

Title: Imperatives of visual versus auditory perception as pragmatic markers in English and Dutch

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Abstract: This article examines the English and Dutch imperatives of intentional visual and auditory perception and in particular their use as pragmatic markers. *Look, listen, kijk* ‘look’ and *luister* ‘listen’ are compared with respect to frequency, distribution and usage. The difference between *look* and *kijk*, on the one hand, and *listen* and *luister*, on the other, are argued to be indicative of a more general cross-linguistic tendency. This tendency is explained in terms of the imperatives’ effectiveness in and likely recruitment for what has traditionally been called attention-getting and in terms of the common view of the nature of visual and auditory perception.

# Imperatives of visual versus auditory perception as pragmatic markers in English and Dutch\*

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## 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been a growing interest in the usage and the development of pragmatic markers (e.g. Brinton 1996, Mosegaard Hansen 1998, Aijmer 2002, Fischer 2006 and Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg 2006). Research has focused on the discourse-structuring (e.g. topic shifter, focus marker) and interpersonal (e.g. introducer of the speaker's opinion, marker of agreement with the addressee's point of view) functions that items like *actually* and *well* fulfill and on the change from propositional, over textual to subjective or speaker-based and intersubjective or addressee-oriented meaning that they undergo (i.e. subjectification and intersubjectification in the sense of Traugott & Dasher 2002). In comparison to the pragmatic markers of adverbial origin, which have been studied in great detail (e.g. Finell 1989, Jucker 1997, Schourup 2001, Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg 2003 and Defour 2008 on *well*), those of imperative origin have received surprisingly little attention. It is obvious from Lamiroy & Swiggers (1991: 137, 140), one of the first systematic studies of (Romance) imperatives as pragmatic markers, that they are very widespread and have much in common with the more traditional examples: “[They] no longer act as verbs, but rather have undergone a process of change from a syntactic to a pragmatic function. ... Their discursive function is ... twofold: they establish a link between speaker and hearer, ... and they ‘connect’ segments within an utterance.” The pragmatic markers of imperative origin in English are, among others, *listen*, *look*, *mark you*, *mind you* and *say* (Brinton 2008: 2). The Dutch ones include *luister* ‘listen’, *kijk* ‘look’, *kom(aan)* ‘come (on)’ and *zeg* ‘say, tell me’. The first two items in each language are the topic of this article.

The pragmatic use of the English and Dutch imperatives of intentional visual perception

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is shown in (1) and (2). Examples (3) and (4) illustrate the pragmatic use of the imperatives of intentional auditory perception.

- (1) And I said **look** you're not to cry. (ICEGB: s1a094.111)
- (2) Dus ik wil uh **kijk** als ik een uh netto transactie zou moeten doen dat uh dat zien we dan toch niet zitten. (CSD: fn000890.66)  
'So I want uhm look if I had to do a uhm net transaction we uhm we don't really feel like doing that.'
- (3) A How do you stop your eyes reading what they're reading?  
B No no no. No.  
A Of course I'll send you know I'll send it to you. I really don't mind Yibin using them.  
B Because. No **listen listen listen**. No. No but **listen**. What I when I thought of it now I thought there's couple of the the letters that are very personal. (ICEGB: s1a092.329-338)
- (4) Ik heb 'm gezegd uh **luister** uh ik wil uh voor de tweepersoonstenten wil ik toch wel zeker een een prijsniveau uh D hebben. (CSD: fn000868.199)<sup>1</sup>  
'I told him uhm listen uhm I want uhm for the two-man tents I want to get at least a a price level uhm D.'

The lexical meaning of the verbs *look* and *kijken* is clearly no longer present in (1) and (2). The imperatives do not call on the addressee(s) to look at something. Instead, they appear to shape discourse and the relation between the interlocutors. They are commonly characterized as “pragmatic mechanisms to obtain the addressee’s attention” (Romero Trillo 1997: 205, but also De Vriendt 1995: 155, Brinton 2001: 180, De Clerck 2006: 168 and Janssen 2006: 337). *Listen* in (3) and *luister* in (4), which call on the addressee to listen to what follows and still exhibit the lexical meaning of intentional hearing, are often lumped together with their visual counterparts. De Clerck (2006: 436), for one, writes that “*look* and *listen* ... express a similar appeal to the addressee as attention-getting devices” (cf. Romero Trillo 1997: 209 too). The primary aim of the present article is to investigate the validity of this claim or, in other words, to examine and account for the similarities and especially the dissimilarities between *look* and

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<sup>1</sup> ICEGB and CSD are short for the International Corpus of English – Great Britain (Survey of English Usage 2006) and the Corpus of Spoken Dutch (Dutch Language Union 2004) respectively.

*kijk*, on the one hand, and *listen* and *luister*, on the other. This investigation will also reveal a number of differences between English and Dutch.

In Section 2, we will have a quantitative look at the imperatives of intentional visual and auditory perception in comparable corpora of spoken British English and spoken Northern Dutch: their overall frequencies, the frequencies of their use as pragmatic markers and their distributions over the various types of spoken language. Section 3 will contain a qualitative analysis of the usage of *look* and *kijk* (3.1) and *listen* and *luister* (3.2). Its main source of data will be the comparable corpora of the previous section but other sources will be used to get as complete a picture as possible (e.g. to check whether a particular use found in only one corpus is acceptable in the other language or not). In Section 4, we will show that the quantitative and qualitative differences between the imperatives of intentional visual perception and those of intentional auditory perception are also attested in other languages. The general tendency will be explained in terms of the imperatives' effectiveness in and likely recruitment for attention-getting (4.1) and in terms of the traditional view of the nature of the two types of perception (4.2). Section 5 is the conclusion.

## 2. Frequency and distribution

Table 1 presents, for each component of a 600,000 word corpus of spoken British English and a 300,000 word corpus of Northern Dutch of similar composition,<sup>2</sup> the number of imperatival forms of *look*, *listen*, *kijken* and *luisteren* per 100,000 words. These imperatives are classified as being of a lexical ('L') nature (cf. 5 and 6), as having an entirely pragmatic ('P') function (cf. 1 and 2), as being vague ('V') between a lexical and a pragmatic meaning (cf. 3, 4 and 7) or as not falling into any of the three preceding categories ('M' for miscellaneous, cf. 8).

- (5) a **Look** at the detail of the ringlets of the wig. (ICEGB: s2a052.68)  
b **Kijk** 'ns wat vaker in de spiegel van de kapper. (CSD: fn009076.21)

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<sup>2</sup> This contrastive corpus consists of the spoken component of the ICEGB and of a selection of the syntactically annotated files of the Northern Dutch component of the CGN that follows the design of the International Corpus of English. The subcorpus of dialogues makes up sixty percent of the material: the private ones (phone calls and face-to-face conversations) and the public ones (lessons, business transactions, interviews and so on) account for, respectively, thirty-three and twenty-seven percent. The subcorpus of monologues makes up forty percent of the material: the scripted ones (talks and broadcast news) account for seventeen percent in the ICEGB but, because of a lack of data, for only ten percent in the Dutch counterpart; accordingly, the unscripted ones (presentations, commentaries and speeches) are relatively more frequent in the Dutch than in the English corpus. Cf. Van Olmen (2009: 408-409) for more information on the make-up of the corpus.

- ‘Just look into the hairdresser’s mirror a bit more often!’
- (6) a **Listen** to the final consonants. (ICEGB: s2a030.46)  
 b Oh wat grappig op gegeven moment ook richtlijnen aan van nou nou hou jij effe je mond en dan uh **luister** even naar elkaar. (CSD: fn009009.22)  
 ‘Oh how funny at a certain point also guidelines on like now now you shut your mouth for a moment and then uhm listen to each other for a moment.’
- (7) Well well just just feed in some of your tapes and say **look** this is what you’ve got to do. (ICEGB: s1a056.32)
- (8) a **Look** after yourself now. (ICEGB: s1a098.140)  
 b **Kijk** uit. (CSD: fn007393.128)  
 ‘Watch out!’

The imperatives of intentional visual perception in (5) are real directives to look. The auditory counterparts in (6) are also regarded as lexical here, because they do not (directly) affect the discourse or the relation between the speaker and the hearer(s). *Look* in (7) can be understood as an appeal to watch the tapes and as a pragmatic marker in the very common position after a form of the verb *to say*. The pragmatic uses of *listen* in (3) and *luister* in (4) are vague too, as they also always function as directives to listen to what comes next. Finally, the imperatives in (8) are, technically speaking, lexical but are classified as miscellaneous because they do not refer to a simple state of intentional visual perception.

**Table 1.** The distribution of the imperatives of intentional perception in English and Dutch

Subcorpus		English				Dutch							
		<i>look</i>				<i>listen</i>		<i>kijk</i>				<i>luister</i>	
		L	P	V	M	L	V	L	P	V	M	L	V
Dialogue	private	7.5	11.5	1.5	2.5	1	10.5	16	41	6	2	0	1
	public	1.3	4.4	0	0	0	1	5	81.3	1.3	0	1.3	6.3
	total	4.7	8.3	0.8	1.4	0.6	6.1	11.1	58.9	3.9	1.1	0.6	3.3
Mono- logue	unscripted	7.9	0.7	0	0	0.7	0	7.8	15.6	0	1.1	0	0
	scripted	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	total	6.3	0.8	0	0	0.8	0	5.8	11.7	0	0.8	0	0
Total		5.3	5.3	0.5	0.8	0.7	3.7	9	40	2.3	1	0.3	2

The figures in Table 1 point to a very important similarity between English and Dutch. The imperatives of intentional visual perception occur more often than their auditory counterparts, in total and as pragmatic/vague markers. The difference is especially pronounced in Dutch but it is equally real in English (note that one utterance in (3) accounts for more than one sixth of all attestations of *listen*). In Romero Trillo's (1997: 217) study of attention-getting in British English conversations, *look* and *listen* are found to have frequencies of, respectively, 16.5 and 0.7 instances per 100,000 words.

There are also several distinctions between English and Dutch. First of all, *kijk* is more closely associated with pragmatic meaning than *look*. The proportion of attestations that still have a lexical meaning is larger for the latter than for the former. *Listen* and *luister* seem to be like *kijk*. Only about one out of seven instances is exclusively lexical. Secondly, and relatedly, there are big differences in frequency between the pragmatic markers under discussion. *Kijk* is much more frequent than *look* and *listen* is more frequent than *luister*. Note, however, that the higher frequency of the English imperative of intentional auditory perception does not make up for the distinction between the imperatives of intentional visual perception and thus that, on the whole, English does not use these devices to get the addressee's attention as often as Dutch. Interestingly, Romero Trillo (1997: 219) finds the same difference between English and Spanish. He hypothesizes that "English is a more prosody-oriented language, and as such is able to focus the attention of the addressee onto the most important pieces of information by means of tonality features whereas Spanish needs lexical expressions to highlight the most relevant information" (Romero Trillo 1997: 220-221). The prosodies of English and Dutch are probably too similar (cf. Gussenhoven 2004: 296) to be an explanation for the difference in frequency. A more plausible account is that English just draws on other linguistic elements. The translation of *kijk* in (9) suggests that *you see* is one of them. This marker can be used "to request attention" (Aijmer 2002: 52) and is very frequent in the corpus of spoken English (e.g. 48 instances per 100,000 words in the subcorpus of private dialogue). But to get the complete picture of alternative markers, an extensive study in parallel corpora would be needed.

(9) **Kijk**, ik weet wat je waard bent, zij willen dat eerst zelf nog even ondervinden.

(Lemmens 1974: 19)

'You see, I know what you're worth, but they want to find out for themselves.'

(Lemmens 1978: 35)

Thirdly, the imperatives of intentional perception have different distributions. Unsurprisingly, they are all infrequent in the subcorpus of monologues. As attention-getting devices, they are more likely to occur in more interactive situations, even though the speaker of a monologue may avail himself or herself of these markers to get the audience involved and to liven up the speech. In the other subcorpus, *look* and *listen* appear to be more typical of private dialogue than of public dialogue while *kijk* is frequent in both types of dialogue (as a result of the high number of attestations in the business transactions, it is even more widespread in public than in private dialogue) and five of the six vague cases of *luister* are found in the public dialogue component.

The main results here are: 1. as a pragmatic marker, the imperative of intentional visual perception is more frequent than the imperative of intentional auditory perception, in Dutch as well as English; 2. *kijk* is more typically pragmatic and much more frequent than *look*; 3. *kijk* and *luister* are less restricted to the direct and informal register than *look* and *listen*. Note, as a final point, that the various *look*-forms mentioned in Brinton (2001) and Schourup (2004) do not occur in the corpus. This fact is in line with the claim that some of them –i.e. *lookyhere*, *lookahere* and *lookit*– are Americanisms (Brinton 2001: 179) and it indicates that the others – i.e. *lookie* and *now look here*– are not so common.

### 3. Usage<sup>3</sup>

In the present section, the uses of *look* and *kijk* are described (3.1) and compared to those of *listen* and *luister* (3.2). The discussion also reveals a number of differences between English and Dutch. The order in which the uses are presented is from lexical ones to more pragmatic (or increasingly bleached) ones.

#### 3.1 *Look* and *kijk*

As (5) shows, the imperative of intentional visual perception can serve as a directive to look at something in English and in Dutch. In (10) and (11), *look* and *kijk* are used to call attention to some important piece of visually accessible information. The turn-initial example of *look* in

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<sup>3</sup> This section is based on the results from the ICEGB and the CSD, on the results from a parallel corpus of plays (cf. Van Olmen 2009: 413 for more information), on additional examples from Google and the BNC and on De Vriendt (1995), De Clerck (2006) and Janssen (2006). The language varieties under discussion continue to be British English and Northern Dutch.

(10) points to a photograph which is contextually given but which is in the background. The imperative presents a renewed topic and appears to give speaker C the opportunity or even the right to interrupt A, who has done most of the talking so far. The turn-medial examples of *kijk* in (11) are used by speaker B to focus on specific components of the picture under discussion and, in a way, to guide A through it. Especially the second imperative can be said to introduce a new subtopic, i.e. the abstract ray of sunlight.

(10) A My room is such a pit I can't believe it.

B Cor.

C 'Tis isn't it.

A What a pit. I keep tidying it up.

C Oh **look**. There's the photo.

B I know. (ICEGB: s1a040.42-51)

(11) A Wat mooie zonnestraal. Hè?

'What a beautiful ray of sunlight. Isn't it?'

B Oh wow. Oh cool. Oh hier is er nog meer hè **kijk**? En hier. **Kijk** da's een abstracte zonnestraal. Hoe vind je die? (CSD: fn00446.208-213)

'Oh wow. Oh cool. Oh there's even more here isn't there look? And here. Look that's an abstract ray of sunlight. What do you think of it?'

The imperatives in (12) and (13) are (semi-)formulaic expressions in which the semantics of intentional visual perception are still present but which have more subjective overtones. *Look at that* in (12), which is described as an expressive directive in De Clerck (2006: 401), refers to the food that A is presenting, but it primarily expresses speaker B's attitude of admiration. *Kijk 'ns aan* in (13), which features the reduced form of the downtoner *eens* and the particle *aan* 'on', conveys A's surprise at Peter's athleticism. Note that both expressions are reactions to given information.

(12) A Will anyone congratulate me on my cooking.

B Oh **look** at that.

C Wow marvellous [unclear].

A Uh this is comes entirely from Marks and Spencer's. (ICEGB: s1a020.285-288)

(13) A Ah *kijk*. Daar komt Peter op de fiets aan. Da's sportief.

‘Ah look. There’s Peter he’s on his bike. That’s athletic.’

B Op de fiets?

‘On his bike?’

A Ja. **Kijk** ‘ns aan.

‘Yes. Look at that.’ (CSD: fn008051.235-240)

The uses in (14) illustrate that the lexical meaning can undergo a shift from the physical to the mental domain in English as well as Dutch. The resulting meaning is close to ‘consider’, as in the reference to a possible example in (14a), or to ‘remember’, as in the argumentation-related reminder in (14b).

(14) a **Kijk** maar naar de Gelderse Poort daar waar dat Ohragebouw staat en uh ‘k zie de heer Thalen ook met mij meedenken aan het nieuwe KPN Telecomgebouw.

(CSD: fn000055.33)

‘Just look at the Gelderen Gate where that Ohra Building is and uhm I see mister Thalen is also thinking of the new KPN Telecom Building like me.’

b And Jimmy Carter followed the example of his predecessor Thomas Jefferson, who walked to his inauguration ceremony to emphasise the simplicity of republican government and **look** what happened to Jimmy Carter. (ICEGB: s2b021.11-12)

The following examples of *look* and *kijk* are the ones that are often characterized as attention-getting devices, i.e. calls on the addressee to pay attention to what is said (rather than to what is visible). The common co-occurrence with vocatives, like in (15), indicates that this label definitely covers part of the function. But it is not entirely satisfactory. In most cases of *look* and *kijk*, the speaker is committed to what comes next. In his or her eyes, the rest of utterance is an important and valid contribution to the conversation. In (16), for instance, the imperative introduces and emphasizes the interpretation of David’s painting that B believes is the correct one. Similarly, the turn-medial example of *kijk* in (17) presents the next step in the speaker’s reasoning (which is marked by *ik denk* ‘I think’ too).

(15) **Look** Dani. You don’t know what you’re speaking about. (ICEGB: s1a038.138-139)

(16) A Particular side of the picture plane that is imposed on David’s painting [unclear].

B No not at all.

A And uhm using the painting until you can see light.

B No I mean **look look**. David compositionally tells the whole [unclear] when he distorts the head in order so it will fit in. (ICEGB: s1b008.68-73)

(17) Nee dus je kunt niet zien aan wie die 't allemaal stuurt maar ze hebben gewoon een heel groot bestand van van e-mailadressen en **kijk** ik denk als je zo'n mailtje duizend keer rondstuurt dat er misschien allicht één of twee mensen zijn die reageren. (CSD: fn000283.270)

'No so you can't see who they send it to but they just have a very big file of of e-mail addresses and look I think if you forward such a mail a thousand times that there will perhaps probably be one or two people who will respond.

The speaker's involvement is also evident from the lack of real questions after *look* and *kijk*. As has been observed by De Vriendt (1995: 155) for Dutch, the questions that follow these pragmatic markers tend to be rhetorical and to reflect the speaker's point of view. Thus, it is clear in (18) that speaker B is not expecting a reply and that he is assuming that the answer is negative. The question in (19) does not require an answer either. The business negotiator is arguing that, all in all, the price of his products is not that high. In light of the discussion here, it does not seem unreasonable to label the imperatives in (16)-(20) as argumentation markers (cf. De Vriendt 1995: 155, Janssen 2006: 337-338).

(18) A Oh my darling! Oh call me by that name you always called me to show your love is still strong.

B Ah yes, **look**, do you think this is quite the time or the place for that sort of thing?

A Please! (<http://www.suslik.org/Humour/FilmOrTV/BlackAdder/ba2-2.html>)

(19) **Kijk** wat is duur? Om daar 'ns mee te beginnen. (CSD: fn000882.22-23)

'Look what does pricey mean? Just to start with that.'

As attention-getting devices and/or argumentation markers, *look* and *kijk* present (re)new(ed) information, like the analysis of David's painting in (16), and they are used to (re)introduce a (sub)topic, as *om daar 'ns mee te beginnen* in (19) makes clear. The actual message is usually at odds with what the others have said. The reproaches in (15) and (18), the counterargument in (16) and the qualification in (19) are cases in point. Note that, in turn-initial position like in

(16), *look* and *kijk* can be used to cut someone's turn short and take the floor and that, in turn-medial position like in (17), they can function as floor-keeping devices. Not all cases of *look* and *kijk* play a role in turn management, however. The offer that A makes in (20) constitutes a complete turn and calls for a response by the addressee. *Look* is therefore not used to interrupt A but to draw her attention to the fact that, contrary to A's expectations, the speaker does not like banana bread.

(20) A Have some banana bread.

B **Look**. I'm not that much of a banana bread eater. (ICEGB: s1a010.183-185)

A first difference in usage between English and Dutch has to do with the link between *look* and quotations, which has also been observed by De Clerck (2006). Nearly two-thirds of the pragmatic uses in the spoken part of the ICEGB "occur in instances or reported speech of what one said or of what one (either speaker, addressee or some third party) would or could say" (De Clerck 2006: 462). In (21a), *look* can still be understood as a quoted argumentation marker. But in (21b), the imperatives seem to be "signalling the onset of the quotation itself" (De Clerck: 2006: 462). The example from Google in (22) illustrates that *kijk* may also occur at the beginning of a quotation. But the fact that none of the many attestations in the corpus do suggests that the quotation-initial use is much less well-established in Dutch.

(21) a It was an architect who was one of the audience, who had a word with Martin afterwards and said **look** I uh don't believe that. (ICEGB: s1a073.156)

b But I I I could even try going in there and just saying **look** uhm get a few off them and then saying **look** uhm I'm part of a a s student's centre. (ICEGB: s1a079.249)

(22) De kapper zei: "**Kijk**, ik geloof niet dat God bestaat."

(<http://www.msei.nl/showthread.php?p=1161>)

'The hairdresser said: 'Look, I don't believe that God exists.'

Another difference has to do with the uses in (23) and (24), which are characteristic of Dutch. The utterance-final case of *kijk* in (23) is an expression of A's surprise at the information that he has just received. The combination with *oh* is indicative but it is not a necessary feature. In (24), *kijk* serves as some type of backchanneling device, i.e. a short comment by the listener to signal that he or she is paying attention and to encourage the speaker to carry on. Speaker A

is talking about a third person's figurines and B is showing, by means of *oh* and *ja kijk* (and *mm-hu* and some unclear reactions in the rest of the conversation), that he is listening. The combination with *ja* is indicative but, again, it must be emphasized that *kijk* can fulfill the backchanneling function on its own.<sup>4</sup> Notice that *kijk* does not point to new information here but acknowledges what has just been determined in (23) and what has just been said by the interlocutor in (24).

- (23) A 't is aanstaande dinsdag?  
'It's this Tuesday?'
- B Ja.  
'Yes'
- A Aanstaande dinsdag al? Oh **kijk**. (CSD: fn000322.53-56)  
'Already this Tuesday? Oh look.'
- (24) A Die heeft ze mooi in de kamer staan.  
'She has put that one at a nice spot in the room.'
- B Oh.  
'Oh.'
- A Heeft ze op een mooi tafelke staan ... En Jozef die is gesneuveld.  
'She has put it on a nice little table ... And Joseph that one has perished.'
- B Ja **kijk**.  
'Yes look.'
- A En daar heeft ze 't kopke van heeft ze in een bloempot gezet. (CSD: fn000946.236-242)  
'And she has put the little head of that one she has put it in a flower pot.'

To sum up, both *look* and *kijk* can function as directives to look (cf. 10 and 11), as expressive directives (cf. 12 and 13), as directives to consider (cf. 14), as attention-getting devices and as argumentation markers (cf. 15-20). *Look* also often serves as a quotation-initial marker (cf. 21) while *kijk* can be used as an utterance-final expressive (cf. 23) and as a backchanneling device (cf. 24). Dutch can thus be said to exhibit a slightly wider range of uses than English.

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<sup>4</sup> One referee notes that the use in (24) sounds unfamiliar to his or her native Northern Dutch ear. It is definitely not a very common use, but there is more than one example in the Northern Dutch component of the CSD and it is acceptable for multiple native speakers of Northern (and Southern) Dutch that have been consulted.

But because of the infrequency of the final two uses (only five cases in the corpus of Table 1), this difference does not explain the difference in frequency between the two languages.

### 3.2 *Listen* and *luister*

The functions that *listen* and *luister* fulfill are very similar.<sup>5</sup> The cases in (6) make clear that they can both be used as directives to listen. The (prepositional) object, which is not always expressed, may be some ‘auditory thing’ –like a tune, the sound of rain against the window or the final consonants in (6a). But more often than not, it is human –like the reciprocal pronoun in (6b)– and stands for what is said by the person referred to. Unsurprisingly, the preference for this type of object is not shared by *look* and *kijk*. As directives to look, they usually point to a piece of visually accessible, ‘non-human’ information –like the photograph in (10) or the ray of sunlight in (11).

*Listen* and *luister* typically serve as attention-getting devices or argumentation markers. The call on the addressee to pay attention is clear from, among others, the translation of *listen* as *hé* ‘hey’ in (25a) and the common combination with vocatives, as in (25b). Like in most directives to listen, the object is human: the speaker and, more specifically, what he or she is going to say next.

- (25) a    **Listen** – I’m still here. (Stoppard 1982: 83)  
          ‘Hé – ik ben er ook nog.’ (Stoppard 1984: 94)
- b    Ja maar **luister** even Bas ik ben heel simpel. (CSD: fn00868.313)  
          ‘Yeah but listen for a moment Bas I’m very ordinary.’

The characterization of imperatives like in (25) as ‘mere’ attention-getting devices is clearer than that of *look* and *kijk*. The reason is twofold. Firstly, while the speaker still considers his or her contribution to the conversation as important (if that were not the case, he or she would not be trying to get the interlocutor’s attention in the first place), the commitment to what follows is generally not so strong. The co-occurrence of *listen* and *luister* with questions is a case in point. As mentioned in Section 3.1, the questions that come after *look* and *kijk* tend to be rhetorical and/or to reflect the speaker’s opinion. The ones that follow *listen* and *luister* are

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<sup>5</sup> The forty examples of *listen* and *luister* in the parallel corpus of plays provide supporting evidence. With the exception of one instance of *listen* (cf. 26a), there is a one-one correspondence between both imperatives.

mostly real: in both (26) and (27), the imperative of intentional auditory perception is used to draw the interlocutor's attention to a request for information on a previous topic. Secondly, as the use of the dash in (25a) (which really sets *listen* apart from the rest of the sentence) makes clear, the appeal to the hearer is often more explicit or even emphatic.<sup>6</sup>

- (26) A I'm not coming to the pub tonight. I'm going to Birkbeck.  
B Why not? You swot.  
A Oh yes I know. I have to swot. I'm not clever like you lot.  
B Anyway **listen**. So when are we going together then to do this revision? (ICEGB: s1a090.014-022)
- (27) A Ik heb zo'n baas die zegt van uh mensen doen zaken met mekaar dus ja dat uh en als je mekaar kent.  
'I have the kind of boss that is like uhm people do business with each other so yes that uhm and if you know each other.'  
B Ja precies ja.  
'Yeah exactly yeah.'  
A Maar uhm **luister** 'ns die uh uh collega De Vries is is bij je geweest en uh en toen?  
'But uhm just listen that uhm uhm colleague DeVries did did meet you and uhm and then?'  
B Mm-hu. Ik heb met hem uh d'rover gehad. (CSD: fn000868.194-199)  
'Mhm. I talked to him uhm about it.'

Despite these differences, some cases of *listen* and *luister* are very similar to the use of *look* and *kijk* as argumentation markers. The turn-medial example of *listen* in (28), for instance, is like *kijk* in (17), in that it introduces the following step in the speaker's reasoning. The turn-initial example of *look* in (29), which presents a fact that is at odds with the directive in the preceding line and which resembles (20), is translated as *luister*. *Listen* and *luister* are also comparable to *look* and *kijk* in (15)-(20) from the perspectives of information structure and

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<sup>6</sup> It is worthy of note here that, as a pragmatic marker, *kijk* hardly ever combines with modal particles (only eight percent of the cases in the corpus of Table 1) whereas *luister* is frequently modified by the strengthener *nou* or by the downtoners *even* and *eens* (four of the six vague cases in the corpus). One interpretation of these facts is that *kijk* is close to being a particle while *luister* is still very much a genuine imperative and thus an explicit call on the addressee to do something. Then again, one of the referees is right in pointing out that "the combination *kijk eens* is a very natural one ... [and that] there does not appear to be any [fundamental] ban against a sequence of two particles."

turn management. They present (re)new(ed) information –like the six-part organization of the speaker’s argument after *listen* in (28)– and they are used to (re)introduce a (sub)topic –like the shift from a digression on A’s boss back to the meeting with De Vries after *luister ‘ns* in (27). Moreover, speakers may avail themselves of these imperatives in the competition for the floor. In (3), for example, B is trying hard to interrupt A, by means of *listen* (four times) and *no* (seven times).

(28) I wasn’t saying that because if he had been there then there wouldn’t have been an economic problem and there there wouldn’t have been that side of being driven. But **listen**, there are three things I’m saying and they are divided in into two. (ICEGB: s1a075.57-59)

(29) A It’s a couple of lines. Please publish a correction.

‘Een paar regels maar. Publiceert u alstublieft een correctie.’

B Look I’ll be frank ... it isn’t very easy. The *Bystander* ... sorry, ‘we’ don’t publish corrections. (Brenton & Hare 1985: 17)

‘**Luister**, ik zal eerlijk tegen u zijn ... het is niet zo simpel als u denkt. De *Stem* ... sorry, ‘wij’ publiceren geen rectificaties.’ (Brenton & Hare 1986: 16)

Note that both *listen* and *luister* are used at the beginning of a fragment of reported speech, as (30) and (4) show. While *kijk* is not often found in quotation-initial position, half of the cases of *luister* in the corpus of Table 1 are like (4).<sup>7</sup>

(30) And said uhm well first of all I said **listen** you’ve got to pretend you don’t know who it is on the telephone. (ICEGB: s1a092.305)

In conclusion: *listen* and *luister* can function as directives to listen (cf. 6), as straightforward attention-getting devices and as argumentation markers (cf. 4 and 25-29) and as quotation-initial markers (cf. 4 and 30). In contrast to *kijk* (and *look* as far as the final two functions are concerned), they are not used as utterance-final expressives, as backchanneling devices, as

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<sup>7</sup> The most plausible explanation for the link between the pragmatic markers under consideration and quotations is that speakers (over)use *look*, *listen* and *luister* in an attempt to recreate part of the dynamics of the original conversation (the argumentative character of which is often the reason why it is reported in the first place) or of real direct speech in general. Another, related, account is offered by Van der Wurff (1999: 198-199). He argues, with regard to Bengali, that unreportable elements such as imperatives and interjections show the hearer that the following words need to be interpreted as direct rather than indirect speech.

expressive directives or as directives to consider. On the whole, the imperatives of intentional auditory perception can be said to be less frequent, to retain more of their lexical meaning and to have fewer uses than their visual counterparts.

#### 4. Explanation

The general conclusion reached in Section 3.2 is based on facts from Dutch and English but it is clear that there is considerable cross-linguistic support for it. The imperative of intentional visual perception seems to be a very frequent source of pragmatic markers: *loor ens* in Lower Rhineland German and *kíta* in Greek (Bergs 2003: 1, 7), *regarde* in Canadian French (Dostie 2004: 109-122), *mira/mire* in Spanish and *mira/miri* in Catalan (Cuenca & Marín 2000: 216), *guarda* in Italian and *ohla* in Portuguese (Waltereit 2002: 997). Bergs (2003: 8), who checks whether or not the imperatives ‘look!’, ‘say!’ and ‘hear!’ have a pragmatic function, notes that “*look* appears to be the cross-linguistically most common, followed by *say* and finally *hear*.” Moreover, in Romero Trillo’s (1997: 218) Spanish data, “*mira*, when used as an attention-getter, is more frequent” than *oye* ‘hear’ and *escucha* ‘listen’. In the same vein, it is argued in Cuenca & Marín (2000: 235) that *escucha* and Catalan *escolta* are less grammaticalized, at the formal level as well as the functional level, than their visual counterparts. Kleinknecht (2007: 101, in translation) claims that Italian “*ascolta* [‘listen’] is not conventionalized as a discourse marker to the same extent as *guarda*.” A notable exception to the trend that the imperative of intentional auditory perception is less frequent and less pragmatic than its visual counterpart is French. Unlike *écoute* ‘listen’, *regarde* “seems to have disappeared in France by the middle of the twentieth century” (Dostie 2004: 109, in translation), as a pragmatic marker at any rate. In Canada, *regarde* does have a number of pragmatic functions but it is not as multifunctional as *écoute* (cf. Dostie 2004: 121-122).

In the present section, the general tendency –i.e. the (lack of) success of the imperative of intentional visual(/auditory) perception as a pragmatic marker– and the differences between *look* and *kijk*, on the one hand, and *listen* and *luister*, on the other hand –i.e. the combination with questions and the absence of particular uses– are explained in terms of their recruitment as pragmatic markers (4.1) and the traditional view of both types of perception (4.2). In the first subsection, the selection of the imperative of intentional visual perception as a pragmatic marker is argued to be due to its usefulness in discourse. The differences with the imperative of intentional auditory perception are related to the speaker-centredness of imperatives such

as *listen* and *luister* (cf. 3.2). This section builds on Waltereit's (2002) scenario for the rise of *guarda* and the casual comments in the literature on the impolite character of the imperatives *escucha* and *ascolta*. In the second subsection, Sweetser's (1993: 23-48) general analysis of the metaphorical and cultural aspects of the semantic structure of perception verbs is applied to the potential use of imperatives of perception as pragmatic markers. The link between the imperative of intentional visual perception and the concept of truthfulness has already been touched on by Brinton (2001: 193).

#### 4.1 Recruitment

Waltereit (2002: 995-1003) argues that functional change is not caused by an item's intrinsic properties but by its exploitation by speakers for communicative purposes. In the scenario that he proposes for the development of *guarda* as a pragmatic marker, the imperative is (mis)used to be allowed to cut another speaker's turn short. In general, interruptions are only acceptable if the contribution is more important than the turn in progress. An utterance that is initiated by a directive to look, like in (10), can certainly be regarded as such a contribution. It points to some piece of visually accessible information which the interlocutors may not be aware of and which may be so momentary and noteworthy that they need to pay attention to it straight away. The imperative of intentional visual perception invokes "a higher-order 'force majeure' right" (Waltereit 2002: 1000) that justifies the interruption. Because it is such a handy device in discourse it would be entirely natural for speakers to start using it in contexts in which there is nothing to look at and they just want to take the floor. In these cases, the conversational implicature that the speaker's contribution is important is preserved. All other pragmatic uses of *guarda* (or any imperative of intentional visual perception, for that matter) are claimed to be further developments of the "interrupting imperative use" (Waltereit 2002: 1002).

The recruitment scenario in the preceding paragraph does not apply to *listen* and *luister*. The reason lies in the kind of object that these verbs tend to have. Unlike *look* and *kijk* –which usually point to a piece of 'non-human', factual information– they are typically about (what) human beings (are saying). *Listen* and *luister* are, in other words, fairly explicit appeals to the hearer to pay attention to what the speaker wants to say. But the fact that the speaker believes that he or she has something important to add does not provide sufficient grounds for cutting someone's turn short because, *ceteris paribus*, all interlocutors are equal with respect to turn management and may only take the floor when the previous turn is completely over and/or

when they are designated to be next by the previous speaker. By contrast, the imperative of intentional visual perception makes full use of the ‘superior force’ of the (fake) reference to some object or event and gets the addressee’s attention in an essentially indirect way, which makes it such a useful tool in conversation and may partly explain its cross-linguistic success. *Listen* and *luister* achieve their pragmatic goals in a very direct way, which makes them less handy as interruption or attention-getting devices than *look* and *kijk* in actual discourse. They can also be said to be more face-threatening than their visual counterparts. As the speaker is the issuer as well as the object of *listen* and *luister*, these imperatives have a tendency to be rather impositive and thus a threat to the interlocutor’s negative face, i.e. his or her desire to do as he or she pleases. The imperatives of intentional auditory perception in other languages appear to be very similar: according to Romero Trillo (1997: 213), *escucha* is “felt to be very direct, even aggressive” and, according to Kleinknecht (2007: 101, in translation), *ascolta* “is characterized by a strong illocutionary substance and has a strong intonational profile.” The cross-linguistic fact that verbs with the meaning ‘listen’ often acquire the meaning of ‘obey’, like Russian *slušat* (Sweetser 1993: 35) and like *listen* and *luisteren*, is another indication of the face-threatening potential of imperatives of intentional auditory perception. As a result, they are likely to be avoided or to be used sparingly in conversation, as speakers generally try to be co-operative and polite.

The difference in object between the imperative of intentional visual perception and its auditory counterpart plays a role in their relation with questions too. As a directive to look at something, the former tends to be accompanied by a specification of what the interlocutor is supposed to see, i.e. by STATEMENTS about the presence of some object –like *there’s the photo* in (10) or *da’s een abstracte zonnestraal* in (11)– or about the occurrence of some event –like *daar komt Peter op de fiets aan* in (13). The preference for this type of utterance is preserved in the more pragmatic uses, even if the following sentence takes the form of a question. As a directive to listen, the latter calls attention to whatever someone wants to say. In other words, the kind of message is not influenced by the preceding imperative and may thus very well be a real question.

#### 4.2 Views of perception

The ‘superior force’ effect of imperatives such as *look* and *kijk* cannot be the only explanation for their success as pragmatic markers. A directive to, say, smell or taste something is similar

to a directive to look in pointing to “an urgency justifying interruption” (Waltereit 2002: 997), such as fire or poisonous food. But only the directive to look is likely to be (mis)used and to develop into an attention-getting device and argumentation marker. We would argue that the (traditional view of) the nature of visual perception plays an important role. On the one hand, unlike olfaction and gustation, vision is generally considered as a sense which (most) people experience all the time and which does not really involve a great or special effort on the part of the subjects (cf. Sweetser 1993: 38). Directives to look are applicable to more contexts and are more common than directives to smell or taste, which makes them prime candidates for ‘illegitimate usage’. In a way, the misuse of a directive to look also imposes less of a burden on the addressee than that of a directive to smell or taste. It is easier, i.e. less demanding, to observe the absence of a visual stimulus than that of an olfactory or gustatory stimulus and to adjust the interpretation of the directive afterward. On the other hand, it is argued by Sweetser (1993: 39) that vision is usually regarded as the “primary source of objective data about the world”, as “the strongest and most reliable source of data” and also as “identical to different people.” People think that what is visible must be true, as it is directly, intersubjectively and easily verifiable. Accordingly, a directive to look –more so than a directive to smell or taste, which would probably be associated with more subjective knowledge (cf. Sweetser 1993: 35-37)– can be said to indicate that what comes next is true. This suggestion<sup>8</sup> contributes to the utterance’s high relevance, which makes interruptions acceptable, and it comes in very handy for cases of illegitimate use because it makes a claim of truthfulness for what the speaker is going to say.

According to Romero Trillo (1997: 220), the difference in frequency and usage with *listen* and *luister* is a result of the fact that “visual actions are better at securing attention than auditory activities” and speakers therefore “appeal to the act of looking as emblematic of the close attention that an addressee would pay to a particular object.” In line with its description in the preceding paragraph as reliable, the information that visual perception offers is actually worth paying attention to. Auditory perception, however, is considered to be “less consciously and readily focused” (Sweetser 1993: 38) and to offer more ephemeral and thus less reliable data. It is, on the whole, much harder to single out one auditory stimulus (e.g. the voice of an interlocutor in a crowded room) than one visual stimulus (e.g. this person’s face).

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<sup>8</sup> Compare Schwenter & Traugott (2000: 15) on the development of *in fact*: “writer/speakers appear to imply that what is physically accessible and empirically attested is also real and true – a well-known implicature, captured by “seeing is believing”. And if the writers/speakers themselves did not in any particular instance intend to imply this, readers may have nevertheless inferred it, using the same principle.”

This view of hearing is important in two further respects. First, the ability to select one of several stimuli is seen as a prominent feature of vision as well as of thought. It is the basis of the very common semantic change from visual to mental perception (cf. Sweetser 1993: 33-34), like in (14). Since this ability to focus is less typical of auditory perception, it is not surprising that *listen* and *luister* are not used as directives to consider. Secondly, the fact that sounds usually disappear almost right away may be part of the explanation for the absence of particular uses. What the expressive directives in (12) and (13), the utterance-final expressive in (23) and the backchanneling device in (24) have in common is that they pertain to shared information and do not have to be followed by anything. Unlike, say, the interruptive directive to look in (10) and the argumentation marker in (17), which point to (re)new(ed) information and are expected to be followed by other linguistic material, they are acknowledgments of, respectively, what has just been shown, what has just been established and what has just been said by the interlocutor. Because of this rather fundamental distinction, it is hard to see these ‘retrospective’ uses as products of Waltereit’s (2002) interruption scenario. A more plausible source is a directive to look at something that is already visible to everyone. From a strictly informational point of view, such a directive is not really required, as it highlights something that people have already seen. As a result, it is (to be) understood as more than just an appeal to an addressee to look at something. It may, for instance, signal the particular significance of what precedes –as some type of strengthener– or convey the speaker’s surprise or approval – as some type of expressive. The effects are preserved in the more pragmatic uses of *look* and especially *kijk* in (12), (13), (23) and (24). As discussed in Section 3.2, *listen* and *luister* do not function in this way at all. The source of such a retrospective (or ‘retroauditive’?) use would be a directive to listen to something that is audible to everyone at the time of speaking. But the fact that the stimulus will probably be gone by the time that the speaker is finished renders this directive fairly pointless. Moreover, the development of uses like an utterance-final expressive or a backchanneling device requires a type of object that is uncharacteristic of both *listen* and *luister*. These imperatives typically draw attention to what the speaker him- or herself is saying or is going to say rather than to newly acquired information, as in (23) or to what an interlocutor has just said, as in (24).

To sum up Sections 4.1 and 4.2, the differences between the imperatives of intentional visual perception and those of intentional auditory perception in English, Dutch and several other languages have been argued to follow from: 1. the attractiveness of the directive to look as a conversational device on account of its ‘superior force’ effect, its general applicability

and the traditional conception of visual perception as a reliable source of information; 2. the problematic status of the directive to listen as a pragmatic marker because of the conception of auditory perception as a somewhat less reliable source of data and because of its typical object and its related directness and face-threatening potential; 3. the type of utterance by which directives to look are usually followed and its preservation in the combination of the pragmatic markers *look* and *kijk* with questions; 4. the (dis)similar ways in which intellection and (hearing/)vision are regarded, as far as the ability to focus on one of a number of stimuli is concerned; 5. the incompatibility of *listen* and *luister* with retrospective uses, because of the fleeting nature of auditory stimuli and because of a difference in what these imperatives and these functions typically relate to.

Note, as a final point, that the differences between the imperative of intentional visual perception and the imperative of intentional auditory perception are much more prominent in Dutch than in English. There is a difference in frequency between *look* and *listen* but the one between *kijk* and *luister* is much bigger. In addition, *kijk* has a number of functions that *look* cannot fulfill. These facts show that while the account in Section 4 sketches a natural pathway for the development of the imperative of intentional visual perception (versus the imperative of intentional auditory perception), languages may follow it at different paces and to different points. Perhaps, the relative success of *kijk* is due to the absence of a real competitor. Unlike in English, which has two common pragmatic markers –i.e. *look* and *you see*– that come from verbs of visual perception (cf. Section 2), there does not appear to be any form of the verb of unintentional visual perception *zien* ‘see’ that is used as an attention-getting device in present-day Dutch. At any rate, more research is needed to explain the differences between *look* and *kijk*.

## 5. Conclusion

The study of *look*, *kijk*, *listen* and *luister* shows that seemingly similar pragmatic markers in two languages or within a language may differ in frequency, in distribution and in usage. Such a detailed comparison of so-called equivalents improves the understanding of the pragmatic peculiarities of both languages and may have applications in translation studies and language teaching. More importantly here, it can also point to more general tendencies, like the relation between imperatives of intentional visual perception and imperatives of intentional auditory perception. In the explanation of this relation, the article calls attention to the communication-

based motivation for and the impact of traditional views of types of perception on language use and language change.

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