On the consequences of being small: Imperatives in Spanish[*]

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1.　　The Types of Imperatives in Spanish

The imperative paradigm in Spanish includes, traditionally, just two forms: one for the 2nd person singular and one for the 2nd person plural, (1). These are the only two forms that constitute what has traditionally been called the imperative mood.

(1)　a. ¡ Cierra　　　las ventanas!
　　　　close.2.sg.Imp the windows
　　　　'Close the windows!'

　　　b. ¡ Cerrad　　　las ventanas!
　　　　close.2.pl.Imp the windows
　　　　'Close the windows!'

In (1a) we see the form for the second person singular, and in (1b) we find the second person plural. However, bare forms[1] are also possible, (2).

(2)　¡ Cerrar　las ventana!
　　　close.Inf the windows
　　　'Close the windows!

Sentences like (2) have been characterized as regular infinitival clauses, and it has been claimed that they are understood as imperatives because of pragmatic reasoning (Han 2000). However, my proposal is that sentences like (2) are true imperatives, just like the examples in (1). The reasons for thinking that sentences like (2) are true imperatives, and

[1]What I am calling bare forms correspond to infinitival verb forms in Spanish. However, because I am making a distinction between infinitival clauses and what is usually said about them in terms of semantics and syntax, versus imperatives with verbs in infinitival forms, I am going to refer to the latter as *bare form imperatives* with the purpose of avoiding confusion.

not regular infinitival clauses, have to do with their interpretations.

On the one hand, regular infinitival clauses in Spanish have a generic interpretation, which is not available to bare form imperatives (compare (3a) and (3b)). On the other hand, regular infinitival clauses can also be found in embedded contexts, in which the embedded subject is controlled. Again, this is not an option for bare form imperatives.

(3)   a.   Cerrar   la puerta ayuda a guardar el   calor.
             PRO close.Inf the door   helps to keep   the warmth
             'To close the door helps keeping the warmth'

      b. ¡ Cerrar   la puerta!
            close.Inf the door
          'Close the door!'

One could imagine that in bare form imperatives, there is a covert predicate embedding a regular infinitival clause like the overt predicate in (4).

(4)   ¡ Ordeno   cerrar   la puerta!
        order.1.sg close.Inf the door
      'I order to close the door'

And one could imagine that this option could allow us to rescue an analysis of (2) as a regular infinitival embedded under a covert predicate. However, notice that the interpretation of (4) is generic ('I order that the door be closed by whoever in the entire world'), and this is not what we get with bare form imperatives like (2). There is a further difference between bare form imperatives and infinitives embedded under an *order* type predicate: as (5a) shows, subjects can appear with infinitives embedded under *order*, but they cannot appear in bare form imperatives, (5b).

(5)   a. Juan ordenó comprar tú   las bebidas y   nosotros la comida
          Juan ordered buy.Inf you the drinks   and we   the food
          'Juan ordered that you buy the drinks and we buy the food'

      b. *¡ Comprar tú   las bebidas!
            buy.Inf   you the drinks

As these arguments show, bare form imperatives are not regular infinitival clauses (not even if we consider that they are embedded under a silent *order* predicate). For this reason, I will argue that bare form imperatives are real imperatives. They should be given an analysis like imperatives with imperative marking. However, they are different in some respects from imperatives with imperative marking.[2]

In this paper I propose a homogeneous analysis for bare form imperatives and imperatives with imperative marking. In §2 I will argue that imperatives lack a Tense and

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[2]An interpreted difference between inflectional and bare form imperatives is that in imperatives with bare forms the addressee is 'non-specific'. That is, it is not important for the speaker who fulfills the command, as long as the command is fulfilled. For more details see Biezma (2007a).

Aspect projection, thus, the forms in (1) are limited in size disallowing negation. When negation appears the structures is big and the overall picture changes. This is expected to have consequences with respect to the semantics. They will be reviewed in §3.

2. Syntax

There are two kind of proposals in the literature concerning the structure of imperatives. On the one hand we have what I will call 'CP proposals', and on the other hand 'VP proposals'. I will take a view similar to this one: I will propose that imperatives in Spanish are *v*Ps.

1. CP proposals

Several proposals that wish to account for imperatives in Spanish (Rivero & Terzi (1995) and Han (2000)) assume that imperatives in Spanish are CPs. The analysis proposed by these authors is based on the idea that in these constructions verbs must move to C^0 to get imperative mood marking. In this position we find the imperative operator Imp.[3] According to Han, from this it follows that it is not possible to have negation with verbs having imperative morphology. This is because negation, in languages like Spanish, is assumed to be above TP and to function like a clitic. Because of its clitic-like status, it moves with the verb to C^0 and takes scope over the verb, which has assumed the role of the the imperative operator when moving to C^0.

(6)

[Han(2000 : 47)]
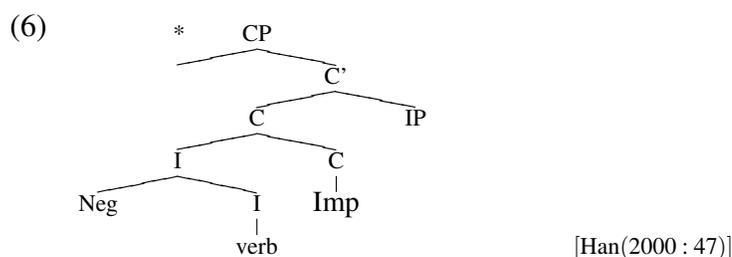
If we negate the imperative verb in (6), the directive force would end up being negated, and that would result in an incoherent interpretation.[4] Under Han's account, the reason negation can appear with verbs in subjunctive and infinitival form is that in those constructions the verb does not move to C^0. The source of force in these cases is pragmatic. We will see in §2.1 that this proposal is inferior to the proposal presented in this paper in which imperatives in Spanish are just *v*Ps.

2. vP proposals

Zanuttini (1997) argues that in Romance languages imperatives have very poor morphology, and that there is no morphological evidence that they are specified for tense, aspect or mood. Pirvulescu and Roberge (2000), extend this proposal to imperative constructions

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[3]Han (1999) proposes that the Imp operator is a modal in the sense of Kratzer (1991). In Han's account, this modal has an epistemic modal base and a deontic ordering source.

[4]It is possible to order somebody not to do something, but this is not the same thing as 'not ordering' them to do something, which is what happens if the directive feature in C^0 is under the scope of negation as in configurations like (6).

in Romanian, claiming that imperatives are VPs. Along the same lines, I propose that imperatives in Spanish are just vPs. The structure I propose for (1) and (2) is in (7).

(7)

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            F              vP
                    pro           v̄
                        v               VP
                    v       Imp / Inf   cerrar la puerta
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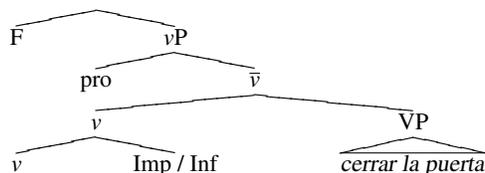
In (7), I propose that Imp and Inf simply make reference to the morphology on the verb (imperative and bare morphology). The reduced structure is embedded directly under the head responsible for the imperative interpretation represented here by F for force.[5] Such a proposal would predict that the structure cannot be embedded by other predicates. Imperatives would thus be similar to participles and gerunds, analyzed as structures embedded by an operator whose effect is reflected in the verbal morphology.[6] We need, however, more syntactic arguments to support the claim that imperatives in Spanish are just vPs. I provide these arguments in the next section.

2.1   Arguments for vP-sized Spanish imperatives

In this section we will see that imperatives in Spanish do not have auxiliary verbs, overt subjects, discourse particles, and do not admit topicalization. If the syntax of imperatives in Spanish included a Tense and an Aspect projection, we would expect them to allow all those phenomena. But they don't.

1. No auxiliary verbs
Regular verb forms in Spanish usually encode person, number, tense and aspect. However I will argue that imperative morphology, indicated by Imp/Inf in (7), is simply 'pure' person agreement, 2nd person singular or plural / default 3rd person, without tense and aspect. If imperatives in Spanish had a Tense and an Aspect projection, we would expect them to allow auxiliary verbs. However, Spanish imperative structures do not admit auxiliary verbs. The imperative form for the auxiliary does not even exist in Spanish. However, according to the verbal paradigm, if they were to exist, they would be *ha* for the second person singular and *habed* for the second person plural, (8).[7]

(8)   *¡ Ha   /Habed   cerrado la   puerta (cuando yo venga   )!
          have.2.sg.Imp(?) /have.2.pl.Imp(?) closed   the door   when   I   get back

The absence of auxiliary verbs, as indicated in (8), can be used as evidence for the absence of an aspect projection (under the standard hypothesis that auxiliary verbs need such a projection to show up). If impeatives were as big as CPs, the absence of auxiliary verbs would

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[5]Rizzi (1997) proposes that Force has its own projection located at the top of the structure. I take that view here.

[6]It is argued in Biezma (2007a) that the crucial difference between the two types of imperatives has to do with the interpretation of the pronoun in the specifier of vP.

[7]Bosque (1980) argues that *Haber llegado antes* (have.Aux.Inf arrived earlier) are imperatives. However, see Biezma (2008) for arguments against that proposal.

be unexplained. However, in my small analysis, this is an expected consequence.[8]

2. *No overt subjects*

Imperatives in Spanish cannot have overt subjects, (9).[9]

(9)   a. ¡ (*Tú) calla   !   b. ¡ (*Vosotros) callad   !
        (you)   shut up.2.sg.Imp   (you)   shut up.2.pl.Imp
        'Shut up!'   'Shut up!'

The fact that imperatives in Spanish do not have overt subjects is a strong argument in favor of our proposal about imperatives being just *v*Ps. That is, if imperatives were CPs, with tense and aspect projections, why wouldn't we have overt subjects? Overt subjects in Spanish are claimed to move to SpecTP for checking purposes. If imperatives had a structure similar to that of regular clauses and subjects were in SpecTP position, we would expect them to be spelled out. The fact that imperatives in Spanish do not allow overt subjects follows nicely from a proposal that characterizes these structures as just *v*Ps. A simple explanation could be that there is no TP projection and therefore there is no nominative case assigner.

3. *No discourse particles*

In Spanish, the verb in imperatives can never co-exists with discourse particles: The verb cannot precede them,(10a), or follow them, (10b).

(10)   a. *¡ Cierra   por supuesto /por lo tanto la   puerta !
        close.2.sg.Imp of course   /therefore   the door

      b. *¡ Por supuesto /por lo tanto cierra   la   puerta !
        of course   /therefore   close.2.sg.Imp the door

If we assume that discourse particles are in the CP domain, and that Spanish imperatives are CPs, it is hard to explain why we do not have discourse particles with imperatives in this language.[10] Again, the proposal that imperatives in Spanish are just *v*Ps gives us an explanation of why they cannot include discourse particles: they lack the projections where those particles are hosted.

4. *No topicalization*

If Spanish imperatives had a CP structure we would expect topicalization to be possible. However, as (11b) shows, topicalization is impossible with imperatives in this language. Topicalization is possible in languages like English, (11a), where imperatives are big.

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[8]In contrast, English imperatives, for example, allow auxiliary verbs (*For heaven's sake have prepared the thing in advance!* [Potsdam 1995]), and imperatives in English are expected to be big.

[9]For English, Potsdam (1995) argues against several theories that claim that English imperatives are VPs with an overt subject occupying a VP internal position. Spanish imperatives follows Potsdam predictions for imperatives that lack structure above VP.

[10]There is not much work on formal linguistics concerning discourse particles in Spanish. There is a lot of work in English and German. It seems totally reasonable to assume that discourse particles in Spanish are also located high in the structure, however, a closer look at these elements is necessary.

(11)   a. Of your mother, take good care!

        b. *¡ De tu   madre, cuida   mucho!
               of your mother take care a lot

The example in (11b) shows that topicalization is impossible in imperatives in Spanish. However, topicalization is possible in regular sentences in Spanish, (12).

(12)   a. Le   das   el libro a Juan
               le.cl give.2.sg.pres.Ind the book to Juan
               'Give the book to Juan'

        b. A Juan le   das   el libro
               to Juan le.cl give.2.sg.pres.Ind the book
               'Give the book to Juan'

In regular sentences, adjunction to the TP is possible. If we assume that imperatives have a big structure, it is hard to explain why it is disallowed. The theory that imperatives in Spanish are *v*Ps provides a simple explanation for the impossibility of topicalization in these constructions. There is not TP adjunction because there is no TP. Imperatives lack the necessary projections for topicalization to take place.

        To summarize, there is no evidence in favor of a structure bigger than *v*P for imperatives in Spanish. On the contrary, there are arguments to claim that imperatives in Spanish lack any projection above *v*P. In the next section I will argue that imperatives with negation have a larger structure.

2.2   Negation in Spanish imperatives

In Spanish, verbs with imperative morphology cannot co-occur with negation, (13), either preceding the verb, (13a), or following it, (13b).

(13)   a. *¡ No cierra   la puerta !
               neg close.2.sg.Imp the door

        b. *¡ Cierra   no la puerta !
               close.2.sg.Imp neg the door

With negative commands, the verb form in Spanish can never be imperative. The subjunctive or the infinitival is called upon instead.

(14)   ¡ No cierres   /cerréis   la puerta !
            neg close.2.sg.pres.Subj /close.2.pl.pres.Subj the door
        'Don't close the door!'

The explanation proposed in this paper for the absence of negation in imperative marked imperatives is that it is anomalous for negation to combine with *v*P. This is not a syntactic problem, however. Instead, as will be shown later, it is semantically anomalous to have a negation operating on the denotation of *v*P. This will be explained in §3.4.

When commands require negation, (14), there is a larger structure. The proposed structure is in (15). This structure has an aspect projection and a tense projection.

(15) TP

       T̄

    Neg   AspP

      Perf   *v*P
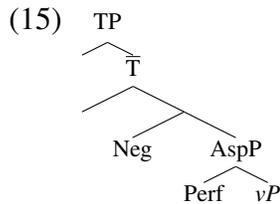
We saw in the previous sections that the lack of structure in imperatives in Spanish explained the lack of auxiliary verbs in imperatives, the impossibility of having topicalization, and now the lack of negation with imperative morphology. However, if negation requires a larger structure, we would expect that phenomena that were not possible before, would be possible here. That is, with a larger structure we should be able to find auxiliary verbs, and topicalization. And we do.

We saw that the absence of an aspect projection explained the absence of auxiliary verbs. However, with negation, and more structure, auxiliary verbs can now appear, (16).

(16) ¡ No hayas   lavado los platos cuando vuelva   !
        neg have.2.sg.pr.Subj clean   the dishes when   get back.1.sg.pr.Subj
      'Have not done the dishes when I get back!'

In (16), the presence of an auxiliary verb is allowed, contrary to what happened in (8) above.

Recall that imperatives without negation did not allow topicalization. With a larger structure we would expect it be possible. And this is what we see in (17).

(17) ¡ A tu   madre no le   levantes la voz !
        to your mother neg le.cl raise   the voice
      'To your mother, do not raise your voice!'

Given the possibility of topicalization with negation, we have to assume that we have a larger structure than with imperatives without negation.

2.3   Conclusion

In this section I have defended the idea that imperatives in Spanish are just *v*Ps. I have presented syntactic arguments supporting this hypothesis including the impossibility of having auxiliary verbs, and topicalizing, and the impossibility of having discourse particles and negation.[11] I have also argued that when negation appears, the structure is big, and all those phenomena can take place now. [12]

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[11]There seems to be variation amongst languages. For example, English and German imperatives are big, and all those syntactic elements that are impossible in imperatives in Spanish are possible in English and German. I cannot offer the details for space reasons.

[12]A question remains. Why does negation allow the structure to grow but to have an auxiliary verb is not enough reason to make it bigger? Spanish lacks imperative forms for auxiliaries. Also, indicative mood

3.   Some aspects of the semantics

In this section I investigate some semantic consequences of the reduced structure for imperatives proposed above. I will end up with a proposal according to which (18a) has the semantics summarized in (18b)[13].

(18)   a.   ¡ Cierra   la   puerta ahora !
                close.2.sg.Imp the door   now

                'Close the door now!'

        b.

$\lambda e.Q(e)$	(P.C.)
$\lambda e.\tau(e){\subseteq}speech\ time$	
$\lambda x\lambda eP(e){\wedge}Agent(x)(e)$	(F.A.)
$\lambda x\lambda eAgent(x)(e)$	
$\lambda eP(e)$	(E.I.)
$[\![\textbf{close}]\!] = \lambda x\lambda e[close(x)(e)]$ 'e is a closing event of x'	

Different aspects of (18b) will be discussed in the following sections. My objective in this section is to show some of the consequences of the syntactic analysis proposed earlier, and to discuss of some topics (times, agents, negation) that are needed to develop a full theory of imperatives.

I am adopting a neo-Davidsonian framework in which verbs describe events or states. Verb predicates have just one argument, the event argument. The so-called 'external arguments', in particular the agent argument, are associated with their verbs via secondary predicates that denote general thematic relations and, thus, these arguments are not true arguments of their verbs (Kratzer 1996, 2002).

3.1   Imp

I have argued against an analysis according to which imperative morphology reflects an Imp operator in C. Instead, I claim that verbal morphology reflects syntactic agreement with the agent located in the specifier of vP. Verbal morphology points to the features of the pronoun found in [Spec, vP]. It is not itself interpretable (the idea that verbal morphology is not interpretable is found in the literature (Benett 1974, Chierchia 1998) and I adopt this view here).

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forms are not found in imperative constructions. The only possibility would be a subjunctive form. However this is not possible either. Subjunctive forms are not allowed in Spanish out of embedded contexts. This morphology needs some licensing. When negation appears, subjunctive seems to get that licensing. *Prima facie*, this could be the answer to our question. However this answer does not explain what happens with bare form imperatives, since infinitival morphology does not require any licensing, therefore, this answer is not complete and something else needs to be said.

[13]P.C. stands for *predicate conjunction*, F.A. stands for *functional application*, and E.I. stands for *event identification*.

We can distinguish between two possibilities with respect to the verbal morphology in imperatives. One possibility is to think that this morphology is special and needs licensing, maybe by F(orce). The position that morphology points to a higher operator is not very different from proposals like Han's (1999, 2000), where imperative morphology corresponds to a modal located above the clause. From this point of view, verbal morphology in imperatives indicates agreement with the subject, in person and number and agreement with a force head. On the other hand, a different way of thinking about imperative morphology is to claim that it does not need to be licensed by F. Imperative morphology is only agreement with the agent (person and number agreement). Something more would need to be said given that we do not see imperative morphology in non-imperative contexts. But maybe what is special about imperative morphology is that it lacks the tense and aspect features usually found in regular clauses.[14]

At this point I do not have evidence that favors one approach over the other, and I leave the matter open.

3.2 The functional projection F

This paper will take for granted the presence of imperative force/modality operating on vP.[15] There are various proposals available in the literature regarding the semantics of imperative force, with different approaches to the subject. Han (1999) has proposed a modal-based account of imperatives, whereas Portner (2004, 2006) has a more pragmatic view. What I have to say does not distinguish amongst these approaches. However, were we to take Portner's approach or Han's approach, we would need to modify them in order to allow them to interact with the reduced clauses proposed in §2.

3.3 Adverbial restrictions

Intuitively, to fulfill an order means to do what is requested and to do it at a contextually relevant time. That is, if there is so much noise in the hall that I cannot focus on my paper, and I order you to close the door, (19), it is not ok if you do it at 11 pm when the department is empty and there is no noise at all. In cases like this, one understands that there is an implicit **now**. In the same way, if tonight I want you to pay the bills tomorrow, otherwise the phone will be disconnected, that restriction will also be implicit in ¡*Paga las cuentas (mañana)*! ('Pay the bills (tomorrow)!') and should be recoverable from context. Temporal modifiers can be implicit or explicit ((19) is also grammatical with an overt **now**).

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[14]Verbal morphology in Spanish regular clauses is an amalgam of person, number, tense and aspect. In imperatives it is just person and number (at most). Given that there are no contexts other than imperatives where person and number are expected to appear on their own, it is hard to find independent supporting evidence for this view.

[15]The more ambitious view would be to claim that Force operates on tenseless clauses in general, and not just vPs. This would mean that imperative Force would operate on negative commands with infinitivals and subjunctives. While this is the more interesting view, it cannot be supported fully in this paper since it would required showing that the semantics of infinitivals and subjunctives themselves cannot derive the imperative interpretation. This investigation lies outside the scope of this paper.

(19) ¡ Cierra   la puerta (ahora) !
      close.2.sg.Imp the door   (now)
      'Close the door (now)!'

Examples like (20) show that covert restrictions can be more complex and may involve quantifying over instances:

(20) <u>Scenario</u>: I am going on a trip. I am leaving my son in charge of the plants at home.
   a. ¡ Riega   las plantas!
       water.2.sg.Imp the plants
       'Water the plants!'

   The utterance of (20a) does not have an implicit **now** or **tomorrow**. It does not mean that my son has to water the plants every day at 3:00 pm. It means that he has to water the plants when necessary (in order for them not to die). It does not mean that he has to do that at a specific time, it has to be done on time for them to live. If he just waters the plants an hour before I get back, but the plants are already dead, then, he would have disobeyed.

   What is important is that the structure proposed here allows temporal modifiers to show up.[16] Temporal modifiers are allowed in the structure in (18b) in a position above *v*P (where **now** is located in the example). Let's take (19) with an overt **now** as an example. The temporal location expressed in this imperative (*ahora*,'now') can be explained with a (Davidson style) temporal adverb, which enters the composition via predicate conjunction with *v*P as shown in the structure in (18b). A possible denotation for **now** is in (21), where τ is a function that maps an event to its running time.

(21) $[\![\textbf{now}]\!] = \lambda e.\tau(e) \subseteq speech\ time$

It is possible to think that imperatives without an overt temporal or manner modifier have a covert one in the structure that enters the derivation just like the overt ones. However, it is not necessary to assume that there are implicit temporal or manner modifiers represented in the structure. It could also be the case that one understands those restrictions via pragmatic reasoning. I leave it open here. However, if they are to appear, there is no need to assume a bigger structure than a *v*P.

3.4   Interaction with negation

In this section I will discuss briefly the appearance of negation in imperatives. A welcome consequence of a reduced syntactic analysis is that negation is predicted not to be possible in simple imperatives in Spanish. This follows from an event predicates analysis of imperatives: I take it that although negation can modify properties, it does not modify properties of events. The example in (22a), for instance, where negation takes scope over the *v*P, with the denotation in (22b) is anomalous:

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[16]Manner adverbs can also appear in imperatives. There is no problem in assuming that manner adverbs enter the derivation at the level of VP, thus, there is no problem with respect to the size of imperatives discussed above.

(22) a. *¡ No cierra   la puerta ahora !
          neg close.2.sg.Imp the door   now

   b. $\neg(\lambda e.\ close(thedoor)(e) \wedge Agent(2^{nd}, sg)(e) \wedge \tau(e) \subseteq speech\ time) =$
       $\lambda e.\ \neg\ close(thedoor)(e) \wedge Agent(2^{nd}, sg)(e) \wedge \tau(e) \subseteq speech\ time$

In (22b), negation would result in a property of events which would be true of an event *if
it is not an event of closing of the door now by the addressee*, (22b), and almost any event
would have these characteristics. With this proposal for the interpretation of the semantics
of negative commands, a negative command requests that a person perform some action
other than the closing of the door. This is not incompatible with the person also closing the
door. Clearly, this cannot be the interpretation of negative commands.[17]

   The proposed analysis captures the intuition that imperatives are not really true or
false. Under a reduced analysis, force in imperatives acts upon properties of events. Prop-
erties of events are not (directly) related to the topic situation, introduced in the syntax
above TP (Kratzer 2004). Since the topic situation does not enters the derivation, the event
does not get anchored to the actual world. This way, no claim is made with respect to the
event in the actual world and as a result, imperatives are not assertoric.

   We have seen that the presence of negation goes together with larger structures,
(15). The analysis in (15) includes an Aspect projection. We can take (23) as its translation.

(23) Tr(*Perfective*)$= \lambda p.\lambda s.\exists e[e \leq s \wedge p(e)]$ [Kratzer, p.c.]

The aspect projection existentially quantifies over events and introduces properties of situ-
ations. Negation is right above aspect and acts upon the property of situations taking scope
over the existential quantifier in aspect, (24) (where p is the denotation of vP).[18]

(24) $\lambda s.\neg \exists e[e \leq s \wedge p(e)]$

As a result of the interaction of negation with a property of situations we get a set of
situations in which there is no p-event. That is, if $\lambda e.\ p(e)$ is a property of events true of
events that are events of closing the door by you, the interaction with aspect and negation
gives as result a set of situations not containing such an event. And this is a welcome result:

(25) a. ¡ No cierres   la puerta!
           neg close.2.sg.Subj the door

       'Don't close the door!'

   b. $\lambda s.\neg \exists e[e \leq s \wedge (close\ the\ door)(e)]$

Now, what is requested by a negative command is that the speaker should ensure that there
not exist an event of closing the door. And this means that the agent must abstain from
any event of closing the door (notice the contrast with the interpretation obtained when
negation acts directly on properties of events).

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[17]This topic could be discussed further as it is unclear what it would mean to have negation at the
level of events, or what would mean to be the agent of a negative event.

[18]This ideas was first suggested to me by Kyle Johnson, p.c.

4. Conclusion

I have discussed some aspects of the syntax and semantics of imperatives in Spanish. I have provided arguments in favor of a *v*P analysis for Spanish imperatives. This syntactic characterization has important consequences for the semantics of this construction, since *v*Ps denote properties of events. I have shown how an event property analysis can help make sense of implicit temporal adverbials and the need for larger structures when negation appears in imperatives.

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