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CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY I: IMPERATIVE SUBJECTS

5.1 Introduction¹

We noted in chapter 2 that the occurrence of hidden communicative heterogeneity has led to the hypothesis that the birchbark letters have a substantial element of orality and functioned in a hybrid (oral-written) form of communication. It was indicated that this hypothesis can be enlarged on by systematically investigating linguistic parameters and pragmatic structures, and more specifically, by conducting research on how grammatical phenomena can fulfil a pragmatic role. The first of these phenomena to be investigated is the category of imperative subjects. In §2.3, anticipating this chapter, the personal pronoun and vocative were already identified as special techniques to compensate for a lack of contextual information as it is usually available in the (face-to-face) standard language setting (Clark 1996). It will be shown in this chapter that the occurrence or non-occurrence of imperative subjects can be connected to the notions of coherence and, ultimately, orality.

We have seen how the communicatively heterogeneous letters that were put forward in chapter 2 consist of various parts, each with its own referential perspective. One of the linguistic units which can make this perspective explicit is the second person pronoun, functioning as an imperative subject. It will be useful to first examine the usage of imperative subjects in the birchbark corpus as a whole. This overview will provide us with a starting point for discussing in what way imperative subjects can be related to the communicatively heterogeneous letters *à la* Gippius (2004), and more generally, to the notions of coherence and orality.

The question to be answered in this case study, then, runs as follows: To what extent does the personal pronoun *ty* ‘you-SG’, when used as an imperative subject, play a role in signalling the switch of perspective between the different parts of the abovementioned communicatively heterogeneous letters?

¹ This chapter is based on Dekker (2014).

As the category of communicatively heterogeneous letters has been sufficiently introduced in chapter 2, we do not need to review it here again. So first of all, in §5.2, the usage of imperative subjects in the birchbark corpus will be investigated. Next, the imperative subject will be analyzed in terms of cohesion and coherence (§5.3), and a connection with the notion of orality will be established (§5.4).

5.2 Imperative subjects

In general, the imperative construction in Old Russian does not have a grammatical subject, as can be seen in (21):

- (21) Poklonъ ot Panfil k Mar-- i ko popu. Kupite masleca drevjanogo da prišlite simъ.
 ‘Greetings from Panfila to Mar-- and to the priest. Buy lamp oil and send it over here.’
 (N173 / 1400-1410 / DND: 656)

There are, however, also instances which do show a grammatical subject; the precise conditions of occurrence will be set out below. It should initially be remarked, though, that the imperative subjects that occur predominantly in the birchbark corpus are the second-person pronouns singular and plural, viz. *ty* and *vy*. For clarity’s sake, an example can be put forward at this point:

- (22) + Ot Petra k[ъ] Mareně. Ci ti rъc[ъ]ne knjazъ kupъcě nadělivati aci ti prisъle kъ tъbě, a ty emu mъlъvi [...]
 ‘From Petr to Marena. If the prince starts providing for the merchants, and sends to you, then you say to him: [...].’
 (N794 / 1160-1180 / DND: 320)

Before proceeding to our main topic, a few more general remarks about the imperative subject will be helpful in order to form an overall picture. First of all, the sequence pronoun + imperative, as in (22), is predominant, as opposed to the opposite sequence imperative + pronoun, which is attested only once on birchbark, in an instance of direct reported speech:

- (23) Poklonъ ot Grikši kъ Jesifu. Prislavъ Onanъja mol[vi] [...] Jazъ jemu otvčalъ: “Ne reklъ mi Esifъ variti perevary ni na kogo.” I onъ prislalъ kъ Fedosъi: “Vari ty pivъ [...].”
 ‘Greetings from Grigša to Jesif. Onan’ja sent [...]. I answered him: “Je-sif has not ordered me to brew beer for anyone.” And he sent to Fedo-sii: “You brew beer [...].”
 (N3 / 1360-1380 / DND: 646)

The use of *vy* ‘you-PL’ as an imperative subject is restricted to two examples in the birchbark corpus, viz. N142 and N579.² Take a brief look at N579:

- (24) Poklono ot Borisa k Zěnověi i Fedoru. Vy, moja ōga, daite konicka do Vidomirja věřě ci do Mstě.
 ‘Greetings from Boris to Zenovii and Fedor. You, my lords, give the little horse on oath to Vidomir’ or to Msta.’
 (N579 / 1360-1380 / DND: 570)

For the sake of completeness, it should be added that one birchbark letter shows an imperative subject which is not a personal pronoun, viz. *kotorei ljubo potroudisja do vladyčě* ‘anyone [of you two] go to the archbishop’ (N725 / 1180-1200 / DND: 415); imperative subjects in the dual number do not occur at all.

Another feature of the imperative subject that is worth mentioning is its close connection to vocatives. In all attested cases where a vocative is also present, the encountered sequence is pronoun + vocative, never the other way round. We shall come across some more examples of this usage, which will be crucial to our argument, below. As far as the diachronic dimension is concerned (bearing in mind that the available corpus of birchbark documents comprises over four centuries of attestations), imperative subjects occur throughout the entire period, though almost half of them are attested in documents from the fourteenth century.³

Let us first have a closer look now at the conditions of use for the imperative subject. Because of the almost exclusive occurrence of second person pronouns as imperative subjects, the area of present concern is narrowed down considerably compared to the scope of most theories of imperative subjects. This situation does allow us, however, to make use of a set of eight rules put forward by Zaliznjak (DND: 171-172) about the use of personal pronouns in Old Novgorodian in general. It should be noted that these rules deal not just with the imperative, but with other types of clauses as well, so that not all of them are applicable to the present topic; in addition, the question may arise whether subjects of imperatives and, say, past tense declaratives can in fact be compared felicitously. Even so, let us first summarise Zaliznjak’s rules and then determine to what extent they are valid for the imperative. According to Zaliznjak (DND: 171), a pronoun is used obligatorily in the following cases:

- (i) if it is not the only subject of a predicate;

² It does, however, occur more frequently in GVNP, mainly in formulas such as *a vy, děti moi* ‘and you, my children’ (GVNP 111) or *i vy, ljudi dobriě* ‘and you, good people’ (GVNP 58).

³ All documents from the 14th century are good for a quarter of the birchbark corpus.

- (ii) if it contrasts with the subject (or any other constituent) of the preceding sentence, or if it is otherwise emphasised;
- (iii) before addressing a person (in sentences with a second-person predicate) if for semantic or syntactic reasons a conjunction is required in that position;
- (iv) following the conjunctions *i* and *ti* when meaning ‘then, in that case’.

In the remaining four cases, pronouns are said to occur optionally (DND: 171-172):

- (v) generally in a main clause whose subject differs from the subject of the preceding main clause, and is the theme; in this case, the use of a conjunction, especially *a* in its adversative meaning, is preferred;
- (vi) at the beginning of long phrases whose communicative structure requires the predicate to be positioned far from the beginning of the phrase, so that the construction is less loaded;
- (vii) with a predicate that allows homonymy of person;
- (viii) in the pluperfect.

Apart from the eight cases mentioned above, pronouns are not expressed. So far a summary of the only hitherto existing account of the use of pronouns in Old Novgorodian. To what extent is it a useful tool for the description of the specific subfield of imperative subjects? As we shall see, the rules that will turn out to be relevant in the case of the imperative can be subsumed under two general principles (of a contrastive and of a pragmatic nature), which various authors have already successfully employed for the description of imperative second-person subjects in languages such as Modern Russian and English, and which are likely to suffice for an adequate description of imperative subjects in Old Novgorodian as well.

5.2.1 The contrastive function

Along these lines, the abovementioned rules (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) can be subsumed under the heading of the “contrastive function” (cf. Davies 1986, Moon 1995, Fortuin 2010 for the use of this term). The other rules are not applicable to imperatives on birchbark. Let us illustrate this contrastive use of the imperative subject – consider the first imperative in the following letter:

- (25) Ot Grigorii ko Dmitrou. My zdorově, a ty xodi, ne boisja; miro vzjalě na staroi mežě Jurija knjazja. A menja poslalě Korele na Kajano more: a ne poměšai, ne ispakosti Kajanecamo, ni sobi prislovija vozmi. A---i poimalo dani Loneskii, vozmi i moi. A ucjuješi a ne poidu k No--, i ty togodъ idi. A doma zdorovo. A na menja věstěi perecinja. Cto aže vozmožeši, posobljai mně cimo.

‘From Grigorij to Dmitr. We are well, and you make-IMP your rounds, don’t be afraid; they have made peace on the old border of prince Jurii. And they have sent me to Karelia, to the Kajan Sea: “don’t hinder, don’t do harm to the Kajan people, and don’t make a bad name for yourself”! If you have collected last year’s tribute, take mine also. And if you hear that I will not go to No--, then you go. And at home all is well. Send me some news. If you can, help me out with something.’
(N286 / 1360-1380 / DND: 595)⁴

Obviously, there is a contrast between ‘we’ and ‘you’ in ‘we are well, and you make your rounds’. Zaliznjak would probably classify this one under (ii), or possibly (v), as both rules could be made applicable to (25). We can see, then, that these two categories are fluid and cannot be decisively distinguished from one another, also when trying to apply them to other examples with the imperative. For rule (iii), we can return to an example already encountered in chapter 2, which Zaliznjak (DND: 171) also mentions:

- (26) Poklonъ oспѣи mtri. Poslaъ jesmъ s posadnicimъ Manuilomъ 20 bělъ k tobě. A ty, Nestere, pro čicjakъ prišli ko mni gramotu, s kimъ budešъ poslaъ [...]
‘Greetings to madam, mother. I have sent you 20 squirrel pelts with the governor’s [man] Manuil. And you, Nester, send me a letter about the helmet, [to let me know] with whom you will send it. [...]’
(N358 / 1340-1360 / DND: 550)

This type is, of course, of crucial interest to our subject. The pronoun in (26) signals the change of addressee that we discussed already in chapter 2, so that the contrast resides in the presence of one addressee (mother) versus another (Nester). As far as (iv) is concerned, the following example can be put forward:

⁴ The translation of this letter is based on Gippius and Schaeken (2011). On a sidetrack, it should be noted that these authors (Ibid.) have made some interesting remarks about some of the other imperatives in this letter. They view three occurrences of the imperative in N286 as instances of the ‘necessitive’ use, for which notion they refer to Fortuin (2000: 56): “The imperative is used to express that the subject is forced or obligated to do the imperative action.” Thus, the three imperatives in *a ne poměšai, ne ispakosti Kajanecamo, ni sobi prislovija vozmi* ‘don’t hinder, don’t do harm to the Kajan people, and don’t make a bad name for yourself’ are not intended as directives for Dmitr, but rather refer to Grigorij, who reproduces these orders in the imperative with an emotive air of discontent. A similar instance of a necessitive imperative is observed by Fortein [Fortuin] (2008: 11) in N370: *a leži ni ot nogo ne otjezde* ‘and remain, don’t dare to go away from him’. These instances are certainly a reflection of the language of immediacy. The other imperatives in N286 are usual directives, voiced by Grigorij and to be executed by Dmitr. The second instance of an imperative subject in this letter (*i ty togodъ idi* ‘then you go’) will be dealt with in (27) below.

- (27) [...] A ucjuješi a ne poidu k No--, i ty togodъ idi. [...] ' [...] and if you hear that I will not go to No--, then you go. [...] ' (N286 / 1360-1380 / DND: 595)⁵

Thus, this instance of (iv) can also be explained in terms of contrast, viz. 'I versus 'you'. Yet, some other examples of type (iv), such as in (28), do not show an easily identifiable contrast. They may rather belong in the category that will be discussed in §5.2.2.

- (28) Poklonъ ot Smena ot [C]ixa k Sidoru. Kakъ imešъ prodavatъ i ty dai namъ rži [...] 'Greetings from Smen Čix to Sidor. When you will sell, then you give us rye [...] ' (N364 / 1380-1400 / DND: 606)

Anyhow, a comprehensive treatment of this type of construction lies outside the scope of the present case study.

5.2.2 The pragmatic function

What connects examples (25-27), then, is the notion of contrast. However, quite a few instances of the imperative subject cannot easily be labelled 'contrastive'. Consider the following example:

- (29) Poklonъ ot Smena k nevěstъkě moje. Až[je] budešъ ne pomina[l]a, ino u tebe solodu bylo. A solodъ ržanyi v potklětě, i ty vozmi kolobъju, a mukě kolko nadobъ, i ty ispeki v měru. A mjaso na sěňnikě. A cto rublъ datъ Ignatu i ty dai. 'Greetings from Smen to my daughter-in-law. In case you have not celebrated the commemoration meal: you had malt. The rye malt is in the cellar. You take a handful, and as much flour as you need, and you bake it in the [proper] measure. And the meat is in the pantry. And concerning the rouble that is due to Ignat, you give it.' (N363 / 1380-1400 / DND: 606; NGB XII: 230-231)

For instances like this, several designations have been proposed in the literature. Davies (1986: 147), describing non-contrastive imperative subjects in English, perceives a connection with the notion of "authority". Fortuin (2010: 475) employs the designation "pragmatic or intersubjective function" for the description of the non-contrastive use in present-day Russian. Whereas to a

⁵ Among the meanings of the conjunction *i* Zaliznjak (DND: 171) distinguishes "'то', 'тогда', 'в таком случае'" 'then, in that case'. Sreznevskij (1893) does not mention this meaning, but SRJa XI-XVII (6: 75) does ("(если) – то" '(if) – then'. In the present instance, this meaning is the most probable one, as agreeing with and reinforced by the temporal adverb *togodъ* 'then'.

certain extent the term ‘authority’ is applicable to the situation in Old Russian (as in (29), to some degree), it should not always be taken at face value, as will become clear from the following example:

- (30) Slovo dobro ot Jesifa bratu Fomě. Ne забудѣ Льва о розънѣ до рѣжи. A pozvale Rodivane Padinogine. A inoje vse dobro zdorovo. A тѣ to помѣни.
 ‘Greetings from Jesif to [my] brother Foma. Do not forget Lev concerning the summons [to court] [...?...]. And Rodivan Padinogin summoned him. And for the rest everything is fine. And you remember this.’
 (N122 / 1410-1420 / DND: 644)⁶

As Davies (1986: 149) herself realised, “an assumption of authority [can have] different implications”, such as ‘real’ authority expressed in commands on the one hand, versus “a concern for the addressee’s well-being” on the other, when “the authority [the speaker] invokes is for the benefit of the addressee”, as seems to be the case in (29) and especially (30) above. Thus, if the term ‘authoritative’ is employed at all, it would be wise to use it in a rather more abstract sense (all the more taking into account that cross-linguistically the non-contrastive use can be compared “on an abstract level only” (cf. Fortuin 2010: 475)). As the above considerations show, an adequate description should be framed in different terms, capturing “the relation between the hearer and the speaker” (Fortuin 2010: 467). Hence, the term ‘pragmatic function’ will be given preference here, while it is acknowledged that the exact relation between the speaker and hearer is left unspecified, for the time being, until further research will describe this relation more explicitly for the case of Old Russian.

The nature of communicatively heterogeneous texts suggests that they would license a contrastive use of imperative subjects. After all, the transition from one addressee to another implies a clear contrast. But is this suggestion sup-

⁶ Concerning the interpretation of *a tѣ* as ‘a ты’ ‘and you-SG’, cf. Arcixovskij & Borkovskij (NGB III; 1958: 56), who state that *tѣ* is not an unusual spelling variant. This may be a slight overstatement, as *ty* is spelled as *tѣ* in only three other birchbark documents, viz. N19, N129 and N788, the latter of which had, of course, not yet been found in 1958. Interestingly, N19 and N129 were also written by Jesif, i.e. they have the same author as N122 (DND: 643). Even more interestingly, in all three of Jesif’s letters, *tѣ* can be analysed as a non-contrastive imperative subject (one of which (N19) combines with *same*: *i tѣ same* ‘and you yourself’).

Another option would be to read *a tѣ* as *atѣ* ‘in order that’, a rare conjunction on birchbark (only found in N681), which is, however, improbable in combination with an imperative; *atѣ* indeed never combines with an imperative in any of Sreznevskij’s (1893: 31) examples from other sources either.

Another consideration that might need some more investigation is the somewhat detached position of the words *a tѣ to помѣни* ‘and you remember this’, which might be an indication of a different “writing event” (a term used by Schaeken 2011a: 6 regarding N497).

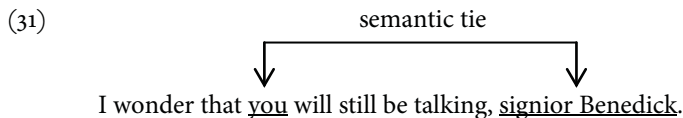
ported by the data? Let us repeat the question posed at the beginning: To what extent does the personal pronoun *ty* ‘you-SG’, when used as an imperative subject, play a role in signalling the switch of perspective between the different parts of the abovementioned communicatively heterogeneous letters? In order to answer this question, the next step in the discussion is to pay attention to the notions of cohesion and coherence.

5.3 The imperative subject as a cohesive device

Cohesion is described by Halliday & Hasan (1976: 4) as follows: “the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another” (see below for some examples). It should be noted that the concept of cohesion is often confused with that of coherence. It has repeatedly been stressed that, whereas cohesion is attained by ties between elements on the surface of a text, “coherence is a mental phenomenon” (Gernsbacher & Givón 1995: vii); it does not reside within the text as such. At the most, cohesive markers in a text can be said to contribute to its coherence. But what is coherence? Most definitions that have been given remain fairly vague. Most of them contain some allusion to the reader, to whom a coherent text makes sense, or who envisages a text in the same way as the writer. Coherence is probably best described as “the connectedness of discourse” (Sanders & Pander Maat 2006: 592) that is formed in the mind of the reader.

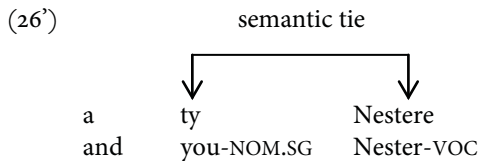
The title of Tanskanen’s (2006) monograph, *Collaborating Towards Coherence*, is especially telling in this respect, since establishing coherence is a joint effort, just like everything else in a discourse, be it in spoken or written form (cf. Clark 1996). Coherence is not only attained by elements that the writer puts into the text; whether a text will be perceived as coherent also depends on the knowledge and activity of the reader, who forms a “mental representation of the text” (Sanders & Pander Maat 2006: 592). In the light of this consideration, the importance of cohesive ties can be put into an appropriate perspective, that is, they can be viewed as being subordinate to coherence.

Now that the notions of cohesion and coherence have been mentioned, we can use the following English sentence (from Shakespeare) to illustrate how cohesion can be attained in the case of the second-person pronoun *you*: “I wonder that you will still be talking, signior Benedick”. Using this sentence, Busse (2006: 111) argues that the vocative *signior Benedick* is co-referential with the personal pronoun *you*—in other words, that a semantic tie exists between the vocative phrase and the pronoun. This can be visualised as follows:



Thus, in the case of (31), the meaning of *you* is dependent on that of *signior Benedick*. In other words, without taking into account the vocative *signior Benedick* it remains unclear, or at least implicit, to whom *you* refers, i.e. to whom the utterance is addressed (apart from possible clues provided by the sequence of turn-taking). The vocative makes the addressee explicit. This is what is meant by “the speaker selection function of the vocative” (Busse 2006: 241), where the term *speaker* selection is used because the current speaker, by addressing the person who is supposed to answer him, indicates who is to be the speaker in the next turn of the discourse. Consequently, vocatives, in their “speaker selection function”, can be analysed as cohesive elements.⁷ It should be noted that in the basic language setting, as discussed in §2.3, speaker selection normally takes place by way of eye contact; we shall return to the basic language setting in §5.4 below.

The cohesive principle which is illustrated in (31) can be applied to instances like (26), by assigning the pronoun *ty* ‘you-SG’ a cohesive function. Terming second person pronouns a cohesive device may seem odd at first sight. After all, Halliday & Hasan (1976: 51) explicitly describe them as “non-cohesive” pronouns, or as exophoric reference items, i.e. they refer to entities outside the text, whereas cohesive devices, such as third person pronouns, tend to refer to other entities within the text (endophoric reference) that precede (anaphoric reference) or follow (cataphoric reference) the cohesive device. However, as we have seen in (31), elements that are traditionally not viewed as cohesive, such as vocatives, may in fact turn out to have cohesive properties, after all. The abovementioned examples from the birchbark corpus can be analysed in a similar way. Let us return to the switch of reference in (26).



The pronoun is a cohesive device here, having a cataphoric reference tie with the vocative. In this way, the second person pronoun is similar to the third person pronoun (which occurs, however, more often anaphorically rather than cataphorically), as is shown in instances like the following textbook ex-

⁷ It should be noted that in this particular case much more can be said about the function of the vocative *signior Benedick* than that of speaker selection alone – “its role extends far beyond that of the targeting function” (Busse 2006: 112). Some overlap can be perceived with what is treated as the ‘pragmatic function’ of the imperative subject in the present article, e.g. more emotional involvement, and similar factors.

ample (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 54), where *he* refers back to *John* (and *it* to *a new house*, for that matter):

- (32) John has moved to a new house. He had it built last year.

Interestingly, Halliday & Hasan, though not considering the possibility of a cohesive second person pronoun, do leave room for an endophoric use of the first person pronoun *we*, as in the following example, put forward by them (1976: 50):

- (33) My husband and I are leaving. We have seen quite enough of this unpleasantness.

Not only does *we* here provide the “rudimentary meaning” of “the speaker plus other(s)” (Ariel 2010: 101), but it also refers anaphorically, and more precisely, to *my husband and I*, and is, therefore, not just a deictic, but also a cohesive device. As we have seen, a similar analysis can be made for *you*.⁸

It will be profitable at this point to take a look at a part of an example from GVNP again, which we have encountered already as example (11) in chapter 2:

- (34)
- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| A | prikazaľ | esmi | ixъ | bljusti |
| and | order-PERF.SG.M | COP.PRS.1SG | them-ACC | protect-INF |
-
- | | | | | |
|--|---------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> | | | | |
| Merkurьju; | a | ty, | Merkurei, | po |
| Merkurii-DAT | and | you-NOM | Merkurii-VOC | according to |
| moei | gramotě | bljudi | ixъ | |
| my-DAT.SG | letter-DAT.SG | protect-IMP.2SG | them-ACC | |
- ‘And I have ordered [i.e. I hereby order] Merkurii to protect them; and you, Merkurii, protect them according to my letter.’

In this example, the second person pronoun *ty* obviously links with the following vocative, just like in (26’). In addition, this link is reinforced by the occurrence of another element in the previous clause—*Merkurьju*. Both elements are, of course, co-referential: they coincide semantically, i.e. they

⁸ Note that the tie between pronoun and vocative in (26’) is intra-sentential cohesion, which is often discarded as of little importance, being superseded by the sentence’s grammatical structure anyway (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976: 9), but here we see that intra-sentential cohesion can contribute to inter-sentential (i.e. textual) coherence (more about which below), as it makes the letter’s referential organization (or referential boundary) explicit.

denote the same referent. Thus, the topic of the discourse remains the same, while its role changes from side participant to addressee.⁹

So first of all, a side participant is mentioned, who is then ‘promoted’ to the position of addressee. Thus, the referent is referred to in more than one part of a communicatively heterogeneous letter (though playing different roles in the different parts of the communicative act). This co-reference facilitates the text’s coherence, i.e. the two parts of the text, on both sides of the referential boundary (cf. below), are connected by this referent. But does this mean that a cohesive tie should be supposed that refers back from *ty* to *Merkurbju*? In other words, can *ty* here have anaphoric as well as cataphoric reference?

Halliday & Hasan (1976: 50) state that second-person pronouns cannot be cohesive unless they occur in “quoted [i.e. direct] speech; and so [they] are normally anaphoric in many varieties of written language, such as narrative fiction”. Direct reported speech is characterized by a shift of perspective, so that a referential boundary occurs between the main text and the stretch of reported speech. Thus, a referent mentioned in the third person in the main text can occur as the addressee (*you*) of a stretch of direct reported speech. The *you* then refers back to the referent mentioned in the third person before: “Somewhere or other in the narrative will be names or designations to which we can relate the *I* and *you* of the dialogue” (Ibid.).

A similar shift of perspective can be seen in (34), i.e. from side participant (3rd person) to addressee (2nd person). However, the difference here is that the interpretation of *ty* does not exactly depend on the link of co-reference with the preceding name. After all, there is already a strong cataphoric tie with the vocative *Merkurei*, and in addition, theoretically speaking *ty* could have referred to a totally different addressee, e.g. **a ty, Ivane* ‘and you, Ivan’. Thus, the tie with the preceding *Merkurbju* cannot be properly termed cohesive, or anaphoric, though it is co-referential (indicated by the dotted line in (34)). Thus, in a sense, the referent is transferred over the referential boundary, which creates coherence, but this coherence is not attained by cohesion *sensu stricto*.

The question might be asked: Why should one make so much of pronouns at all? Why not just consider names and phrases in the vocative case? First of all, a vocative without a pronoun never signals a switch of addressee in the birch-bark corpus.¹⁰ Secondly, we can turn to an example where the pronoun’s ref-

⁹ The semantic coincidence here is unequivocal because of the names being identical. In other cases, we may not be able to substantiate the existence of such a co-referential tie; e.g. in N253 (example (36) below), it remains a hypothesis at best.

¹⁰ A possible exception was unearthed recently (N1054 / 1260-1300 / NGB XII: 154), where the switch of addressee may be signalled by a vocative only: *Kure! Dai grěvnu i 3 kunō* ‘Kur! Give a *grivna* and 3 *kunas*.’ As the editors acknowledge, an alternative reading with a 3rd-person impera-

erential force is not realised by way of a cataphoric tie, i.e. it is not followed by a name in the vocative:

- (35) Pokono ot Maskima ko popu. Dai ključī Fomi. A ty pošī Grigoriju Onefimova. Čto b(u)[d](e na)dobi ---at-----e Foma.
 ‘Greetings from Maskim to the priest. Give the keys to Foma. And you send Grigorija Onfimov. If anything is needed [...] Foma-NOM.’
 (N177 / 1360-1380 / DND: 582)

Gippius (2004: 197) interprets *A ty pošī Grigoriju Onefimova* ‘and you send Grigorija Onfimov’ as being addressed not to the priest, but to Foma. Čerepnin (1969: 316) already proposes this interpretation, without, however, providing arguments for his view. Gippius arrives at the same conclusion by drawing an analogy with N253, written by the same author Maksim, where *a ty* ‘and you’ unambiguously signals speaker selection, i.e. indicates a change of addressee, because it is accompanied by a vocative:

- (36) Ot Maksima ko Desjascjanamo. Datъ Melejanu 8 deže, naklado i veši. A ty, starosto, sberi.
 ‘From Maksim to the inhabitants of Desjatskoe. [You are to] give Mel’jan 8 *dežas*¹¹—interest and grain. And you, elder-VOC, collect [them].’
 (N253 / 1360-1380 / DND: 583)

In the first part of (36) the villagers are addressed, and in the second part the village elder, who is most probably the same person as Meljan, as Gippius (2004: 197) concludes by analogy with N177. If Gippius’s (2004: 197) suggestion that *Melejanu* ‘Mel’jan-DAT’ and *starosto* ‘elder-VOC’ refer to the same person is correct, which is taken for granted here, we can assume an analysis similar to that in (34), i.e. for its interpretation the second person pronoun relies on the cataphoric referential tie (from *ty* ‘you-SG’ to *starosto* ‘elder’). Although the preceding name *Melejanu* ‘Mel’jan-DAT’ does not contribute to the felicitous interpretation of *ty* ‘you-SG’, the co-referential tie does connect both parts of the letter, thus supporting the coherence of the letter as a whole.¹²

tive is also possible, viz. ‘Let Kur give a *grivna* and 3 *kunas*.’ In that case, the letter is not communicatively heterogeneous.

¹¹ A *deža* is a measure of grain (SRJa XI-XVII 4: 201).

¹² In that case, by the way, the reason why Meljan is addressed as *starosto* ‘village elder’, and not by his name, serves to underline his position among the villagers. It does not mean that Maksim is Meljan’s subordinate, but rather that Maksim takes the perspective of the villagers, who are subordinate to Meljan and have to approach him as such. Thus, mentioning his function is more effective than mentioning his name; in other words, the designation *starosto* ‘village elder’ assigns a greater authority to Meljan than only his name would have done.

To return to N177, Gippius (Ibid.) argues that because Foma has already been mentioned in the preceding phrase, repeating his name in a following vocative is considered redundant. In addition, Gippius (Ibid.) states that if both imperatives referred to the same person, there would be no way to account for the presence of the conjunction and the second person pronoun (*a ty* ‘and you’). Another consideration that Gippius (Ibid.) mentions, is the fact that after a gap later on in the letter (the latter part of which is, unfortunately, severely damaged) Foma is mentioned in the third person. This might be seen as an argument against the abovementioned interpretation, but Gippius (Ibid.) follows a line of reasoning in which the priest later on resumes the role of addressee; the instruction given to Foma is still indirectly also addressed to the priest, who has to be convinced that it is safe to give the keys to Grigor’ja Onfimov, whom Gippius (Ibid.) considers to be the letter-bearer, sent by Foma to collect the keys for him from the priest.¹³

It would follow from this that the pronoun *ty* ‘you-SG’ is co-referential with *Fomi* ‘Foma-DAT’.¹⁴ Does this imply that *ty* can also be said to have an anaphoric tie with *Fomi*? In a sense, the construction in (35) can be seen as a ‘truncated’ version of the one in (34). Again, the pronoun can only be seen as a cohesive element if its interpretation relies on the link of co-reference with the preceding name. Although in (35) there is no cataphoric tie with a vocative, as is the case in (34), the interpretation of *ty* cannot be exclusively dependent on *Fomi*; rather, the major part of its interpretation has to be negotiated *in situ*, i.e. by extratextual means. Thus, if a cohesive tie can be posited there at all, it will have to play a merely secondary role, the primary role being reserved for contextual aspects allowed for by the letter’s oral performance, which will be elaborated on in §5.4 below. Still, the relation of co-reference between *Fomi* and *ty* cannot be ignored, and should be seen as a factor that creates a coherence which transcends the referential boundary between both parts of the letter.

¹³ It should be borne in mind that this way of reasoning does not lead to absolute certainty about the role patterns of the participants mentioned in this letter. For some letters which have been analysed within a pragmaphilological framework, a communicatively heterogeneous interpretation is actually the only plausible one. In the present case, Gippius’s statement can be nothing more than a hypothesis—although, it is true, a quite plausible one within the line of thinking in the rest of his article (2004). Another remaining caveat should also be noticed, arising from our discussion of imperative subjects, viz. the possibility that *ty* is an instance of the abovementioned pragmatic function, and hence non-contrastive, and not indicative of a switch of perspective. In this case, a communicatively heterogeneous interpretation would be excluded. Nevertheless, we will, for the time being, abide by Gippius’s (2004) interpretation.

¹⁴ This, by the way, is the reason why Gippius, by analogy, considers Meljan to be the village elder in N253, as we already mentioned above, when discussing (36). Note in this respect that N177 and N253 have the same author Maksim and are written in the same hand.

In summary, it can be said that (35) most likely expresses a contrast (by the contrastive function of the imperative subject), but not the nature of that contrast; i.e., the target of speaker selection remains implicit.

So apparently, the state of affairs in (35) is considered sufficient to bring about speaker selection. However, the same is true of texts like the following (which was introduced as communicatively heterogeneous in chapter 2 already), where no second person pronoun is present:

- (37) Ot Petra kъ Vasilevi. Vъdai 6 kounъ i grivъnou Vyšatě. Ali ti ne dastъ a pristavi na nъ otrokъ.
 ‘From Petr to Vasil’. Give 6 *kunas* and a *grivna* to Vyšata. If he doesn’t give [them], then send a court official after him.’
 (St.R.15 / 1140-1160 / DND: 328)

On the basis of some of the abovementioned examples we might expect the contrastive use of a second person pronoun in the last clause of (37) – *a *ty pristavi na nъ otrokъ* ‘and you send a court official after him’ – ideally even forming a cohesive tie with a following vocative – *a *ty, Vyšata, pristavi na nъ otrokъ* ‘and you, Vyšata, send a court official after him’. If we want to abide by Gippius’s interpretation, we are obliged to acknowledge that a second person pronoun is not an obligatory device for signalling a switch of reference. In other words, speaker selection takes place in a different way, at least in instances like (37). But how? The question as to why the ‘contrast’ between Vasil’ and Vyšata is not made explicit there by way of a second person pronoun is left unanswered. In order to answer this question, we have to turn away from a purely linguistic analysis, and resort instead to external factors of a pragmaphilological nature. In other words, the context in which the writer envisaged the fulfilment of the letter’s function, and, in connection with that, the letter’s genre, has to be taken into account. Some attention will be devoted to this topic in the next section (§5.4).

But let us first recapitulate a few points. Overall, it appears that imperatives in communicatively heterogeneous contexts constitute a special subclass of the contrastive type, in which the use of a pronoun is not obligatory. The distinction between ‘overt’ and ‘hidden’ communicative heterogeneity (cf. Gippius 2004) can now be formulated in terms of whether or not a cohesive tie is formed in the way as described above, i.e. between a second-person pronoun and a name or other designation in the vocative. If such a cohesive tie is formed, the speaker selection, or switch of reference, is overt, as in (26); if not, it is hidden, as in (37), or ‘intermediate’, as in (35).

To put it differently, we have seen several possibilities for communicatively heterogeneous letters. First of all, the contrast as well as the speaker selection may be made explicit, as in (26) and (34). Secondly, only the contrast may be expressed explicitly, by a second-person pronoun as an imperative subject, but

without explicit speaker selection, i.e. without a vocative, as in (35). Thirdly, both the contrast and the speaker selection may be left implicit, as in (37). These three types are represented in Table 7:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Nº</i>	<i>Ex.</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Vocative</i>	<i>Imperative</i>
Overt	N358	(26)	<i>ty</i>	<i>Nestere</i>	<i>prišli</i>
Intermediate	N177	(35)	<i>ty</i>	Ø	<i>poši</i>
Hidden	St.R.15	(37)	Ø	Ø	<i>pristavi</i>

Table 7: Types of communicative heterogeneity

An overview of the respective occurrences of the three types throughout the birchbark corpus is represented in Table 8. Their chronological distribution might seem to suggest that hidden communicative heterogeneity occurs more often in the earlier centuries, but the number of instances is too small to draw any hard and fast conclusions about a diachronic development within the birchbark corpus.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Nº</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Ex.</i>
Overt	N831	1140-1160	(3)
	N358	1340-1360	(26)
	N414	1340-1360	
	N253	1360-1380	(36)
Intermediate	N177	1360-1380	(35)
Hidden ¹⁵	Smol. 12	1100-1200	
	St.R.15	1140-1160	(37)
	N509	1160-1180	(10)
	N420	1240-1260	(9)
	N771	1300-1320	
	N354	1340-1360	(7)

Table 8: Instances of communicative heterogeneity

As we shall see in the next section, the pronoun and vocative are not suppressed haphazardly. In other words, the overt expression of contrast and speaker selection is optional only when the situation of performance compensates for the absence of a pronoun and vocative by a reliance on the oral component. Consequently, the contrast that needs to be conveyed in case of a switch of addressee can be expressed intra-textually, by an imperative subject (often supplemented by a vocative to make speaker selection explicit, too), or

¹⁵ For a treatment of the hidden communicative heterogeneity in these letters, see Gippius (2004). For N771, see Schaeken (2014: 158-162). Some more instances of hidden communicative heterogeneity could be mentioned (e.g. N406), where no imperatives are present, which makes them fall outside the scope of the present investigation.

extra-textually, by elements connected to the letter's oral situation of performance.

5.4 The oral component

We have already mentioned a consideration of prime importance as regards the function of letters, viz. that they were often read out aloud by the messenger. Accordingly, the situation in which the letter played its part was such that any specific designations of the identity of the present addressee were often not deemed a necessary component of the text itself. Such indications were rather left to the context of performance and the communicative skills of the letter-bearer or messenger. In this way, the letter's internal 'weight' was relieved by disposing of perceived redundant elements that would be expressed orally anyway. This means that the letter's contents were in close interaction with the oral performance by which it was accompanied (cf. Gippius 2004: 204), as it would have been difficult or even impossible to interpret the letter without recourse to its context of performance. In other words, the letter is highly context-dependent.

It is at this point that a significant difference arises between the birchbark letters and the GVNP documents. In the latter, a switch of reference, or speaker selection, seems to be always marked overtly by a pronoun plus a vocative, i.e. a language-internal factor within the text.¹⁶ This explicitness is in accordance with the formality and the legal significance of the documents. In order to attain absolute legal certainty, every aspect of the transaction or will had to be made explicit; no 'underspecification' could be permitted. Birchbark letters, in contrast, were often of a less formal kind, and required, therefore, less explicit language; more reliance on the context of oral performance could be afforded (though there are exceptions, such as legal texts of a more formal nature). Secondly, relating to that, the GVNP documents were generally not (or not only) intended to be delivered to an addressee and read out aloud by the messenger, but apparently to be preserved for future reference, so that all participants had to be made explicit for future readers who did not have any situational clues. Birchbark letters, on the other hand, generally had a far more ephemeral character; they were only intended for use in a specific situation, and were often to be discarded afterwards. Another consideration that should be taken into account is the fact that the GVNP documents are by and large of a somewhat later date; as people became more accustomed to (the peculiarities of) the written medium of communication, former oral features were disposed

¹⁶ A thorough quantitative analysis of this material will have to be postponed until further research is conducted. A few examples of overt speaker selection can be found in GVNP 81, 84, 110, 111, 295.

of, and the written word and its conventions – directed at a greater explicitness – took a more central position in settling matters.

It follows that for instances like (35) and (37) we still need a common-sense situational analysis; a linguistic tool is not enough to decisively answer any questions about speaker selection. After all, the application of this approach has shown that the second person pronoun does not provide a linguistic parameter for determining whether a letter is communicatively heterogeneous or not. To what extent, then, do the above considerations provide a telling explanation for the occurrence of second person pronouns and enable us to make an attempt towards formulating an adequate conclusion about the way in which speaker selection takes place in birchbark letters?

It is good to notice that one of the main points of criticism that have been ventured against Halliday & Hasan's (1976) position by various authors (e.g. Brown & Yule 1983) concerns their statement that cohesion is a necessary condition for achieving textual unity. As has been demonstrated by (37), and also abundantly by a variety of textbook examples not quoted here, a text can very well exist without any cohesive markers at all. Coherence just has to be achieved in a different way, i.e. within a situation of oral performance.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The discovery of communicative heterogeneity in birchbark letters (Gippius 2004) has opened up a whole field of research and a vast array of theoretical concepts relating to the notion of orality. This consideration has led the present author to look at imperative subjects as one of the linguistic parameters to be investigated as to their potential pragmatic role in connection with an oral component in the communicative constellation of the birchbark letters. We can now answer the question that was posed at the beginning of this chapter: To what extent does the personal pronoun *ty* 'you-SG', when used as an imperative subject, play a role in signalling the switch of perspective between the different parts of the abovementioned communicatively heterogeneous letters? Furthermore, the role of imperative subjects will have to be linked to the main research question, i.e. how imperative subjects (or the lack thereof) can be a manifestation of orality in the birchbark letters.

The hypothesis was that the contrast between different addressees would be signalled by a personal pronoun. As we have seen, imperative subject pronouns can indeed have a contrastive function. One would expect the switch from one addressee to the next to provide an ideal environment for the contrastive use of an imperative subject pronoun. We can now look back and conclude whether this hypothesis comes true.

As some of the above examples have shown, it is not always easy to distinguish between the two categories of imperative subjects (contrastive and pragmatic), which is, inevitably, attributable to our limited insight into the context of the texts on birchbark. Still, the distinction can prove to be a useful

classification tool. The imperative subject in non-contrastive settings does not play a role in terms of speaker selection (though, of course, it is useful in other respects, such as expressing certain pragmatic factors discussed above). In contrastive settings, on the other hand, of which communicative heterogeneity is a subtype, the pronoun functions as a speaker selection device, i.e. it 'targets' the next speaker, thereby making the addressee of the utterance explicit. We have seen, however, that even this contrastive function can be made redundant and disposed of within a context of oral performance.

Semantic ties can be formed between second person pronouns and vocatives, and in this sense second person pronouns can be seen as cohesive devices, contributing to textual coherence. Accordingly, Halliday & Hasan's basic definition of cohesion can easily be extended to instances of a second person pronoun as the subject of an imperative clause. In spite of this, cohesion, at least insofar it can be expressed by the imperative subject, is by far not always a relevant factor in heterogeneously contrastive environments. In other words, a pronoun is by far not always dependent on cohesive ties for its interpretation, though cohesive ties can facilitate the pronoun's interpretation in those instances where a felicitous interpretation is not guaranteed by clues in the letter's external context of performance.

The above considerations have reinforced the view that cohesion by means of a pronoun and a vocative is very much an optional device and in no way a prerequisite for coherence; at the most, it facilitates coherence and, along with that, the ease of a text's interpretation, at least for accidental 'overreaders' (cf. Clarks' (1996: 14) notion of "overhearers") such as present-day readers are in the case of medieval birchbark letters. In some cases, as has been seen, a letter's communicatively heterogeneous interpretation can be explained by the occurrence of a second person pronoun as a cohesive marker. Other cases, that do not show any such marker, are a challenge to this approach; they require a greater role to be played by other theories, most probably in the field of coherence, not of cohesion, in interplay with the letter's context of oral performance. Schaeken (2011a: 8) formulates a similar consideration, in the context of a slightly different kind of communicative heterogeneity, as follows: "The communicative coherence of the written text would be guaranteed by the intermediary role of the messenger." In Clark's (1996) terms, the 'basic language setting' of the letter's oral performance diminishes or even eliminates the need for 'special (cohesive) techniques' to be employed, which is one of the reasons why cohesive devices may be absent. Intra-sentential cohesion can thus contribute to inter-sentential (textual) coherence, but, under the right circumstances, the latter can also be attained without the former.

To sum up: there are instances in which the imperative subject has a signaling function to indicate a switch of addressee, typically in combination with a vocative; this is what makes communicative heterogeneity 'overt'. The absence of an imperative subject is what makes communicative heterogeneity 'hidden'.

In that case, coherence is attained thanks to the oral context in which the letter is presented by the messenger.

In addition, a tentative statement may carefully be posited about a possible correlation between cohesion and context-independent written language. Or, in slightly different terms, a decrease in cohesion can be said to correlate with the degree to which the letter was envisaged to function in an oral setting.

