In contrast to extensive discussion in philosophy (cf. Hamblin 1987), *conditionalized imperatives* like (1) have received less attention in linguistics. Moreover, ‘imperative’ is often understood as a functional concept in philosophy, while I confine my discussion to ‘imperatives’ as morphosyntactically identifiable clause types.

(1) If a donkey is tired, let it rest.

I argue that constructions like (1) are not imperative speech acts issued only in case the antecedent is true. Rather, I take the imperative itself to be a modal operator whose domain can be restricted by the proposition in the *if*-clause. This correctly predicts numerous properties conditionalized imperatives share with indicative conditionals.

**Why conditionalized imperatives are not hypothetical speech acts**

Following Iatridou’s (1991) distinctions, *if*-clauses modifying imperatives express relevance (2a), factual (2b), but also hypothetical conditionals (evidenced by binding, (1), and only, (2c)). My discussion is confined to the latter cases, where the obligation conveyed by the imperative crucially depends on the truth value of the antecedent.

(2) a. If I may be honest, (*then*) better call him as soon as possible.
   b. If you like him so much, then go ahead and help him!
   c. Call a doctor only if you are sick.

Assuming that ! turns a proposition into whatever semantic object should correspond to an imperative, (3) seems a straightforward analysis of a sentence like (1). It expresses that whether or not the semantic effect associated with the imperative is obtained, depends on the truth value of/the successful update with the antecedent (cf. Segerberg 1990, Asher & Lascarides 2004, Zarnic 2002). Abstracting away from the exact nature of ![p] for the moment, I call these approaches *hypothetical speech act analyses* (HSA).

(3) ‘If p, q!’ = [p → ![q]]

HSA faces at least two problems: first, imperatives modified by *if you like* are often used as permissions. But, independently of the addressee having the respective wish, (4a) has the effect of a permission (and not of a command). This rules out both (4b) and (4c) (cf. Hamblin 1987).

(4) a. Come earlier if you like.
   b. you want to come earlier → OBLIGATION(you come earlier)
   c. you want to come earlier → PERMISSION(you come earlier)

Second, the HSA makes wrong predictions when the *if*-clause has a lawlike flavour and is combined with a quantificational adverbial different from *always*, such as *never*. It fails to predict the similarity between (5a) and (5b) (both expressing something along the lines of (5e)), by interpreting (5a) as (5c) or (5d).

(5) a. If your boss comes in, never stare at him.
   b. Whenever/If your boss comes in, don’t stare at him.
c. your boss comes in(t) → !(-∃t′ ⊆ t: you stare at him(t'))

d. *-∃t[your boss comes in(t) & ! you stare at him (t)]

e. !(∃t[your boss comes in(t) & you stare at him (t)]

The analysis in (5c) does not render the preferred reading for (5a) under which it has a lawlike flavour. (5d) is too weak under any interpretation of the imperative that focuses on its relation to non-epistemic modality (as e.g. Zarnic 2002, Portner 2004, Mastop 2005). In contrast to that, the proposal of Asher & Lascarides (2004) comes surprisingly close to an update with the indicative counterpart of the imperative. Therefore, it does not create the unwanted scopal effect one might generally expect for (5d).

An Alternative Analysis: IMP as a modal operator

Treating imperatives as modal operators allows on the one hand to explain their similarity to performative usages of modalized propositions as in (6). On the other hand, it allows for a natural analysis of different subtypes of hypothetical conditionals that contain imperatives.

(6) You must help me!

Semantically, I rely on Kratzer’s (1991) framework of graded modality, abstracting away for the moment from a presuppositional meaning component I hold responsible for the lack of truth-values. The imperative morphosyntax is translated as a modal operator IMP that expresses necessity with respect to the worlds identical to w so far that are best according to a contextually salient set g(w) of propositions (mostly the wishes of the speaker or the wishes/goals of the hearer).

Assuming Kratzer’s (1991) semantics for conditionals, the antecedent is hypothetically added to the modal base of a modal operator present in the consequent.

(7) ||if p IMP q || ≡ (w, t) iff for all worlds w′ that are identical to w up to t, make p true, and come closest to the ordering source g(w): w′ ∈ q.

This is in line with Bhatt & Pancheva’s (2001/t.a.) assumption that the sentence type of the entire conditional is determined by the matrix clause, making conditionalized imperatives complex imperatives.

Imperatives are thereby predicted to pattern largely with If p, you should/ought to q. This allows solutions proposed for anankastic conditionals (Sæbe 2002 and modifications) to carry over straightforwardly to the imperative twins (8a)/(8b) of the original contrast. In Schwager (2005), I argue that permission cases as exemplified in (4a) can be treated successfully in analogy to (8a).

(8) a. If you want sugar in your coffee, call the waiter.

b. If you want sugar in your soup, get tested for diabetes.

If the consequent contains both an imperative and a quantificational adverbial as in (5a), the if-clause can also restrict the latter (cf. Lewis 1975). The imperative takes widest scope, giving rise to the desired construal in (5e). Again, we obtain ‘imperative’ as the overall sentence type.

The general impossibility to embed imperatives under epistemic modals extends to a lack of nested modality-readings to be observed with imperatives in conditionals. According to Kratzer (1991), a modal verb in the consequent can be treated either as the conditional operator or as part of the consequent proposition. In the latter case, it is
a covert operator of epistemic necessity that plays the role of the conditional operator and gets restricted by the if-clause. Such a construal, whose tripartite structure is schematized in (10a), accounts for the preferred reading of (9a) (from Geurts 2003). It is unavailable for (9b), though. The latter can only be construed as in (10b), which conforms to the analysis in (7).

\[(9) \begin{align*}
\text{a. & If the pope is right, you shouldn’t use contraceptives.} \\
\text{b. & If the pope is right, then don’t use contraceptives.}
\end{align*}\]

\[(10) \begin{align*}
\text{a. & } & \Box_{epi}(p)(\Box_{deontic} q) \\
\text{b. & } & \Box_{deontic}(p)(q)
\end{align*}\]

In contrast to the HSA-analysis, the modal analysis predicts that trying to avoid the antecedent to come true is an alternative way of complying with the imperative (unless \(g\) contains reasons not to avoid the antecedent). I take this to be a further advantage (cf. Piwek (2001) for a similar view.) E.g., in order to comply with (11a), one could just as well try to get enough sleep before departing instead of just waiting if one will feel tired. Where the antecedent is clearly disfavoured as in (11b), avoiding the antecedent might even be the most obvious way of complying.

\[(11) \begin{align*}
\text{a. Don’t risk your life when driving. If you are tired, stop and have a nap.} \\
\text{b. Don’t ever come back here if you get a bad mark!}
\end{align*}\]

**Conclusions**

I have argued that conditionalized imperatives should not be analyzed as imperatives that depend on the truth or falsity of the antecedent, but constitute complex imperatives that convey necessity with respect to some restricted modal base. This allows for the observed scopal relations with \(q\)-adverbials and predicts the actual parallels to ordinary indicative conditionals containing modal verbs like *must* or *ought to*. The puzzle of conditionalized imperative permissions reduces to the one of imperative permissions in general.