

Left-Peripheral Interactions in English Imperatives

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Main Questions

- How do the information-structural restrictions of imperatives differ from declaratives (and questions)?
- Are these restrictions semantic or syntactic?
- Can a universal syntactic model explain these restrictions in English, while permitting cross-linguistic variability?

What's in the imperative CP field?

Several hypotheses have been proposed in the literature:

Unitary CP (e.g. Han 2000)	CP > TP ...
Clause-specific phrase (Zanuttini 2008, Zanuttini et al. 2012)	JussiveP ≥ TP ...
Articulated CP (Rizzi 1997)	ForceP > TopP > FocusP > TopP > FinP > TP ...

I adopt a structure for English that incorporates Rizzi-style positions but also allows conflation of adjacent positions.

Extended articulated CP for English (following Haegeman 2004)

Sub / Force / TopP > FocusP > FinP > TP ...
Sub / Force / TopP is a single, conflated phrase = CP

Key features:

- No low TopP in English.
- C⁰ carries three features: [±Sub, Force{DEC/INT/IMP}, ±Top]

What kind of topics are allowed?

Only contrastive topics (hosted in FocusP) are allowed in English imperatives.
 (Cormany forthcoming)

- (1) The book, John bought ____.
- (2) *The book, buy ____!
- (3) These stocks, the broker bought immediately.
- (4) These stocks, buy immediately! (Those avoid at all costs!)

	contrastive topic	non-contrastive topic
declarative	✓	✓
imperative	✓	✗

What topics do other languages allow?

Non-contrastive topics do freely appear in other languages.

(5) Chayk un ilke-ra!
book TOP read-IMP
"Books, read!"

(Korean)

Korean distinguishes SubP and ForceP (Zanuttini et al. 2012)

Un overtly marks high TopP, an available fronting position.

How are clauses typed?

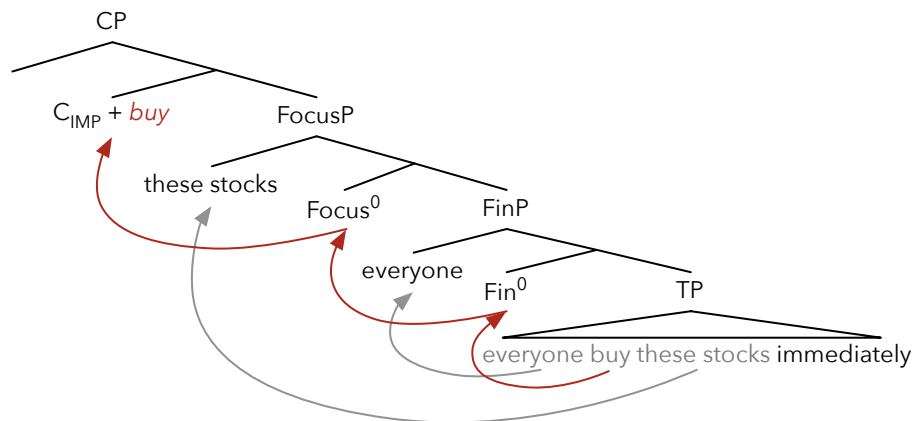
Clause typing hypothesis

All clauses contain an element that scopes over a propositional constituent (TP) and specifies its discourse function. (Cheng 1991)

Methods that don't work for English:

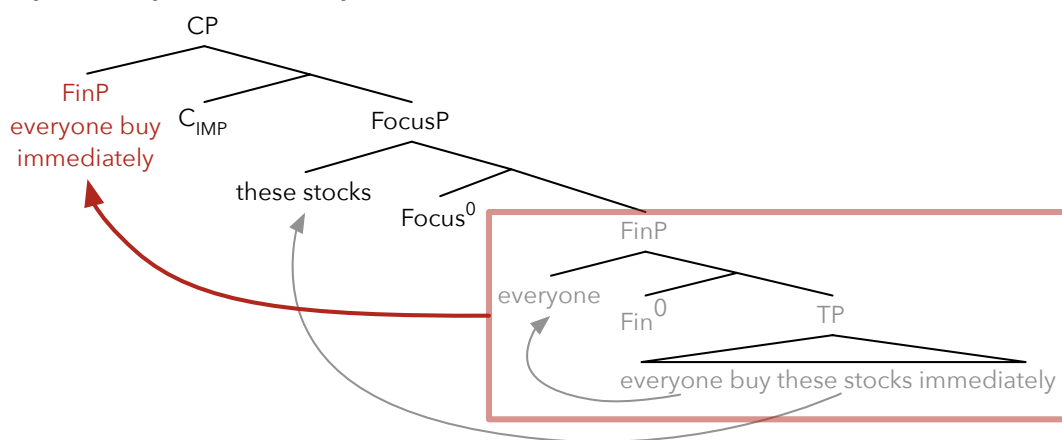
Head movement of V to C (Han 2000)

(6) *Buy these stocks everyone immediately!



Phrasal movement to Spec ForceP (Koopman 2007)

(7) *Everyone buy immediately these stocks!



Method that does work for English:

Force feature of C⁰

Not in free variation; portmanteau with Sub and Topic.

	[-Sub]		[+Sub]	
	[-Top]	[+Top]	[-Top]	[+Top]
declarative	∅	∅	that, ∅	X
interrogative	∅	X	if, whether	X
imperative	∅	X	∅	X

Interactions with typed C⁰

English embeds both DEC and IMP clauses (Crnic and Trinh 2009)

Neither is headed by a [+Top] complementizer.

- (8) *John said [a book that he bought ____.]
- (9) *John said [a book ∅_{SUBORD.DEC} he bought ____.]
- (10) *John said [a book ∅_{SUBORD.IMP} buy ____.]

Embedded clauses still have FocusP.

- (11) John said [_{CP} that [_{FocusP} THE BOOK he bought ____.]
(...not the magazine.)
- (12) John said [_{CP} ∅_{SUB.IMP} [_{FocusP} THESE STOCKS buy ____.]
(...those avoid.)

Subjects never precede negation in English imperatives.

- (13) *You don't do that! high subject X
- (14) You, don't do that! vocative ✓
- (15) Don't you do that! low subject ✓

Placing Neg in FocusP enforces this order. (Zanuttini 1997)

Wh-extraction is impossible from English imperatives.

- (16) John_i said [∅_{IMP} send his_i mother to the store].
- (17) *Who did John say [send ____ to the store]?

Other types of extraction, e.g. clefting (18) and long-distance topicalization (19), are more acceptable. (Cormany forthcoming)

- (18) a. It's this book (that) John said [read ____].
b. ?It's at the library, John_i said [meet him_i ____].
- (19) His_i mother, John_i said [send ____ to the store].

Conclusions

- English imperative clauses have different information-structural restrictions because they must be typed IMP.
- The limited left-peripheral structure in English requires that clause-typing and topicalization occupy a single position.
- Lexical gaps (no [+Top, Force{IMP}] complementizer) and in-situ clause typing block non-contrastive topic raising.
- Other languages' complementizer inventories (as conditioned by syntax) will drive similar processes.

References

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