

A semantic-pragmatic analysis of the Slovak imperative and its lexicographic description

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*Abstract: The present study focuses on semantic and pragmatic aspects conditioning the distribution of Slovak imperative forms. On the basis of corpus data it analyses verbs with a preference for the imperative form taking into consideration not only the absolute frequency of particular imperative forms but also the representation of the imperative in the grammatical paradigm of the analysed verbs. It concentrates upon lexicographic descriptions of imperatives in *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* with special attention paid to two important issues: restrictions concerning the formation of imperatives within different semantic groups of verbs and distributional patterns of positive and negative imperatives with respect to verb semantics including also the question of aspectual characteristics. The results illustrate the importance of usage-based analysis which enables us to uncover the semantic and pragmatic aspects relevant for distribution of imperatives in Slovak.*

Keywords: *imperative, Slovak, lexicographic description, positive imperatives, negative imperatives*

1. Introduction

The Slovak imperative has seldom been studied from a usage-based perspective. This study fills the gap by examining verbs with a preference for the imperative in positive and negative forms within their grammatical paradigms and the possibilities of forming imperatives within different semantic groups of verbs. Within the Slovak linguistic context imperative forms of verbs have been investigated mostly from a formal point of view. For the Slovak imperative, for instance, arguably the most classic studies, Pauliny (1947), Dvonč (2003) and Sokolová and Bónová (2010), focus primarily on the formation of imperatives within different verb conjugation paradigms and describe the possible imperative variants existing for certain verbs. To our knowledge, though, no systematic study of the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the imperative's usage exists in a corpus of Slovak. However, beyond the Slovak linguistic context many monographs and articles can be found, cf. critical review of works on the imperative in Van Olmen & Heinold (2017) and Van Olmen (2019).

The investigation of imperatives from a semantic and pragmatic point of view is motivated by work on the 4th edition of *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka*. Semantic and pragmatic characteristics play an important role in the lexical processing of imperative forms in the dictionary. The question whether to introduce imperatives within grammatical apparatus in the dictionary and in which form (positive or negative) they should be introduced cannot be answered without a detailed and consistent analysis of verbal semantics and pragmatics.

The study is organized as follows. In Section 2 the chosen data sources are described. In Section 3 the role of the imperative in speech acts is analysed, strictly distinguishing the imperative as a morphological form, the imperative sentence as a sentence type and the directive function as an illocutionary function that can be expressed by the whole gamut of linguistic means in Slovak. Section 4 focuses on an investigation of the most frequent imperative forms identified in corpus data, comparing them with a score gained from Omnia

Slovaka III Maior. In Section 5 a lexicographic description of imperative forms is elaborated with special attention paid to factors limiting the formation of the imperative form and to distribution of positive and negative imperative forms. Finally, Section 6 summarises the most important conclusions of the investigation.

2. Corpus data

The investigation was done in two corpora. Corpus version prim-8.0-vyv is a subcorpus balanced with regard to style (33.3 % journalistic, 33.3 % fiction, 33.3 % professional texts), it has 377 million tokens / 298 million words. Omnia Slovaka III Maior is a corpus comprising several subcorpora, namely SNK prim-6.1 + Europeana + OpenSubtitles + Wikipedia + Wanda + skTenTen + Araneum + Cassovia + web-3.0 (part). It has 4 950 392 333 tokens and 4 035 523 604 words. In his usage-based study on English and Dutch imperatives Van Olmen (2019) uses a comparable corpus of English and Dutch speech. A similar corpus investigation cannot be provided for Slovak simply because of the fact that Slovak spoken corpus is not morphologically annotated. That is why Omnia Slovaka III Maior is used as a corpus which merges the largest “traditional” corpus (prim-6.1-all) with the web corpus (Araneum Slovacum Maximum). The web corpus brings into investigation the advantages that overcome the shortcomings caused by the non-existence of an annotated spoken corpus in Slovak: web corpus is more suitable for analysis of infrequent phenomena (such as phraseology) and it comprises new text types, genres, domains and registers so that there is a larger proportion of more informal language in the data (cf. Benko 2017).

To extract the data from corpus prim-8.0-vyv the tags [tag="VM.*\+"] (for positive imperative) and [tag="VM.*-"] (for negative imperatives) were used. To identify the most frequent imperative forms of individual verbs the data were sorted on the basis of frequency distribution using the attribute lemma. The procedure yielded a frequency list of the most frequent verbal lemmas occurring in imperative forms. However, this procedure simply identifies the most frequently occurring verbs in the Slovak imperative, but this approach fails to tell us, however, whether the verbs are characteristic of the construction. That is why the lemmas from the frequency list were further investigated in Omnia Slovaka III Maior which provides the user with information on usage patterns of every investigating unit. For verb units, the usage patterns include raw frequency and proportional distribution of the grammatical forms of the investigated verb unit (such as infinitive, indicative, imperative, 1-participle, singular, plural, 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person, negation, etc.).

3. Imperative and speech acts

We regard the imperative as a form through which a morphological category of mood is realized on the verb. Apart from the imperative, indicative and conditional forms can be employed in the Slovak mood system. The Slovak language belongs to a large group of languages which have fewer imperative forms than for other mood forms (cf. Karlík 2017). Within the singular paradigm there is only one form that is usually interpreted as the form of

2nd person.¹ Within plural paradigms two forms are recorded, one for 1st person and one for second person. 1st person plural always has inclusive interpretation as it comprises both the speaker and the addressee. 2nd person plural has exclusive interpretation as it comprises only the addressee. 2nd person plural refers to either an individuated or collective addressee which is the way how the category of honorifics is realised in Slovak.

The morphological forms of indicative, imperative and conditional constitute the basis for different modal forms of sentences, namely declarative, imperative, interrogative and optative sentences. Each sentence in Slovak has its modal value and belongs to one of these four types. Modal forms can be described as abstract patterns formed by means of morphological, lexical and intonational elements. Thus, a declarative sentence is formed by a combination of indicative/declarative mood and conclusive cadence, an interrogative sentence is formed by means of indicative/conditional mood and anticadence (yes/no question) or by means of interrogative pronoun, indicative/conditional mood and conclusive cadence (complementary question), an imperative sentence is formed by means of imperative mood and an optative sentence is formed by means of optative particle and indicative/conditional mood.

Each modal form can express different communication functions. In a speech act approach, different communication functions of utterances are distinguished, namely assertive, directive, interrogative, commissive, etc. (cf. Grepl – Karlík 1989). Some authors speak of “imperative stance” (Grepl 1979), distinguishing it from the imperative as morphological imperative. From the terminological point of view, it is more convenient to differentiate imperatives as a kind of sentence type and directives as a kind of speech act based on a common illocutionary point which can be characterised as the intention of the speaker to make the addressee realize the action. However, these phenomena cannot be strictly separated. Jary and Kissine (2016), trying to define the imperative as a comparative concept, describe the imperative as a sentence-type whose only prototypical illocutionary function is the performance of directive speech acts, and which is suitable for the performance of the full range of directives. In his later work, Grepl (in Grepl & Karlík 1998) distinguished different types of directive speech acts taking into consideration different degrees of force with which the author acts upon the addressee (e.g. command – order – request) and the measure of the author’s participation in the realization of the action (e.g. proposal as a speech act in which the author participates versus request representing a speech act the realization of which is expected on the side of the addressee). As Aikhenvald (2010: 198–199) claims, there is a vast array of directive meanings among which orders (commands, demands), requests (pleas, entreaties), advice (recommendation, warnings), instructions (and expository directives), invitations, permission, acceptance, good wishes, imprecation, incredulous rejection and self-deliberation can be counted. However, in our opinion, permission, acceptance, good wishes, imprecation, incredulous rejection and self-deliberation do not meet the definition of directives and should be treated separately. Permission and acceptance include something the addressee would want to do, not the speaker; wishes express the intention of the speaker, but not an appeal towards the addressee; imprecations (such as curses) do not direct the addressee to do something, they are expressions of emotions; incredulous rejections and self-deliberations can be understood as discourse formulae with conventionalized meaning (Aikhenvald 2010: 200) which do not have directive force.

¹ According to Karlík (2017) it is also possible to interpret it as an example of formal syncretism, i.e. as a form for all three persons, or as a default. In that way, examples like *Čert to ber.* ‘To hell with it.’ (literally, the sentence comprises the imperative form of the verb *brať* ‘take’ with a formal subject *čert* ‘devil’) or *Pracuj každý s vůli usilovnou.* ‘Everybody work with diligent will.’ can be naturally interpreted.

Table 1 presents relationships between morphological mood, modal type (often called syntactic mood) and communication function of utterance.

Table 1: Relationships between morphological mood, modal types and communication functions of utterance

Utterance	Communication function	Modal type	Morphological mood
Pracuje na záhrade. 'She is working in the garden.'	assertive	declarative	indicative
Cvičím a neulievam sa. 'I am exercising and I am not shirking.' Ideš preč! 'You go away.'	directive (command)	declarative exclamative variant of declarative	indicative
Na tvojom mieste by som tam nechodil. 'I would not go there if I were you.'	directive (advice)	declarative	conditional
Kto príde? 'Who is coming?'	interrogative	interrogative	indicative
Zavrela by si ústa? "Could you shut your mouth?"	directive (prohibitive)	interrogative	conditional
Ako si to mohla urobiť? 'How could you do this?'	expressive (reproof)	interrogative	indicative
Urob to! 'Do it!'	directive (command)	imperative	imperative
Len to skús urobiť! 'Just try to do it!'	admonitive (threat)	imperative	imperative
Nedávno poľnoc minula, človeka nevidno, a ty rob ako mula. 'It's already after midnight, no man can be seen and you work like a donkey.'	assertive (with descriptive obligation)	imperative	imperative
Keby ste radšej mlčali. 'You better shut up.'	directive	optative	conditional
Nech už odíde. 'Let him go.'	hortative	optative	indicative

Table 1 brings several examples of the possible relationships between morphological mood forms, types of syntactic constructions and communication functions. It shows that the relationship between morphological mood and directive illocutionary function is not always symmetrical. Their relation is twofold: the imperative can be conceived as a prototypical way of expressing the directive function; however, the language has the whole gamut of other linguistic means to express directive speech acts (e.g. ability questions, declarative sentences with exclamative intonation, etc.). On the other hand, although the imperative is used mainly to express directive speech acts of command, it can also be used to indicate different pragmatic values, e.g. threat, permission, acceptance, etc. As Jarry and Kissine (2016: 123) remind us permission or advice are also inherent parts of the imperative's multifunctionality so that they define the imperative as "a sentence-type whose only prototypical illocutionary function is the performance of directive speech acts, and which is suitable for the performance of the full range of directives". Because of the presented facts, the term *directive* must be differentiated from

the term *imperative*. The term imperative will be used for any member of the category of morphological mood (the linguistic form of the imperative is overtly signalled by specific imperative morphemes in Slovak) and the term directive for any illocutionary type of utterance with directive function.

The directive function of the imperative is also connected with the (non-)expression of overt subject in imperative constructions. The explicit reference to the addressee is possible in Slovak by using the personal pronouns *ty* ‘you-sg.’, *vy* ‘you-pl.’, *my* ‘we’. Exceptionally, even explicit reference expressed by indefinite or delimitative pronouns is possible, however, these pronouns can be interpreted as the correlates of the addressee in given contexts, which can be proved when addressing the same person with personal pronouns in second person in the wider context, e.g.

- (1) (Môžem vás poprosiť?) Povedzte už niekto tomu Honzovi, aby si konečne našiel novú tému.
‘(May I ask you?) Someone tell John to find a new topic.’
- (2) Nechod’te nikto k nám (prosím vás veľmi pekne).
‘Nobody go to us (if I can ask you).’

In the following table the most frequent collocations of explicitly expressed personal pronouns with imperatives of individual verbs are presented.

Table 2: Explicit reference to the addressee in imperative constructions

Verb	Frequency
<i>ty chod’</i> ‘you-sg. go’	221
<i>vy chod’te</i> ‘you-pl. go’	80
<i>ty bud’</i> ‘you-sg. be’	72
<i>vy bud’te</i> ‘you-pl. be’	50
<i>ty sa neboj’</i> ‘you-sg. don’t be afraid’	46
<i>ty čuš’</i> ‘you-sg. shut up’	43
<i>ty zostaň</i> ‘you-sg. stay’	42
<i>ty povedz’</i> ‘you-sg. say’	35
<i>ty ostaň</i> ‘you-sg. stay’	32
<i>ty mlč’</i> ‘you-sg. be quiet’	32
<i>ty drž’</i> ‘you-sg. hold’	25
<i>ty daj’</i> ‘you-sg. give’	21
<i>ty prepáč’</i> ‘you-sg. be sorry’	20
<i>ty počúvaj’</i> ‘you-sg. listen’	20
<i>ty sa nestaraj’</i> ‘you-sg. don’t care’	20
<i>ty dávaj’</i> ‘you-sg. give’	20
<i>my dodajme</i> ‘we add’	18
<i>ty príď</i> ‘you-sg. come’	15
<i>vy zostaňte</i> ‘you-pl. stay’	14

As can be seen from the corpus data, explicit reference to the addressee is more typical for the individuated addressee (*ty*). On the other hand, explicit reference to the inclusive addressee (*my*) is quite rare when compared with second person imperatives. Explicit reference of the addressee is connected with various discourse functions and occurs in particular types of context:

(i) in situations when the actions of two participants are confronted (often after negation to negate the idea that the addressee is not the subject of the imperative situation or to present the idea that the addressee is also the subject of the imperative situation with so-called parallel or additive meaning):

- (3) My ti budeme pást' husi a ty chod' natrhat' mak.
'We will be herding your geese and you go gather the poppy.'
- (4) „Chod' prvá, Magda,“ povie Nad'a. „Nie, ty chod' prvá,“ namietne Magda.
“You go first, Magda,” says Nad'a. “No, you go first,” objects Magda.'
- (5) „Tak chod' do postele!“ „Aj ty chod' do postele!“
“Now you go to bed!” “You go to bed too!”

(ii) in situations in which soothing reassurance, encouragement, support is expressed (often with negative imperative):

- (6) Nič sa ty neboj, bude z teba ešte chlap.
'You needn't be worried, you'll be a man yet.'
- (7) O mňa sa ty netráp!
'Don't you worry about me.'

(iii) in situations in which the speaker (often in an ironic way) provides the addressee with advice or recommendation:

- (8) Len ty pekne rob svoju robotu.
'You just do your work.'

(iv) in situations in which impatience, irritation, aggression on the part of the speaker is expressed:

- (9) Matka podráždene hodila rukou: – Ty mlč!
'Mother irritably waved her hand: – You shut up!'

(iv) in situations in which the subject participant is focalised (often after the use of a focus particle):

- (10) Aspoň ty maj rozum!
'At least you be reasonable!'

(v) in contexts when syntactic subjects are coordinated:

- (11) Hlavne Nathanko a ty bud'te silní.
'Especially Nathan and you be strong'

The results of the analysis can be compared with findings presented in a study by Fortuin (2010). His survey shows that verbs that are frequently attested with the subject *ty* 'you' are *posmotret* 'look'; *gljadet*/'*gljanut*' 'look'; (*ne*) *govorit*/'*skazat*' '(not) say, tell'; (*po*)*dumat* 'think'; *izvinit* 'forgive'; *prostít* 'forgive', and *ne bojat* 'sja' 'not be afraid' (a similar search with the subject *vy* (polite form) resulted in more or less the same verb classes). A comparison with Slovak shows that the results partly overlap. The imperative form is also typical for the Slovak verbs *povedat* 'say, tell'; *prepáčít*' 'forgive'; 'forgive', and *nebát* 'sa' 'not be afraid'. On the other hand, the explicit imperative form is not typical of perception verbs (in Russian, *posmotret*', *gljadet*/'*gljanut*') or cognitive verbs (the Russian (*po*)*dumat*'). When analysing the function of explicit imperative subjects, apart from cases where the accented subject fulfils a contrastive and parallel function, various pragmatic functions of explicit second-person subjects connected with the vocative-like function of the subjects. are discussed such as emotional involvement of the speaker to display such emotions as irritation and impatience (it can be compared with the situations described in (iv)) or the signal that the action is only in the benefit of the speaker (it can be compared with the situations described in (ii)).

4. Imperative as a preferred form of verb

A first possible way of charting the imperative's usage focuses on verbs employed in a given construction. In the corpus data verbs frequently occurring in the imperative form can be simply identified. However, this approach fails to tell us whether the imperative is the characteristic form of these verbs. That is why we will also imply the proportional distribution of imperative constructions within the grammatical paradigm of the investigated verb. The score can be easily acquired from SketchEngine (Omnia Slovaca III Maior).² In the following table, the most frequent imperative constructions gained from the Slovak National Corpus (corpus version prim-8.0-vyv) are listed and the distribution of their imperative forms is compared with their score from Omnia Slovaca III Maior.

² While Takahashi (2012) simply identifies the most frequently occurring verbs in the English imperative and simple collexeme analysis (Stefanowitsch and Gries, 2003, as used in Van Olmen, 2019) reveals which lexemes occur more or less often in an imperative construction than expected in view of their overall frequencies in the entire language, this score shows proportional distribution of the imperative compared with infinitive, indicative, participle and 1-participle forms, e.g. *pozriet*. 'look': infinitive 28.18 %, indicative 14.09 %, imperative 37.79 % (which shows that the imperative is the most frequent grammatical form of the given verb), participle 0.05 %, 1-participle 19.89 % vs. *pozerat* 'watch': infinitive 26.25 %, indicative 40.21 % (which shows that the indicative is the most frequent grammatical form of the given verb), imperative 3.60 %, participle 0.75 %, 1-participle 29.20 %.

Table 3: Frequency of imperative constructions and distribution of infinitive forms
in verbal paradigms

Verb	Absolute frequency	Score
pozrieť 'look'	41 233	37.79
ísť 'go'	40 824	3.35
dať 'give'	21 823	6.44
povedať 'say'	19 900	3.08
prepáčiť 'forgive'	14 116	93.09
byť 'be'	12 468	0.07
nechať 'leave'	11 680	19.51
nebáť sa 'be not afraid'	9857	19.78
počkať 'wait'	9071	25.53
predstaviť (si) 'imagine'	8112	10.85
skúsiť 'try'	7437	46.80
počúvať 'listen'	6505	12.12
vrátiť (sa) 'give/come back'	6145	4.81
vziať 'take'	5956	9.60
prísť 'come'	5702	2.30
dovoliť 'allow'	5534	14.19
veriť 'believe'	5487	9.50
prestať 'stop'	5343	8.60
urobiť 'do'	5193	4.21
pomôcť 'help'	4881	3.33
nezabudnúť 'not forget'	4771	23.58
spomenúť (si) 'remember'	4735	8.94
mať 'have'	4200	0.31
počuť 'hear'	4160	3.40
nerobiť 'not do'	3950	2.88
nezabúdať 'not forget'	3760	27.98
sadnúť (si) 'sit down'	3701	7.06
ukázať 'show'	3641	3.77
nehovoriť 'not speak'	3589	1.64
robiť 'do'	3564	2.88
odpustiť 'forget'	3430	17.96
držať 'hold'	3419	8.00
dávať 'give'	3389	5.00
poslať 'send'	3352	9.75
napísať 'write'	3292	10.30
nebyť 'not be'	3262	0.07
vybrať 'choose'	3187	13.16
všimnúť (si) 'notice'	3181	9.43
stáť 'stand'	3065	1.44
zavolať 'call'	2981	13.86
otvoriť 'open'	2902	5.51
začať 'begin'	2901	2.11
prečítať 'read'	2738	19.13
pustiť 'let go'	2697	7.76
pridať 'add'	2478	9.87
pamätať (si) 'remember'	2469	10.02
prosiť 'beg'	2459	10.85
brať 'take'	2448	8.74
venovať (sa) 'dedicate'	2414	2.92
porovnať 'compare'	2357	20.23

As the data show, among the 50 most frequentative imperatives, only 14 verbs show higher preference for the imperative construction (they score above 10). For most verbs, the imperative is not a typical construction (they score under 10) and the high frequency of the imperative is conditioned by the overall frequency of the verb. A higher preference for imperative construction can be traced among the following verbs:

(1) Verbs with remedial function evolving into particles in which the imperative form becomes fossilized, e.g. *prepáčiť* (*prepáč, prepáčte*) ‘forgive me, I’m sorry’, *ospravedlniť* (*ospravedlňte ma*) ‘excuse me’, *odpustiť* (*odpustíte*) ‘forgive’. One of the signals of fossilization of the imperative form is the dropping of the object participant and syntactic and semantic independence of the imperative sentence, e.g.

(12) Prepáčte, to som netušil.
‘Forgive (me), I was not conscious of it.’

(13) Odpustíte, aké je vaše meno?
‘Excuse (me), what is your name?’

(2) Verbs with contact function undergoing processes of conversion into interjections. They occur in those contexts where they relate directly to the ongoing interaction, e.g. *pozrieť* ‘look’, *počkať* ‘wait’ (as an appeal to the interlocutors to pay attention to the speaker).³ These imperative forms become conventional speech formulae, part of our linguistic repertoire. They are listed in dictionaries as interjections, e.g.

(14) Hľad’, aký je zrazu múdry.
‘Look, how wise he suddenly is.’

(3) Verbs that participate as the components of so called analytic imperative forms (cf. Grepl 1979), e.g. *ber(te) sa* + INF ‘be off to INF’, similarly *ráč(te)* + INF ‘pray INF’, *staraj(te) sa* + INF ‘give a try to INF’, *chráň(te) sa* + INF ‘fear to INF’, etc.

(15) Ber sa, dočerta, drichmať.
‘Go sleep!’

(4) Verbs with various illocutionary functions in the discourse: *dovoliť* (*dovol’/dovol’te* ‘allow’ as the expression of polite request), *skúsiť* (*skús, skúste* ‘try’ as the expression of advice), *nezabudnúť, nezabúdať* (*nezabudni, nezabudnite* ‘do not forget’ as the expression of recommendation), *nebáť sa* (*neboj sa, nebojte sa* ‘don’t be afraid’ as the expression of encouragement), *nechať* (*nechaj to, nechajte to* ‘leave it’ as the expression of command):

(16) Dovoľte, vyzlečiem vás a uložíam do postele.
‘Let me undress you and put you to bed.’

(17) Skúste obmedziť príjem kalórií a začať cvičiť.
‘Try to reduce the amount of calories and begin to exercise.’

³ The study by Swearingen (2017) of Romance languages reveals that imperatives and interjections share the properties that facilitates transcategorization. For Slovak, such features as degrees of force exertion (Takahashi 2012), mobilization signal (Lamiroy & Swiggers 1993), or (perceived) lack of overt inflection are relevant.

- (18) Nezabudnite zapnúť svetlá.
'Don't forget to turn the lights on.'
- (19) Nebojte sa priznať sami sebe.
'Don't be afraid to confess to yourself.'
- (20) Nechaj to, je mi z teba do revu.
'Leave it, I feel like crying because of you.'

(5) Verbs with instructive function in regulative contexts: *porovnať* 'compare' (in scientific texts), *prečítať* 'read' (in didactic and popular-scientific texts), *zavolať* 'call' (in administrative and journalistic texts), *vybrať* 'take out, choose' (in recipe instructions)⁴:

- (21) Porovnaj hodnotenie Tatarkovho dialógu vo Farskej republike v knihe A. Matušku.
'Compare the evaluation of Tatarka's dialogue in Farská republika in the book by A. Matuška.'
- (22) Prečítajte si: Čo by ste mali vedieť o chrípke.
'Read to yourself: What you should know about flu.'
- (23) HĽADÁME seriózných a schopných ĽUDÍ. Zavolajte na tel. 0905 187 519.
'WE'RE LOOKING for respectable and competent PEOPLE. Call: 0905 187 519.'
- (24) Korenie vyberte a nechajte mierne vychladnúť.
'Take out the spice and leave it to cool down.'

Identification of verbs with preference for imperative forms is important for lexicographic description in three ways:

(i) It helps to identify different phrases which are processed as separate lexicalized formulae within the verbal entry, e.g. *dovoľ*, *dovoľte (mi)* 'let (me)' as an expression of polite request, *no dovoľ(te)* 'I beg your pardon' as an expression of indignation, disagreement, *ale choď(te)* 'come on' as an expression of rejection or disagreement. Imperative forms are often used as tokens of politeness in greetings, farewells and blessings, e.g. *maj(te) sa* 'see you', *Boh ťa žehnaj* 'God bless you', at the same time they serve as forms expressing curses, imprecations or insults, e.g. *neposer(te) sa* 'keep your hair on', *pojeb(te) sa* 'go fuck yourself'.

(ii) It helps to identify fossilized imperatives which undergo word-class transposition (conversion) and start to function as particles or interjections, e.g. *hľad'(te)* 'look' (as volition interjection expressing a warning from the speaker, pointing to someone or something), similarly *pozri(te)* 'look', *počkaj(te)* 'wait', *prepáč(te)* 'sorry', etc.

(iii) It helps to identify idioms with fossilized imperatives (in either positive, or negative forms), e.g. *daj sa mi svete* 'what the hell', *maj(te) sa pozore* 'be careful', *choď(te)/ber(te) do*

⁴ Certain verbs with instructive function are preferentially used in written texts. Here, the identification of units with preference for the imperative form is determined by the type of corpus used.

čerta/v čerty ‘go to hell’, *chod’(te)/id’(te) mi oči/očú* ‘get out of my face’, *chod’(te)/id’(te) v mene Božom/s Pánom Bohom* ‘go with God’, etc.⁵

The Slovak data corroborate the findings presented in studies by Stefanowitsch & Gries (2003) or Van Olmen (2019) for English that the “preference” of imperative forms for verbs encoding actions that yield results desirable from the point of view of someone else, i.e. the speaker, may not be so outspoken. While action verbs do also occur among the most frequent imperative constructions, they are not nearly as dominant as might be expected. At the same time, the Slovak data show that imperative forms often undergo different semantic changes, including transcategorisation of imperatives into interjections, fossilization of imperatives becoming components of idioms or appearing in formulaic expressions with different discourse functions.

5. Imperative and lexicographic descriptions

5.1 Factors limiting the formation of the imperative form

In *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* (2006, 2011, 2015) the imperative form is processed as part of the grammatical apparatus which comprises grammatical forms of the given verb. This grammatical apparatus is presented for the whole verbal lemma without specific attention paid to individual lexical units. Therefore, the imperative form is presented as part of the grammatical apparatus whenever at least one of the lexical units proves the existence of the imperative form. For example, the imperative form is attested in the grammatical apparatus of the verbal polysemous unit *hrmieť* consisting of three lexical units. However, imperative forms of the first two lexical units (the first one with meteorological meaning, e.g. *Vonku hrmí*. ‘There’s thunder outside.’, and the second one with process meaning of sound produced by a non-animate subject, e.g. *Delá hrmia*. ‘Cannons are roaring.’) are not attested in the corpus data. The presence of the imperative form in the grammatical apparatus of verb entry is conditioned by a third lexical unit having the meaning of communication verb, e.g. *Hrmel na hráčov*. ‘He was yelling at the players.’

The same procedure should be consistently applied to every verbal polysemant, e.g. the verbs *míňať sa/minúť sa* ‘be passing, miss each other’, *miznúť* ‘disappear’ should take the imperative form as part of their grammatical apparatus because at least one of their lexical units presupposes the existence of imperative forms which are also attested in corpus data, e.g. *Nemiň sa s ním!* ‘Do not pass him by!’ (“pass by and do not stop”), *Nemizni, prosím, nestrácaj sa*. ‘Do not disappear, please, do not fade away!’ (“become less seen and lose sight of something”).

For lexicographic description it is important to set the group of verbs with the imperative form apart from verbs for which the formation of imperative mood is limited by some factors. From a purely formal point of view the imperative can be formed from any personal verbs. Impersonality of verb represents the limiting factor for the imperative’s formation, e.g. *cnieť* ‘miss’, *záležať* ‘care’, *smädiť* ‘cause thirst’, etc.

Apart from formal factors, an important role is played by the semantics of certain verbs. It is generally accepted that imperative forms are dispreferred for verbs that encode states and

⁵ In most expressions both second person singular and second person plural can be used depending on the degree of formality relating to the interlocutors’ relationship. However, in certain idiomatic expressions only one form (second person singular or second person plural) is possible), e.g. *daj sa mi svete* – **dajte sa mi svete*.

(potentially) uncontrollable actions (in our terminology we use the term “processes”, cf. Sokolová 1995), cf. Aikhenvald (2010: 6). Prototypical imperatives are used to express directive speech acts (commands). J. Searle (1969, 1979) argues that prototypical commands should comply with felicity conditions such as propositional content condition (i.e. future act A is an act of the addressee), preparatory condition (i.e. the addressee is able to do A and the speaker believes the addressee is able to do A), sincerity condition (i.e. the speaker wants the addressee to do A) and essential condition (i.e. the speech act counts as an attempt to get the addressee to do A).

In theoretical works it is often stated that the non-existence of the imperative form is a typical feature of so-called static verbs (cf. Ivanová 2006). However, in usage, examples of imperatives of static verbs are sometimes documented, e.g. *Nájdite si svoju skupinu zákazníkov a páčte sa im*. ‘Find your group of customers and be liked by them.’ These uses do not comply with the felicity conditions stated for the usage of directive imperatives (as the construction used here, i.e. the imperative, always coerces an agentive reading whereas the verbal unit used in this construction is static), as in this case the addressee is not able to do A (the person cannot force himself/herself to be attractive for somebody else). However, these types of examples are quite rare and can be viewed as manifestations of linguistic creativity rather than regular uses.

On the other hand, process verbs represent more of a complicated area. For example, the imperative form *Melt!* is pragmatically odd, but, as A. Aikhenvald (2010: 6) explains, “with special contexts, however, such imperatives are possible. For instance, one could imagine an impatient cook standing over a pot of hard chocolate saying *Melt!* Of course, this would be a case of indirect speech act. The cook is not really trying to alter the behaviour of the chocolate. He is expressing a desire, *I wish this chocolate would melt quickly.*”

These non-prototypical usages of imperatives comprise the following situations:

(1) Imperatives where the subject is animate, but he/she is not able to control the situation and perform A solely by his/her own will, these kinds of verbs usually describe non-volitional processes that are normally uncontrollable; such utterances can be interpreted as an example of wishful thinking on the part of the author and no force is exerted on the addressee in such cases, e.g. *Vylieč sa!* ‘Get well.’, *Uzdrav sa skoro!* ‘Get well/better soon.’

(2) Imperatives the subject of which is non-animate so that it is not able to perform A wilfully; the sentence subject is usually a kind of plant or natural element and these utterances can usually be interpreted as enchantments of anthropomorphized subjects (that are typical in poetry): *Rasti, rasti, sivá palina*. ‘Grow, grow, grey artemisia.’, *Plyň, sladká Temža, plyň, kým pieseň nedospievam*. ‘Flow, sweet Thames, flow, until I finish singing.’, *Požehnávam Ťa, zem: rasť a rozmnož sa!* ‘I bless you, earth: grow and reproduce.’

(3) Imperatives whose subject is non-animate and encodes abstract action or temporal circumstance, the usage of the imperative expresses the wish of the speaker for A to be realized, e.g. *Plyňte, časy*. ‘Go by, times.’

That is why in Takahashi’s approach (2012: 71, 76) there is a distinction set between an abstraction that is fully compatible with all the instances of the category it defines and a prototype as a representation of the conceptual core of a category. The prototype is said to involve (i) a speaker as the causer-agent in an initial conceptual event, (ii) an individuated addressee as cause in the first event and as agent in the subsequent event, and (iii) the application of a high degree of force by the former to the latter. In the work by Van Olmen and Heinhold (2017: 10) “force exertion is not understood as an undifferentiated notion but as a combination of desire, capability, power, cost, benefit, and obligation”. Each of the parameters consists of a scale of numerical values which are taken to reflect a speaker’s intention and

his/her perception of the situation in which a given imperative is issued. For example, in the sentence *Uzdrav sa skoro!* ‘Get well soon!’ no effort from the addressee is required and such an imperative would receive the value 0 on a numerical scale. In sentences like *Ožeň sa a zabijem ťa.* ‘Get married and I’ll kill you.’ the addressee is obliged not to bring about the state of affairs and the imperative is given the numerical value –2. In that way all imperative uses vary between –7 to +10 on a scale forming the prototypical core of the imperative category (at the positive end of the scale) differentiated from non-prototypical uses (at the negative end of the scale). For lexicographic processing, cases like *Ožeň sa a zabijem ťa* are not important as they concern the usage of the individual verb in the respective type of constructions but they do not apply to verb semantics itself (the imperative use of the verb *oženit’ sa* can be viewed as “normal”, acceptable).

There are two possible ways to solve the problems of lexicographic description connected with the question whether to introduce the imperative form in the grammatical apparatus of the verb entry. One possible way is to rely on corpus data and explain any deviations from imperative semantics by using an implementation prototypical and parameterizing approach. The negative evidence of imperative forms in the corpus would signal the absence of this form in the grammatical paradigm which would be reflected in the lexicographic processing of this verb by omitting the imperative form from the grammatical apparatus. However, this procedure is not unproblematic. Firstly, the question of the representability of corpus data arises (even big corpora cannot comprise the whole usage). Secondly, it is not clear how to deal with very rare non-prototypical uses of the imperative form. For example, *Slovník slovenského jazyka* (2006) does not introduce the imperative form of *diať sa* ‘happen, be going on’ in the grammatical apparatus of the verb entry, however, corpus data show the existence of the imperative form of this verb, e.g. *V poslednom momente sa rozhodli, že oni traja sa budú držať pospolu, dej sa čo dej.*, ‘At the last moment they decided that they three will stick together, no matter what happens.’, *Ja kladiem svoje ruky a hovorím dejte sa, zázraky, dejte sa, charizmy, dejte sa, divy, dejte sa, uzdravenia.* ‘I place your hand on you and I tell you: happen, miracles, happen, charisma, happen, wonders, happen, healings.’. On the other hand, *Slovník slovenského jazyka* (2011) gives evidence of the imperative form for the verb *končiť sa* ‘end, terminate, finish’. When analysing the semantics of the both verbs there are no striking differences between them: both denote processes evolving independently of human will, both have impersonal subjects and their imperative uses are extremely rare in the corpus.

The second possible solution is to introduce the imperative form in the grammatical apparatus of every process verb taking into consideration that imperative construction can be possibly formed from every process verb in non-commanding, indirect speech uses.

It seems that *Slovník slovenského jazyka* (2006, 2011, 2015) adopts the first solution as the imperative form is not introduced in the grammatical apparatus of every process verb. However, this approach is not always applied consistently and corpus data are not followed strictly as the decisive criterion for processing imperative forms in the dictionary. In the following parts we will analyse selected groups of process verbs and their lexicographic processing in *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* (2006, 2011, 2015):

(1) Verbs expressing meteorological processes barely form imperatives, e.g. *snežiť* ‘snow’, *hrmieť* ‘thunder’, *pršať* ‘rain’. Non-prototypical uses can be traced occasionally especially in contexts where the will of a powerful agent is demonstrated: *Premiér len vyjde na balkón a povie – snež! A sneží!* ‘The Prime minister will go out on to the balcony and say –

Snow! And it will snow.’ Non-prototypical uses are quite frequent when the subject of the imperative construction is represented by the name of some natural element (which often has human-like, agent characteristics): *Fúkaj, vetrik, z celej sily, a vynes nám šarkany.* ‘Blow, wind, blow with all your strength and send our kites upwards.’, *Teč, vodička, teč!* ‘Flow, water, flow.’.

(2) Verbs expressing the modification of quality:

(a) relating to the change or manifestation of colour quality: corpus data do not prove the existence of imperative forms for verbs like *lesknúť sa* ‘shine’, *blyšťať sa* ‘glitter’, *belieť sa* ‘be (all) white, show up white’, *černieť sa* ‘be (all) black, show up black’, *brnieť sa* ‘be (all) dark, show up dark’, *červenieť sa* ‘be (all) red, show up red’, *hnednúť* ‘get brown’⁶, however, the imperative forms of these verbs are listed in the grammatical apparatus in dictionary entries. Occasionally, corpus data prove the existence of imperative form when a non-animate subject from natural world is addressed: *Zelenaj sa, zelenaj, javor dlaňolistý.* ‘Be all green, palmate maple.’ or in cases when the syntactic subject is human: *Neleskni sa, používaj primerane púder.* ‘Do not glitter, use face powder proportionately.’;

(b) relating to change in the physical or psychological qualities of animate subjects: corpus data do not prove the existence of imperative forms; however, imperative forms are presented in the grammatical apparatus of the verbs *chabnúť* ‘be losing strength’, *hluchnúť* ‘become deaf’, *chorľavieť* ‘be ill’, *chorieť* ‘be ill’, *krehnúť* ‘grow numb’, *drevenieť* ‘get stiff’, *kamenieť* ‘become stone’, *dúpnieť* ‘get stunned’, but not for verbs *malátnieť* ‘grow weary’, *meravieť* ‘get stiff’, *ml’andravieť* ‘get flabby’, *dengľavieť* ‘get weedy’, *malomysel’nieť* ‘get little-minded’, *mladnúť* ‘get young’, *múdriieť* ‘grow wiser’. Attested imperative forms for the verbs *chudnúť* ‘be losing weight’, *dospieť* ‘mature/grow up’, *hlúpnuť* ‘grow stupid’ can be interpreted as subtle semantic shifts in the given units towards the meaning of behaviour; the examples *Chudnite rozumne.* ‘Lose weight reasonably.’, *Dospejte už konečne.* ‘Grow up finally!’, *Nehlúpnite!* ‘Don’t be silly!’ do not encode the command directed to change the physiological or psychological qualities but they represent a command oriented towards the behaviour of human agents leading to that change (this can be viewed as another example of constructional coercion when a construction coerces agentive reading whereas the verb unit forming the construction has non-agentive reading).;

(c) relating to change of externally manifested qualities of non-animate subjects: the entries for the verbs *chladnúť* ‘get cold’, *hrdzavieť* ‘get rusty’, *kôrnatieť* ‘get hard, tough’, *mäknúť* ‘soften’ include imperative forms, however, they are not traced in the corpus data. On the other hand, imperatives are not included in the grammatical apparatus of the verbs *matnieť* ‘tarnish’, *modravieť* ‘get blueish’, *mútnieť* ‘get muddy’.

(3) Existential verbs: generally speaking, existential verbs can form imperatives which signal their semi-volitional status (we can decide for living and for dying): *Prosím ťa a plačem: Existuj!* ‘I’m begging you and I’m crying: Exist!’, *Sed’ si tam a rozmyšľaj, existuj a mlčky trp!* ‘Sit there, and think, exist and suffer wordlessly.’, *Zomri s priateľmi.* ‘Die with your friends!’. Non-prototypical uses of imperatives occur even for verbs the semantics of which is non-volitional but their uses are connected with special pragmatic nuances, e.g. *Editori teraz poznajú riešenie: Inovujte. Integrujte. Alebo zaniknite.* ‘Editors know the solution now:

⁶ In the corpus data many examples are wrongly tagged as imperative forms of *blyšťať sa*, *černieť sa*, *belieť sa*, *brnieť sa*, etc.

Innovate. Integrate. Or perish.’, *Narod’ sa, vyštuduj, chod’ na vysokú, nájdi si prácu, ožeň sa, sprav si deti, a keď sa budeš modliť, dožiješ sa dôchodku a bolesti, reumy a rakoviny.* ‘Be born, finish your studies, go to university, find a job, get married, have children, and when you pray, you will live until retirement with pain, rheumatism and cancer.’ (meaning of obligation or condition connected with irony).

(4) Verbs expressing involuntary physiological reactions: when used as personal verbs, their semi-volitional character is highlighted and the imperative form is possible: *dávit’* ‘vomit’, *grgat’* ‘burp’, *čkat’* ‘hiccup’, *zívat’* ‘yawn’, *driemat’* ‘doze’, *vracat’* ‘bring up’, *grcat’* ‘puke’. Among other verbs with psychophysiological meaning, the imperative form is processed occasionally in the grammatical apparatus despite the fact that it is not attested in the corpus data, e.g. *bolieť’* ‘ache’.

5.2 Distribution of positive and negative imperative form

For some verbs, the negative form of the imperative seems to be the primary choice when realizing the imperative function. For those verbs, *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* (2006, 2011, 2015) uses special marking of the imperative form with the negative morpheme put in brackets, e.g. *(ne)bol’!* ‘do (not) ache’, *(ne)jeduj sa!* ‘(not) be enraged’, *(ne)l’akaj sa!* ‘(not) be frightened’, etc.

The data reveal that for some verbs, the negative imperative form is a more natural choice. Thus, we decided to investigate the most frequent negative imperative forms and compare their distribution with positive imperative forms of the same verb. The following table presents the most frequent imperatives in the negative form gained from the data of the Slovak National Corpus (corpus version prim-8.0-vyv) compared with the frequency of positive imperative forms of the same verbs.

Table 4: Frequency distribution of positive and negative imperative forms

Negative imperative	Absolute fr.	Fr. p.m.	Translation	Positive imperative	Absolute fr.	Fr. p.m.
nebát’ sa	9857	26.14	be afraid	bát’ sa	188	0.5
nezabudnúť	4771	12.65	forget	zabudnúť	2155	5.71
nerobiť	3950	10.47	do	robiť	3564	9.45
nezabúdať	3760	9.97	forget	zabúdať	14	0.04
nehovoriť	3589	9.52	say	hovoriť	2011	5.33
nebyť	3262	8.65	be	byť	12468	33.06
nemyslieť	2180	5.78	think	myslieť	1883	4.99
nedat’	1976	5.24	give	dat’	21823	57.86
nehnevať’ (sa)	1732	4.59	worry	hnevať’ (sa)	27	0.07
netrápiť’ (sa)	1696	4.50	suffer	trápiť’ (sa)	43	0.11
neveriť	1275	3.38	believe	veriť	5487	14.55
neplakať	1255	3.33	cry	plakať	111	0.29
nebrať	1180	3.13	take	brať	2448	6.49
nenechať	1096	2.91	leave	nechať	11681	30.97
nevrať	1017	2.70	tell	vrať	781	2.07
nečakať	976	2.59	wait	čakať	901	2.39
neváhať	965	2.56	hesitate	váhať	4	0.01
nedovoliť	855	2.27	let	dovoliť	5534	14.67
nepýtať sa	838	2.22	ask	pýtať sa	918	2.43
nemať	817	2.17	have	mať	4200	11.14
nejst’/neísť	1201	1.6	go	ísť	40824	108.25

netárat'	676	1.79	drivel	tárat'	1	0.00
neopovážit' sa	662	1.76	dare	opovážit' sa	141	0.37
nečudovať sa	639	1.69	wonder	čudovať sa	435	1.15
nepovedať	636	1.69	tell	povedať	19900	52.77
nedávať	615	1.63	give	dávať	3389	8.99
nechciet'	554	1.47	want	chciet'	125	0.33
nechodiť	539	1.43	go	chodiť	1875	4.97
neprehliadnuť	535	1.42	overlook	prehliadnuť	32	0.08
nevšímať si	534	1.42	pay attention	všímať si	473	1.25
ne strácať	527	1.40	lose	strácať	1	0.00
nepokúšať (sa)	525	1.39	try	pokúšať (sa)	35	0.09
nesnažiť sa	497	1.32	strive	snažiť sa	1834	4.86
nedotýkať sa	497	1.32	touch	dotýkať sa	74	0.20
nestarať sa	490	1.30	take care	starať sa	561	1.49
nepozerať	487	1.29	look	pozeráť	799	2.12
nerozprávať (sa)	461	1.22	talk	rozprávať (sa)	1128	5.42
nehľadať	460	1.22	search	hľadať	2045	4.87
netváriť sa	440	1.17	make faces	tváriť sa	94	0.25
nenechávať	423	1.12	let, allow	nechávať	20	0.05
neodchádzať	402	1.07	leave	odchádzať	14	0.04
nekričať	397	1.05	cry	kričať	227	0.60
nehýbať sa	362	0.96	move	hýbať sa	289	0.77
nepodceňovať	361	0.96	underestimate	podceňovať	0	0.00
nevolať	356	0.94	call	volať	1446	3.83
nevzdávať sa	353	0.94	give up	vzdávať sa	204	0.54
neklamať	351	0.93	lie	klamať	22	0.06
nepoužívať	346	0.92	use	používať	757	2.01
nepreháňať	341	0.90	exaggerate	preháňať	7	0.02
neopúšťať	340	0.90	leave, abandon	opúšťať	3	0.01

Bold type marks preferential imperative forms of the investigated verbs⁷. As can be seen in the table, from 50 investigated verbs, 23 verbs show preference for negative imperative forms when compared with the distribution of positive imperative forms, 17 verbs have preferential positive imperative forms and for 10 verbs the distribution of the positive and negative imperative form is comparable.

The negative imperative can be traced as the preferred form for the following groups of verbs:

(1) Verbs expressing negative emotional or physical states and their changes, e.g. *báť sa* 'be afraid', *hnevať (sa)* 'be angry, worry', *trápiť (sa)* 'suffer, bother'. Despite the fact that these verbs often encode uncontrollable actions or states, their negative imperative form is acceptable; according to D. Bolinger (1967: 348) "we have more occasions to command resistance than sufferance", thus it is more natural to record negative imperative forms within the grammatical paradigm of these verbs in the dictionary. This assumption does not hold for behavioural predicates expressing behavioural correlates of emotional states: simply because of the fact that giving vent to such kind of behaviour can bring about relief for the addressee, e.g. *plakať* 'cry', *lamentovať* 'lament', *bedákať* 'moan', *jojkať* 'pant', *horekovať* 'wail', etc. For those verbs, the positive imperative is a more natural choice.

⁷ The preferentiality of the positive or negative imperative was calculated by comparing the score expressing the frequency of the given form per million words.

(2) Verbs with possible negative consequences for the addressee, e.g. *zabudnúť*, *zabúdať* ‘forget’, *váhať* ‘hesitate’, *prehliadnúť* ‘overlook’. The negative imperative should be treated as the preferred form within the group of destruction verbs (*deštruovať* ‘destroy’, *devastovať* ‘devastate’, *ničiť* ‘destroy, ruin’, *kaziť* ‘spoil’), verbs expressing physiological or psychological discomfort for the addressee (*deprimovať* ‘depress’, *moriť* ‘bother’, *mučiť* ‘torture’, *deptať* ‘get down’, *týrať* ‘torment’), communication verbs expressing incomprehensible communication acts (*bl’abotať* ‘to talk gibberish’, *brbtať* ‘babble’, *brbotať* ‘babble’, *l’apotať* ‘gabble’, *hatlať* ‘mispronounce words’), etc.

(3) Verbs expressing the possible breaking of ethical norms, e.g. *tárať* ‘talk twaddle’, *klamať* ‘lie’, *preháňať* ‘exaggerate’. The negative imperative should be treated as the preferred form within the group of communication verbs (*oklamať* ‘lie’, *luhať* ‘tell lies’, *cigániť* ‘fabricate’, *fixľovať* ‘deceive’), action verbs (*podviest’* ‘cheat’, *zradiť* ‘betray’, *spreneveriť* ‘embezzle’, *zapredať* ‘betray, sell down the river’).

(4) Evaluation verbs with the sememe of invalid evaluation, e.g. *podceniť/podceňovať* ‘underestimate’, similarly the negative imperative should be processed as the preferred form for verbs within the same semantic group, e.g. *zľahčiť/zľahčovať* ‘belittle’, *znevážiť/znevažovať* ‘discredit’, *zneuctiť/zneucťovať* ‘dishonour’, *bagatelizovať* ‘trivialize’, *diskreditovať* ‘discredit’.

(5) Verbs expressing resignation, e.g. *vzdať sa/vzdávať sa* ‘give up’, similarly the negative imperative should be processed as the preferred form for verbs within the same semantic group, e.g. *rezignovať* ‘resign’, *poddať sa* ‘yield’, *kapitulovať* ‘capitulate’, *podľahnúť* ‘succumb’, *podriaďiť sa* ‘conform’, *podvoliť sa* ‘surrender’.

(6) Volition verbs, e.g. *opovážiť sa* ‘dare’, *chcieť* ‘want’, *pokúšať sa/pokúsiť sa* ‘give (something) a try’. The negative imperative should be processed only for those verbs which encode unacceptable manifestation of will, e.g. *opovážiť sa* ‘dare’.⁸

When investigating negative imperatives processed in the verb entries of *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* (2006, 2011, 2015), certain inconsistencies can be traced there. Negative imperatives are not processed for all verbs with negative semantic components present in their semantic structure, e.g. *chorľavieť* ‘be ill’, *hlúpnuť* ‘grow stupid’ have only positive imperative forms in their grammatical apparatus. The same problem concerns verbs which are synonymous: imperative forms are not processed consistently for all verbs within the same semantic group, e.g. *dochnúť* ‘kick the bucket’, *kapať* ‘drop dead’ take positive imperative forms processed in their entries whereas *hynúť* ‘perish’ takes the negative imperative form. Sometimes even aspectual pairs are treated differently, e.g. *durdiť sa* ‘be angry, cross’ (positive imperative form) – *nadurdiť sa* ‘become angry, cross’ (negative imperative form), *ľakať sa* ‘be frightened’ (negative imperative form) – *nal’akať sa* ‘get frightened’ (positive imperative form), etc. (for possible different preference of positive and negative imperative forms of aspectual pairs see Table 4, however, these cases cannot be interpreted in this way).

With some verbs, the preference for positive imperative forms is determined by the semantics of verbo-nominal expressions which motivates the preference for the realization of the action, e.g. *dať si pozor* ‘pay attention’, *brať ohľad* ‘take into consideration’, *brať na vedomie* ‘take into account’, *vzdávať chválu* ‘praise’, or existence of lexicalized phrases, e.g.

⁸ In his study of English imperative Takahashi (2012) proved that the overt negative *don’t* systematically appears with a particular class of verbs and adjectives, i.e. adversative expressions such as *worry*, *bother*, *mind* (group 1 in our analysis), *rude* (comparable with group 3 in our analysis), *hard* (*on oneself*), and *stupid*, *silly*, *ridiculous*.

mat' sa 'see you' (*maj(te) sa* as a kind of farewell greeting), *hybat' sa* 'move' (*hyb(te) sa* as a kind of challenge for the realization of an action).

For many verbs, the usage of positive imperative forms has a negative meaning, e.g. *Opovázte sa ma dotknúť!* 'Just dare to touch me!' (= *neopovázte sa ma dotknúť* 'do not dare to touch me'). It is typical of admonitive utterances with formally independent clauses in which the imperative construction can be interpreted as a conditional clause semantically subordinate to the clause that it is conjoined to: *Dotkni sa jej a zomrieš!* 'Touch her and you'll die!' (= do not touch her).

In certain contexts, the positive imperative form is used within elliptical sentences to express the irrelevance of an addressee's reaction to the speaker, e.g. *Nuž, Tomáš, hnevaj sa alebo nie, takéto správanie ti na vážnosti nepridá.* 'Well, Thomas, be angry or not, such behaviour won't bring you seriousness.' The same motivation lies behind sentences with measure clauses: *Hnevaj sa, koľko chceš, aj tak tam pôjdem.* 'Be angry as much as you want, I'm still going there.' In these sentences the positive imperative form does not code the adhibition of the actions but the irrelevance of the addressee's reaction to the speaker. It is typical for utterances with expressive and satisfactory function of rebuke or disagreement.

The distribution of positive and negative imperative forms is conditioned also by the aspect of the verb as was pointed out in studies by Dokulil (1948), Karlík – Nübler (1998). The basic claim is that perfective form is unmarked for the adhibitive aspect whereas the imperfective form is characteristic for the prohibitive aspect. The distribution of perfective and imperfective aspect in imperative forms can be conditioned by various factors: (i) the degree of authority, (ii) urgency, (iii) accent on the realization of an action or its result.

As M. Dokulil (1948) claims the usage of the imperfective aspect causes the source of command to be shifted from the author towards impersonal necessity so that the authority of the speaker is lower⁹:

(25) *Vykonaj svoju povinnosť!*
'Fulfil_{perf} your duty!'

(26) *Konaj svoju povinnosť!*
'Fulfil_{imperf} your duty!'

At the same time, the opposition of perfective and imperfective imperatives is connected with the degree of urgency. By using the imperfective aspect, the realization of an action is understood as an immediate act whereas by using the perfective imperative the realization of an action can be postponed in time:

(27) *Napiš mu list! (niekedy v budúcnosti)*
'Write_{perf} him a letter! (sometimes in the future)'

(28) *Píš mu ten list! (teraz)*
'Write_{imperf} him a letter (now)!'

⁹ According to J. Zinken (2016), the invariant meaning of the imperfective imperative is to direct animation of an action, while disowning authorship.

According to R. Benacchio (2010) the perfective aspect is used when the action is introduced for the first time (e.g. *Napiš mu list. Poteší sa.* ‘Write_{perf} him a letter! He will be glad.’) whereas the imperfective imperative is used when the action is already known (e.g. *Píš mu ten list. Už naň dlho čaká.* ‘Write_{imperf} him a letter! He’s waiting for it.’). That is why imperfective imperatives are sometimes treated as more categorical (someone standing over the writer and forcing him to go on with writing *now* would say *píš* ‘write_{imperf}’). The same conclusion can be traced in B. Wiemer’s study (2008): “The bottom line of the matter [is] that imperfective verbs are used in the non-negated imperative if the speaker supposes that the [appropriateness of the] action in question is self-evident, e.g. because it belongs to the relevant script or because it has already been introduced; perfective verbs are used if the speaker does not suppose this and the situation in question is therefore considered new or unexpected” (in von Waldenfels 2012).

According to V. Lehmann (1989) the basic function of the imperfective imperative is a junction function, simply speaking, by using the imperfective imperative, a speaker joins his or her imperative to the presumption that the other person wants or intends to carry out the relevant action. In these contexts, the imperfective imperative can be understood as a kind of “nudge” (Zinken 2016) or *go-ahead* for the addressee, e.g.

- (29) Hádž tu loptu! (vidiac váhanie adresáta)
 ‘Throw_{perf} the ball!’ (seeing the hesitation of the addressee)
- (30) Hod’ tú loptu! (v prípade, že nie je zrejmé, že by adresát zvažoval realizáciu deja)
 ‘Throw_{imperf} the ball!’ (if there is no evidence that the addressee is minding the relevant matter)

By using the perfective aspect, the author presupposes the realization of an action in its entirety. The imperfective aspect allows both interpretations: the addressee is supposed to realize the action in its entirety including its result or the addressee is supposed to realize the action regardless of achieving its result:

- (31) Umyte podlahu!
 ‘Wash_{perf} the floor!’
- (32) Umývajte podlahu!
 ‘Wash_{imperf} the floor!’

Perfective prohibition is used when the author wants to prevent the achievement of an action’s result:

- (33) Nerozbi to!
 ‘Do not_{perf} break it!’

Imperfective prohibition is used when the author wants to prevent directing the action to its final point or he/she wants to stop the realized action at one of its points.

- (34) Nerozbíjaj to!
 ‘Do not_{imperf} break it!’

The following table shows the distribution of positive and negative imperative forms of verbs existing in aspectual correlation.

Table 5: Distribution of positive and negative imperative forms of verbs in aspectual correlations

Negative perfective imperative	Fr. p.m.	Positive perfective imperative	Fr. p.m.	Translation	Negative imperfective imperative	Fr. p.m.	Positive imperfective imperative	Fr. p.m.
nezabudnúť	12.65	zabudnúť	5.71	forget	nezabúdať	9.97	zabúdať	0.04
Neurobiť	0.47	urobiť	13.77	do	nerobiť	10.47	robiť	9.45
nepovedať	1.69	povedať	52.77	say	nehovoriť	9.52	hovoriť	5.33
nedat'	5.24	Dat'	57.86	give	nedávať	1.63	dávať	8.99
neziať	0.06	vziať	15.79	take	nebrať	3.13	brať	6.49
nenechať	2.91	nechať	30.97	leave	nenechávať	1.12	nechávať	0.05
nedovoliť	2.27	dovoliť	14.67	let	nedovoľovať	0.05	dovoľovať	0.00
neopýtať sa	0.01	opýtať sa	2.44	ask	nepýtať sa	2.22	pýtať sa	2.43
neopovážiť sa	1.76	opovážiť sa	0.37	dare	neopovažovať sa	0.07	opovažovať sa	0.00
neprehliadnuť	1.42	prehliadnuť	0.08	overlook	neprehliadať	0.05	prehliadať	0.01
nestratiť	0.3	stratiť	0.62	lose	nestrácať	1.40	strácať	0.00
nepokúsiť (sa)	0.01	pokúsiť	5.30	try	nepokúšať (sa)	1.39	pokúšať (sa)	0.09
nedotknúť sa	0.14	dotknúť sa	0.85	touch	nedotýkať sa	1.32	dotýkať sa	0.20
nepostarať sa	0.00	postarať sa	1.77	take care	nestarat' sa	1.30	starat' sa	1.49
nepozrieť	0.05	pozrieť	109.33	look	nepozerať	1.29	pozerat'	2.12
neodísť	0.16	odísť	4.07	leave	neodchádzať	1.07	odchádzať	0.04
nepohnúť sa	0.19	pohnúť sa	1.64	move	nehýbať sa	0.96	hýbať sa	0.77
nepodceňiť	0.07	podceňiť	0.01	undervalue	nepodceňovať	0.96	podceňovať	0.00
nezavolať	0.01	zavolať	7.90	call	nevolat'	0.94	volat'	3.83
nevzdať (sa)	0.07	vzdať (sa)	1.14	give up	nevzdávať (sa)	0.94	vzdávať (sa)	0.54
nepoužiť	0.09	použiť	4.18	use	nepoužívať	0.92	používať	2.01
neprehnať	0.05	prehnať	0.02	exaggerate	nepreháňať	0.90	preháňať	0.02
neopustiť	0.25	opustiť	0.10	abandon	neopúšťať	0.90	opúšťať	0.01

As the data show, the basic presumption concerning the distribution of positive and negative imperative forms depending on verbal aspect has been confirmed. For most verbs, the positive imperative form of perfective verbs and the negative imperative form of imperfective verbs are the basic options. However, this claim doesn't hold true for every case. The semantics of the verb is a rather strong factor which undermines the distribution of positive and negative imperatives. For example, verbs which show a preference for negative imperative forms keep a higher frequency of negative imperatives even when realized in the perfective aspect, e.g. *nezabudnúť* 'not forget', *neopovážiť sa* 'not give a try', *neprehliadnuť* 'not overlook', *nepodceňiť* 'not undervalue'.

The same situation can be traced for verbs in the imperfective aspect. A high preference for positive imperative forms is typical of contact verbs undergoing conversion to interjections (*pozerat'* 'look', e.g. *Táto nádhera, pozeraj, úplný raj*. 'This beauty, look, complete paradise.') or verbs the semantics of which favours positive imperative forms for various reasons, mainly

because of the fact that the verbs are usually employed in contexts describing human interaction (e.g. *volat* ‘call’, *používat* ‘use’, *brať* ‘take’, etc.).

6. Conclusions

In the study, corpus data were used to show some important features of Slovak imperative forms. Scores showing usage patterns of imperatives within the grammatical paradigm of the investigated verbs is a useful tool to identify those verbs attracted to the imperative. The study revealed that a preference for the imperative form is typical of verbs which are often used in discourse organization as an attention-getting device and as semi-formulaic expressions used as supportive means for particular illocutionary types of utterances. Apart from them the list of the most frequent imperatives also comprises verbs which are not examples of action verbs frequently used in pragmatics literature to exemplify the imperative, e.g. *pamätať* (*si*) ‘remember’, *nechať* ‘leave’, *veriť* ‘believe’, etc. While result-yielding action verbs do also occur, they are not nearly as dominant as might be expected (*prečítať* ‘read’, *zavolať* ‘call’) which is in accordance with findings presented in theoretical works on imperative (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003).

Usage-based analysis of the imperative is important for lexicographic description in *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* (2006, 2011, 2015) in several ways. The first important issue is connected with restrictions on formation imperatives. It is generally accepted that imperatives may not be able to be formed from stative verbs or verbs which do not imply the speaker’s control. However, this presumption was to be tested on corpus data. It was shown that while stative verbs usually do not form imperatives (occasional uses can be attested to rather as examples of linguistic creativity) the situation concerning verbs expressing uncontrollable action (process verbs) is not so clear. That’s why we scrutinized different semantic groups of process verbs and their lexicographic description in the mentioned dictionary to show that similar units are not treated consistently. The identification of verbs with dispreference for the imperative form should be grounded in corpus data and similar verbs from the same semantic group should be treated uniformly. In the next chapter the distribution of positive and negative imperatives was compared to identify those verbs with preference for negative imperative forms. It was confirmed that negative imperatives have fewer restrictions on verb types than positive imperatives (among the most frequent imperative forms we can find verbs with preference for negative imperative which often belong to the semantic group of process verbs which are traditionally labelled as being unable to form imperatives, e.g. *nebáť sa* ‘not be afraid’, *nezabúdať* ‘not forget’, *nebyť* ‘not be’, etc.). The results were compared with lexicographic processing of negative imperative forms in the mentioned dictionary. It was shown that the preference for negative imperatives is conditioned by various semantic and pragmatic factors. The role of aspectual form conditioning the distribution of positive and negative imperative forms was examined too to verify Dokulil’s concept of modification of aspectual opposition within the imperative (Dokulil 1948). It was proved that there is a tendency for positive imperatives to take the perfective aspect and for negative imperatives to take the imperfective aspect, however, the semantics of verbs is a more important factor in certain cases (there are verbs attracted to negative imperatives in both aspectual forms, e.g. *nezabudnúť/nezabúdať* ‘not forget’, *neopovážiť sa/neopovažovať sa* ‘not dare’, *neprehliadnúť/neprehliadať* ‘not overlook’, *nepodceniť/nepodceňovať* ‘not overestimate’).

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