This talk concerns the ban on imperatives in questions, or better the lack thereof. I argue, based on attestations, that there is no per se ban on imperative questions and that the ban is really a conspiracy of two independent semantic factors.

(1) a. * Komu pomaga-j?
   who.DAT help-IMP.
   int.: ‘Who must you help?’

b. * (Ali) Mu pomaga-j?
   3.M.DAT help-IMP.
   int.: ‘Must you help him!’?

The ban is traditionally understood as showing a prohibition of combining two of the main clause types (cf. Sadock and Zwicky 1985). But this kind of general ban has been challenged, as imperatives can appear in echo questions or rhetorical questions (Kaufmann and Poschmann 2013, KP13). However, even KP13 claim that imperatives are impossible in ‘true’ information seeking questions. I argue that:

(i) imperatives can also occur in information seeking questions, namely scope marking questions (Dayal 1994) such as (2a) (same meaning as (2b)),
(ii) there is thus no general ban on imperative questions,
(iii) what is responsible for the badness of other kinds of imperative questions (cf. (1)) is a subject obviation-like effect, prohibiting coreference between subjects of interrogative imperatives and the addressee, which arises from the semantics of imperative/directive operators (Stegovec 2016) and matrix attitudinal operators (Pearson 2012), and
(iv) a ban on imperative questions occurs only when a directive operator is in the scope of a matrix interrogative attitudinal operator, which is not the case in scope marking questions like (2a), explaining why they are good.

(2) a. Kaj je rekel? Komu pomaga-j?
   what.AUX.3 said who help-IMP.
   ‘What did he say? Who must you help?’

b. Komu je rekel, da pomaga-j?
   who AUX.3 said that help-IMP.
   ‘Who did he say you must help?’

**Subject obviation.** Imperatives can occur embedded in speech reports in Slovenian (Sheppard and Golden 2002), but the matrix subject and the subject of the embedded imperative cannot be coreferential (Stegovec and Kaufmann 2015, Stegovec 2016), showing the same subject obviation restriction often found with subjunctives embedded under attitude verbs (Quer 2006). Both in Slovenian and in languages that disallow embedded imperatives, this restriction manifests in matrix clauses as a ban on exclusive first person (1P) subjects for all constructions with a canonical directive speech act function. In the case of Slovenian, there are two such constructions: verbal imperatives and ‘analytic’ imperatives (naj + verb). The two have a complementary distribution (cf. (3)): the former exist for 2P and inclusive 1P subjects, while the later exist for 3P and exclusive 1P subjects. However, 1P analytic imperatives cannot occur in matrix clauses due to a systematic ban against singular/exclusive 1P subjects, see (3a). In other words, the subject cannot corefer with the speaker.

(3) a. ‘Help!’

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b. ‘Q + Help!’

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<td>3P</td>
<td>naj pomaga?</td>
<td>naj pomaga-ta?</td>
<td>naj pomaga-jo?</td>
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Interestingly, the restriction is different in questions (3b): subjects can be 1P exclusive/singular, but not 2P. Thus, analytic imperatives can occur in questions with 3P and exclusive 1P subjects (cf. (4)), but imperatives are now impossible, as they are limited to 2P and inclusive 1P (=1P+2P) subjects.
I propose that this subject gap is all there is to the ban on imperatives in questions, where the coreference ban arises due to the special semantics of directive/imperative operator I lay out below.

**Perspectival PRO.** I adopt a version of the *performative modal* approach to imperative semantics (see, a.o. Kaufmann 2012), and propose that imperatives and other dedicated directive constructions (directive subjunctives, surrogate imperatives, etc.) involve the operator $OP_{Dir}$ (5b), which due to its complex semantic type (cf. standard necessity modal in (5a)) requires a type $e$ element (perspectival $PRO$) to satisfy the centered conversational backgrounds $(f_x, g_x)$ that are part of its semantics.

This can account, among other things, for the ‘speaker distancing ban’ (Kaufmann 2012, Condoravdi and Lauer 2012), and subject obviation as a Condition B effect. In control infinitives (6a), $PRO$ is bound by the matrix subject and cannot coreferential with pronominal objects. With subject obviation (6b), $PRO$ is bound the same way, but now the subject $pro$ that cannot be coreferential.

I suggest that with matrix directive clauses, perspectival $PRO$ is bound by the speaker in non-interrogatives, and addressee in interrogative contexts. This correctly predicts a ban on (exclusive) 1P subjects with the former (7a) and 2P subjects with the latter (7b), as a form of subject obviation.

I assume speaker/addressee binding occurs via matrix attitudinal operators (Pearson 2012): COMMIT (8) (non-interrogatives) and ASK (10) (interrogatives). The former takes a root sentence meaning (a centered proposition) as its argument and (via presupposition) returns a property only if the property is true in the speaker’s belief worlds. This is shown with the sample derivation of ‘Leave!’ in (9).

**Scope marking questions.** The account predicts that the ban is only observed when ASK ranges over an $OP_{Dir}$. Thus, what makes (2a) grammatical is the fact that ASK only ranges over ‘What did he say?’, so perspectival $PRO$ is not bound by the addressee (but by ‘he’), and no ban is observed.
References