

Deferred Imperatives in Central Naga Languages

Imperatives constitute a vital class of utterances, one which remains thoroughly under-researched in languages of South Asia. The current study provides a typological analysis of a special kind of Imperatives. This paper examines ‘Deferred Imperatives’ in *Mongsen Ao*, *Chungli Ao*, and *Lotha*, Tibeto-Burman languages spoken primarily in the districts of Mokokchung and Wokha in Nagaland. They belong to the Sino-Tibetan sub-category, under the Central Naga sub-group (Burling 2003). This study, to the best of the authors’ knowledge, will be the first of its kind in the Tibeto-Burman Languages spoken in Nagaland, India.

As per Van der Wurff (2007), Aikhenvald (2010, 2014), Schwager (2011), a few of the world’s languages feature two distinct types of imperatives ((1a) and (1b)), the latter of which is placed in the later future rather than the immediate future. As in Tucano below,

Context: A parent calling out to their child to eat the food that’s been prepared:

(1) [Tucano]	a. Immediate imperative	b. Deferred imperative
	Ba’á-ya	Ba’á-apa
	Eat-impv	Eat-dfr.impv
	‘Eat!’	Eat (later)!’

(West 1980: 48, 51; as cited in Aikhenvald 2010: 130)

The paper attempts to carve out the difference between the two, using Semantic-Pragmatic diagnostics: (i) performativity, which dictates that all immediate and deferred commands, regardless of their form, lack truth conditions and (ii) availability of weak readings which instantiate “acquiescence or indifference” (von Fintel and Iatridou 2017), to claim that such a distinction is also present/absent in *Mongsen Ao* ((2)), *Chungli Ao* and *Lotha*. The characterisation of the immediate vs. deferred distinction forms the crux of the analysis of imperatives in the language.

(2) [Mongsen Ao]	a. Immediate imperative	b. Deferred imperative
	Tsáng	Tsáng-óh
	Eat-impv	Eat-dfr.impv
	‘Eat (later)!’	‘Eat!’

The empirical data in the paper points towards definitive proof of whether both forms of the imperative marker can be attested to in the *Mongsen Ao*, *Chungli Ao*, and *Lotha* languages and also posits that the immediate imperatives are temporally unspecified, whereas deferred imperatives are positively specified.

References:

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