

Commands, Prohibitions & the Subjunctive

Latin MILC – W5, MT 2012

November 6, 2012

1 Commands

1.1 2nd person

In direct speech, commands are commonly expressed by means of the imperative.

There are, however, numerous ways of expressing commands or entreaties, especially when directed at a person of similar standing, which are less brusque: *velim* + subjunctive “I would that you ...”, *cura ut* + subjunctive “Take care that you ...”. Generally, any verb of request may preface an imperative to weaken its commanding character.

1. *Age nunc, refer animum, sis (=si vis), ad veritatem!* (S. Rosc. 48)

Come on, then! Let your thoughts turn back to reality, if you will!

2. *Sed mihi hoc credas velim: non eis libentissime soleo respondere quos mihi videor facillime posse superare.* (Cic.Sul.46,9)

But this believe me: I am not readily used to answer to those, whom it seems simple enough to surpass.

Note, however, that the pure subjunctive in the 2nd person singular and plural is only used in instances, where no definite person is addressed; these are commonly general concepts or precepts.

3. Be the last to speak, and the first to keep quiet.

Postremus loquaris: primus taceas.

1.2 1st and 3rd person

As opposed to the proper direct commands to the 2nd person, those addressed to oneself or a third person not directly spoken to will commonly be found in the pure present subjunctive; functionally speaking, we are dealing with *jussives* (3rd person) and *hortatives* (1st person).

(Both jussives and hortatives can be found in the past, specifically in the imperfect or pluperfect; here, they refer to missed opportunities: “we should have...”.)

4. *Teneamus cursum neque ea signa audiamus, quae receptui canunt!* (Cic.Rep.1,3)

Let us keep on course and pay no heed to those signals, which call for retreat!

5. The family fortune must be increased through reflection, and must not obey to desire.

Res familiaris augeatur ratione nec libidini pareat. (Cic.Off.1,92)

Note, however, that in more archaic Latin and in the judicial vernacular, a particular form of the imperative, i.e. the *future imperative*, may be employed; it commonly denotes general requirements, and is at times found when dependent on future actions.

6. *Respondeto ad ea, quae rogabo.* (Vatin.10)

Respond to the things, which I shall ask!

7. *Si in ius vocat, ito!* (Lex XII Tab. 1,1)

If he [i.e. the prosecutor] calls you to court, you shall go!

2 Prohibitions

The imperative is **never** to be used in a prohibitive function; such collocations will occur only in poetry. There are two principal ways of constructing prohibitions: an imperative of *nolle* + infinitive (which is a rather polite way of prohibiting something), and the perfect subjunctive after *ne*.

8. *Perge scribere nec meas litteras expectaris!* (Cic.Att.10.18,2)
Go on and write, but expect no letters from me!
9. Please don't be obnoxious and don't cause me any trouble.
Noli impudens esse nec mihi molestiam exhibere! (Cic.Fam.12.30,1)

When connecting prohibitions (as above), use *neve*, *neu* "(n)or" or *neque*, *nec*.

3 Various other uses of the subjunctive

So far, we have encountered the prohibitive (*ne* + perf.subj.) and the hortative and jussive (usually pres.subj., unless in the irreal past, and always in 1st or 3rd person, respectively).

There are five more functions it may fulfill: *optative*, *concessive*, *deliberative*, *potentialis* (expressing possibility) and *irrealis* (expressing irreal scenarios). The latter two we shall deal with later, in the context of conditionals.

3.1 Optative

Optative subjunctives are often, but not always, introduced by an expression of wish (such as a form of *velle* or *utinam*), and are negated with *ne*.

Which tense of the verb occurs in the phrase is largely dependent on the kind of wish:

	Present	Past
real	<i>subj.pres.</i>	<i>subj.perf.</i>
unreal	<i>subj.impf.</i>	<i>subj.plpf.</i>

Real, i.e. fulfillable, and unreal, i.e. unfulfillable, wishes can be told apart at times, since the latter will **always** be introduced by *vellem/nollem/mallem* or *utinam*.

8. *Id omen di avertant!*
May the gods avert this omen!
9. *Utinam vere auguraverim!*
Oh will that I have made a correct prediction!
10. Oh that the republic had remained intact and had not fallen to revolutionaries!
Utinam res publica stetisset nec in homines evertendarum rerum cupidos incidisset! (Cic.Off.2,3)

3.2 Concessive

The subjunctive is also used to express concessions. The negation remains *ne*, and the present subjunctive and perfect subjunctive are used for the present and past, respectively.

11. *Ne sit sane summum malum dolor, malum certe est.* (Cic.Tusc.2,14)
Admittedly, pain is not the worst of ills, but it certainly is bad.
12. *Dicatur sane eiectus esse Catilina a me, dummodo eat in exilium.* (Cic.Cat.2,15)
It may well be said that Catilina was expelled by me, as long as he goes into exile!

3.3 Deliberative

When addressing or asking oneself for rhetorical purposes, e.g. deliberating something, or expressing doubt (“Shall I...?”, “Should I have ...?”), the subjunctive present or imperfect are used for present or past deliberations. Note, that these are most often found in the 1st person. The negations is *non*.

13. What now? Shall I ask you to come? Shall I not ask?

Quid nunc? Rogem te, ut venias? Non rogem?

14. *Cur Caesar fortunam experiretur?*

Why should Caesar have put his luck to the test?

4 References

For more details, cf. Bradley’s Arnold, chs. 18-19, Kennedy §§346-357, and Menge §§107-127.

5 Assignment

5.1 Translate into Latin

In each case, explain why and in which function you have used the imperative or subjunctive.

1. Do not, my countrymen, count the foes who are threatening you with massacre and slavery; let them rather meet the same lot which they are preparing for us.
2. Pardon this fault of mine; and be sure you remember that I, who have done wrong today, have repeatedly brought you help before.
3. Let us then refuse to be slaves, and have the courage not only to become free ourselves, but to assert our country's freedom also.
4. And therefore do not object to endure everything on behalf of your suffering country and your exiled friends!
5. What was I to do? What to say? Who would care to blame me because I refused to listen to such abandoned men?
6. I would neither deny nor assert that he had looked forward to all this, but he should have provided against the country being overwhelmed by such disasters.
7. I could have wished that you had sent me the best soldiers that you had with you.
8. I have consulted, as I ought to have done, your interests rather than my own; may you not ever impute this to me as a fault!
9. Even as concerns our luck, let us shy away from haughtiness.
10. Be careful! Please don't bring my circles into disarray, and don't touch me!

5.2 Reading & Analysis

For next week, please read as much as possible of ch. 5 of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* below; also, please pick two sentences from the text and give a FULL analysis of how they work, including parsing verbal and nominal forms.

L. Catilina, nobili genere natus, fuit magna vi et animi et corporis, sed ingenio malo pravoque. Huic ab adulescentia bella intestina, caedes, rapinae, discordia civilis grata fuere ibique iuventutem suam exercuit. Corpus patiens inediae, alioris, vigiliae supra quam cuiquam credibile est. Animus audax, subdolos, varius, cuius rei lubet simulator ac dissimulator, alieni adpetens, sui profusus, ardens in cupiditatibus; satis eloquentiae, sapientiae parum. Vastus animus inmoderata, incredibilia, nimis alta semper cupiebat. Hunc post dominationem L. Sullae libido maxuma invaserat rei publicae capiundae; neque id quibus modis adsequeretur, dum sibi regnum pararet, quicquam pensi habebat. Agitabatur magis magisque in dies animus ferox inopia rei familiaris et conscientia scelerum, quae utraque iis artibus auxerat, quas supra memoravi. Incitabant praeterea corrupti civitatis mores, quos pessuma ac divorsa inter se mala, luxuria atque avaritia, vexabant. Res ipsa hortari videtur, quoniam de moribus civitatis tempus admonuit, supra repetere ac paucis instituta maiorum domi militiaeque, quo modo rem publicam habuerint quantamque reliquerint, ut paulatim inmutata ex pulcherruma atque optima pessuma ac flagitiosissima facta sit, disserere.

Please hand in your assignment by Friday 6pm, either by email to robin.meyer@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk, or by pigeon post to Robin Meyer, Wolfson College, Linton Rd.