

Modality-based Account of Imperatives in Palestinian Arabic

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TIN-dag

Feb. 3, 2018, Utrecht

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• 1. Talk objective

Palestinian Arabic (PA) imperative clauses appear to necessitate the re-examination of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic theories of directive natural language (NL). Unlike Romance and Germanic languages, PA allows a wider range of possibilities of imperative clause realization or instantiation. Their exotic nature is manifested by (at least) the following facts: they display serial/stacking verb constructions, embed easily, express rhetorical and ironic meaning, can morphologically appear with past and future meaning overtly, allow universally positive quantified expressions to scope over the directive speech act operator/ phrase, and permit the presence of attitude markers expressing the speaker's attitude towards the eventuality/propositional content of Force phrase. To my knowledge none of the leading theories of NL imperatives predict and able to capture the *totality* of these facts. The main objective of this talk is to contribute to the proper treatment of NL imperatives. More specifically, some *novel* data from Palestinian Arabic (PA) are introduced and the *modal* hypothesis will be argued to best account for these intricate linguistic facts of PA imperatives.

• 2. Main data

PA features (at least) the following matrix imperatives: second-person type, third-person type and the performative modal type, respectively.

- (1) a. *?i-hmid* *rabb-ak* *?inn-ak* *baʕd-ak* *ʕaayeš*
IMP-thank-2SGM master-2SGM that-2SGM still-2SGM live-APC-SGM
“You should thank your God that you are still living!”
- b. *?issa* *l-kull/wala hada/hada* ***yi-tharrak***
now the-every/no one/one IMPV-move-3SGM
“Now everyone/no one/someone (should) now move!”
- c. *?issa* ***badd-ik*** *tu-ruʔš-i¹*
now need-2SGF IMPV-dance-2SGF
“Now you should/need dance!”

¹ Remarkably, Native speakers of PA demonstrate their linguistic competence or knowledge in their possible responses to imperatives. Some natural responses for (1c) that display consent or total compliance by the addressee are the following:

- (i) *(?inti)* *(b-)tu-ʔmur* *(?amir)*
(you) (nonPST-)IMPV-order-2SGM ORDER
“You order.”
- (ii) *?ana* *taħt* *?amr-ak*
I under order-CL-2SGM
“I am under your command.”

PA exhibits various serial imperative verb constructions, as exemplified in (2) and (3).

Adjunction structure

- (2) a. *ʔinti* *fizz* *tiir* *ʔi-štri* *biira*
 you IMP-get-up-2SGM IMP-fly-2SGM IMP-buy-2SGM beer
 “You (should) immediately quickly buy beer!”
- b. *ruuħ* *ʔi-ʕrif-li* *ʔiða* *rašiid* *naayim* (*walla* *laʔ*)
 IMP-go-2SGM IMP-know-2SGM-to-me if Rashid asleep (or not)
 “Go find out for me if Rashid is asleep or not!”
- c. *ʔu-ʔʕud-i* *ʔi-ktib-i* *maktub*
 IMP-sit-2SGF IMP-write-2SGF letter
 “Sit write a letter!”
- d. *ʔiða* *laazim* *ti-ʔištri* *s-sayyara* *ruuħ* *ʔištri-iha*
 if should IMPV-buy-2SGM the-car IMP-go-2SGM IMP-buy-2SGM
 “If you should buy the car, go buy it!”
- e. *ʕaawid-i* *ʔirjaʕ-i* *ʔi-ftaħ-i* *l-baab*
 IMP-return-2SGF IMP-go-back-2SGF IMP-open-2SGF the-door
 “Open the door once again!”
- f. *t-ʕud-i-iš* *ti-ftaħ-i* *l-baab*
 IMPV-return-2SGF-NEG IMPV-open-2SGF the-door
 “Don’t open the door anymore!”

Rhetorical and non-literal imperatives

- g. *ruuħ* *ʔi-ʕrif* *ʔinnu* *rašiid* *raħ* *yi-rbaħ* *l-ʔintaxabaat*
 IMP-go-2SGM IMP-know-2SGM that Rashid FUT IMPV-win-3SGM the-election
 “You cannot know that Rashid is going to win the election.”
- h. *leeš* *ʔuum* *taʕaal* *ʔu-ɖrub-ni*²
 why-ATT IMP-stand-up-2SGM IMP-come-2SGF IMP-hit-2SGM-me
 “Come hit me!”
- i. *ʕajab* *leeš* *ʔuum* *taʕaal* *ʔuɖrub-ni*
 wonder_{ATT} why_{ATT} IMP-stand-up-2SGM IMP-come-2SGF IMP-hit-2SGM-me
 “come hit me!”
- j. *ʔaal* *ruuħ* *ʔi-štri* *marsidis*³
 EVD IMP-go-2SGM IMP-buy-2SGM Mercedes
 “Go buy a Mercedes!”

²The use of *leeš* 'why' in (2h-i) implies or entails that the speaker rejects some aspect(s) of previous interaction with the addressee. The speaker is not really ordering the addressee to stand up and hit him but is rather challenging him, implying that there is no reason to hold any aggressive or negative attitude towards me. It is possible to further reinforce the speaker's attitude by placing *ʕajab* 'wonder' in the left periphery of the imperative clause.

³(2j) is best analyzed as ironic sentences/utterances and, therefore, cannot have the unmarked interpretation of imperatives. The speaker of (2j), for example, seems to mock the addressee since he knows that he cannot afford to buy a Mercedes. A natural response by the addressee would be: *ʕam titmašxar* 'You are making fun!'. Moreover, *leeš* seems to encode *syntactically* the speaker's ironic attitude towards the addressee's-buying –a-Mercedes situation.

k. *ruuh-i ballf-i l-bahir*
 IMP-go-2SGF IMP-tile-2SGF the-sea
 “Go tile the sea!”

l. *ruuh-i ?in?ibr-i b-taxt-ik*
 IMP-go-2SGF IMP-get-burried-2SGF in-bed-CL-2SGF
 “Go sleep in your bed!”

Complementation structure

(3) a. *?inti ?i-?rif ?irfa? haay t-?aawle*
 you-2SG IMP-know-2SGM IMP-lift-2SGM this the-table
 “You (should) know how to lift this table!”

b. *?aawl-i ?i-?tri marsidis*
 IMP-try-2SGF IMP-buy-2SGF Mercedes
 “You should try to buy a Mercedes!”

c. *?i-starji fuut-i ?a d-daar*
 IMP-dare-2SGF IMP-enter-2SGF into the-house
 “You should dare enter into the house!”

d. *?eer-i kul-i samak*
 IMP-start-2SGF IMP-eat-2SGF fish
 “Start eating fish!”

PA imperatives embed easily:

(4) a. *miš raḥ ?a?ul-l-ik yeer ?innu ?i-thammal-i*
 not FUT IMPV-say-1SG-to-2SGF except that IMP-bear-2SGF
 “I will only tell you that you should take the burden.”

b. *rašiid ?aal la-hiba ?innu ?i-dfa?-i li-ḥsaab*
 Rashid said to-Hiba that IMP-pay-2SGF the-bill
 “Rashid said to/told Hiba that you should pay the bill.”

c. *?aḥsan l-ik ?i?tr-i s-sayyara ?issa*
 better Prep-2SGF IMP-buy-2SGF the-car now
 “It is better for you to buy the car now.”

d. *?aal la-hiba ?innu ?issa badd-ik tu-ru?š-i*
 said-3SGM to-Hiba that now need-2SGF IMPV-dance-2SGF
 “He said to Hiba that now you need to dance.”

e. *?i?tr-i ktaab mufiid ?i-?ri-ih*
 IMP-buy-2SGF book beneficiary IMP-read-2SGM-it
 “You should buy a beneficiary book you should read!”

f. *?ana baa?i hoon li?annu t?akkar ?innu ?ultil-lak min ?abil*
 I stay- here because IMP-remember that said-1SG-to-you from before
 “I am staying here because you should remember that I told you before.”

g. *rašiid bi-nabbih ?ale-ek innu ma-ti-ftaḥ-iš n-naadi*
 Rashid makes-aware Prep-2SGM that Neg-IMPV-open-2SGM-Neg the-club
 “Rashid makes you aware that you shouldn’t open the club.”

PA permits imperatives featuring the past tense marker *kaan* ‘was’:

- (5) a. *kaan* *ʔi-štr-i* *s-sayyara* *r-rxiis-a*
 was IMP-buy-2SGF the-car-F the-cheap-F
 “You should have bought the cheap car!”
- b. *kun-ti* *ma-ti-štri-iš* *s-sayyara* *r-rxiis-a*
 was-2SGF Neg-IMPV-buy-2SGF-Neg the-car-F the-cheap-F
 “You shouldn’t have bought the cheap car!”
- c. *kun-ti* *tašaal-i* *zuur-i-ina*
 was-2SGF IMP-come-2SGF IMP-visit-2SGF-us-1PL
 “You should have come visited us!”
- d. (~~kaan~~) *miš* *ʔa-beeš* *s-sayyara*
 (was) Neg IMPV-sell-1SG the-car
 “I should have sold the car.”

(5a-c) provide an argument for the presence of tense as a grammatical ingredient of imperative syntax and their counterfactual interpretation seems to depend on the interaction between the past tense marker *kaan* and the implicit modal head in their syntactic structure. This is consistent or compatible with the irrealis reading of clauses that display the negative marker *miš* and the non-finite verb (the so-called ‘subjunctive’ in Romance and Germanic languages) associated with modality meaning, as shown in (5d), where the speaker of (5d) reprimands himself or herself because of his or her irrational decision that occurred prior to speech time⁴. The amazing facts here are that (a) the morpheme *miš* does not contribute a sentential negation *semantically* nor does the modal clause necessitate the presence of the past tense marker *obligatorily*. It is enough at this stage to note that the declarative clause has a rhetorical sense or meaning and the fact that PA permits implicit encoding of tense, especially in present tense sentences.

Interestingly enough, the imperative complex can move across the past tense marker *kaan*, on a par with past modals featuring *laazim* ‘should/must’:

- e. i. *kaan* *ʔinbšet* ii. *ʔinbšet* *kaan*
 was IMPget-joy-2SGM IMP-get-joy-2SGM was
 “You should have had fun!” “You should have had fun!”
- f. i. *kunt* *laazim* *ti-nbšet* ii. *lazim* *kunt* *ti-nbšet*
 was should IMPV-get-fun-2SGM should was IMPFV-get-fun-2SG
 “You had to have had fun.” “You had to have fun.”

⁴ This datum constitutes a real problem for Karawani and Zeijlstra’s (2013) account of the semantics of *kaan*, since they seem to be unaware of it. In their account, only the past habitual reading is possible, since they assume that counterfactuality reading of PA matrix declaratives is possible if, and only if, there are two layers of tense marking. As a matter of fact, they wrongly rule out declaratives featuring only the imperfective form of the verb, their (2), p.106. Moreover, they are silent over past perfect sentences such as (i), where two overt tense markers of the perfective morphology are present and nevertheless no counterfactuality reading is available.

(i) *kaan-at* *šaar-at* *kaatb-i* *l-maktuub*
 was-3SGF have-PST-3SGF write-PTC-SGF the-letter
 “She had already written the letter.”

Moreover, the past imperative can occupy the antecedent of a counterfactual conditional without the overt irrealis complementizer *law* ‘if’:

- g. *kaan* *ʔul-li* *innu* *baddak tbiif* *s-sayyara* *kaan* *ʔi štaref-ha*
 was IMP-tell-to me that want-you sell the-car was bought-it
 “If you had told me that you want to sell the car I would have bought it.”
- h. *law* *kaan* *ʔultili* *ʔinnu* *baddak tbiif* *s-sayyara* *kaan* *ʔištaref-ha*
 if was told-me that want sell the-car was bought-it
 “If you had told me that you want to sell the car, I would have bought it.”

PA permits conjoining imperatives and declaratives:

- (6) a. *ʔaamin* *b-ʔalla* *w* *ħayatak raħ* *tityayyar* *meet* *daraji*
 IMP-believe in-God and your life will change hundred degree
 “Believe in God and your life will change hundred percent.”
- b. *ʔu-drus* *mliih* *w* *ʔakiid* *b-ti-njah*
 IMP-study-2SGM well and sure nonPST-IMPV-succeed-2SGM
 “Study well and you will sure succeed!”

PA allows disjoining imperatives and declarative:

- (7) a. *ʔihtrim* *ħaal-ak* *walla* *ba-zʕal* *ʕal-eek*
 IMP-respect-2SGM self-2SGM or nonPST-get-angry Prep-2SGM
 “You should respect yourself or I will get in bad terms with you!”
- b. *ti-kõib-iš* *walla* *ba-ʔ taʕ* *l-ʕalaʔa* *maʔ-aak*
 IMP-lie-2SGM-Neg or nonPST-cut-1SG -the-relation with-you
 “You shouldn’t lie or I (will) terminate our relation!”

PA may display speaker attitude marker in matrix imperative clauses:

- (8) a. *ʔay* *ʔiftaħ* *l-xazni* *ʕaad*
 ATT IMP-open-2SGM the-safe-box already
 “You should already open the safe box!”
- b. *ʔiftaħ* *l-xazni* *ʕaad* *yaa*
 IMP-open-2SGM the-safe-box already ATT
 “You should already open the safe box already!”

The presence of the attitude markers *ʔay* and *yaa* conveys that the speaker desires or demands that the addressee comply or realize the eventuality described by the verb and falls within its scope. The speaker of (8a), for example, expresses a *negative* attitude towards the addressee just because the order/command was not performed immediately in the previous time of issuance and hence feels uncomfortable. The modifier *ʕaad* (‘already’) also encodes lexically the speaker’s desire to have the addressee realize or execute the order/command immediately. It seems therefore reasonable to claim that at least the matrix imperative syntax contains the attitude head that represents the concept of politeness and its polar opposite, impoliteness, as a characterizing feature in the directive force. Under this view, *rajaaʔan* or *min fadlak*, the counterparts of *please*, shows compatibility with the speaker *attitude* head. One advantage for such view is that it can account for the quantificational variability source and diversity of directive illocutionary force of NL imperatives. The syntactic encoding of this type of

information (potentially) provides another advantage over current views that crucially takes minimal semantics with strong pragmatics stance (cf. Portner 2007) and van Fintel and Iatridou 2017). Let us now turn into the main proposal.

• 3. Main proposal

PA imperative clauses appear to motivate the postulation of the following syntactic structure:

(9)

- a. Attitude_{Speaker}>>(Topic)>>Force_{Dir}>>Tense_{nonPst}>>MOD_{IMP}>>SUBJ_{addressee}
Aspect_{Individuator}>>(OBJ) N_{Root}
- b. Agreement phenomenon in serial/stacking verb construction is (a) a reflex of (local) adjunction structure and addressee subject-cyclic movement through the specifier of each (functional) imperative modifier or (b) manifestation of the non-distinctness of the addressee subject in both matrix and embedded context in complementation structure (cf. Khalaily 1997, pp. 238-242).
- c. Matrix imperative clauses with a command/order force feature an implicit universal deontic modal⁵.
- d. Imperative clauses are tensed linguistic objects/entities: their default temporal interpretation is non-past. When the past tense marker *kaan* appears in imperatives, it yields a counterfactual modality interpretation. The modal semantics is attained due to the presence of a covert modal operator and its interaction (with the non-past tense encoded by the imperative morphology) and the past tense marker *kaan*.
- e. Unmarked imperative clauses have a second person subject: when it is covert, it is identified/licensed by the *phi*-features on the (main) imperative predicate, PA being a *pro*-drop language with rich morphology.⁶
- f. The so-called verbal root is in fact a nominal one in PA (cf. Khalaily 1994, 1997). It describes the core eventuality of the (nominal) imperative clause. The imperative verbal form is derived from the truncation of the prefix *phi*-features of the imperfective verbal form and the insertion of the glottal stop ʔ when the complex has the template pattern *CVCVC*: *KaTaB_{PERF} ti-KTiB_{IMPV} ʔi-KTiB_{IMP}*
- g. ALL matrix imperatives have a *speaker attitude* head scoping over the speech act operator that constitutes the directive force. Orders/commands correlate with *Att(itude)_{Speaker}* head specified for [+ Impolite] feature and requests/permissions with the *Att* head specified for [+Polite] feature.
- h. (Matrix) Imperatives may display a *Top(ic)* head immediately following the *Att* head. A natural candidate to occupy the specifier/adjunct of *Top* is the universal positive quantifier. The latter must be base-generated and associated with a matching clitic in the *Force_{DIR}* phrase domain.

⁵ Kaufmann (2012) and Schwager (2006) argue that imperatives always contain a necessary operator accompanied with a number of presuppositions, which contribute to the performative effect of imperatives.

⁶ One possible response to (1c) above is the imperative in (i) as a refusal to realize the content of the order:

(i)	<i>ʔu-rʔuʂ</i>	<i>ʔinti</i>	<i>(leeʂ</i>	<i>ʔana</i>	<i>ʔa-rʔuʂ)</i>
	IMP-dance-2SGM	you-2SGM	(Why	I	IMPV-dance-1SG)
	“You dance! (Why should-me dance?)”				

- i. The Force_{Dir} head encodes the canonical directive speech act in NL and is endowed with the [+Performative] feature to ensure that modal clauses can have a directive use or function, the third type of PA imperatives. The Force_{Dir} may lose the later feature when the Force phrase is dominated by the speaker's rhetorical attitude, as in (2g) for example, thus turning the imperative into an assertive that is subject to truth or falsity judgements⁷.

• 4. Some pieces of evidence for the proposal

I. PA lexicalizes the nominal root of the imperative complex as a cognate/absolute object when the main predicate is focused, as in (10) (cf. Khalaily, 1994, 1997).

- (10) a. *yalla* *ʔissa* *ʔu-ruʔs-i* *raʔiʃ*
 come on now IMP-dance-2SGF DANCE
 “Now you should dance!”
- b. *yalla* *ʔissa* *ʔi-difš-i* *s-sayyara* *dafiš*
 come on now IMP-push-2SGF the-car PUSH
 “Now you should push the car!”

II. One piece of evidence for the presence of a covert modal in PA imperative clauses comes from the following question-answer conversation concerning a decision problem raised by a participant:

- (11) a. *šuu* *ʔissa* (*laazim*) *ʔa-ʕmal*
 what now (should) IMPV-do-1SG
 “What should I do now?”
- b. *ʔissa* *ʔi-difš-i* *s-sayyara* *dafiš*
 now IMP-push-2SG.F the-car PUSH
 “Now you should push the car!”

III. A second argument in favor of the modal analysis of PA imperative clauses comes from the presence of a sentential modal adjunct that selects a non-past predicate in its scope.

- (12) a. *ʔaʔal* *maa* *fii-ha* *hiba* *b-ti-ħdar* *d-druus*
 less what in-it Hiba nonPST-IMPV-attend-3SGF the-lessons
 Minimally, Hiba attends the lessons.”
- b. *ʔaʔal* *maa* *fii-ha* *ʔu-ħdr-i* *d-druus*
 minimally IMP-attend-2SGF the-lessons
 “Minimally, you should attend the lesson!”
- c.* *ʔaʔal* *maa* *fii-ha* *hiba* *ħadr-at* *d-druus*
 minimally Hiba attend-PST-3SGF the-lessons

⁷ This is supported by the fact that a participant in the relevant conversation context may respond with the utterance of (i):

(i) *ʔil-ħaʔʔ* *maʕa-ak/* *ʕahiħ*
 the-truth/right with-CL-2SGM correct/true
 “The truth is with you/You are right/It is correct/true.”

IV. A further support for the modality hypothesis comes from doubly-marked negative imperatives that have a universal deontic modality:

- (13) a.i. *(ma-)ti-ftaħ-iš* *n-naadi* ii. *maa ti-ftaħ n-naadi*
 (Neg-)IMPV-open-2SGM-Neg the-club Neg IMPV-open-2SGM
 “You shouldn’t open the club!” “You shouldn’t open the club!”
- b.i. *miš ti-ftaħ n-naadi* ii. *tayyeb (ma-)ti-?la?-iš*
 Neg IMPV-open-2SG the-club okay (Neg-)IMP-get-worried-2SG-Neg
 “Don’t you open the club!” “Okay, don’t worry!”
- c. *miš ma-ti-ftaħ-iš n-naadi*
 Neg Neg-IMPV-open-2SG-Neg the-club
 “You should open the club!”
- d.* *miš/wala ?i-ftaħ-i / (ma-)?i-ftaħ-i-iš n-naad-i*
 Neg/Neg IMP-open-2SGF/ (Neg-) IMP-open-2SGF-Neg the-club
 “*Not/No open the club!”

Without the presence of a modal in the imperative syntax, one would expect the two sentential negations in (13c) to simply cancel each other out⁸. However, such a cancellation gives rise to universal deontic modality meaning, the counterpart of *should*, as the gloss demonstrates. The resort to the non-finite verb form to generate a prohibitive meaning (‘*al-nahy*’) is due to the ban on unmarked imperative verbs to be *selected* by a sentential negation marker, as show in (13d).

V. One source of evidence for the postulation of tense head in the syntactic structure of imperatives comes from the presence of the aspectual-temporal marker *?ib?i* scoping over the imperative main predicate, as in (14d). The grammaticalization of the former lexical item and its acquisition of tense and aspect meaning allows its presence in pre-imperative complex and lexicalizing the tense head position, despite its obligatory imperative form that is forced by virtue of the imperative mood agreement constraint. Interestingly enough, its future orientation meaning cannot coincide with the immediate temporal modifier *?issa*, thus creating the contrast between the immediate future realized in the unmarked imperatives, as in (1a), and non-immediate future represented in (14d).

- (14) a. *hiba ba?a-t ti-ktib maktuub*
 Hiba be-PST-3SGF IMPV-write-3SGF letter
 “Hiba was writing a letter.”
- b. *hiba b-ti-b?a ti-ktib maktub ba?deen/*?issa*
 Hiba Fut-IMPV-be-3SGF IMPV-write-3SGF letter later/*now
 “Hiba will write a letter tomorrow.”
- c. *hiba raħ ti-b?a ti-ktib rasaayel*
 Hiba Fut IMPV-keep-3SGF IMPV-write-3SGF letters
 “Hiba will keep writing letters.”

⁸ In modal logic, we have the following equivalence: $\neg\Diamond\neg P = \Box P$

d.	<i>ʔi-bʔ-i</i>	<i>ʔi-kitb-i</i>	<i>maktub</i>	<i>baʕdeen/*ʔissa</i>
	IMP-be-2SGF	IMP-write-2SGF	letter	later/*now
	“You should write a letter later!”			

VI. The motivation for the postulation of the topic position in the imperative syntactic structure comes from the fact that PA permits universally quantified nominals such as *kull ʔifel* ‘every child’ to scope over the directive speech operator (or Force phrase), as shown in (15)⁹. A natural continuation of (15) is a conjunction of imperatives: *Help Rashid with a computer, help Hiba with cloths, help Diana with money*, etc.

(15)	<i>kull</i>	<i>ʔifel</i>	<i>saaʕd-u</i>	<i>b-ʔiʕi</i>
	Every/each	child	IMP-help-2SGM-CL-3SGM	Prep-thing
	“Help each child with something!”			

- **5. Previous Analyses of Imperatives**

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- **6. Conclusion**

To conclude, we believe that the syntactic structure posited for imperatives in (9) has the explanatory power potential to account for (at least) the intricate and exotic linguistic facts of PA imperatives. If our analysis is on the right track, it is necessary to expand the theorizing perspective to include ‘marginalized’ languages such as PA and model universal principals or systems according to *both* ‘main stream’ and ‘peripheral’ languages in order to unearth the mysterious and aesthetic beauty of *all* NL facts.

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⁹ Krifka (2001) argues for quantification into question speech acts to account for the pair-list reading of quantifiers in questions such as (i):

(i) Which dish did every chef make?

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