Imperatives and negation in Romance languages

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The data

The relationship between imperatives and negation in Romance languages (and in other languages, as well) may be of compatibility or incompatibility[1]. This means that imperatives may or may not be negated. Compatibility and incompatibility manifest in multiple forms, and involve (in a rather unpredictable way) both the pre- or post-verbal position of negation and the person of the imperative. Here is an (almost) complete inventory:

- Pre-verbal negation is incompatible with imperatives: Italian (also Daco-Romanian and Spanish), 2nd pers.: **Non parla !* `Don`t speak` (*parla*= true imperative)
- Pre-verbal negation is incompatible with plural imperatives but compatible with singular ones: the dialect from Cortina D`Ampezzo, Italy, 2nd pers: *No laőra !* `Don`t work` (*laőra* =true imperative); 5th pers. **No lourà !* `Don`t work`(*lourà*=true imperative)
- Pre-verbal negation is compatible with imperatives: Aromanian, 2nd pers: *Nu zi !* `Don`t speak` (*zi*=true imperative)
- Post-verbal negation is compatible with imperatives: French (also Wallon, several dialects of Italian – Piedmontese, Valdotain, Milanese - and several varieties of Occitan - see Zanuttini 1997:111-112), 2nd pers.: *Ne parle pas !* `Don`t speak` (*parle*=true imperative)
- Post-verbal negation is incompatible with imperatives: Modern Central Occitan, 2nd pers: **Canta pas !* `Don`t sing` (*canta*=true imperative)

Despite this discouraging diversity, a unified account seems to be possible and it is the aim of the present paper to propose one. The leading concepts in the following analysis are verbalisation and de-verbalisation.

Expressing directives

A directive may be expressed in natural language through different forms. However, two parts of speech play a particularly important role in this respect: the interjection and the verb. Here are examples of interjections and verbs used with directive force in Spanish. Similar examples may be given not only from the area of Romance languages but also from languages of the world in general:

(1) ¡ Anda, Juan ! `Come on John !`

(2) ¡ Habla ! `Speak !`

[1] By `imperatives` I mean throughout this paper what is sometimes called `true imperatives` (see, for instance, Rivero and Terzi 1995), as distinct from `surrogate imperatives` - for example, infinitives used with directive force.

Interjections and verbs are important in expressing directives but they are not limited to play this role. Apart from injunctions, interjections also serve to express affective states (*exclamative interjections* - for instance, *Wow* ! in English, which expresses admiration and surprise), or natural noises (*onomatopoeic interjections*). The situation of the verbs is more complex. The imperative mood or certain performatives show that verbs have specialised forms for directives. Nevertheless, verbs may be also used to express assertions or to ask questions, which are speech acts distinct from directives.

A peculiar property of interjections and verbs deserves special attention. When they are involved in expressing directives they are no longer pure interjections or verbs. Moreover, when an interjection serves to express a directive (a *D-interjection*), it loses a feature interjection but it acquires a feature of verb. Likewise when a verb form expresses a directive (a *D-verb form*) it loses something from its verbhood and acquires a feature of interjection. So, one may say that D-interjections tend to become verbs, whereas D-verb forms tend to become interjections. In the area of Romance languages these tendencies are illustrated by two properties: independent occurrence and adverbial modification.

Independent occurrence

If considered as a criterion of comparison between interjections and verb forms which do not express directives, the independent occurrence appears to be a property of the interjections. Indeed, exclamative and onomatopoeic interjections never occur in subordination (one cannot have a clause such as *I said *that wow !,* but the clause *I said: Wow !* is allowed– the same goes for every Romance language). On the other hand, verb forms not expressing directives may (or even have to) be used in subordination. Just as in English, where one may have the same verb form *sing* used either as an independent or as a subordinate clause (*You sing* vs *I know that you sing*), one may have the same situation in all Romance languages.
This contrasts with D-verb forms and D-interjections. In their case the independent occurrence is a common property. So, no D-verb form or D-interjection is allowed to be subordinate. The following example in Romanian documents this situation (the first pair of examples contains a D-interjection while the second pair contains a D-verb form):

(3) Hai !/I-am spus *că hai ! `Come on !/ I told him *that come on !`
(4) Vino !/I-am spus *că vino ! `Come !/ I told him *that come !`

On may therefore conclude that the incapacity of the D-verb forms to occur in subordination is a (weak) symptom of de-verbalisation, in the sense that due to this property D-verb forms tend to come closer to interjections.

Adverbial modification

Taken as another criterion of comparison between interjections and verb forms not expressing directives, adverbial modification appears to be a verb property. Adverbial modification characterizes verb forms with illocutionary forces distinct from directives. Adverbial modification is not possible in the case of exclamative or onomatopoeic interjections. This may be seen in the following examples in Italian, where the adverb

modifies a verb form with assertive force but cannot modify the exclamative interjection which expresses impatience:

(5) Gianni è venutto subito `John has come quickly`

(6) Uff, subito, Gianni, subito ! `Ooh, quick, John, quick !`

The adverb *subito* in (6) cannot be understood as modifying the interjection *uff* !.

The situation changes again when one deals with D-interjections and D-verb forms. This time the adverb may be uniformly used to modify both the interjection (7) and the verb form (8):

(7) Smettila adesso! `Stop it right now !`

(8) Vieni subito ! "Come quickly !`

The availability of the D-interjections to adverbial modification may then be interpreted as a weak symptom of their verbalisation.

D-words

Since independent occurrence and adverbial modification are shared features of D-verb forms and D-interjections but are not shared properties of non-D-interjections and non-D-verb forms, it is justified to identify an intermediary category between verbs and interjections on the basis of the shared properties. I call it the category of *D-words*. The identity of D-words with respect to `pure` interjections and verbs is represented in the table below.

	Independent occurrence	Adverbial modification
D-words (interjections or verb forms)	+	+
Non-D-interjections	+	-
Non-D-verb forms	underspecified or -	+

Table 1. Comparison between properties of verb forms, interjections and D-words.

D-words and negation

The relationship negation-imperatives in Romance languages may be now approached thanks to the space of the D-words delimited above; at issue is the play between the complementary tendencies that manifest within this space, verbalisation of the interjections and de-verbalisation of the verb forms.

Noticing that exclamative and onomatopoeic interjections are incompatible with negation is irrelevant: one cannot imagine what the combination between negation and such interjections would amount to. Noticing instead that D-interjections cannot be negated *is* relevant, because just like imperatives D-interjections are destinated to change a state of things in the world. Under these conditions, their incompatibility with negation goes with another interjection property – the independent occurrence – and both show that the verbalisation of D-

interjections is really weak. And, indeed, to the best of my knowledge no D-interjection in the Romance area could be negated; it would not be surprising to discover that this is a property of D-interjections in general.
On the other hand, negation *does* characterize the verb in general, which means that non-D-verb forms may be negated. However, in the field of the D-words some imperatives may be negated, whereas some others may not. In the context of the two tendencies that characterize this field, compatibility/incompatibility between negation and imperatives now receives a simple and obvious interpretation: compatibility means more verbhood in the nature of imperatives, whereas incompatibility means less verbhood and more de-verbalisation. Imperatives that are incompatible with negation show therefore an additional symptom of their de-verbalisation: these imperatives are closer to (D-)interjections than imperatives which may be negated.
This view on D-words has several advantageous consequences:
(i) Cross-linguistically, it presents D-words on a scale (a sequence of positions) in which the lowest position is occupied by D-interjections and the highest one is filled with imperatives which may be negated. An intermediary position is the one of the imperatives incompatible with negation. Each Romance language fills this scale its own way.
(ii) Explaining compatibility/incompatibility with negation as the effect of the complementary forces of verbalisation and de-verbalisation allows us to refer to other (synchronic) facts relevant to the hierarchy in the scale, such as root and truncated imperatives or cliticization.
(iii) As synchronic phenomena, the relationship negation-imperatives and facts connected with this relationship may be correlated with diachronic processes. Of a special interest in this respect turns out to be the Jespersen Cycle.
(iv) The hypothesis of the verbalisation/de-verbalisation scale is accessible to a formal, declarative approach, such as the HPSG Hierarchical Lexicon or Construction Grammar. Positions on the scale may thus be represented as types of lexical signs or lexical constructions.
In the full version of the paper, I give details on all the points above. Here I sketch the representation of D-words in the HPSG Hierarchical Lexicon.

D-words in the HPSG Hierarchical Lexicon

The starting points are two lexical types, interjection (*interj*] and verb (*verb*) which correspond to the two parts of speech. The type *interj* has, in turn, two subtypes, *excl-interj* (exclamative interjection), and *onom-interj* (onomatopoeic interjection). Both refer to interjections that are not used with directive force.
We have seen that exclamative and onomatopoeic interjections combine with no adverbial dependent, whereas D-interjections do. For this property to be expressed, it is appropriate to use the feature DEPS (dependents), which puts together arguments and adjuncts. Since the value of DEPS is a concatenation of lists, and since in the case of exclamative interjections there are no adverbial dependents, the value of DEPS for this subtype shall be the empty list: C1(DEPS-*excl-interj*): *excl-interj* → [DEPS:*elist*].[2]

[2]The corresponding constraint on onomatopoeic interjections is slightly different, in that it is a default constraint. It plays no role in the analysis below, so it is left aside.

On the other hand, as verbs *may* combine with dependents, the value of the *verb* DEPS shall be just *list*:
C2 (DEPS-*verb*): *verb* → [DEPS:*list*].
It has been shown above that, unlike verbs, interjections cannot be subordinated. Finite verb forms (indicatives, subjunctives and conditionals) allow for subordination, whereas non-finite forms (participles, gerunds and infinitives) *have* to be subordinated. It is therefore not empirically appropriate to assign the availability to subordination to the verb itself, but to one of its subtypes, *fin-vform.*
Subordination is encoded through the feature I(ndependent)C(lause), whose most general value is *boolean* (Ginzburg and Sag 2000: 46-47). The subordination constraint on the type *interj* (C3, below) says that an interjection must have independent occurrence:
C3 (SUBORD-*interj*): *interj* → [IC: +]
The constraint on the type *fin-vform* (C4) states in turn that a finite verb form is *available* to subordination:
C4 (SUBORD-*fin-vform*): *fin-vform* → [IC: *boolean*]
It remains now to find a solution for the representation of the D-words themselves. We propose to treat them as a distinct lexical type, say, *D-wd*:
C5 (*D-wd*): *D-wd* → [HEAD:*D-wd*].
As data show, this type ought to make visible its connections with interjections, on the one hand, and verbs, on the other. The best solution in this respect would be to further treat D-words as a *mixed category*, in the sense of Malouf (2000). A mixed category is a distinct type, with a position in the hierarchy, such that the type has (usually) two super-types. In the present case, the super-types are *interj* and *verb*, as in the Figure 1, below.

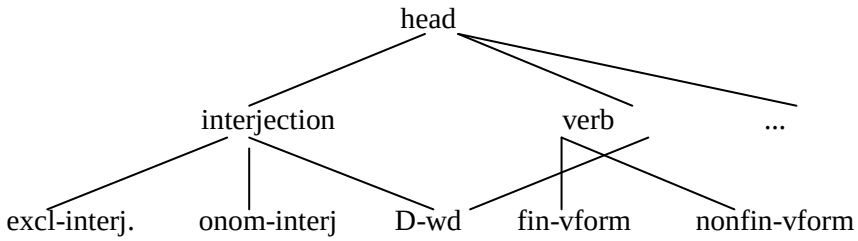

Figure 1: Partial representation of the HL: interjections, verbs and D-words

According to this representation, constraints that characterize a type also characterize its subtype(s).
With respect to this hierarchy, we firstly have to avoid the clash of different values for the same attribute through constraint inheritance. This undesirable possibility originates in the constraints on the HEAD values for the types *interj* and *verb*, respectively. The constraints in questions say that the value of the HEAD feature in the case of an interjection is the type *interj*, whereas the value of the same feature in the case of the type *verb* is verb. In virtue of the hierarchy in Figure 1, the type *D-wd* inherits the constraints on the types *interj* and *verb*, which leads to the situation that a D-word is concomitantly defined as an interjection and a verb for the attribute HEAD. This, however, is not allowed.
The clash of the values may be avoided by using *default constraints* (Malouf: 2000: 124). The default is expressed by a slash mark, /, in the value of the relevant feature. In our case the relevant value is the value of the HEAD attribute. So, the corresponding default constraints for interjection and verb are C6-C7:
C6 (*interj*) *interj*→ [HEAD: /*interj*]
C7 (*verb*): *verb*→ [HEAD: /*verb*]

C6 says that if no other more specific constraint intervenes on the HEAD value of a subtype of *interj*, a lexical item of type *interj* has the value *interj* for the attribute HEAD. Likewise, C7 states that a lexical item of type *verb* has the value *verb* for the feature HEAD, provided that no other constraint on a subtype of the type *verb* specifies something different with respect to the value of the same attribute.

Notice now that the type *D-wd* inherits the (non-default) constraint C2 (DEPS-*verb*) from the verb. The corresponding constraints on *excl-interj* and *onom-interj*, though, are not inherited, because these types do not dominate the type *D-wd*. This situation accounts for the fact that D-words may select adverbial dependents.

On the other hand, on the basis of the same hierarchy, the type *D-wd* inherits the constraint C3 (SUBORD-*interj*) from its super-type *interj* but does not also inherit the corresponding constraint C4 (SUBORD-*fin-vform*) on the type *fin-vform*. This explains the fact that D-words have independent occurrence.

Thanks to these constraints, the type *D-wd* as a distinct (and mixed) type is defined within the Hierarchical Lexicon.

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