

# IMPERATIVES AS FRAGMENT ANSWERS

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ABSTRACT

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Imperatives can be answers to questions. That creates a dilemma. It seems to force us to choose between the predominant semantics of imperatives on which imperatives are non-propositional, and the standard semantics of questions on which answers are propositions and questions are sets of them. This paper presents the dilemma and offers a solution. To preserve the non-propositional semantics of imperatives, I argue that imperativ answers are fragment answers. To retain the propositional nature of answers, I proffer a discourse function-oriented mechanism for constructing propositions from imperatives pragmatically. Specifically, I show that the pragmatically constructed contents of imperativ answers are similar to the propositional contents expressed in *anankastic conditionals*.

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## 1. The Dilemma

Imperatives can be answers to questions. To illustrate:

(1a) Q: How do I get to the philosophy department?

(1b) A: Walk down on Downer and turn left!

(2a) Q: Why wouldn't she talk to me? (2b) A: Ask her yourself!<sup>1</sup>

(3a) Q: What should I get my mom for Mother's Day?

(3b) A: Get her some flowers!

(1b) is an example in which imperatives are answers to *how*- questions, and function to provide instructions. Imperatives can also be answers to *wh*- questions, as seen in (2b) and (3b). (2a) is a *wh*- question seeking reasons; the imperatival response in (2b) provides direction to such reasons. (3a) is a question asking for suggestions, and (3b) offers a suggestion.

These previously unappreciated data on imperatives as answers create a dilemma for accounts that take imperatives to be property-denoting expressions (Portner 2007, Von Stechow & Iatridou 2017) and for the standard semantics of questions and answers.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the semantic value of a question is standardly thought to be a set of propositions that are answers to that question (Hamblin 1973, Karttunen 1977).

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<sup>1</sup> Some might think (2b) is not an answer, given that (2a) is not a semantic object contained in the question denotation of (2a). I acknowledge that (2b) is different from (1b) and (3b). In this paper, I'm going to treat (2b) as an answer, as it is a discourse move that is relevant for resolving the question under discussion. This point will be further discussed in §3.1.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the data on imperatival answers are compatible with views that advocate for a propositional semantics of imperatives, such as Kaufmann (2020) and Condoravdi & Lauer (2011). Kaufmann (2020) takes imperatives to be modalized expressions and Condoravdi & Lauer (2011) motivate a desire-based semantics of imperatives. Since the proposition-denoting semantics is compatible with the data on imperatival answers, in what follows I only focus on resolving the incompatibility between the property-denoting semantics and the standard semantics of questions.

Consequently, answers are propositional. Given that imperatives can be used as answers, imperatives should be propositional. Hence, it seems that to accommodate the data on imperatives as answers, one either has to give up the standard semantics of questions and answers, or one has to give up the non-propositional semantics of imperatives.

In this paper, I solve the dilemma. Solving the dilemma involves tackling two tasks. The first task is to retain the non-propositional semantics of imperatives. The second task is to preserve the propositional nature of answers. I resolve the first task by arguing that when imperatives are used as answers to questions, they are fragment answers that do not involve ellipsis for declarative sentences. I resolve the second task by proposing a discourse function-oriented mechanism for constructing propositions pragmatically. The upshot is that even if there is a pragmatic way of constructing propositions from imperatives, my solution still saves the semantics of imperatives from itself having to be propositional. As a result, one can accommodate and explain the data on imperatives as answers without sacrificing the non-propositional semantics of imperatives and the standard semantics of questions and answers.

In §1.2, I give a brief presentation on the semantics of questions. Then, I further illustrate the dilemma with Portner's (2007) property-denoting approach, aiming to contour the incompatibility between the property-denoting semantics of imperatives and the propositional nature of answers. In §2, I resolve the first task. Specifically, I provide an overview of fragment answers, with an emphasis on the ellipsis / sentential analysis in understanding fragment answers. Then, I present the linguistic phenomenon – ellipsis. Lastly, I prove that imperativial answers are fragment answers that do not

involve ellipsis for declarative sentences. In §3, I resolve the second task. Specifically, I argue that imperatival answers yield propositional contents that are similar to the contents expressed in *anankastic conditionals*.

### 1.1 The Semantics of Questions

Questions denote sets of propositions (Hamblin 1973, Karttunen (1977)). That is, the semantic value of a question is a set of propositions, which are themselves potential answers to that questions. Answers, consequently, are propositional. Hence, the argument constructed based on the semantics of questions and the data on imperatival answers is this:

**Premise 1:** If the standard semantics of questions is correct, answers are propositional.

**Premise 2:** The standard semantics of question is correct.

**Premise 3:** Imperatives can be answers.

**Conclusion:** Imperatives denote propositions.

This inference is incompatible with the predominant semantics for imperatives on which they denote properties. Hence, to reconcile the dilemma between the propositional nature of answers and the property-denoting semantics of imperatives, it is essential to unpack what it means for imperatives to be answers.

### 1.2 The Property-denoting Approach

One of the central approaches to understanding the semantics of imperatives is endorsed by Portner (2007) and Von Stechow & Iatridou (2017). Per the approach, imperatives are treated as non-propositional verb forms denoting properties. These

properties carry actions, namely - the prejacent of the imperatives. Portner's (2007) semantics for imperatives hinges on an analogy: "Imperatives are to deontic modals as declaratives are to epistemic modal" (Portner, 351). More specifically, Portner points out that when one uses a declarative sentence as an assertion and when the assertion is accepted by the interlocutors, the proposition expressed in the assertion enters the Common Ground (CG) – a collection of background information shared by the interlocutors of the conversation. The propositions in the CG are used to interpret 'subsequent' epistemic modals. For example, one can interpret (5) based on (4).

(4) She didn't answer the door.

(5) She must not be home then.

The upshot of Portner's analogy is to create a similar mechanism that associates imperatives with deontic modals, such that (7) can be construed using (6):

(6) Meet me at the airport at 7am tomorrow!

(7) I should set my alarm at 6am then.

Portner's semantics of imperatives puts emphasis on the actions expressed in the imperatives; to realize an imperative, in his framework, is to carry out the action encoded in that imperative.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the realization of an imperative is not

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<sup>3</sup> To substantiate this analogy, Portner argues that imperatives contribute to the discourse component To-Do-List (TDL) in a similar way that declaratives contribute to the Common Ground. Nevertheless, unlike declaratives, imperatives do not denote propositions - they denote properties. When the speaker utters an imperative, "the utterance of the imperative imposes an obligation on the addressee" (Portner, 359)), and the property expressed in the imperatives gets updated on the hearer's TDL, a list of properties that the addressee is obligated and committed to taking. For example, the denotation of (6) based on this property-denoting approach is:  $\llbracket \text{Meet me at the airport at 7am tomorrow!} \rrbracket = \{\lambda w. \lambda x : x = \text{addressee}_c. x \text{ meets me at the airport at 7am tomorrow in } w\}$

contingent upon there being an explicit proposition expressed in the at-issue imperatival sentence. In fact, imperatives don't express propositions at all, according to the property-denoting semantics of imperatives.

The property-denoting semantics of imperatives is able to explain and accommodate most of the data on imperatives. Nevertheless, it struggles to accommodate the data on imperatives as answers, as the property-denoting semantics of imperatives is inconsistent with the propositional nature of answers. Hence, the dilemma is that to accommodate the data on imperatives as answers, one either has to relinquish the property-denoting semantics of imperatives, or the standard semantics of questions and answers.

## **2. The Solution - Part I**

In this section, I solve the first task by arguing that imperatival answers are fragment answers that do not involve ellipsis for declarative sentences.

### **2.1 Fragment Answers**

Fragments are non-propositional expressions. They can be words, phrases, and clauses. Syntactically, a fragment is an expression that appears to be smaller than a sentence (Progovac, 2013). The central question in understanding fragments is this: are fragments remnants of fully-fledged declarative sentences (the ellipsis/sentential analysis), or are they independent expressions standing on their own (the non-sentential analysis)? Providing an answer to this question, generalizing all types of fragment answers is outside the scope of this paper. For the purpose of solving the first task, I only aim to prove that when the fragments are imperatives, they are syntactically

complete, genuine imperatival sentences that do not involve ellipsis for full declarative sentences. Consider the following example:

(8) Q: Who did she invite?

(9) A: Harrison.

(10) She invited Harrison.

(9), a determiner phrase (henceforth, DP), is a fragment answer to (8), and (10) is the complete, declarative form of (9). Other lexical categories, such as noun phrases (henceforth, NP) also can be fragment answers:

(11) Q: What did Harrison bring?

(12) A: Dark chocolates.

(13) Harrison brought dark chocolates.

The ellipsis approach treats fragment answers, such as (9) and (12) as grammatically incomplete expressions. Specifically, fragments are argued to be remnants of fully-fledged sentences that have undergone syntactic movements and ellipses<sup>4</sup>; as a result, a fragment answer itself involves syntactically truncated and unpronounced sentential constituents. For instance, in Merchant's (2004) framework, the syntax of (10) is [<sub>CP</sub><she invited> [<sub>DP</sub>Harrison]]. And a DP fragment like [<sub>DP</sub>Harrison] is a remnant that

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<sup>4</sup> For example, to show the involvement of ellipsis in fragment answers, Merchant (2004) compares fragment answers to sluicing, arguing that fragment answers undergo syntactic movements and reconstructions seen in sluicing, namely – the fragment is analyzed “as having moved to a clause-peripheral position, followed by ellipsis of the clause itself”. The details of the syntactic movements and sluicing will not be further discussed, as the technical bits are not of direct relevance to this paper.

has an unpronounced syntactic constituent – [she invited] and is itself incapable of denoting the proposition expressed in its declarative counterpart, *She invited Harrison*.

In contrast to the ellipsis analysis, the non-sentential constituent structure analysis argues that fragments are non-sentential, “base-generated” (Progovac, 2013) expressions. In other words, fragments do not involve unpronounced or elided constituents – what you see is all there is.

In what follows, I prove that when imperatives are used as answers to questions, they are grammatically complete, genuine imperative sentences that do not involve ellipsis for declarative sentences.

## 2.2 Licensing Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a linguistic phenomenon whereby what is uttered has more syntax structure than is pronounced. Ellipsis entails syntactic deletion. Such deletion is governed by the *Condition of Recoverability*, which requires that “deletion must be recoverable” (Barton, 1990). This condition is guaranteed upon the presence of a linguistic antecedent, a constituent to which the ellipsis is identical. Thus, to license ellipsis, there has to be a linguistic antecedent that functions to trigger the deletion and to guarantee the *Condition of Recoverability*. To illustrate,

(14) Pebbles will break the window blinds, and Squiggle will break the window blinds, too.

(15) Pebbles will break the window blinds, and Squiggle will, too.

(14) is the full-blown version of (15), which contains a verb phrase (henceforth, VP) ellipsis in the second clause. The VP ellipsis is successfully licensed here because the

elided content, [will break the window blinds], is identical to the VP, [will break the window blinds], in the first clause. In other words, the first clause provides a linguistic antecedent necessary for triggering the VP ellipsis in the second clause. Given the presence of a linguistic antecedent, one can recover the elided content in the second clause in (15). Moreover:

(16) Giacomo can speak five languages, and Sam can speak six.

Given that the elided content, [languages], is a noun phrase (henceforth, NP), (16) is an example of a NP ellipsis. The first clause provides a linguistic antecedent, [languages], triggering the deletion in the second clause. Hence, the recovered full-sentential version of (16) is *Giacomo can speak five languages, and Sam can speak six languages*.

In the next section, I prove that when the fragments are imperatives, they are genuine imperatives that do not involve ellipsis for declarative sentences.

### **2.3 Imperative Answers are Non-elliptical**

To attest that an imperatival answer is non-elliptical for a declarative sentence, I identify what propositional answer the at-issue imperative *seems* to express. Then, I prove that the imperative is not elliptical for a declarative that expresses *that* proposition.

Reconsider example (1):

(1a) Q: How do I get to the philosophy department?

(1b) A: Walk down on Downer and turn left!

(1b) includes two imperatives connected by the logical operator *and*. (1b) *seems* to communicate the proposition expressed in (1c):

(1c) If you want to get to the philosophy department, you must walk down on Downer and then turn left.

(1b) is not elliptical for a declarative that expresses the proposition in (1c), as there is no linguistic antecedent that triggers relevant deletion. Specifically, the discourse is the question-answer exchange environment. To look for a linguistic antecedent in the question-answer exchange environment, it is necessary to analyze the compositionality of the question – that is, the syntactic structure of the question and the meaning of each constituent of that question. There is no linguistic antecedent in the question *how to get to the philosophy department?* that functions to provide a linguistic antecedent that is necessary for deleting *if you want to get to the philosophy department, you must*. Hence, there are no truncated syntactic constituents in (1b) that are identical to some syntactic constituents in (1a).

Consider example (2):

(2a) Q: Why wouldn't she talk to me?

(2b) A: Ask her yourself!

(2b) is a non-elliptical VP yielding the action *asking her yourself*. And it seems that (2b) communicates the following proposition:

(2c) If you want to know why she wouldn't talk to you, you should ask her yourself.

(2b) is not elliptical for a declarative expressing the proposition (2c), as there is no linguistic antecedent available in the question discourse that triggers the deletion.

Hence, no deletion can be licensed.

Now consider example (3):

(3a) What should I get my mom for Mother's day?

(3b) Get her some flowers!

Unlike questions (1a) and (2a), (3a) contains a deontic modal *should*. It is tempting to treat the deontic modal *should* as a linguistic antecedent provided by the question discourse and to argue that (3b) is elliptical for a declarative sentence that yields the proposition expressed in (3c):

(3c) You should get her some flowers.

I argue that *should* is not a linguistic antecedent when the question is answered with an imperative; in other words, (3b) is not elliptical for a declarative yielding the proposition expressed in (3c). I prove this point by comparing and contrasting (3b) from (3c). Then, I show that (3c) is the full-fledged declarative for a NP, such as *flowers or some flowers*, rather than an imperatival answer- *get her some flowers!*. To illustrate:

(3b) Get her some flowers!

(3c) You should get her some flowers.

(3d) Some flowers.

(3b) is a non-elliptical imperatival fragment answer. First, if (3b) does involve ellipsis, the fragment and its declarative form (3c) should express the same meaning in every respect. Nevertheless, they do not express the same meaning in every respect.

Specifically, (3b) is pragmatically more definite, forceful, and it yields a higher degree of strength that is absent in (3c). Relatedly, *should* adds an additional flavor of *preference*;

namely, (3c) delivers a personal preference for the option- flowers. This preference makes (3c) borderline infelicitous as a response to the (3a). Even though (3a) contains the deontic modal *should*, it *really* is a question asking for options- *what are some of the things I can get my mom for Mother's Day?*, as opposed to *what do you think I should get my mom for Mother's Day?*. After all, one can reply to (3a) with *Get her some flowers, get her some chocolates, get her a book...it's up to you!*, but it certainly cannot mean the same thing as *You should get her some flowers, you should get her some chocolates, you should get her a book...it's up to you!* Hence, (3b) seems to express the proposition seen in (3e):

(3e) You can get her some flowers.

Nevertheless, there is no linguistic antecedent in (3a) that can function to trigger the deletion. Consequently, (3b) is not elliptical for (3e). Lastly, ellipsis-involving fragments are grammatically incomplete, whereas imperatives are grammatically complete sentences- (3c) is a grammatically complete imperative. Hence, (3b) does not involve ellipsis.

To see why (3c) is the full-fledged declarative for a NP, rather than an imperative, consider (3d). (3d) is an ellipsis-involving fragment answer. When answered with (3d), the modal *should* in question (3a) functions as a linguistic antecedent licensing the deletion. Hence, (3d) is elliptical for a declarative sentence yielding the proposition expressed in (3c), as (3d) is grammatically incomplete, whereas (3c) is a NP standing on its own. Hence, *should get her some flowers* is a linguistic antecedent licensing the ellipsis in (3d), which is elliptical for a declarative that expresses the proposition seen in (3c).

In this section, I have accommodated the data on imperatives as answers. I solved the first task by showing that imperatival answers are fragment answers that do not involve ellipsis. In the course of doing so, I have discussed what propositional answers imperatives *seem* to express. In the following section, I propose a mechanism for constructing those propositions pragmatically.

### **3. Part II- Constructing Propositions Pragmatically**

Pragmatically constructing a proposition from an imperative is essentially a practice of collecting information from the discourse so that one has enough information to pronounce the unpronounced. This pragmatic proposition-construction equates to an *information adding* process. Specifically, an imperatival fragment answer itself expresses a property; interlocutors construct and complete its propositional content by collecting information from the discourse and *adding* those information to a non-propositional, property-denoting expression. To construct propositions from imperatival answers pragmatically, I propose a discourse function-oriented information-adding mechanism. The overarching philosophies of this mechanism are:

(17) Imperatival answers should always be construed in a way that makes the imperative *execute-able*. That is, the hearer can understand, and thus can carry out the action encoded in the imperatival answer so that the *question under discussion* (henceforth, QUD) (Roberts, 1996) can be settled. (18) Pragmatically constructing propositions from imperatival answers doesn't call for precision – the inquirer only needs *enough* information so that the imperatival answer is *comprehensible enough* for settling the QUD.

### 3.1 Imperative Answers are *Conditionalized Modals*

Imperative answers are answers to questions. The discourse function of an imperative answer is to resolve the QUD. Hence, no matter what kind of semantics one adopts for understanding imperatives, to construe what an imperative answer seems to express, it is crucial to incorporate its discourse function into the pragmatic process of constructing its propositional content. Specifically, the propositional content of an imperative answer should always be construed in a way that makes the imperative *execute-able*. That is, the hearer can understand, and thus can carry out the action encoded in the imperative, so that the QUD can be settled. To capture the discourse function of imperative answers, I argue that imperative answers yield propositional contents that are *close, but not quite*<sup>5</sup> like the contents expressed in *anankastic conditionals*.

To better understand the discourse function-oriented mechanism for constructing propositions pragmatically, first, it is helpful to identify two contexts: a *globalized* context and a *localized* context, along with two notions of *relevance*: the Gricean relevance and Roberts's (1996) relevance. Specifically, the question-answer exchange environment is the globalized context which provides imperative answers a discourse function – settling the QUD. This globalized context corresponds to Roberts's notion of relevance, ensuring that the imperative answer is a discourse move that is relevant for solving the QUD. Similarly, the QUD provides a localized context containing information relevant for completing the propositional content of the imperative that is the answer to that specific QUD. The localized context is associated with the Gricean

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<sup>5</sup> Reasons for this claim will be provided in §3.2

relevance, requiring that every contribution must be of relevance to the conversational purpose which, in the localized context, is to settle *that* specific QUD.

This discourse function-oriented semantics of imperatival answers can be captured by *anankastic conditionals* neatly. *Anankastic conditionals*, according to Condoravdi & Lauer (2015), are conditionals that “express a necessary-means-of relation between the complement of the attitude predicate in the antecedent and the complement of the modal in the consequent” (Condoravdi & Lauer, 8:2). For example:

(19) If you want to put together the dresser, you must follow the instruction sheet.

(19) conveys the information – following the instruction sheet is necessary for putting together the dresser. To derive this information, two conditions have to be met. One, the consequent of the conditional has to include a necessity modal. Two, the antecedent of the conditional needs to be predicated with a verb expressing desires, purposes, or plans, such as *want*, *plan*, and *intend* (Condoravdi & Lauer 2015). In other words, the antecedent of an anankastic conditional designates a *goal*, or a *purpose* of the conversation, and the consequent of the conditional provides a precondition for achieving that goal.

To see why this goal-featuring property of anankastic conditionals is semantically sufficient for understanding imperatival answers, consider example (1):

(1a) Q: How do I get to the philosophy department?

(1b) A: Walk down on Downer and turn left!

(1c) p: If you want to get to the philosophy department, you must walk down on Downer and then turn left.

The minimally expressed content of (1b) are the prejacent of the imperatives – walking down on downer and turning left. The globalized context is the question-answer exchange environment. The QUD, (1a), provides a localized context in which the utterance of (1b) takes place. (1c) is an anankastic conditional. The antecedent of the conditional contains the purpose of this conversational exchange – to get to the philosophy department. The consequent of the conditional provides instructions for settling the QUD. Hence, the pragmatically constructed content of (1b) is (1c).

Moreover:

(2a) Q: Why wouldn't she talk to me?

(2b) A: Ask her yourself!

(2c) p: If you want to know why she wouldn't talk to you, you should ask her yourself.

The globalized context, again, is the question-answer exchange environment. The localized context contains a specific QUD, (2a). The conversational purpose in this example, consequently, is to settle the question (2a). (2c) is an anankastic conditional in which the antecedent delineates the goal of this conversation – to know why she wouldn't talk to me; the consequent provides instructions for achieving that conversational purpose. (2c), therefore, seems to be the propositional content expressed in (2b).

### **3.2 Sufficiently Precise, Maximally Flexible**

Restricting the proposition construction process within the condition of fulfilling its discourse function allows the propositional content of an imperatival answer to be flexible. Specifically, forming propositions from imperatival answers doesn't call for

precision – the hearer only needs *enough* information so that the imperatival answer is comprehensible enough for her to carry it out. Hence, to promote a flexible semantics of imperatival answers, I introduce a set of modal auxiliary verbs – *can*, *should*, and *must*. Allowing imperatival answers to be construed using a range of modals, rather than only the necessity modal is what makes the propositional content of an imperatival answer close, but not quite like the content expressed in *anankastic conditionals*. Imperatival answers *can* yield a range of possible propositions. The upshot of advocating for a flexible semantics is that no matter which modal auxiliary verb is plugged into the consequent of the anankastic conditional, the pragmatically constructed proposition will always suffice for being comprehensible enough for the inquirer to settle the QUD. To illustrate:

(1c) If you want to get to the philosophy department, you must walk down on Downer and then turn left.

(2c) If you want to know why she wouldn't talk to you, you should ask her yourself.

(3e) You can get your mom some flowers.

The imperative in (1c) is preceded by the modal auxiliary verb *must*. Suppose *walk down on Downer and turn left* is the true answer to the question, then (1c) suffices for settling the inquiry. Notice that replacing (1b) with *should* or *can* would yield propositions that are comprehensible enough for the sake of settling the QUD as well. In other words, *can* and *should* are equally effective at gluing the subject and the imperative – they all function to direct the inquirer to the actions expressed in the imperatives. Hence, no matter which modal auxiliary verb is plugged in for constructing

a proposition from an imperatival answer, the composition would be sufficient for the inquirer to understand the action expressed for settling the QUD.

Similarly, the consequent in (2c) is composed of the subject, followed by the modal auxiliary verb *should* and an imperative. Since *asking her yourself* is the action needed for settling the QUD, the propositional content expressed in (2c) suffices for directing the inquirer to that action, and consequently for fulfilling its discourse function – settling the QUD. This result can be achieved even if *should* in (2c) is replaced with *can* or *must*, as they all function as a condition for achieving the conversational purpose.

Lastly, (1a) and (1b) are *how-* and *why-* questions seeking *instructions* and *reasons*. Unlike (1a) and (1b), (1c) asks for suggestions, and hence any relevant suggestion will suffice for being a relevant discourse move for settling the QUD:

(3a) Q: What should I get my mom for Mother's day?

(3b) A: Get her some flowers!

(3e) P: You can get her some flowers.

(3a) is a question where the flexible approach in constructing propositions pragmatically does not apply. Specifically, the deontic modal *should* in the question adds an additional flavor of *preference*; namely, (3c), *You should get her some flowers*, delivers a personal preference for the option- flowers. This preference makes (3c) borderline infelicitous as a response to the (3a). Specifically, even though (3a) contains the deontic modal *should*, it *really* is a question asking for options- *what are some of the things I can get my mom for Mother's Day?*, as opposed to *what do you think I should get my mom for Mother's Day?* Hence, (3b) seems to express (3e).

## 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented a dilemma between the property-denoting semantics of imperatives and the standard semantics of questions. That is, to accommodate the data on imperatival answers, one either has to give up the non-propositional semantics of imperatives or the semantics of questions. I provided a solution to the dilemma. My solution for preserving the non-propositional semantics of imperative is to argue that when imperatives are used as answers to questions, they are fragment answers that do not involve ellipsis for declarative sentences. To retain the propositional nature of answers, I proffered a discourse function-oriented mechanism for constructing propositions from imperatives pragmatically. Specifically, I argued that imperatival answers should always be construed in a way that is comprehensible for settling the QUD. To implement this idea, I argued that imperatival answers yield propositional contents that are similar to contents expressed in anankastic conditionals. Moreover, I promoted a more flexible semantics in understanding imperatives. Pragmatically constructing propositions from imperatives does not call for precision – the inquirer only needs *enough* information to understand the imperatives and settle the QUD. My proposal guaranteed this flexibility component by allowing *can*, *should*, and *must* to be freely interchangeable in the pragmatic construction. This implementation is sufficiently precise for achieving the conversational purpose- settling the QUD, meanwhile maximally flexible in understanding imperatival answers.

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