

## French imperatives, negative *ne*, and non-subject clitics

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### 1. Introduction

What's it about? The contrast between positive and negative imperatives in Modern French.

Question: do positive and negative imperatives in Modern French contrast in same way as, e.g., Spanish? (In positive contexts, 'true' imperative can be used, while in negative contexts it can't, and non-imperative suppletive subjunctive/infinitive is used instead as 'surrogate'.)

Answer: No.

But: they do contrast in subtly different way which shows up in presence of clitics.

### 2. Getting to the problem

Contrasting positive/negative imperatives not new: familiar from Romance (e.g. Spanish, Italian, Portuguese) and beyond (e.g. Greek, Hebrew).

Spanish:

- positive imperatives = distinct imperative morphology, as in (1a);
- such forms sometimes called 'true' imperatives (Rivero 1994);
- 'true' imperatives not found in negative contexts, as shown in (1b);
- in negative contexts, suppletive non-imperative (subjunctive or infinitival) morphology found instead, as in (1c, d);
- such forms sometimes called 'surrogate' imperatives (Rivero 1994): non-imperative irrealis forms used with imperative/exhortative force:

- (1) a. Haz-lo!                      b. \*No haz-lo!                      c. No lo hagas!                      d. No hacerlo!                      (Spanish)  
do.IMP-it                      NEG do.IMP-it                      NEG it do-SUB                      NEG do-INF  
'Do (it)!'                      'Don't do it!'                      = (1c)

Standard assumption: presence of negation in (1b–d) prevents use of true imperative, rather than absence of negation in (1a) preventing use of surrogates.

Also: contrasting patterns of (non-subject) cliticisation:

- 'true' imperative in (1a) takes *enclitic* (unlike what's found with any other finite verb forms);
- 'surrogate' imperatives trivially adopt *proclitic* (1c) or *enclitic* (1d) depending on source paradigm.

Necessary (but not sufficient) condition on Spanish-type pattern: negative marker = head (rather than adverbial) (Zeijlstra 2004).

French: regular negative marker = adverbial *pas* (rather than *ne*), so: Spanish-type pattern in (1) not expected.

Prediction borne out: positive and negative imperatives = morphologically identical . . . nearly . . .

One small difference.

BUT: arguably insignificant because predictably phonological and irrelevantly orthographic:

- some 2SG imperatives are orthographically -s final (e.g., *Réponds!* 'Answer!'), while some are not (e.g., *Parle!* 'Speak!', *Va!* 'Go!'; (2a, b));
- if 2SG imperative which is *not* orthographically -s final takes enclitic *en* 'of it' or *y* 'to it', then obligatory phonological liaison [ . . . z . . . ] and orthographic final -s, as in (3a, b);
- does not happen if imperative takes proclitic *en* or *y*, as in negative contexts in (4a, b):

- (2) a. Parle de ton enfance!                      b. Va à la banque!  
talk.IMP of your childhood                      go.IMP to the bank  
'Talk about your childhood!'                      'Go to the bank!'

- (3) a. Parle<sub>s</sub>-en [parl<sub>z</sub>ɑ̃] !                      b. Va<sub>s</sub>-y [vazj] !  
 talk.IMP-of.it                                      go.IMP-to.it  
 'Talk about it!'                                      'Go there!'
- (4) a. N'en parle<sub>s</sub>\_ pas [nɑ̃parl\_pa] !              b. N'y va<sub>s</sub>\_ pas [niva\_pa] !  
 NEG-of.it talk.IMP not                              NEG-to.it go.IMP not  
 'Don't talk about it!'                                      'Don't go there!'

= strange negative/positive contrast!

However, reasons to believe that absence of final -s in (2a, b) and (4a, b) is mere orthographic convention:

- Ignore 2SG imperatives. Consider 1PL and 2PL imperatives. No positive/negative contrast anywhere.
- In all but three cases (*être* 'to be', *avoir* 'to have' and *savoir* 'to know'), 1PL and 2PL imp. = identical to pres. ind. (Verbs with free variation between more than one pres. ind. have the same free variation in the imperative, e.g., *assieds/assois*.)
- With *être* and *avoir*, 1PL and 2PL imperatives = are identical to the pres. sub.
- Thus, with all verbs apart from *savoir*, 1PL and 2PL imperatives = identical to corresponding pres. ind./sub.
- If 2SG imperatives (not followed by *en/y*) (as in (2a, b) and (4a, b)) don't have underlying final -s, then unique in not being identical to corresponding pres. ind./sub.
- If 2SG imperatives (not followed by *en/y*) DO have underlying final -s, the pattern is regular across 1PL, 2PL AND 2SG imperatives.
- AND the pattern in (3a, b) is accounted for.
- AND the pattern in (2a, b) and (4a, b) is not disturbed because the underlying final -s would be silent here anyway.
- THEN there's no positive/negative contrast anywhere, as predicted.

Conclusion: all 2SG imperatives are underlyingly -s final; orthographic absence of -s is mere convention.

No formal contrast between positive and negative imperatives in Modern French.

Despite absence of formal contrast, French positive and negative imperatives follow Spanish-type cliticisation:

- French has proclisis with finite forms, as in (5a);
- positive imperatives have enclisis, as in (5b) (cf. (1a));
- negative imperatives have proclisis, as in (5c) (cf. (1c, d)).

- (5) a. Tu le regardes.                      b. Regarde-le!                      c. Ne le regarde pas!  
 you it watches                                      watch.IMP-it                                      NEG it watch.IMP not  
 'You are watching it.'                                      'Watch it!'                                      'Don't watch it!'

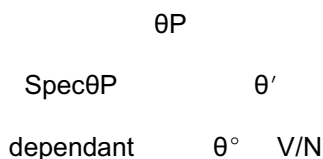
Given lack of formal contrast between positive and negative imperatives (unlike Spanish), why divergent cliticisation pattern (like Spanish)?

### 3. General theoretical assumptions

V/N = drawn from lexicon fully formed, with set of thematic and grammatical features which drive all X' structure building.

Thematic features:

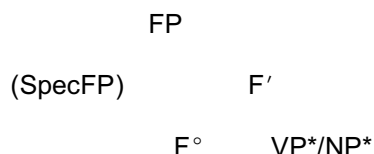
(6)



- V/N = associated with  $\theta$  grid.
- $\theta$  grid = list of  $\theta$  roles hierarchically structured by UG-determined thematic hierarchy.
- $\theta$  roles = realised in syntax in order.
- Each  $\theta$  role = assigned to nominal dependant via intermediary of  $\theta$  head:  $\theta$  role therefore licenses merger of  $\theta^\circ$ ;  $\theta^\circ$  in turn licenses merger of nominal dependant in Spec $\theta P$ .
- Merger of  $\theta^\circ$  = iterative: each  $\theta$  role licenses unique  $\theta^\circ$ ; as many distinct  $\theta^\circ$ s ( $\theta^\circ_{Ag}$ ,  $\theta^\circ_{Th}$ ,  $\theta^\circ_{Re}$ ) = merged as required by  $\theta$  grid (subset of those made available by UG).
- Topmost  $\theta P$  = lexical NP/VP shell: VP\*/NP\*.

Grammatical features:

(7)



- V/N = associated with set of grammatical (inc. pragmatic) features.
- Like  $\theta$  roles, grammatical features = listed hierarchically in UG-determined order (contra Ouhalla 1991).
- Like  $\theta$  roles, grammatical features = checked in syntax in order.
- Each grammatical feature = checked via F head: grammatical feature therefore licenses merger of  $F^\circ$ .
- Merger of  $F^\circ$  = iterative: as many distinct  $F^\circ$ s = merged as required by grammatical features of V/N (subset of those made available by UG (contra Cinque 1999)).
- Topmost FP = complete clause/nominal: CP\*/KP\*:

(8) a.  $[_{CP} \dots [_{IP} \dots [_{VP} \dots ]]]$       b.  $[_{KP} \dots [_{DP} \dots [_{NP} \dots ]]]$

Default features:

- Economy: UG has system of default values for grammatical features;
- default values are not encoded in syntax.

Subtle difference between  $\theta$ -role assignment and grammatical-feature checking:

- isomorphic mapping from  $\theta$  roles to  $\theta^\circ$ s: YES;
- isomorphic mapping from grammatical feature to  $F^\circ$ : NO (well, not always).

If morphology and UG ordering allow, then more than one grammatical feature = checked against single  $F^\circ$ , e.g., portmanteaux forms *à la* vs. *au*, combining inherent case and 'definiteness':

(9) a. *à la femme*      b.  $[_{K} \text{à}] [_{D} \text{la}] \text{ femme}$  ]]

(10) a. *au(x) garçon(s)*      b.  $[_{K/D} \text{au}(x)] \text{ garçon}(s)$  ]]

Economy: check grammatical features on as small a set of  $F^\circ$ s as possible: *au(x)* drawn from lexicon as a unit, so check relevant features on a single  $F^\circ$

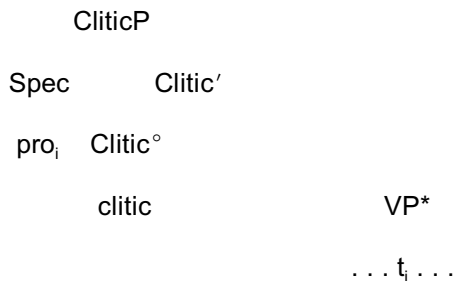
(11) a. *à tous les garçons*      b.  $[_{K} \text{à}] [_{\text{PreDet}} \text{tous}] [_{D} \text{le}(s)] \text{ garçon}(s)$  ]]]

*tous* gets in the way.

#### 4. Clitics (Shlonsky 2004)

Clitics are IP\*-internal F°s:

(12) IP\*

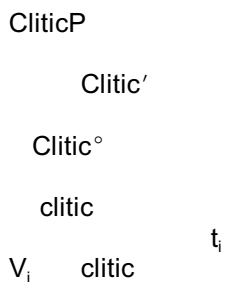


Pronominal clitics allows non-overt dependants (*pro*) to be identified.

Enclisis vs. proclisis:

Enclisis: left-adjunction of verbal complex onto clitic:

(13)



In (13), head of Clitic°/CliticP = clitic, not V; therefore, no grammatical features of V can subsequently be checked.

Two necessary and sufficient conditions on enclisis:

(14) We have enclisis when:

- a. the verb is inflectionally complete under the cliticization site; and,
- b. the verb moves at least as far as the cliticization site. (Shlonsky 2004: 332, his ex. (8))

Enclisis found if conditions in (14) = met; otherwise proclisis.

Inflectional completeness: all V's inflectional features = checked against F°; no inflectional feature remains unchecked.

Movement of verb to cliticisation site (Clitic°) triggered by need to identify non-overt dependant (*pro*) (which moves to SpecCliticP).

Enclisis not found with finite verbs in French, or with infinitives (cf. Spanish) or present participles because:

- Clitic° merges before all V's inflectional features are checked;
- V therefore inflectionally *incomplete* at point it reaches Clitic°;
- condition (14a) on enclisis not satisfied;
- proclisis found instead.

Enclisis found in one environment only in French: positive imperatives, as in (5b).  
Enough to conclude that positive imperatives = 'true' imperatives?

## 5. Imperatives

Imperative: essentially a pragmatic property.

Encoded as an irrealis feature high within clause structure (Force<sup>o</sup> within Rizzi's (1997) exploded IP?):

What does this mean? Not checked until after all 'I\*' features have been checked.

- (15) a. Que personne ne bouge !                      b. Vive la France !  
          that no one NEG move.SUB                      live.SUB the France  
          'No one move !'  
          (Overt complementiser)                      (Residual V2: I-C movement)

Under such an approach, Spanish surrogate subjunctive/infinitive imperatives in (1c, d) contain a non-overt [IRR] complementiser.

'True' imperative: morphosyntactic verb paradigm, often described as defective or morphologically impoverished, e.g., lack of 'I\*' features (Rooryck 1992, 2000a: 117).

Suggestion: with 'true' imperatives, absence of 'intervening' 'I\*' features allow [IRR] and defective/impoverished [I] to be checked on same F<sup>o</sup>, like *au(x)* in (10).

So, are French imperatives 'true' or 'surrogate'?

– Less clear cut than in Spanish.

– Unlike Spanish, French imperatives not typically morphologically unique (see above), but rather suppletive ind./sub. forms.

Two contexts of morphologically unique imperative marking:

– With *savoir*: 1PL *sachons* and 2PL *sachez* = uniquely imperative (cf. pres. ind. *savons* and *savez*, pres. sub. *sachions* and *sachiez*).

– With *vouloir* 'to want': alongside 2SG *veux* and 2PL *voulez* (suppletive pres. ind. forms), there are 2SG *veuille* and 2PL *veuillez*, the first of which = corresponding pres. sub. (once final -s restored), while the second = uniquely imperative.

So: are these three instances of unique imperative morphology enough to conclude that French has 'true' imperatives rather than non-imperative 'surrogate' forms? Watch this space!

## 6. Negation

Negation in formal French = bipartite: *ne . . . pas*, etc., as in (16):

- (16) Jean ne fume pas/plus/jamais/guère.  
      J. NEG smokes not/no-longer/never/hardly  
      'J. doesn't smoke/no longer smokes/never smokes/hardly ever smokes.'

Pollock (1989): negation marked by an inflectional feature [NEG] checked on distinct IP\*-internal functional head, Neg<sup>o</sup>, between the inflectional heads T<sup>o</sup> and Agr<sup>o</sup> (Belletti 1990):

(17)	NegP	
	Spec	Neg'
	pas	Neg° [NEG]
		ne

Zanuttini (1997): multiple IP\*-internal NegPs to host various categories of negative adverbials.

Rowlett (1993): adverbials like *pas* = generated lower in IP\* than SpecNegP, so Zanuttini's various NegPs do not actually have to be NegP.

Cinque (1999): Neg° = one of large set of UG-ordered inflectional heads within massively exploded IP\*; Zanuttini's negative adverbials associated with non-negative inflectional heads.

Slight reinterpretation of Cinque: it's grammatical features rather than functional heads that are UG ordered.

Crucial idea: hierarchical order of [NEG] with respect to other inflectional features = fixed by UG.

Assume: [IRR]>[NEG]>[I].

Since morphology does not allow [NEG] feature to be checked on the same F° as [IRR] or [I], [NEG] prevents [IRR] and [I] from being checked against the same head, just like *tous* stops *à* and *le(s)* from getting together as *au(x)* in (11).

### 7. Why do positive imperatives have enclitics, while negative imperatives have proclitics?

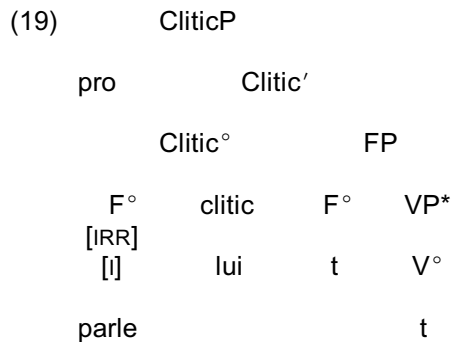
French imperatives:

- 'true' imperatives;
- inherently inflectionally defective;
- drive minimal inflectional structure building above VP\*;
- (in the absence of negation) inflection and pragmatic features can be checked on same F°: [<sub>IRR°/I°</sub>];
- verb = inflectionally complete once it reaches [<sub>IRR°/I°</sub>].

(18)	FP	
	F°	VP*
	[IRR]	
	[I]	V°
	Parle	t

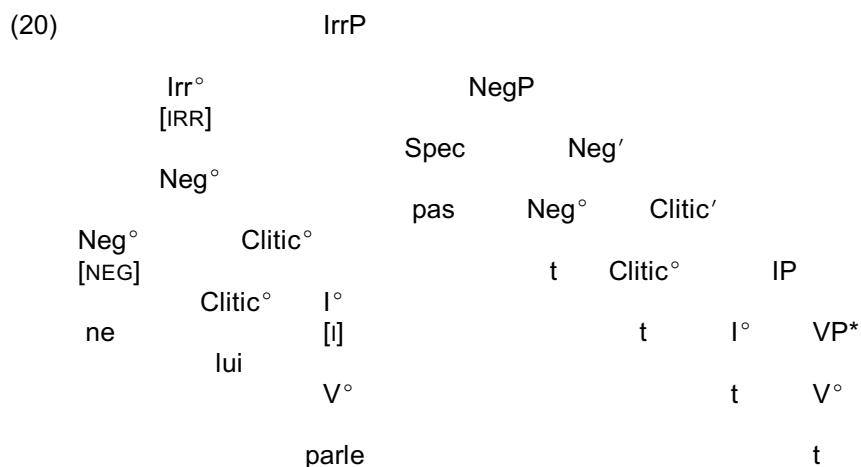
Where French imperatives have non-overt dependant(s) (pro):

- pro needs to be identified in spec-head checking configuration with clitic head;
- merger of Clitic° therefore licensed above [<sub>IRR°/I°</sub>];
- pro moves to SpecCliticP, while verb moves to Clitic°;
- since verb = inflectionally complete, conditions (14a, b) on enclisis = satisfied;
- movement of imperative to Clitic° = left adjunction.



Where French imperatives have non-overt dependant(s) (pro) AND are negative:

- since negative polarity = non-default, a negative verb has one feature to check that positive verb does not: [NEG];
- in hierarchy of grammatical features, [NEG] intervenes between [IRR] and [I];
- [NEG] therefore needs to be checked after [I] but before [IMP];
- since morphology does not allow [NEG] feature to be checked on the same F° as [IRR] or [I], all three have to be checked on distinct F°s;
- merger of Irr°, Neg° and I° therefore licensed;
- if Clitic° merges after I°, verb = inflectionally *incomplete* when it moves to Clitic°: [NEG] and [IRR] still to be checked;
- conditions for enclisis therefore not met;
- movement of verb to Clitic° therefore not left adjunction, but substitution instead;
- similarly, verb inflectionally incomplete when moving to Neg°: therefore substitution;
- final step: movement to Irr° to check [IRR] (to the left of *pas*, if present, in SpecNegP).



Why is (21) ungrammatical?

(21) \*No lo haz !  
NEG it do.IMP

Because Spanish Neg° ≠ French Neg° (= Zeijlstra's idea).

### 8. Post scriptum

What blocks [IMP] and [I] from being checked on the same head is the feature [NEG], not *ne* itself, hence:

(22) Le regarde pas ! (cf. (5c))

It watch.IMP not  
'Don't' watch it!'

Well known that negative *ne* is non-overt in many varieties: [NEG] feature enough to block enclisis.

Consider the data in (23):

- (23) a. Défais-la pas !      b. Parle-moi-z-en pas !      c. Gênez-vous pas !  
undo.IMP-it not      talk.IMP-me-of.it not      trouble.IMP-you not  
'Don't undo it!'      'Don't talk to me about it!'      'Don't be embarrassed!'

Problematic: enclisis together with negation.

Grammarians deny they exist; yet examples abound.

What's going on?

Not really negative: no [NEG], therefore *ne* not available:

- (24) a. \*Ne défais-la pas !      b. \*Ne parle-moi-z-en pas !      c. Ne gênez-vous pas !  
NEG undo.IMP-it not      NEG talk.IMP-me-of.it not      NEG trouble.IMP-you not

*Pas* in (23a–c) = constituent negator with local scope.

Further evidence that *ne* and *pas* (etc.) aren't associated underlyingly with one and the same FP (cf. Pollock 1989; Rowlett 1993).

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