An illocutionary account of reportative evidentials in imperatives
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1. Introduction: This paper provides the first detailed formal investigation of reportative evidentials in imperative sentences (henceforth, \text{ImpRep}). While Aikhenvald (2004) claims that most reportatives do not allow \text{ImpRep}, there is a sizable minority of languages in which this is possible. Drawing on original fieldwork for two such reportatives – Tagalog \textit{daw} and Yucatec Maya \textit{bin} – we argue that \text{ImpRep} have the same discourse potential as unmodified imperatives once the pragmatic perspective shift associated with reportatives (AnderBois (2014)) is taken into account. We develop an account of \text{ImpRep} as update modifiers within an augmented Farkas & Bruce (2010)-style model of discourse context.

2. \text{IMPRep} pattern with imperatives: The scant prior literature on \text{ImpRep} has reached divergent conclusions on their core properties. Aikhenvald (2010) claims that the meaning of \text{ImpRep} across languages is not mere hearsay, but rather “imperative by proxy”. However, recent formal work on \text{ImpRep} reaches essentially the opposite conclusion. For example, Korotkova (2016) regards them as ‘quotatives’, while Schwager (2010) describes them as ‘not an imperative on behalf of a third party, but rather an entirely neutral report of an imperative’ (see also, Thomas (2014)). Lacking in both bodies of work, however, are felicity judgments of \text{ImpRep} in a variety of discourse contexts manipulated to test these claims. Using such data, as in (1) in Yucatec Maya, we argue for a version of the former view.

(1)\textbf{Order Context:} Our mother has told me to make sure that your younger sibling eats their dinner. I tell my sibling:
\textit{Uk’ \text{bin} a \text{wo’och k’eyem=’o’} drink.\text{IMPER \text{REP} your meal \text{pozole=’DISTAL} ‘Drink your pozole (she orders/advises)’}}

Claim I – not quotations: We present three arguments against the claim that \text{ImpRep} involve quotation. First, indexicals – including the imperative subject – consistently do not shift in \text{ImpRep}, even in Tagalog where the imperative subject is overt (NB. unlike English imperatives embedded under \textit{say}). Second, comparing \text{ImpRep} in Yucatec Maya with analogous examples with the quotative particle \textit{k-}, the latter consistently do result in ‘mere reports’ rather than commands/offers/etc. (Lucy (1993)). Finally, we show that \text{ImpRep} are felicitous in contexts where the original speech act being reported on is not an imperative or even modal, but nonetheless makes clear the reporter’s preference.

Claim II – range of illocutionary forces unchanged: Imperatives can be used to perform a wide range of (direct) speech acts including not just commands, but also offers, wishes, advice, etc. This same range of speech acts is found for \text{ImpRep}, as partially illustrated in (1). Like other imperatives, \text{ImpRep} are not seen by speakers as interchangeable with corresponding declaratives, and are infelicitous in purely information-seeking contexts. For example, (1) is infelicitous as a response to a question like ‘What have you heard?’ or ‘What does Mom want?’ Further corroborating this, the possible linguistic responses to \text{ImpRep}, (2), pattern with imperatives rather than declaratives (contra Schwager (2010)’s ex. 18’).
(2) **Context:** Responding to (1)

No NEG.1SG eat NEG PROG NEG true okay then true
‘No, (I won’t).’ // ‘I won’t.’ // #’It’s not true.’ // ‘Okay then.’ // #‘True.’

Cl**aim III – Strength and deniability due to pragmatics:** Aikhenvald (2004, 2010) claims that languages vary with respect to whether reportatives systematically ‘weaken’ the illocutionary force of imperatives. By manipulating discourse contexts systematically, we show that either ‘weakening’ or ‘strengthening’ may occur depending on the relative authority of the speaker, hearer, and the reporter and the speech act being performed. Thomas (2014) makes a superficially similar observation, claiming that \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) in Mbyá allow for explicit denials of the form “\( p!_\text{Rep} \), but I don’t want \( p \).”. Looking more broadly at \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) in discourse, however, we find a similar pattern to that described in AnderBois (2014) for declaratives. \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) are overwhelmingly used like other imperatives, but explicit denials are possible in cases where the disconnect between the speaker’s and reporter’s perspectives is made especially salient. Absent this sort of perspectively-rich environment, the speaker is taken to have some level of personal commitment, as in corresponding sentences with no reportative.

III. Reportatives as illocutionary update modifiers: Whereas ordinary preferences need not be consistent, Condoravdi & Lauer (2012) claim that imperatives express effective preferences, i.e. ones which are consistent and therefore guide our actions. They propose that an imperative \( !p \) uttered by a encodes a’s effective preference for the proposition \( p \) over \( \neg p \). Drawing on Farkas & Bruce (2010)’s conception of declaratives as contributing proposals to update a shared element of the discourse scoreboard, the Common Ground (CG), we claim that imperatives encode proposals to update the shared set of effective preferences taken for granted by the conversational participants, CP (see Starr (2013), von Fintel & Iatridou (t.a.) for related ideas). Inferences about the speaker’s individual preferences arise from reasoning about the speaker’s proposal, rather than being encoded semantically (an idea independently motivated by disinterested advice imperatives). Finally, we extend AnderBois (2014)’s account to \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) as in (3-4). \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) still contribute a proposal to update the CP, but also the information that the proposal is based on the preferences of the reporter.

(3) **Discourse components:** \( \langle X, \text{CG}_X, \text{CP}_X, \{\text{DC}_x \mid x \in X \} \rangle \)

(4) A **reportative imperative** by a with content \( p \) and evidential source \( \text{REP} \):

a. Adds \( \text{REP}(p > \neg p) \) to \( \text{DC}_a \).

b. Proposes to add \( p > \neg p \) to \( \text{CP}_{\{a,b\}} \) on the basis of (4a), subject to b’s acceptance.

IV. Conclusions: We have argued that \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) require an illocutionary modifier analysis. Given previous literature on the illocutionary/epistemic distinction, we might expect to find that these reportatives pattern together on other properties. This expectation is not met. Tagalog \textit{daw} can be embedded in a variety of environments and allows for ‘interrogative flip’, whereas Yucatec Maya \textit{bin} does neither of these. The data therefore cast doubt on this dichotomy (cf. Korotkova (2016)), or at the very least suggests that individual evidentials may have uses of both types. Similarly, the possibility of \( \text{Imp}_\text{Rep} \) does not show a clear correlation with independent properties of imperatives themselves. For example, while certain imperatives in Tagalog are claimed to be embeddable, imperatives in Yucatec Maya are not.
References


von Fintel, Kai & Sabine Iatridou (t.a.) A modest proposal for the meaning of imperatives, ms, submitted to a volume on Modality across syntactic categories (Oxford University Press), ed. by Ana Arregui, Marisa Rivero, and Andrés Pablo Salanova.


