English Imperatives as a Discourse-Configurational Language  
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The goals of this paper are threefold: (i) To reinterpret English imperatives (EIs) as a discourse-configurational language (DC-language, limiting discussion to subject omission; Miyagawa 2010), but not as an agreement-based language (A-language); (ii) To refine Agree in A- & DC-grammars; & (iii) To redefine some discourse (D)-related resources to describe EIs. (See Miyagawa (2010) for dichotomy between A- (English) & DC-languages (Japanese) in terms of φ-features & topic-/focus-features (respectively) inherited by T from phase head C (Chomsky 2008) for the purpose of triggering A-movement at T.) Consider the following, with evidence pointing to EIs being a DC-language:

(1) a. Somebody open the window.  (no agreement on the verb)
   (cf. ‘Somebody opens the window’: a declarative, agreement on the verb)
   b. Don’t be noisy.    (do-support, without V-to-T movement of the be-verb)
   (cf. ‘John isn’t/is not noisy’: a declarative, V-to-T movement of the be-verb, without do-support)

The EIs in (1a,b) point to there being no φ-feature agreement between subject & verb (a defining characteristic of DC-languages), & lack of φ-feature agreement on T makes it impossible for the be-verb to raise to T ((1b)). Unvalued φ- & topic-/focus-features detect DPs (pro for (1b)) with unvalued Case-features. Case-valuation is implemented roughly in the same way in both types (upon Agree in φ-features & upon Agree in topic-/focus-features for A- & DC-languages, respectively; Saito 2007 for a different view of Case in East Asian (EA) languages & his attempt to equate EA argument-ellipsis & radical pro-drop (RPD)). I take an overt & a pro EI subject (somebody & pro in (1a,b)) to be a focus & a topic DP, respectively. Further, pro in EIs receives nominative Case, valued by T(ense)<Imp> (based on such Modern English data as Go and do thou likewise (Luke x.37) (The Holy Bible: 394), an imperative with the nominative pronoun thou as subject, & on the Japanese imperative, Omae-ga ik-e (‘you-NOM go-IMP’: ‘You go’), which contains an overt nominative subject). Let me propose some D-related resources to describe EIs, as follows:

(2) a. Go away.
   b. You go away.

Following Grohmann’s (2003) tripartite clausal structure (i.e., the theta-domain (TH-domain), the Case/agreement-domain (C/A-domain; for A-languages; the Case/topic/focus-domain (for DC-languages)), & the discourse-domain (D-domain)), we obtain the following NS-structures for the TH-domains of (2a,b): ‘[vP pro go away]’ & ‘[vP you go away],’ respectively. The subjects receive a theta-role of ‘goer.’ We then
have the NS-structures for their C/A-domains: ‘[C<IMP, topic> [TP T<IMP> [vP pro go away]]’ & ‘[C<IMP, focus> [TP T<IMP> [vP you go away]],’ respectively. Inheritance of topic-/focus-features from C by T takes place. Valuation of pro’s & you’s unvalued Case-features takes place, the imperative Tenses T<IMP, topic/focus> assigning nominative Case to pro & you with a topic- & a focus-feature, respectively, under Agree. The topic-/focus-features have been assigned to pro & you, respectively, from the “pragmatics” module at the strong v phasal TRANSFER via the “invasive” approach to the NS-interfaces connection (López 2003). Finally we get the NS-structures for their D-domains: ‘[[C<IMP> [TP T<IMP> [vP protopic go away]]’ & ‘[[C<IMP> [TP youfocus T<IMP> [vP (youfocus) go away]],’ respectively. The feature <IMP> in C functions to mark its sister TP as imperative, with the “performative” meaning of “command.” What remains for the purposes of interpretation of (2a,b) is identification of the subjects. As for “subject interpretation” in EIs, LF copying operates (Saito 2007), providing imperative subjects with you, the sole LF object available to English for imperative purposes (Saito 2007 for the view that ‘LF copying is an available option universally’). The D-domain of imperatives includes the notion of “YOU,” which denotes the “addressee” & counts as the (sole) value of the “semantic role” of Addressee. The protopic & youfocus subjects of imperatives covertly raise to [Spec,C], where they receive the semantic role of Addressee from the Speaker, whose “linguistic” domain is the D-domain (my forthcoming work for the ‘generalized’ theta-Criterion requiring an argument to bear a theta- or a semantic-role). T(ense)<Speaker>, which resides in the D-domain & corresponds to the “Speaker’s” Absolute Present Tense (Hornstein 1990 for a Reichenbachian theory of tense), values “vocative Case” (Case-visibility requirement on theta-assignment, according to which such ‘vocative’ expressions as John! may receive a semantic-role of Addressee only if its Case-feature is valued as vocative; the generalized theta-Criterion). T<IMP> used to raise overtly to the imperative C (Go and do thou likewise, with the verb in C), but it does not any more. The subjects of (2a,b) receive both a theta-role of goer & a semantic-role of addressee. Referring to the “addressee” makes an imperative subject topicalized or focused, depending on whether it is covert or overt, respectively. EIs capitalize on the DC-language strategy in assigning a topic or focus status to [Spec,T]. This situation points to EIs being (partly) a DC-language. [792words]

References: