EMBEDDED IMPERATIVES IN SEMITIC, GERMANIC, AND OTHER LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

Several Semitic and Germanic languages, just as languages belonging to other language families (Slovenian, Korean), embed imperatives and thus use direct speech in syntactical context, where most other languages would use subordinate clauses. This kind of embedding can entail "shifting indexicals" and "imposters", i.e. the reference to one and the same person with different persons in the verbal and pronominal system, even within one and the same phrase. In this paper, departing from the Germanic and other data presented so far in this context, I attempt a descriptive analysis of this phenomenon focusing on Semitic, with only hints to elements of a formal analysis.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Imperatives, especially the interplay of finite imperative forms and infinitives in Germanic languages, were one of the many areas of interest and competence of Janne Bondi Johannessen (see e.g. Johannessen 2016). Throughout her outstanding commitment to scholarly cooperation with Ethiopia, Janne also showed a keen interest in Amharic (see e.g. Edzard & Johannessen 2015). In this spirit, this short paper referring to Semitic material (including Amharic), originally dedicated to her 60th birthday, is now dedicated to her memory.

"Shifting indexicals", i.e. the reference to one and the same person with different persons in the verbal and pronominal system, have increasingly caught the attention of scholars working in theoretical linguistics in the last two decades or so. The imperative plays a crucial role here. Important contributions include Crnič & Trinh 2009, Kaufmann & Poschmann 2013, and Stegovec & Kaufmann 2015, among others. "Imposters" (cf. Collins & Postal 2012) involving a combination of pronominal reference with names referring to the same person (e.g. *Mommy*ᵢ *and Daddy*ᵢ *will put away our*ᵢ *car keys*) also have been shown to play a role in this context. Thereby, the term "embedded imperative" is not uncontroversial, and neither is the term "matrix imperative" (Crnič & Trinh

2009). Punctuation plays a crucial role, as what might appear to be embedded, may indeed be graphically marked as a quotation in certain languages.

Several Semitic (notably modern Amharic) and Germanic languages (Icelandic, different stages of German), just as languages belonging to other language families (notably Slovenian and Korean), embed imperatives and thus use direct speech in syntactical context, where most other languages would use subordinate clauses. What I specifically mean by "embedding" in this paper is — following e.g. Stegovic & Kaufmann (2015), and Alvestad (2015) — the use of an imperative after a subordinating conjunction (complementizer) that would usually entail a subjunctive verb form. This kind of embedding can entail "shifting indexicals", i.e. the reference to one and the same person with different persons in the verbal and pronominal system, even within one and the same phrase. In this context, "[i]ndexicals are expressions of natural language that depend on the context of utterance for their semantic values. This includes expressions that pick out the speaker(s) of the context (*I/me/we*), the addressee(s) (*you*), the place (*here*), the time (*now*), etc." (LaTerza et al. 2015:, p. 158). Typologically, this not too frequent feature cannot only be found in Amharic, but also in Older Germanic, Slovenian, and even Korean. In this paper, I attempt a descriptive analysis of this phenomenon, with special attention to Hebrew and mainly Arabic data that have no yet been discussed in this context. Older Germanic, Slovenian, and Korean will also be adduced as further typological evidence. Crucially, in response to the valuable input of the anonymous reviewer of this paper, the imperative morphology in Semitic is restricted to precisely that function, and does not apply to the subjunctive and the optative, for which different paradigms exist.

[2]   THE DATA

In a typological perspective, embedded imperatives with shifting indexicals have received considerable attention within the topic of syntactically embedded direct speech (notably Sadock & Zwicky 1985). Especially remarkable are those cases, in which direct speech is preceded by a complementizer and not by punctuation such as a colon, i.e. precisely those cases where one would expect a subordinate clause from a European perspective. In this context, Amharic has been treated, *inter alia*, by Schlenker (2003), Anand (2006), and, marginally, by Deal (2019, p. 128ff.). In my view, the hitherto best analysis of the Amharic data is presented by LaTerza et al. (2015), the main credit going to the co-author Ruth Kramer. The following three examples may serve to illustrate the situation:

(1)   Clear reference of the indexical "I" in English

John$_i$ said that I_j am here.

In (1), the indexical "I" can only refer to the speaker of the whole sentence (2), and not the speaker of the reported speech act, John, i.e. "I" and "John" must have a different referent. In contrast, one finds semantic ambiguity in the Amharic sentence (2) below, where the utterance 'I am a hero' is syntactically embedded:

(2)   Ambiguous reference of the indexical "*-ññ*" in Amharic

John$_i$	*[ğägna*	*nä-ññ$_{i/j}$]*	*yə-l-all$_i$*
John	hero	COP-1SG.OBJ	3SG.M-say.IPFV-AUX.NPS

'John says (that) {I am, he is} a hero'

Here, "I am" can refer both to the speaker of the whole sentence (2) and the speaker of the reported speech act. The translation in LaTerza et al. (2015) convincingly reflects the opaque syntax which resides somewhere between direct and indirect speech. The ambiguity of the referent is not the main point here, though. What matters is that the first person, as opposed to the third person, is used in the syntactically embedded part. An opaque situation regarding the pronominal reference in the embedded phrase obtains in the following example (3):

(3)   Opaque status between direct and indirect embedded speech in Amharic

yä-sära	*g^{w}adäññočč-e$_j$*	*[kä-ne$_j$*	*an-nə-sära-mm$_i$]*	*alu$_i$*
GEN-work	friend.PL-1SG.POSS	from-1SG.SUB	NEG-1PL-work.IPFV-NEG	say.PF.3PL.M

'My colleagues refused to work with me.'

("My colleagues with me we will not work they said.")

I will first present an overview of previously cited examples of embedded imperatives in Germanic, Slavic, and Korean, and then cite examples from Hebrew and mainly Classical Arabic, the topic of this paper proper. As stated initially, there is also interesting typological evidence beyond Semitic regarding syntactically embedded imperatives and shifting indexicals. The following Middle High German, Old High German, and Old Icelandic examples (4) to (7) are all due to Kaufmann (2014):

(4) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Middle High German

ich	*rate*	*dir,*	*[waz*	*du*	*tuo]*
1SG	advise.IPFV.1SG	2.SG.DAT	what	2SG	do.IMP.SG

'I give you advice what you should do.'

(Kudrun, stanza 149; cf. Stackmann 2000, p. 34)

(5) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Middle High German

ich	*sage*	*dir,*	*herre,*	*[wie*	*du*	*tuo]*
1SG	advise.IPFV.1SG	2.SG.DAT	mylord	how	2SG	do.IMP.SG

I tell you how to act, Mylord.'

(Rolandslied, stanzas 14,22 and 16,21; cf. Wesle 1985, pp. 13, 15)

(6) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Old High German

ik	*bimunium*	*dih, ...*	*[daz*	*du*	*niewedar*	*ni*	*gituo]*
1SG.NOM	implore.IPFV	2SG.ACC ...	COMP	2SG	never	not	do.IMP.SG

'I implore you never to do this again.'

(Denkmäler deutscher Poesie und Prosa aus dem viii – xii Jahrhundert 4,7; cf.
Müllerhoff & Scherer 1873, p. 11; cf. also Erdmann 1886, p. 119)

(7) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Old Icelandic

'Verða	*kann*	*það,'*	*segir*	*Arnkell, 'en*	*það*	*vil*
happen.INF	may_be.IPFV.SG	COMP	say.PF.3SG	Arnkell but	DEM.DIST	want.IPFV.1SG

eg	*við*	*Þig*	*mæla,*	*Þórarinn*	*frændi,*	*[að*	*þú*	*ver*	*með*
1SG	with	2SG.ACC	speak.INF	Þórarinn	relative	COMP	2SG	be.IMP.SG	with

mér	*Þar*	*til*	*er*	*lýkur*	*málum*	*þesssum*	*á nokkurn*	*hátt]'*
1SG.ACC	there	until	be.IPFV.3SG	end.PPP	affair	DEM.PROX	*in some*	*mode*

That may be', said Arnkell, 'but this I want to arrange with you, Cousin
Þòrarinn, that you stay with me until this affair is in some way ended.'
(Eyrbyggja saga; cf. Vigfússon 1864, p. 30; cf. also Rögnvaldsson 1998 and Isac
2015, p. 239f.)

In all the cases (4) to (7), an imperative within an embedded structure is depend-
ent on either a complementizer (*daz, að*) or a relative interrogative element (*waz,
wie*). Again, what would be expected in these cases is an exhortative verb form
rather than an imperative.

Comparable cases are also attested in Slovenian, another language that has
caught the attention of formal linguists and logicians in this context. The follow-
ing examples (8) to (10) are all due to Alvestad (2015).

(8) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Slovenian

Mama   pravi,   [da jo   dobro   poslušaj]
mother say.IPFV.3SG COMP 3SG.OBJ well   listen.IMP.2SG
'Mother says you should listen to her carefully.'
("Mother says that listen! to her carefully.")
(Dvořák 2005, p. 11)

(9) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Slovenian

To   je   avto, [ki   ga   prodaj   čimprej]
DEM   be.IPFV.3SG car   REL   3SG.OBJ sell.IMP.2SG as_soon_as_you_can
'This is a car that you must sell as soon as you can.'
("This is a car that sell it! as soon as you can.")
(Rus 2004, p. 11)

(10) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Slovenian

Zakaj te Moje   opozorilo, [da   bodi   previden], tako jezi
why   2SG 1SG.POSS warning COMP be.IMP.2SG careful   so   make_
                                                                  angry.IPFV.3SG

'Why does my advice that you must be careful make you so angry?'
("Why does my advice that be careful! make you so angry?")
(Rus 2004, p. 11)

A complementizer *da* precedes all the imperatives in examples (8) to (10) (e.g. Uhlik & Žele 2018), comparable to the situation in the previous Germanic examples.

The phenomenon also is attested in the far Eastern branch of Altaic languages. To conclude this rudimentary typological survey of embedded imperatives, here is another example, this time from Korean, again due to Kaufmann (2014) (11).

(11) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Korean

john-i   tom-eykey [cip-ey   ka-la]-ko   malhayss-ta
John-NOM   Tom-DAT   [home-to   go-IMP]-COMP said-DC
'John ordered Tom to go home.'

In the latter Korean example the complementizer *-ko* serves, *inter alia*, to embed the imperative phrase in direct speech (cf. Yeom to appear).

Let us turn now to the Semitic examples. In the following Biblical Hebrew example (12), one finds what in traditional syntactic theory is called an anacoluth (what one would rather expect is an imperfective optative form after

the conjunction *lū* 'if (only), would that'. No ambiguity with respect to the referents themselves obtains, but one can clearly observe the shifting indexicals, i.e. systematic use of the second instead of third person.

(12) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Biblical Hebrew

> ʾim   ʾattā$_i$ lū   [šəmāʿē$_i$-nī$_j$]
> if   2SG.M   would_that   hear.IMP.SG.M-1SG.OBJ

'If you would only hear me.'
("Would that you hear me!")
(Genesis 23:13)

In Classical Arabic, one likewise encounters examples of syntactically embedded imperatives after the so-called ʾan al-mufassira 'the explanatory ʾan' (cf. Wright 1896, vol. I, p. 292C, W. Fischer 2006, § 414, note 1; Özkan 2008, p. 298ff.). Sībawayhi introduces this ʾan in the sense (*manzila* 'position') of ʾay 'that is' at the beginning of chapter 273 (cf. also Sadan 2012, p. 1; Dror 2017, p. 85) and provides examples and an explanation thereof in chapter 275, but this analysis has to be rejected in a comparative Semitic perspective. In any event, such an "explanatory" ʾan can be directly followed by an imperative, e.g. in Sībawayhi's examples *katabtu ʾilay-hī ʾani fʿal* 'I wrote to him to do' ("I wrote to him that do!") and ʾamartu ʾan qum 'I ordered that you (should) get up' ("I ordered you that get up!") (*Kitāb*, vol. 3, p. 162), but also by other verbal constructions, containing elucidation or explanation, e.g. in the example ʾan kuntum qawman muṣrifīna 'because you are a people without measure' (Q 43:5). Typical examples in the Qurʾān are the following, (13) and (14):

(13) Syntactically embedded imperatives in the Qurʾān

> fa-ʾawḥaynā   ʾilay-hi$_i$ ʾani ṣnaʿi$_i$ l-fulka
> CONJ-inspire.PF.1PL   to-3SG   COMP fabricate.IMP.SG.M   DEF-ark.ACC

'And we [God] inspired him to make the ark.'
("And we inspired him that fabricate! the ark.")
(Q 23:27)

(14) Syntactically embedded imperatives in the Qurʾān

wa-nṭalaqa	l-malaʾu	min-hum	ʾani	mšū	wa-ṣbirū …
CONJ-de-part.PF.3SG.M	DEF-emi-nent.NO	from.3PL.M	COMP	go.PL.M	CONJ-be_pa-tient.IMP.PL.M

‘And the eminent among them went forth, [saying] "continue and be patient! …"’

("And the eminent among them went forth that continue! and be patient!")

(Q 38:6)

In (14), one conceptually has to supply a *verbum dicendi*, also in an idiomatic European translation of the phrase, as the verb "to depart, to go forth" cannot directly govern a subjunctive.

Further Classical Arabic examples featuring an *ʾan al-mufassira* with an embedded imperative are the following, (15) to (17):

(15) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Classical Arabic

ʾašārat$_i$	ʾilay-ya$_j$	ʾan	ḫuḏ$_j$-hā
signal.PF.3SG. F	to-1SG	COMP	take.IMP.SG.M-3SG.F

‘She made a sign to me [meaning] that I should take her.’

("She made a sign to me that take (!) her.")

(Wright 1896, vol. I, p. 292C)

The referent of 'her' in *ḫuḏ-hā* is not entirely clear here. It is unlikely, though, that the referent is the author of the main clause.

(16) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Classical Arabic

ʾarsalū$_i$	ʾilay-him$_j$	ʾan	[ruddū$_j$	ʿalay-nā$_i$	ʾibila-nā$_i$]
send.3PL.M	to-3PL.M	COM	return.IMP.3PL.M	upon-1PL	camel.PL.ACC.CS-1PL

‘They sent to them [requesting] that they should return their camels to them.’

("They sent to them that return (!) to us our camels.")

(W. Fischer 2006, § 414, note 1)

(17) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Classical Arabic

fa-ʾašāra$_i$	ʾilay-him$_j$	ʾani	[ṯbutū$_j$	ʿalā	ṣalāti-kum$_j$]
and-sig-nal.PF.3SG. M	to-3PL.M	COMP	be_firm.IMP.2PL.M	at	prayer.GEN.CS-2PL.M

‘He [Muḥammad] gave them a sign to continue with their prayer.’

("He gave them a sign that be firm (!) at your prayer.")

(*Sīra Nabawīya*, cf. Brünnow and A. Fischer [2008, p. 62], Arabic)

Intuitively, one would expect the Arabic subjunctive in the subordinate clauses in these cases, i.e. *ʾan yaṣnaʿa* 'that he fabricate(s)' (13), *ʾan ʾāḫuḏa* 'that I take' (15), *ʾan yaruddū* 'that they return' (16), and *ʾan yaṯbutū* 'that they be firm' (17).

Badawi, Carter & Gully (2004, p. 595f.) also report the phenomenon for higher registers of Modern (Standard) Written Arabic "when a verb in the sense of 'to tell' or related meanings is involved", e.g. in the following case (18):

(18) Syntactically embedded imperatives in Modern (Standard) Written Arabic

kutiba	ʿalā	Ǧibāhi	l-ʾaḥyāʾi	ʾani
write.PF.PASS.3SG.M	upon	forehead.PL.GEN.CS	DEF-living.PL.GEN	COMP

ṣbirū	wa-taṣābarū
be_steadfast.IMP.PL.M	CONJ-be_ forebearing.IMP.PL.M

'it was written on the foreheads of the living that they should be steadfast and forebearing' ("… that be steadfast and forebearing!").

The anonymous reviewer recommends to establish evidence for wh-movement out of the embedded clause as well as quantifier-variable binding into the embedded clause as firm criteria for syntactic embedding, but I argue that the Arabic examples constitute no less reasonable cases of embedding imperatives than the previously cited Germanic and Slovenian examples (for which this status seems to be less contested). In principle, the categories "mixed/partial/hybrid quotations" (hitherto not in use in Semitic linguistics, with the possible exception of Goldenberg 1991 (see following paragraph), could also be invoked in the discussion of such examples. After all, the Arabic examples above are all syntactically "marked" and possibly less standard than, e.g. the Slovenian examples.

[3]   CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing examples, the universal validity of the distinction between the categories "direct" and" indirect" (or "reported") speech has to be questioned, at least in a Semitic context. Indeed, some authors openly declare indirect or reported speech as "un-Semitic" (e.g. Goldenberg 2012, p. 3, or Gzella 2004, p. 83, the latter in an exaggerated way). Goldenberg (1991, p. 84) summarizes the quite complex situation as follows:

In the common form of direct speech, the fact that the quotation would normally not be presented by a conjunction "that", i.e. not formed into a substantival clause, is prima facie not surprising"; it would no longer be a literal quotation if it were syntactically or otherwise transposed. And yet, "that" beginning direct speech is not unknown in various languages. The existence of apparently subordinate direct speech (which has been termed, as already mentioned above, "style direct lié"), besides indirect speech that is place in 'in-

> *cluded position' asyndetically, will show even more convincingly that the as-*
> *sumed proportional opposition*
>
> *direct speech : indirect speech = asyndeton indep.. : "that"-clause*
>
> *is far from being universal; or should the variety of relations between deictic*
> *marking and syntactic frame require revised definitions of what direct and in-*
> *direct speech really are.*

Again, one should keep the initially formulated caveat in mind to the effect that our intuition in the European target language should not determine our statements regarding the source language.

Kaufmann (2014) argues that a comparable syntactic variability regarding the use or non-use of a complementizer, resulting in a (for German canonical) verb-final embedded clause (19a) and a verb-second embedded clause (19b), also exists in colloquial (as opposed to normative) German. Consider the following data (19a/b).

(19)   Embedded subordinate clauses in normative and colloquial German

(19a) Normative

Hans	*glaubt,*	*[[c dass]*	*ich*	*müde*	*bin]*
Hans	believe.IPFV.3SG	COMP	1SG	tired	be.IPFV.1SG

(19b) Colloquial

'Hans believes that I am tired.'

Hans	*glaubt,*	*[ich [c*	*bin]*	*müde]*
Hans	believe.IPFV.3SG	1SG	be.IPFV.1SG	tired

'Hans believes that I am tired.'

Clearly, no confusion as to the referents arises in either (16a) or (16b). This is in marked contrast to examples such as *John$_i$ said that I$_j$ am here.* In this example, the subordinating complementizer *that* clearly entails two different referents, while *John$_i$ said I$_{i/j}$ am here* would be ambivalent, i.e. "I" could refer to John himself or to someone else.

In a "naïve" non-formal approach, I propose that the issue of shifting indexicals in Semitic and elsewhere can simply be attributed to the syntactical embedding of direct speech in a way, where the analytical target language English would be expected to make use of a complementizer or at least punctuation (colon; quotation marks) that marks the embedding (frequently referred to as "European perspective" in this paper). As we have seen, Slovenian and Korean do require the use of such complementizers, and in Hebrew and Arabic they may occur. The interesting point is that, at least in the case of embedded imperatives, regular shifting of indexicals takes place. This is

essentially where our confusion or our being puzzled by the Semitic data stems from.

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