Non-past Directives in Japanese*

Yuya Noguchi

University of Connecticut
yuya.noguchi@uconn.edu

Abstract

This paper concerns non-past directives (NPDs) in Japanese, non-past declarative sentences that serve as directive speech acts like imperatives. I observe that NPDs can be felicitous in a more restricted range of contexts than imperatives. To capture this restriction, building on Kaufmann's (2012) modal approach to imperatives, I propose that NPDs contain a modal that is the same as the one in imperatives except that it triggers a presupposition that the speaker considers the behavior of the addressee(s) to be irrational. This proposal will be supported by the "Hey, wait a minute." test. The results of this paper tentatively support the modal approach to the semantics of imperatives.

1 Introduction

In Japanese, declarative sentences with a verb followed by a non-past morpheme -(*r*)*u* (a non-past verb) usually describe a present state or future event, as exemplified in (1). [1]

(1) Ken-wa {mainichi / asita} hasir-u.
Ken-TOP every.day tomorrow run-NP
'Ken runs {every day / tomorrow}.'

However, they can serve as directive sentences, usually accompanied by phonological emphasis (e.g. Arita 2015, Noguchi 2016, Ihara & Noguchi 2018, Ihara 2020, 2021). For example, (2), where the capitals represent phonological emphasis, is interpreted as an order, as is the (standard) imperative in (3).

(2) HASIR-U.
run-NP
'Run.'

*I would like to thank Jon Gajewski, Magdalena Kaufmann and Stefan Kaufmann for helpful discussion and insightful comments. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers of Amsterdam Colloquium 2022 for helpful comments. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

[1] The following abbreviations are used: ACC = accusative, GEN = genitive, IMP = imperative morpheme, NOM = nominative, NP = non-past morpheme, POL = politeness, Q = question marker, SFP = sentence final particle, TOP = topic particle

(3) Hasir-e.
run-IMP
'Run.'

This paper calls directive sentences like (2) *non-past directives* (*NPDs*). To the extent that they have been discussed in the literature, it is assumed that NPDs are generally interchangeable with corresponding imperatives.[2] However, this paper shows a new observation that NPDs are contextually more restricted than imperatives. Building on this observation, this paper proposes a semantic analysis of NPDs.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 illustrates that NPDs are felicitous only in a limited range of contexts, compared with imperatives. Section 3 proposes a semantic analysis of NPDs based on Kaufmann's (2012) modal approach to imperatives, and provides support for the proposal. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2 Contextual restrictions

This section illustrates the contextually restricted use of NPDs. Observe first that both the NPD (2) and the imperative (3) are felicitous in the contexts (4) and (5).

(4) [It is a well-known rule in this PE course that students must run around the grounds when a class starts. In one class, the students somehow feel too lazy to run, keeping chatting. When the class starts, the teacher is surprised to find that they have not started to run. He says to them:]
the NPD (2): ✓ / the imperative (3): ✓

(5) [The teacher mistakenly believes that the new first-year students know the rule of his PE course that students must run around the grounds when a class starts. So, when the first class starts, the teacher is surprised to find that they have not started to run. He says to them:]
the NPD (2): ✓ / the imperative (3): ✓

In the following contexts, however, only the imperative (3) is felicitous:[3]

(6) [The teacher is planning to make a rule for his new PE course that the students run around the grounds as a first exercise. In the first class, he says to them:]
the NPD (2): # / the imperative (3): ✓

(7) [It is a well-known rule in this PE course that students must run around the grounds when a class starts. In one class, the teacher arrives a little early and so the students have not yet started to run. He expects them to start running soon since they have followed the rule in every class. As a reminder, he says to them:]
the NPD (2): # / the imperative (3): ✓(with the sentence final particle *yo*)

[2] Ihara & Noguchi (2018) and Ihara (2020, 2021) observe some differences between imperatives and NPDs, such as the availability of so-called weak readings like permissions. As these do not concern the core directive uses that I am concerned with in this paper, I will leave it to future work to consider how my proposal relates to their observations.

[3] I leave open why the sentence final particle *yo* is required for the imperative (3) in the context (7) (see Davis 2009, 2011 and Oshima 2014 for relevant discussion and further references).

To identify the crucial difference between (4-5) and (6-7), notice first that (4) and (5) are common in that the students seem to the teacher to be "lazy", though they differ in whether his assumption about their laziness is correct or not. More precisely, this can be described as in (8).

(8) a. The speaker (i.e. the teacher) believes that it is obvious to the addressee(s) (i.e. the students) that they should realize the prejacent *p* (i.e. *you run*) in the current situation.
b. It seems to the speaker that the addressee(s) will not realize *p* in the current situation.

Crucially, (6-7) differ from (4-5) in whether (8) holds. In (6), (8a) is not the case (and accordingly, (8b) is not either); the teacher knows that the students do not yet know the planned rule, thus not believing that it is obvious for them that they should run. In (7), (8a) holds but (8b) does not; the teacher assumes that it is obvious to the students that they should run, and he has no reason to think that they will not do so, given that they have been following the rule on all previous occasions. The contrasts suggest that NPDs are felicitous only in contexts characterized by (8a) and (8b), unlike imperatives. The next section aims to propose a semantic analysis of NPDs that can capture this contextual restriction.

3 Proposal

3.1 Modal approach to imperatives

For the proposal of this paper, I adopt the modal approach to the semantics of imperatives (e.g. Kaufmann 2012). According to this approach, imperatives involve the imperative modal operator *IMP*, which takes a propositional prejacent *p* as in (9a). This paper assumes that utterance contexts are characterized by what is common ground between the interlocutors *CG* (Stalnaker 1978), the world *w* and time *t* at which they take place, and that they determine a salient modal base *f* and an ordering source *g*. With this, putting aside details irrelevant for the following discussion, I assume that IMP is interpreted as in (9b), based on the Kratzer-style analysis of modals (e.g. Kratzer 1991, 2012).[4]

(9) a. [IMP [*p*]]
b. $[\![(9a)]\!]^{c} = \forall w' \in BEST(CG_c, g_c, t_c, w_c)[\exists t'[P(t', w') \,\&\, t_c<t']]$
presupposes, among others:
p resolves a salient decision problem of the addressee(s) (consisting of future courses of their actions), such that the speaker and the addressee(s) consider the ordering source *g* the relevant criterial for solving the decision problem. (**Ordering Source Restriction**: OSR)

$BEST(CG_c, g_c, t_c, w_c)$ in (9b) denotes a set of worlds which are compatible with the common ground CG_c (as a modal base) and best according to the contextually salient ordering source g_c at the utterance time t_c in the actual world w_c. The at-issue meaning of (9b) is then that *p* is true in all the worlds of $BEST(CG_c, g_c, t_c, w_c)$. The at-issue meaning of IMP is thus the same as necessity modals like *should* and *must*. It differs from those modals, however, in that it triggers presuppositions that make imperatives non-assertoric, or performative. The only presupposition

[4] For expository purposes, I assume that the prejacent of an imperative (and an NPD) involves a tense element that posits the event denoted by the prejacent in a temporal location which follows the context time t_c, as shown in (9b). Kaufmann (2012) argues that the temporal interpretation of imperatives is represented in the presuppositional component.

that is relevant to the following discussion is *Ordering Source Restriction* (*OSR*); see Kaufmann (2012) for other presuppositions.

With this approach to imperatives, I assume that the Japanese imperative (3), repeated below, is analyzed to have the structure in (10a), and (10a) is interpreted as in (10b).[5,6]

(3) Hasir-e.
run-IMP
'Run.'

(10) a. [IMP [you run]]
b. $[\![(10a)]\!]^{c} = \forall w' \in BEST(CG_c, g_c, t_c, w_c)[\exists t'[\text{you.run}(t', w') \ \& \ t_c < t']]$
presupposes, among others:
p (i.e. *you run*) resolves a salient decision problem of the addressee(s) (consisting of future courses of their actions), such that the speaker and the addressee(s) consider the ordering source *g* the relevant criterial for solving the decision problem. (**Ordering Source Restriction**: OSR)

3.2 Special imperative modal

Building on the modal approach to imperatives illustrated above, I now propose that NPDs involve a special type of IMP, *S*(*pecial*)-*IMP*. More specifically, I argue that the NPD in (2), repeated below, has the structure in (11a), and (11a) is interpreted as in (11b).

(2) HASIR-U.
run-NP
'Run.'

(11) a. [S-IMP [you run]]
b. $[\![(11a)]\!]^{c} = \forall w' \in BEST(CG_c, g_c, t_c, w_c)[\exists t'[\text{you.run}(t', w') \ \& \ t_c < t']]$
presupposes, among others:
(i) *p* (i.e. *you run*) resolves a salient decision problem of the addressee(s) (consisting of future courses of their actions), such that the speaker and the addressee(s) consider the ordering source *g* the relevant criterial for solving the decision problem. (**Ordering Source Restriction**: OSR)
(ii) The addressee(s) is(/are) behaving irrationally with respect to their decision problem (**Irrational Behavior by Addressee**: IBA).

S-IMP is the same as IMP except that it triggers an additional presupposition *Irrational Behavior by Addressee* (*IBA*). The notion "behaving irrationally" draws on Kaufmann & Kaufmann's (2012) proposal that presupposing OSR entails *Rational Choice* (12) (where $\Box^{f,g}q$ stands for a proposition where the prejacent *q* is modalized by a necessity modal like *should* and *must* with respect to the modal base *f* and the ordering source *g*). Note in particular that (12) characterizes a *rational* hearer.

(12) A rational hearer who believes $\Box^{f,g}q$ such that *q* serves as a solution to the salient decision problem will aim to bring about *q*. (*Rational Choice*)
(cf. Kaufmann & Kaufmann 2012: 219)

[5] See Ihara & Noguchi (2018) and Ihara (2020, 2021) for the modal approach to imperatives in Japanese.
[6] I assume that imperatives (and NPDs) involve a covert second person pronoun as their subject, as in (10).

Encoding IBA in S-IMP is motivated by the characteristics of the contexts (4-5), where the NPD (2) is felicitous. In these contexts, the teacher (correctly or wrongly) believes that the students know that they should run, based on his assumption that they know the rule. In addition, the teacher should presuppose OSR in (4-5), given that imperatives, which presuppose OSR (see (9/10b)), are felicitous as well in those contexts. Rational Choice (12) should thus be entailed in (4-5). It then follows from these characteristics (i.e. (i) the teacher's assumption that the students know that they should run, (ii) the entailment of Rational Choice) that in (4-5), the teacher assumes that the students will aim to run, as long as they are *rational*. Actually, however, it seems to him that they will not run. The teacher thus concludes that they are *irrational* and presupposes this, namely IBA, when using the NPD.

Let us now consider how the current proposal can account for the felicity difference of the NPD (2) between (4-5) and (6-7). On the one hand, it is observed in Section 2 that (4-5) and (6) differ in whether the teacher believes that it is obvious to the students that they should run (see (8a)); he believes so in (4-5) because of the teacher's assumption that the students know the rule, while he does not in (6) because the teacher has not told the students about the planned rule. Note here that if the speaker is to determine whether the addressee(s) is(/are) rational based on Rational Choice (12), (s)he needs to assume that they believe $\Box^{f,g}q$ (and to find out whether they are likely to bring about q). Therefore, in (6) there is no reason for the teacher to assume that the students are irrational, preventing him from presupposing IBA. On the other hand, as observed in Section 2, while (7) is similar to (4-5) in that the teacher believes that it is obvious for the students that they should run, they differ regarding the behavior of the students (see (8b)); in (4-5) it seems to the teacher that the students will not run, but in (7) he has no reason to think that they will not do so, given their obedience to the rule. Hence, in (7), the attitude of the students does not seem to the teacher to be irrational in the sense of (12) and accordingly he cannot presuppose IBA. The infelicity of NPDs in (6-7) can thus be accounted for by presupposition failure with respect to IBA. Thus, the current proposal captures the contextual restriction of NPDs.

3.3 Support

A piece of evidence for the proposal that NPDs involve a special imperative modal that triggers IBA can be provided by the "Hey, wait a minute." test.[7] Von Fintel (2004) argues that when one states a complaint after saying "Hey, wait a minute.", that complaint is regarding what the speaker presupposes, rather than what (s)he asserts. In (13), for example, A presupposes that someone proved Goldbach's Conjecture when he makes the utterance, as suggested by the subject *the mathematician who proved Goldbach's Conjecture*. After saying "Hey, wait a minute.", B can felicitously complain about A's making that presupposition. On the other hand, B's statement would be infelicitous when she said, after "Hey, wait a minute.", that she did not know about the asserted content.

(13) A: The mathematician who proved Goldbach's Conjecture is a woman.
B: Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that someone proved Goldbach's Conjecture.
B': # Hey, wait a minute. I had no idea that that was a woman.
(von Fintel 2004: 271)

This test applies in Japanese as well; translating (13) into Japanese results the same, as (14) shows.

(14) A: Goorudobahha-no yosoo-o shoomeesita suugakusya-wa zyosee nanda tte.
Goldbach-GEN conjecture-ACC proved mathematician-TOP woman is SFP
'The mathematician who proved Goldbach's Conjecture is a woman.'

[7] I thank Yusuke Yagi for suggesting applying the "Hey, wait a minute." test to NPDs.

B: E, chotto matte. Goorudobahha-no yosoo-o shoomeesita hito-ga
hey little wait Goldbach-GEN conjecture-ACC proved person-NOM
iru nante siranakatta yo.
there.is C not.knew SFP
'Hey, wait a minute. I didn't know that (there is) someone (who) proved Goldbach's Conjecture.'

B': # E, chotto matte. Sono hito-ga zyosee da nante siranakatta yo.
hey little wait that person-NOM woman is C not.knew SFP
'Hey, wait a minute. I didn't know that that person was a woman.'

With this background, let us observe the data (15), where one student makes a complaint after "Hey, wait a minute.", following the teacher's utterance of the NPD.

(15) [The teacher mistakenly believes that the new first-year students know the rule of his PE course that students must run around the grounds when a class starts. So, when the first class starts, the teacher is surprised to find that they have not started to run.]
Teacher: HASHIR-U.
run-NP
'Run.'
Student: E, chotto mat-tekudasai. Nani-o suru beki ka wakaranakatta kara,
hey little wait-IMP.POL what-ACC do should Q not.knew because
hasiranakatta n desu yo.
not.ran C is.POL SFP
'Hey, wait a minute. We didn't run because we didn't know what to do.'

Note that the context in (15) is the same as (5). In that context, as discussed in Section 3.2, the teacher wrongly believes that the students know the rule, and thus considers their not running to be irrational (satisfying IBA). Crucially, in (15), after saying "Hey, wait a minute.", the student felicitously complains about the teacher's wrong belief by explaining the reason why they did not run, stating that that was because they did not know what to do (not knowing the rule). The felicity of the complaint thus suggests that NPDs should involve IBA in their presuppositional component.

This suggestion is further corroborated by the data in (16), which is the same as (15) except that the teacher utters the corresponding imperative, not the NPD.

(16) [In the same context as (15):]
Teacher: Hashir-e.
run-IMP
'Run.'
Student: # E, chotto mat-tekudasai. Nani-o suru beki ka wakaranakatta kara,
hey little wait-IMP.POL what-ACC do should Q not.knew because
hasiranakatta n desu yo.
not.ran C is.POL SFP
'Hey, wait a minute. We didn't run because we didn't know what to do.'

(16) crucially shows that the student cannot make the same complaint as in (15) if the preceding utterance by the teacher is an imperative; the students would accept the imperative in (16) as a mere order by the teacher that the students should run. The difference between (15) and (16) thus indicates that IBA is triggered by NPDs, but not by imperatives.

4 Conclusion

To recap, this paper has provided a hitherto unacknowledged fact that in contrast with imperatives, NPDs are felicitous only in a limited range of contexts, where the speaker assumes that the addressee(s) is(/are) "lazy". Based on this observation, I have argued, adopting the modal-based analysis of imperatives (e.g. Kaufmann 2012), that NPDs involve the special imperative modal S-IMP, which triggers a presupposition that the speaker considers the behavior of the addressee(s) irrational, namely IBA. I have further shown that this proposal is supported by the "Hey, wait a minute." test.

Note finally that the contextual restriction of NPDs is not observed in declaratives used as directive in other languages (e.g. *You will run!* in English). This difference supports the idea that the directive construal of NPDs results from a modal operator which can be parameterized, rather than from pragmatic principles. Given the overall similarity between NPDs and imperatives, the proposal may be considered tentative support of the modal approach to, or a "strong" theory of, imperatives overall (see von Fintel & Iatridou 2017 for discussion; Portner 2004 for an alternative "minimal" theory).

References

Arita, Setsuko. 2015. "Sasisematta meirei" ni kansuru oboegaki [A note on "urgent imperatives"]. *Kyuushuu Daigaku Gengogaku Ronshyuu* [*Kyushu University Papers in Linguistics*] 35: 382–397.

Davis, Christopher. 2009. Decisions, dynamics and the Japanese particle *yo*. *Journal of Semantics* 26: 329–366.

Davis, Christopher. 2011. Constraining interpretations: Sentence final particles in Japanese. Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

von Fintel, Kai. 2004. Would you believe it? The King of France is back! Presuppositions and truth-value intuitions. In *Descriptions and Beyond*, ed. by Marga Reimer and Anne Bezuidenhout, 315–341. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

von Fintel, Kai, and Sabine Iatridou. 2017. A modest proposal for the meaning of imperatives. In *Modality across Syntactic Categories*, ed. by Ana Arregui, María Luisa Rivero, and Andrés Salanova, 288–319. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ihara, Shun. 2020. Decomposing directive strategies. Doctoral dissertation, Osaka University.

Ihara, Shun. 2021. Division of labor between semantics and pragmatics of canonical and non-canonical imperatives. *Gengo Kenkyu* 160: 155–182.

Ihara, Shun, and Yuya Noguchi. 2018. Imperatives with/without necessity. In *Japanese/Korean Linguistics 25*, ed. by Shin Fukuda, Mary Shin Kim, and Mee-Jeong Park, 103–116. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Kaufmann, Magdalena. 2012. *Interpreting Imperatives*. New York: Springer.

Kaufmann, Magdalena, and Stefan Kaufmann. 2012. Epistemic particles and performativity. In *Proceedings of SALT 22*, ed. by Anca Chereches, 208–225. Washington, DC: Linguistic Society of America.

Kratzer, Angelika. 1991. Modality. In *Semantik: Ein Internationales Handbuch der Zeitgenössischen Forschung*, ed. by Arnim von Stechow and Dieter Wunderlich, 639–650. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Kratzer, Angelika. 2012. *Modals and Conditionals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Noguchi, Yuya. 2016. Does ForceP determine all the illocutionary forces?: A case study of dictionary form imperatives in Japanese. In *Proceedings of FAJL 8: Formal Approaches*

to Japanese Linguistics, ed. by Ayaka Sugawara, Shintaro Hayashi, and Satoshi Ito, 75–85. Cambridge, MA: MITWPL.

Oshima, David Yoshikazu. 2011. On the functions of the Japanese discourse particle *yo* in declaratives. In *Formal Approaches to Semantics and Pragmatics: Japanese and beyond*, ed. by Elin McCready, Katsuhiko Yabushita, and Kei Yoshimoto, 251–271. New York: Springer.

Portner, Paul. 2004. The semantics of imperatives within a theory of clause types. In *Proceedings of SALT 14*, ed. by Robert B. Young, 235–252. Washington, DC: Linguistic Society of America.

Stalnaker, Robert. 1978. Assertion. *Syntax and Semantics* 9: 315–332.