A three-fold approach to the imperative in English and Dutch

Daniël Van Olmen
Lancaster University

Abstract

The English imperative and its Dutch counterpart have seldom been studied and compared from a quantitative, usage-based perspective. This article fills the gap by examining what three different approaches to spoken corpus data can reveal about the construction in the two languages and evaluates their usefulness. The collostructional approach shows that, contrary to the traditional view of the imperative, it is not typically used to obtain concrete results. Distinctive collexeme analysis in particular also suggests that the English imperative is somewhat more open to non-agentive verbs. The discourse contexts in which imperatives occur are taken into account more by the speech act approach, in a holistic manner. The English imperative is found to serve so-called non-willful and expressive directive purposes more often than the Dutch one. The parametric approach, developed within cognitive linguistics and systematically applied for the first time here, considers features such as power and cost separately. It suggests that the higher degree of overall force exertion in Dutch is mainly due to differences in the extent to which the speaker desires the proposed event to be realized and to which it is to their own benefit. The results are argued to illustrate the complementary nature of the three approaches and to have important implications for a better understanding of the imperative in general and in the two languages.

1.   Introduction[1]

The last decades have seen the publication of many articles on the imperative (see Van Olmen & Heinold 2017 for a critical review) and of several monographs such as Aikhenvald (2010) and Jary & Kissine (2014). In another book-length study, Takahashi (2012: 2) rightly points out, however, that "little quantitative, usage-based research has been done" on the imperative in English and, by extension, in other languages. For the Dutch imperative, for instance, arguably the two most classic studies, Proeme (1984) and De Haan (1986), are based primarily on the authors' intuitions. More recent work like Fortuin (2004) on imperative subjects and Fortuin & Boogaart (2009) on the conditional imperative relies on a combination of constructed examples and very specific internet and corpus searches. Other research such as De Hoop et al. (2016) on the perceived politeness of different formal and functional types of imperative adopts a more experimental approach. To our knowledge, though, there exists no systematic study of the imperative's usage in a corpus of Dutch – with the exception of Van Olmen (2011), our own unpublished dissertation. In the present paper, we seek to address this lack of quantitative usage-based research, by comparing the use of the Dutch imperative to that of its English equivalent and by examining whether and/or how three different approaches can contribute to our understanding of the construction in general and the (dis)similarities between the two languages in particular.

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[1] This article elaborates on unpublished PhD research (see Van Olmen 2011).

A first possible way of charting the imperative's usage focuses on the verbs employed in the construction. Takahashi (2012: 21-56), for one, simply identifies and discusses the most frequently occurring verbs in the English imperative. This approach fails to tell us, however, whether the verbs are *characteristic* of the construction. Simple collexeme analysis (SCA), a type of collostructional analysis developed by Stefanowitsch & Gries (2003), addresses the issue: it reveals which lexemes occur more or less often in a specific construction than expected in view of their overall frequencies in the entire language. The authors actually illustrate this method with the English imperative and the present article will apply it to Dutch as well. For the comparison of English and Dutch, we will explore a suggestion by Gilquin (2015). She argues that Gries & Stefanowitsch's (2004) distinctive collexeme analysis (DCA), an extension of collostructional analysis to alternating constructions in a language, can be employed for contrastive purposes too.

A second approach to examining the imperative's usage is to look at the speech acts that it is used to perform. Many traditional descriptions just list all the speech acts for which they think the imperative can be employed. De Haan (1986: 254-257), for example, mentions advice, encouragements, imprecations, instructions, orders, permissions, requests, warnings and wishes. There is, however, little systematicity in and considerable variation between such inventories and few scholars have analyzed the imperative's actual usage in speech act terms. De Clerck (2006) is one of the exceptions, with his application of a well-argued taxonomy of functions to all imperatives in a corpus of English. The present paper will elaborate on this study – and its follow-up, Van Olmen (2011) – and compare the English imperative's illocutionary profile to the Dutch one's.

A third and final way of capturing the imperative's usage has been developed by Takahashi (2012) within the framework of cognitive linguistics. In his view, the imperative's force exertion can be analyzed in terms the parameters of desire, capability, power, cost, benefit and obligation. They are all quantifiable (e.g. obligation ranging from -2 to +2) and the sum of their values for a particular imperative, going from -7 to +10, is proportional to its overall level of force. Takahashi's (2012: 87) main claim is that "prototypical" imperatives are at the positive end of the combined scale and he calls upon frequency to back it up: "[In a collection of four English novels,] the great majority (at least 84%) of imperative utterances involved +3 or a higher total score." Any discussion of the analysis is lacking, though. Our study wants to implement the parametric model in a more meticulous way and thus put its claim about prototypicality to the test, not only with English but also with Dutch.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. In Section 2, we will discuss our methodology and some general findings about the imperative in English and Dutch. In Section 3, we will look at the results of the collostructional approach. Section 4 will consider the findings of our speech act analysis. Section 5 will examine the application of Takahashi's (2012) parametric model. In Section 6, we will present our conclusions.

2 Methodology

2.1 Corpus

The basis for this study is a comparable corpus of English and Dutch speech. For the English part, the International Corpus of English Great Britain is used (ICE-GB, Survey of English Usage 2006) and its component of dialogues in particular. It is also employed by Stefanowitsch & Gries (2003) and De Clerck (2006), probably because the annotation of the ICE-GB allows us to extract every imperative in a straightforward manner. Moreover, its wide range of text types (see the first column

of Table 1) enables us to get a fairly comprehensive idea of the imperative's usage in British English conversation. The Dutch part is made up of the syntactically annotated Northern Dutch files of the Corpus Gesproken Nederlands (CGN; Nederlandse Taalunie 2004). The reason for this limitation is that only in the parsed files can imperatives be searched for efficiently. As Table 1 shows, we have tried to make the Dutch component as comparable to the English one as possible. Note, however, that the ICE-GB's legal cross-examinations are not included here because of the absence of this text type in the CGN.

Text type	English		Dutch	
	# words	%	# words	%
Private dialogues	*205,627*	*57.84*	*100,048*	*58.82*
Face-to-face conversations	185,208	52.10	90,024	52.92
Telephone calls	20,419	5.74	10,024	5.89
Public dialogues	*149,883*	*42.16*	*70,054*	*41.18*
Class lessons	42,210	11.87	19,984	11.75
Broadcast discussions	43,920	12.35	} 30,122	17.71
Broadcast interviews	22,147	6.23		
Parliamentary debates	21,060	5.92	9,937	5.84
Business transactions	20,546	5.78	10,011	5.89
Total	*355,510*	*100.00*	*170,102*	*100.00*

Table 1. Comparable corpus.

The Dutch part of our corpus is still only half the size of the English one. This difference is due to the paucity of syntactically annotated Northern Dutch data for particular text types. Moreover, the broadcast discussions and interviews are separate components in the ICE-GB but constitute a single unit in the CGN. On the whole, though, the proportions of private and public dialogues and of the specific text types are very similar.

2.2 Object of study

Following Jary & Kissine (2016: 132), we regard the imperative as the sentence type in a language "whose only prototypical function is to provide the addressee(s) with a reason to act, [which] … is suitable for the performance of the full range of directive speech acts and whose manifestations are all morphologically and syntactically homogeneous with the second person." Constructions that do not therefore count as imperatives are, for instance, (1a) and (1b). The former, literally an ability question, may typically give the addressee a reason to act, as a conventionalized request strategy, but cannot be used for such other directive purposes as warnings or offers. The latter is an example of a "non-canonical imperative" (Aikhenvald 2010: 17), i.e. one with a first or third person subject. It is excluded here, unlike in Stefanowitsch & Gries (2003) and Takahashi (2012: 21-56), because the required presence of *let* (or *laten* 'let' in Dutch) makes it syntactically different from a canonical imperative like (1c).

(1) a. **Could you pass** me uh the diagnostic light there? (ICE-GB:S1A.088.171)
    b. **Let Kingdom come** and my name perish. (ICE-GB:S1B.041.68)
    c. **Shut up**! (ICE-GB:S1A.085.331)

With Davies (1986: 5-17), we can characterize the imperative construction in English as: (i) having the verb in its base form, like *shut* in (1c); (ii) having an optional subject, as in (2a); (iii) needing *do*-support for the emphasis and the negation of every verb, including *be* in (2b) (for a more detailed

description of these features, see De Clerck 2006: 16-46).

(2) a. (**You**) **try** them in a minute. (ICE-GB:S1A022.249)
    b. Oh **don't be** so mean. (ICE-GB:S1A032.114)

In Dutch, in line with Haeseryn et al. (1997: 105-107), the imperative construction can be defined as: (i) placing the verb, normally in its stem form, in clause-initial position, like *noem* in (3a); (ii) having an optional subject after the verb, as in (3b).[2]

(3) a. ***Noem*** *er eens een paar*. (CGN:FN000600.117)
        'Just name a couple.'
    b. ***Neem jij*** *maar een hele goeie fiets*. (CGN:FN000541.150)
        'You just take a very good bike.'
    c. ***Noemt u*** *d'r eens wat.* (CGN:FN007102.68)
        'Please name a few.'

When plural or polite, such an explicit second person subject pronoun triggers agreement changes in the verb, as *noemt* in (3c) shows (see Van Olmen 2011: 24-31 for an in-depth discussion of, for instance, the debate about the overt subject construction as an imperative or not).

  Not all cases that, on the surface, fit the above descriptions are of interest, though. Takahashi (2012: 40-42), for example, observes that *look* is the fourth most common verb in the imperative. This fact is mainly due to its frequent use as a discourse marker. It is debatable, however, whether *look* in (4a) should be taken into account. Unlike a "full-fledged" imperative, this discourse marker has become quite fixed formally – one can, for instance, no longer add *do* or a subject (e.g. **do/you look*) – and it has only one real, semantically very bleached function left (see Van Olmen 2010 on its evolution). Moreover, it cannot occur on its own and it is secondary in discourse prominence to the subsequent sentence. Including cases such as (4a) in, say, our DCA would reveal that 'look' is more attracted to Dutch than to English (see Van Olmen 2010: 224). Yet, this result would tell us more about the difference in frequency of the discourse markers *look* and *kijk* 'look' than about the imperative in the two languages. Note, however, that cases like (4b), where *look* still conveys some kind of appeal to the addressee to watch something, *would* obviously be relevant.

(4) a. A Have some banana bread.
       B **Look**, I'm not that much of a banana bread eater. (ICE-GB:S1A010.183-185).
    b. A What a pit. I keep tidying it up.
       B Oh **look**. There's the photo. (ICE-GB:S1A040.45-48)

The above criteria of formal and functional flexibility and of autonomy and prominence are relative, of course. The imperative in (5a) is unquestionably flexible: it could act as a command in one context and as advice in another and it is also possible to insert a subject or modal particles. The construction in (5b), by contrast, can be argued to occupy an in-between position. Functionally, it

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[2] The question whether this definition should include so-called past imperatives like *had gekomen!* 'you should have come!' (lit. 'had come!') (see Van Olmen 2018) does not need to be answered: they are not attested in our data.

is almost always a good wish and, formally, negating the clause is impossible while the acceptability of introducing a subject or the "imperative-only" particle *maar* (Vismans 1994: 5) is unclear.[3] Unlike the discourse marker in (4a) and like the imperative in (5a), though, (5b) is an independent expression that is not secondary in discourse prominence to anything else. Moreover, the construction is not restricted to the verb *eet* 'eat'. Examples with *werk* 'work' or *sport* 'exercise', for instance, are easy to find.

(5) a. ***Zet*** [***jij***] *er* [***maar***] *een stempel op*. (CGN:FN000404.21)
'[You] [just] put a stamp on it.'
b. ***Eet*** [?***jij***] *ze* [?***maar***] [*****niet***]! (CGN:FN000679.100)
'[*Don't] [you] [just] enjoy your meal.'

In the present study, we will not be concerned with both formally and functionally inflexible cases that can only occur together with a more prominent discourse element (see also De Clerck's 2006: 45 distinction between minor and major imperatives). In other words, (4a) will not be considered but (4b) and (5a) will and so will (5b) because, despite its inflexibility, it still meets the criteria of autonomy and prominence.

2.3 Data retrieval

For the ICE-GB, the following steps were taken to extract the relevant data. We first looked for all instances of the mood label IMP (see Nelson et al. 2002: 64). As the focus here is on the canonical imperative, hits like (1b) were dismissed right away. *Let* can, of course, also be used in addressee-oriented imperatives like (6), with its lexical meaning of 'allow'. Such cases were included. Of the other hits for IMP, only three percent were found to be incorrect.

(6) **Don't let** him upset you. (ICE-GB:S1A.005.131)

Cases such as (4a) are typically annotated as DISMK and COAP (i.e. discourse marker and appositive connective) in the ICE-GB. Sometimes, however, these tags are also employed for more flexible and/or independent instances that actually fall within our scope. *Fuck off* in (7a), for example, is annotated as DISMK but serves as an autonomous call upon the addressee to go away and allows the insertion of, say, a subject. *Excuse me* in (7b) is tagged as DISMK too. This apologetic formula often functions as an interruption device (see De Clerck 2006: 174) and is thus usually a less prominent part of a longer stretch of discourse, like (4a). Yet, unlike *look*, it can still be modified by, for instance, emphatic *do* or *please* and is therefore of interest to us.

(7) a. Well [**you**] **fuck off** then. (ICE-GB:S1A052.129)
b. [**Do**] **excuse** me I will take your coat. (ICE-GB:S1B046.54)

Because of the issues with the annotation, our second step was to examine the results of numerous queries based on information in the manual (see Nelson et al. 2002: 30) and an exploration of the

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[3] According to one of the reviewers, "items can be added but not without changing the meaning of *eet ze*". We admit that an interpretation as 'you just eat them!' becomes more likely but still believe that the construction tolerates some formal flexibility. The online attestation *werk jij ze maar fijn* 'you just have a good time working!' (http://www.perryvermeulen.nl/guestbook.html, accessed on 31 August 2018) can serve as an example.

syntax of specific examples. At this stage, all potentially relevant hits were extracted. Finally, we checked an arbitrary selection of 40,000 words and did not come across any imperatives overlooked by the aforementioned queries.

From the CGN, we first retrieved all instances of the word order label SV1, i.e. all verb-initial clauses (see Hoekstra et al. 2003: 24-25). The many polar interrogatives and conjunction-less conditionals were sifted out by hand and so were the non-canonical imperatives. We then looked at the results of various queries (e.g. for MWUs or multiple-word units, see Hoekstra et al. 2003: 30, 67) and extracted all potentially relevant data. Examples that would have been missed without this step include the independent good wish in (8a) and many hits of *wacht* 'wait, hang on' serving to keep or get the floor in conversation. The latter are not dissimilar to the discourse marker *kijk* in the way they relate to the adjacent discourse but differ from it in that they still exhibit considerable formal flexibility. Although *wacht* mostly combines with *even* 'briefly', it can also be found without this modal particle, as well as with additional ones like *'ns* 'once' in (8b).

(8) a. ***Eet*** *smakelijk.* (CGN:FN00679:99)
          'Enjoy your meal.'
     b. ***Wacht 'ns even*** *ik heb het over een integrale prijs hè?* (CGN:FN000869.245)
          'Just wait a moment, I'm talking about an all-inclusive price, you know?'

The examination of an arbitrary collection of 20,000 words, lastly, confirmed the accuracy of our search.

The ultimate step in the data retrieval was the exclusion of cases that did not meet any of our criteria (see Section 2.2). The 447 hits in the Dutch corpus were thus reduced to 217. The deleted instances include the discourse marker *kijk*, the conjunction *laat staan* 'let alone' in (9a), reaction-eliciting *zeg* 'hey' in (9b) and approximating *zeg maar* 'say' in (9c). The latter, for example, cannot occur on its own. It is also invariable in that it needs and is only able to combine with *maar* to serve its purpose (see Van Olmen 2013 on 'say' as a pragmatic marker in Dutch and English).

(9) a. *… dat een president natuurlijk eigenlijk niet mag liegen en* ***laat staan*** *meineed plegen* (CGN:FN007176.14)
          '… that, clearly, a president should actually not lie, let alone commit perjury.'
     b. *Hoe weet jij dat allemaal* ***zeg***? (CGN:FN000400.268)
          'How do you know all of that, hey?'
     c. *Dan zouden d'r* ***zeg maar*** *drie elementen in dat werk kunnen zijn.* (CGN:FN007249.47)
          'There could then be, say, three elements in that study.'

Of the 846 English hits, 138 were removed. They include the discourse marker *look* in (4a), example-introducing *say* in (10a) and highlighting *mind you* in (10b) (see De Clerck 2006: 386-392 on the latter).

(10) a. Nothing could stop it regenerating unless … you actually actively stopped it by **say** tying a great big knot in it or something. (ICE-GB:S1B009.174)
     b. And uh prawns of course. Large prawns **mind you**. But not as big as the langoustines. (ICE-GB:S1A009.313-315)

2.4   General comparison

Table 2 gives the absolute numbers of English and Dutch imperative verbs and their rates of occurrence per 10,000 words. To test the results statistically, we will use Rayson & Garside's (2000) log-likelihood calculator. It has been designed specifically for the comparison of raw frequencies across corpora of possibly dissimilar sizes. It produces a G^2-value, pointing to a significant difference when higher than 3.84 ($p<0.05$) and a highly significant one when higher than 6.63 ($p<0.01$).

Text type	English		Dutch		
	#	/10,000 words		#	/10,000 words
Private dialogues	*533*	*25.92*		*114*	*11.39*
Face-to-face conversations	470	25.38		95	10.55
Telephone calls	63	30.85		19	18.95
Public dialogues	*175*	*11.68*		*103*	*14.70*
Class lessons	61	14.45		59	29.52
Broadcast discussions/interviews	59	8.93		31	10.29
Parliamentary debates	0	0.00		3	3.02
Business transactions	55	26.77		10	9.99
Total	*708*	*19.92*		*217*	*12.76*

Table 2. The imperative's frequency.

Overall, the imperative is found to be more frequent in English than in Dutch ($G^2=35.47$, $p<0.01$). This difference is mainly due to the private dialogues. In this part of the corpus, the English imperative's rate of occurrence is more than twice as high as its Dutch counterpart's ($G^2=74.81$, $p<0.01$). In the public dialogues, the languages are much closer together. However, the lack of a significant difference between them here ($G^2=3.37$, $p>0.05$) actually disguises substantial variation in the text types. In relative terms, the Dutch lessons, for instance, have about twice as many imperatives as the English ones. The difference results from the fact that, for whatever reason, the teacher-speakers in the CGN tend to be setting assignments to their student-addressees whereas their colleagues in the ICE-GB are usually explaining subject matter. In the business transactions, by contrast, it is English that has roughly two and a half times as many imperatives as Dutch – for which we do not really have an explanation, though. Importantly, no such variation is found in the private dialogues: the English imperative vastly outnumbers its Dutch counterpart in both the face-to-face conversations and the phone calls. This finding raises the questions why the imperative is consistently more common in English personal exchanges than in Dutch ones and whether the difference in frequency reflects another difference in usage.[4]

3   Collostructional approach

3.1   Introduction

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[4] One of the reviewers hypothesizes that this frequency finding can be attributed to the fact that Dutch, unlike English, can also use the infinitive for directive purposes. This additional "basic" strategy does not make up for the difference between the two languages, however. According to Van Olmen (2009: 151), it occurs just 1.7 times per 10,000 words in the CGN's Northern Dutch face-to-face conversations (cf. the imperative's relative frequencies of 10.55 in Dutch and 25.38 in English). According to the reviewer, the length of the individual texts may play a role too. Imperatives associated with beginning or ending a text (e.g. *give her my regards* in private conversations) could indeed be more frequent if texts were generally shorter. There is little evidence of this possibility in our data, though. Furthermore, the average text length in our comparable corpus is actually fairly similar. In the private dialogues, for example, where the English imperative is much more frequent than its Dutch counterpart, it is 2,056 words per text in English and 1,888 in Dutch.

Our SCA computes, for every verb, its degree of association with the imperative, i.e. its collostructional strength, in view of its overall corpus frequency (see Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003: 217-218 for the technical details). In the list of verbs produced by R script Coll.analysis 3.5 (Gries 2014a), the collostructional strength is given in the form of the negative base-10 logarithm of the p-value, which corresponds to a significance of p<0.05 when higher than 1.30103. It is crucial to point out that, for the verbs' overall corpus frequencies in our SCA, we were forced to ignore the particles of phrasal verbs. *Put on* and *put off*, for instance, were lumped together with *put*. Similarly, *doorgaan* 'go on' was merged with *gaan* 'go'. The reason for this simplification is that the corpora do not allow us to automatically determine the general rates of occurrence of phrasal verbs with sufficient accuracy. Note also that, with cases of negative or emphatic *do*, our collostructional analyses looked at the main verb, not the auxiliary.

DCA examines the degree to which verbs are attracted to one construction over another one. As this method requires no information about a verb's overall corpus frequency (for the procedure, see Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 102), we were able to take into consideration phrasal verbs here. Importantly, Gilquin (2015) argues that DCA can be used for contrastive purposes, by translating the verbs in one of the languages under investigation. For ease of presentation, we decided to translate the Dutch ones into English. For the translation, we opted for the most direct equivalent of the Dutch verb, in light of the English data. *Proberen*, for instance, could have been translated as *attempt* but *try* made more sense since it is also attested in the imperatives in the ICE-GB. We are aware that such translations are somewhat of a generalization, as a verb in one language can have multiple meanings that are expressed by distinct verbs in another. However, we also agree with Gilquin (2015: 260): "Collostructional analysis traditionally relies on forms rather than senses, one form typically corresponding to several senses, which also implies a certain degree of simplification."

3.2 SCA

Table 3 presents, for English and Dutch, the twenty verbs most closely associated with the imperative in each language, in order of decreasing collostructional strength. It also gives the observed corpus frequencies of all verbs.

English		Dutch	
Verb (observed frequency)	Collostructional strength	Verb (observed frequency)	Collostructional strength
hang (21)	45.7440	*wachten* 'wait' (19)	43.4509
worry (18)	36.9450	*kijken* 'look' (17)	22.0146
try (27)	34.0041	*doen* 'do' (19)	17.6592
tell (25)	29.7820	*laten* 'let' (12)	15.1072
excuse (11)	27.1841	*proberen* 'try' (9)	14.9460
look (25)	24.8961	*stellen* 'suppose' (9)	12.6865
listen (14)	23.6257	*luisteren* 'listen' (6)	11.6332
go (39)	23.0033	*geven* 'give' (8)	8.9215
hold (13)	22.6951	*letten* 'mind' (4)	7.8194
shut (10)	21.7770	*houden* 'hold' (6)	6.9697
put (20)	21.4109	*vertellen* 'tell' (5)	6.9358
give (18)	17.9444	*beschrijven* 'describe' (3)	6.6125
forget (11)	17.0357	*eten* 'eat' (4)	5.4670
take (18)	15.8599	*noemen* 'name' (4)	5.4230
wait (9)	13.5052	*rotten* 'fuck' (2)	5.3137
leave (12)	13.3887	*zorgen* 'make sure' (3)	5.2325
see (19)	13.1210	*helpen* 'help' (3)	5.0052

let (11)	11.8723	*zetten* 'put' (3)	4.8428
come (17)	11.3563	*plakken* 'stick' (2)	4.6159
keep (10)	11.1207	*komen* 'come' (7)	4.2784

Table 3. SCA.

Let us start with English. A first thing to notice is that many collexemes' attraction to the construction seems to be due to their role in the organization of discourse (see also Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003: 233). *Hang on*, for one, accounts for almost all instances of first-ranked *hang* and the same is true of *hold on* and *hold*. Both are mainly used to manage the floor, as in (11), and so are *excuse me* and *wait*.

(11) A   It's the fifteenth isn't it.
      B   Is it. Oh blimey.
      A   I'm not sure. **Hang on**. I've got the fifteenth down. (ICE-GB:S1A096.232-237)

Tell, *go*, *listen* and *shut* also often occur in contexts where they relate directly to the ongoing interaction. It is not hard to see how, as imperatives, the last two verbs affect the discourse: an appeal to the interlocutors to pay attention to the speaker for *listen* and one to stop talking for *shut up*. In (12), the relevant uses of the other two verbs are given.

(12) a.   So **tell** me about this field this field trip of yours then. (ICE-GB:S1A036.110)
      b.   A   The slight problem is uhm you say you want it according to different categories
                  as.
            B   Well not. That would be a second level thing though. Sorry **go on**.
            A   Uhm no that would uhm. (ICE-GB:S1B076.39-44)

As in (12a), *tell* is typically followed by a first person and calls on the addressee to provide certain information (see Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003: 234). As in (12b), *go* often combines with *on* to get the other person to continue their original turn.

What is of note about second-ranked *worry* is that it is not an action verb (see Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003: 232 too). Neither are *forget* and *see*, of course. The example of the first verb in (13), a semi-formulaic expression of reassurance or support, is indicative of the typical use of all of them in the imperative: they are less to the speaker's benefit than to the addressee's.

(13) A   It is uh well I don't want to sound blasé or [unclear].
      B   Oh no I mean no **don't worry** about it. (ICE-GB:S1A092.63-65)

Third-ranked *try* and, inter alia, *keep*, *let, listen* and *look* are also interesting here. As Stefanowitsch & Gries (2003: 232) rightly argue, they may be action verbs but "they do not yield tangible results" and differ in this respect from "the verb most frequently used in the pragmatics literature to exemplify the imperative", i.e. *pass* in *pass me the salt*. Let (4b) suffice as an example: *look* is mainly used to draw visual attention to something, with no sense of imposition on or benefit to any interlocutor.

These strongly attracted collexemes can be said to challenge the "standard" view of the (English) imperative. More specifically, its supposed prototypical link with agentivity and speaker benefit (e.g. Takahashi 2012: 76, 80) may not be so evident from actual usage. Obviously, the list in Table 3 includes some result-yielding and less clearly discourse-related verbs too, like *put, give*

and *take*. They do not, however, appear in the imperative's top ten collexemes.

The question now is whether the Dutch imperative resembles its English counterpart. What is immediately clear from the list is that the Dutch imperative indeed plays a crucial role in interaction and discourse management. The collexemes *wachten*, *luisteren* and *vertellen*, which do similar jobs to their English equivalents, need little explanation. Other relevant verbs are (*op*)*letten* 'take note', (*op*)*houden* 'stop' and *noemen* 'name'. In (14), for instance, the imperative is used to ask the interviewee to elaborate on his claim.

(14) A *Prop die heeft ooit ontdekt dat er* [unclear] *een beperkt aantal thema's zijn die eigenlijk in alle sprookjes ter wereld terugkomen in een aantal variaties.*
'Prop, he discovered that there are a limited number of themes that recur in all faiytales in the world in a number of variations.'
  B ***Noemt** u d'r eens wat.*
'Please name a few.'
  A *Uh vader-moederbinding* [unclear]. *Uh het loskomen van de ouders.*
(CGN:FN07102.64-71)
'Uhm father-mother bonding. Uhm breaking free from the parents.'

Another parallel is that many of the top collexemes of the Dutch imperative are not concrete result-yielding action verbs either. They include, inter alia, *kijken*, *laten*, *proberen*, *zorgen* and *stellen*. The last one, for instance, covers two uses: an appeal like (15a) to conceptualize something and a related but typically more generic one like (15b) to assume something as part of a complex argument. Interestingly, there is again no obvious sense of speaker benefit with these verbs.

(15) a. *Laten we maar eerlijk wezen als wij tijdschriften openslaan ik weet niet welke jullie uh in huis krijgen maar **stel** je **voor** hè .* (CGN:FN009121.12)
'Let's just be honest: if we open magazines – I don't know which ones you uhm buy but just imagine it, OK?'
  b. ***Stel** dat dat niet zo is dan tekent dat de positie van de BVD in Nederland.*
(CGN:FN007215.148)
'Suppose that that isn't the case, then that characterizes the position of the BVD in the Netherlands.'

Table 3 does feature numerous typical Dutch action verbs, like *geven* and *zetten*. *Eten* also counts, of course, and is entirely due to good wish phrases like (8a). The collexemes (*op*)*rotten* 'fuck off', *helpen* and *plakken* need to be included too but their impact should not be overstated. The use of each of them as an imperative is limited to just one file in the corpus. *Doen*, by contrast, could be interesting. The fact that this action verb par excellence is ranked third and no such verb occurs among the top collexemes in English might be taken to mean that the imperative's link with agentivity is somewhat stronger in Dutch. However, it is clear from the examples that its comparatively high position is primarily due to its status as a "light" verb. In about two thirds of the cases, *doen* is part of an expression employed instead of a lexically more specific verb, like in (16). Other examples are *bijdoen* (versus *toevoegen*) 'add' and *dichtdoen* (versus *sluiten*) 'close'.

(16) *Nou **doe** maar eens een voorstel.* (CGN:FN000882.107)
'Now, just propose something.' (lit. 'Now, just do a proposal.')

The analysis shows that, on the whole, the Dutch imperative is similar to its English equivalent. It too often serves to manage discourse and interaction and combines with verbs that do not yield any concrete results. Yet, there may be some limited evidence suggesting that, usage-wise, the imperative is somewhat more open to non-agentive verbs in English – with, for instance, *worry* and *forget* in its top twenty collexemes – than in Dutch.

3.3 DCA

Table 4 first lists, in order of decreasing collostructional strength, the verbs that have a significantly distinctive preference for the English imperative and then those for its Dutch equivalent. It also includes each verb's observed corpus frequencies in the two languages.

Verb	Observed frequency English	Observed frequency Dutch	Collostructional strength	Preferred occurrence
'get'	20	0	2.3500	English
'hang on'	19	0	2.2311	English
'worry'	18	0	2.1123	English
'have'	13	0	1.5208	English
'be'	17	1	1.3251	English
'excuse'	11	0	1.3124	English
'leave'	11	0	1.3124	English
'wait'	9	19	6.3072	Dutch
'suppose'	0	6	3.8013	Dutch
'let'	10	12	2.8539	Dutch
'look'	20	17	2.7450	Dutch
'name'	0	4	2.5280	Dutch
'eat'	1	4	1.9179	Dutch
'explain'	0	3	1.8937	Dutch
'describe'	1	3	1.3747	Dutch

Table 4. DCA.

Let us first note that not all of the results are equally informative. 'Hang on' may be distinctive for English and 'wait' for Dutch, for instance, but they are just different lexical manifestations of the same floor-managing device. Likewise, 'leave' and 'let' frequently have a similar meaning in the imperative, as (17) makes clear.

(17) a. *Oh, **laat** het maar hier.*
'Oh leave it here.' (ICE-GB:S1A043.221)
b. *Ja nee **laat** mij maar hier liggen.* (CGN:FN000254.293)
'Yeah, no, just leave me here.'

Another relevant case here is 'describe'. It comes out as characteristic of Dutch but the three cases of *beschrijven* all occur in the same file of the corpus.

Several of the other distinctive collexemes are clearly tied to specific semi-formulaic expressions. For English, 'excuse' and 'worry' match this description. Dutch does have direct imperative equivalents, as (18a) shows, but does not use them in the CGN. For Dutch, 'suppose' and 'eat' fit the description. The function of *stellen* is probably subsumed by more general *say* in English, as in (18b). Intriguingly, to convey a good wish like (8a) with *eten*, English would perhaps typically opt not for an agentive verb but for experiential *enjoy*.

(18) a. ***Maak** je geen zorgen.*
'Don't worry.' (lit. 'Make yourself no concerns.')
b. **Say** X one is strictly less than X two, then you know that F X one, is less than F X two. (ICE-GB:S1B013.24)

Four verbs that cannot readily be accounted for in this way are 'get', 'look', 'name' and 'explain'. The first one is attracted to English. The complete lack of a direct counterpart in the data is likely due to the fact that *get* is a light verb corresponding to a range of more particular ones in Dutch, such as *nemen* 'take' in (19a) and *kopen* 'buy' in (19b).

(19) a. ***Neem** die dan.*
'Get that one [i.e. a train].' (ICE-GB:S1A074.17)
b. ***Koop** maar een nieuwe als ie doodgaat.* (CGN:FN000583.122)
'Just get a new one when it dies.'

The second verb, 'look', is used in English and Dutch to draw someone's visual attention to something, as in (4b), but is, for whatever reason, more common in Dutch. 'Name' and 'explain', finally, are distinctive for Dutch and serve to ask for more information and continue the conversation, like in (14). English may prefer an ability question for this purpose. As Takahashi (2014: 120) observes, *explain* occurs "with *can you* directives" but is not "particularly frequent with the imperative".

To conclude, perhaps the most remarkable finding in Table 4 concerns 'have' and 'be'. Unsurprisingly, SCA tells us that these two extremely frequent verbs are actually repelled by the imperative in both English and Dutch. This fact could be attributed to the clash between their stative character and the construction's more typically agentive nature. Yet, DCA reveals that English is less resistant to them than Dutch. The difference in 'have' is mainly due to the conventional way of making an offer in English, i.e. like *have some banana bread* in (4a). For such offers, if communicated by an imperative, Dutch would probably rely on an obvious action verb like *nemen*, as in (20a) (no offer like this is attested in the CGN, however) and *heb* 'have' sounds entirely unacceptable. The reason seems to be that originally stative *have* has acquired more dynamic and agentive semantics in combination with certain direct objects (e.g. Brugman 2001: 570-574), unlike its Dutch cognate. As (20b) makes clear, these meanings are independent of the imperative.

(20) a. ***Neem/*heb** wat koffie!*
'Have some coffee.'
b. She **had** [i.e. 'drank'] three coffees yesterday evening.

The difference in 'be' mostly results from the frequent use of *be* to tell someone off for their behavior, like in (21a). According to Payne (2013: 29-30), the English copula meaning 'act' is found either in progressives like (21b) or in imperatives. These constructions can, in other words, be said to coerce an agentive interpretation out of what is essentially a stative verb. The Dutch imperative can do the same to *zijn* 'be', as *wees* 'be!' in (21c) shows, but the remaining one third of the cases of *doen* (see Section 3.2), like in (21d), confirms our intuition that the language favors the action verb to tell off the addressee.

(21) a. Oh **don't be** so mean. (ICE-GB:S1A032.114)
b. He **was being** so mean yesterday.
c. ***Wees niet** zo vervelend.*

        'Don't be so annoying.'
    d.   ***Doe niet** zo vervelend.* (CGN:FN000679.34)
        'Don't be so annoying.' (lit. 'Don't do so annoying.')

This fact about 'be', together with the comparatively high level of collostructional strength of verbs like *forget* and *see*, suggests that, usage-wise, the English imperative is slightly more open to non-agentive verbs than its Dutch equivalent (though an agentive interpretation is normally coerced, of course). Such a difference would not be completely unheard of: in numerous languages, the imperative does not even tolerate stative verbs or verbs denoting uncontrollable actions (e.g. Aikhenvald 2010: 150-153; Jary & Kissine 2014: 89).

3.4   Interim conclusion

Collostructional analysis has the advantage that one is, in a way, forced to take a closer look at the lexemes actually occurring in the construction under examination. For the imperative, this approach confirms Stefanowitsch & Gries's (2003: 235) conclusion that, perhaps counter to certain preconceptions, it is "avoided with typical action verbs" and that one of its major functions is "the organization of spoken … discourse", not only in English but also in Dutch. The application of DCA to the two languages has proved fruitful as well in that it suggests a possible usage difference in the openness to non-agentive verbs between English and Dutch. Collostructional analysis has its weaknesses too, of course. For one, the singular focus on the verbs in the imperative abstracts away from the discourse contexts in which the construction appears. We may, for example, make certain inferences from collexemes about the extent to which the imperative serves to provide benefit to the speaker. Yet, the same verbal content can, in principle, profit the speaker in one situation and the addressee in another. A more context-sensitive approach might offer other/subtler insights into the imperative's usage.

4   Speech act approach

4.1   Introduction

The taxonomy developed by De Clerck (2006) for the study of English groups all possible speech acts into a finite set of six broader types. The first one is willful directives. They involve a strong appeal to the addressee, usually in hierarchical situations, to do what the speaker, typically to their own advantage, wants (e.g. orders, pleas, requests). Consider (22): the speaker interrupts the dinner conversation to ask for the sour cream that they want.

(22) A   Well it's not exactly uhm.
      B   **Pass** the sour cream please.
      C   Yes.
      A   Well he's always worried about Sarah getting too serious with her boyfriends. (ICE-GB: S1A071.95-98)

Non-willful directives make up the second type. They are characterized by a less strong call upon to the addressee, normally in situations where hierarchy is irrelevant, to do not what is of advantage to the speaker but what, in their opinion, benefits the addressee (e.g. advice, suggestions, warnings). In (23), the lecturer reacts to the complaint that group work is time-consuming. Her imperatives do

not present actions that are expected to be performed. Rather, they serve as tips that may make the work more efficient for her students.

(23) A   *Samenwerken kost meer tijd.*
          'Joint work takes more time.'
     B   *... **Verdeel** taken en **probeer** dingen via e-mail uit te wisselen.* (CGN:FN009022.75-77)
          '… Divide up the work and try to exchange stuff via email.'

Commissive directives, the third type, entail some kind of commitment by the speaker to do something that is typically to the benefit of addressee and speaker and often require some action from the addressee as well (e.g. invitations, offers, permissions). The imperative in (24) can serve as an example: "The speaker commits himself to allow something to happen." (De Clerck 2006: 97).

(24) A   Can I help you?
     B   Yeah I just wondered if these are to take away.
     A   Yes. **Help** yourself. (ICE-GB:S1A077.290-295)

The fourth category is expressive directives, which typically involve a call upon the addressee that mainly conveys the speaker's attitude toward the addressee and confirms/denies the former's solidarity with the latter (e.g. apologies, expressions of support and wonder). In (25), the imperative expresses both a generic appeal to consider the preceding utterance and the speaker's wonder at it.

(25) A   *Moeten we die* [belastingvluchtelingen] *weer met open armen opnemen als verloren zonen?*
          'Should we receive them [i.e. tax refugees] with open arms like lost sons?'
     B   *Nja nou **kijk** eens aan dat is toch een prachtige afsluiting.* (CGN:FN007252.112-113)
          'Well now, look at that, that is a wonderful conclusion indeed.'

Mixed expressives, the fifth type, communicate some kind of appeal with which the speaker hopes to advance the coming about of a state of affairs beyond the addressee's actual control and which betrays the speaker's attitude toward the addressee (e.g. good wishes, imprecations). The addressee of *eet smakelijk* 'in (8a), for instance, clearly has no power over enjoying the food. The imperative mainly conveys the speaker's wish that they will. The sixth and final type is non-directives. They do not really call for the realization of the state of affairs and are often part of an assertion, as in (26).

(26) I've always been the sort of person you can ask me to do something for you and I'll do it but **don't tell** me what to do because I'll do the complete opposite. (ICE-GB:S1B049.32-33)

No addressee is urged (not) to order the speaker around here: "The imperative expresses habitual behaviour rather than a[n] actual directive." (De Clerck 2006: 298).

The present article elaborates on De Clerck's (2006) study of the ICE-GB and Van Olmen's (2011) of the ICE-GB and the CGN. We examined the data again, though, and our analysis differs from the earlier research in a number of ways. First, no finer distinctions than the above categories are made here. The previous work still distinguishes suggestions from advice, for instance. Like in

(23), however, it is often unclear from the context whether a non-willful directive presents, respectively, one of several possible things to do or only the best thing (see De Clerck 2006: 113). Second, certain expressions regarded as "minor" imperatives in the earlier studies (e.g. De Clerck 2006: 45) and not analyzed in terms of their illocutionary functions are included in our study. *Wacht* used by speakers to keep the floor to themselves, for example, is considered a willful directive here. Third, we explicitly recognize the potential of ambiguity. Consider (27), in which a student union officer is talking to two people seeking guidance (one of which is Tony). The imperative serves as a commissive directive: as an invitation, it signals the speaker's willingness to welcome the addressees back and help them out. Yet, the following utterance indicates that he/she is advising them as well. The claim that people at the counter, like the speaker, can give the same information as a careers interview at no cost suggests that returning is the best thing to do. The imperative thus also acts as a non-willful directive. Cases like (27) are classified as ambiguous here. Note that they differ from cases in which the context is not clear enough for us to identify the imperative's function and which are categorized as indeterminate.

(27) I mean once you've got more stuff about it if there's anything you want to ask me **come** back. I mean to give you a careers interview they'd charge you twenty-five pounds but there's a hell of a lot of information Tony could just get by just standing at the counter you know and saying what do you think. (ICE-GB:S1A079.97-98)

Fourth, the present study tries not to rely on just one researcher's judgments. The ICE-GB data was split up in equal parts for an assignment in the 2016-2017 PhD module *Linguistic Analysis* at Lancaster University. Each part was given to two students. They were asked first to analyze the imperatives on their own at home in terms of the above taxonomy, which was explained to them beforehand, and then to compare their findings in class. Disagreements were resolved through discussion, in which we participated, and often, but not always led, to a classification as ambiguous. We subsequently took the outcomes of this exercise into account in our own analysis of the CGN. Fifth, our results are subjected to statistical testing. To contrast the imperative's illocutionary profile in two corpora, we follow Gries (2014b: 327) and perform a Fisher exact test. It tells us, despite some low expected frequencies, whether the different proportions of the functional types – the categorical dependent variables – in, say, English and Dutch – the independent variables – are a matter of chance or not. The test produces a p value. To compare the various types' frequencies in the ICE-GB and the CGN, we use the log-likelihood calculator.

4.2 Results

Table 5 provides, for each functional type, the absolute number as well as the share of imperatives belonging to it in the English and Dutch data.

| Type | English | | | | | | Dutch | | | | | |
| | Priv.Dial. | | Publ.Dial. | | *Total* | | Priv.Dial. | | Publ.Dial. | | *Total* | |
	#	%	#	%	*#*	*%*	#	%	#	%	*#*	*%*
Willful directive	171	32.08	69	39.43	*240*	*33.90*	53	46.49	39	37.86	*92*	*42.40*
Non-willful directive	159	29.83	67	38.29	*226*	*31.92*	21	18.42	34	33.01	*55*	*25.35*
Commissive directive	32	6.00	9	5.14	*41*	*5.79*	8	7.02	7	6.80	*15*	*6.91*
Expressive directive	69	12.95	9	5.14	*78*	*11.02*	8	7.02	6	5.83	*14*	*6.45*
Mixed expressive	3	0.56	0	0.00	*3*	*0.42*	3	2.63	0	0.00	*3*	*1.38*
Non-directive	1	0.19	1	0.57	*2*	*0.28*	1	0.88	0	0.00	*1*	*0.46*

Ambiguous	72	13.51	20	11.43	*92*	*12.99*	17	14.91	15	14.56	*32*	*14.75*
Indeterminate	26	4.88	0	0.00	*26*	*3.67*	3	2.63	2	1.94	*5*	*2.30*

Table 5. Speech act analysis in terms of absolute frequencies and proportions.

Our Fisher exact tests show that the English imperative and its Dutch equivalent are used in significantly different ways (p=0.044) and that the general dissimilarities are primarily due to the private dialogues (p=0.004). The public ones exhibit no substantial difference (p=0.545).

The overall similarity in usage between the English and Dutch public dialogues, just like that in frequency (see Section 2.4), masks considerable variation between text types and between languages. In the Dutch business transactions, for example, the willful and non-willful directives are equally frequent whereas the broadcast discussions/interviews in this language have twice as many of the former than of the latter. In the English broadcast discussions/interviews, however, the non-willful directives occur slightly more often than the willful ones. A closer look at the data suggests that the Dutch broadcast discussions/interviews differ, on the one hand, from the business transactions in that they involve a higher number of willful attempts to take or keep the floor and, on the other hand, from their English equivalent in that, for some reason, the discussion in the latter regularly turns to potential recommendations about a particular topic. In short, the imperative's usage in the various types of public dialogue in the two languages deserves to be examined in more detail – as well as in a larger corpus: the raw number of imperatives in each text type is rather low. Such a study is beyond the scope of the present article, though.

By contrast, within the private dialogues in both languages, the phone calls have a roughly similar distribution of functions to the face-to-face conversations (in Dutch, for instance, respectively 47.37% and 45.26% of willful, 15.79% and 18.95% of non-willful, 10.53% and 6.32% of commissive and 5.26% and 8.42% of expressive directives). The difference in usage between English and Dutch in this corpus component seems to be quite consistent, in other words. Given their comparable proportions in the two languages, the explanation for it cannot lie in the commissive directives, mixed expressives, non-directives and ambiguous or indeterminate cases. Rather, it appears to be the willful, non-willful and expressive directives that are responsible. The latter make up 12.95% of the English imperatives in the private dialogues and only 7.02% of the Dutch ones, for which part of the reason is the frequency of the semi-formulaic expression of reassurance *don't worry* and the absence of a widely used imperative counterpart in Dutch. The (non-)willful directives, however, are less clearly linked to specific phrases/verbs. They account for about two thirds of the imperatives in both languages but the non-willful directives take up a much smaller share of them in Dutch. To make better sense of these differences, let us look at relative frequencies.

Table 6 presents the rate of occurrence per 10,000 words of each type.

Type	English (/10,000 words)			Dutch (/10,000 words)		
	Priv.Dial.	Publ.Dial.	*Total*	Priv.Dial.	Publ.Dial.	*Total*
Willful directive	8.32	4.60	6.75	5.30	5.57	5.41
Non-willful directive	7.73	4.47	6.36	2.10	4.85	3.23
Commissive directive	1.56	0.60	1.15	0.80	1.00	0.88
Expressive directive	3.36	0.60	2.19	0.80	0.86	0.82
Mixed expressive	0.15	0.00	0.08	0.30	0.00	0.18
Non-directive	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.00	0.06
Ambiguous	3.50	1.33	2.59	1.70	2.14	1.88
Indeterminate	1.26	0.00	0.73	0.30	0.29	0.29

Table 6. Speech act analysis in terms of relative frequencies.

Probably unsurprisingly, no substantial differences exist between English and Dutch in the public

dialogues and the significant contrasts between the two languages in the whole corpus reflect those in the private dialogues. There are no differences for the commissive directives ($G^2=0.82$, $p>0.05$), the mixed expressives ($G^2=0.80$, $p>0.05$), the non-directives ($G^2=0.00$, $p>0.05$) and the ambiguous instances ($G^2=2.53$, $p>0.05$). The low frequencies of the first three categories in particular suggest that the imperative is primarily used for purely directive purposes in English as well as Dutch. The languages do exhibit a substantial difference, partially explained above, in the expressive directives ($G^2=14.12$, $p<0.01$). The indeterminate cases, though infrequent in both corpora, are also significantly more common in English ($G^2=4.22$, $p<0.05$) but this minor dissimilarity tells us more about the ICE-GB and the CGN than about imperatives. The comparison of the (non-)willful directives, by contrast, is of interest. In the private dialogues, the willful directives' rate of occurrence is one and a half times higher in English than in Dutch ($G^2=8.86$, $p<0.01$). The difference in frequency of the non-willful ones is much more substantial, though: in relative terms, they occur more than three and a half times less often in Dutch ($G^2=43.30$, $p<0.01$). The main point of contrast thus seems to be that the English imperative is employed more frequently/easily as a non-willful and expressive directive than its Dutch counterpart. It may also account for the overall difference in the construction's frequency between the two languages (see Section 2.4).

4.3   Interim conclusion

A strength of the speech act approach is that, unlike collostructional analysis, it gives us an idea of the discourse contexts in which the imperative is used. In general, our study confirms De Clerck's (2006: 470) observation that the English imperative is employed for non-willful directive purposes very frequently. It also suggests that the non-willful directive use of the imperative is significantly less common in Dutch. The absolute numbers in our CGN data in particular are, of course, not very high and it would therefore be useful to check whether the Dutch imperative behaves similarly in a larger corpus of private dialogues. As they stand, the results raise the question – under the (perhaps not uncontroversial) assumption that people advise, make suggestions and the like to roughly the same extent – which alternatives to the imperative speakers of Dutch, as compared to those of English, opt for to issue a non-willful directive.[5] More research into speech act realizations, focusing on functions other than the typical request, is obviously needed to answer this question.

Our speech act analysis also complements the collostructional approach. Certain verbs' particular association with the English imperative can be argued to be reflected in its more widespread use as a non-willful directive. A non-result-yielding action verb like 'try' – the third most strongly attracted collexeme in English and "just" the fifth in Dutch – and non-action verbs like 'forget' and 'see' – which only appear in the top twenty English collexemes – are clearly a more natural fit for non-willful than, say, willful directive functions. Moreover, the English imperative's frequent occurrence as an expressive directive can be linked, at least partially, to 'worry', another non-action verb and distinctive collexeme of English.

One of the present approach's weaknesses is that its types conflate a number of more specific factors. Willful directives, for instance, are defined as generally expressing both speaker benefit and a high level of obligation on the addressee and non-willful ones as typically conveying a lower degree of obligation and addressee benefit. Accordingly, any imperative strongly obliging someone

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[5] An important related question is "why?", of course. Interestingly, politeness might not be the primary motivation: De Hoop et al. (2016: 49) show that speakers of Dutch do not actually assess imperatives beneficial to the addressee, like non-willful directives, as impolite.

to do something to their own advantage would have to be considered ambiguous. Yet, such a classification obscures how many imperatives actually involve addressee benefit. Takahashi's (2012) parametric approach, by contrast, considers benefit and other specific factors separately and can really tell us, for example, whether, on the whole, imperatives are more to the speaker's advantage or the addressee's. Furthermore, it can be used to describe every single imperative in the data. As Table 5 shows, the more holistic speech act approach, however, fails to accurately capture approximately one seventh of the imperatives, i.e. the ambiguous ones.[6]

5   Parametric approach

5.1   Introduction

Takahashi (2012) regards the imperative's force exertion[7] as a combination of desire, capability, power, cost, benefit and obligation. Each of the parameters involves a scale of numerical values, which are taken to mirror "a speaker's intention and his/her perception of the situation in which a given imperative is issued" (Takahashi 2012: 78). Desire is about how much the speaker wants to see the proposed event realized and varies from +2 to -2. The positive values are for cases in which the speaker (really) wishes the event to come true while 0 applies to instances where they do not care. In (28a), for instance, B has no particular desire to see A go. The imperatives are mere suggestions. The values -1 and -2 are reserved for, respectively, ironic uses like (28b) and other "non-literal" ones like (28c) (see Takahashi 2012: 79). In neither instance does the speaker hope that the event becomes reality.

(28) a.   A   I could do that in about September, but before that I can't see it happening realistically.

B   Yeah … I mean **go** for six months and you know **see** how it feels. (ICE-GB:S1B.072.92-98)

b.   **Tell** me about it! [meaning 'I know!']

c.   **Scream** and I'll kill you.

Capability deals with the question whether the speaker assumes that the addressee is, in principle, able to bring about the event on purpose. Imperatives for which the answer is positive, like those in (28), receive +1. If the answer is negative, they are assigned 0 – as in *eet ze* in (5b), for example. The parameter of power is concerned with "the speaker's ratings of the relative power/social status of S[peaker] and A[ddressee] … in on-going discourse" (Takahashi 2012: 79). Its values span from +1, if the speaker is more powerful than the addressee, to -1, if the situation is reversed. The score of 0 applies to cases with no power difference between speaker and addressee: in the conversation between two friends in (29), for example, B asks the equally powerful A to say hello from her to a

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[6] One of the reviewers regards this proportion as an incentive for more fine-grained analysis or further customization of the analytical toolkit. We would argue, though, that this level of ambiguity is at least partly the inevitable result of working with the more holistic categories. In theory, it would be possible to include the various types of ambiguity – (27) would be an instance of the category "commissive/non-willful directives" – in our quantitative comparison. In practice, such an approach would lead to a proliferation of low-frequency types that is hard to interpret.

[7] Strictly speaking, the imperative is analyzed in terms of a force criterion *and* a second person subject criterion. The latter consists of the parameters of identity and semantic role and its prototypical value is argued to be an individuated agent. On the whole, the subject criterion receives little attention in Takahashi (2012: 87-88) and, for reasons of space, we focus on force exertion too.

person that they are talking about.

(29) A   *Die mensen die dit bandje afluisteren die kennen 'r niet* [unclear].
           'Those people listening to this tape, they don't know her.'
      B   [unclear]
      A   *Ja dat denk 'k wel uh.*
           'Yes, I do think so, uhm.'
      B   *Ja nou **doe** 'r de groeten.* (CGN:FN00467.3-6)
           'Oh well, give her my regards.'

Cost is the degree of effort required from the addressee and ranges from +2 to 0. The latter value applies to a good wish like *eet ze*, which places no burden on the addressee whatsoever. In (29), there exists some cost to A but it seems quite limited – compared to, for instance, the task that the lecturer in (30) sets her students. The imperatives are given +1 and +2 respectively.

(30) ***Lees** in de reader hoofdstuk één en twee.* (CGN:FN009022.30)
      'Read chapters one and two in the reader.'

Benefit concerns the extent to which the proposed event is presumed to be to someone's advantage and goes from +2 to -2. The positive values are set aside for imperatives expressing something that is (very) beneficial to the speaker, as in (31): although the ten-page limit could be seen as profiting the addressee-students too, it is contextually evident that the directive is issued under the assumption that it is to the speaker-lecturer's advantage. A 0 score is given to cases with no obvious beneficiary and to cases in which only the addressee profits from the event, as in (28a).

(31) *Moet 'k allemaal maar lezen hè ... Ik vind dat je een minimum van* [unclear] *acht pagina's moet leveren ... Maar **doe** alsjeblieft **niet** meer dan tien.* (CGN:FN009146.7-15)
      'I have to read all of that, you know … I think that you should produce a minimum of eight pages … But don't do more than ten please.'

Note that, for Takahashi (2012: 80), "the case of mutual benefit … would be treated as S[peaker]'s benefit". The imperative in (32) thus has a positive value: C urges B to go through with their own offer to provide Pictionary after A's proposal to play it. Clearly, everyone – B and C included – would enjoy it if the game were made available. The negative values are associated with non-literal imperatives like (28b) and (28c): carrying out what is actually said could be regarded as detrimental to speaker and/or addressee (see Takahashi 2012: 84-87).

(32) A   So let's play Trivial Pursuit as well after or something … shall we. Pictionary.
      B   Oh we've got the Pictionary.
      C   Oh **bring** the Pictionary. (ICE-GB:S1A048.124-129)

The last parameter, obligation, captures the degree to which the addressee is assumed to be obliged to comply by the speaker. It varies from +2 to -2 and its negative scores are reserved for cases like (28b) and (28c). The positive values are assigned to cases in which compliance is presumed not to be optional (at all). An example of +1 is (33a). The speaker is compelling their colleague to do something but the appeal to their willingness, with *won't you*, leaves the option of refusal open and makes the directive less insistent. A 0 value applies to cases where compliance is entirely optional.

The addressee in (33b), for instance, is free to eat something or not.

(33) a. A   You've probably met him and he's forgotten about it.
      B   … But anyway **do send** him my best regards. Won't you.
      B   Yes. I certainly will yes. (ICE-GB:S1A100.29-37)
    b. A   Are we going to be eating at your parents or here …
      B   Well **have** something now if you're hungry.
      A   Yeah I'm I'm starving yeah but I've got to last. (ICE-GB:S1A099.107-111)

Crucially, Takahashi (2012: 87) argues that the lower the sum of the scores for these six parameters is, the less prototypical the imperative is and that prototypicality is reflected in corpus frequency – the large proportion of imperatives analyzable as highly forceful, to be exact.

    The following steps were taken in the present analysis. We first randomly selected 150 imperatives from the ICE-GB data. Then, the same procedure, involving students, was followed as in Section 4.1. Our dialogue with them corroborated the impression from Takahashi's (2012: 82-87) own application that, for the force exertion parameters in particular, it was not always possible/desirable to choose between specific values. We therefore coded every single imperative for its highest and lowest potential score on each parameter (which can be identical). Obligation and benefit in (34) can serve as examples.

(34) A   Well it's not exactly uhm.
      B   **Pass** the sour cream please.
      C   Yes.
      A   Well he's always worried about Sarah getting too serious with her boyfriends. (ICE-GB: S1A071.95-98)

We agreed with the students that the imperative was simply +1 for obligation: a dinner companion can more or less be expected to comply with the directive but *please* relieves the addressee of some of the obligation. For benefit, however, we opted for +2 or +1. The reason is that the context is not clear about whether B is requesting the condiment for themselves and/or someone else.[8]

    The outcomes of this exercise were taken into account in our own subsequent examination of a random sample of 150 imperatives from the CGN. To compare our results for Dutch and English statistically, we performed two-tailed unpaired t-tests. They check whether one mean is significantly different from another one (e.g. those of cost in English and Dutch) while also considering their standard deviations. They are two-tailed because we have no a priori expectations about the direction of the difference between the means and unpaired because our scores come from different groups (see Rasinger 2013: 190-200).

5.2   Analysis

Table 7 presents, for the English and the Dutch imperative, the minimum and maximum means, with their standard deviations (st.dev), of each parameter of force exertion and of its total sum.

Parameter	English	Dutch

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[8] The other scores were +2 for desire, +1 for capability, 0 for power and +1 or +2 for cost. The total amount of force exerted in (34) thus varies between +6 and +8 (see also Takahashi 2012: 85 on requests).

		Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Desire	mean	+0.81	+1.43	+1.11	+1.57
	st.dev	*0.78*	*0.57*	*0.71*	*0.59*
Capability	mean	+0.99	+0.99	+0.99	+0.99
	st.dev	*0.08*	*0.08*	*0.08*	*0.08*
Power	mean	+0.06	+0.13	+0.28	+0.29
	st.dev	*0.35*	*0.41*	*0.47*	*0.45*
Cost	mean	+1.12	+1.40	+1.16	+1.40
	st.dev	*0.42*	*0.51*	*0.58*	*0.57*
Benefit	mean	+0.55	+0.75	+0.55	+0.99
	st.dev	*0.69*	*0.79*	*0.71*	*0.76*
Obligation	mean	+0.68	+1.13	+0.71	+1.17
	st.dev	*0.73*	*0.71*	*0.72*	*0.67*
Total	mean	+4.21	+5.83	+4.81	+6.42
	st.dev	*2.16*	*1.94*	*2.18*	*2.16*

Table 7. Parametric analysis.

Our findings confirm Takahashi's (2012: 87) claim that the imperative is typically employed "with high force (i.e. [+3] or more)". The rationale behind this seemingly arbitrary score of +3 is that it is said to be the minimum value corresponding to the traditional view of what imperatives express: "(i) The speaker wants the proposed action to be carried out [+1/2 in desire] …; (ii) [he/]she believes the addressee is capable of carrying out the action [+1 in capability] …; and (iii) at the same time the addressee is put under some obligation to comply [+1/2 in obligation]." (Takahashi 2012: 81-82). Imperatives indeed have +1 for the (essentially dichotomous) parameter of capability on almost all occasions. On average, desire and obligation are positive too. Their scores are generally closer to +1 than to +2, however. The imperative does, in other words, not always convey that the addressee is strongly obliged to do what the speaker wants to see realized very much.

The use of imperatives is also not restricted to situations where the speaker has some kind of power over the addressee. In fact, most imperatives in our two corpora resemble, say, (34) in that they are uttered between peers. Furthermore, a high degree of speaker benefit is not characteristic of the imperative either. In the many cases of advice and suggestions, like (33b), it is the addressee who is supposed to profit from the event. As Takahashi (2012: 80) hypothesizes, mutual benefit, as in (32), is quite common too. As to cost, the average imperative places only a limited burden on the addressee, which should come as no surprise: many of the imperative's top collexemes (e.g. 'hang on', 'try', 'look') would typically not involve much effort. Note, finally, that the imperative has no overall negative scores for any parameter in either language. In keeping with the logic behind Takahashi's (2012) model, imperatives are thus rarely used non-literally.

Let us now turn to the comparison of the two languages. The data suggests that, on the whole, the imperative tends to exert slightly more force in Dutch than in English. The difference between the minimum sums, as well as that between the maximum ones, is significant according to t-tests (p<0.05 in each case). This result could be argued to substantiate our speech act analysis, in particular the finding that the English imperative is more often/easily used as a non-willful directive than its Dutch equivalent. The fact that the latter scores significantly higher on desire both in minimum (p<0.01) and maximum terms (p<0.05) may reflect non-willful directives' penchant to not necessarily express what the speaker really wants to see happen themselves. Similarly, their tendency to be to the addressee's advantage may explain the English imperative's significantly lower maximum value for benefit (p<0.01; but for the minimum scores, p>0.05). Yet, one would expect the English imperative to score lower on obligation too. The values for this parameter are lower in English than in Dutch but not significantly so (p>0.05 in each case). A reason for the comparable scores could

be frequency differences between the two languages within the non-willful directive type or, for that matter, other types like the willful directive one. Compare, for instance, the level of obligation of the typical advice with that of the typical suggestion or an order's degree of obligation with a request's. Such variation may, of course, have an impact on the average values of the other parameters too, which means that we should be careful about linking the results of Sections 4.2 and 5.2 too directly.

As far as cost and capability are concerned, there are no substantial differences between the two languages ($p>0.05$ for the minimum and maximum values of both parameters). For power, by contrast, the English imperative has a significantly lower score ($p<0.01$ twice). This dissimilarity could be interpreted as a sign that the imperative is more easily used in power-neutral contexts in English. It seems more likely, though, that it is just due to corpus content. Most of the Dutch imperatives with an unequivocal +1 value for power occur in the class lessons (see Section 2.1). For whatever reason, the teacher-speakers in the CGN are often found to wield their power to set assignments to their student-addressees and, as in (30), to employ imperatives to do it. Their colleagues in the ICE-GB tend to be explaining subject matter rather than telling their students what to do.

5.3 Interim conclusion

The (dis)advantages of the parametric approach, compared to collostructional analysis, are similar to those of the speech act approach. They do not tell us which events are typically proposed in the imperative but they do take the discourse contexts in which the construction is used into systematic account. Unlike the parametric approach, however, speech act analysis elaborates notions – like order and advice – that are easy to understand. Conversely, parametric analysis can provide us with a more detailed picture of the imperative's general behavior in terms of factors – like capability and obligation – underlying the speech act approach's classification as well. It also allows us to see in which factors/parameters the English imperative typically differs from its Dutch counterpart in usage. Yet, our present results can clearly be said to complement those of Sections 3 and 4 too, as the links made in Section 5.2 to collexemes and (non-)willful directives show.

As far as Takahashi's (2012) model is concerned, our results substantiate the assumption that the imperative's prototype correlates with high corpus frequency. The application of the parameters also raises some issues, however. The idea that a higher score is more prototypical and should thus be more frequent, for instance, may not extend to individual parameters. Power is a case in point: most imperatives in our data are uttered in power-neutral contexts. This fact could even make one wonder whether power is relevant for force exertion (see also Takahashi 2012: 101-115 on its lack of impact on the choice between imperatives and other directive strategies). Another issue concerns the negative values. Takahashi (2012) makes a persuasive case for their presence in his model: they neatly describe cases like (28c) where the intended meaning is the opposite of the literal one. It is unclear, though, whether the wide range of negative scores is really needed. Force exertion can, in theory, vary from -7 to +10. A look at the overall scores and their standard deviations in English and Dutch suggests that, in practice, the imperative is almost never used with negative force. There is little corresponding to the whole -7 to 0 part of the scale and its depth does not seem crucial for analyzing corpus data.

6 Conclusion

We hope to have shown the fruitfulness of combining different approaches for the study of imperatives. As argued in the interim conclusions, each has its strengths and its weaknesses. The use of DCA for contrastive purposes, for instance, may reveal potentially interesting differences between the English imperative and its Dutch counterpart in the verbs attracted to them but it tells us little about the contexts in which they occur. Together, however, the three approaches paint a relatively comprehensive picture of how the imperative is used in general and how it can vary between languages. The combined results have several implications, in our view. They challenge, for instance, the preconception that imperatives are all about obtaining tangible results (see Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003: 231-234 too).

From a theoretical perspective, the fact that the imperative is used mostly as a pure ((non)-willful) directive or, put differently, with a relatively high level of force exertion is of interest too. Much of the literature has focused on uses like the conditional imperative (e.g. Fortuin & Boogaart 2009) and many proposals for imperative meaning have gone to great lengths to accommodate such cases. Davies (1986: 263), for one, defines the imperative "as presenting a proposition which may or may not become true", which makes it a perfect match for a protasis. Directivity is a secondary meaning and is argued to follow from the reasonable assumption that, when introducing a potentiality by itself, the speaker "intends to convey that [s/]he accepts something's being made the case" (Davies 1986: 51). As Jary & Kissine (2014: 267) rightly point out, this pragmatic convention that imperatives express acceptance allows for commissive directives like permissions but fails to explain why such uses are relatively infrequent. They themselves characterize imperative meaning as a distinct suite of semantic features (see Jary & Kissine 2014: 76-108) that sanctions permissions and non-directive uses but is especially suited to conveying directivity. This view can be said to be supported by the usage data uncovered in the present article. One possible problem concerns Jary & Kissine's (2014: 58) interpretation of directivity as "providing the hearer with a reason to act". In a way, it puts lower-force cases serving as, say, advice on a par with higher-force ones functioning as, for instance, an order. Both can indeed motivate the addressee to do something. Particularly in Dutch, however, the imperative appears to be more typically used as the latter. In other words, from a usage-based standpoint, one could contend that "any adequate theory of imperative semantics should [perhaps not only] be able to capture the directive as well as the non-directive uses of the imperative and, at the same time, account for the primacy of the former … [but also] be able to explain why some directive uses are more prototypical than others" (Van Olmen & Heinold 2017: 13). Takahashi's (2012) – not entirely unproblematic – model, for one, seems to meet the requirements: the cases with higher force exertion would be regarded as the more quintessential examples of the imperative.

Admittedly, in the English data, the "preference" for willful directive/higher-force uses may not be so outspoken. This, together with other dissimilarities, raises the question to what extent the English imperative and the Dutch imperative are truly equivalents in terms of usage and meaning. There is, for instance, some evidence suggesting that the English one is slightly more open to non-agentive verbs. When characterizing the respective constructions, one may therefore want/need to include this type of information. The differences in usage between English and Dutch – such as the comparative ease/frequency with which speakers of the former language seem to use the imperative to give advice and make suggestions (though it requires confirmation from a larger corpus) – also suggest that the two languages vary in the manner in which they realize the domain of modality. An interesting observation in this regard is made by Mortelmans (2010: 141, in translation), whose parallel corpus study reveals that, unlike its cognates in German and English, *moeten* 'must' "appears as a target of imperatives too …, i.e. it can correspond to a highly grammaticalized, speaker-oriented type of modality". The Dutch imperative's lower frequency in general and in particular

functions could thus be compensated for by more typically directive modals (see also Van Olmen 2011: 496). Further research is needed to test this hypothesis, however.

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