Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. & Dixon, R. M. W. (eds.). 2017. *Commands: A cross-linguistic typology: Explorations in linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xxiv + 328.

Reviewed by Rea Peltola

1   Introduction

Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald's & R. M. W. Dixon's book *Commands: A Cross-Linguistic Typology* explores the diversity in world languages in the marking and the meaning of commands, as well as the semantic structures and cultural values and ideas underlying this variation. The array of investigated languages is illustrative of different language families, geographical areas and typological profiles, including Aguaruna and Ashaninka Satipo (both from Peru), Dyirbal (Australia), Japanese, Korowai (West Papua), Karawari (Papua New Guinea), Lao, Northern Paiute (a native language of the United States), Nungon (Papua New Guinea), Quechua, Tayatuk (Papua New Guinea), Wolaitta (Ethiopia) and Zenzontepec Chatino (Mexico). The studies draw on rich empirical data which is mostly achieved through field work.

The first extensive and systematic investigation concentrating on the typological description of directive sentences was Xrakovskij (2001). It presented results from a sample of 23 languages which were obtained through a questionnaire designed to capture comparable morphological, syntactic and semantic-pragmatic information from languages of different types. In the first chapter of the book, Birjulin & Xrakovskij (2001) provided an unconventionally broad definition of imperatives, expanding their interest, e. g., in non-second person imperatives, verbless commands, prohibitives and directives oriented toward an already on-going event. Cross-linguistic research has thereafter deepened our understanding on some of these individual aspects of imperatives (see e. g. van der Auwera et al. 2003, on the person distinctions and the nature of imperative-hortative speech act; Miestamo & van der Auwera 2007 and van der Auwera 2010, on prohibitives). Aikhenvald (2010) was the first to explore imperatives and other command strategies in a large amount of data (a set of approximately 700 grammars of different language families), instead of a sample of a more limited number of languages, with a broad scope of analysis (although the definition of imperatives was narrower than that given by Birjulin & Xrakovskij 2001). This monograph gave a thorough account of the morphological,

syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties of directive expressions and set an empirical foundation for future studies. An up-to-date state-of-the-art concerning studies in imperative and command strategies can be found in the introduction of Van Olmen & Heinold (2017), which is itself another recent contribution in the field.

The analytical framework of the present volume is outlined in the introductory chapter by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, which builds upon grammatical data from 600 languages and the results presented in Aikhenvald (2010). This chapter evokes some cross-linguistic patterns of formation and usage in imperatives and commands, all the while underlining the non-universality of many of the features generally associated with imperatives. The chapters that follow demonstrate this complexity. They generally start by presenting the conventionalized, dedicated forms of command in the studied language, taking into account the recurrent formal differences between addressee-oriented ("canonical") and other-person-oriented ("non-canonical") imperatives. Some observations are also given regarding the non-directive uses of imperatives, for example in greetings and curses (Japanese, Chapter 8 by Nerida Jarkey) or in asking for permission and discourse-marking (Nungon, Chapter 11 by Hannah S. Sarvasy). Attention is then drawn toward other command strategies, in other words non-imperative forms (e. g. interrogative, declarative and de-subordinated clauses) used for modulating the directive force.

In the course of the book, two major domains of interest are brought to the fore: the interplay between the distinctiveness of the imperative category and its historical, formal and semantic relatedness with neighboring verb categories, on the one hand, and the culturally and socially rooted nature of commands, on the other.

2 The imperative among other grammatical categories: peculiarity and relatedness

Not all languages have a dedicated imperative form, nor do all communities make use of a clearly defined speech act of commands. In his article (Chapter 9), N. J. Enfield shows that in Lao, an isolating-analytic language that employs sentence-final particles for distinguishing clause types, it is not obvious to consider imperatives as a sentence type of its own. Imperative sentences are structurally similar to other sentence types. They may contain one of a series

of specialized sentence-final particles, in which case the semantic category of the particle determines the type of command performed (e. g. the particle *vaj2* indicates that the speaker is asking the addressee to hurry), but they may also be formed without any explicit marking.

When dealing with linguistic phenomena as cross-linguistically diverse as sentence types and other means for expressing speech acts, there is a great risk of imposing conventional analytic frames on forms that do not fit, namely analyzing as imperatives something that is not an imperative. R. M. W. Dixon's paper (Chapter 6) revisits Dyirbal verbal inflection to demonstrate that the forms labelled "positive imperative" and "negative imperative" in a previous study are better characterized as potentiality and caution verb forms. According to Dixon, in traditional Dyirbal society, acts of ordering and forbidding were not part of the life of its members, and there was therefore no well-defined speech act category of commands. The article affords a strong example of the way in which long-term, in-depth research can shed light on the originality and the richness of the resources of a given language.

When there is a dedicated imperative form in the verbal system of a language, it tends to stand out as exceptional among verb forms, in terms of the semantic distinctions it encodes and the grammatical relations it entertains with other phrasal constituents. First, imperatives may differ from other forms in number and person marking and meaning. There may be gaps in imperative paradigms: the absence of the first-person singular imperative is not uncommon. This is the case in Quechua, investigated by Willem H. Adelaar (Chapter 2), which instead displays a first-person inclusive form ('you and me'). On the other hand, in Korowai, there are more person distinctions in the imperative than in other verb paradigms, as noted by Lourens de Vries (Chapter 12). Korowai imperatives distinguish between first, second and third person forms in singular and plural, while all other verb forms only oppose the speaker (first person) with the non-speaker (second/third person) in singular and plural. This is interesting in view of the discussion concerning the non-canonicity of third-person imperatives.

Second, imperative clauses may encode syntactic relations in an unusual way. Tim Thornes presents examples from Numic languages where the subject either is non-overt or appears in an unusual form, namely in the third-person reflexive pronominal form (Chapter 7). In this language branch, transitive imperative sentences may also exhibit atypically case-marked objects.

Furthermore, imperatives are likely to deviate from other verb forms in expression of tense, aspect, modality (TAM) and evidentiality. Typically,

fewer verbal categories are marked in imperative clauses than in declarative or interrogative clauses. In Quechua, the imperative mood is incompatible with sentential affixes indicating validation and evidentiality, whereas competing verbal categories, the future tense and the potential mood, combine with these markers (Adelaar, Chapter 2). Valérie Guérin reports that, in Tayatuk, canonical imperatives formed with a bare verb stem accept none of the TAM markers found in declarative mood (at least five tenses, one aspect and three modalities) (Chapter 10). In Ashaninka Satipo, on the other hand, imperative constructions can host a number of aspectual markers but their function is not the same as in declarative constructions. Elena Mihas provides several examples of the ways in which aspectual and modal markers are used in Ashaninka Satipo imperatives to convey pragmatic information, namely to adjust the force of a command (Chapter 4). For example, when associated with the imperative, the semelfactive marker *apaint* 'once' gives rise to a diminutive reading: the addressee is requested to perform the action expressed by the verb to a lesser extent than normally expected.

In all its exceptionality, imperative is nevertheless formally, semantically and historically related to certain other verb categories, in a cross-linguistically consistent way. Simon E. Overall observes a formal, most likely motivated overlap between imperative, vocative and interrogative in Aguaruna and suggests that there may be a wider category of "addressee-oriented forms" (Chapter 3). The close connection between imperatives and other TAM markers is reflected by the presence of these latter among command strategies in different languages. Eric W. Campbell demonstrates that, in Zenzontepec Chatino (Chapter 5), the potential mood is used in all other commands except for the second-person basic directives, which are realized by the imperative mood. This means that the potential occurs in non-addressee-oriented directives, prohibitives and all alternative command strategies. Campbell also draws attention to a possible morphological and historical connection between the imperative mood and the perfective aspect in this language. The two forms are marked in certain inflectional classes with a similar prefix, in other classes they are distinguished by the absence of a preposed nasal in the imperative prefix. This nasal is present in the perfect and is presumed to originate from a realis marker. The interplay of the imperative with irrealis mood, perfective aspect and future tense surfaces at several stages in the book.

When it comes to semantic distinctions specific to imperatives, they are motivated by the inherent property of commands to reflect the social structures

and the cultural meanings shared and maintained by the members of a speech community. Subdividing imperatives in delayed, immediate, plain, polite or familiar imperatives, as for example in Quechua (Adelaar, Chapter 2), Aguaruna (Overall, Chapter 3), Japanese (Jarkey, Chapter 8) and Nungen (Sarvasy, Chapter 11), is likely to be dependent on culture-specific values and norms concerning the relationship between the interlocutors. The fact that certain verb types are incompatible with imperatives can also be viewed as stemming from cultural meanings. Nerida Jarkey studies in detail the uses of imperatives in Japanese in terms of social (in)acceptability of commands. In contemporary Japanese, subject-honorific verbs tend to be at odds with plain imperative forms, since showing respect to someone who is socially above one's one position and issuing commands are actions that generally do not coincide in terms of social hierarchy. Another example of a limitation in imperative use are verbs expressing involuntary action: when it comes to language constructions, drawing the line between intentional beings and non-intentional entities, as well as determining the nature of this interface, is in the end a question of cultural values. The next section elaborates on some of the cultural and social issues examined in Aikhenvald & Dixon's book.

3   Cultural values and norms underlying commands

In the introductory chapter, Aikhenvald underlines the importance of being cautious when establishing links between the structure of a language and the ways of thinking of its speakers, as there is great risk of drawing too straightforward conclusions. Taking this into account, the book offers careful considerations on the complex relationship between language and culture, based on in-depth empirical analysis. The studies shed light on the reasons why mastering the different command strategies of a language is so crucial for successful communication and the ways in which language contact and cultural contact can change language use.

In many speech communities, issuing commands is conditioned by underlying social hierarchies based on age and gender, as well as social and emotional distance or familiarity. Azeb Amha analyzes a set of examples showing how plural forms are used to convey politeness in Wolaitta, even when talking to a single addressee (Chapter 14). In Japanese speech culture, issuing commands is in general particularly face-threatening and is therefore avoided when speaking to those above, in the vertical social dimension, or

to one's equals (Jarkey, Chapter 8). Japanese has a relatively large range of dedicated imperative forms, but it also employs a rich array of command strategies which make it possible for the speakers to avoid having to use plain imperatives. These strategies tend to lose their euphemistic qualities and gradually become more explicit. The choice of strategy ensues from the position of each interlocutor in the horizontal and vertical social dimensions (those above one's own status vs. those below, those who are in-group members vs. those with whom one does not easily identify with), the identity the speaker wishes to display and the relationship the speaker aims to foster with the interlocutor. Japanese command strategies are particularly sensitive to constraints concerning the ways in which socially acceptable gender identity is conveyed. According to Jarkey, certain authoritative ways of issuing commands are generally regarded as appropriate for men specifically. This can be challenging for example for women in professional positions of authority.

In many of the languages, there are special forms for interspecific commands. The speakers of Ashaninka Sapo (Mihas, Chapter 4) address commands to pets and other domesticated animals in order to call them to come or to chase them away. Some calls imitate the sounds produced by the animal (e. g. *ko ko ko* for chicken), others employ a diminutive form of the name of the species (e. g. *obisha obisha* < Spanish *oveja* 'sheep'). A long tradition of raising hunting dogs has led to a special category of dog commands in Nungon (Savary, Chapter 11). These commands are issued in order to direct the dog to alert the hunter to where game is located or to search at a certain location (*Ori horon!* 'Search on the ground!') or for a certain type of game. In Wolaitta, imperatives are used in directives addressed to oxen and cows (Amha, Chapter 14). In this case, the imperative is used in a singular form, regardless of the number of animals addressed.

It is possible that, in some languages, imperatives were originally used with reference to an even wider range of entities and that contacts with certain European cultures have influenced the way in which the environment is categorized. As a result, certain types of commands have become marginalized. In contemporary Quechua (Adelaar, Chapter 2; see also Aikhenvald, Chapter 1), impersonal verbs referring to weather conditions can be used only in third person imperative form. The author suggests that this limitation may not have existed in pre-Hispanic and pre-Christian era when the forces of nature could have been seen as potential addressees of commands. There are also some examples of Ashaninka Sapo and Karawari commands addressed to spiritual entities in Mihas' (Chapter 4) and Telban's (Chapter 13) papers.

The wide-spread idea that imperatives and commands are systematically and unequivocally face-threatening or interactionally problematic elements is also likely to result from contact between speech communities. Contrary to the situation in Japanese and many European languages, for Karawari speakers of Ambonwari village, commands indicate the close and positively direct relationship between human and non-human members of the community, as reported by Borut Telban (Chapter 13). Karawari commands are also an important part of language socialization through which children learn to participate effectively in the life of the speech community: in sharing, exchanges and cooperation.

In the concluding chapter of the book, Rosita Henry discusses the social aspect of directive speech acts from an anthropological point of view (Chapter 15). She calls attention to the whole of the social situation where commands are used. Instead of analyzing speech acts in terms of one-to-one relationships, it is necessary to take into account the other participants of the situation. Their presence is likely to influence the way in which the speaker addresses the interlocutor. The author illustrates the active role of listeners in a speech situation by presenting observations on the central position given to interpretation and understanding of talk among peoples of the Western Highlands in Papua New Guinea.

4   Conclusion

Aikhenvald & Dixon's book is a comprehensive panorama of imperative constructions and command strategies in the languages of the world. It brings to the fore the particularity of imperatives among verb paradigms and sentence types. The methodological regularity and thoroughness, reflected in the structure of each chapter, makes manifest the parameters of variation in imperatives and other command strategies and allows cross-linguistic comparison also with regard to specific issues in the semantics of commands. The different chapters furthermore undertake the important task of exploring the cultural meanings behind the use of directive expressions. In doing so, they open up perspectives to the effects of language contact in expression of commands and the ways in which language structures reflect speakers' means for positioning themselves within the society and categorizing their environment.

The book is of interest to all those seeking to gain insights into

cross-linguistic variation and patterning in verb paradigms and sentence types, language-specific interplay between verbal categories, and typology of grammatical constructions. It is also relevant reading to anyone concerned with the cultural and social aspects of grammatical constructions.

References

Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2010. *Imperatives and commands*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Birjulin, Leonid A. & Xrakovskij, Viktor S. 2001. Imperative sentences: Theoretical problems. In Xrakovskij, Victor S. (ed.), *Typology of imperative constructions*, 3–50. (LINCOM Studies in Theoretical Linguistics 9). Munich: LINCOM Europa.

Miestamo, Matti & van der Auwera, Johan. 2007. Negative declaratives and negative imperatives: Similarities and differences. In Ammann, Andreas (ed.), *Linguistics festival: May 2006, Bremen*, 59–77. Bremen: Brockmeyer.

van der Auwera, Johan. 2010. Prohibition: Constructions and markers. In Shu, Dingfang & Turner, Ken (eds.), *Contrasting meaning in languages of the East and West*, 443–475. Tübingen: Narr.

van der Auwera, Johan & Dobrushina, Nina & Goussev, Valentin. 2003. A semantic map for imperative-hortatives. In Willems, Dominique & Defrancq, Bart & Colleman, Timothy & Noel, Dirk (eds.), *Contrastive analysis in language: Identifying linguistic units of comparison*, 44–68. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Olmen, Daniël & Heinold, Simone. 2017. *Imperatives and directive strategies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Xrakovskij, Victor S. (ed.). 2001. *Typology of imperative constructions*. (LINCOM Studies in Theoretical Linguistics 9). Munich: LINCOM Europa.

Contact information:

Rea Peltola
Université de Caen Normandie
Laboratoire CRISCO
Esplanade de la Paix
CS 14032
14032 Caen cedex 5
France
e-mail: rea(dot)peltola(at)unicaen(dot)fr