



Ja particle as a flavor-restrictor in Greek directive utterances



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Directive speech & ja-particle

Imperatives can be interpreted in a multifacet way.

(1) Pjes tin portokalada!
Drink the orange-juice!

Their interpretation is *contextually* and *prosodically* restricted but certain *particles* can also restrict it.

Schmerling, S. 1982, Scwhager 2006, Kaufmann 2012



Directive speech & ja-particle

JA narrows down the range of interpretations:

Ja pjes tin portokalada!

Ja-PRT drink the orange-juice!

X indifference

X permission

X invitation/offer

X advice

(2) **Ja** fae ena sokolataki! *#cannot be interpreted as offer/invitation*

Ja eat.IMP a chocolate

'Eat a chocolate'

#cannot be interpreted as permission

(4) **Ja** diavase afto to vivlio.

Ja read.IMP this the book

'Raed this book

#cannot be interpreted as advice

(3) **Ja** pigene sto party!

ja go.imp to-the party

'Go to the party!'

Directive speech & ja-particle

Ja narrows down the range of interpretations:

Ja *pjes tin portokalada!*

Ja-PRT drink the orange-juice!

✓ request

✓ command

✓ threat-flavor

(discussed later)

(5) **Ja** des afto to grama!

Ja-PRT see.IMP this the letter

✓ *Request*

✓ *Command*

(6) **Ja** mazepse ta pehnidja su!

Ja-PRT collect.IMP the toys yours

(7) **Ja** na do ki ego.

Ja-PRT SUBJ see.1SG and I

✓ *Request*

Directive speech & ja-particle

At first site, it looks like *JA* excludes weaker interpretations and favors a stronger request/command interpretation.

We will see that the picture is more complicated.

Main Questions:

*What is the **semantic/pragmatic contribution of JA** in directive speech?*

Where in the clause spine is *JA* and how does it combine syntactically and semantically with the rest of the clause?

Roadmap

- *On the distribution of JA (syntactic & semantic)*
- *Where is JA in the clausal spine, how does it combine with the rest of the clause?*
- *What is the semantic/pragmatic contribution of JA in directive speech?*
- *Accounting for the data*
- *Concluding remarks*

On the distribution of ja-particle

Greek has a variety of discourse particles, *ja* seems to be one of these with the most restrictive distribution:

1. It is specific to **directive** utterances (imperative & subjunctive)
2. It is very particular about the **clause type**, not only the speech act type
3. It is strictly clause initial.

On the distribution of ja-particle

*Greek has a variety of discourse particles, JA is very particular about the **clause type**, not only the speech act type*

(8) ***Ja** boris na dis afti ti zografja?
Ja can.2SG SUBJ see.2SG this the painting?

Request

(9) ?**Ja** na mazepsis ta pehnidja su!
Ja-PRT SUBJ collect.2SG the toys yours

Command

(10) ***Ja** thelo na do ki ego.
Ja want.1SG SUBJ see.1SG and I

1st person request

On the distribution of ja-particle

JA is inconsistent with negated imperatives

(11) a. #Ja min to klisis!

JA not it.CL close.2SG

b. #Ja min figis!

JA not leave.2SG.

Perhaps the only case with negation is:

c. ?Ja mi fonazis!

JA not scream2SG.

As a threatening command (only)

ja-particle is sentence initial

(12) **Ja** des afti ti zografja!
Ja-PRT see.IMP this the painting

(13) a. *Des **ja** afti ti zografja!
b. *Des afti ti zografja **ja**.

Λεξικό της κοινής νεοελληνικής
Ινστιτούτο Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών
(Ίδρυμα Μ. Τριανταφυλλίδη)

για² [já] μόριο : με επιφωνηματική πρόταση δηλώνει ανάλογα με τον τόνο της φωνής: **α.** προτροπή ή έντονο ενδιαφέρον: ~ *πες μας τα νέα σου, έλα πες μας τα νέα σου.* ~ *να δω τι κάνατε!*, *ας δω τι κάνατε.* ~ *να δοκιμάσουμε άλλη μια φορά!* **β.** δυσαρέσκεια, ειρωνεία, απειλή κτλ.: ~ *έλα εδώ.* ~ *πλησίασε, εμπρός πλησίασε.* ~ *πρόσεχε λίγο.* ~ *συμμαζέψου!* ~ *μάζεψε τη γλώσσα σου.*

[μσν. *για* < αρχ. επιφ. *ερα* `μπρος!, *έλα!* με συνίζ. *για* αποφυγή της χασμ.]

για⁶ [já] : (λαϊκότρ., προφ.) βεβαιωτικό, φατικό μόριο: *Ναι, ~, καλά τα λες, συμφωνώ. Αφού θα έρθει κι αυτός, ~.* [τουρκ. *ya!*]

ja-particle: Contextual Restrictions

JA seems to eliminate the weaker interpretations of imperatives, thus a possible hypothesis seems to be that it imposes a restriction on the bouletic state of the addressee, i.e. the addressee must be unwilling to perform *p*.

However, this is not true:

(14) A: Ego pantos tha dokimaso apo afto. Mu fenete oreo...

I will try from this. It looks tasty.

B: Ok.. Ja dokimase...

OK.. JA try.IMP.2SG

OK (go ahead) Try!

Giannakidou & Mari (To appear): The particle JA seems to strengthen the imperative. **JA** is analysed as a particle which strengthens the deontic bias of the speaker (pp. 239-243)

ja-particle: Contextual Restrictions

JA seems to eliminate the weaker interpretations of imperatives, thus a possible hypothesis seems to be that it imposes a restriction on the bouletic state of the addressee, i.e. the addressee must be unwilling to perform p .

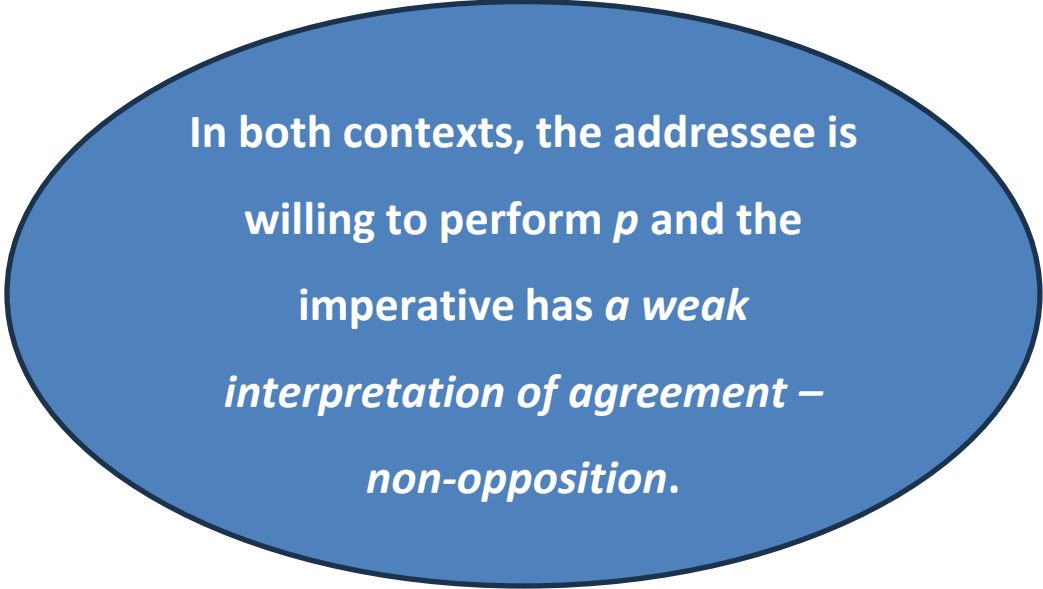
However, this is not true:

(15) A: Na sas po mia istoria?

Shall I tell you a story?

B: Ja pes mas!

Tell us!



In both contexts, the addressee is willing to perform p and the imperative has a weak interpretation of agreement – non-opposition.

ja-particle: Contextual Restrictions

JA is consistent with advice in certain contexts

(16) A: Den ksero ti na kano me afti tin ipothesi...

I don't know what to do with this issue

B: Ja pare ton Niko telefono... isos aftos se voitithisi...

JA take IMP.2SG the Nick phone perhaps he you.CL help.3SG

Call Nick. Perhaps he will help.

ja-particle: Interim Summary

Ja narrows down the range of interpretations:

Ja pjes tin portokalada!

Ja-PRT drink the orange-juice!

X indifference

X *permission*

X invitation/offer

X advice



As we showed weaker interpretations become possible, but they acquire an additional inference:

What is this inference?

ja-particle: Preliminary attempt

Across all environments that JA appears, there is an inference that:

Upon the actualization of p by the addressee, another action will follow by the speaker (desirable or not).

Thus, it shifts the interest from the actual event described by the prejacent to the consequent eventuality following the realization of the prejacent.

*In a job interview: The interviewer
says to the candidate:*

(17) a. Ja metafrase afto sta italika.
 ja translate this in-the Italian
 ↪ *I need to check your translate-skills*

Plain command to an employee:

b. Metafrase afto sta italika.
 translate this in-the Italian
 ↪ *no afterthoughts/follow-ups*

ja-particle: Preliminary attempt

Upon the actualization of *p* by the addressee, another action will follow by the speaker (desirable or not).

(18) A: *I Maria ipe oti patontas afto denonte aftomata ta kordonja.*

Maria said that by pressing this the strings are automatically tied.

B: Ja pata to!

JA press.IMP.2SG it

~ we will see if the strings will tie automatically

(19) Boss: Ja ela do.

JA come.IMP.2SG edo

~ for sure another action follows

(without ja, there is no such obligatory inference)

THREAT

Tha fonakso! (I will scream!)

Ja fonakse!

JA scream.IMP.2SG it

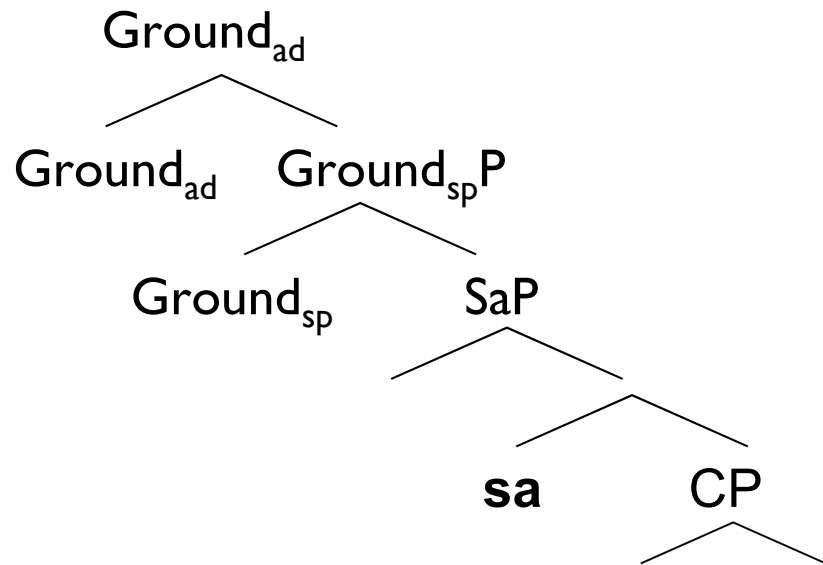
~ upon screaming there are consequences

ja-particle: Formalization and composition

Upon the actualization of p by the addressee, another action will follow by the speaker (desirable or not).

- *What is this inference?*
- *How does it combine and restrict the interpretation of imperatives?*
- **Where is the particle located (is it part of the LF)?**

Interactional Spine Hypothesis (ISH)

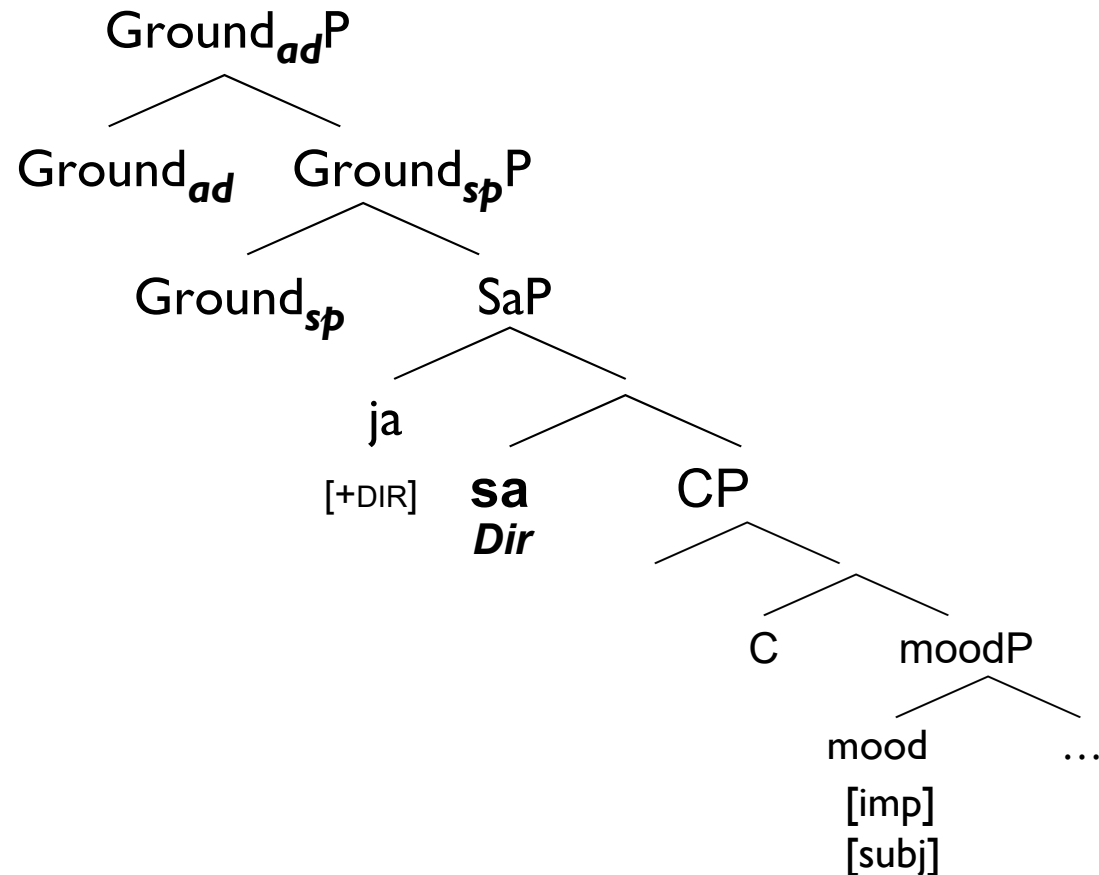


Wiltschko, 2021: Interactional Spine Hypothesis
Units of language that are used to regulate human interaction are integrated into the *syntactic spine*.

Building on the idea that there is a speech-act layer in the syntax (Rizzi 1997; Speas and Tenny, 2003; Haegeman and Hill, 2013; Krifka, 2013, 2023; Wiltschko and Heim, 2016; Miyagawa, 2022)

-> This framework gives us enough space to account for JA and its interaction with other particles (*ande, re*)

Ja-imperatives within the ISH



Imperatives within the *interactional Spine* framework:

→ *sa*-head in which there is a $[+Dir]$ feature

→ **JA** is a particle at SpecSaP, requiring to check its $[+dir]$ feature

→ **JA** can only be preverbal, sentence initial

~ **It is not possible to have focus or contrastive topic in between or higher than JA**

ja-particle: Syntax

(20) *I called Nikos but he didn't help much.*

a. ✓ *Ton PETRO pare!*

✓ *Focus movement in imperatives*

The Peter call.IMP.2SG

Call Peter (he's more helpful)

b. **Ton PETRO ja pare!*

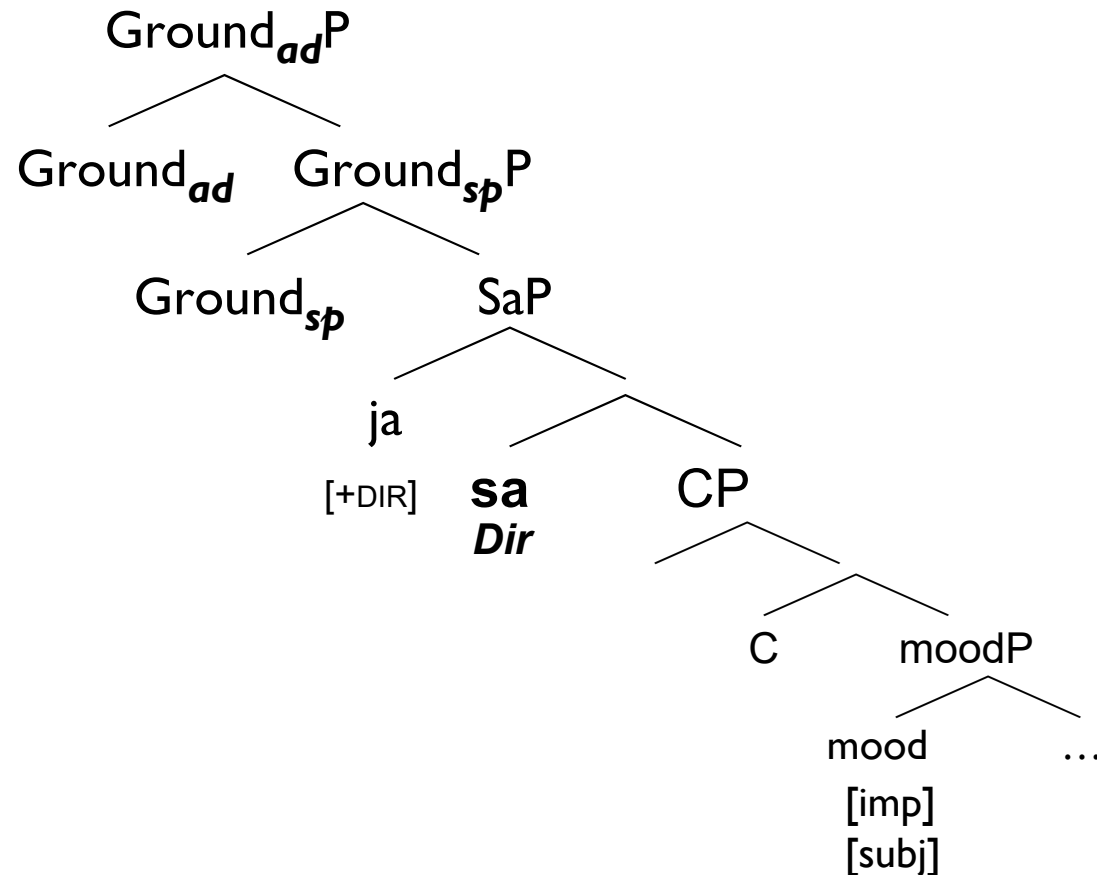
✗ *Focus movement in JA-imperatives*

c. **Ja ton PETRO pare!*

d. ✓ *Ja pare ton Petro!*

e. *Ton Petro [pause], ja parton..*

Ja-imperatives within the ISH



Imperatives within the *interactional Spine* framework:

- **ja** is located at SpecSaP, requiring to check its **[+dir]** feature
- The verb obligatorily moves to sa-head in ja-imperatives to check the **[dir-feature]**
- This explains why we cannot have any materials at the CP-level
- Also, explains the other restrictions of **JA** compared to other particles (*ande*, *(v)re*)

Ja-imperatives within the ISH: interaction with RE

(21) a. (v)re ja anikse to doro!
Re ja open.IMP.2SG the gift
Open the gift.

✓ Particle re can move around the clause

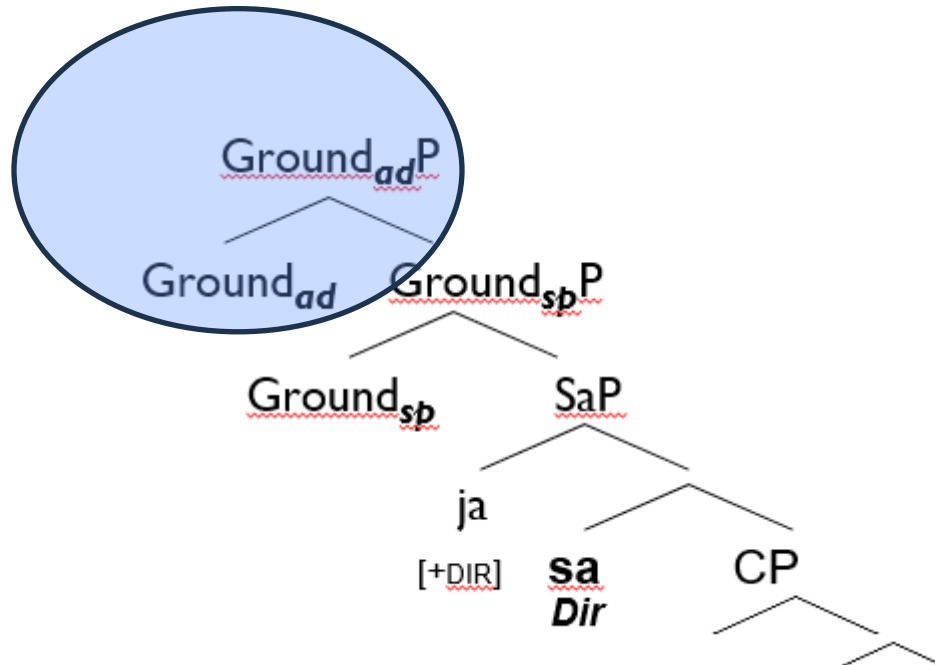
b. ja anikse to doro (v)re!
ja open.IMP.2SG the gift re
Open the gift.

Tsoulas & Alexiadou (2006):
Re is a late-inserted element
Discourse related functional heads

c. ja anikse (v)re to doro!
ja open.IMP.2SG re the gift
Open the gift.

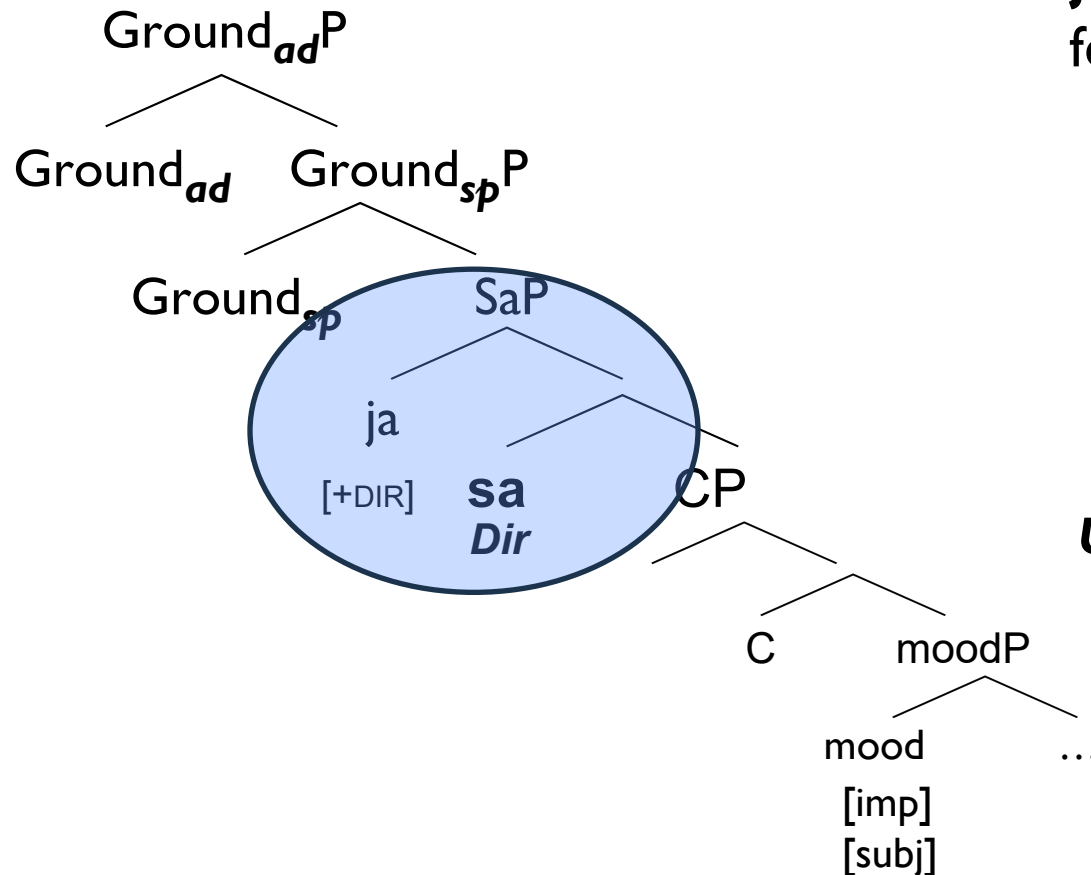
Ja-imperatives within the ISH: interaction with ANDE

(22) **ande** (re) ja anikse to doro!
 Ande ja open.IMP.2SG the gift
 Open the gift!



- Particle *ande* is strictly initial (final, only after a pause)
 - *Ande* can surface on its own
 - It is consistent with both imperatives and assertions (not specific illocutionary force)
- *ande* is located higher in the structure, related with the addressee ground

Next: What is the semantic contribution of *ja*?



ja is located at SpecSaP, requiring to check its [+dir] feature

What is its semantic/pragmatic contribution?

Formalize our intuition:

Upon the actualization of *p* by the addressee, another action will follow by the speaker (desirable or not).

Reminder on the meaning of imperative

→ An imperative minimally consists of a mood_{imp}P, which under the weak modal approach means (Oikonomou 2016, 2022):

(23) [[imp open the gift]] = *ad may open the gift*

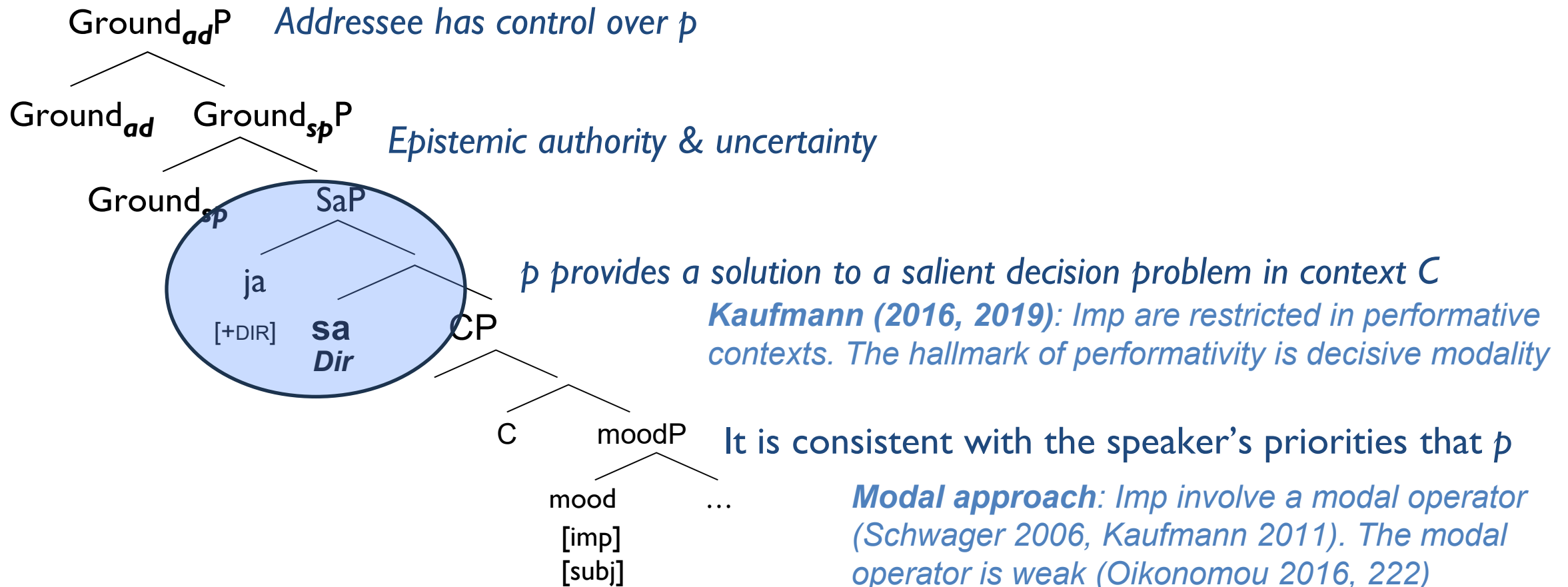
It is consistent with the speaker's priorities that the addressee opens the gift

→ Nothing in this implies directive illocutionary force (performativity)

→ Kaufmann in a series of works provides an essential framework in which the performative character of imperatives is preserved (Kaufmann 2012, 2016, 2022)

→ I follow her analysis arguing that the performativity restrictions arise in [+dir] uniformly for imperatives and subjunctives.

Imperative syntax and semantics (background)



JA as a forward contextual restrictor

In context c (that involves a speaker and an addressee) when a speaker utters **[ja + imp p]**: Once p is actualized by the addressee, there is an *expectation* that some further *conversational or interactional move* will occur.

Speaker control: The next move is typically oriented to the speaker's initiative (e.g. they will comment, evaluate or react to what the addressee has just done), i.e. sp needs to have some interest in ad actualizing p .

- A plain imperative suggests that p is a reasonable (consistent with the Sp 's priorities) option to resolve a decision problem Δ .
- A JA-imperative introduces a conditional, that if p is actualized the discourse will proceed with a speaker-initiated follow-up (comment, evaluation or reaction).

Accounting for the data

Let's see flavor

(24) **Ja** pjes tin portokalada.

Ja-PRT drink.IMP.2SG the orange-juice.

~ A follow-up from the speaker is expected.

Threatening flavor:

(25) *I will scream!*

Ja fonakse!

Ja-PRT scream.IMP.2SG

~ If you scream, there will be reaction from the speaker.

Accounting for the data

Let's see flavor

(26) **Ja** na do ki ego.

Ja-PRT SUBJ see.1SG and I

~ A follow-up from the speaker is expected.

✓ Request

(27) *I'm hungry*

Ja fae mia banana.

Ja-PRT eat.2SG one banana.

~ Once you eat the banana, I'll check again to see if you are still hungry.

Accounting for the data

Command – is it problematic?

(28) **Ja** mazepse ta pehnidja su!

Ja-PRT collect.IMP the toys yours

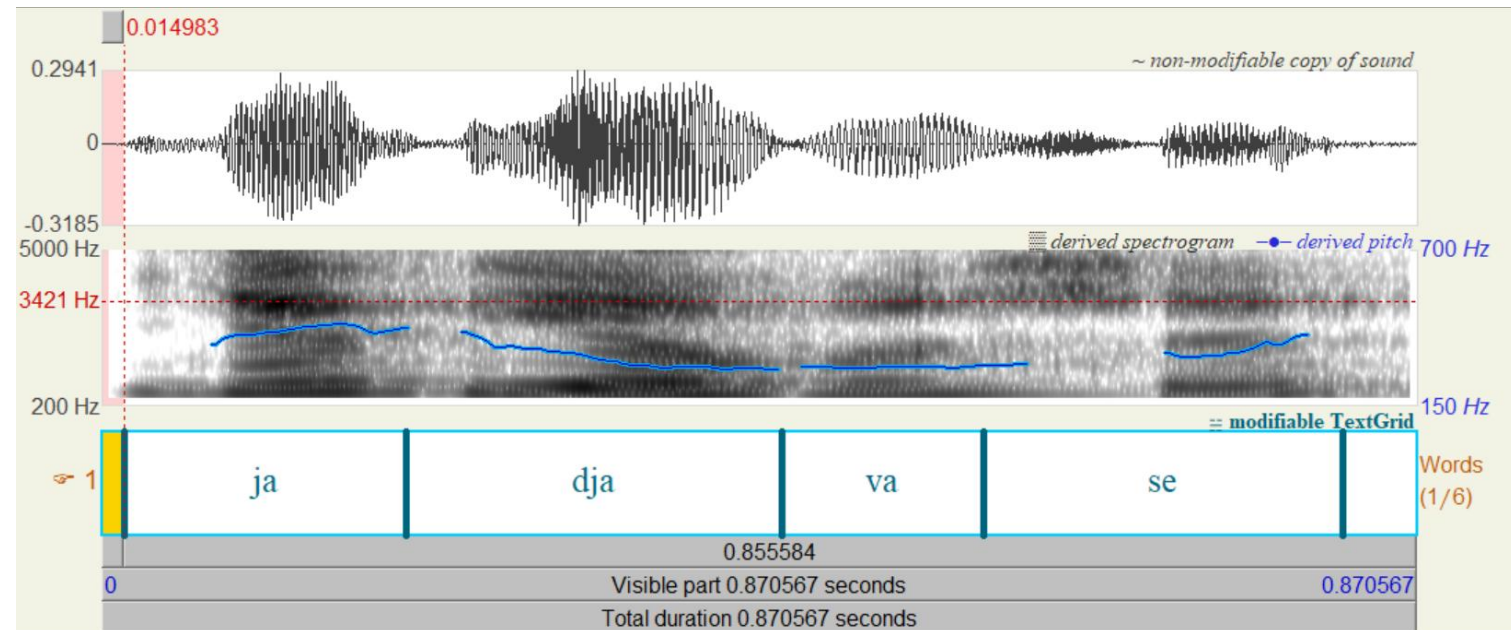
↷ If you **don't**, there will be
reaction from the speaker.

In this case JA is licensed only if **not-actualizing p** is salient in the discourse, i.e. if somebody has already denied or it is common knowledge that they are unwilling to *perform p*.

Thus, in this case, JA picks up *not-actualizing p* as its conditional. Since it is a discourse element, this is a possible contextual restriction.

Evidence from prosody

- This follow-up is also encoded in the prosody of JA-imperatives
- JA-imperatives obligatorily have a non-falling edge tone
- Baltazani et. al. (2019) independently argue for wh-questions that the non-falling edge tone indicates there is a follow-up conversational move.



Concluding and further questions

- JA functions as a **discourse element** in imperatives which restricts the discourse **requiring a follow-up move** from the speaker.
- In this sense, a JA-imperative cannot convey an invitation or an offer, since these should be unconditional, i.e. expect no reactions upon actualizing
- A pure permission reading is not consistent with an obligatory follow-up. When the context indicates a permission reading and the speaker adds JA, a threatening flavor arises (*you can do it, but if you do there will be consequences*).
- JA is consistent with *requests, orders or instructions*, the speaker remains involved, waiting for the actualization of p , to evaluate, comment or react analogously.
- In this sense, JA-imperatives are also inconsistent with imperfective aspect or negation.

THANK YOU!!!

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further questions

- Is JA-imperative consistent with non-endorsing (threatening IaDs, Kaufmann 2011, von Stechow & Trudgill 2017)?

Ja fae afto to sokolataki, k tha arostisis amesos

Ja pijene ke den tha su ksanamiliso pote

Not sure..

Oposite pattern 'ja fata to ke tha su doso biskoto' / ja dosto mu [mi se diro]??

Where is this mi-clause