

Prohibition: constructions and markers¹

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1. The problem

Let ‘prohibitive’ be the one word term for ‘imperative negative’. I will discuss both ‘prohibitive constructions’ and ‘prohibitive markers’. Let me explain the former notion first. A prohibitive construction is that construction, whatever its structure, that is conventionally used to express a prohibition. It can be illustrated with English (1b-c).

- (1) English
- a. Move!
 - b. Do not move!
 - c. Don’t move!

In English, the main prohibitive construction is relatively straightforward. In general, English expresses negation with the help of the *do* auxiliary, followed by the citation form (the infinitive) of the lexical verb. The negation is either the full form *not* or its cliticized form *n’t*.

- (2) English
- a. John moves.
 - b. John does not move.
 - c. John doesn’t move.

The prohibitive constructions in (1b-c) are no different. And they are not relevantly different from ordinary imperatives: English uses the citation form as the imperative, and I find one both in (1a), viz. *move*, and in (1b-c), viz. *do*. So one could claim that the English prohibitive construction of the type illustrated in (1b-c) has a compositional structure: it combines the ordinary negative marker (*do* with *not* or *n’t*) with the ordinary imperative. I will therefore say that English (1b-c) do not exhibit any ‘prohibitive marker’, i.e., a negative marker that is more or less dedicated to the prohibitive construction.

But English does have a prohibitive marker. In English, as in other languages, the prohibitive construction may include the second person subject. The effect is pragmatic (see Bergs 2005; De Clerck 2005), and the construction is only possible when the negative is a clitic (or arguably even a suffix - Zwicky & Pullum 1983).

¹ The paper is a follow-up to van der Auwera (2005, 2006): the essential difference concerns this paper’s third section. Special thanks are due to Alexander Bergs, Katarzyna M. Jaszczolt, Matti Miestamo, Dingfang Shu, and an anonymous referee. The work is financed by the “GOA” grant of the University of Antwerp. The less well-known languages are referred with their *Ethnologue* name (Grimes 2000) and are given a language family label, similarly based on the *Ethnologue*. The observations and hypotheses are based on a growing sample of some 600 languages, extended from the samples of van der Auwera & Lejeune (2005a, 2005b).

- (3) English
- a. *Do not you move!
 - b. *Do you not move!
 - c. Don't you move!

As Bergs (2005) points out, the subject pronoun may further cliticize to the *don't* form.

- (3) d. Doncha bother me!

In a question *don't you* (and *doncha*) is also possible, and here a construction with a full *not* is acceptable, though there is a word order complication.

- (4) English
- a. *Do not you like him?
 - b. Do you not like him?
 - c. Don't not like him?

The point is that the non-expandability of the clitic *n't* in prohibitives makes the *don't you* and *doncha* turns a little special. They are, of course, still transparently compositional, but there is a modest degree of dedication. I will therefore call *don't you* and *doncha* 'prohibitive markers'.

In English the prohibitive marker is a bit hard to detect. The construction with the pronoun subject is marked and the degree of dedication is rather humble. But in many languages the situation is very different. Take Mandarin. First of all, in declaratives Mandarin has a few sentential strategies, the three most common ones employing the markers *bù*, *méi* or *méiyǒu* (for a review of the literature and a new account, see Xiao & McEnery 2005).

- (5) Mandarin (Li & Thompson 1981: 417, 418)
- a. 他 不 念 书。
Tā bu niàn shū.
3SG NEG study book
'(S)he does not study.'
 - b. 他 没 有 开 门。
Tā (méi)yǒu kāi mén.
3SG NEG open door
'(S)he didn't open the door.'

méi(yǒu) does not surface in prohibitive constructions, and neither does *bu*, at least not by itself. Instead we mostly find the dedicated markers *buyào* and *bié*. Both are conventionally associated with the prohibitive construction. They are grammatical markers with just that function (*bié*) or with that function as one of its main functions (*buyào*). Both of them therefore deserve the label 'prohibitive marker'.

- (6) Mandarin (Li & Thompson 1981: 455; Yip & Rimmington 1977: 88)
- a. 动!
Dòng!
 - b. 别 动!
Bié dòng!
PROH move
'Don't move!'
 - c. 不要 动!
Buyào dòng!
PROH move
'Don't move!'

We find a somewhat similar situation in Cantonese. The neutral declarative negative is *mh*. There is a specialized existential or completive declarative marker *móuh*, and for the prohibitive construction, we again have two strategies: *mhóu* is the normal prohibitive marker, but there is also an informal *máih* (Matthews & Yip 1994: 248-260, 363-364). Of course, the similarity is not complete. For our purposes, it suffices to point out that both Cantonese and Mandarin have prohibitive markers.

In Mandarin and Cantonese, the prohibitive markers are syntactic grams. Whether they are auxiliaries or particles has been discussed in the literature, but it is not relevant for our purpose. In fact, world wide the dedication of the prohibitive markers is not dependent on their formal properties at all. Thus the prohibitive markers, if syntactic, may indeed be auxiliaries or particles, and they may further be clause-initial, clause-second, postsubject, postobject, pre-auxiliary, preverbal, postverbal, postauxiliary or clause-final. They may also be morphological, both prefixal and suffixal, and they may hover between morphology and syntax and have the status of proclitics or enclitics. The prohibitive markers may also be complex and combine morphological or syntactic elements of the sort just described. Not all of these are equally common. In particular, syntactic prohibitives seem to be like other negatives in preferring an early and preverbal position. (Jespersen 1917: 7; Dahl 1979; Dryer 1988), and perhaps even more so than declarative negatives (Jespersen 1917: 5-6; Horn 1989: 450), and morphological negatives submit to the forces steering the universal suffixation preference (Greenberg 1963: 73; Hawkins & Gilligan 1988). The point here is merely that prohibitive markers come in all shapes and colors. Mandarin illustrates one of the syntactic strategies: the particles are preverbal but postsubject. Some other syntactic strategies are illustrated in (7).

- (7) Syntactic
- a. Particle, preverbal, postobject
Me'en (Eastern Sudanic, Ethiopia, Will 1998: 444)
Galá ké ámi!
food PROH eat.2SG
'Don't eat the food!'

- b. Particle, clause-final
Arop-Lokep (Oceanic, Papua New Guinea, D'Jernes 2002: 266)
Ku-wete nen bee!
2SG-speak like.that PROH
'Don't speak like that!'
- c. Particle, preVP
Ainu (Isolate, Japan, Tamura 2000: 247)
Irwak anak iteki utasaroski p
siblings TOP PROH discord thing
ne na!
COP SGST
'Don't make trouble between yourself and your siblings!'
- d. Particles, one clause-initial and the second clause-final
Vengo (Grassfields Bantu, Cameroon, Schaub 1985: 24)
Kĩ ghò s̄h̄ bá mē!
PROH 2SG cut.IMPF lie NEG
'Don't tell a lie!'
- e. Auxiliary, postverbal
Tokia (Oceanic, Papua New Guinea, Ross 2002b: 240)
Mau am w-ani u-moi!
taro that 2SG-eat 2SG-PROH²
'Don't eat that taro!'

In (16c) we will show a strategy in Lewo, which may use three particles: one preverbal, and two postverbal.

A few morphological strategies are illustrated in (8).

- (8) Morphological
- a. Prefix
Qiang (Tibeto-Burman, China, LaPolla 2003: 155)
Ṭo-lu-n-(na)
PROH-come-2SG-IMP
'Don't come!'
- b. Suffix
Lezgi (North Caucasian, Daghestan, Haspelmath 1993: 149)
Wuna am pačahdi-z gu-mir!
2SG.ERG that.ABS king-DAT give-PROH
'Don't give it to the king!'
- c. Prefix and enclitic
Pero (Chadic, Nigeria, Frayzyngier 1989: 91)
Mà-kát-6é=m!
2PL-PROH-break=NEG
'Don't break it!'

(9) illustrates a combination of syntactic and morphological means.

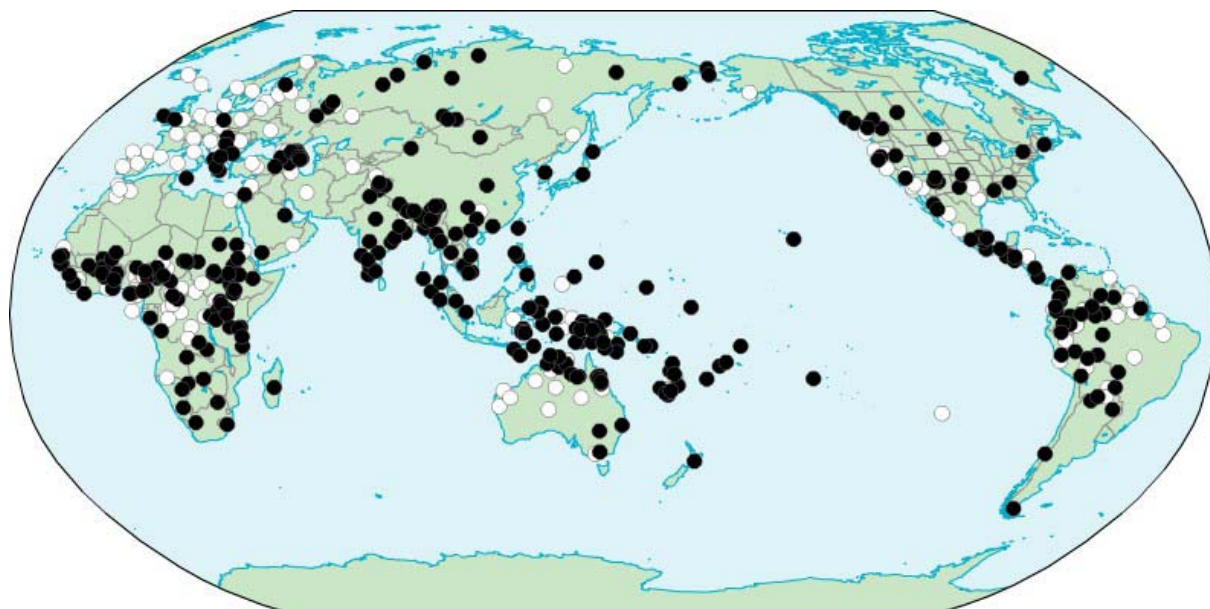
² The interpretation of the *moi* verb as a prohibitive auxiliary is only justified if the *moi* verb is truly dedicated to the prohibitive function. The grammatical description glosses the structure as a serial verb construction with *moi* meaning 'not want'.

- (9) Suffix and postverbal auxiliary
Ica (Chibchan, Colombia, Frank 1990: 87)

Tšoʔ-uʔ	nán!
put.down.NEG	PROH
‘Don’t put it down’	

Note that when the prohibitive marker has more than one gram, one of them is typically (?always) identical to the declarative negative. This is the case for the Vengo clause-final particle, the Pero clitic and the Ica affix.

That languages frequently have prohibitive markers has been pointed out before, e.g. by Schmerling (1982: 202), Horn (1989: 447-448), Zhang (1990: 160), Dooley Collberg & Håkansson (1999), and by König & Siemund (forthcoming). Sadock & Zwicky (1985: 175-177), Croft (1991: 14) and Kahrel (1996: 116-118) make the same point and they add an areal claim: prohibitive markers would be untypical for Western languages (Sadock & Zwicky), Europe (Croft) or the ‘Old World’ (Nichols 1992: Eurasia, Africa, South and South-East Asia) (Kahrel 1996). Samples, if any, on which these claims are made, are modest in size: from 15 for Dooley Collberg & Håkansson (1999) to 47 for Zhang (1990), and the representativeness is also variable, with Kahrel (1996) scoring best, but with only 40 languages. A more representative, but still not balanced, and bigger sample was investigated by van der Auwera & Lejeune (2005b). They looked at second singular prohibitive constructions of 495 languages. They concluded that 327 of those 495 languages have a more or less dedicated prohibitive marker as their only or main strategy. That we are dealing with a truly world wide phenomenon is shown in Map 1 below, based on the map on van der Auwera & Lejeune (2005b: 292-3). There is indeed at least one exceptional area, viz. Western Europe, but there may be more (e.g. the western and central part of Australia)



Map 1. Prohibitive markers in second person singular prohibitive constructions

- Prohibitive marker as unique or main strategy
- No prohibitive marker as unique or main strategy

The majority of the languages shown in Map 1, viz. 183 of them, are like Mandarin and Cantonese, in the sense of having the form of the verb in the prohibitive construction identical to the form of the verb in the imperative construction. For Mandarin and Cantonese, this is hardly surprising, for the languages exhibit little morphology. But we may also find this with languages with rich morphology. An example is Malayalam: its basic imperative is the root of the verb, and it is also this root that we find with the prohibitive marker *-arutə* (Asher & Kumari 1997: 332-334).

(10) Malayalam (Dravidian, India, Asher & Kumari 1997: 332, 334)

- a. Para!
tell.IMP
'Tell!'
- b. Para-yarutə!
tell-PROH
'Don't tell!'

We also find a special prohibitive marker followed by a verb form that is different from the one used in the imperative construction. In Zulu the imperative second singular (normally) takes the root of the verb followed by the final vowel *-a*. The most common prohibitive construction, however, takes a special prohibitive marker, in this case a bleached auxiliary, followed by the lexical verb in an infinitival form.

(11) Zulu (Narrow Bantu, South Africa, Poulos & Msimang 1998: 244, 247)

- a. Sebenza!
work.IMP.2SG
'Work!'
- b. Musa uku-ngen-a
PROH.AUX INF-come-INF
'Don't come in!'

When we see that 327 out of 495 have a more or less dedicated prohibitive marker, there are still 168 languages that do not have one, or at least not as their main strategy. Of these, the majority (113 languages) are like English: the prohibitive construction employs the negative marker found in declaratives and the verb form used in positive imperatives. A minority (55 languages) uses the declarative negation, but not the imperative verb form. A language illustrating this strategy is Spanish.

(12) Spanish

- a. Canta!
IMP.2Sg
'Sing!'
- b. No cantes!
NEG sing.SUBJ.PRES.2SG
'Don't sing!'

In the rest of the paper I will address two issues: (i) why is it that prohibitive markers exist at all? and (ii) why do languages prefer them? I will restrict myself to second singular prohibitives.

2. On the existence of prohibitive markers

It has been pointed out (Givón 1978: 89, 1984: 232; Croft 1991; Miestamo 2003: 188-189; Heine & Kuteva 2002: 188, 192-193) that negative markers may come from verbs, though one may doubt the relevance of this observation (Dryer 1988: 111-113, 115), in part because the origin is often no longer traceable. The point has also been made with respect to the prohibitive type of negative marker. I am aware of three cross-linguistic observations: Payne (1985: 222), Croft (1991: 14), and Heine & Kuteva (2002: 283-284). Payne (1985: 222) points to two possible sources, a ‘stop’ verb and a ‘not want’ construction. The first source is also documented by Heine & Kuteva (2002: 283-284), and the second by Croft (1991: 14). In what follows these observations will be integrated in a more comprehensive account.

2.1. Prohibitive markers that derive from predicative constructions

The prohibitive scenario is one in which the speaker forbids the hearer(s) to bring about a future state of affairs. Important components of this kind of scenario can be expressed lexically. Instead of (1) one can use the (imperative of the) predicate ‘abstain’.

(13) Abstain from singing.

There are two possibilities: either the hearer(s) is/are singing and the speaker wants him/them to stop, or he/they is/are not singing, and the hearer does not want him/them to start. The criterial properties of these two scenarios may be expressed with lexical means, too.

(14) a. Stop singing.
b. Don’t start singing.

There can be various reasons for the prohibition, and again, these can be expressed with appropriate predicates.

(15) a. Singing is not necessary.
b. Singing is not possible.
c. Singing is forbidden.
d. Singing is taboo.
e. Singing is wrong.

In each of the sentences in (13) to (15), there is a lexical predicate that is particularly important for triggering the prohibitive meaning.³ We know that lexical items may become grammatical markers and this process is called “grammaticalization”. The basic explanation for the existence of at least some dedicated prohibitive markers is then that they are grammaticalizations involving the lexemes and phrases that are relevant in the prohibition scene.

Thus we find general verbs like ‘abstain’ as the hypothesized origin of prohibitive markers in Hano (Oceanic, Vanuatu, Crowley 2002: 636), Kuku-Yalanji (Pama-Nyungan, Australia, Patz 2002: 194) and Lewo (Oceanic, Vanuatu, Early 1994). The case of Lewo is particularly interesting, because it illustrates a general property of grammaticalization, called

³ Some of these also exemplify what were “prohibitive constructions”: (14a), for instance, is clearly a normal conventional expression format for the appropriate subtype of prohibition.

“divergence” (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 116-120) and “split” (Heine & Reh 1984: 57-59), and referring to the fact that whereas lexical items may grammaticalize, they may also retain lexical uses. Lewo has more than one prohibitive strategy. The first one just uses the normal negative marker, in this case, a discontinuous *ve ... re*. The second one uses the verb *toko* ‘desist’ in combination with a nominalization.

- (16) Lewo (Oceanic, Vanuatu, Early 1994: 76-77)
- a. *Ve* *a-kan* *re!*
 NEG.IRR 2SG-eat NEG
 ‘Don’t eat it!’
- b. *Na-kan-ena* *toko!*
 NOM-eat-NOM desist
 ‘Don’t eat it!’ or ‘Desist from eating it!’

toko is a verb and it may take a nominalized complement. But there is also a *toko* which shows up in a third prohibitive construction, the one that has developed most recently (Early 1994: 76). In this strategy we find both *toko* and the structure with the normal negative markers.

- (16) Lewo (Oceanic, Vanuatu, Early 1994: 76)
- c. *Ve* *a-kan* *re* *toko!*
 NEG.IRR 2SG-eat NEG PROH
 ‘Don’t eat it!’

In (16c) *toko* does not combine with a nominalization. From that point of view, *toko* is not a complement taking verb (or auxiliary) anymore. It would not make semantic sense either, for then it would mean ‘Desist from not eating!’, i.e., ‘Eat!’. Early also makes clear that there is no intonation break between *toko* and the preceding phrase. So one should not gloss the sentence as ‘Don’t eat it, don’t!’, although I think, this could very well be the source of the new strategy. Different from the *toko* of (16b) then, that of (16c) is a component of the complex prohibitive marker *ve ... re toko*.

So much for the grammaticalization of the prohibitive marker out of a general ‘abstain’ construction. Different from ‘abstain’, ‘stop’ is more particular, in that it makes clear that the activity is going on at the moment of speaking. It is my impression that a grammaticalization of a prohibitive marker from a ‘stop’ verb or, more generally, a ‘stop’ predicate, is relatively common. In Heine and Kuteva’s *World lexicon of grammaticalization* (2002) prohibitive markers are supplied with only one source and that is the ‘stop’ verb. Most of their examples come from Marchese’s (1979) work on Kru languages.

- (17) Klao (Kru, Liberia, Marchese 1979: 326-327)
- Bɔ kùà nyu-ɛ!*
 PROH thing eat-NOM
 ‘Eat nothing!’

A Seychelles Creole example, also supplied by Heine and Kuteva (2002: 284), is (18).

- (18) Seychelles Creole (Corne 1977: 184)
- Arret vol sitrô!*
 PROH steal lemon
 ‘Don’t steal lemons!’

The paraphrases with modality in (15a-b) can also grammaticalize. An example of a prohibitive marker resulting from a possibility verb and a negation is Serbian/Croatian *nemoj*, from the negative *ne* and the imperative of the verb *moći* ‘may’ (Greenberg 1996: 164; Hansen 2004). We get a derivation from the negative in combination with a necessity modal in Afrikaans *moenie*. As (22b) shows, *moenie* is separable, and in its separable version one could still consider it to be a combination of a modal and an ordinary negation.⁴

- (22) Afrikaans (Germanic, South Africa, Donaldson 1993: 234)
- | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| a. | Moenie | dit | vir | hom | gee | nie! | |
| | PROH | this | for | him | give | NEG | |
| | ‘Don’t give it to him!’ | | | | | | |
| b. | Moet | dit | nie | vir | hom | gee | nie! |
| | must | it | NEG | for | him | give | NEG |
| | ‘Don’t give it to him!’ | | | | | | |

The Mandarin prohibitive *buyào* is another example, as it derives from the ordinary negative *bú* followed by the necessity modal *yào*, and *bié* may in turn derive from *buyào* (although there is an alternative etymology relating to the meaning ‘other’—Norman 1988: 127; see also Li 2003: 268-270). This *yào* element also means ‘want’, hence *buyào* could also be seen as deriving from ‘not want’, a path claimed for Nengone (Oceanic, Loyalty Islands, Moysé-Faurie & Ozanne-Rivierre 1999: 78), Takia (Oceanic, Papua New Guinea, Ross 2002b: 240; example 7e) and Monumbo (Torricelli, Papua New Guinea, Vormann & Scharfenberger 1914: 63). This source was already discussed by Croft (1991: 14-16), who further mentions Tagalog (Meso Philippine, The Philippines), Wintu (Penutian, USA), and Latin. Another source meaning, close to ‘not want’, is ‘refuse, reject’ as in Teop (Oceanic, Bougainville, Mosel & Spriggs 1999: 54) and Nyâlây (Oceanic, New Caledonia, Moysé-Faurie & Ozanne-Rivierre 1999: 75).

There are yet other predicates that have been attested as delivering prohibitive markers. They include ‘(be) taboo’, argued for Saliba, Oceanic, Papua New Guinea, Margetts 1999: 38) and Tongan (Oceanic, Tonga, Broschart 1999: 109), ‘(be) wrong’, argued for Lower Grand Valley Dani (Trans-New Guinea, Indonesia, Bromley 1981: 40), and ‘forbid’ argued for Luvale (Narrow Bantu, Zambia, Horton 1949: 115). Cantonese *mhóu* belongs here too, as it derives from ‘(be) not good’ (Croft 1991: 16).

This is by no means a complete list. Whenever we find a synchronic polyfunctionality for a prohibitive marker, as with ‘lest’ (negative purpose), claimed for Pasaale Sisaale (Gur, Ghana, McGill, Fembeti & Toupin 1999: 139) or Tenneset (Eastern Sudanic, Sudan, Randal 1998: 249) or with the preposition ‘without’, claimed for Bafia (Narrow Bantu, Cameroon, Guarisma 1990: 76-77), a diachronic scenario is bound to relate the various meanings.

2.2. Prohibitive markers that are due to changes to the general negative markers

The best known scenario through which a language may acquire two negative markers is the one called “Jespersen’s cycle”. The term is due to Dahl (1979: 88) and the essential idea is due to Jespersen (1917). For the purpose of expressivity, a negative marker may be accompanied by another word, which then becomes part of the negative marker and may further either replace the old marker or merge with it. A three-step representation for French is given in (23). *ne* is the original negative marker, often in front of a finite verb (‘Vf’). *pas*,

⁴ There is more to *moenie*. It may be a calque on “Low Portuguese” *namisti*, itself also a univerbation of a negative and a modal (*mister* ‘necessary’) (Ponelis 1993: 460).

literally ‘step’, is the strengthener. It often follows the finite verb, it has become a part of a complex embracing negative *ne ... pas* in modern standard French, and it has become the only exponent of negation in the colloquial register.

(23) Jespersen’s cycle in French

- 1 *ne* Vf
- 2 *ne* Vf *pas*
- 3 Vf *pas*

This process need not happen at the same speed in each context. In particular, the prohibitive context may favor either the retention of the old marker or the rise of the new one. A good example of the former situation is Latin. In Latin the original negative marker was *ne*. It came in two versions, a phonetically weak one, henceforth *nĕ*, and a phonetically strong one, henceforth *nē*. Only the weak one entered Jespersen’s cycle. The strengthener was *oinum* ‘one’. In Latin, different from French, the strengthener did not replace the old negative, but it merged with it and gave *non* (Wackernagel 1926: 253). The phonetically strong *nē* did not get strengthened and one of the contexts in which it was found was the prohibitive one, where it presumably often occupied a clause-initial position (*nē* also held its ground at the onset of some subordinate clauses). Eventually, in the Romance languages, *nē* disappeared. Schematically:

(24) The development of negation in Latin and Romance (with Jespersen’s cycle boxed)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. | <i>nĕ</i> | <i>nē</i> |
| 2. | <i>nĕ oinum</i> | <i>nē</i> |
| 3. | <i>non</i> | <i>nē</i> |
| 4. | <i>nen/non/no</i> | Ø |

The case of the cycle advancing faster in prohibitive contexts is also illustrated by Dutch. The old negative is *en* and the new one is *niet*, itself a univerbation of *en* and the word for ‘something’. In main clauses, *en* preceded the finite verb and the strengthener *niet* followed it. Modern Standard Dutch has reached the third stage, with *niet* being the only exponent of negation.

(25) Jespersen’s cycle in Dutch (main clauses)

- 1 *en* Vf
- 2 *en* Vf *niet*
- 3 Vf *niet*

The third stage was not, however, reached at the same time in every region. Thus Burridge (1983: 33) has shown, for example, that in the Brabant dialect of 1650, stage 3 was only beginning to be reached in declaratives: 91% of the cases exhibit the stage 2 construction and only 9% the stage 3 construction. In some contexts, however, the stage 3 construction had already ousted its stage 2 competitor and one of these was the prohibitive construction. There were two other such constructions: the polar question and the conjunctionless conditional clause. What the three contexts had in common was that they were developing a ‘V1’ constraint, i.e., a strong preference for an order with the finite verb in first position. This norm was to preclude anything in front of the finite verb (see Van der Horst & Van der Wal 1979: 27). That the finding is not a coincidence can be shown by the figures for other dialects

and other periods (figures all from Burridge 1983: 33 (1993: 190-191); confirmation also in Beheydt 1998).

(26)	stage 3	declarative main clauses ↔ prohibitive			
		Brabantic		Hollandic	
	1300	0 % ↔ 21 %		28 % ↔ 43 %	
	1400	?		11 % ↔ 83 %	
	1500	9 % ↔ 50 %		48 % ↔ 77 %	
	1600	5 % ↔ 57 %		30 % ↔ 100 %	
	1650	9 % ↔ 100 %		100 % ↔ 100 %	

2.3. Prohibitive markers grammaticalize out of imperative and negative markers

Another source for prohibitive makers relates to a grammaticalization out of the grammar of imperative and negative. The English *don't you* (*doncha*) is a case in point. The origin is still transparent, but the construction is no longer the mere sum of the components.

Here is another type: in Hunzib (North Caucasian, Daghestan, Van den Berg 1997: 87), the prohibitive marker is the suffix *-áq'(o)*. In Van den Berg's synchronic description, this morpheme is not analyzed into smaller units. Knowing that the transitive imperative suffix is *-o* and the intransitive one is zero and that *-at'* is the negative affix of the indicative present (Van den Berg 1997: 84, 87), the hypothesis that *-áq'(o)* historically derives from a negative much like *-at'* and the ordinary imperative *-o* or zero would seem rather plausible.⁵

2.4. Prohibitive markers are borrowed

Of course, prohibitive markers can be borrowed (or calqued—see note 4). It is not very common, probably, but claims have been made for Chayahuita (Cahuapan, Peru, Adelaar with Muysken 2004: 448) borrowing its prohibitive marker from Quechua (Quechuan, Peru) or for Khasi (Mon-Khmer, India, Roberts 1891: 85) from Hindi.

3. On the worldwide preference for prohibitive markers

So far I have thrown some light on how prohibitive markers may come into existence. The next question is why there is a universal preference for them. Explanations can be formal or functional. In generative quarters a lot of relevant work has been done in the wake of Zanuttini (1991). Most of it does not directly address the preference for prohibitive markers, but rather the impossibility of combining the declarative negative marker with the imperative.⁶ This is due to the initial focus on Romance languages, in which the negative is unremarkable but the verb often cannot be imperative, but rather subjunctive (as in (12b)) or infinitival. This has remained the focus of the work, although the span of languages studied has increased to include Germanic, Slavic and Balkan. In Balkan languages investigators have dealt with the prohibitive markers of Greek and Albanian—even in Romance, the prohibitive

⁵ The hedge is intended, though. Compare the reservation expressed in the description of related Godoberi (Dobrushina, Kibrik & Tatevosov 1996: 49).

⁶ The English *don't you* construction has also attracted attention, and the link between this construction and the more clearly prohibitive markers has been noticed (Zhang 1990: 79-81; Potsdam 1996: 319-323).

is not unknown (Poletto & Zanuttini 2003). Generative work directly focussing on the prohibitive marker itself is, first of all, Zhang (1990) and Dooley Collberg & Håkansson (1999), both of which extending their scope to non-European languages. Then there is the work of Han & Lee (2002) and Sells (forthcoming) on Korean. Of course, all of the generative work is relevant, for part of the reason for the universal preference for a prohibitive marker might be the universal dislike of the combination of the declarative negative and the imperative.

Formalist explanations have tended to derive the unavailability of the combination of the declarative negative and the imperative from other properties of the declarative negative and the imperative. Relevant features included (i) the position of the negative relative to the verb, (ii) the question whether or the negative is a clitic, and (iii) the question whether or not the verb form used for commands is a dedicated imperative or whether it instantiates just a use of a multifunctional category, which is then said to supply “suppletive” (Zanuttini 1991) or “surrogate” (Rivero 1994) imperatives. Though these factors may well be relevant for specific languages, as an explanation for the universal preference for prohibitives, they must be discounted. I have already argued in 1 that prohibitive markers appear independently of any formal and positional properties. There is also no dependence on whether or not the imperative is dedicated. This was a finding arrived at by Dooley Collberg & Håkansson (1999: 32) on the basis of their 15 language sample. I can replicate it on the basis of the descriptions in van der Auwera & Lejeune (2005a, 2005b).⁷ For 473 languages we had data on the dedicatedness of the second singular imperative and on the existence of a second singular prohibitive marker. Of these the majority have a dedicated imperative. But both in the subset with dedicated imperatives and the one without, prohibitive markers are preferred, and even in roughly the same proportion (see Table 1)

		Prohibitive marker	
		+	-
Morphologically	+	236	131
dedicated IMP.2SG	-	78	28

Table 1. The second singular morphologically dedicated imperative and the second singular prohibitive marker

Some of the formalist work ends up with a semantic proposal (Han 1999). The claim is that in some languages the morphosyntax would deliver a construction with a negation that has scope over the imperative meaning—a view already expressed in traditional grammar (Alarcos 1994: 152). The latter construction would not be good for the job: a prohibitive is not a negation of the imperative, it is rather an imperative such that something should not be the case. Put differently, the prohibitive negation does not negate the illocution, but only the proposition. I see two problems with this kind of proposal. First, it has to be remarked that the dependence on any particular morphosyntactic exponence of either the imperative or the negative cannot be too specific. Just like there is a wide variation in the morphosyntax of prohibitive markers, there is a also wide variation in the morphosyntax of constructions that do allow the declarative negative and the verb form used in imperatives. In (27) I illustrate this for syntactic strategies, and in (28) for morphological ones.

⁷ The pre-Zanuttini work of Zhang (1990) already downgrades the role of the dedicatedness of the marking of the positive imperative. Zhang (1990: 165) expects languages to have the negatives found in declaratives if the imperative marking is sufficiently clear, but he admits (1990: 166) that even when this is the case, languages may still use prohibitive markers.

- (27) Syntactic
- a. Particle, clause-initial
Iaai (Oceanic, Loyalty Islands, Lynch 2002 : 789)
Caa mwede!
NEG make.noise
'Don't make noise!'
 - b. Particle, clause-final
Lele (Chadic, Chad, Fraynzyngier 2001: 274)
Tamá, ul dé!
woman cry.IMP NEG
'Woman, don't cry!'
 - c. Particle, preverbal
Tetelcingo Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan, Mexico, Tuggy 1979: 32)
Amo šo-mo-čiwł-lı
NEG IMP-HON-do-APPLIC
'Don't do it!'
 - d. Negative auxiliary, preverbal
Evenki (Tungus, Russia, Nedyalkov 1994: 19)
E-ηne-keullu tala girku-ra
NEG-HAB-IMP.2PL there go-CONN
'Don't go there!'
- (28) Morphological
- a. Proclitic
West Kewa (Trans-New Guinea, Papua New Guinea, Franklin 1972: 47)
Na=pú-lupaa-pe!
NEG=go-IMP.PL-IMP.IMM
'Don't all of you go now!'
 - b. Suffix
Cubeo (Tucanoan, Colombia, Morse & Maxwell 1999: 24)
O-be-xa-ko
cry-NEG-IMP-FSG
'Don't cry!'
 - c. Circumfix
Araona (Tacanan, Bolivia, Pitman 1980: 37)
Joda pi-jemi-na a-que.
that NEG-get-NEG make-IMP
'Don't pull that out!'

Second, the risk that any particular exponence of a negation would yield the wrong scope makes itself felt with declaratives, too. The negative of the declarative also does not have wide scope, at least not in my view (but see Horn 1989: passim for discussion).

(29) The ball is not blue.

(29) does not mean that one does not assert that the ball is blue. It rather means that one asserts that the ball is not blue. Thus the mere risk of the wrong scope cannot be a sufficient reason for avoiding to use the same negative marker as the one found in declaratives.

What is it then that makes prohibitive constructions prefer prohibitive markers? I propose that at least part of the does involve a garden path effect, but not that one that involves a mistaken scope, but rather a mistaken speech act type. For this I have to assume that the declarative negatives are the most frequent ones, i.e., more frequent than either imperative negatives or interrogative negatives, and that it is important for languages to make clear whether the direction of fit—to use a speech act term—is word to world (declaratives) or world to word (imperatives). If these assumptions are correct, then there is a certain risk that the occurrence of the negative marker that occurs in the declarative will itself be taken as a sign of the declarative. Of course, the hedge of “a certain risk” is important, for quite some languages do take that risk.

To clarify this further, we can bring in considerations of aspect. As many linguists have remarked, Hagège (1982: 87), Forest (1993: 86-91) and especially Miestamo (2003: 185)⁸, it is a property of negative declaratives that they are overwhelmingly stative. Positive declaratives, on the other hand, may be stative or dynamic. Consider the positive declaratives in (30).

- (30) a. John was at home.
 b. It rained.
 b. John ran away.

(30a) is stative and (30b) and (30b) are dynamic: (30b) is a process and (30c) is an action. But consider now their negations.

- (31) a. John was not at home.
 b. It didn't rain.
 b. John didn't run away.

All of the situations in (31) are stative: (31a) is just as stative as its positive counterpart. But different from their respective counterparts, (31b) and (31c) are stative now, the simple reason being that nothing happened, i.e., the process didn't materialize and neither did the action. This is, of course, a propositional or situational stativity, but at the level of the declarative speech act, there is stativity, too: the speaker does not want to interfere with the world at large (apart from being understood by the hearer). A paraphrase of all declarative negatives is ‘it is not the case that’. Under an imperative illocution, however, the illocutionary aspect is different. We are now dealing with an appeal for action, either of discontinuing what is going on or of taking care that some new state of affairs does not materialize. This use does not support any ‘it is not the case that’ paraphrase. The appropriate paraphrase is rather ‘let it not be the case that’. The negative of the prohibitive is thus crucially different from the most frequent use of the negative, the declarative one. There is thus—and I use a hedge again—a “certain need” for reflecting this difference in a direct way, most clearly so with the help of a more or less dedicated prohibitive marker.

The claim about the illocutionary and propositional stativity of declarative negation is not invalidated by the fact that the positive declaratives may differ in stativity in a more fine-grained way. In particular, it is common for languages to have different strategies for the declarative negation of verbal predicates, on the one hand, and non-verbal ones, on the other hand (Croft 1991: 18; Eriksen forthcoming). Interestingly, Croft (1991: 9-14) reports on the existence of languages that have derived a declarative negative marker for verbs from one for

⁸ Miestamo (2003) uses this property to explain why the verbs of negative declaratives are often less finite than those of positive declaratives, the point being that lower finiteness means lower verbiness and higher nouniness, which, in turn, means a more stable position on Givón's time stability scale (Givón 1984: 51-56).

non-verbs, and in which these negatives has kept the non-verbal function as well. Such markers can thus be considered triply stative, two times because of the illocutionary and propositional stativity of the declarative negative, but now even a third time, because of the stativity relating to the fact that the markers negate states. One would predict that the “certain need” to have a distinct prohibitive is even greater for these languages. The languages Croft lists are Indonesian (Western Malayo-Polynesian, Indonesia), Kanuri (Nilo-Saharan, Nigeria), Manam (Oceanic, Papua New Guinea), Mara (Maran, Australia), Nunggubuyu (Gunwingguan, Australia), Tongan (Oceanic, Tonga), and Wintu (Penutian, USA), and indeed, in each of the languages, there is a more or less dedicated prohibitive marker. And additional languages could be added to this list: Mandarin *méi(yǒu)* is a declarative verbal negative that retains its non-verbal use, and Mandarin has a prohibitive, and even two.

What happens then in the languages that do use the same negative as the one they use in declaratives? I see at least three scenarios. First, the marker abstracts from the speech act type of the utterance. This is the case of English *not*. It can be freely used in any type of speech act. Second, the marker is the declarative negative simply because the prohibitive construction is or was declarative too. Consider Mussau-Emeria.

- (32) Mussau-Emeria (Oceanic, St. Matthias Islands, Ross 2002a: 165)
 Karika u mene nama asi eteba o.
 NEG 2SG again eat taro SG that
 ‘You will not eat that taro!’
 ‘Don’t eat that taro!’

Not only is the *karika* gram the one that we find in a declarative, the whole sentence allows a declarative reading, more particularly, a future one, meaning ‘You will not eat that taro!’. This is actually a common situation and one could either say that the language in question does not really have a prohibitive construction but uses the negative future instead or that the pattern is vague between a declarative future and a prohibitive reading. (33) illustrates the same phenomenon, but with a progressive instead of the future.

- (33) Comaltepec Chinanteco (Oto-Manguean, Mexico, Anderson 1989: 91)⁹
 Ha^L-hiú:^{M-?} lú^{LM!}
 NEG-blow.PROGR-2 instrument
 ‘You are not playing an instrument!’
 ‘Don’t play an instrument!’

Of course, the two uses may also diverge and develop a separate grammar: in Tepetotula Chinanteco, the prohibitive is still based on the progressive, but it lacks the inflectional second person glottal ending.

- (34) Tepetotula Chinanteco (Oto-Manguean, Mexico, Westley 1991: 90)
 a. Ca^L-lě^H-zia^{M?} mi^M-ka^Mfe^{LH} ʔuě^L.
 NEG-IND-place.PROGR-2 CLS-coffee ground
 ‘You are not placing the coffee beans on the ground.’
 b. Ca^L-lě^H-zia^M mi^M-ka^Mfe^{LH} ʔuě^{L!}
 NEG-IND-place.PROGR CLS-coffee ground
 ‘Don’t place the coffee beans on the ground!’

⁹ In (33) and (34) the superscripts mark tone: H(igh), M(edium), and L(ow).

The third scenario is that of the Spanish subjunctive or infinitive. In this case, the strategy is a conventionalization of the description of the content of the desired state of affairs. What one wishes when prohibiting the hearer not to sing is that the speaker would not sing—a subjunctive also in English— i.e., an irrealis state of affairs of no singing. In the case of the conventionalization of the subjunctive turn of Spanish, it must have taken place a long time ago, for this strategy has been around since the earliest documents of Latin. But it would not suffice to explain the Spanish subjunctive by merely saying that it is a relic from Latin. One could argue that framing the prohibition with the indirect strategy of describing only the content of the prohibition must have the independently commendable effect of softening the prohibition or, to vary on Horn (1991: 97), of “cushion[ing] the iron fist” of prohibition “in the velvet glove” of the description of what is merely wished for.¹⁰

4. Conclusion

In this paper I studied prohibitive markers, i.e., negative markers that are more or less dedicated to the expression of a prohibition. In section 1 I illustrated the variety in the formal make-up of these markers, and I confirmed the earlier claims that they are frequent everywhere, with at least one exception, viz., Western Europe. In section 2 I offered four pathways for languages to acquire such markers. Prohibitive markers may derive from predicative constructions, they may appear as a side product of Jespersen’s cycle, they may derive from a univerbation of imperative and negative markers, and they may be borrowed. In section 3 I tried to explain why languages prefer to have prohibitive markers. I argued that attempts to explain this preference in terms of morphosyntax are misguided. I offered a frequency-based explanation. The most frequent use of negatives are declarative, thereby inviting a static ‘it is not the case that’ paraphrase. It is important, however, to mark clearly that prohibitives are instances of a dynamic ‘let it be the case that’ appeal. I finally distinguished between three types of strategies that do not employ prohibitive markers.

Abbreviations

ABS ‘absolute’, APPLIC ‘applicative’, CLS ‘classifier’, CONN ‘connegative’, CONV ‘converb’, COP ‘copula’, DAT ‘dative’, ERG ‘ergative’, F ‘feminine’, FUT ‘future’, HAB ‘habitual’, HON ‘honorific’, IMM ‘immediate’, IMP ‘imperative’, IMPF ‘imperfective’, IND ‘independent’, IRR ‘irrealis’, LOC ‘locative’, NEG ‘negative’, NOM ‘nominalization’, PL ‘plural’, POSS ‘possessive’, PRES ‘present’, PROGR ‘progressive’, PROH ‘prohibitive’, SG ‘singular’, SGST ‘suggestion’, SUBJ ‘subjunctive’, TOP ‘topic’.

¹⁰ In the case of the Spanish subjunctive strategy, it must also be said that the subjunctive has a much wider use in the realm of command and prohibition: with or without a conjunction it also serves for the first plural, the third singular and plural, and the honorific second, all negative as well as positive. From that point of view, one might say that the use of the imperative is as much in need of explanation as the subjunctive, for the imperative occurs only in the positive non-honorific second person (and even then, it is not the only choice, esp. not in the second plural, which commonly allows an infinitival strategy; Butt & Benjamin 1994: 277-278). For an account of possible imperative systems relative to the person parameter, see van der Auwera, Dobrushina & Goussev (2004).

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