



1. Directive motion as a discourse marker

Greek imperative form *ela* of the deictic motion verb 'come' serves a unique and multifaceted role in communication, functioning both as a directive imperative and as a discourse marker with multiple interpretations.

In its imperative form, *ela* translates to 'come' and is often utilized to issue direct commands or requests. Used as a marker, *ela* signals transitions, encourages participation, and creates informal rapport between speakers (Mackridge, 2010).

Similar phenomena in other languages: The Spanish imperative 'venga' which also translates to 'come' is frequently employed not just as a directive but also as a discourse marker to invite participation or signal agreement within dialogue (Daniels, 2014). In Arabic, "yela" (يالا), 'come on' performs overlapping functions as both a directive and a discourse marker, thus facilitating smoother interactions (Al-Kayed, 2023).

The grammaticalization path of an imperative motion verb into a discourse marker remains an area yet to be fully explored. As argued for the Spanish *venga* in Daniels (2014), in the case of *ela*, there appears to be a process involving pragmatic strengthening, followed by semantic weakening and syntactic independence—typical characteristics of discourse markers.

2. Non-lexical uses of *ela*

6 primary non-lexical uses of *ela*.

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|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) a. Ela parto. / ela den to hriazome.
<i>Here, take it / here, I don't need this one</i> | Invitation/Offer | Directive function |
| b. Ela, ftiakse mu gliko!!!
<i>Come on, bake me a cake!</i> | Plea/Request | |
| c. Ela tora!
<i>Come on! Stop it!</i> | Prohibition/Stop it! | |
| d. Ela! Den to iksera!
<i>Come on! I didn't know that!</i> | Surprise | |
| e. Ela pu den stenahorikes
<i>Come on, really?</i> | Doubt | |
| f. Ela vre, ekinos
<i>Come on, that one</i> | Common ground | |

Based on Blakemore (2002), all of these functions are discourse-related, but the first three appear to be restricted to directive environments, suggesting a grammaticalization path (cf. Fraser 2010). The association with its directive function is further evident in the fact that *ela* can be pluralized under certain conditions in its first three non-lexical functions.

This study undertakes an initial classification of the non-lexical uses of *ela* and aims at exploring the acquisition path of its discourse functions. By examining the broad spectrum of interpretations that this single element can acquire depending on the context, we raise an important acquisition question:

What is the developmental path of this element?

Our study offers a preliminary investigation of this question by analyzing a spontaneous child speech corpus under development within the framework of the **DIRE SPEECH** project.

3. Ongoing study: Occurrences of *ela* in Spontaneous Child Speech

Preliminary findings: In this corpus 282 utterances containing ['ela] 'come'

- We looked into data from a **Corpus** comprising of **18142 utterances**. Recordings of spontaneous speech during play and other child-child, child(ren)-caregiver, child(ren)-experimenter interaction.
- The data from our corpus of spontaneous speech data of children (total number of children participants 16, age range (2;9 - 7;6)) and the speech input (spontaneous speech) of 11 adults (Corpus creation is ongoing)
- The recordings were transcribed in broad IPA (and orthographic Greek) and annotated by trained linguists, with the use of ELAN (Version 6.9) software.
- Participants:** We included 9 children (4 female, 5 male) 2;07-5;08, 2 non-target older siblings, aged 6;03-6;04, 9 adults (1 male) 23;03-36;06

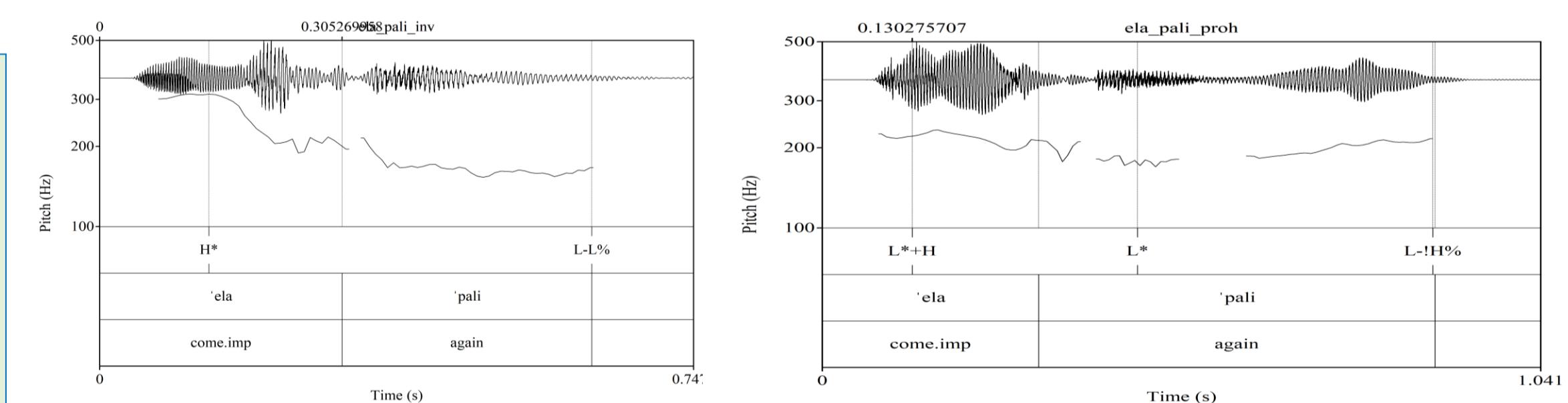
SA Type	Occurrences	%	Children 2;7-3;6	%	Children 3;7-4;6	%	Children 4;7-5;6	%	Children 5;7-6;6	%	Adults	%
Lexical <i>ela</i>	48	17.02	1	0.4	15	5.32	5	1.77	3	1.06	24	8.51
Invitation	114	40.43	11	3.90	23	8.16	3	1.06	21	7.45	54	19.15
Offer ("take it")	9	3.19	0	0.00	1	0.35	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	2.84
Request	80	28.37	3	1.06	51	18.09	2	0.71	10	3.55	14	4.96
Prohibition / 'stop it!', 'enough'	28	9.93	0	0.00	13	4.61	0	0.00	1	0.35	14	4.96

In adult input (adult spontaneous speech), we also found additional uses, in fixed phrases where *ela* clusters with other words:

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ['ela pu ðen 'eçis] | Doubt |
| ['ela pana'jia mu] (INV002FCV) | Surprise-disapproval |
| ['ela de] (MOT002FLB) | Wonder/ignorance |

4. Non-lexical directive functions as canonical directives

- The three directive, non-lexical uses of *ela* are present in child speech, at least for children older than 3;7.
- The invitation interpretation is often hard to classify as strictly lexical, offering, or requesting.
- It seems children first acquire the directive, non-lexical functions of *ela*, with non-directive surprise/doubt uses emerging later.
- The directive nature of non-lexical *ela* is evident in its prosodic pattern, which aligns with canonical invitation and prohibition patterns.
- Though further study is needed, invitation/offer *ela* features Nuclear Pitch Accent on *ela* with a low boundary tone, while prohibition *ela* has rightmost NPA and a rising boundary (Arvaniti & Baltazani 2005).



Figures 1 and 2: Waveforms and F0 contours of the imperative 'ela pali' 'come again' as non-lexical directive functions. In the first case, it is understood as offer/invitation (e.g., during a game, inviting the addressee to play again). In the second case, it conveys prohibition, urging the addressee to stop (e.g., when the addressee resumes complaining, the speaker uses *ela pali* with this intonation to mean 'that's enough, don't do it anymore'). In the prohibition case, a rising tone at the end is detected, similar to the description of L-H% in Arvaniti & Baltazani (2005).

5. Conclusion & Open Questions

This study examines the non-lexical uses of the imperative *ela* ('come'), which also appear in child speech. We categorized its functions into directive and non-directive, showing that the directive uses retain both their directive nature and, seemingly, their prosodic pattern.

Currently, our data do not allow us to propose a developmental path for the various non-lexical functions of *ela*. However, once our corpus annotation is complete, we expect to gain more insights. Further research into the acquisition of these non-lexical uses may also shed light on the grammaticalization process of these constructions.

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