

Imperative Perspectives

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Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Empirical evidence: generalized obviation
- 3 Generalized obviation as a semantic conflict
- 4 Conclusions

My target of interest

Natural Language Semantics: Uncovering and modelling the meaning that is **conventionally associated** with natural language expressions.

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- Topic today: (An aspect of) natural language imperatives
Practical language, knowledge and belief, perspectival content, . . .

Canonical 2p imperatives

Morphosyntactically marked sentential form types associated with command-like **directive speech acts** as a default:

'attempts [...] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something', Searle (1976:11)
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| (1) | a. Read this book! | English |
| | b. Preber-i to knjigo!
read-IMP this.F.SG.ACC book.F.SG.ACC | Slovenian |
| | c. Lies dieses Buch!
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Conventional meaning? Specifically: does it reference the **speaker**?

One of the (major) clause types

- Distinct sentential form types associated with prototypical functions:
 - (2) *declarative* assertion
It's hot inside.
 - (3) *interrogative* question
Who can help?
 - (4) *imperative* command
Open the window.
 - (5) *exclamative* exclamation
How nice!

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How nice!
- Can all be used for other functions as well
- ➡ form, content and context jointly determine actual utterance function

Examples of imperatives in (non-)prototypical functions

- | | | |
|------|---|-------------------|
| (6) | Get out. | <i>command</i> |
| (7) | Stay away from the machine. | <i>warning</i> |
| (8) | Help me with this. | <i>request</i> |
| (9) | (How do I get to the station? -) Take the bus. | <i>advice</i> |
| (10) | Have a seat. | <i>invitation</i> |
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- Challenge:
Capture versatility as interplay between (stable) semantic meaning and (varying) contextual factors.

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- Common denominator: 'The speaker singles out a particular (future or present) state of affairs (involving the addressee) as optimal.'
- Theories differ a.o. in whether the **speaker** plays a role in syntax/semantics of imperatives.–*Yes!*

Imperatives close gap between knowledge and action



Director

Knowledge what's best

IMPERATIVE



Instigator

Ability to carry it out
(*know-how-to*)

Building blocks of empirical evidence to come

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Include directive subjunctives (surrogate imperatives)

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- (Canonical 2p) imperatives as part of a larger paradigm of directive clauses:
Include directive subjunctives (surrogate imperatives)
- Grammatical patterns of perspective sensitivity

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 - Grammar of perspective setting
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Imperatives as embedded 2p directives

Morpho-syntactic marking of canonical imperatives in indirect speech:

(12) Rekel (ti) je, da mu pomagaj.
 said.M (2.Dat) is that 3.M.DAT help.IMP.(2)

'He_i said (to you) that you should help him_{i,k}.'

Slovenian, Sheppard and Golden (2002)

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- (13) Hans hat gesagt ruf seinen Vater an.
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Also: Japanese, Korean, Mbyá, Old Scandinavian, . . .

But not: Greek, French, Italian, Serbian, . . .

Surrogate imperatives fill gaps in paradigm (directives)

- Negative imperatives

(15) Leggi! – Non {leggere, *leggi}.
 read.IMP2 – not read.INF, read.IMP2
 ‘Read!’ – ‘Don’t read!’

Italian

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- Regulating course of events described with non-2p subject

‘3rd person imperatives’, Zanuttini et al. (2012)

(16) Naj pomaga! Slovenian, *naj*-subjunctive
 SBJV help.3
 ‘(S)he should help!’

(17) Tebulwa: sa:ph rahe! Bhojpuri
 table-NOM clean-NOM be-IMP3Sg Zanuttini et al. (2012)
 ‘Let the table be clean!’

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Commands to addressee *see to it that?*

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Commands to addressee *see to it that?*

Prototypically: yes (\Rightarrow include in imperative clausetype, ‘directives’).

Slovenian directive paradigm

Stegovec (2019)

naj-subjunctives complement imperative inflection (dual omitted):

Person	Singular	Plural
1(Excl)	naj pomaga-m I should help	naj pomaga-mo we.EXCL should help
1+2	–	pomaga-j-mo (we.INCL) let's help
2	pomaga-j (you.SG) help!	pomaga-j-te (you.PL) help!
3	naj pomaga (s)he should help	naj pomag-jo they should help

Generalized obviation

Stegovec (2019)

Finding: Availability of forms is constrained

- matrix clause: by discourse function (committing/asking)
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Overall pattern of constraints: **generalized (directive) obviation**

Slovenian generalized obviation: matrix case

Stegovec (2019)

Commitment: 'x should...!'

(includes canonical imperatives)(18) Anyone **but first person exclusive**

- a. ***Naj pomagam!** – ***Naj pomagamo!**
 SBJV help.1 – SBJV help.1PI
- b. Pomagaj! – Pomagajte! – Pomagajmo!
 help.IMP.2 – Help.IMP.2PI – Help.IMP.1PI(Incl)
- c. Naj pomaga! – Naj pomagajo!
 SBJV help.3 – SBJV help.3PI

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Information seeking questions: 'Should x...?'

(19) Anyone but second person

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- b. *Pomagaj? – *Pomagajte? – *Pomagajmo?
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Generalized obviation in speech reports

Stegovec (2019)

- (20) Anyone **but attitude holder**
- I** said that ***I**/you/(s)he should...
 - You** said that I/***you**/(s)he should ...
 - (S)**he_i** said (to Z) that I/you/(s)he***_i/j** should...

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- (21) Adrian: 'I should exercise more!' – Later I remind him:
- *Rekel **si**, da več **telovadi**.
said are.2 that more exercise.IMP.2
 - Rekel **si**, da **moraš** več telovadit.
said are.2 that **should**.2 more exercise.INF
'**You** said that **you** should exercise more.'

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'**You** said that **you** should exercise more.'

'It's ok to tell yourself what to do (and report this); just not with imperatives/directives!'

⇒ issue of conventional meaning

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- Speech reports: extends well-known **subject obviation**
(Kaufmann (2020a) for references & discussion)

(22) Pierre_i veut [que il_j,#_i parte]
 Pierre wants that he leave.SUBJ
 'Pierre wants for him to leave.', not: 'Pierre wants to leave.'

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- 'speaker–hearer–matrix subject': **grammar of perspective setting**
 - Source for epistemic modals, evidentials, speech act adverbials, taste predicates,...
 - Japanese experiencer predicates
 - Conjunct-disjunct agreement systems, e.g. Newari (Sino-Tibetan)

Newari conjunct-disjunct agreement

Hale 1980, Wechsler 2018, Zu 2018

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- Main clause, commitment (assertion)

(23) DISJ for everyone other than *speaker* (1p.Excl):

- Ji* ana wan-*ā*.
1P there go-PAST.CONJ.
'I went there.'
- cha ana wan-a.
you there go-PAST.DISJ
'You went there.'
- wa ana wan-a
(s)he there go-PAST.DISJ
'(S)he went there.'

Newari conjunct-disjunct marking

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CONJ for [Speaker](#)

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- Main clause, commitment (assertion) CONJ for **Speaker**
- Main clause interrogatives, information seeking

(24) DISJ for everyone other than **addressee** (2p):

- a. ji ana wan-a lā.
 I there go-PAST.DISJ Q
 'Did I go there?'
- b. **cha** ana wan-ā lā
you there go-PAST.CONJ Q
 'Did you go there?'
- c. wa ana wan-a lā.
 (s)he there go-PAST.DISJ Q
 'Did (s)he go there?'

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- Main clause declarative, commitment (assertion) CONJ for [Speaker](#)
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- Main clause declarative, commitment (assertion) CONJ for **Speaker**
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- In speech reports

(25) DISJ for everyone (also utterance speaker) other than matrix speaker (identified *de se*):

- a. **wõ:** [wa ana **wan-ā** dhakā:] dhā
 (s)he (s)he there **go-PAST.CONJ** that said
 '(S)he_i said that (s)he_{i,*j} went there.'
- b. **wõ:** [wa ana **wan-a** dhakā:] dhā
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- Main clause, commitment (assertion) CONJ for [Speaker](#)
- Main clause interrogatives, information seeking CONJ for [Addressee](#)
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 - Directives as modalized propositions
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- **Director** aims to get **Instigator** to bring about specific course of events.

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- Analysis of **ImpOP** builds on performative modals

Schwager (2006); Kaufmann (2012)

Descriptive and performative modal verbs

Kamp 1973

Two uses of declaratives with (deontic) modals ...

- **descriptive:**

describing what is permitted, commanded, recommended, ...

- (28) a. You should call your mother. *[that's what she said]*
 b. You may take an apple.
[that's what the guy in the uniform said]

- **performative:**

issuing permissions, commands, recommendations, ...

- (29) a. You must clean up your desk now!
 b. Ok, you may take an apple.

Evidence for performativity:

Kaufmann (2012)

- (30) a. #That's (not) true!
 b. #...but I (absolutely) don't want you to do this.

Modals and imperatives

Kaufmann [2006]/2012, 2016

- Modals: descriptive vs. performative is a distinction of use.

Kamp (1973); Schulz (2003)

Context decides: **descriptive context** vs. **performative context**

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 - **Director** does not already take ϕ for granted
 - ⇒ *Epistemic Uncertainty Condition (EUC)*

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 - ⇨ *Epistemic Uncertainty Condition (EUC)*
 - **Instigator** is considered capable of bringing about ϕ
 - ⇨ *Decisive Modality (DM)*

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 - ⇨ *Epistemic Uncertainty Condition (EUC)*
 - Instigator is considered capable of bringing about ϕ
 - ⇨ *Decisive Modality (DM)*
 - Modal flavor is considered decisive
 - ⇨ *Decisive Modality (DM)*

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 - Director does not already take ϕ for granted
 - ⇨ *Epistemic Uncertainty Condition (EUC)*
 - Instigator is considered capable of bringing about ϕ
 - ⇨ *Decisive Modality (DM)*
 - Modal flavor is considered decisive
 - ⇨ *Decisive Modality (DM)*
 - Director is considered an authority
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Modals and imperatives

Kaufmann [2006]/2012, 2016

- Modals: descriptive vs. performative is a distinction of use.

Kamp (1973); Schulz (2003)

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\Leftrightarrow *Epistemic Authority Condition (EAC)*
- Imperatives are never descriptive \Leftrightarrow **ImpOP** is similar to *must* but **presupposes** that context is performative

Publicly commits speaker to belief that it is mutual joint belief
(Stalnaker, 1978, 2002)

Modal logic for modals and directives

- Translate into standard modal logic with \Box and \Diamond indexed for epistemic and prioritizing interpretations w.r.t. a Frame $F = \langle W, B, R \rangle$, where:
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 indexed for transitive closure of $B_S \cup B_A$ for Speaker and Addressee
 - **Public Belief**: Individual a is publicly committed to believing p :

$$\Box^{PB_a} p := \Box^{CG} \Box^{B_a} p$$

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- Example:

- (31) a. You must close the door!
 b. Close the door!

– both: $\rightsquigarrow \Box^R \text{close}(\text{you}, \text{the-door})$

– both are true at w

iff you close the door in all w' s.t. w' is R -accessible from w .

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Kaufmann [2006]/2012, 2016

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- ⇒ Speakers using directives become publicly committed to believing that EAC, EUC, and DM are mutual joint belief.

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Given context set CS (the set of worlds compatible with mutual joint belief) and a salient partition Δ on CS , the salient modal flavor R is **decisive** iff it constitutes the contextually agreed upon criteria to choose the preferred cell.

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- R being the **decisive modality** implies:

Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2012)

- If $\Box^R q$, no participant effectively prefers $\neg q$.
- If Δ is a decision problem for α , α tries to find out if $\Box^R q$ for any $q \in \Delta$.
- If α learns that $\Box^R q$ for $q \in \Delta$, α tries to realize q .

Generalized obviation as a clash in discourse commitments

Any performative context meets **Director's Anticipation**:

If Director D is publicly committed to believing that Instigator α believes that $p \in \Delta$ is R -necessary, then D is publicly committed to believing that p will come true:

$$\Box^{PB_D} \Box^{B_\alpha} \Box^R p \rightarrow \Box^{PB_D} p$$

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Gist of Proof:

Appendix or Kaufmann (2020b).

- Modal flavor R is decisive:
If α believes p is R -necessary, then α will try to realize p .
- Presumed control: α can realize p

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Preview **Director = Instigator**:

Epistemic Authority clashes with Epistemic Uncertainty

Generalized obviation: matrix case, commitment

No first person directives:

(32) *'I VERB_{Imp/Subj} . . . !'

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∴ Inconsistent presuppositions \Rightarrow speaker incurs conflicting discourse requirements

Generalized obviation: embedded case

- (33)
- a. *I said that I should...
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- ⚡ Inconsistent presuppositions cannot be resolved

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No 2p-imperatives/directives in information seeking interrogatives:

(34) *'VERB_{Imp/Subj} you...?'

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- Whichever answer is true, Addressee-Director knows (EAC) and will hence assume that it will come true (Director's Anticipation)

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Tampering with perspective enables 2p-directives in questions
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- Director \neq Instigator \Rightarrow No Director’s Anticipation

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- Scope Marking (\approx embedding, Director=**Thinker**)
Stegovec (2017) for Slovenian, Oikonomou (2016) for Greek

(36) Schema: *What does **your mother** think? What buy.2pIMP?*

Alleviating generalized obviation 3: Rhetorical Questions

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(Instigator = **Addressee**).

- Newari rhetorical questions: like declaratives Hale 1980, Zu 2018

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I there go-PST.CONJ
'Did I go there?' (=Of course I did not.)
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- Imperatives in rhetorical (*wh*)-questions:
 - Sperber & Wilson 1988: Omotic (Southern Ethiopia);
 - Kaufmann & Poschmann 2011: %German

(38) Wo stell den Blumentopf (schon) hin? %German
 where put.IMP the flower.pot DISCPART VERBPART
 ‘Come on, where should you put that flower pot? (It’s obvious.)’

Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Empirical evidence: generalized obviation
- 3 Generalized obviation as a semantic conflict
- 4 Conclusions**

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Thanks for zooming in!

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Director's Anticipation

- (39) **Director's Anticipation:** If director d is publicly committed to believing that instigator a believes that $p \in \Delta$ is R -necessary, then d is publicly committed to believing that p will come true:
- $$\Box^{PB_d} \Box^{B_a} \Box^R p \rightarrow \Box^{PB_d} p$$
- (40)
- a. $\Box^{PB_d} \Box^{B_a} \Box^R p$ Assumption
 - b. $\Box^{PB_d} (\Box^{B_a} \Box^R p \rightarrow \text{TRY}(a, p))$ Decisive Modality
 - c. $\Box^{PB_d} \Box^{B_a} \Box^R p \rightarrow \Box^{PB_d} \text{TRY}(a, p)$ K
 - d. $\Box^{PB_d} \text{TRY}(a, p)$ 1, 3, MP
 - e. $\Box^{PB_d} p$ presumed control (decision problem)

Conflict: Commitment Case

- (41)
- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------------|
| a. | $\Box^{PB_d} \Box^R p$ | Committing utterance by <i>d</i> |
| b. | $\Box^{PB_d} \Box^{B_d} \Box^R p$ | Def. of <i>PB</i> |
| c. | $\Box^{PB_d} p$ | b, Director's Anticipation |
| d. | $\Box^{PB_d} (\Diamond^{PB_d} p \wedge \Diamond^{PB_d} \neg p)$ | EUC |
| e. | $\neg \Box^{PB_d} p$ | d, System K |
| f. | $\Box^{PB_d} p \wedge \neg \Box^{PB_d} p$ | c,e: ✗ |

Conflict: Information Seeking Question

- (42)
- a. $\{\Box^R p, \Box^R \neg p\}$ Semantic answers
 - b. $\Box^{PB_S}(\Box^R p \vee \Box^R \neg p)$ Interrogative commitment
 - c. $\Box^{PB_S}(\Box^R p \leftrightarrow \Box^{B_A} \Box^R p) \wedge \Box^{PB_S}(\Diamond^{B_A} p \wedge \Diamond^{B_A} \neg p)$ EAC, EUC
 - d. $\Box^{PB_S}((\Box^R p \wedge \Box^{B_A} \Box^R p \wedge \Diamond^{B_A} \neg p) \vee (\Box^R \neg p \wedge \Box^{B_A} \Box^R \neg p \wedge \Diamond^{B_A} p))$
- b,c; EAC

Subjects of morphosyntactic canonical imperatives

English subjects in morphosyntactic canonical imperatives:

- (43)
- a. $\{\emptyset, \text{You}\}$ read the book!
 - b. Nobody $\{\emptyset, \text{of you}\}$ move!
 - c. Kids, Sebastian open the door and Tobias put away the toys.

Subject referent cannot be disjoint from an existing addressee:

Downing 1969; *pace* Potsdam 1989, Zanuttini, Pak, Portner 2012

- (44)
- a. Maître'd, someone seat the guests.
 - b. #Maître'd, one of your underlings seat the guests.
- (45) Rain! Don't rain!

Subjects of morphosyntactic canonical imperatives

English subjects in morphosyntactic canonical imperatives:

- (43)
- a. $\{\emptyset, \text{You}\}$ read the book!
 - b. Nobody $\{\emptyset, \text{of you}\}$ move!
 - c. Kids, Sebastian open the door and Tobias put away the toys.

Subject referent cannot be disjoint from an existing addressee:

Downing 1969; *pace* Potsdam 1989, Zanuttini, Pak, Portner 2012

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(46) English 2p imperative subjects: Kaufmann 2012

When construed as a quantifier, if there is non-empty set of addressees, the domain of the imperative subject contains at least one of them.

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- (43) German generalization: Kaufmann 2012
 The domain of the imperative subject is the set of addressees. –
 *(39c), *(41).

Wish-imperatives

- (44) a. Get well soon! Wish
 b. Please have the keys with you! Wish
 c. Please don't have broken another vase! Wish
- (45) a. #Get tenure!
 b. Get work done on the train! Command, #Wish

New proposal: Canonical morphosyntactic 2p-imperatives $p!$ in English pre-suppose:

If it is possible that some agent controls p , then the addressee controls p .

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- Greek: *(44a) Oikonomou 2016; ok: (44b,c) (D.O., p.c.)

Addressees of embedded '2p' imperatives

Kaufmann 2016

Canonical imperatives differ cross-linguistically in who ends up being the addressee under embedding:

(47) A said (to B) that IMP.2Sg.

- Korean, Japanese: B (matrix indirect object, \approx object control)
- Slovenian: utterance addressee
- English: B or utterance addressee

(48) [Context: Peters visa is about to expire. His good friend Mary tells him:]

I talked to a lawyer yesterday, and he said marry my sister.

(49) [Context: Mary has lost her wallet. She tells her husband:]

I talked to John, and he said call his bank.

- German: B has to be utterance addressee (Kaufmann & Poschmann 2011)

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Explanation: embedded directive (or desiderative) subjunctives signal gap between epistemic authority and control of events