

## Object drop in imperatives and the status of imperative subjects

The paper will examine object drop in a particular type of imperatives, the starting point being such object drop in English imperatives. While imperatives typically have a null subject, the subject can be overtly realized. The previous literature has observed that object drop in imperatives is blocked when the imperative subject is overtly realized (see Sadock 1974, Sigurðsson and Maling 2008, Bošković 2011). The relevant paradigm is given in (1). I will use this paradigm to probe into the nature of the null element in question as well as the position of overt subjects in imperatives, where the crucial data that will shed light on these issues will come from Slavic. I will argue that the null object undergoes movement to the left periphery for licensing reasons (to be spelled out in the talk). This is on a par with what has been argued for in the literature for other null elements (see e.g. Johnson 2001, Fujiwara 2022).

Evidence for movement comes from parasitic gap licensing. It is well-known that parasitic gaps are licensed only under overt A'-movement. Importantly, the null object in question licenses parasitic gaps (2), which indicates that it undergoes A'-movement.

As for the blocking effect of overt imperative subjects on object drop, note that the overt subject is focalized, i.e. it is contrastively focused, in contrast to the null subject. The suggestion is then that, being focalized, the subject in (1b-c) undergoes A'-movement to the left periphery (more on this below), hence it blocks A'-movement of the null object. The blocking effect then also provides an argument for movement of the null object.

Interestingly, the blocking effect of overt imperative subjects on object drop is not found in Serbo-Croatian (SC), as shown by (3)-(4). Regarding what matters for the English/SC contrast, it is possible that there is a difference in the nature of the null object. I will argue that this is not what matters. Rather, what matters is a difference in the verbal form. SC has a dedicated imperative verbal form, which is not the case with English. That this is what is relevant here is confirmed by Russian. Russian imperatives pattern with SC imperatives in the relevant respect: there is no blocking effect of an overt imperative subject on object drop (5). However, Russian can also use infinitives (with dative subjects) as imperatives. In infinitival imperatives, the blocking effect in question shows up: an overt subject blocks object drop (6). Taking SC, English, and Russian into consideration, the blocking effect does not show up with true imperative forms, it shows up in cases where an infinitive or a bare verb is used as an imperative. Also relevant is Icelandic. Sigurðsson and Maling (2008) show that Icelandic also shows the blocking effect in question. While they gloss the relevant verbal form as an imperative, the form in question is formed by dropping the -a ending from the infinitival form of the verb, which yields a bare stem. So the situation here is similar to English. The relevant difference then is true imperatives vs infinitives/bare forms used as imperatives. To account for this, I argue that only true imperatives have/license SpecIP. Overt imperative subjects cannot stay in SpecvP (see Potsdam 1996). In English (1b), the overt imperative subject then must move to the left periphery, where, being located in an A'-position, it blocks A'-movement (Potsdam 1996 places the overt imperative subject in English in SpecIP. His arguments, however, only show that the subject cannot stay in SpecvP—they are compatible with the movement to the left periphery treatment). This is not the case in e.g. SC (4), where the imperative subject in SpecIP then does not block A'-movement of the null object.

I will also use the proposed analysis and imperative object drop to examine a number of cases where an argument optionally surfaces overtly, as in the case of *donate*, where it is not clear whether we are dealing with optionally intransitive/transitive/ditransitive usage (7), without a null element, or whether there is a null element. The blocking effect of the overt imperative subject in (8) indicates that there is a null object in (8b) but not (8c) (i.e. the intransitive usage is not really intransitive—there is a null DP object on that usage).

## Data

- (1) a. Open carefully!  
b. \*You open carefully!  
c. You open it carefully!
- (2) Open without closing afterward
- (3) Otvori/Pažljivo otvori  
open/ carefully open
- (4) Ti otvori/pažljivo otvori  
you open/carefully open
- (5) a. Otkrivaj ostorožno!  
openIMPER carefully  
b. Ty otrkyvaj ostorožno!  
you openIMPER carefully
- (6) a. Otryvat' ostorožno!  
openINF carefully  
b. ?\*Vsem otkryvat' ostorožno!  
all<sub>DAT</sub> openINF carefully  
c. ?Vsem otkryvat' pis'ma ostorožno!  
all<sub>DAT</sub> open letters carefully
- (7) a. Alex donated ten dollars to the fund  
b. Alex donated to the fund  
c. Alex donated ten dollars  
d. He is the only one who hasn't donated yet
- (8) a. Please donate  
b. \*You donate  
c. You donate to the fund

## References

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