Exploring rhetorical imperatives in Catalan and German

We draw the attention to an understudied class of imperatives in Catalan and German that we call *rhetorical imperatives*, following Ihara and Asano (2020), since the speaker does not actually order the addressee to carry out the directive. Rhetorical imperatives have a sarcastic interpretation as they are uttered when the speaker wants to call the addressee's attention to an action they just carried out that has affected the speaker. We propose rhetorical imperatives constitute a natural subclass as they present anti-imperative properties which set them apart from canonical imperatives. In order to predict their licensing conditions, we propose that rhetorical imperatives follow from a reaction to a norm breach that are reflected through inconsistent commitments (Geurts 2019).

Keywords: imperatives, normative pragmatics, commitments, sarcasm, Catalan, German.

1. Introduction

In this paper, we concern ourselves with what we dub as RHETORICAL IMPERATIVES[1] (RIs) in Catalan and German, following Ihara and Asano (2020), illustrated below in the example in (1) from Catalan. RIs constitute a subset of imperatives which, as far as we are concerned, have gone understudied in previous work, with the exception of Asano and Ihara (2019) and Ihara and Asano (2020), who draw on Japanese data to propose the existence of a similar class of imperatives. Here, we observe that RIs are a phenomenon beyond Japanese and extends to Romance and Germanic languages.

RIs are relevant since they present completely distinct characteristics than CANONICAL IMPERATIVES (CIs). Most notably, as Ihara and Asano (2020) discuss, RIs involve *anti-imperative* properties since RIs violate well-established conditions on the licensing of CIs. As we discuss in detail in the sections to follow, we have opted for the term *rhetorical* because it underscores that the speaker does not expect the addressee to follow the directive, in contrast to CIs. This is illustrated in the preliminary example below in (1) from Catalan, in which the speaker is not actually ordering the addressee to follow the directive in the imperative.

(1) CONTEXT: You are walking together with Joe, your friend, who accidentally steps on your foot without realizing it as he is talking on the phone. To make him aware of it, you go and say to him in a snarky way:

   Això,   vinga,   trepitja'm!
   this,   INTER,   step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG
   '≈ Step on me, why don't you!'
   '≠ I want you to step on me.'

In order to predict the licensing conditions of RIs, we resort to the notion of NORMATIVE PRAGMATICS in general (Habermas 1981; Brandom 1994; Geurts 2019a, b; Krifka 2023, among others) and COMMITMENTS in particular (Hamblin 1971; Gazdar 1981; Cohen & Krifka 2014; Geurts 2019 i.a.,). In this respect, we assume that the speaker and addressee share a certain set of commitments (Cohen and Krifka 2014; Geurts 2019a) which emerge through

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[1] We would like to thank Evripidis Tsiakmakis for suggesting this term to us.

social activities if treated as a relational state (Geurts 2019). Further, even without explicit awareness of one's commitments or those of others, individuals can engage and act on commitments without knowing one's commitments or others' (Geurts 2019: 15). By way of illustration, consider the example above in (1) again. In that scenario, both the speaker and addressee find themselves in a normative state in which they are committed to not stepping on each other's feet for plausible reasons, which makes them mutually committed to not stepping on each other's feet. We propose that the licensing of RIs, then, is the result of a reaction to a breach in norms or contradiction with a (tacitly) shared commitment, as the context in (1) suggests, thereby permitting the speaker to be sarcastic, which is a key defining property of RIs, in contrast to CIs, as we discuss next.

We proceed as follows. In Section 2, we first briefly consider a previous study that has also made use of the term *rhetorical* when analyzing a subset of imperatives in Romance. These imperatives, despite having been dubbed *rhetorical* as well, are critically different from our RIs in Catalan and German. In the same section, we discuss that the RIs considered here appear to behave as the set of imperatives in Japanese that Ihara and Asano (2020) (also Asano and Ihara 2019) classify as rhetorical as well since they do not require any action by the addressee of the imperative. We then proceed to describe the defining properties of RIs in Catalan which set them apart from CIs. Next, we turn to provide some cross-linguistic evidence from a typologically unrelated language, namely German. Section 3 lays out a preliminary analysis on how to tentatively analyze RIs in Catalan and German and section 4 concludes.

2. Rhetorical imperatives

The label *rhetorical imperative* is not new, as we are not the first ones to coin it to describe a class of imperatives in Romance that deviate from CIs. In particular, Bravo (2017) (see also Bosque 1980) considers some imperative constructions in Spanish which are dubbed *rhetorical* because they involve the grammar of imperatives, but their interpretation is not directive in nature. Namely, Bravo (2017: 81-83) discusses that what she calls *rhetorical imperatives* in Spanish involve the morphosyntax of imperatives, but their meaning is declarative as they carry a modal interpretation, as illustrated below by the translation of the Spanish example of a RI in the sense of Bravo in (2).

(2) *¡Ve=te*   tú   a   *encontrar*   un   bar   abierto   a   *estas*
     go.IMP.2SG=yourself   you   to   find.INF   a   bar   open   to   these
     horas!
     hours
     'It is impossible to find a cafeteria open this late (because there are not any cafeterias open).'

                                                                          (from Bravo 2017: 81)

Bravo (2017: 82) discusses that imperatives of the sort of (2) in Spanish do not give "the hearer a reason to act", but rather contain a "modalized assertion", as suggested by the English translation. In particular, Bravo (p. 82) observes that imperatives like the ones in (2) in Spanish involve a change in polarity, just like rhetorical questions, e.g., *Who knows? = Nobody knows*. Namely, the example in (2) does not involve any explicit negation, but it is translated as a negative utterance in English. This change in polarity is precisely what motivates the use of the

rhetorical label in Bravo, or in her words "because of this change in polarity, I will refer to the construction as a rhetorical imperative." (p. 82).

As will be made explicit in the discussion to follow, the RIs in Catalan and German that we consider in the present paper are critically different from the subset of Spanish imperatives analyzed by Bravo in the sense that the imperatives that we dub as *rhetorical* do not involve any change in polarity or a modalized assertion. Rather, the imperatives considered here are rhetorical because the addressee is not expected to follow the directive in the imperative; the speaker makes use of a RI when they want to sarcastically call the addressee's attention to an action the addressee just carried out that has affected the speaker. As a matter of fact, our set of RIs appear to involve the defining properties of a class of imperatives in Japanese that have been classified as rhetorical as well by Ihara and Asano (2020) (see also Asano and Ihara 2019). In this respect, Ihara and Asano (2020) make use of the label *rhetorical* to refer to "utterances which have an imperative form but convey some anti-imperative properties" and "despite their imperative form without any negation, the speaker does not demand action but rather conveys a flavor of 'prohibition' or 'complaint'." (Ihara and Asano 2020: 377). Japanese RIs are illustrated in the example below in (3).

(3)   CONTEXT: The addressee has just told a lie to the speaker.
       Uso   tsuk-e!
       lie   tell-IMP
       '[lit.] Tell me a lie!'
       '= You shouldn't have told me such a lie!'   (not performative)
       '≠ You should tell me a lie.'   (performative)
                                                         (from Ihara and Asano 2020: 377)

Ihara and Asano (2020: 377) discuss that imperatives of the sort in (3) in Japanese are *rhetorical* since they are non-directive, have a negative interpretation and do not involve any performativity. Namely, in the example in (3), Ihara and Asano note that the speaker utters the RI because they want to express their annoyance with the fact that the addressee told a lie.

In what follows, we proceed to outline the defining properties of RIs in Catalan first, and then move on to German, and propose that they constitute a natural subclass of imperatives in these two languages. In particular, we show that RIs in Catalan involve the defining properties of the set of imperatives dubbed rhetorical as well in Japanese in Ihara and Asano (2020). As discussed in detail in Ihara and Asano, these defining properties of RIs are anti-imperative in the sense that they violate some well-established conditions required by CIs (see Kauffman 2012).

2.1 Defining properties of rhetorical imperatives

Catalan RIs critically differ from CIs in several key aspects. First, RIs always carry a sarcastic flavor, since RIs are uttered when the speaker wants to be sarcastic about an action, carried out by the addressee of the RI, that has affected them. This was initially illustrated in the example above in (1) where the speaker utters a RI when they want to draw the addressee's attention to the fact that the addressee has stepped on the speaker's foot. Further consider the example below in (4), in which a RI is also uttered because the speaker ends up being wet as a direct

result of the addressee's sloppiness when playing with balloons. Sarcasm is therefore a defining property of RIs, in contrast to CIs.

(4) CONTEXT: You are sitting on a bench. Some kids are playing around with balloons which they fill with water. A kid accidentally drops one of the balloons nearby and they splash water on you. You then go and tell them:

(Això),	vinga,	**mulleu-me***!
this	INTER	drench.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG

'≈ Drench me in water, why don't you!'
'≠ I want you to drench me in water.'

Sarcasm is evident in scenarios like the ones depicted above in (1) and (4), since in the case of (1) and (4), the speaker is not actually ordering the addressee to step on their foot or to drench them in water. Quite the contrary, RIs are licit since the speaker wants to sarcastically call the addressee out on their action. This can be further illustrated in the following examples, where explicitly stating that the speaker wants the addressee to follow the directive is only felicitous in the case of CIs (5b) but not in the case of RIs (5a) (see Kaufmann 2012; Condoravdi and Lauer 2012; Ihara and Asano 2020). Ihara and Asano (2020) refer to this property as *anti-preferability*, since CIs are uttered when the speaker wants to show their "preference for ϕ over $\neg\phi$" (5b), whereas RIs "show a preference for $\neg\phi$, rather than for ϕ" (5a).

(5) a. RI:

Això,	*vinga,*	***trepitja'm***!	*#Vull /*	*No*
this	INTER	step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG	want.PRS.1SG	no
vull	*que*	*em*	*trepitgis.*	
want.PRS.1SG	that	ACC.1SG	step.PRS.2SG	

"Step on me, why don't you! #I want you to step on me / I don't want you to step on me!"

b. CI:

Trepitja'm!	*Vull /*	*#No*	*vull*	*que*
step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG	want.PRS.1SG	no	want.PRS.1SG	that
em	*trepitgis.*			
ACC.1SG	step.PRS.2SG			

"Step on me! I want you to step on me! / #I don't want you to step on me!"

The second defining property involves agentivity (see Cruse 1973) since CIs have been considered a diagnostic to probe for it (see Lakoff 1966; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995). This is illustrated in the example in (6) which involves two instances of CIs. In this respect, the (a) example is infelicitous since the addressee is an inanimate entity, and hence incompatible with agentivity by definition. Similarly, the (b) example also illustrates that CIs require the addressee to be agentive since expressions such as adverbs like *accidentally* which cancel any agentive interpretation of the addressee are out, in contrast to agent-oriented adverbs such as *carefully,* which reinforce the agentive interpretation.[2]

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[2] As Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 171) discuss, examples of the sort in (6a) are only possible if the rock is anthropomorphized. In this case, inanimate entities would have some degree of agentivity as a result of anthropomorphism, which would in turn make them compatible with CIs as the requirement of agentivity would be then fulfilled.

(6) a. #Roll down the hill, rock! (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 170)
    b. Shoot this target (#by accident/carefully)!

In contrast to CIs, RIs can be licensed in scenarios in which the main action is accidental, as previously illustrated in (1) or (4) above where the stepping on the speaker's foot or the dropping of one of the water balloons is specified to be accidental and the RI is nonetheless felicitous. This can be further illustrated in the example below in (7) where the RI is licit despite the killing being accidental.

(7) CONTEXT: You are playing a video game with Joe, your friend. While playing the video game, you <u>accidentally</u> kill your friend's character in the game. Joe, who has witnessed the whole process, goes and says to you:
    *(Això),   vinga,   **mata'm**!*
    this   INTER   kill.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG
    '≈ Sure, go ahead, kill me, why don't you!'
    '≠ I want you to kill me.'

The third defining property of RIs is related to the observation that RIs tend to be accompanied by cues, which most often involve interjections or particles such as the Catalan interjection *vinga.* Their absence often renders RIs odd since cues provide contextual support to allow for the sarcastic interpretation that RIs carry.[3] We illustrate this in (8) with another example from Catalan, where the absence of cues renders the RI notably marked, though not impossible.[4]

(8) CONTEXT: John takes Sally's favorite plate because he wants to wash it. Unfortunately, when washing the dish, John accidentally breaks it. Sally, who has witnessed the whole process and is a bit upset, goes to John and says …
    *?(Això,   vinga)   **trenca'l**!*
    this   INTER   break.IMP.2SG=ACC.3SG
    '≈ Sure, go ahead, break it, why don't you!'
    '≠ I want you to break the plate.'

We suggest that cues such as interjections make the non-directive interpretation of RIs salient, since the absence of such cues would favor instead the canonical interpretation of the

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[3] An anonymous reviewer questions the relevance of the role of cues such as interjections or particles for obtaining the sarcastic interpretation that RIs have, since there are cases of CIs that also involve particles and are not sarcastic, e.g., *Això, vinga, ataca'm* 'Go on, attack me!', which involves an example of a CI in Catalan uttered in a judo class by the instructor in an attempt to make the student attack him. As we have discussed, we believe that the role of cues is necessary for obtaining the sarcastic interpretation of RIs, but clearly not sufficient. Namely, as discussed above, cues such as particles or interjections favor a RI interpretation in the right contexts, but they are not sufficient, since we still need other conditions for RIs to be possible, as we discuss. In this respect, particles appear to be reinforcers, not triggers, of the rhetorical interpretation, as rightly pointed out by the anonymous reviewer.

[4] As we discuss in section 2.2, bare RIs are indeed possible, at least in German, if RIs are accompanied instead by physical reactions such as gestures, e.g., *rolling one's eyes*. Gestures in this case would provide the contextual support to allow for the sarcastic interpretation in the absence of cues.

imperative indicating a directive. Ihara and Asano (2020) call this non-directive condition of RIs the *anti-directive* property, since even though RIs have the morphosyntax of imperatives, they do not carry any directive. As discussed in detail in Ihara and Asano (2020: 380), that RIs are anti-directive can be explicitly illustrated in the contrasting minimal pairs below in (9), where the utterance *the addressee accepts/refuses the speaker's order* can only be a felicitous answer as a response to a CI, as these convey a directive. The same utterance is therefore non-felicitous as an answer to RIs, since they are not directive in the sense that the addressee carries out the action of the propositional content. Rather, they are only compatible with answers that either confirm or deny the assertion implicit in the RI such as Catalan *Ostres, ho sento* 'Oh, I'm sorry!'

(9) a. RI:

    A: *Això,*   *vinga,*   **trepitja'm!**

        this   INTER   step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG

        'Step on me, why don't you!'

    B: *Ostres,*   *ho*   *sento! /*   *#Accepto*   *l'*   *ordre!*

        INTER   NEUT   feel.PRS.1SG   accept.PRS.1SG   the   order

        'Oh, I'm sorry! / #I accept the order.'

    b. CI:

    A: **Trepitja'm!**

        step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG

        'Step on me!'

    B: *#Ostres,*   *ho*   *sento! /*   *Accepto*   *l'*   *ordre!*

        INTER   NEUT   feel.PRS.1SG   accept.PRS.1SG   the   order

        '#Oh, I'm sorry! / I accept the order.'

The fourth and last defining property of RIs relates to the fact that the event time must be prior to the utterance time of RIs, in contrast to CIs, which are future-oriented. This was illustrated in the previous examples above in (1) and (4), (7) and (8). For instance, in (1), repeated below for convenience as (10), the stepping on the foot is prior to the utterance time of the RI. This is also the case for the other examples in (4), (7) and (8).

(10) CONTEXT: You are walking together with Joe, your friend, who accidentally steps on your foot without realizing it as he is talking on the phone. To make him aware of it, you go and say to him in a snarky way:

     Això,   *vinga,*   **trepitja'm***!*

     this,   INTER,   step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG

     '≈ Step on me, why don't you!'

     '≠ I want you to step on me.'

This strongly suggests that RIs need to be anchored in a previous recent event as they provide a sarcastic follow up on it. RIs contrast then with CIs since CIs do not require the event time to be prior to utterance time. Namely, as discussed in Ihara and Asano (2020), in CIs "the speaker presupposes that an event of an imperative must occur in the future time (Kaufmann 2012)", whereas RIs require the opposite pattern. This can be explicitly illustrated in the examples below, by employing the diagnostic as laid out in Ihara and Asano (2020: 378) which consists of providing the follow up *Why have you done x?* This utterance describes that the

event of the imperative has already taken place and is therefore only felicitous with RIs (11a) since CIs are future-oriented (Kaufmann 2012). Ihara and Asano (2020: 378) call this property *anti-future-orientativity* as the event time of the RI needs to be previous to the utterance time of the RI.[5]

(11) a. RI: *Això, vinga, **trepitja'm**!* *Per què m' has*
            this INTER step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG for what ACC.1SG have.PRS.2SG
            trepitjat?
            step.PTCP
            'Step on me, why don't you! Why have you stepped on me?'
      b. CI: ***Trepitja'm**!* *#Per què m' has*
            step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG for what ACC.1SG have.PRS.2SG
            trepitjat?
            step.PTCP
            Intended: 'Step on me! Why have you stepped on me?'

Further evidence in this respect comes from the observation that only CIs (12a), but not RIs (12b), allow for an *I hereby remind you (not) to* reading, where *hereby* serves as a test for performativity (Austin 1962). This is relevant since, according to Asano and Ihara (2020), RIs do not seem to be performative, unlike CIs, as illustrated above in (3).

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[5] As an anonymous reviewer rightly points out, there are examples of RIs with an apparent future interpretation, since the action that the RIs describe is to take place in the future, just like CIs. This is illustrated by examples of the following sort (we are grateful to Josep M. Fontana for drawing our attention to this type of examples):

(i) CONTEXT: Joan, who has been quite a pain in the neck during the whole morning, starts coughing uncontrollably. You are quite upset with him, and when you see he can't stop coughing, you go and tell him in a snarky way:
      *Vinga, això, i ara **mor-te**!*
      INTER this and now die.IMP.2SG=REFL.2SG
      '≈ Yeah, and to top things off, go and die now!'
      '≠ I want you to die.'

As the reviewer notes, examples of this sort involve a RI with a future orientation, since the action that the RI describes, i.e., that of *dying*, is yet to take place. These examples contrast with the examples of RIs that we have considered thus far, since in the previous examples, the action that RIs describe does indeed take place before the RIs is uttered, cf. (1). While it is true that examples of the sort of in (i) are not future-oriented in the strict sense, or in the original sense of Ihara and Asano (2020), we wish to capitalize on the fact that, in our approach, RIs are anti-future oriented since they need to be anchored in a previous action/event; this is a restriction that is not shared by CIs, which are clearly future-oriented. By anti-future orientation we mean that the temporal structure of the proposition embedded in the RI in a case like *Vinga, això, trepitja'm* '≈ Step on me, why don't you!' (cf. (1)) refers to an action that has already occurred, not one that is about to occur. Thus, the utterance is not projecting a future event but rather responding sarcastically to a past one—this is what we mean by anti-future orientation. Analogously, in the example in (i), the *coughing* has taken place and is the action that licenses the RI which provides in turn a sarcastic follow up on such an action. In short, and as we have been discussing, RIs are anti-future oriented in the sense that in order to be licensed, they require an action previous to the utterance time of the RI.

(12) a. CI: *A*　　　　*continuació*　　*et*　　　　*recordo*　　　　*que*
　　　　　　　in　　　　continuation　　DAT.2SG　　remind.PRS.1SG　　that
　　　　　　　no　　　*em*　　　　　*trepitgis*
　　　　　　　no　　　　ACC.1SG　　　step.PRS.2sg
　　　　　　　'I hereby remind you not to step on my foot.'

　　　b. RI: *#A*　　　*continuació*　　*et*　　　　*recordo*　　　　*que*
　　　　　　　in　　　　continuation　　DAT.2SG　　remind.PRS.1SG　　that
　　　　　　　això　　*vinga*　　*no*　　*em*　　　　*trepitgis.*
　　　　　　　this　　　INTER　　*no*　　ACC.1SG　　step.PRS.2SG
　　　　　　　Intended: 'I hereby remind you not to step on my foot, why don't you!'

In short, in this section we have observed that Catalan RIs present completely distinct characteristics than CIs. Namely, their characterizing properties are anti-imperative in nature, as RIs violate some well-established conditions on the licensing of CIs. In particular, we have identified four characterizing properties that set RIs apart as a distinct subclass of imperatives in Catalan. First, RIs always carry a sarcastic interpretation as they provide a sarcastic follow up on a previous action that has affected the speaker, who utters a RI to draw the attention of the addressee to that action. Second, RIs are compatible with non-agentive interpretations as they do not require the addressee to be agentive. Third, RIs are generally accompanied by cues such as interjections which provide the contextual support to allow for the sarcastic interpretation. Four and last, RIs need to be anchored in a previous event, since they are uttered when the speaker wants to provide a snarky comment about a previous action that has affected them. We therefore conclude that RIs in Catalan constitute a subclass of imperatives distinct from CIs since CIs are neutral with respect to sarcastic interpretations, require the addressee to be agentive, do not need to be accompanied by cues such as interjections and do not need to be anchored in a previous event as CIs are future-oriented (Kauffman 2012).[6]

In the next section, we provide evidence that RIs are not exclusive to Romance as they are also present in a typologically unrelated language, namely German.

2.2 Crosslinguistic evidence

In German, RIs prefer to be accompanied by cues as well such as the interjections *ja (klar)*, *jaja, joa* '≈ yes/ sure/ yeah yeah', with a falling intonation, or modal particles like *halt* '≈ simply'. Consider this in the example below in (13). These cues or modal particles favor the sarcastic interpretation or resigned tone, prominently marked by a falling prosody, that RIs carry with them. For instance, in the example below in (13), the speaker is sarcastically ordering

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[6] An anonymous reviewer notes that at least some RIs may bear superficial similarities to so-called *weak imperatives* in tone and structure, i.e., imperative utterances that function not as commands but as invitations, offers, or polite suggestions (e.g., *Have a cookie!*, *Come in!*, see Portner 2018). These imperatives are typically characterized by low directive force and are often interpreted as reflecting the addressee's interests or preferences rather than the speaker's authority, and it is conceivable that they could be treated as part of a broader family of non-canonical imperatives. While this is a promising direction, particularly in relation to recent semantic and pragmatic models of force and commitment, we leave a detailed comparison between rhetorical and weak imperatives for future research.

the addressee to eat all the potatoes as they are realizing that the addressee is actually eating all of them and the speaker will end up eating none.

(13) CONTEXT: You are splitting patatas bravas with your friend Martin. Since he has not eaten anything all day, he accidentally ends up eating your portion; in response, you say:

??(Ja	*klar/*	*Joa)*	***iss***	*??(gleich)*	*die*	*ganze*	*Portion.*
yes	sure	yeah	eat.IMP.2SG	immediately	the	whole	portion

'≈ Sure, go ahead, eat the whole portion!'
'≠ I want you to eat the whole portion.'

In the previous section, we tentatively suggested that the presence of cues is actually expected since they provide the necessary contextual support to license the sarcastic interpretation of a directive like an imperative. Evidence for this comes from the observation that bare RIs in German are possible only if they are accompanied by physical reactions like gestures such as *rolling one's eyes, shrugging one's shoulders* etc., as illustrated by the example in (14).

(14) CONTEXT: Your clumsy friend admires your recently crafted Lego structure and decides to retrieve it from the shelf. However, regrettably, it slips from their grasp, falling to the ground and resulting in its disassembly; in response, you say:

#(Rolls eyes)	***Mach's***	*kaputt!*
	make.IMP.2SG=ACC.3SG	break.PTCP

'≈ Yeah sure, break it!'
'≠ I want you to break it.'

This shows that RIs require contextual support to license sarcasm, otherwise the unmarked interpretation of the imperative, i.e., that of a canonical directive, is more salient, and although contextual support most often comes from verbal interjections such as Catalan *vinga*, in the absence of these, gestures can also provide it, therefore licensing the RI.

German RIs are also *anti-directive* (Ihara and Asano 2020), since they involve the German morphosyntax of imperatives, but they do not require the addressee of the imperative to act on the directive. This can be explicitly illustrated by making use of the diagnostic laid out by Ihara and Asano (2020: 380), which was discussed above when considering Catalan RIs in (9) and involves the utterance *the addressee accepts/refuses the speaker's order*, which can only be a felicitous follow up as a response to a CI, since only CIs are directive in nature. In German, RIs are only compatible with follow ups that confirm or deny the assertion contained in the RI, such as the German translational equivalent of Catalan *Ostres, ho sento* 'Oh, I'm sorry!'. Consider (15) below.

(15) a. RI:

A:	*Klar,*	***tritt***	*mir*	*halt*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß!*
	clear	step.IMP.2SG	DAT.1SG	MP	on	the	foot

'Step on me, why don't you!'

B:	*Oh,*	*tut*	*mir*	*leid! /*	*#Jawohl!*
	INTER	does	DAT.1SG	bad	yes

'Oh, I'm sorry! / #Sure, of course!'

b. CI:

A:	**Tritt**	*mir*	*halt*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß!*
	step.IMP.2SG	DAT.1SG	MP	on	the	foot

'Step on me!'

B:	*#Oh,*	*tut*	*mir*	*leid! /*	*Jawohl!*
	INTER	does	DAT.1SG	bad	yes

'#Oh, I'm sorry! / Sure, of course!'

In German, RIs do not require the event time to be prior to utterance time, i.e., they are not future-oriented, in contrast to CIs, as discussed above in detail (cf. Kauffman 2012). This was previously illustrated in the example in (13), where the event time of eating the potatoes is prior to utterance time, since RIs are uttered when the speaker wants to sarcastically call the addressee out on an action they just carried out that has somehow affected the speaker. That RIs in German are not future-oriented, as in Catalan, can be explicitly illustrated by resorting to the diagnostic laid out in Ihara and Asano (2020: 378), as discussed above when considering RIs in Catalan (11), which shows that RIs involve the property of *anti-future-orientativity*. Namely, follow ups of the *Why have you done x?* or *What was that all about?* sort are only felicitous with RIs, since these utterances specify that the event in the imperative has already taken place.

(16) a. RI:

Klar,	**tritt**	*mir*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß.*	*[pause]*	*Was*
clear	step.IMP.2SG	DAT.1SG	on	the	foot		what

sollte	*das*	*denn?*
should	that	PART

'≈ Step on me, why don't you! What was that all about?'

b. CI:

Tritt	*mir*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß!*	*[pause]*	*#?Was*	*sollte*
step.IMP.2SG	DAT.1SG	on	the	foot		what	should

das	*denn?*
that	PART

'Step on me! #What was that all about?'

German RIs also involve the *anti-preferability* property. Namely, as illustrated by the Catalan examples similar to those in (5), RIs are uttered when the speaker wants to signal their preference for ¬ϕ, rather than for ϕ, in contrast to CIs, where the speaker's preference is for ϕ over ¬ϕ (Ihara and Asano 2020). Note that in (17a), the speaker uses a cue such as *nee im Ernst jetzt* '≈ no, seriously' to switch from being sarcastic to being serious about their sincere wishes towards the addressee.

(17) a. RI:

Ja	*klar*	**tritt**	*mir*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß.*	*Nee*	*im*
yes	clear	step.IMP.2SG	DAT.2SG	on	the	foot	no	in.DAT

Ernst	*jetzt,*	*ich*	*will*	*#(nicht)*	*dass*	*du*
seriousness	now	I	want.PRS.1SG	not	that	you

mir	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß*	*trittst.[7]*
DAT.2SG	on	the	foot	step.PRS.2SG

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[7] The utterance sounds even more natural if the speaker makes a brief pause between the RI and the transition to their sincere wish.

'≈ Step on me, why don't you! I #(don't) want you to step on me!'

b. CI: ***Tritt*** *mir auf den Fuß! Ich will*
step.IMP.2SG DAT.2SG on the foot I want.PRS.1SG
(#nicht) dass du mir auf den Fuß trittst.
not that you DAT.2SG on the *foot* step.PRS.2SG
'Step on me! I (#don't) want you to step on me!'

German RIs are also compatible with non-agentive interpretations of the addressee. Recall that this is relevant since agentivity has been considered a property required by CIs (cf. Lakoff 1966; Cruse 1973; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995). Namely, as illustrated in the examples above in (6), repeated below for convenience as (18), CIs require the addressee of the directive to qualify as an entity compatible with agentive interpretations. Consequently, examples of CIs where the addressee is an inanimate entity (18a) or an entity that is not acting agentively are not possible (18b).

(18)   a. #Roll down the hill, rock! (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995: 170)
         b. Shoot this target (#by accident/carefully)!

Just like Catalan RIs, in German RIs can also be licensed in scenarios in which the main action is accidental (19) where the RI is possible even though the killing is specified to be accidental. This strongly suggests then that in both Catalan and German, RIs are not restricted to agentive interpretations of the addressee, in contrast to CIs.

(19)   CONTEXT: You are playing a video game with Joe, your friend. While playing the video game, you <u>accidentally</u> kill your friend's character in the game. Joe, who has witnessed the whole process, goes and says to you:
         Klar ***bring*** *mich um!*
         clear kill.IMP.2SG ACC.1SG PART
         '≈ Sure, go ahead, kill me, why don't you!
         '≠ I want you to kill me.'

In sum, in this section we have observed that German RIs also present completely distinct characteristics than CIs. As discussed above, the defining properties of RIs in both German and Catalan are anti-imperative in nature, as RIs also violate some well-established conditions on the licensing of CIs (cf. Kauffman 2012).[8]

Before moving on to the next section, we wish to consider a further property of RIs that has not yet been explicitly addressed, but which aligns them with rhetorical questions, namely their capacity to undergo a polarity shift. In particular, RIs may occur in negated form, without expressing prohibition or instruction not to carry out an action. Rather, these negated RIs serve

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[8] We wish to note here that the properties of RIs discussed so far also apply to speech acts beyond directives such as constatives. For instance, in the contexts of (4), (6), (7), and (8), the speaker may also perform an assertion instead, i.e., *Na das hast du aber toll gemacht!* '≈ Wow, you did well!' in German and '*Oh! Molt bé!*' 'Oh, well done!' in Catalan, which both give a strong sarcastic flavor. We leave this open for future research.

to highlight that the action has in fact occurred—or failed to occur—thereby conveying a sarcastic or reproachful assertion. In this respect, consider the Catalan (20) and German (21) examples, where the speaker ironically criticizes the addressee for not greeting them.

(20)   *Això,*   **no**   *em*   **saludis,**   **no***!*
       this   NEG   ACC.1SG   greet.PRS.2SG.SBJV   NEG
       '≈ Oh sure, don't say hi or anything!'
       '≠ I don't want you to greet me.'

(21)   *Joa,*   *grüß*   *mich*   *halt*   **nicht***!*
       yeah   greet.IMP.2SG   ACC.1SG   MP   NEG
       '≈ Oh sure, don't say hi or anything!'
       '≠ I don't want you to greet me.'

Here, the imperatives *no em saludis* or *grüß mich halt nicht* cannot be interpreted as a genuine directive or prohibition. Rather, it functions as a rhetorical device: the speaker does not expect a change in the addressee's behavior, but instead calls attention to a norm breach – in this case, the failure to perform an expected greeting. The use of negation here reinforces the discrepancy between social expectations and reality, yielding a sarcastic interpretation that parallels that of rhetorical questions, e.g., *Who cares?* ≈ 'Nobody cares'. In this respect, such negated RIs further support the anti-imperative nature of the construction: they do not convey speaker preference for ¬ϕ (as they would in run-off-the-mill directives), but rather draw attention to the fact that ¬ϕ already holds, despite a shared expectation for ϕ. Crucially, this polarity shift can be subsumed under our broader analysis of RIs as reactions to norm violations and inconsistent commitments (see section 3). Even in their negative form, RIs are licensed not by the speaker's desire to prohibit an action, but by the existence of a clash due to inconsistencies in behavior: the addressee's actual behavior is inconsistent with a mutually assumed norm. We therefore take such cases to constitute further evidence that RIs are not merely imperatives with a sarcastic tone, but a functionally distinct subclass whose interpretation crucially hinges on inconsistency in commitments, as discussed in detail in the next section.

3. A normative analysis
3.1 Commitments
Before laying out our analysis, we would first like to clear up our understanding of commitments, as this term has been used quite extensively in linguistic literature but often interpreted in various ways. Here, we resort to the view dating back to Hamblin (1970) which has been built on in subsequent work (e.g., Gazdar 1981; Lyons 1995; Gunlogson 2001; Geurts 2019a, 2019b; Shapiro 2020; Krifka 2021, 2023, among others). In particular, we depart from the idea that commitments are "a form of expectation management" (Geurts 2019: 3) with respect to the utterances that a speaker undertakes through speech acts (Searle 1969; Austin 1975; Geurts 2019; Krifka 2022) or non-linguistic actions (Hamblin 1987; Walton and Krabbe 1995; Geurts 2019). Geurts (2024) suggests calling the former discursive and the latter non-discursive commitments, which he describes as follows:

Here we are primarily concerned with commitments, which may be subdivided in various ways, two of which deserve special mention. One is the distinction between discursive and non-discursive commitments, which govern linguistic and non-linguistic acts, respectively. For example, if Fred promised Wilma to mow the lawn, he is non-discursively committed to mowing the lawn and he is discursively committed to refrain from saying or implying that he will not mow the lawn.

In the sense of expectation management, then, both discursive and non-discursive commitments crucially serve as an orientation for both conversation participants to monitor their consistency in their social interactions, which brings up further implications. One of them is the case where a proposition that somebody is committed to turns out to be false (Krifka 2023). Another one is that a speaker simply holds contradictory commitments (Geurts 2019). In both cases, the committer has to take responsibility for such inconsistencies. On such a view, commitments also obtain a normative character. Geurts (2019: 15) says:

> Commitments are interpersonal relationships that are established in the wake of our social activities, and it is entirely possible to engage in the game of sharing and acting on commitments without knowing one's commitments or others', and indeed without knowing what commitments are.

In a different vein, the above quote alludes to the claim that commitments need not be explicitly negotiated or shared. In fact, commitments can also be agreed upon implicitly (Geurts 2019: 3). Geurts (2019: 19) also argues that shared or mutual commitments, whether implicit or explicit, constitute Common Ground (CG). That is, "construing it as a set of mutual commitments entails that common ground is a normative construct, which not only supports but also constrains actions, and thus helps to coordinate them" (Geurts 2019: 19). As a consequence of this constraint, performing any actions that are inconsistent with our mutual commitments brings social consequences. Take the following example from Geurts (2024) which describes a case of implicit mutual commitments:

> Human sociality is intensely normative. We habitually treat each other as having normative statuses: commitments, responsibilities, permissions, and so forth [...] For example, when I get into a taxi, my normative status and the drivers are thereby augmented with commitments that didn't exist a moment ago: I am now supposed to inform the driver about my destination, he is supposed to take me there, I am supposed to pay him for that service, and so on.

In such a setting, the passenger and the taxi driver tacitly share several commitments which amounts to them sharing a CG. We can imagine that this CG would probably consist of but is not limited to (shared) commitments to act on ϕ = ⟦the taxi driver is supposed to bring the passenger to their destination of their choice⟧, for instance. Assuming that the driver would assert *I won't drive you to your destination* without giving any plausible explanation, they would hold a (discursive) commitment that is inconsistent with ϕ. By the same token, the driver bringing the passenger to a wrong destination, a non-discursive commitment, would be equally inconsistent with ϕ. So far, we have seen that regardless of whether commitments are shared or not, a speaker that is committed "is obliged to maintain consistency" (Hamblin 1970: 257; see also Geurts 2019) with respect to their other commitments.

Last, we want to stress here that commitments are not to be confused with attitudes which primarily display a relation between individuals and propositions, unlike commitments, which on top are relativized to others, as Geurts (2019) argues. Even beyond views that put less stress on the interindividual aspect, commitments always imply a social relation to surface in one way or another. While most if not all views on commitments have in common that they try to distinguish themselves from attitudes, such as beliefs, they do so in different ways (Tuzet 2006; Venant and Asher 2015; Krifka 2022, 2023; Geurts 2019, 2024). For instance, Venant and Asher (2015) treat commitments as a state between individuals and propositions, and while it misses out the relational component from Geurts (2019), it sets them apart from beliefs in that they describe commitments as immediately verifiable through the speech acts that cause them (Venant & Asher 2015: 598). Krifka (2022) also defines commitments as an attributive rather than a relational state in which an individual vouches for the truth of a proposition (see also Tuzet 2006; Shapiro 2020). The social component still comes up when Krifka (2023) explains that a speaker is to blame when the proposition a speaker is committed to turns out to be false. Apart from these different interpretations, what all of the above have in common is that commitments are intended to make the consistency of an individual's verifiable actions measurable in social interactions and be able to display inconsistencies in the committer's actions and vindicate social sanctions.

3.1 A Note on Ihara and Asano's (2020) approach

We depart from Ihara and Asano (2020: 386) that RIs "are imperatives whose contents are known to both the speaker and the addressee; in other words, imperatives in which the content of the request is part of the common ground".[9] Let us discuss this assumption in more detail.

Note first that Ihara and Asano propose an idea of CG that is based on the table model by Farkas and Bruce (2010). This model builds on the assumption that assertions are not immediately contributing propositions to the CG but are rather received as proposals to update the CG. What is relevant to us here at the moment is the modelization of CG. In Ihara's and Asano's analysis, CG is merely a set of propositions, i.e., "the set of all propositions that all discourse participants commit to" (Ihara and Asano 2020: 381; see also Farkas and Bruce 2010: 85). Even though the term commitment is quite prominent in this model, commitments as such do not materialize formally in the conceptualization of a CG. Namely, the CG in the table model does not formally differentiate between propositions and commitments to propositions by discourse participants. Discourse participants' commitments are separately put in a set of discourse commitments, the set that represents the propositions each discourse participant is publicly committed to. However, even in this set, we do not find any formalization of a commitment either, only propositions.

Without going too much into the details of the table model, we would like to allude to some issues with this account, apart from not formalizing commitments itself. For instance, it has been argued by Krifka (2015, 2022, 2023) that in a table model, "no record of S[peaker]$_1$'s initial move is kept if S$_2$ does not accept it" (Krifka 2022: 97). While non-acceptance is not as relevant here, the issue also expands to cases of acceptance. That is, the table model does not

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[9] Ihara and Asano (2020) draw parallels to previous observations for rhetorical questions whose answers are already in the CG (Caponigro and Sprouse 2007).

trace back the origin to the speaker who committed to a proposition, thus making it difficult to blame them in case it turns out to be false. For our endeavor, we think that this "blame" if a proposition turns out to be false or inconsistencies in commitments arise is necessary to properly address the licensing conditions for RIs. Especially our case in (15), repeated below as (22), suggests that the stepper mitigates the social consequences for their actions as they immediately take the blame for the commitments that come with their actions and are incompatible with previous commitments that B has.[10]

(22) a. RI:

	A:	*Klar,*	***tritt***	*mir*	*halt*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß!*
		clear	step.IMP.2SG	DAT.1SG	MP	on	the	foot

'Step on me, why don't you!'

	B:	*Oh,*	*tut*	*mir*		*leid! /*	*#Jawohl!*
		INTER	does	DAT.1SG		bad	yes

'Oh, I'm sorry! / #Sure, of course!'

b. CI:

	A:	***Tritt***	*mir*	*halt*	*auf*	*den*	*Fuß!*
		step.IMP.2SG	DAT.1SG	MP	on	the	foot

'Step on me!'

	B:	*#Oh,*	*tut*	*mir*	*leid! /*	*Jawohl!*
		INTER	does	DAT.1SG	bad	yes

'#Oh, I'm sorry! / Sure, of course!'

Taking the blame in (22), however, could only really happen if inconsistencies in terms of commitments arise. B must have done something that is violating a previous commitment that they made before. As far as things are standing, if the content of the imperative is "known to both speaker and addressee", this merely expresses that it is the case that the addressee stepped on the speaker's foot without suggesting any inconsistencies in terms of commitments. Thus, in terms of CG, this is not sufficient for licensing a RI, which is why Ihara and Asano propose that RIs express the utterer's preference of ϕ over $\neg\phi$. Even if this may seem plausible, it ultimately shifts the problem as it calls for the question of where preferences even come from, making it an *ad hoc* assumption for licensing RIs. Moreover, under such an analysis, an apology would remain unmotivated, since preferences on the part of one party could always be ignored, which does not come into play in everyday situations and especially those in which social agents are usually cooperative. As a result, Ihara and Asano's account does not tell us much about the interrelation between the speaker and the addressee in terms of the commitments they (tacitly) share.

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[10] It is crucial to note that, unlike beliefs, commitments may occur through passive uptake. Roughly speaking, passive uptake means unintentionally or accidentally endorsing a content. This is something that is not possible with beliefs, e.g., *"I accidentally believe in God"* is infelicitous, unless used to report a past belief that has since been abandoned. As for commitments, this is different. For instance, we can unconsciously commit to things *qua* actions: crossing a country's border may commit us to its laws, and signing a contract without reading it still binds us to its clauses. Example (21) illustrates this: Joe performs an action (stepping on his friend's foot) and, whether he intends it or not, becomes committed *qua* action to ⟦I stepped on my friend's foot⟧. The resulting inconsistency arises from a previous tacit, socially shared commitment to ⟦We don't step on each other's feet⟧, which we take as a default presumption in human interaction in most if not all cases.

We think that what Ihara and Asano formulate as the speaker's preference calls for further expansion to motivate such preference in the first place. Having a model in which we merely assume ϕ to be in the CG is not sufficient for doing that, as we briefly pointed out above. Hence, what we need is a model that assumes CG itself to be a more complex set that not only comprises propositions but also commitments to these propositions of the parties involved to trace back commitments in the CG (Cohen and Krifka 2011, 2014; García-Carpintero 2015, Geurts 2024). Such issues were solved in the alternative model of Commitment Spaces, which captures developments of the CGs (Cohen and Krifka 2014; Krifka 2021, 2022, 2024). In this view, we make it clear that in a case such as (1), the stepper, Joe, committed to something that stands in direct contradiction to something he is committed to already and as such, licenses the speaker to use a RI.[11]

3.3 RIs as reactions to normative breaches
The preliminary thoughts in the previous section motivate us to draw more attention to the normative pragmatic perspective in general and commitments in particular (Hamblin 1971; Gazdar 1981; Cohen and Krifka 2014, Geurts 2019a, b, among others). Here, we would like to postulate that RIs are licensed not simply because the propositional content of the RI is in the CG, but rather because one discourse participant did something that caused a commitment to a proposition that is inconsistent with the commitments in the CG that two participants share. This crucially differs from Ihara and Asano (2020) insofar that RIs are imperatives whose contents are not subject to mutual commitments but rather that one party holds a commitment that is being inconsistent with previous commitments that both parties already share.

Let us start by providing a formalization of CG as sets of propositions and shared commitments. Here, we resort to Cohen and Krifka (2014) and follow-up literature. Cohen and Krifka conceptualize CG as a Commitment State (CSt), which is not only a set of propositions but also a set of commitments (see also García-Carpintero 2015 for a similar view on CG). Unlike CGs, which are typically modelled as sets of propositions, "commitment states are richer; for example, with assertive commitments, they also keep track of the participants that asserted a proposition and hence are responsible for its truth" (Cohen and Krifka 2014: 48); we will use CSt and CG interchangeably here. The consequence for this extended view on CG is that it not only comprises ϕ, but also commitments to ϕ, for which we use the shorthand, $S \vdash \phi$; the turnstile symbol '$\vdash$' expresses that a speaker S is committed to ϕ (Krifka 2024). Thus, treating CG as a set of commitments and propositions, the CSt c_0 in (23) describes a CG between S(peaker)$_2$ and S(peaker)$_2$. Here, S_1 and S_2 are mutually committed to ϕ, which also results in ϕ itself being in the CSt c_0 (see Krifka 2021, 2022 for more details of such an account).[12]

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[11] (1) also displays another aspect, namely that of non-linguistic actions that nonetheless have an impact on the licensing of an RI. That is, in (1), Joe uttered something that would manifest itself as a commitment being part of the CG, as we show later.

[12] An anonymous reviewer notes that modelling the CG as a set of propositions and commitments appears to be conceptually odd, and since in our model commitments do most of the explanatory work, they note that it is not self-evident why propositions are needed in the first place. In this respect, including propositions still serves an important conceptual role, which becomes salient in cases where a proposition p is merely accepted into the CG without any speaker explicitly committing to its truth. In such cases, p is treated as a shared assumption for the purposes of the conversation, but it does not entail social accountability. This is important in our view because

(23) $c_0 = \{S_1 \vdash \phi, S_2 \vdash \phi, \phi\}$

Thus, in any conversation between S_1 and S_2 where (23) holds, both S_1 and S_2 are committed to ϕ, such that neither S_1, nor S_2 may commit to $\neg\phi$, as they would hold inconsistent commitments. In everyday life, this would simply mean that both S_1 and S_2 share a CG and should not act to whatever contradicts what they are (mutually) committed to. For instance, if S_1 sincerely asserted $\neg\phi$, then S_2 would be able to call S_1 out on their contradictory commitment or question S_1's commitment because S_1 would then hold commitments to both ϕ and $\neg\phi$, which is inconsistent. Thus, in (23), it is not only CG that $\phi \in c_0$ but also that S_1 and S_2 are mutually committed to $\phi = $ ⟦Nobody should step on each other's foot⟧, i.e., $S_1 \vdash \phi \in c_0$, and $S_2 \vdash \phi \in c_0$.

The same mechanisms apply if we go back to our initial example in (1) from Catalan, which we repeat once again in (24).

(24) CONTEXT: You are walking together with Joe, your friend, who accidentally steps on your foot without realizing it as he is talking on the phone. To make him aware of it, you go and say to him in a snarky way:

*Això,   vinga,   **trepitja'm**!*
this,   INTER,   step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG
'≈ Step on me, why don't you!'
'≠ I want you to step on me.'

In terms of commitments, Joe performed an action that, following our view on in section 3.1, causes him to be (non-discursively) committed to $\psi = $ ⟦Joe steps on the speaker's foot⟧.[13] Yet, we still do not see that any inconsistencies arise for Joe which is why we need to provide a motivation for RIs to be licensed. Let us now take for granted that both Joe and the speaker have been brought up in similar cultural environments and imbued with the same norms such that they know how to normally behave in public in general and engage in a conversation while taking a walk in particular. As Geurts (2024) suggested for his taxi example, both Joe's and the speaker's normative status are augmented with commitments such as not stepping on each other's feet, among other things. Assuming that Joe is S_1 and the speaker is S_2, this would then mean that, in our given situation in (24), it is CG between S_1 and S_2 that they are mutually committed to something along the lines of $\phi = $ ⟦Nobody should step on each other's foot⟧. Thus, the CG between Joe and the speaker prior to the utterance time of (24) corresponds to

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acknowledging or accepting *p* in the CG is not the same as vouching for its truth, i.e., committing to it. A speaker can allow *p* into the CG (e.g., by not contesting it) without bearing responsibility for its truth. If *p* later turns out to be false, no social consequences follow unless someone had actively committed to it. By contrast, if a speaker *does* commit to *p*, they are accountable for its truth and may be expected to justify or retract the claim if it fails. In this sense, propositions in CG track the informational state of the discourse, while commitments track social or pragmatic stakes (Cohen and Krifka 2011, 2014; see García-Carpintero 2015 for further contexts in which this distinction makes sense). Removing propositions would conflate these two dimensions, potentially obscuring important pragmatic distinctions. See Buchczyk this volume, García-Carpintero (2015), Cohen and Krifka (2011, 2014), for further details.

[13] Note that on this view, there is no conflict between merely S_1 being committed to ϕ and mutual knowledge of ϕ between S_1 and S_2. As we fully concentrate on commitments here, we leave the complexity of including knowledge and similar cognitive states with respect to CG out of the equation. As Geurts (2024) notes, cognitive states such as beliefs do not imply commitments, whereas commitments usually imply beliefs.

(23). This brings us back to the situation where Joe non-discoursively commits to ψ = ⟦Joe steps on the speaker's foot⟧. What stands out immediately is that φ and ψ are incompatible because Joe is now committed to ⟦Nobody should step on each other's foot⟧ and ⟦Joe steps on the speaker's foot⟧ *qua* non-discursive commitment. This results in an inconsistency. But note as well that (24) suggests even more than that. Clark (2006: 130) would call (24) a case of participatory commitment which captures the spirit of a shared commitment. Violating such a commitment brings consequences beyond the individual level which he describes as follows:

> Suppose you and I agree to meet for coffee at noon [...] If, finally, you and I are jointly committed and I unilaterally change my mind or fail, I expect you to hold me responsible not only for my individual failure but for subverting our joint action—what we would have accomplished jointly.

Thus, given the CG that S_1 and S_2 share in (24), Joe is now held responsible not only for his "individual failure" of stepping on my foot, but for "subverting our joint action" of keeping our feet under control such that we do not step on each other's feet. Let us call such a situation of subverting a joint action a *norm breach*. This norm breach now is what licenses the speaker to resort to an RI. The speaker may now scold Joe for his social rule infraction, and sarcasm– which is part of both Catalan and German RIs– is a possible remedy to do so. In short, we assume that S_1 and S_2 share a CG; however, this CG is evoked by a normative status which precludes us from hurting each other, for instance. Qua non-discursive commitment, S_1 becomes committed to something that violates our tacitly established CG *qua* normative statues which entails a much longer list of commitments than we described here in our simplified case.[14] What further supports this view of a norm breach is the case in (9a) from Catalan, once again repeated in (25a). Based on Ihara and Asano's analysis, B's apology would be unmotivated.

(25) a. RI:

    A: *Això,*   *vinga,*   ***trepitja'm!***
        this   INTER   step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG
        'Step on me, why don't you!'
    B: *Ostres,*   *ho*   *sento!* /   *#Accepto*   *l'*   *ordre!*
        INTER   NEUT   feel.PRS.1SG   accept.PRS.1SG   the   order
        'Oh, I'm sorry! / #I accept your order.'

    b. CI:

    A: ***Trepitja'm!***
        step.IMP.2SG=ACC.1SG
        'Step on me!'
    B: *#Ostres,*   *ho*   *sento!* /   *Accepto*   *l'*   *ordre!*
        INTER   NEUT   feel.PRS.1SG   accept.PRS.1SG   the   Order
        '#Oh, I'm sorry! / I accept your order.'

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[14] This could go from not belching or farting in public to not killing each other. While this might seem trivial, it is not, as such commitments arise not only from social convention but also from laws and other social rules, for instance.

Note here the same normative status discussed before and B commits to $\psi = \llbracket$A steps on the speaker's foot$\rrbracket$. Again, B holds commitments that are inconsistent with ϕ. Given such a situation, B is now held responsible for their actions and has to mitigate the social sanctions that follow from stepping on A's foot. Such a mitigation can be done by B if they apologize, which is a felicitous follow-up to an RI, as predicted by our approach.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the nature of RIs in Catalan and German. We have observed that they form a distinct subclass of imperatives which involve anti-imperative properties. Unlike CIs, RIs are inherently sarcastic, non-directive, and anchored in a prior event that constitutes a breach of norms or contradiction of a shared commitment. We have argued that RIs emerge as a reaction to such breaches, and function as pragmatic tools to highlight and call attention to the addressee's prior actions. By examining their distribution, we identified four core properties that distinguish RIs from CIs: (i) their sarcastic nature, (ii) their compatibility with accidental actions, (iii) their reliance on cues such as interjections or gestures to reinforce their non-directive interpretation, and (iv) their requirement for a past-event anchoring as they are not future-oriented, in contrast to CIs. These properties, which we have shown to hold across Catalan and German, align with the behavior of RIs in Japanese, further supporting the crosslinguistic validity of this phenomenon.

From a theoretical perspective, we have proposed that the licensing of RIs is best understood within the framework of normative pragmatics, particularly in relation to commitments. Unlike previous accounts that describe RIs as merely expressing the speaker's preference, we have argued that RIs arise when an addressee's action creates an inconsistency between their prior commitments and their behavior. This pragmatic inconsistency serves as the trigger for the licensing of RIs. Ultimately, our analysis underscores the importance of considering imperatives not only as directive speech acts but also as complex pragmatic tools that speakers use to navigate through social interactions. By situating RIs within a broader framework of commitments that different normative statuses bring, RIs might prove useful in understanding how language reflects and regulates human behavior in social contexts.

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