) mentions that this kind of sentences is characterized by the usage of the particles ne…pas, ne pas…… where the pronouns take their normal positions before the verbs as in sentences (48) and (49).
(48) Ne mange pas trop.
      Do not eat too much.
(49) Ne pas marcher sur la pelouse.
      Do not walk on grass.
    The place of the pronouns obey the same rules of the directives, when a negative imperative sentence has many personal pronouns, as in sentence (50).The tag question " will you"? is used after negative imperative, as in sentence (51).
(50) Ne lui en donne pas.
(51) Don't tell anybody, will you?
    Quirk et al.(1985:831) identify that negative directives are seldom followed by tag questions. The only operators that seem possible are the positive auxiliaries "will" and "can". The tag has a falling tone as in sentence(52).
(52) Don't make a noise, will 'you? can 'you?
b.   Non- Negative Imperatives
This kind of sentences is characterized by the absence of the negative particles. It is clear that negative form sentences are formed by using negative adverbs like " never" and " nowhere" and the semi negatives " hardly", "rarely", "scarcely" and "seldom". The determiner " neither—nor", negative pronouns like "none", "no one", "nothing" and " nobody".
    Eastwood (1994:24) mentions that "always" and "never" come before imperatives, as in sentences (53) and (54).
(53) Always remember what I told you. (Not remember always)
(54) Never speak to me like again.
(55) Ne parle pas avec moi la prochaine fois.

Conclusions:

The imperative mood expresses commands, direct requests and prohibitions. Commands are sentences which normally have no overt grammatical subjects and whose verbs are in the imperative. In many circumstances, using the imperative mood directly seems rude, so it is to be used with care, hence, there are other ways of expressing orders like using" I want you…." or " You must/ ought to….." in English, "pourriez vous…" or" il fait…/ tu dois…" in French. The orders can be less abrupt by expressing it as a request in a question form or by or by markers of politeness such as " please" in English and "si'l vous plait"in French. Many languages including English and French, the bare verb stem is used to form the imperative. Second –person pronouns " You" in English and " toi" in French are implied by the imperative except when first person plural is specified, as in " Let's write" " Laisse- nous ecrir". In addition to the basic use of the imperatives which are slogans and advertisements, suggestions and advices, warnings and reminders, instructions and directions, informal offers and invitations and good wishes.

The imperatives are either with subjects which are also either with " let" in English and " laisse" in French as introductory particles (i.e. 1st and 3rd person pronouns in the objective case) " let" and " laisse" express a suggestion of an action by the speaker and the hearer, or without " let" and " laisse" (i.e. 2nd and 3rd person pronouns), the imperatives are specific when they are used with stressed 2nd and 3rd person pronouns and preceded by the vocative. The confusion between the imperative and the vocative as a grammatical category is possible, the imperatives can be without subjects (i.e. the 2nd person pronouns only, " You" in English, " toi" in French) which are the most common ones. The negative (Don't+ base form) in English/ (Ne… pas, ne pas….) are used. In English, (Do+ base form of the verb) is used for emphasis. It is noted that certain imperative structures in French are termed as " impatience" are marked by the usage of certain words placed after the verb as 'donc, un peu, moi' to express impatient feelings. It is worth mentioning here that " vocative", " stress", and " intonation" play significant roles in designing imperative structures in both languages to avoid ambiguity.

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دراسة مقارنة للتراكيب الامرية في اللغتين الفرنسية والانكليزية

م. سناء صبيح عثمان

المستخلص

تناول البحث الحالي التراكيب الأمريَّة في اللغتين الفرنسية والانكليزية. كان المحور الرئيسي لهذا البحث هو عمل استنتاجات لمقارنة خصائص التراكيب الأمريَّة في كلتا اللغتين. وتعرف التراكيب الأمريَّة على أنَّها جمل لا فاعل قواعدي لها ولفعلها صيغته الاساسية فقط. ترتبط بالتراكيب الأمريَّة التراكيب الخاصة ب "التوجيهات" كأحد انواع التراكيب المرتبطة بوظائف الخطاب والتي تستخدم بصورة رئيسية لإعطاء التوجيهات للقيام بفعل ما. تم الافتراض بان هناك سمات عامة مشتركة بين التراكيب الأمريَّة في كلتا اللغتين الفرنسية والانكليزية. لذا فان الهدف هو اعطاء صيغة تعريفية للأنواع اللغوية العامة التي تخص التراكيب الأمريَّة والى حد ما، اعطاء سمة العالمية لخصائص اللغة البشرية على الرغم من الاختلاف في السمات الخاصة .

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