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**IMPERATIVE AS CONDITIONAL:  
FROM CONSTRUCTIONAL TO COMPOSITIONAL SEMANTICS**

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*Abstract*

*The topic of constructional inheritance is discussed by means of a detailed qualitative analysis of the conditional imperative construction in Dutch and in Russian. It is argued that the two distinctive features of this construction, as compared with other conditional constructions such as explicit ‘if’ conditionals, can be motivated in a compositional approach: (i) from the directive imperative construction, the conditional use inherits intersubjective meaning; (ii) from the conditional paratactic construction, it inherits the pragmatic (context-dependent) feature that the situation in the protasis immediately leads to the situation in the apodosis. As such, we show that a compositional analysis, defined as constructional inheritance, is fruitful in motivating both the semantics and the pragmatics of complex constructions.*

*Key words:* conditional, imperative, conjunction, constructions, compositionality, Russian, Dutch

## 1. Introduction

In various languages, imperative verb forms can be used to present a condition. Examples from English that have been discussed in the literature (e.g. by Bolinger 1977; Davies 1986; and Clark 1993) include (1a) and (1b).

- (1) (a) *Break that vase and I will break your neck.*  
(b) *Catch the flu and you can be ill for weeks.*

Such cases constitute a challenge for a coherent semantic description of the imperative since it is not immediately obvious how the conditional use of the form is related to its more typical directive use: in (1a) and (1b), the speaker is obviously not trying to get the addressee to break the vase or catch the flu. Rather, the utterances can be paraphrased using *if*-clauses and that is why these imperatives are referred to as *conditional* imperatives.

Recent work on conditional imperatives in English (in particular Stefanowitsch 2003; Takahashi 2004, 2006; Dancygier and Sweetser 2005), has treated examples such as (1a) and (1b) as instantiations of a more general conditional *and*-construction. This construction was already discussed in some detail by Culicover and Jackendoff (1997), who provided examples such as (2).

- (2) *You drink one more can of beer and I am leaving.*

Since both the first clause in (2) and in (1a)-(1b) are interpreted as providing a condition, it is assumed that in either case the conditional interpretation is inherited from a more general coordinate *and*-construction – that, for instance, also allows for bare nominal phrases in the

slot for the protasis (*one more can of beer and I am leaving!*). Existing accounts, however, leave unanswered the question what exactly sets the conditional imperative apart from other conditional constructions – specifically those with an explicit conditional conjunction such as English *if*. In this paper, we will argue that not only the conditional meaning but also the more specific semantics of the conditional imperative construction can be fully motivated in terms of constructional inheritance. (For a detailed discussion of constructional inheritance as motivation, see especially Goldberg 1995: Chapter 3.)

As Dancygier and Sweetser (2005: 266) remarked, “these structures may (...) be more motivated than a language-specific analysis would suggest” and therefore we are introducing other languages besides English in the discussion about the conditional imperative. We will mainly present data from Dutch and Russian.<sup>1</sup> Since these languages are not closely related to each other, they may give insight into both the language specific and the common cross-linguistic features of the construction.

After having presented the basic facts about the conditional imperative in Dutch and in Russian (section 2), we will deal with the two parent constructions of the conditional imperative construction: the imperative and conditional parataxis, respectively. Thus, in section 3 we are concerned with the question what exactly the conditional imperative construction inherits from the more general imperative construction. We argue that the imperative in the conditional construction still has directive meaning but that this may be weakened to a more subtle kind of hearer-directedness or intersubjectivity. In section 4, we address the contribution of the abstract conditional parataxis construction to the conditional imperative. We show that, in addition to conditional meaning, the conditional imperative inherits from its second parent construction the pragmatic feature that just the slightest occurrence of the situation in the protasis immediately leads to the situation of the apodosis.

We thus provide a qualitative analysis of the conditional imperative in Dutch and Russian that focuses primarily on the *compositional* features of the construction, rather than on its more local *constructional* features. Indeed, the general conclusion of our analysis is that the main features of the conditional imperative can be linked to its two parent constructions in a straightforward manner. This shows that even if one considers the conditional imperative to be a separate construction, constructional semantics can still benefit significantly from a more traditional compositional approach.

## 2. The conditional imperative in Dutch and Russian<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 Imperatives and conditional imperatives in Dutch

The standard example from the literature of a conditional imperative in Dutch is cited in (3); (4) presents a recent example from a newspaper.

- (3) *Hang de was buiten en het gaat regenen.*

hang-IMP the laundry outside and it goes rain

‘Hang the laundry outside, and it will start raining’/‘As soon as you hang the laundry to dry outside, [you’ll see] it will start raining’

(Proeme 1984: 246)

- (4) *Leen hem 20.000 Euro uit en u zult het niet terug krijgen.*

lend-IMP him 20,000 euro out and you will it not get.back

‘Lend him 20,000 euros, and you won’t get it back’.

(*Trouw*, July 14th, 2007)

In both examples, the verb form in the first part of the sentence can be characterized as an imperative. There is no specialized morphological form for the imperative in Dutch – the form of the verb equals that of the first person indicative – but on the basis of the clause-initial position of the verb and the lack of an explicit subject such forms are considered imperative (see e.g. De Haan 1986). However, in these sentences, the typical directive meaning of the imperative is clearly absent: the speaker does not wish the imperative situation to be realized by the addressee, because the result would be undesirable. This is not a necessary prerequisite for the conditional use of the imperative, as is illustrated by (5), where getting rid of fruit flies is precisely the effect aimed for.

- (5) *Last van fruitvliegjes? Zet een glaasje port neer en je*  
trouble of fruit.flies? put-IMP a glas port down and your-SG  
*vliegjes zijn weg.*  
flies are gone  
‘Bothered by fruit flies? Put down a glass of port and your flies will be gone’.  
([http://www.bepster.com/\\_nl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=377&Itemid=1005](http://www.bepster.com/_nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=377&Itemid=1005))

Whereas the subject of the conditional imperative may specifically be the addressee, as in (4), it may also have a generic character, indicating that the conditional relation applies to everyone. In these cases, the imperative situation gets an iterative interpretation, implying that the conditional relation applies every time the imperative situation is realized; a paraphrase of this reading is: ‘If you do X, you can be sure of it that Y happens’. This is clearly the

preferred reading of (3) and (5) and it seems to be the more common reading of the conditional imperative construction (also in Russian, see next section).

As for the formal properties of the conditional imperative in Dutch, all of them have in common that the imperative is the first member of a construction consisting of two clauses conjoined by *en* ‘and’. A further construction-specific feature of the Dutch conditional imperative construction with *en* ‘and’ is that the subject is not explicit (see Boogaart and Trnavac 2004). As such, the construction adheres to the general properties of the imperative in Dutch. However, in directive uses of the imperative it is possible to find an explicit subject, see (6).

- (6) *Kom jij eens hier!*  
come-IMP-2SG you-SG PRT here  
‘You come over here!’

The imperative construction in (6) is usually called ‘congruerende imperatief’ (agreeing imperative) in the literature and is, by many linguists, not regarded as a real imperative (see, for instance, Proeme 1984; De Haan 1986 and Ebeling 2006), but as a regular present tense. These linguists point out that the same construction is used to convey a whole array of different meanings, many of which are clearly not directive (but, for instance, interrogative). The construction also differs from the bare imperative construction because the use of modal particles, such as *eens* (lit. ‘once’) in (6), is obligatory in most contexts (Fortuin 2004).

If an imperative is used in combination with an explicit addressee-subject and modal particles, a directive reading is triggered and a strictly conditional reading is no longer possible. However, a conditional-like reading of the imperative can occur in combination with an expressed subject in sentences with the particle cluster *maar eens* (lit. ‘just once’) in

contexts where it is clear that the addressee only has to imagine the realization of the imperative situation, as in (7).

- (7) *Ga jij maar eens een bokstraining doen, dan lig*  
 go-IMP.2SG you-SG PRT a boxing.training do, then lay-2SG  
*je na een kwartier volledig op apegapen, jongen.*  
 you-SG after a quarter fully exhausted boy  
 ‘You go and try some boxing training, my boy, you will be exhausted to the bone  
 within 15 minutes’.  
 (sport.residentie.net/sites/hakkie-tikkie/pages/Artikelen)

Imperative clauses with *maar eens* (with or without subject) differ, however, from the regular conditional imperative construction in two respects. First, the consequences of the realization of the imperative situation are often not expressed by a separate clause (see the examples provided by Proeme 1984: 246–248). Second, if the speaker wants to make the apodosis explicit, he will generally use the resumptive correlator *dan* (‘then’) in the second clause, as in (7), rather than the conjunction *en* (‘and’). In this paper, we focus on the coordinative conditional construction with *en* and we leave the ‘*maar eens* imperative construction’ illustrated in (7) out of our discussion. (The distinction between ‘*and*-coordination’ and ‘*then*-resumption’ will be briefly addressed in section 4.1.)

## 2.2 Imperatives and conditional imperatives in Russian

In Russian, there is a special morphological imperative form, the basic function of which is directive, see (8).



(8) *Podoždite!*

wait-IMP-PL

‘Wait!’ (plural addressees or honorific use)

Besides the directive function of the imperative, the Russian imperative has a large number of so-called ‘transposed’ uses which are not directive in the prototypical sense but only express directivity in a very weakened form (see Fortuin 2000; 2008), expressing such modal notions as necessity, wish and ‘unexpected action in the past’. Typical for these uses is that the imperative can occur with first and third persons. Furthermore, these uses differ from the directive uses because the plural suffix *-te* is not attached to the verb in the case of the second person plural subject, as is the case in the optative use of the imperative in (9):

(9) *Provalis’                      vy!*

get.lost-IMP-PL    you-PL

‘If only you got lost/Blast you!’

(Čexov, *Vovrage*)

The difference between the actual directive use of the imperative, and the non-directive uses is also evident in the case of the conditional imperative. In fact, Russian has two different kinds of conditional imperative constructions. First, it has a conditional imperative on a par with the one in English and Dutch, as demonstrated in (10) and (11):

(10) [A] *sprosi                      u nego, kak                      projti                      k fabrike – on tebja*

but ask-IMP-SG at him, how go to factory, he you-SG

*obol'et prezreniem s nog do golovy.*

pour.over with.contempt from feet till head

‘But ask him how to get to the factory, and he will look at you contemptuously from head to toe.’

(Strugackie, *Gadkie lebedi*)

(11) *Da voz'mite vy ljubyx pjat' stranic iz ljubogo ego*

PRT take-IMP-PL you-2PL of.any.kind five pages from any.kind of.his

*romana, i bez vsjakogo udostoverenija vy*

novel, and without any proof you-PL

*ubedites', čto imeete delo s pisatelem*

will.be.convinced-PL that have-2PL deal with writer

‘Just take five random pages from any of his novels, and you won’t need any proof to convince you that you are dealing with a writer.’

(Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*).

In this construction, the subject is 2nd person and, as in Dutch, often has a generic character, in which case the whole conditional construction gets an iterative reading (‘always if X, Y’). Different from Dutch is that it is possible to use a nominative pronoun (*ty* (singular) or *vy* (plural or distant interlocutor relationship)) to make the subject of the imperative verb explicit. This is a more general property of the Russian imperative, exhibited also in its directive use (see for example Moon 1995; Fortuin to appear). As in Dutch, the conditional directive imperative in Russian is the first member of a construction consisting of two clauses. The two clauses are conjoined by the conjunction *i* ‘and’ (or *a* ‘but’), but in Russian they may also occur without conjunction, as is illustrated by (10) above. In such sentences one can speak of ‘asyndetic coordination’. In this paper, we use the term ‘parataxis’ as a cover term for both

kinds of conditional sentences without explicit linguistic maker, i.e. coordination with ‘and’ and asyndetic coordination.<sup>3</sup>

Crucially, the imperative in (10) and (11) still shows features that are typical of the directive imperative, namely the restriction to second person and the use of the suffix *-te* in the case of the second person plural. Thus, this type of conditional imperative in Russian displays at least some directive features, which is why it is called the conditional *directive* imperative.

In the second type of conditional imperative construction of Russian, the imperative is less clearly directive. In fact, historically, it can be seen as an extended use of the optative as in (9) (see Fortuin 2000, 2008). In the case of its extended use – the conditional imperative – the feature of wish of the speaker that the imperative situation will be realized in reality is lost (Fortuin 2000; 2008). An example is given in (12).

- (12) *Sumej ja vovremja pozvonit', i vse bylo by*  
 manage-IMP-SG I on time call-INF, and everything was IRR  
*inače*  
 different  
 ‘Had I been able to call on time, everything would have been different.’  
 (*Vstreča (Dubna)*), 2003.04.09)

Many observations make manifest that the imperative in the second type of construction is less directive than in the first type. First, this conditional imperative occurs with *all* subjects (1,2,3 singular and plural; animate and non animate) and with impersonal verbs. The subject is expressed by a nominative noun or pronoun, and always follows the imperative verb. Second, whereas the imperative in this construction is also part of a paratactic (‘and’

coordinated or asyndetic) construction, it may in fact follow rather than precede the non-imperative clause (in contrast to the directive imperative, where the imperative clause is always the first clause of the construction). Third, the imperative in this construction may refer either to a hypothetical or to a counterfactual event. In the latter interpretation, the second clause contains a subjunctive form. Finally, the suffix *-te* is not attached to the imperative stem if the subject is 2nd person plural; cf. (11), with *-te*, and (13), without *-te*:

- (13) *Ne bud'*                      *vy,*                      *a drugaja –*                      *ni za čto*                      *by*                      *ne*  
not be-IMP.SG    you-PL, but other.woman, under no consideration    IRR    not  
*pošel*    *provožat'*.  
went    accompany-INF  
‘If it hadn’t been you, but some other woman, I would never have accompanied her’.  
(Zoščenko, *Ljubov'*)

These features clearly set the *conditional imperative* construction of Russian apart from the *conditional directive imperative*. Only the latter construction is similar to the Dutch – and, for that matter, English – conditional imperative and in the contrastive account of Russian and Dutch offered in this paper, we, therefore, focus on this construction.

### 3. Parent construction 1: the directive imperative

In this section, we focus on the first of the two main questions of our paper: What is the relation between directive and conditional meaning? We will argue that the conditional imperative is never *strictly* conditional since it inherits the feature of directivity from the higher-level imperative construction. Before presenting our own proposal in more detail, we

will briefly review an existing account of the conditional imperative, and of the relationship between directive and conditional meaning, and point out its shortcomings.

Based on work by De Haan (1986), the standard reference grammar of Dutch (Haeseryn et al 1997) advocates a monosemous approach to the imperative. Here it is stated that by using an imperative the speaker always presents a situation as a possible situation. The realization of this situation can be applicable in different ways: the speaker can order, request, wish for, or advise it (the ‘performance variant’) or he can simply ask the addressee to imagine that he is the agent of the situation and the possible consequences thereof (the ‘imagine variant’). Clearly, the conditional use of the imperative would be an instance of the latter type.

The idea that the directive and the conditional use of the imperative share some semantic substance like ‘potentiality’ can be found, in different terms, also in Stefanowitsch (2003: 5) and Dancygier and Sweetser (2005: 205). On this view, as has been visualized in Figure 1, the parent construction of the conditional imperative is not directive but the directive imperative is itself a more specific instantiation of the general imperative (with the general meaning ‘potentiality’), just like the conditional construction is. The fact that, in the latter construction, the meaning of potentiality is more specifically interpreted as conditionality may be ascribed to a higher-level conditional paratactic construction, to be discussed in section 4.

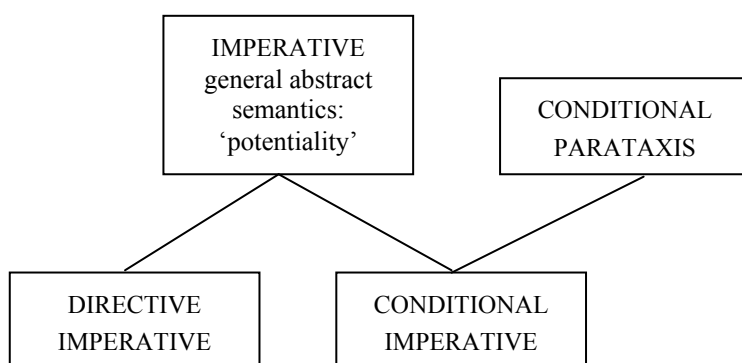
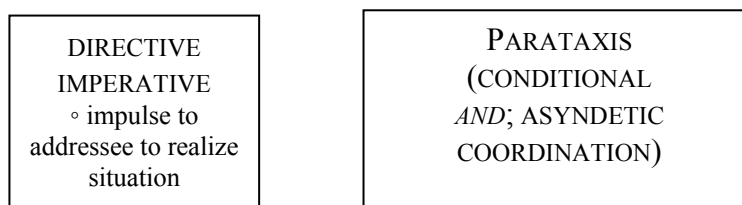


Figure 1.

The idea of monosemy is attractive mainly because of its simplicity. In constructional terms, the principle of monosemy in fact boils down to a ‘complete inheritance’ model, in which all properties of a parent construction are always inherited by all of its daughters (see Boogaart, to appear on polysemy and monosemy in construction networks). However, apart from the general problems with monosemous approaches that have been widely discussed elsewhere in the literature (e.g. by Kirsner 1991 and Geeraerts 1993), the type of analysis presented in Figure 1 is problematic specifically for the purpose of our investigation.

The concept of ‘potentiality’ is so abstract that it can be applied to different kinds of non-imperative conditional constructions as well and, therefore, it is hard to see how this notion can help us determine the specific semantics of the conditional imperative in comparison with other conditionals. More importantly, the analysis does not assume there to be a direct connection between the directive use of the imperative and its conditional use since both are considered to be specific instantiations of the more abstract concept of ‘potentiality’. Therefore, it cannot explain the remaining directive semantics of the imperative in the conditional construction, which, in our view, is precisely one of the things that makes this construction different from other conditional constructions.

Even though some features of the prototypical directive imperative may, admittedly, be considered backgrounded on the conditional use, other features are highlighted and justify an analysis of the conditional imperative as a directive one. Our own proposal may be summarized as in Figure 2.<sup>4</sup>



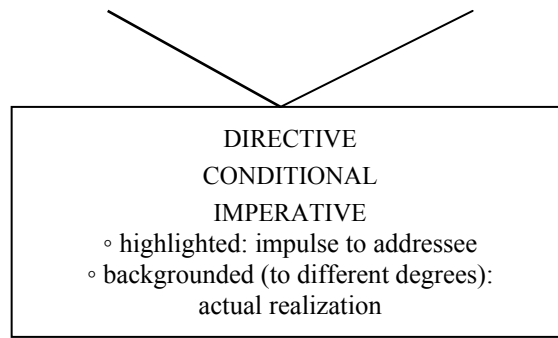


Figure 2

There are three indications that the imperative in the conditional construction is still to some extent directive.

First, the conditional directive imperative is confined to second person (typically generic) subjects.<sup>5</sup> If the directive meaning played no part in the conditional meaning, it would be expected that the construction would allow for first and third person subjects. It is true that, in Russian, there are also imperative conditional sentences with third and first person subjects but, as already mentioned in section 2.2, such sentences derive from the original optative meaning of the imperative, which occurred with first and third persons all along (see Fortuin 2000; 2008). As was already illustrated above, an important difference between these constructions is that the directive suffix *-te* occurs in the case of the conditional directive imperative ( (8)) but not in the case of the conditional imperative ( (13)).

Second, both in Dutch and in Russian the order of the clauses in the construction is always imperative first. This suggests that the meaning of condition is indeed a secondary one, since conditional clauses with an explicit marker, such as English *if*, may occur both in sentence initial and in sentence final position.<sup>6</sup>

A final constraint on the conditional reading of the imperative that may likewise be attributed to its directive semantics is that it does not allow for every kind of conditional

reading. Specifically, the construction is incompatible with pragmatic (speech act) types of conditional interpretation. The standard example offered by Dancygier and Sweetser (2005) of a speech act conditional is given in (14); as shown in (15), the use of a conditional imperative is not possible here in English – and the same is true for Dutch and Russian.

(14) *If you need any help: my name is Ann.*

(15) *\*Need any help and my name is Ann.*

However, the restriction to semantic ('content', 'predictive') conditional relations, where there is supposed to be a relationship between the events 'in the (potential) world' and not merely at the level of the speech act (as in example (14)), is not sufficient. The conditional imperative cannot express counterfactual relations. The restriction to hypothetical relations is obviously not shared by other conditional constructions such as *if*-clauses, nor by the 'non-directive' conditional imperative of Russian. The latter construction, in fact, seems to prefer counterfactual readings (Fortuin 2008) (see example (12)). Since strictly directive imperatives are by definition about (at least potentially) realizable events 'in the world', these restrictions may likewise be ascribed to the remaining directive aspect of the imperative in the conditional imperative construction.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in order to account for the directive meaning of the imperative in the construction, we assume that the conditional imperative inherits the directive feature from a higher-level directive imperative construction. The meaning of this general directive imperative construction, both in Dutch and Russian, may be defined as follows: *By using the imperative, the speaker gives an impulse to the addressee to realize the imperative situation.* Whereas in the conditional use of the imperative, the directive feature 'impulse to the addressee' is still present, the idea that actual realization of the imperative situation in the real world is at issue



may be backgrounded. This is a matter of degree: there is a continuum from directive uses to purely conditional uses. Examples such as Russian (16) and Dutch (17) are at the conditional end of the directive-conditional continuum in the sense that the feature of actual realization is completely lost:

- (16) *Tol'ko raz poterjaj doverie tovariščej, i srazu.*  
 just one.time loose-IMP-SG confidence comrades-GEN and instantly  
*okažeš'sja v polnom odinočestve.*  
 find.oneself in complete solitude  
 'Once you loose your comrades' confidence, you'll instantly find yourself to be alone.'

(Voinov, *Otvažnye*)

- (17) *Geef haar één keer het woord en je krijgt het nooit meer terug.*  
 give-IMP her once the word and you-SG get it never againback  
 'Give her the floor once, and you'll never be able to say anything yourself.'

([www.hofman-cafe.nl/theatersport.htm](http://www.hofman-cafe.nl/theatersport.htm))

However, these cases are still different from conditionals containing an explicit conditional conjunction: the directive feature of 'impulse to the addressee' is not lost completely, but present as an 'appeal for involvement', as a result of which conditional imperatives possess a kind of hearer-directedness, or intersubjectivity (in the sense of Verhagen 2005). This additional semantic-pragmatic nuance is hard to make precise, but it can be brought to light by comparing the conditional imperative in (18) with its explicitly conditional paraphrase in (19) (these examples are from Dutch, but a similar analysis can be given for Russian):

- (18) *Hang de was buiten en het gaat regenen.* (repeated (3))  
 hang-IMP the laundry outside and it goes rain  
 ‘Hang the laundry outside, and it will start raining’/‘As soon as you hang the laundry to dry outside, [you’ll see] it will start raining’
- (19) *Als je de was buiten hangt, gaat het regenen.*  
 if you-SG the laundry outside hang start it rain  
 ‘If you hang the laundry outside, it will start raining.’

Whereas conditionality is indeed part of the interpretation of both (18) and (19), the latter, explicit *if*-conditional is a rather poor paraphrase of the conditional imperative construction. The interpretation of (18) is more adequately captured as: ‘You can be sure that every time you hang out the laundry, exactly what you do not want to happen will happen: it immediately starts raining!’. The kind of expressive power typically associated with conditional imperatives, that – depending on the specific context of use – may be paraphrased as, for instance, ‘guess what!’ or ‘take notice!’, is lacking in explicit conditional constructions such as the one in (19).

Now, part of the additional semantics of the conditional imperative in sentences where the speaker does not actually want the addressee to perform the imperative situation can be connected to its directive nature. (In section 4, we will show that the other part, in particular the ‘immediacy’ of the link between X and Y, is a more general pragmatic property of conditional parataxis.) The imperative in the conditional construction inherits from its imperative parent the feature ‘impulse to the addressee’; by using an imperative, the speaker asks for special attention from the hearer (‘note this!’), who is thereby entitled to assume that there will be something literally noteworthy about the relation between X and Y, for instance because it is unexpected, as in (18).<sup>8</sup> Compared to other conditional constructions, such as

explicit ‘if’ conditionals, the conditional imperative construction clearly functions more on the level of the ‘subject of conceptualization’ (of speaker and hearer) than merely on the content level of the ‘object of conceptualization’ (Verhagen 2005): since it is clear to both speaker and addressee that actual realization in the world is not at issue – such a literally directive reading may be impossible or, in any case, irrelevant – the directive force of the imperative in the construction primarily has a rhetoric function in the interaction between speaker and hearer. By using an imperative rather than an explicit ‘if’ conditional, the speaker not only communicates a conditional relation between X and Y but, in addition, asks the addressee to *imagine* X happening and the consequences thereof, thereby strengthening the rhetoric power of his argument.

Of course, if the conditional imperative construction, as in (18), displays intersubjective, hearer-directed meaning whereas ‘if’-type conditionals, as in (19), do not, it does not automatically follow that this feature should be attributed to the imperative in the first conjunct of the construction. It could, for instance, be a general property of the more abstract conditional ‘and’ construction (to be discussed in more detail in the following section). That this is not the case can be illustrated with the perfective present (perfective future tense) in Russian, which can be used as a conditional in asyndetic sentences, or sentences with the conjunction *i* (‘and’). Such sentences clearly lack a directive meaning or weakened directive meaning with the added notion that we paraphrased as ‘guess what!’ or ‘take notice!’ above<sup>9</sup>:

- (20) *Vspomnju – pozvonju.*  
 remember-1SG-PRS-PERF call-1SG-PRS-PERF  
 ‘As soon as (If) I remember it, I’ll call you.’  
 (Griškovec, *OdnovrEmEnno*)<sup>10</sup>

The intersubjective nature of the conditional imperative construction may be regarded as the functional counterpart of the formal constraints discussed above, most notably constraints on subject choice and clause order. Since these aspects of both form and meaning of the conditional imperative are inherited from the directive imperative construction, we feel that the relationship between directive and conditional use of the imperative is more adequately captured by our representation in Figure 2 than by the existing analysis represented in Figure 1.<sup>11</sup>

#### **4. Parent construction 2: conditional parataxis**

Compared to the interpretation of other conditional constructions, the conditional imperative has two specific features. The first one of these we defined, in the preceding section, as an expressive appeal for hearer involvement which we regard as a directive feature inherited from the prototypical imperative. As for the other feature, it was noted already by Bolinger (1977: 162) that the apodosis in the English conditional imperative construction is restricted to situations that are the ‘intrinsic’ and ‘automatic’ result of the imperative situation in the protasis. This feature may be compared to what Dancygier and Sweetser (2005: 242) refer to as ‘minimal unit semantics’: the construction typically conveys that *even just the slightest* occurrence of the situation in the protasis leads to the situation of the apodosis. We regard the two notions as two sides of the same coin: if it is true just a little bit of X is needed for Y to occur, then it is also true that Y ‘automatically’ or ‘intrinsically’ follows X.

In this section, we examine more closely the ‘restrictive’ conditional feature of the conditional imperative. In 4.1, we argue that it is a pragmatic feature not just associated with

the conditional imperative construction, but with parataxis more generally and we, thus, again illustrate the importance of compositional analysis or constructional inheritance. In 4.2, we briefly address the puzzling phenomenon that in some cases it seems obligatory to express the restrictive semantics by means of separate forms whereas in other cases it is not.

#### 4.1 *Conditional parataxis and restriction*

In order to show that the restrictive feature (‘only X is needed for Y to occur’) is not merely a local, construction-specific property of the conditional imperative, we will first review cases of conditional parataxis in Russian and Dutch that do not have an imperative in their first conjunct but that are nonetheless typically restrictive in the same sense as the conditional imperative is. Afterwards, we will suggest that the restrictive conditionality is a pragmatic feature inherited down from an even more general, i.e. not necessarily conditional, paratactic construction expressing temporal sequence, and that this feature is motivated by iconicity.

Both in Russian and in Dutch, the first conjunct of the conditional ‘and’ construction may be constituted not just by an imperative but by a whole range of different syntactic forms that are strikingly similar for both languages.<sup>12</sup> First, the conditional construction may occur with an infinitive. In Russian, this may be a modal infinitive presenting a situation either as something desirable (‘if only’), as in (21), or as something that one has to do in order to trigger another situation, as in (22).

(21) *Do sveta by uložit’ vse (...), i ja by spasen.*

till dawn IRR shoot.down-INF all, andI IRR saved

‘If only I could shoot them all till dawn, I would be saved.’

(Švedova et al 1980: 642)

- (22) *Da mne tol'ko glazom morgnut', i tebja pedriloj*  
 PRT I-DAT just eye-INSTR blink-INF, and you pedophile-INSTR  
*zadelajut*  
 lock.up-3PL-FUT  
 'I just have to blink with one eye, and they'll lock you up as a pedophile.'  
 (Nekrasova, *Platit poslednij*)

Sentences like (22) always occur with restrictive modifications such as *tol'ko* 'just' and thus clearly express the feature of restriction. In sentences such as (21), expressing a wish or desire, this feature is not explicit. Still, the speaker in such utterances does seem to believe that fulfillment of his wish is the *only* thing needed for the consequences to take effect (cf. the use of *only* in English *if only*). In Dutch, the infinitive in the construction is obligatorily accompanied by such restrictive elements as *nog even* ('a bit longer') in (23). (Without it, the utterance is infelicitous, see section 4.2 for discussion.)

- (23) *Nog even wachten en we kunnen genieten van een fantastisch*  
 still a.little.while wait-INF and we can enjoy of a fantastic  
*plein met mooie speeltoestellen.*  
 square with beautiful playing.devices  
 'If we wait just a little bit longer, we will be able to enjoy a fantastic square equipped  
 with great playing devices.'  
 ([www.de-huifkar.nl/nieuws.htm](http://www.de-huifkar.nl/nieuws.htm))

Second, the construction is used with modal verbs indicating a sufficient degree such as *dostatočno* ‘enough’ in Russian or the modal verb *hoeven* (‘need’) in combination with the modal particle *maar* (‘just’) in Dutch.

- (24) *Vam dostatočno pozvonit’ i naši specialisty pomogut*  
 you-DAT enough call-INF and our specialists help-3PL-FUT  
*vam vybrat’ buket i oformit’ zakaz!*  
 you chose bouquet and make order  
 ‘You just have to call, and our specialists help you to make a choice and order.’  
 (Cvety, 2005)
- (25) *Je hoeft maar iets te vragen en het wordt meteen geregeld.*  
 you have.tojust something to ask andit becomes immediately taken.care.of  
 ‘Ask anything and it will be immediately taken care of.’  
 (www.zoover.nl/mexico/mexico/playa\_del\_carmen)

Third, the first slot of the paratactic construction in both Russian and Dutch may be occupied by non-verbal forms, specifically bare nominal phrases (see Russian (26) and Dutch (28)), or prepositional phrases (see Russian (27) and Dutch (29)). Such sentences typically occur with restrictive modifications like ‘a little’ or ‘still’ preceding the noun or the preposition.

- (26) *Nemnožko čast’ja – i čelovek srazu že ustanovitsja*  
 little happiness and man immediately PRT becomes  
*lučše, dobree.*  
 better, kinder

‘Just a little bit of happiness, and you immediately feel better, kinder.’

(Švedova et al 1980: 677)

- (27) *Ešče nemnogo k severu – i my predstanem pred Garet El’-Dženun (...).*

still little to north, and we appear before Garet El’-Dženun

‘Just a little to the north, and we will appear before the mountain Garet El’-Dženun.’

([www.kovchegterra.ru/where/hoggarteffedest.html](http://www.kovchegterra.ru/where/hoggarteffedest.html))

- (28) *Een beetje geluk, en voor het jaar 2010 weten we of we.*

a little luck and before the year 2010 know we whether we

*alleen zijn in het heelal*

alone are in the universe

‘With a little bit of luck, we’ll know whether we are alone in the universe before the year 2010.’

([noorderlicht.vpro.nl/artikelen/21442893/](http://noorderlicht.vpro.nl/artikelen/21442893/))

- (29) *[De paal viel slechts een paar centimeter voorbij Bob's oor.]*

*Iets meer naar rechts, en dit verhaal zou nooit geschreven zijn.*

somewhat more to right and this story would never written be-INF

‘[The falling pole missed Bob’s ear by no more than a few centimeters.] If it had been a little bit more to the right, this story would never have been written.’

(<http://www.qsl.net/pa0abm/ghe/ghepa0abm.htm>)

Fourth, in Russian, the conjunction *i* ‘and’ is also used in sentences with a third or first person conditional imperative (to be distinguished from the conditional *directive* imperative that we are discussing, see section 2.2), as in (30):

- (30) *Malo togo, opozdaj ja xot’ na mig, i emu by udalos’*



moreover, come.late-IMP I just on instance, and he IRR succeed-PAST  
*sdelat' èto!!!*

do that

‘Moreover, if I had been just an instance later, he would have succeeded doing that.’  
 (zhurnal.lib.ru/b/bublik\_a\_n/ist\_smert.shtml)

As described by Fortuin (2000), sentences such as these have a restrictive character as well (cf. Garde 1963: 209-210, who observes that conditional imperatives often occur with forms like *tol'ko* ‘only’, *čut'* ‘just’ in the first clause).

Finally, the first slot of the conditional paratactic construction may be occupied by a declarative clause containing present tense, as in Dutch (31):

- (31) *Als meisje... je leeft je een x uit en je bent gelijk een slet.*  
 as girl you live selfa time prt and you are immediately a slut  
 ‘As a girl...you have a good time, and you are immediately considered a slut.’  
 (http://babsweblog.blogspot.com/2007/01/dat-verschil.html)

Because of the generic context, (31) is interpreted as a conditional: it invites the hearer to think of a situation of being a girl, and the automatic (immediate) consequences of performing particular situations as a girl.<sup>13</sup> In Russian, as we remarked earlier, the use of the present tense in conditional sentences is possible in sentences with a perfective present or perfective future tense as in (20), and in (32) below. In these examples, there is no explicit connector *i*, but such examples can be found as well, see (33):

- (32) *Tol'ko kliknete – pribegu.*

Just call.2PL-PRS-PERF come.running.1SG- PRS-PERF

‘You just have to call, and I’ll come running.’

(Grekova, *Perelom*)

- (33) [text preceding the perfective present: ‘Such jokes are only reminiscent of riddles with respect to their form (question-answer). But in fact, there is nothing to guess here].

*Prosto pročtěš’ – i smešno stanet. Poprobujte!*

just read-1SG-PRS-PERF and funny becomes try-IMP-PL

‘If you just read them, they become funny. Try it!’

(*Tramvaj* 4, 1990)

In (32) and (33), the feature of restriction is made explicit, but also in the absence of such an indication, the conditional perfective present construction may be used to present an immediate connection between X and Y (‘as soon as’), as in our earlier example (20).

The idea that the feature of ‘restriction’ is connected to the paratactic construction is confirmed by the observation that conditional constructions in Russian and Dutch that use other correlators instead of *i/en* ‘and’, specifically those that may be compared to English *then*, lack the typical restrictive semantics of the paratactic construction.

Thus, in Russian, the restrictive reading does not occur in sentences with the correlators *to* ‘then’ or *tak (i)* ‘then/so’, nor in sentences with no correlator (i.e. asyndetic coordination) that could occur with one of these correlators. (The interpretation of restriction does occur in sentences without any conjunction – the so called asyndetic coordination –, but then it is usually possible to insert the conjunction *i* ‘and’). For instance, in addition to the conditional constructions containing a modal infinitive illustrated in (21) and (22) above, Russian has different conditional constructions with a non-modal infinitive in the first part of

the sentence (see Švedova et al 1980: 641–642 for an overview). In these constructions, the correlator *i* is not used, and instead other correlators such as *tak* (*i*) ‘so’ (‘and’) are used, see example (34).

- (34) *Pozže priji, tak Petruška budet, požaluj vorčat’.*  
 later come-INF, so Petruška will, perhaps grumble  
 ‘If I come home later, then Petruška will probably grumble at me.’  
 (Švedova et al 1980: 641)

Sentences like these lack the restrictive semantics of (21) and (22) and merely express that the realization of the infinitive situation *equals* or *amounts to* another situation.<sup>14</sup>

In a similar vein, while the conditional imperative occurring in a conditional paratactic construction with *i*, such as in (30), gets a restrictive reading, the conditional imperative in combination with the correlator *to* ‘then’ in (35) lacks this particular feature:

- (35) *Bud’ on čelovekom, to, vozmožno, nazval by eto čuvstvo.*  
 be-IMP he human, then, perhaps, call-PAST IRR that feeling  
*gordost’ju.*  
 pride  
 ‘If he were human, then he would perhaps have called that feeling pride.’  
 (zhurnal.lib.ru/w/werbena/master.shtml)

As for Dutch, it has conditional constructions in which *als* ‘if’ is missing and the protasis is instead marked by ‘inverted’ word order, i.e. the finite verb form is used in clause-

initial position and followed by the subject; the construction occurs both with and without the resumptive element *dan* ‘then’ in the apodosis. An example is given in (36).

- (36) *Ga je troosten, dan denkt de hond dat hij de volgende keer*  
 go-2SG you-SG comfort-INF, then thinks the dog that he the next time  
*nog harder moet schrikken.*  
 even more must be.scared  
 ‘If you comfort the dog, he will think that he has to be scared the next time even more.’  
 (www.tonverlind.nl/tv.php?offset=1332&logid=88)

Now, the inversion construction does not have any of the ‘directive’ constraints discussed in section 3 for the conditional imperative. It is compatible with various kinds of conditional readings, including pragmatic and counterfactual ones, and, most importantly for present purposes, it does not express the kind of restrictive semantics typically associated with the conditional *and* construction. More generally, like in Russian, the restrictive reading in Dutch does not occur in the presence of the correlator *dan* (‘then’). Adding it to the standard example of a conditional imperative, as in (37), results in an utterance that is distinctly odd.<sup>15</sup> (A tentative explanation is proposed at the end of this section.)

- (37) Hang de was buiten, (??dan) gaat het regenen.  
 hang.out the laundry outside, (then) goes it rain-INF

Although we may thus conclude that use of the conjunction *i/en* ‘and’ in conditional constructions strongly favors the interpretation that just the slightest occurrence of X

immediately leads to Y, we cannot make the stronger, claim that the presence of *en/i* in conditional constructions automatically results in such a restrictive conditional reading. In Russian (38) we find a subjunctive conditional, which can express counterfactual conditionality without any specific restrictive semantics. Most of such sentences occur without correlator, or with the correlator *to* ‘then’ (see e.g. Fortuin 2000) – which is in accordance with our data so far – but the conjunction *i* ‘and’ occurs as well without attributing a restrictive meaning to the sentence:

(38) [review of a French movie]:

*Byl by ja postarše i ocenka možet byla by drugaja.*

was IRR I older and evaluation perhaps was IRR different

‘If I had been older, my evaluation would perhaps have been different.’

([http://video-review.nm.ru/vhs/vhs-une\\_liaison\\_pornograhigue.html](http://video-review.nm.ru/vhs/vhs-une_liaison_pornograhigue.html))

In (38), the use of *i* must probably be explained differently, because it seems to contribute an additive meaning to the sentence: ‘If situation X were the case, then situation Y might *also* be the case’; the conjunction seems to function both as a correlator and as an additive element at the same time. More generally, the reason that in Russian cases of conditional *i* lacking any restrictive semantics occur, may be that the conjunction *i* often gets this kind of an additive interpretation, which is comparable to the interpretation of English *also* rather than *and* (see e.g. Uryson 2000).

Even though the feature of restriction may not be equally manifest in all cases of conditional *i/en*, it is nonetheless clear from the examples discussed in this section that it is a natural

interpretation of the conditional paratactic construction in Russian and Dutch – and, given that Russian and Dutch are not closely related, presumably in other languages as well (see below for an iconic motivation). In fact, the restrictive semantics seems to be even more general than that: the feature also occurs in sentences with the conjunction *en* or *i* that have a meaning of temporal sequence and are not conditional in the strict sense, as in Dutch (39); such instances can also get a causal reading, as in Russian (40).

- (39) *Ik heb even niet gekeken en je vader is onder het mes*  
 I have a.little.while not looked and your father is under the knife  
*én je bent jarig geweest.*  
 and you have.had.your.birthday  
 ‘I didn’t look for a short while, and your father has been operated on and you have celebrated your birthday’. [indicating that many things have happened in a short while]  
 (roodbont.web-log.nl/roodbont/2006/11/vaders\_in\_zieke.html)
- (40) [the author describes how the human race invented the wheel, and later on different kind of vehicles].  
*Ešče nemnogo usilij – i pojavilis’ mexaničeskie povozki*  
 still little effort – and appeared mechanical wagons  
 ‘A little bit of effort, and the cars appeared.’  
 (Avtopilot, 2002.02.15)

Both sentences share features with conditional paratactic sentences because they too describe that only X was needed for the occurrence of Y. However, they describe specific events that actually happened in the past rather than merely hypothetical situations and they do not suggest an inherent relation between X and Y which is typical of conditional structures.

However, also in such non-conditional cases, parataxis seems well suited to express the kind of meaning that we have termed ‘restrictive’. This strongly suggests that the conditional imperative construction inherits this feature, via its immediate parent construction (conditional parataxis), from an even more abstract paratactic construction merely expressing temporal sequence. The connection between these various sorts of paratactic constructions may be visualized as in Figure 3.<sup>16</sup>

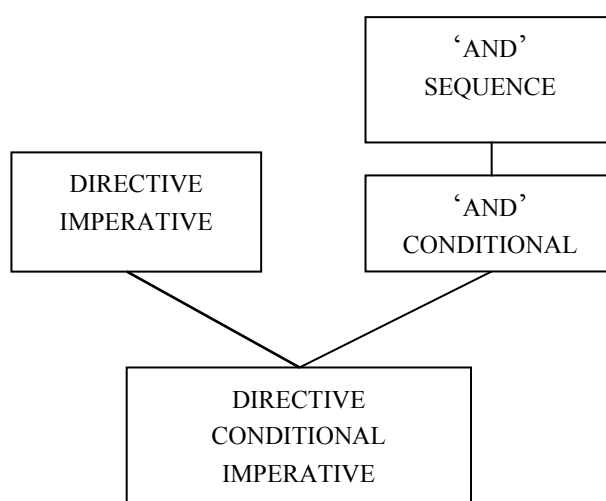


Figure 3

Since ‘and’ is not used exclusively to express temporal sequence, we must assume there to be an additional more abstract ‘and’ construction at the top of the taxonomy, which is not represented in figure 3. The factors involved in getting from the most abstract meaning of ‘and’ to specific interpretations involving sequence or causality have been widely discussed in the pragmatic literature (see Ariel 2008: 68-89 for a recent overview and discussion). In order to be interpreted specifically as a conditional sentence, i.e. as an instance of the ‘*and*’ *conditional* construction instead of merely the ‘*and*’ *sequence* construction, the first part of the construction must be compatible with a hypothetical reading. The survey of the Dutch and

Russian examples shows that such a reading is not only possible in the case of predicates that inherently present ‘hypothetical’ or ‘unrealized’ situations, such as imperatives and infinitives, but also in the case of declarative sentences, that may be ‘coerced’ into a hypothetical reading, especially if the subject is generic and the relation between X and Y can be interpreted as an intrinsic one, as in (31). In such cases, the conditional meaning can often not be distinguished from a temporal reading. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the case of the paratactic perfective present construction, which can be interpreted as expressing a conditional relation (‘if’), or a temporal relation (‘when’), depending on the larger context. Sentence (33) can therefore be interpreted in both ways (‘If you just read it’/ ‘When you just read it’). This only shows that conditional and temporal meaning are closely related notions, that, in some contexts, cannot even be properly distinguished. We therefore wholeheartedly agree with the remark by Dancygier and Sweetser (2005: 9) that “it is no exaggeration to claim that we simply lack a linguistically useful definition of conditionality”. We would even like to make the stronger claim that it is not possible to provide a discrete and definitive cross-linguistic definition of conditionality. This is because different languages conceptualize and divide the fuzzy domains of ‘conditionality’ and ‘temporality’ (and ‘causality’) in different ways, implying that cross-linguistic definitions will inevitably be based on choices of the linguist that are to some extent arbitrary.

Turning back to the topic of restrictivity, for the purpose of this paper, it suffices to note that the ‘restrictive’ feature of the conditional imperative construction is clearly not a local feature but is inherited down from a higher-level ‘and’-construction (‘and’ sequence). It is, however, not equally manifest in all contexts, which suggests that we are dealing here with a pragmatic (context dependent) rather than an inherent semantic feature. To what extent the feature of ‘restriction’, or ‘immediacy’ is expressed by a particular construction, and the specific character of this feature, strongly depends on the meaning of the first slot of the



paratactic conditional construction. On the one hand, we find paratactic conditional constructions that are inherently associated with restrictive semantics, even if – in Russian – no correlator ‘and’ is used. This is the case with the conditional imperative. On the other hand, we find conditional paratactic constructions that do not clearly express the feature of restrictivity, such as the subjunctive conditional in (38). Finally, we find paratactic conditional constructions that can easily express the idea of ‘restriction’ such as the conditional perfective present construction as in (20), (21) or (32). Even though this construction is easily associated with the idea of ‘immediacy’ or ‘restriction’ (‘as soon as’), the same construction is also used in sentences where the idea of restriction is not strongly present, for example in the following sentence where a dilemma is presented:

- (41) *Ugadaete – butylka s menja, ne ugadaete –*  
 guess.2PL-PRS-PERF bottle from me not guess.2PL-PRS-PERF  
*butylka s vas.*  
 bottle from you  
 ‘If you guess it, I owe you a bottle, if you do not guess it, you owe me one.’  
 (Bitov, *Ožidanie objez’jan*; cited in Voitenkova 2001: 167)

It is only by providing even more detailed analyses of the various paratactic conditional constructions, i.e. the other daughter constructions of ‘and’ coordination, that more insight can be gained into what ‘restriction’ exactly means, and how this feature differs from construction to construction.

That the ‘immediacy’ of X and Y in the conditional imperative construction is a pragmatic rather than a semantic property is irrelevant from the perspective of constructional inheritance since semantic and pragmatic properties are apparently inherited in the same way. The fact

that the data for Russian and Dutch are strikingly similar suggests that the restrictive reading that we have associated with parataxis could be motivated by iconicity: independent of a specific language, paratactic constructions enable the speaker to present two situations that are minimally separated. The immediate juxtaposition of the clauses mirrors the immediate (automatic, intrinsic) temporal succession of the situations presented (cf. Van Langendonck 2007 and references cited there), which may be further supported by intonational means.<sup>17</sup> This may also explain our earlier observation that the correlators *dan* (Dutch ‘then’) or *to* (Russian ‘then’) are not used in the conditional use of the imperative (see discussion of examples (34)–(37) above). Adding such a resumptive element means presenting an additional, intermediate step between the two situations, thus distorting the unity of form and meaning that can be observed in the paratactic construction (cf. Renmans and Van Belle 2003 on resumption and event integration in ‘ordinary’ *if*-type conditionals).

#### 4.2 *Explicit restrictive elements*

In this final section, we briefly address a remaining puzzle: if the conditional paratactic construction as such typically expresses restrictive conditionality (‘only X is needed for Y to occur’), then why does it in some cases seem obligatory to use explicit restrictive elements (e.g. (29)) whereas in other cases it does not (e.g. (3))? More specifically, such elements seem obligatory if the first conjunct contains a bare NP or PP or an infinitive, whereas they are not obligatorily used if the first conjunct is an imperative. Once again, these findings are strikingly similar for Russian and Dutch. In our view, the difference between non-finite, including non-verbal, forms and finite forms is that the former need more context in order to get an eventive or predicative reading.

In (42), an example for Dutch is given with the form *thuis* ‘at home’.

(42) [Gelukkig was ik niet thuis toen er brand uitbrak]. ?*Thuis, en ik was er geweest.*

[...] home, and I had.there.been

Intended meaning: ‘Fortunately I wasn’t at home when the fire started. Had I been at home earlier, I would have been dead.’

The phrase *thuis* (‘at home’) cannot by itself constitute the protasis of a conditional construction. According to our native intuition, it is only by adding a restrictive element such as *ietsje eerder* (‘just a little bit’) in (43) that the results becomes acceptable.

(43) *Ietsje eerder thuis en ik was er geweest.*

little earlier home and I had.there.been

‘At home a little earlier and I would have been history’

This suggests that the presence of explicitly restrictive elements with non-verbal forms in the construction may be partly motivated by the fact that such forms cannot by themselves constitute an event-like predicate, i.e. express change. If anything, *thuis* (‘at home’) conjures up a stative predicate (of ‘*being* at home’) which is hard to reconcile with the typical conditional reading that X needs to *happen* for Y to take effect. This aspectual constraint may in fact be inherited from the more general sequential ‘and’ construction (cf. Figure 3), since eventive rather than stative predicates are required to get a sequence reading. Adding restrictive elements such as *ietsje eerder* (‘a little bit earlier’) coerces the stative predicate into a dynamic one; the protasis of (43) is about ‘coming home’ rather than about ‘being (at) home’.

What exactly constitutes enough linguistic context for an eventive reading depends on the type of construction used in the first conjunct. As (44) shows, in the case of bare PP's the reference to a direction is not enough to constitute an acceptable sentence, and the use of a comparative (often with the expression of a small measure), as in (45), is necessary.<sup>18</sup>

(44) ?*Naar links, en hij was er geweest.*

to left, and he had.there.been

['To the left, and he would have been history.']

(45) *Drie centimeter meer naar links, en hij was er geweest.*

three centimeter more to left, and he had.there.been

'Three centimeters more to the left, and he would have been history.'

The specific form and meaning of the restrictive elements in the first conjunct, then, depends on the kind of predicate used and can often be attributed to the parent construction of that predicate. This can be illustrated further with the Dutch infinitive. The Dutch directive infinitive easily occurs with modifications like *even* ('a while') or *gewoon* ('just') (see Van Olmen, in preparation):

(46) *Even opletten nu.*

a.little.while pay.attention-INF now

'Pay some attention now.'

It is, of course, no coincidence that we find the same type of restrictive markers in the case of the conditional use of the infinitive (see (23) given earlier).<sup>19</sup> Whereas the use of *even* as a restrictive marker is typical of infinitives, as in (46), it is not typical of the directive

imperative in Dutch. Such differences must thus be linked to the difference in meaning between the parent construction – the imperative and the infinitive – and the interaction of the parent construction with the ‘and’ construction.

It should be noted that the requirement of restrictive markers in non-finite conditionals is not absolute, and depends on the context in which they are used. In sentences with a comparative, for example, restrictive markers are not required in all contexts, for example:

(47) [Two people are talking about an object they just put in trunk of the car].

*Groter, en het had niet gepast.*

bigger, and it had not fitted.

‘(Any) bigger, and it would not have fitted.’

In (47) the use of forms like *ietsje* (‘a little’) or *nog* (‘even’) would be very natural, but such forms are not necessary. In this sentence, the idea of a comparison between the given situation (the given size), and another situation (a slightly smaller size), is easily associated with the idea of a change – i.e. an event like structure. If the context, specifically the speech situation, provides enough clues, restrictive or similar markers that strengthen the verbal character of the comparative are therefore not required. But even bare nouns can occur without restrictive elements in some contexts, as the following sentence shows:

(48) *Nu moet je weten dat ik krullend haar heb, hoe korter hoe meer krul,*

*dus een goede coupe en ik kan er weer weken tegenaan.*

so a good hair-cut and I can there again weeks against

‘Well you should know that I have curly hair, the shorter, the curlier, so a nice hair-cut, and I am fine for weeks.’

([www.mamshoekje.nl/magazine.php?item=240](http://www.mamshoekje.nl/magazine.php?item=240))

In this sentence, the context provides enough clues that the speaker wants to express that only the event of *getting* a good hair-cut is all that is necessary for being fine for weeks. This differs from (49), where the interpretation of ‘just X is necessary’ is difficult to arrive at (cf. (28), including an explicit restrictive marker, which is fine):

- (49) *?Geluk, en voor het jaar 2010 weten we of we  
luck and before the year 2010 know we whether we  
alleen zijn in het heelal.  
alone are in the universe*

[intended meaning: ‘With luck, we’ll know whether we are alone in the universe before the year 2010.’]

Thus, non-verbal predicates may be felicitously used in the construction if they are compatible with an eventive reading. Such an eventive reading is easily triggered by restrictive elements, that, moreover, accord with the typical restrictive use of the construction itself. However, whether or not explicit restrictive elements are required is essentially a pragmatic matter and depends on the question to what extent the linguistic and pragmatic context supports an eventive reading of the non-verbal predicate.

Finally, we return to the conditional imperative construction itself. We started out section 4 with the observation, reported on in the literature starting with Bolinger (1977), that this

imperative construction typically conveys that X is *automatically*, *inevitably*, or *without exception* followed by Y. As we argued above, the idea that X automatically leads to Y is a natural interpretation of the more general ‘and’ construction. The restrictive reading that only (or just a bit of) X is needed for Y to occur is basically a stronger version of this. In the case of the imperative, it is not obligatory for the specific feature of restriction to be made explicit (but it is certainly not impossible either (see (16) and (17))). In addition to the imperative being event-like by itself, there may also be something inherently ‘restrictive’ about its semantics. Also in its strictly directive use, the imperative is meant to restrict the possible actions of the addressee to exactly the imperative situation (and no other one) – and it is a small step from ‘do only X’ to ‘only X is necessary’.

Thus, even though we argued that the specific kind of conditional reading of the conditional imperative is a pragmatic feature inherited from a higher-level (non-imperative) paratactic construction, it should be clear that, for various reasons, the imperative form is an ideal candidate for the first slot of the construction (cf. Takahashi’s 2006 notion of constructional ‘fusion’). In addition to contributing an intersubjective element that focuses the attention of the hearer on the special, often unexpected, relation between the situations presented (see section 3), the imperative form brings with it a modal element of restriction that accords well with the pragmatic properties of conditional parataxis more generally. In fact, when combined in the conditional imperative, the notions of intersubjectivity and restriction may further strengthen each other since it may be precisely the immediacy of the link between X and Y (‘restrictive conditionality’) that the speaker wants to present as noteworthy for the hearer (‘intersubjectivity’). Indeed, the interpretation of the conditional imperative can often be paraphrased as follows: ‘Just imagine: if X happens, it is – contrary to what you might expect – immediately followed by Y’. Such a paraphrase shows how the

features inherited from its two parent constructions may fuse in the conditional imperative construction.

## **5. Conclusion**

Our main research goal was to determine to what extent the semantics and pragmatics of the conditional imperative construction may be compositionally derived from its two parent constructions. With existing ‘constructional’ accounts of the conditional imperative in English (Stefanowitsch 2003; Takahashi 2004, 2006; Dancygier and Sweetser 2005) we agree that the conditional semantics of the construction is to be analysed as inherited from a higher-level conditional ‘and’-construction. Indeed, we have argued the same for Russian and Dutch, by showing that a conditional interpretation can occur in paratactic constructions with different types of predicates in the first clause (imperative, infinitive, declarative, bare noun, etc.). However, we have shown, in addition, that the highly specific semantics of the conditional imperative construction as compared with other conditional constructions can be motivated as resulting from constructional inheritance as well. More specifically, the construction inherits intersubjective meaning from the directive imperative and restrictive conditional meaning (only X is needed for Y) from the more general paratactic construction.

We thus tried to explain the interpretation of the conditional imperative by looking, in quite some detail, at the individual contribution of the constituting parts of the construction. Rather than taking a holistic approach to the construction, we were dealing with its relatively abstract higher-level parent constructions. Taking such a compositional view, enabled us to get a grip on various aspects of the meaning of the conditional imperative construction. In particular, it made clear in what respects the construction differs from other conditional



constructions, such as explicit ‘if’-type conditionals. Our analysis, then, might be taken as a reappraisal not just of old school compositional analysis, easily accommodated as constructional inheritance, but also of *function to form* analysis, specifically comparing alternative means of expression within one semantic domain such as ‘conditionality’.<sup>20</sup>

These more traditional concerns of, in particular, structuralist linguistics are, in our view, not incompatible with the insights and methodology of contemporary cognitive and constructionist models. Since our analysis is based on qualitative analysis of data, the next step should be to look at quantitative data in order to further support or falsify our claims, specifically with respect to the notion of intersubjectivity that we attribute to the imperative in the construction (section 3) and on the phenomenon of ‘restrictive conditionality’ that we associate with parataxis (section 4). Furthermore, it would be interesting to study the conditional use of the imperative in a larger sample of languages. Even though we assume that the specific function of the conditional imperative can only be studied within the larger linguistic structure of the language in which it occurs, our analysis of Dutch and Russian suggests that conditional imperatives in paratactic constructions will display more or less the same semantic features cross-linguistically.

Whether or not the conditional imperative construction is stored independently, is an issue we have remained agnostic about. Our analysis is a reconstruction of meaning based on the available linguistic data. This reconstruction is not an analysis of the mental processes that take place in the mind of the language user. In fact, it is unlikely that a reconstruction expressed in language by a linguist will come close to a reconstruction of what actually takes place in the human mind. However, even if the compositional analysis does not mirror the way in which language users store or process constructions, we feel that deriving constructional semantics from compositional semantics is something that linguists are supposed to do. Our analysis can be seen as a model that relates different linguistic data to

each other. In this model, the notion of constructional inheritance, specifically including both semantic and pragmatic features, is used to motivate the meaning of a complex construction thereby providing a deeper understanding of it.

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<sup>1</sup> See Dancygier and Trnavač (2007) for a similar account of conditional constructions, including conditional paratactic constructions, in Serbian and Polish.

<sup>2</sup> The Russian data are taken from the *Nacional'nyj Korpus Russkogo Jazyka* (National Corpus of the Russian Language, RNC) or from the Internet. The Dutch data are taken from the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* (Corpus of Spoken Dutch, CGN) Newspapers or the Internet. Examples without source were constructed by the authors for expository reasons.

<sup>3</sup> In our paper, we use '*and*' and '*if*' to generalize over the Russian and Dutch coordinative conjunction and conditional conjunction respectively.

<sup>4</sup> An interesting intermediate position is proposed in the work of Proeme (1984), who assumes the common semantics of the directive and conditional use of the imperative to be constituted by 'impulse to the addressee to imagine the imperative situation'. On the typical directive reading, the addressee not only has to imagine the situation but actually realize it himself, but this is considered by Proeme to be a more specific instantiation of the 'imagine' reading. Problematic with this analysis is that it does not take into account the fact that the 'performance' interpretation of the imperative is by far the more typical one. The 'imagine' interpretation only occurs in highly specific contexts, mainly conditional ones, and in the absence of such a context, the non-directive use of the imperative is simply not acceptable.

<sup>5</sup> This is not true of the second, declarative part of the construction (see example (3)), so the subjects of the two clauses are not necessarily coreferential.

<sup>6</sup> This may be a more general feature of conditional clauses that lack an explicit conditional conjunction, since they need clause order to iconically distinguish protasis and apodosis. However, the 'non-directive' type of conditional imperative in Russian (see 2.2) does allow for 'reverse order' presentation without explicit marking.

<sup>7</sup> In English, the restrictions on the conditional imperative seem to be somewhat less strict: examples with other than (non-expressed) 2nd person subjects are attested (*Miss that train and we'll never get there on time*) (Clark 1993) and so is the occasional counterfactual imperative (*Turn a different corner and we never would have met*, from a George Michael song entitled *different corner*) (see also Davies 1986: 187). A complicating factor for

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English is that the form of the imperative equals that of the infinitive and may be analyzed as such (see e.g. Bolinger 1977).

<sup>8</sup> If our analysis at this point is correct, it would constitute a highly interesting case of scope increase (cf. Traugott and Tabor 1998 for other examples in grammaticalization). Thus, in the case of the literally directive imperative, the directive operator ('Do!') has scope only over the imperative situation ('Do X!'). In the case of the conditional imperative, however, the directive force ('Note this!') seems to be operating not just on the imperative situation, but on the coordination of X and Y together, focusing the attention of the hearer on the very relation between X and Y ('Note (if X, Y)!').

<sup>9</sup> The conditional use of the perfective present prefers asyndetic coordination rather than the use of a conjunction (*i* 'and'). To give an illustration, from 100 randomly collected examples from the RNC, only 8 sentences contained *i*. Even though in some of these examples the use of *i* would be acceptable, in others insertion of *i* would be less acceptable or even unacceptable. A possible factor is that the use of *i* may lead to ambiguity in the conditional perfective present, because in the context of two future tenses it is easily interpreted in a non temporal way. Furthermore, it suggests that conjunctionless parataxis and the use of *i* are not semantically identical. This topic needs further research. It should be stressed, however, that the intersubjective feature that is expressed by the conditional imperative cannot be attributed to the use of 'and' in the construction, since it is absent in sentences where 'and' is used as in .

<sup>10</sup> The claim that the intersubjective meaning should be attributed to the imperative rather than to the conditional 'and' construction can be further supported by the Dutch '*maar eens* conditional' in : it is clearly hearer-directed but there is no 'and' coordination.

<sup>11</sup> Another way to explain the conditional imperative is in terms of grammaticalization or, more specifically, conventionalization of implicature (Traugott and König 1991): the directive interpretation already contains a conditional element ('do X and, if you do X, Y will happen') and on the conditional reading this conditional implicature is in fact the only element that remains ('If you do X, Y will happen'). However, attributing the conditional meaning to an implicature associated particularly with a directive speech act in the first part, seems to miss an important generalization since parataxis and *and*-coordination often get a conditional reading, also in the absence of an imperative in their first conjunct. Another problem for the alleged development, at least in Dutch, is that following a strictly directive imperative, speakers of Dutch typically use an independent main clause introduced by the resumptive particle *dan* ('then') rather than *en*-coordination.

<sup>12</sup> It should be kept in mind throughout our discussion that in Russian the constructions with the correlator *i* can also occur without correlator at all, but, instead, with a specific intonation pattern; see, for example, Voitenkova (2001: 137-138).

<sup>13</sup> Declarative clauses with a first or third person subject lend themselves less easily to a conditional interpretation. In the following sentence, for instance, the verb may refer to an actual situation:

- (1) [description of a particular footballplayer]: [H]ij maakt een goal, en hij is gelijk de held.  
(<http://www.uithaal.nl/?p=2149>)  
'He scores and he immediately becomes the hero.'

At the same time, the occurrence of the situation may still be seen as 'typical' behaviour of the subject referent, which could, in principle also occur at different moments. Because of this, sentences like these are similar to conditional sentences.

<sup>14</sup> This suggests a close relation between the feature of restriction and the modal semantics of the predicate of the first sentence, as is also captured when paraphrasing the restrictive reading as 'only X is *needed/necessary* for Y to occur'. Indeed, the requirement of a necessity modal is posited as a more general property of 'modal sufficiency' constructions, including such cases as *To get good cheese you only have to go to the North End*, by Von Stechow and Iatridou (2007). As one of our reviewers points out, the common element might be 'scalar' rather than 'modal' but we have to leave the relation between the modality and the scalarity of the construction for future research.

<sup>15</sup> A possible reading available for . is a non-conditional one in which the first clause constitutes an independent directive speech act with the second clause motivating this speech act by pointing out positive consequences ('Go hang the laundry outside since then it will start raining'), which is, on pragmatic grounds, hard to imagine here.

<sup>16</sup> In Figure 3, we have represented only cases of 'and' coordination: 'and' is meant to generalize over Russian *i* and Dutch *en*.

<sup>17</sup> If there is no correlator at all, such in the Russian cases of asyndetic coordination, the interpretation is probably less restricted than in the presence of *i* 'and'. The iconically motivated reading of immediacy is compatible with such structures, but other readings are as well. This topic deserves further study.

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<sup>18</sup> Restrictive modifications are typical of many (non-conditional) directive uses of such comparative PP's as well, both in Dutch and in Russian. Note for example that in the CGN, the search term *meer naar* ('more to') results in 5 directive uses, *all* five of which contain either *een beetje* ('a bit') or *iets* ('something'). This can probably be explained in a semantic-pragmatic way: this type of utterance is used to give directions that directly (e.g. by moving your hand) or indirectly (by stating the location of something to which the subject has to move) involve movements of the addressee. This presupposes, usually, that we are talking about relatively small movements that are executed by the addressee at the moment of speaking, and more importantly, about deviations from the position where some person or part of a person (e.g. his hand) is located.

<sup>19</sup> In this case, the conditional inherits properties specifically of the *directive* use of the parent construction. This is in accordance with our earlier observation (cf. note 14) that restrictive conditionality typically involves a modal element in the protasis ('just a little bit of x is *needed/necessary* for y').

<sup>20</sup> From such a *function to form* perspective, it will be interesting not only to compare the conditional imperative construction more thoroughly with other conditional constructions but also to determine its place within the larger family of what Von Stechow and Iatridou (2007) call 'sufficiency modal' constructions.