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LINGUISTICS

**explore** /ɪk'splɔːr/

(a country etc.) to investigate or  
2 inquire into

examine (a person or thing)  
/ɪk'splɔːrətɪv/

# Commands

*A Cross-Linguistic Typology*

EDITED BY

Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald  
and R. M. W. Dixon

*Explorations in Linguistic Typology*

# Commands

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## EXPLORATIONS IN LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY

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# Commands

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Edited by

ALEXANDRA Y. AIKHENVALD and  
R. M. W. DIXON

Language and Culture Research Centre  
James Cook University

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# Contents

*Preface* x

*Notes on the contributors* xii

*Abbreviations* xvii

## 1 Imperatives and commands: a cross-linguistic view 1

*Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald*

- 1 Preamble 1
- 2 Imperatives and commands 2
- 3 Canonical and non-canonical imperatives 5
- 4 Non-imperative forms in lieu of imperatives 8
- 5 Imperatives, their grammar, and meanings 11
- 6 Negating an imperative 18
- 7 The limits of imperatives 20
- 8 Imperatives which do not ‘command’ 23
- 9 Command strategies 24
- 10 Imperatives in language history 30
- 11 Understanding imperatives 33
- 12 About this volume 37
- References 40

## 2 Imperatives and commands in Quechua 46

*Willem F. H. Adelaar*

- 1 Preliminary information on Quechua 46
- 2 Nature of the sources 50
- 3 Expression of imperatives 50
- 4 Imperative and Future tense 51
- 5 Negative commands 53
- 6 Prohibitive adverb *ama* 53
- 7 The copula construction in an imperative environment 54
- 8 Grammatical categories of imperatives 55
- 9 Politeness 56
- 10 Pre-imperatives 56
- 11 Special imperatives 57
- 12 Postverbal clitics 57
- 13 Imperative in quotations 58

14	Vocatives	58
15	Imperative strategies	58
16	A final word	59
	References	59
3	The grammatical representation of commands and prohibitions in Aguaruna	61
	<i>Simon E. Overall</i>	
1	Introduction	61
2	Typological profile	62
3	Formal marking of directives	67
4	Commands in grammar	76
5	Commands in interaction	79
6	Final comments	82
	References	82
4	Imperatives in Ashaninka Satipo (Kampa Arawak) of Peru	83
	<i>Elena Mihás</i>	
1	Community background	83
2	The language	84
3	The canonical imperative construction	88
4	First person cohortative construction	89
5	Third person jussive construction	90
6	Summary of the imperative paradigm	91
7	Restrictions on the formation of imperative	91
8	Prohibitives and preventives	94
9	Specification of the action's temporal, spatial, and phasal parameters	95
10	Adjusting the force of commands	96
11	Command strategies	98
12	Responses to commands	100
13	Mock-up commands	101
14	Calling people and other spiritual entities	102
15	Commands given to pets and domesticated animals	102
16	Conclusions	103
	References	105
5	Commands in Zenzontepec Chatino (Otomanguéan)	106
	<i>Eric W. Campbell</i>	
1	Introduction	106
2	Basic information about Zenzontepec Chatino and the data in this study	107
3	Grammatical sketch	108

---

4	Canonical imperatives: the Imperative Mood	112
5	Prohibitives and non-canonical imperatives	118
6	Other addressee-directed command strategies	121
7	Conclusion	124
	References	125
6	What Dyirbal uses instead of commands	127
	<i>R. M. W. Dixon</i>	
1	Preface	127
2	Introduction	127
3	Background	130
4	Verbal structure	133
5	Potentiality inflection	137
6	Caution inflection	142
7	Conclusion	144
	References	145
7	On the heterogeneity of Northern Paiute directives	146
	<i>Tim Thornes</i>	
1	Introduction	146
2	Exploring directive speech	146
3	The language and its speakers	147
4	Preliminaries: Northern Paiute grammatical properties	148
5	Note on sources	151
6	Commands in Northern Paiute	151
7	Command strategies	153
8	The prohibitive construction	157
9	Development of the prohibitive construction	158
10	Non-canonical directive: first person (ex)hortative	159
11	Non-canonical directive: third person optative	161
12	Historical considerations	162
13	Summary and conclusion	165
	References	166
8	Imperatives and commands in Japanese	169
	<i>Nerida Jarkey</i>	
1	Preliminary information	169
2	Cultural parameters, commands, and discourse	171
3	Expression of imperatives and prohibitives	173
4	Semantics of imperatives	176
5	Grammatical categories of imperatives	178
6	Non-command meanings of imperatives	179



7	Command strategies	181
8	Conclusion	187
	Sources	188
	References	188
9	Linguistic expression of commands in Lao	189
	<i>N. J. Enfield</i>	
1	Preliminary information	189
2	Expression of imperatives	191
3	Negative imperatives	196
4	Semantic distinctions in commands	197
5	Social hierarchy and commands	202
6	Conclusion	204
	References	205
10	Imperatives and command strategies in Tayatuk (Morobe, PNG)	206
	<i>Valérie Guérin</i>	
1	The language	206
2	Canonical imperatives	209
3	Non-canonical imperatives	211
4	Negative imperatives	213
5	Commands strategies	214
6	Concluding notes	218
	References	222
11	Imperatives and commands in Nungon	224
	<i>Hannah S. Sarvasy</i>	
1	Introduction to Nungon	224
2	Imperatives overview	227
3	Imperative forms in other clause types	238
4	Imperative strategies	242
5	Origin of imperative forms	246
6	Acquisition of imperatives	247
7	Dog commands	248
	References	248
12	The imperative paradigm of Korowai, a Greater Awyu language of West Papua	250
	<i>Lourens de Vries</i>	
1	Introduction	250
2	Introduction to the Korowai verb system	250

3	Korowai imperatives	252
4	Summary and discussion	263
	References	264
13	Commands as a form of intimacy among the Karawari of Papua New Guinea	266
	<i>Borut Telban</i>	
1	Introduction	266
2	The use of commands in Ambonwari	268
3	Short non-verbal commands	269
4	Canonical verbal imperatives marked with the suffix <i>-ra</i> or <i>-nda</i>	270
5	Verbal imperatives/hortatives marked with the suffix <i>-n</i>	276
6	Potential form used in mild commands	278
7	A note on non-canonical commands	279
8	Conclusion	280
	References	281
14	Commands in Wolaitta	283
	<i>Azeb Amha</i>	
1	Introduction	283
2	Sentence-type distinction	285
3	Imperative	287
4	On the use and meanings of imperatives	297
5	Concluding remarks	298
	References	300
15	Veiled commands: anthropological perspectives on directives	301
	<i>Rosita Henry</i>	
1	A question of command	301
2	Directives in an intersubjective world	302
3	Speech acts in the Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea	305
4	Veiled words materialized	307
5	Your wish is (not) my command	309
6	Conclusion: veiled commands, egalitarian values, and language materiality	311
	References	312
	<i>Index of authors</i>	315
	<i>Index of languages, peoples, language families and areas</i>	318
	<i>Index of subjects</i>	322

# Preface

Every language has numerous means for getting someone to do something. These cover orders, pleas, entreaties, and other directives. They correlate with social conventions, existing hierarchies, and even kinship systems. This volume focuses on the form and the function of commands (or directive speech acts), their interrelationship with cultural stereotypes and practices, and their origins and development, especially in the light of language contact under different circumstances.

The volume starts with a typological introduction outlining the marking, and the meaning, of imperatives and other ways of expressing commands and directives, together with their cultural and social aspects and historical developments. It is followed by revised versions of fourteen presentations from the International Workshop 'Commands', held at the Language and Culture Research Centre, James Cook University, 28 September–3 October 2015. An earlier version of Chapter 1 had been circulated to the contributors, with a list of points to be addressed, so as to ensure that their detailed studies of individual languages were cast in terms of a common set of typological parameters. (This is the eighth monograph in the series *Explorations in Linguistic Typology*, devoted to volumes from International Workshops organized by the co-editors.)

The week of the workshop was intellectually stimulating and exciting, full of discussions and cross-fertilization of ideas. Each author has undertaken intensive fieldwork, in addition to experience of working on linguistic typology, historical comparative issues, and problems of areal diffusion. The analysis is cast in terms of basic linguistic theory—the cumulative typological functional framework in terms of which almost all descriptive grammars are cast—and avoids formalisms (which provide reinterpretations rather than explanations, and come and go with such frequency that any statement made in terms of them is likely soon to become inaccessible).

It is our hope that this volume will provide a consolidated conceptual and analytic framework. We aim at covering the major parameters of variation in the expression of commands and a plethora of directive speech acts in general across languages of the world.

We are grateful to all the participants in the Workshops and colleagues who took part in the discussion and provided feedback on presentations at various stages, particularly Grant Aiton, Yongxian Luo, Cassy Nancarrow, Colleen Oates, Howard Oates, Ryan Pennington, Nick Piper, and Kasia Wojtylak. We are grateful to the Honourable Jan McLucas, Labor Senator for Queensland, for her official opening of the Workshop and support. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Amanda Parsonage

and Brigitta Flick, for helping us organize the Workshop in a most efficient manner. Brigitta Flick's and Jolene Overall's support and editorial assistance were invaluable.

The Workshop was made possible partly through the Australian Research Council Discovery Project 'How languages differ and why'. We gratefully acknowledge financial assistance from the College of Arts, Education and Social Sciences, the Cairns Institute and the Division of Research and Innovation at James Cook University.

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# *Abbreviations*

/	either/or
:	portmanteau
[]	clause boundaries
1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
1sg>2sg	1sg subject acts on 2sg object
4	inclusive first person (Chapter 2)
4	obviative; low topicality pronoun (Chapter 7)
I	masculine etc. gender in Dyirbal (Chapter 6)
II	feminine etc. gender in Dyirbal (Chapter 6)
IV	neuter gender in Dyirbal (Chapter 6)
I	nominal group I (Chapter 13)
III	nominal group III (Chapter 13)
IV	nominal group IV (Chapter 13)
V	nominal group V (Chapter 13)
VI	nominal group VI (Chapter 13)
VII	nominal group VII (Chapter 13)
A	transitive subject
ABL	ablative
ABS	absolutive
ACC	accusative
ADD	additive; additive focus (Chapter 4)
ADEM	adverbial demonstrative
ADJ	adjective
ADJZ	adjectivizer
ADV	adverb, adverbial form
AFF	affect
AG	agentive nominalizer
AHON	addressee honorific
ALL	allative case

ALT	alternative
ANA	anaphoric
ANT	anterior
APASS	antipassive
APPLIC	applicative
APPLIC.CAUS.SOC	causative-sociative applicative
APPLIC.GEN	generalized applicative
APPLIC.REAS	applicative of reason
APPR	apprehensive
AQ	Ayacucho Quechua
ART	article
ASSERT	assertive
ATT	attention
AUG	augmentative
BARE	bare (non 'respect/politeness')
BEN	benefactive
C	child
CANINE	dog-directed speech
CAUS	causative
CC	copula complement
CFACT	counterfactual
CHAR	characteristic
CISL	cislocative
CNT.ASSERT	counter-assertive
COLL	collective, collaborative
COMIT	comitative
COMPL	completive
CON	conative
CONC	concessive
COND	conditional
CONJ	conjunction
CONN	connective
CONT	continuous
CONTR	contrastive
CONVB	converb

COORD	coordinator
COP	copula
COUNTR	counterfactual
COURT	courteous
CS	copula subject
CT	class term
DAT	dative
DEC	declarative
DEF	definite article
DEL	delayed
DEM	demonstrative
DEM.NON.PROX	demonstrative nonproximal
DEP	dependent
DESID	desiderative
DIM	diminutive
DIR	directional
DISC.M	discourse marker
DIST	distal
DISTN	distance
DM	discourse marker
DS	different subject
du, DU	dual
DUB	dubitative
DUR	durative
eB	elder brother
EMPH	emphasis
EP	epenthetic
ERG	ergative
EXC, exc	exclusive
EXCL	exclamative
EXH	exhaustive focus
EXIST	existential
EXPL	expletive
EXPLIC	explicating
eZ	elder sister

F, f	feminine, female
FAC	factive
FAM	familiar
FOC	focus
FOC.TERM	focalized terminative aspect
FRML	formal
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
GENL	general
GERUND	gerund
GOAL	goal (no abbreviation)
H	human
HAB	habitual
HESIT	hesitation
HON	honorific prefix
HORT	hortative
HYPOTH	hypothetical
ID	identifier
IDEO	ideophone
IFUT	intentional future
IMM	immediate
IMMED	immediate
IMP	imperative
IMPERV	imperfective
INAN	inanimate
inc, INC	inclusive
INCH	inchoative
INFER	inferring
INFIN	infinitive
INFRML	informal
INST	instrumental
INT	intentional
INTENS	intensifier
INTER	interrogative
INTERJ	interjection

---

INTS	intensive
INV	inverse
IP	instrumental prefix, short tag
IPART	illocutionary particle
IRR	irrealis
ITER	iterative
JUS	jussive
LDEM	local demonstrative
LOC	locative
LOGO	logophoric reference
M, m	masculine
M	mother (Chapter 11)
MASC	masculine
MC	modifier classifier
MED	medial
MID	middle
Mo	mother
MOD	modal
MOM	momentaneous
MV	medial verb
MVII	medial verb II
NEG	negation
NEG.IMP	negative imperative
NEWS	proposition is news for addressee
NF	near future (Chapter 11)
NF	non-final (Chapter 10)
NJQ	North Junín Quechua
NM	non-masculine
NO.ADO	without any ado, right away
NOM	nominative
NOMZ	nominalizer
NON <sub>1</sub>	non-first person (or 2nd/3rd person)
NONPROX	demonstrative (non-proximal)
NP	noun phrase
NP	near past (Chapter 11)

NPAST	non-past
NSBJ	non-subject
nsg	non-singular
NSPC	non-specific
NVIS	non-visible demonstrative
O	transitive object
OBJ	object
OBL	oblique
OHON	object honorific
ON.RCD	on record
OPT	optative
Pa	parent
PARTIC	participle
PASS	passive
PAST	past (no abbreviation)
PER	perfect
PERIPH	peripheral
PERV	perfective
pl, PL	plural
PLEAD	pleading
POL	polite
POL.IMP	polite imperative
POSS	possessive
POT	potentiality (Chapter 6); potential (Chapters 5, 10, 13)
PP	positive polarity
PQ	Pacaraos Quechua
PRED	predicative
PREP	preparatory aspect/modality
PRES	present
PRESM	presuming
PRO	pronoun
PROB	probable
PROG	progressive
PROHIB	prohibitive
PROX	proximal

PSSD	possessed
PUNC	punctual
Q	interrogative, question particle
QI	Quechua I
QII	Quechua II
QPLR	polar question marker
QUOT	quotative
REAL	realis
RECIP	reciprocal
REDUP	reduplicated
REFL	reflexive
REL	relative
REM	remote
REQST	requestive
RES	resultative
RESIG	resignation
RESTR	restrictive
RF	remote future
RHET	rhetorical
RNDM	random motion
RP	remote past
RSP	respectful
RSTR	restrictive
RUSH	rushing, hastening
S	subject of intransitive verb
s.o.	someone
SAP	speech act participant
SB	shared benefit
SE	social enabler
SEMB	semblative case, semblance
SEMELF	semelfactive
SEQ	sequential
sg, SG	singular
Sh	short
SHON	subject honorific (shows respect to the subject referent)



SIM	simultaneous
SIMIL	similative
SOFT	softening
SPEC	specifier
SS	same subject
STAT	stative aspect
SU	subject
SUBORD	subordinate
SUBORD:SS	subordinator same subjects
SUGG	suggesting
T.LNK	topic linker
TAG	tag question
TENT	tentative
TERM	terminative
TOP	topic
TOPZ	topicalizer
TQ	Tarma Quechua (phonologically innovative sub-variety of NJQ)
TR	transitional sound (Chapter 12)
TR	transitive (Chapter 7)
TRNSL	translocative
TTL	title
UNIMP	addressee presumed to be unimpeded
V	verb
VAL	validator
VEN	ventive ('hither')
VN	verbal noun
VOC	vocative
VULG	vulgar
WH	interrogative word
yG	younger sibling

# Imperatives and commands: a cross-linguistic view

ALEXANDRA Y. AIKHENVALD

## 1 Preamble

Some linguistic categories show more correlations with cultural values, social hierarchies, and their conceptualizations than others. Genders, noun classes, and classifiers tend to mirror social and cultural stereotypes, and patterns of human perception. Meanings encoded within possessive structures often reflect relationships within a society, and change if the society changes.<sup>1</sup>

As Enfield (2004: 3) put it, ‘grammar is thick with cultural meaning. Encoded in the semantics of grammar we find cultural values and ideas, we find clues about social structures which speakers maintain, we find evidence, both historically and otherwise, of the social organization of speech communities’. Imperatives, and other ways of framing commands and directives, are particularly instructive: their use is shaped by conventions and norms people are socialized to follow.

In every language one can make a statement, ask a question, or tell someone what to do. The ways in which imperatives and other directives—including wishes, entreaties, invitations, and more—are framed may reflect societal structures, interpersonal relationships, gender roles, existing hierarchies, and kinship systems. The relationship between the speaker and the addressee, their age and social status, the conventions appropriate for a particular genre, and many more features may be at play in the ways people get one another to do things, using directives.

This introductory chapter focuses on the forms and the functions of imperatives and other ways of phrasing commands, their possible relationships with cultural values, practices, and attitudes, and their origin and development. We start with a brief summary of how imperatives interrelate with commands and directives in general.

<sup>1</sup> Correlations between possession and cultural parameters are addressed in Aikhenvald and Dixon (2013); see Aikhenvald (2015: Chapter 13) on how cultural parameters are reflected in other categories.

2 Imperatives and commands

There are three major types of speech acts. This is reflected in the category of ‘mood’. The form of a statement is declarative, and that of a question is interrogative. A command—that is, an utterance whose function is to get someone to do something—corresponds to the imperative mood. Just as there can be covert questions (not framed as interrogatives), one can express a command without using a dedicated imperative form.<sup>2</sup>

It is not uncommon for a linguistic term to have a counterpart in the real world. The idea of ‘time’ in the real world translates into ‘tense’ when expressed in a language. ‘Time’ is what our watch shows and what often passes too quickly; ‘tense’ is a grammaticalized set of forms we have to use in a particular language. Not every time distinction acquires grammatical expression in the language: the possibilities for time are unlimited, and for tense they are limited. Along similar lines, ‘evidentiality’ is a linguistic category whose real-life counterpart is information source. Similarly, an ‘imperative’ is a category in the language, while a ‘command’ is a phenomenon of the real world (Figure 1). Languages of the world have limited grammatical means of expressing imperatives. The ways in which commands—or directives—may be phrased are open-ended.

In day-to-day English usage, the adjective and the noun, *imperative*, share a similar meaning to do with ‘commanding’. A bossy person talks ‘in a quick imperative tone’. It is ‘imperative’ that scholars ‘check their quotations’. Being ‘imperative’ implies demanding obedience, execution, action, obligation—*The situation makes it imperative that you should return at once* and *The work is quite imperative, and its result will be most beneficial*. Philosophers talk about ‘the unconditional imperative of the moral law’.

GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY	COUNTERPART IN THE REAL WORLD
tense	time
gender	sex etc.
evidential	information source
imperative	command

FIGURE 1. Grammatical categories and their ‘real world’ counterparts

<sup>2</sup> Aikhenvald (2010) contains details on the typological parameters in imperatives and commands. A collection edited by Xrakovskij (2001) (a somewhat expanded translation of the Russian original, Xrakovskij 1992a) offers a selection of chapters dealing with imperatives in a few languages. These are uneven in quality, with each contribution following a restrictive ‘typological questionnaire’ (Xrakovskij 1992b). An overview of typological and language-specific work on imperatives is in Aikhenvald (2010: 15–16). A different, formally-oriented approach to imperatives in a narrow sense is in Jary and Kissine (2014). The present chapter takes into account the data on 600 languages (expanded on Aikhenvald 2010). Whenever relevant, we draw on examples from languages discussed in this volume.

The opposite—negative imperative, or ‘prohibitive’—implies making someone not do something, having the effect of forbidding, preventing, or restricting. Prices may be *prohibitive*, if they are too high.

Imperatives can be rich in their meanings. They may cover entreaties and requests: *Let me go to the party!* and *Try and behave!* Advice and instructions are often cast in the form of an imperative—*Don’t repeat other people’s mistakes!* or *Mix two spoonfuls of water with flour.* Imperatives may also express invitations: *Meet the Joneses!* Or principles and life mottoes: *Publish or perish!*

An imperative may have an ‘anti-command’, or a mock-command meaning. A ‘recipe for disaster’ may be cast in an imperative. A spoofy passage on how to destroy your festive season contains mock commands—which tell you what not to do unless you want your Christmas time to become a disaster: *Drive to somewhere terrible for a holiday. Stay in three motels with plumbing that gargles and screams all night. Break out in acne. Get food poisoning* (from Börjars and Burridge 2001: 130).

Conditions, threats, and ultimatums may be cast in the form of an imperative: *Buy from that shop and you will regret it* or *Be quiet or I’ll send you to bed.* Saying *Take care!* or *Fare thee well!* are not commands; these are conventional speech formulae, part of our linguistic repertoire.

‘Imperative’ and ‘command’ do not always refer to the same thing. *Go away!* is a command, and is imperative in form. But I can say the same thing jokingly to someone without meaning to chase them away—this will be reflected in my tone of voice or intonation. *Get out!*, an imperative in form, can be used as an exclamation, to express extreme surprise. And one can command without using an imperative. A question *Why don’t you go away?*, or a stern statement *You will go away*, or just one word *Away!* serve the same purpose. *Could you pass the water?* is a conventionalized form for requesting water, and not a question about a person’s capabilities.

But such forms will not be used under the same circumstances. Their appropriateness will depend on relationships between the speaker (‘commander’) and the addressee, in terms of social hierarchy, kinship relations, age, status, social gender, and peer group membership. It will also depend on speaker’s and addressee’s entitlements in terms of authority and obligations to comply. Directives of any sort are essentially ‘social acts’: in many societies ‘marking and differentiation of the category of directive acts’ reflect the ways people ‘think about and order their ongoing social bonds and deeds’, and ‘the “force” of speech acts depends on things participants expect’ (using Rosaldo’s 1982: 228–9 words).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> ‘Directives’, or verbal means of getting people to do things, were identified by the philosopher Searle (1994 [1969]: 21), as one of five types of speech acts, the other four being assertives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. These speech acts are not mutually exclusive. For instance, as we will see throughout this volume, a statement—cast as an assertive speech act—can be used in lieu of a directive (see Enfield 2013: 89–90 on the nature and permeability of speech acts). In Chapter 15, Rosita Henry offers an

In theory, the set of means for getting others to do things is unlimited. But in the practice of language communities it is far from being the case: different languages, and different societies where they are spoken, use different conventionalized strategies for commands, requests, and other directives (see also Enfield 2014; Clark 1979). A polite request in Kuuk Thayorre, an Australian language from the Cape York peninsula, is usually phrased as a negative statement. So, saying ‘You won’t work for me’ is best translated into English as a polite ‘Would you do some work for me?’ (Gaby 2007: 494). Commands couched as questions in Ku Waru, a Papuan language of the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea, may express sarcasm rather than polite or gentle overtones of a wish or an entreaty (see §5 of Chapter 15). What kind of forms are favoured by different languages for getting others to do things, and why? This is what we are out to discover.

A command can be expressed without using language. A glance, a gesture, or a picture can do the job. Pictorial command strategies may contain unequivocal prohibitions (or permissions). For instance, a picture of a mobile phone with a line across is a conventional command not to use the device (the red colour of the line is an additional sign meaning ‘don’t do it’). The Ambonwari people in the Sepik area of New Guinea use ‘visual prohibitives’, in the form of leaves tied around the trunk, as a means of protecting their coconut and betel nut palms (see Chapter 13; so do the Tayatuk: Valérie Guérin, p.c.). A comprehensive study of such extralinguistic command techniques would be a fascinating enterprise, which lies beyond our scope here.

In many languages imperatives stand clearly apart from other clause types in their grammatical properties. As Jakobson (1971: 191) put it, ‘the lonely imperative’ stands apart from declaratives and from interrogatives. Imperative mood is the commonest way of expressing commands, and a multitude of related meanings, in the languages of the world. In some languages, imperatives may give the impression of simplicity in form. In other languages, they can also be dauntingly complex. In §§3–5, we briefly look at some special features of addressee-oriented (or ‘canonical’) imperatives and imperatives oriented towards other persons (called ‘non-canonical’). Negative imperatives, or prohibitives, are the topic of §6. In §7 we turn to grammatical restrictions on forming imperatives, and their interaction with questions. Non-command meanings of imperatives are the topic of §8.

Non-imperative forms—statements, questions, exclamations—are frequently co-opted to express varied overtones of command-like meanings, intruding into the imperative domain. We will be referring to these as command strategies and discuss them in §9. We then turn to the development of imperatives and their spread in language contact, in §10. The ways in which imperatives are used are the topic of §11. The last section focuses on the structure of this volume.

outline of speech act theory, and a further division of speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary; see the critique by Rosaldo (1982).

### 3 Canonical and non-canonical imperatives

The most straightforward command is the one directed at the addressee. If a language has a special set of imperative forms, it will have a special form for a command to second person. Such addressee-oriented, or ‘canonical’, imperatives (in a ‘narrow sense’) may stand apart from other verbal forms in a language. They are commonly expressed by the bare root, or stem, of the verb, as is the case in Northern Paiute, a Uto-Aztecan language (§6 of Chapter 7) and Tayatuk, a Papuan language from Morobe Province in Papua New Guinea (Chapter 10). Such short and snappy forms may give an impression of superficial simplicity—as if the imperatives were, in some sense, poor relations of their declarative and interrogative counterparts. This simplicity is often a mere illusion, as we will see throughout this chapter, and throughout the volume.

Imperatives may also be oriented towards third person and first person.<sup>4</sup> In agreement with Aikhenvald (2010), we call them ‘non-canonical’ imperatives. In a number of languages, all imperative forms may form one paradigm—this is what justifies considering them together. The example in Table 1 comes from Yemsa, an Omotic language from Ethiopia (Zaugg-Coretti 2009: 136–7). The second person singular form is the shortest of all and the least formally marked. All plural imperatives (except for first person) bear a plural marker. In Mauwake (a Papuan language of Madang province), canonical and non-canonical imperatives are marked with suffixes and form one paradigm. Berghäll (2010: 132–3) explicitly states that there is

TABLE 1. The imperative paradigm in Yemsa: *kássū* ‘bake’

PERSON	SG	PL
1	<i>kássú-nā</i>	<i>kássú-nī</i>
2	<i>kássú</i>	<i>kássú-sō-tì</i>
2 Polite	<i>kássú-nì</i>	<i>kássú-sō-nì</i>
3 feminine	<i>kássú-n</i>	<i>kássú-sō-n</i>
3 masculine	<i>kássú-wó</i>	<i>kássú-sō-wó</i>
3 Polite	<i>kássú-tó</i>	<i>kássú-sō-tó</i>

<sup>4</sup> In contrast to declaratives and interrogatives, imperatives do not have any further person distinctions. A number of languages, including the majority of languages from the Arawak language family, have a further term in their person system, with ‘impersonal’ meaning, roughly corresponding to a generic *you* or *one* in English, *on* in French, and *man* in German. An imperative cannot be formed on an impersonal form in Tariana and other Arawak languages. See Dixon (2010: 204–5) on further person distinctions (including proximal and obviative in Algonquian languages); these are not relevant for imperatives. In §4, we return to the person system in imperatives compared to that of other clause types.

**TABLE 2. Imperative markers in Mauwake**

PERSON AND NUMBER	SUFFIXES
1 dual	-u
1 plural	-ikua
2 singular	-e(-a)
2 plural	-eka (aka)
3 singular	-inok
3 plural	-uk

‘no valid reason to divide them’ into different categories based on person. The imperative markers which attach to a verb in Mauwake are in Table 2 (Berghäll 2010: 133).

All the person values of imperative forms constitute one paradigm in Nungon, a Papuan language from Morobe Province (see Table 1 and §2 of Chapter 11), and in Awara, a related language (§3 of Chapter 10). Similarly to many Papuan languages, the distinction between second and third person is neutralized in non-singular numbers in Nungon declarative, interrogative, and also imperative forms. This is an additional piece of evidence in favour of considering all person values of the imperative in Nungon as forming one paradigm. Three persons of imperatives also form one paradigm in Korowai, a Greater Awyu language from West Papua (see (5) in §3.2 in Chapter 12), and also Wolaitta, an Omotic language from Ethiopia (§3.1 in Chapter 14). (Further examples and discussion are in Aikhenvald 2010: 49–51.)

In some languages, imperatives may have gaps in their paradigms. In Quechua, imperatives oriented towards second and third persons, and also ‘fourth’ person (or ‘first person inclusive you and me’), form one paradigm. But unlike declaratives and interrogatives, the imperative does not have a first person singular form (see Tables 1 and 3 in Chapter 2). This is a most common gap, to which we return shortly.

In other languages, non-addressee-oriented imperatives may stand apart from the addressee-oriented ones in their expression (see also Chapter 5, on Zenzontepec Chatino). In Dolakha Newar, a Tibeto-Burman language from Nepal (Genetti 2007: 337–41, 179–86), dedicated imperative forms are restricted to the canonical (addressee-oriented) imperative. They have distinct forms for singular and plural addressees.

- (1) jana                      mica                      ya-ŋ  
     1sgGENITIVE   daughter   take-IMP.SG:TRANSITIVE  
     Take my daughter!

*Dolakha Newar*

- (2) chipe            thau    thau    chē      o-n                          Dolakha Newar  
2sgGENITIVE   REFL   REFL   house   go-IMP.PL:INTRANSITIVE  
Go each to your own house!

A special construction is used for first person inclusive commands, involving the addressee and the speaker: the marker *-lau* attaches to the infinitive form of the verb, as in (3):

- (3) isi                    chē=kuu      ū-i-lau                    nā                    *Dolakha Newar*  
1pl.EXC.GEN house=LOC go-INFINITIVE-1PL AGREEMENT.PARTICLE  
Let's go to our house!

Commands oriented towards first person are the only verb forms in the language to have a special form just for inclusive reference. Other verbal forms do not distinguish inclusive and exclusive forms (Genetti 2007: 159); this distinction is reflected in personal pronouns (as we can see from (3)). To issue a command to a third person, the optative form is used, as in (4):

- (4) tha-hat *Dolakha Newar*  
 OPTATIVE-speak  
 May he speak!

The major meaning of the optative is to express a wish that something should happen.

Heterogenous expression of canonical imperatives, on the one hand, and non-canonical ones, on the other, is a feature of many languages (especially Indo-European and Semitic: see Aikhenvald 2010: 47–66). Within this volume we find a similar principle in Aguaruna (Chapter 3), Ashaninka Satipo (Chapter 4), Zenzontepec Chatino (Chapter 5), Northern Paiute (Chapter 7), and Tavatuk (Chapter 10).

In many traditional linguistic terminologies, different person values of imperative are assigned different terms. The most frequent ones are hortative or cohortative for first person, and jussive for third person, reserving ‘imperative’ just for second person. We saw, in (1)–(4) from Dolakha Newar, that first and third person imperatives stand apart from second person imperatives in their make-up. This offers a formal reason for assigning different names to different persons in this language.

Different person values of an imperative may differ in their meanings. Second person imperatives are primarily commands. In contrast, first person imperatives may develop overtones of suggestion or permission, and the ones oriented towards third person shade into the expression of indirect, mediated wishes. Incidentally, this is something one finds even in languages where imperatives undoubtedly form one paradigmatic set: first person imperative in Hungarian has permissive overtones (see Kenesei et al. 1998: 21–2, 310–12, for the full imperative paradigm in the language). We find similar meanings in Nungon (see §3.1 of Chapter 11). We return to the special meanings of different person forms of imperatives in §5.1.



This terminological ‘splitter’—which ultimately stems from Indo-European and Semitic languages—is at variance with the analysis of other clause types. No grammar would use one label for first person declarative or interrogative, another one for second person, and yet another one for third. Having different terms for different person is hardly appropriate for analysing languages where all person values of an imperative form one paradigm—something we have seen in Table 1, for Yemsa, and also in Chapter 2 for Quechua, and in Chapters 11 and 12, for Nungon and Korowai respectively.

A splitter approach can be justified if different persons of imperative differ in their formal features. This is what we have seen in Dolakha Newar (and a number of other languages, including English: see Aikhenvald 2010: 54–73). Only canonical imperatives in Zenzontepec Chatino are marked with an imperative prefix; non-canonical imperatives employ the potential mood (§§4–5 of Chapter 5).

In Ashaninka Satipo only canonical imperatives can be negated (§8 of Chapter 4). The first person commands contain a special particle *tsame* (originally a suppletive first person command form of the verb *ja* ‘go’). The first person plural imperative in Aguaruna is negated with the same suffix as non-imperative (declarative and interrogative forms). Second and third person prohibitives contain an ‘apprehensive’ marker (§3, §3.5.1 of Chapter 3). In such instances, different terms for different person values are justified by language facts.

#### 4 Non-imperative forms in lieu of imperatives

Imperatives may be heterogenous in further ways. Some languages have a dedicated imperative form just for second person singular. A second person plural imperative will be ‘co-opted’ from another set of verbal forms. In Supyire, a Gur language from Mali (Carlson 1994: 520–6), the dedicated imperative which consists of the verb root without a subject marker or auxiliary can only be used to command one person, as in (5):

- (5) Lwɔhɔ kan náhá Supyire  
       water give here  
       Give me some water (lit. Give water here)

The subjunctive form (also used in adverbial and complement clauses) is used to command second person plural addressees in Supyire:

- (6) Yii à wá! Supyire  
       you.PL SUBJUNCTIVE.IMPERFECTIVE go  
       Go (you plural)

Members of an imperative paradigm may overlap with other, non-imperative forms in their formal expression. In Italian, the second person singular imperative is segmentally identical to the third person singular present indicative for verbs of

the first conjugation, e.g. *canta!* ‘sing!’, *canta* ‘he/she sings’, or second person singular present indicative, for verbs of other conjugations, e.g. *dormi!* ‘sleep!’, *dormi* ‘you are sleeping’. First person plural imperative is always identical to the first person plural present indicative, e.g. *cantiamo!* ‘let’s sing’, *cantiamo* ‘we are singing’. The second person plural imperative has the same form as the second person plural present indicative, e.g. *cantate!* ‘you pl sing!’, *cantate* ‘you pl are singing’. In contrast, third person imperative (singular and plural) is expressed by using subjunctive form, e.g. *canti!* ‘May she sing!’ or ‘Sing (singular polite)’, *cantino!* ‘May they sing!’ or ‘Sing (plural polite)’ (Maiden and Robustelli 2007: 247–8). These overlaps have led some scholars to argue that the imperative in Italian has no segmental form of its own—it is parasitic on other forms. There are however extra features that make imperatives stand out: the special intonation and other suprasegmental clues ensure that the addressee will distinguish a command from a statement or a wish.

A language may lack an imperative paradigm altogether. Another verbal category is then ‘co-opted’ in its stead. A command and a non-command meaning of the same form will be distinguished by context, and by prosodic and other clues (intonation, or an eye-gaze).

In Athabaskan languages, a declarative verb marked for imperfective aspect is a conventional way of expressing commands, in the absence of dedicated command forms. The sentence in (7), from the Hare dialect of Slave, is ambiguous (Rice 1989: 1109). The two meanings can presumably be differentiated by intonation, eye-gaze, and situational clues.<sup>5</sup>

- (7) ʔáradį́ta *Hare dialect of Slave*  
 you.sg.IMPERFECTIVE.go.home  
 You (sg) go home!  
 You (sg) are going home

This usage reminds us of a cross-linguistic tendency to employ declarative clauses as an option for expressing directives. In many languages, including English, saying *You are going home now* can be understood as a stern command. In English, a language with a specialized imperative, such directive use of a non-directive verb form is part of a plethora of command strategies (we return to these in §9).

A primarily non-directive form can become a conventionalized command; this is a typical path for the development of dedicated imperatives. Canonical and non-canonical imperatives in Ashaninka Satipo are based on irrealis forms. They differ from the declarative irrealis in a number of features, including intonation, the meanings of verbal categories (especially aspect: see §5.3 below), and patterns of

<sup>5</sup> In languages lacking a special set of imperative-only forms, commands can also be expressed with present tense forms or forms unmarked for tense; future forms, forms of various modalities, or with irrealis; see Aikhenvald (2010: 38–44).

negation (see Chapter 4). The near future form in Tayatuk commands is a conventional way of expressing a distal command, for an action to be carried out far from the speaker (§5.1 of Chapter 10).

Imperative forms in Northern Paiute and in Japanese developed out of dependent verb forms (Chapters 7 and 8). A close connection between irrealis and imperative in Korowai (and other languages from the Greater Awyu family) points towards a shared origin (§4 in Chapter 12); the same is true of the link between irrealis and delayed imperative in Nungon (Chapter 11). In §10, we will return to the pathways of development of dedicated imperative forms.

But the issue may lie deeper than ‘mere’ grammaticalization and reinterpretation of non-command forms. Some Australian languages have no dedicated forms for commands. Future forms are a standard way of getting people to do things in Bunuba, Nunggubuyu, and Rembarnga (see Rumsey 2000: 91; see further examples and references in Aikhenvald 2010: 40–1, 81). Other languages employ intentional or potential forms in what can be interpreted as commands and directives. Why so?

A form with a potential or intentional meaning refers to the possibility of something happening. A command or a directive can be viewed as presentation of such a possibility, something as yet unrealized—as suggested by Davies (1986: 57). This link provides an intuitively plausible reason for using the same form to express potentiality, future, and also a command. But the overtones of such forms might reveal clues of their social underpinnings.

As R. M. W. Dixon puts it (§2 of Chapter 6), in the traditional Dyirbal society ‘a significant feature was that one person did not order another to do something or forbid them from doing something; there was no verb “order”. And there was *no clearly defined speech act of commands*.’ The ‘potentiality’ inflection in Dyirbal is versatile: this form is frequently used with second person subject, and ‘then provides a suggestion or advice’ (§2 of Chapter 6). But this inflection—which Dixon had called ‘imperative’ in his earlier work, following ‘a temptation to describe languages in terms of conventional categories’ (§7 of Chapter 6)—has a number of other meanings, including wishes, possibilities, and (in its negated form) caution and warning. In Dixon’s words (§2 of Chapter 6), the most appropriate characterization for such forms is ‘a potentiality, which is likely to be realized, but may not be’. Calling such forms ‘commands’ or ‘imperatives’ would be at odds with the pragmatic import of their use in the traditional society.

Trying to establish a straightforward connection between the structure of a language and beliefs and attitudes of its speakers is a dangerous venture. And yet the absence of dedicated command forms in some speech communities may be indicative of speech practices deeply embedded in the original ethos and egalitarian social structure. Could it be the case that commands were not appropriate in the essentially egalitarian traditional Australian language communities, and so the dedicated forms were lacking? And could the lack of specialized command forms

in Hare, Western Apache, and other Athabaskan languages have been facilitated by ‘the Athabaskan attitudes about the autonomy of the person’ and the inappropriateness of issuing orders to others (cf. de Reuse 2003: 96 and references therein)? These connections—tempting as they are—remain a conjecture.

## 5 Imperatives, their grammar, and meanings

Imperatives are often easy to recognize by the way they sound. In Warekena, an Arawak language from north-west Amazonia, a declarative clause has a flat intonation; an imperative clause—which has the same segmental make-up—shows falling intonation on the last word. In Ashaninka Satipo, the intonation contour of a command shows a boost in the pitch range which is higher than the usual pitch register in statements and questions (see §3 of Chapter 4). Commands in Nungon (§1 of Chapter 11) can involve greater pitch ranges than declarative clauses (this applies to both dedicated imperatives and some imperative strategies). Distinctive suprasegmental properties are a frequent, if not a ubiquitous, feature of imperatives and commands.<sup>6</sup>

We now turn to other features of imperatives: person and number (§5.1), grammatical relations and constituent order (§5.2), verbal categories including tense and aspect (§5.3), and imperative-specific categories (§5.4).

### 5.1 Person and number in imperatives

Canonical imperatives (that is, addressee-oriented imperatives) are pervasive. The most frequently attested non-canonical imperatives are the ones with first person inclusive reference. First person imperatives in general tend to have inclusive (rather than exclusive) reference (see, for instance, (3), from Dolakha Newar). First person inclusive (but not first person singular or exclusive) can be expressed in the imperative forms in Macushi (Abbott 1991: 49) and in Trio (Carlin 2004: 308), two North Carib languages from Brazil and Suriname respectively.

First person inclusive imperatives (but no other first person values) are part of the imperative paradigm in Quechua (Chapter 2). First person commands have only an inclusive meaning in Northern Paiute (Chapter 7) and Zenzontepec Chatino (Chapter 5). The first-person-directed construction in Ashaninka Satipo marked by *tsame* has exclusively inclusive reference (Chapter 4). First person dual and plural imperatives in Manambu, a Papuan language from the Sepik area of New Guinea, are the only grammatical forms in the language which have inclusive-only reference (Aikhenvald 2016). And, as noted by Trubetzkoy in a 1931 letter to Jakobson (1985:

<sup>6</sup> Whether or not having a special intonation for imperatives and commands is universal remains a matter for further investigation; see for instance Adelaar (§1 of Chapter 2) on the lack of ‘functional space’ for intonation in Quechua imperatives due to their explicit and complex morphological marking.