

# 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** CP > TP ...  
(e.g. Han 2000)

**Clause-specific phrase** JussiveP ≥ TP ...  
(Zanuttini 2008, Zanuttini et al. 2012)

**Articulated CP** ForceP > TopP > FocusP > TopP > FinP > TP ...  
(Rizzi 1997)

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 ...  
single, conflated phrase = CP

Key features:

- No low TopP in English.
- C<sup>0</sup> 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!)

## What topics do other languages allow?

Non-contrastive topics do freely appear in other languages.

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

Korean distinguishes SubP and ForceP (Zanuttini et al. 2012)  
*Un* overtly marks TopP, an available fronting position.

## How are clauses typed?

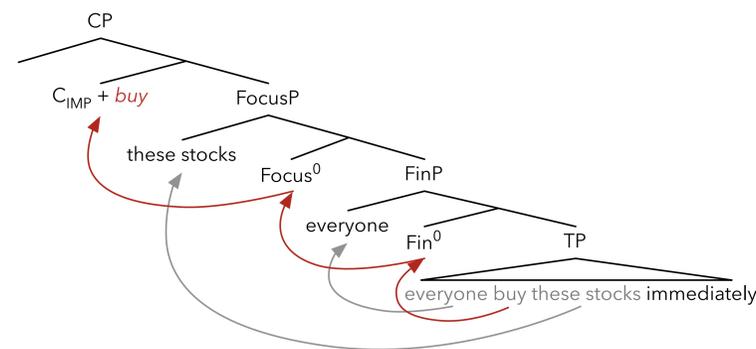
### Clause typing hypothesis

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:

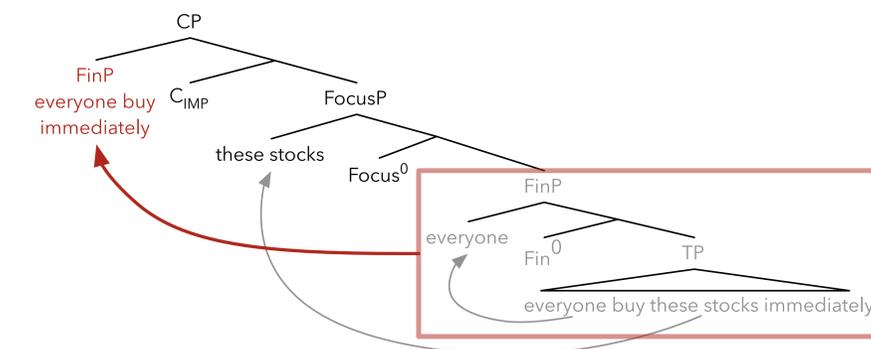
#### Head movement of V to C (Han 2000)

- (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 C<sup>0</sup>

Not in free variation; portmanteau with Sub and Topic.

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

Collocations of features on English C<sup>0</sup>

## Interactions with typed C<sup>0</sup>

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 ∅<sub>SUBORD.DEC</sub> he bought \_\_\_\_.]
- (10) \*John said [a book ∅<sub>SUBORD.IMP</sub> buy \_\_\_\_.]

### Embedded clauses still have FocusP.

- (11) John said [CP that [FocusP THE BOOK he bought \_\_\_\_.]  
(...not the magazine.)
- (12) John said [CP ∅<sub>SUB.IMP</sub> [FocusP THESE STOCKS buy \_\_\_\_.]  
(...those avoid.)

Subjects never precede negation in English imperatives.

- (13) \*You don't do that! high subject ✗
- (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<sub>i</sub> said [∅<sub>IMP</sub> send his<sub>i</sub> mother to the store].
- (17) \*Who did John say [send \_\_\_\_ to the store]?

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

## 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.



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