On General Prohibitives

Yale Syntax Reading Group Fall 2020

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Overview

1. Introduction
2. Basic Properties
3. Declarative Properties of GPs
4. Imperative Properties of GPs
5. Analysis
6. Some Implications
7. Appendix

Verbless Imperatives

Natural languages are filled with short, fragmentary utterances that can be used with imperative-like force.

(1)
a. Enough!
b. Silence!
c. Feet on the floor!
d. No hippos in the pool!
e. Not another word!
f. Ticket, please.
g. Out of my sight!
h. Gentlemen, to bed!

Verbless Imperatives

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General Prohibition

General Prohibitives (GPs) are modal permission statements that involve some noun and some exhaustifier (no, only).

(3) a. No jumping on the sofa!
b. Visitors before 10 p.m. only!
c. No spoilers in this thread!

Why 'General'?

In contrast to standard imperatives, general prohibitives seem to most typically implicate that no one is allowed to do the specified action.

(4) a. Don't smoke in here! $\rightarrow$ Addressee cannot smoke. Others unspecified.

b. No smoking in here! $\rightarrow$ Addressee cannot smoke. Others also cannot smoke.

Why 'Prohibitives'?

GPs must limit the space of what is allowed, equivalent forms of "allowing" are ungrammatical, at least in English.

(5) Jumping on the sofa! $\neq$ You are allowed to jump on the sofa.

(6) Visitors before 10 p.m.! $\neq$ Visitors are allowed before 10 p.m.

Analysis

- GPs are best analyzed as modalized declaratives, with an imperative operator and declarative syntax.
- The pragmatic update for GPs is identical to that of imperatives, plus additional declarative content.
- This can be handled within several theories of imperatives.
- Still unclear under what circumstances (and why) an imperative operator can combine with a declarative.

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General Prohibitives are Nominalized

Previous accounts to mention this form have been mostly considered to be limited to gerunds (Seiss et al., 2008; Hudson, 2003; Iatridou, 2019).

(7) No jumping in the pool!

It is not correct, however, to limit the scope of discussion to examples with gerunds. General prohibitives are actually quite permissive in terms of what type of nouns can participate.

Some of the Types of Nouns that can appear in GPs

(8)
a. No swimming! (gerund)
b. No dolphins! (basic noun)
c. No horseplay! (eventive noun)
d. No destruction! (derived noun)
e. No coffee! (mass noun)
f. No soap operas! (compound noun)
g. No theories that the world is ending! (noun with complement)
h. No dogs that just drank from the toilet! (noun with relative)

And Some that Can't

(9) a. *No Gordon Ramsay in my basement! (proper name)

b. *No you in my apartment! (pronoun)

c. *No these dogs at work! (demonstrative)

d. *No some students in my office after 6 P.M.! (determiner)

e. *No Satoshi's dogs in my office! (possessed noun)

The Form of Negation

(10)
a. No dolphins!
b. *Don't dolphins!
c. (#Prohibitive) Not dolphins!
d. *None of dolphins!
e. (#Prohibitive) Never dolphins!
f. *Non-dolphins!

Some of these are possible in some context, but not as prohibitives.

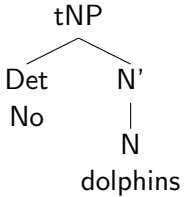
(11) A: I heard dolphins are going extinct.
B: Not dolphins!

Structure

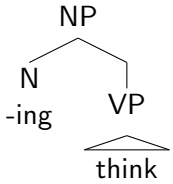
This distribution falls out if the overt material present in general prohibitives is simply a *traditional noun phrase*[a] with the prohibited item as the head.

[a] i.e., an atheoretical notion of either NP or DP

(12)



(13)



‘Only’ Prohibitives!

All the nouns that can appear in “no” GPs can also appear with “only.”

(14)
a. Swimming only!
b. Dolphins only!
c. Horseplay only!
d. Destruction only!
e. Coffee only!
f. Soap operas only!
g. Theories that the world is ending only!
h. Dogs that just drank from the toilet only!

Determiners, Pronouns Proper Names also possible

(15) a. Artemis only!

b. A: Which of these are allowed in? (of dogs, cats, giraffes)
B: Him only! / The dogs only! / Satoshi's dogs only!

This is exactly what we would expect if "no" is a determiner. "No" prohibitives do not allow material that cannot co-occur with determiners, but "only" prohibitives do allow it.

Adding "Allowed"

"Allowed" can (almost) always be added with nearly no change in meaning.

(16) a. No dolphins (allowed)!
b. No smoking (allowed)!
c. Only Artemis (allowed)!

"Allowed" in Other Languages

Uzbek shows that the possibility modal "mumkin" is required to be explicitly stated in prohibitives in translations of "no" commands.

(17) a. Chek-ish mumkin e-mas
smoke-NMLZR possible e-NEG
'No smoking! / Smoking is not possible!'

b. *Chek-ish e-mas
smoke-NMLZR e-NEG
'No smoking! / Smoking is not possible!' (Uzbek)

Interim Conclusions

- The overt material of GPs (No + X) is just a normal tNP.
- GPs require some exhaustifying element ("no", "only")
- "No" is a determiner, whereas "only" is not.
- The word "allowed" can almost always be added with no change in meaning, suggesting it is always there underlyingly.

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Split Properties

- GPs exhibit both declarative and imperative properties ("partial performatives")
- GPs pattern with declarative clauses in several relevant respects.
- This combination of properties will inform the eventual analysis of a modalized declarative.

Null Hypothesis

Given the similarity of the two examples below, we might want to analyze GPs as being covert members of the imperative clause type.

(18) No smoking! → Don't smoke!

Given the similarity between the gerund and imperativized verb in (18) and (19), this type of direct analogy is possible. However, given the acceptability of GPs like "No dogs!," it seems unlikely to be able to directly "translate" imperatives into GPs in a consistent manner.

(19) No dogs! → ???

IMP clauses require addressee subject

Binding possibilities for standard IMPs are limited to second person. With 3rd person IMP subjects, 2nd person binding is possible (Zanuttini, 2008; Potsdam, 2017).

(20) a. Give me a hand with this penguin, won't you / *he?

b. Make yourself / *ourselves a drink! (Zwicky, 1988)

(21) a. Everyone$_i$ raise (his$_i$/her$_i$/their$_i$)/your$_i$ hand!

b. Someone$_i$ raise (his$_i$/her$_i$/their$_i$)/your$_i$ hand!

c. Everyone$_i$ should raise his$_i$/her$_i$/their$_i$/*your$_i$ hand.

d. Should everyone$_i$ raise his$_i$/her$_i$/their$_i$/*your$_i$ hand?

(Zanuttini, 2008)

GP Binding

GPs can also bind 2nd person (like IMPs).

(22) No hitting yourself!

However, GPs can also bind "oneself," which is unavailable to IMPs or 2nd person subjects generally.

(23) a. No hitting oneself!
b. *Make oneself a drink!
c. *You saw oneself.

GPs and binding

GPs do not violate Condition B with non-reflexive 2P pronouns.

(24) a. No candy for you / *yourself!
b. You brought candy for *you / yourself.
c. *Don't sell you short!

GPs and binding

1P and 3P reflexive pronouns can be bound in GPs, unlike IMPs.

(25) a. "OK, so no making myself scarce" ("Soothing Music for Stray Cats" by Jayne Joso)

b. "No making himself withstand something too strong, no requiring himself to "break through" or "tough it out." (http://archive.skoll.org/2011/03/15/expanding-your-window-of-tolerance-increasing-effectiveness-by-staying-present-in-the-moment/)

c. *Don't sell myself short! (Talking to self in mirror)

Existential subject?

The subject of GPs cannot be fixed as 2P. One promising possibility is that it is a deleted existential.

(26) a. No smoking allowed! Actually, is there? / *are you? / *is it?
b. No trucks allowed! Actually, are there? / *are you? / *is it?
c. No hitting yourself! Actually, is there? / *are you? / *is it?

But, as Iatridou (2019) points out, whatever ellipsis is going on here is highly unusual.

(27) ~~There is~~ no smoking ~~allowed~~!

Connection with Existential Usage

There is also an existential usage of "No + X" strings, disambiguated from GPs by prosody.

(28) (Checks room) Hm, no dogs in here!

This coincidence of form and function is not unique to English, occurring in at least several other languages.

(29) Ei koir-i-a
neg.3sg dog-pl-par
"No dogs allowed / Hm, no dogs." (Finnish)

GPs and Truth Values

Imperatives are often believed to lack truth-values entirely (Han, 1998; Portner, 2007). GPs, however, have at least partially accessible truth values. This can be seen using the *"That's (not) true!"* test, the merits and downsides of which are discussed in Kaufmann (2012).

(30) a. A: It's raining outside! B: That's (not) true!

b. A: No smoking in this bar! B: That's (not) true!

c. A: Don't smoke in this bar! B: #That's (not) true!

That's (not) true!

As discussed at length in Kaufmann (2012), the failure of an utterance to be felicitously followed by *"That's (not) true!"* does not necessarily make the object non-propositional. Performative propositions are odd with this follow-up.

(31) A: I promise to be there on time.
B: #That's (not) true!

If performative declaratives cannot be targeted by *"That's (not) true!"*, we might want to say that GPs are declaratives, but are not performative. This cannot be correct, however, as we will see.

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Performativity of GPs

Both imperatives and general prohibitives are equally infelicitous with follow-ups that deny speaker commitment.

(32) a. #Don't enter into my office! Though, I don't care if you enter.
b. #No jumping on the sofa! Though, I don't care if you jump on it.

Non-Past Presupposition

Kaufmann (2012) argues that imperatives are obligatorily performative because there is a series of presuppositions that must hold in order for imperatives to be felicitously uttered. One presupposition that she argues for is that imperatives are required to be not entirely contained in the past.

(33) a. #No parking last year!
b. No parking right now!
c. No parking next week!

(34) a. #Don't park last year!
b. Don't park right now!
c. Don't park next week!

Temporal Parameter

Kaufmann (2012) argues that the temporal parameter is not entirely non-past, and imperatives can actually involve evaluation of times before the utterance time.

(35) Don't call Cécile more than three times while she is in Greece. (Ch. 3, pg. 97)

(36) No calling Cécile more than three times while she is in Greece.

In the event that the addressee has already called Cécile twice at the time of utterance, then the addressee is only allowed one more call.

Unembeddability

Han (1998) argues convincingly that the restrictions on embedding imperatives are related to the performativity of the semantic object they represent. Both GPs and IMPs resist embedding.

(37) a. *Jeff requested (that) stop!
b. *I implored Alyssa (that) finish her meal!

(38) a. *John requested (that) no dogs here.
b. *I implored Alyssa (that) no more pigs.

Except under "say"

Crnič & Trinh (2009) argues that imperatives can be truly embedded in English under exactly one verb, "to say." Both general prohibitives and traditional imperatives are embeddable under "say."

(39) a. Mom said no jumping on the couch!

b. Mom said don't leave yet!

Range of Uses

Imperatives are well-known to participate in a range of uses outside of their canonical use as commands (Davies, 1986; Kaufmann, 2012; Condoravdi & Lauer, 2012; Schmerling, 1982).

(40) a. Get out of my sight! (Command)
b. Take a cookie, if you like. (Permission)
c. Please don't rain tomorrow! (Wish)
d. Take two in the morning and one before bed. (Advice)

GPs Have the Same Range

The same range of uses is available to both imperatives and GPs. I argue that this is best represented by their meaning coming from the same source.

(41) a. No smoking in the pool room! (Command / Warning)
b. Fine, no washing your hands before dinner then. (Concession)[1]
c. Please no raining tomorrow! (Wish)
d. No rubbing the infected area. (Advice)

[1] Concession seems to be the most controversial of these, in terms of robustness of judgments. The intended context is something like:

(1) A: Remember to wash your hands before dinner!
B: I don't need to, they aren't dirty!
A: Fine no washing your hands then, see if I care when you get sick!

Summary

Declarative Properties

- Not limited to addressee subject.
- Have accessible truth values.

Imperative Properties

- Performative
- Identical Range of Uses

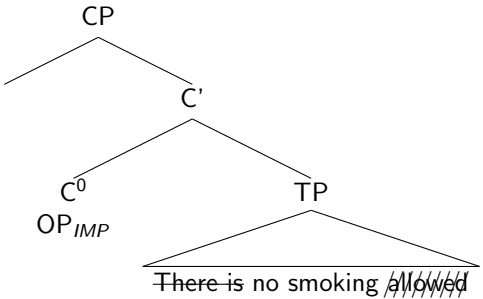
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Analysis

This analysis is an imperative operator combining with a declarative TP.

(42)



Analysis

- This analysis assumes an imperative operator, of the kind argued for in (Kaufmann, 2012; Oikonomou, 2016)
- This operator is typically assumed to remove the truth values of the proposition it combines with. (Kaufmann, 2012).
- In this case, it combines with a declarative TP.
- There is an assertoric meaning component (truth value) and a performative meaning component.

Kaufmann 2012

Schwager (2006); Kaufmann (2012) argues that the imperative operator is essentially a necessity modal that comes along with a series of presuppositions that ensure imperatives are sufficiently performative.

(43) $[\![\text{IMP}]\!]^c$ [[There is no smoking allowed]] $\approx$ There should be no smoking allowed!

- Non-past Constraint
- Authority Condition
- Epistemic Uncertainty
- Ordering Source Restriction

Keshet and Medeiros 2019

Keshet & Medeiros (2019) argue that we can separate the modality of the operator from the presuppositions of (Kaufmann, 2012) to account for the distribution of Imperative-and-Declarative Conjunctions.

(44) a. OP_{IMP} [ModP][TP]

b. OP_{IMP} [$\text{ModP}_{priority}$][TP Leave!]

c. OP_{IMP} [ModP_{future}][TP Take the A train, and you'll be there after dark.]

IaDs have accessible TVs

(45) a. A: Take the A Train, and you'll be there after dark. (IaD)
B: That's not true, I'll never get there taking the A train!

b. A: If you take the A train, you'll be there after dark. (Conditional)
B: That's not true, I'll never get there taking the A train!

(46) a. A: Take another step and I'll shoot.
B: You're lying.

b. A: If you take another step, I'll shoot.
B: You're lying.

Truth Values and Imperatives

(47) a. OP_{IMP} [ModP allowed][TP There is no smoking!] (TVs accessible)

b. OP_{IMP} [ModP MOD_{future}][TP Take the A train, and you'll be there after dark.]

(TVs accessible)

c. OP_{IMP} [ModP $MOD_{priority}$][TP Paint these walls!]

(TVs inaccessible)

It is not the imperative operator that blocks truth values, but its combination with a priority modal. Under this conception, the fact that GPs have accessible TVs is not unexpected. "Allowed" fulfills the requirement to have ModP filled by a modal element.

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Closed Clause-Type Systems

In an influential proposal, Sadock & Zwicky (1985) point out that, given a random language, there is a high likelihood of finding a closed clause-type system like the following.

(48) a. You caught the speckled geese. (Declarative)
b. Did you catch the speckled geese? (Yes-no question)
c. Catch the speckled geese! (Imperative) (Sadock & Zwicky, 1985)

If GPs can provide a dual force, then clause type systems cannot be claused in the way proposed in Sadock & Zwicky (1985).

Whimperatives

Going back to Sadock (1970), "whimperatives" have been considered a problem for theories of clause types.

(49) Why don't you be quiet!

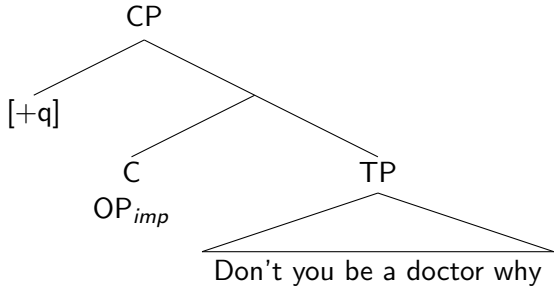
It has been argued that an utterance like (49) is interrogative (Green, 1975). Curiously, however, do-support is not triggered. The contrast between (49) and (50) is clear.

(50) Why aren't you quiet?

Whimperatives

If we take the moniker 'whimperative' seriously, however, we can easily account for this.

(51)



Latin whimperatives

(52) a. quin omitt-e me!
WHY.NOT LET.GO-IMP ME.ACC
'Why don't you leave me alone?' (Terence, Phormio, Act 3)

b. quin tu aud-i!
WHY.NOT YOU.NOM LISTEN-IMP
'Why don't you listen?' (Plautus, Bacchides, Act 2, Sc. 3)

c. quin ego hunc agred-ior de ill-a?
WHY.NOT I.NOM HE.ACC CONFRONT-1SG ABOUT HER-ABL
'Why don't I confront him about her?' (Plautus, Mercator, Act 2, Sc. 3)

Some Outstanding Questions

- If clause-type systems are not closed, what constrains combinations of forces?
- What counts as a GP cross-linguistically?
- What is the typology of verbless imperatives more generally? How do GPs fit into that?

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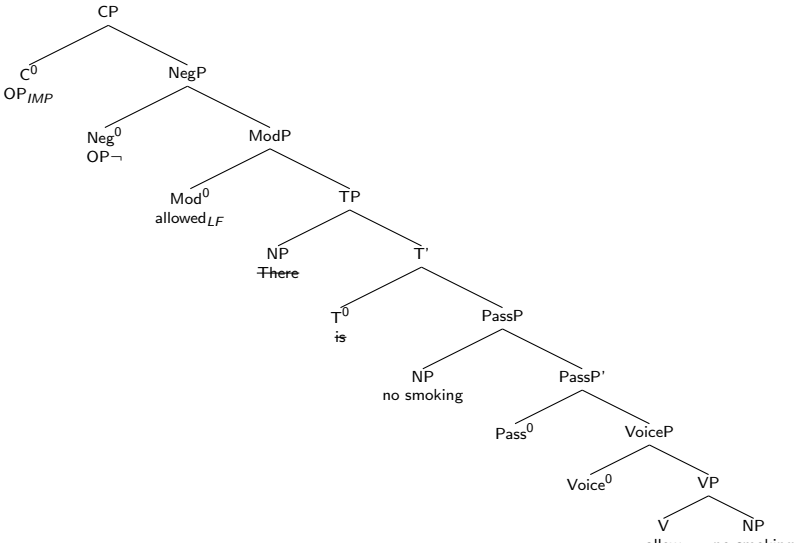
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Full Structure

(53)



Adjectival Passives with Objects

Iatridou (2019) points out the following contrast.

(54) a. No playing piano!
b. No playing of piano!
c. No playing of piano allowed!
d. *No playing piano allowed.

As far as I can tell, this observation is just empirically false.

APs with Objects

(55)
a. Due to..., NO FEEDING THE ANIMALS ALLOWED. (http://www.worcesterma.gov/parks/activities/green-hill-park-farm)
b. No taking photos allowed (https://www.tcbsbm.net/events/tasa-tasb/)
c. No drinking alcohol allowed at this location. (https://besocialrichmond.com/Locations/UTurnSportsPerformanceAcademy)
d. No Smoking cigarettes allowed (http://www.chathamfishingcharters.com/what-to-bring)

Adjectival Passive + Object

Some combinations of adjectival passive + object do sound odd, however.

(56) ??Buying tickets required.

Non-modal APs with objects sound impossible, or telegraphic.

(57) ???Attending concerts overrated.

French

(58) A: pas de fumage! B: c'est (pas) vrais!
no smoking
'No smoking! That's (not) true!'

(59) pas de pluie!
neg of rain
'No raining!'

Finnish

(60) Ei koir-i-a!
neg.3sg dog-pl-par
"No dogs allowed!"

Epistemic Uncertainty and GPs

Epistemic Uncertainty seems to lack modality with GPs.

(61) No smoking allowed in the bar! $\rightarrow$ Speaker believes both (There will be smoking in the bar) and (There will not be smoking in the bar) to be possible.

There is no epistemic uncertainty over the status of the rule with a felicitous GP, but rather about addressee behavior.

Movement of “allowed”