

Comparative study on the usages of the imperative in French and Myanmar languages

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Abstract

French specialization students of YUFL usually use imperative sentences to express an order, a prayer, an exhortation, a wish and a suggestion. Therefore they need to be aware of the formal and informal usages of these imperative forms. In this study, the imperative usages in French and Myanmar languages are studied with examples sentences. This study is done to make the students recognize the three forms of French imperative mood and the other imperative usages in contrast to Myanmar language, to let them explore the place of various pronouns in French imperative sentences and make the sentences more correct and effective. Types of the sentences expressing imperative mood, formation of French imperative sentences, the use of pronouns and pronominal verbs in imperative, and the use of imperative mood in the subjunctive mood, the infinitive mood and in the future forms are highlighted in this study. It is also to observe when the imperative sentences are used, and what are the similarities and differences between French and Myanmar. For this study, comparative and analysis methods are used based on the manuals latitudes 1& 2 which are the manuals for first year and second year French B.A course, and referring the sentences from French grammar books and internet websites. It is hoped that this paper can be a great help for the French specialization students and those who want to use French imperative sentences correctly and elegantly.

Keywords: types of sentences, usages of imperative, place of pronouns, similarities and differences

INTRODUCTION

Every people from the different countries in the world use the imperative sentences in communication. They use it in different ways to express an order, a prayer, an exhortation, a request and a wish, yet they need to employ these usages effectively, appropriately and elegantly. In French language these sentences are expressed by using imperative and subjunctive mood where as in Myanmar they are used to express an exhortation and a wish. Almost all the French specializing students at YUFL use imperative sentences in their classroom and their daily life chatting with their teachers and their friends. And they need to be able to use these expressions in formal and informal way according to the intimacy, the role and the position in the society of the person addressed. As most of the students use only imperative form to express their demand, they need to be aware of other usages such as subjunctive mood and future tense for their effective use of what they want to express and for their good language skills. In French language, as most of grammatical rules and sentence structures are similar to those of English, the students are used to think in English to construct French sentences in speaking and writing. There are even certain students who think in Myanmar by replacing Myanmar words into the French sentences. In this paper French imperative usages are studied by comparing with Myanmar language to make clear that there are not only exquisite usages of French imperative mood but also interesting similarities as well as the differences between French and Myanmar imperative expression.

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Myanmar students who are learning French use imperative forms very often for classroom instructions, in group discussion and chatting but they use them only by sentences starting with verbs. They seldom use the other expressions to make a demand, a suggestion, to express their desire and wish. Besides, in French language, as most of grammatical rules and sentence structures are similar to those of English, the students are used to think in English to construct French sentences in speaking and writing. There are even certain students who think in Myanmar by placing words into the French sentences instead of using correctly and exquisitely in French. This is the main aim to do this research paper that if the students can use these forms more correctly and exquisitely when they are aware of different usages and the place of French pronouns in imperative mood.

Objectives of the research are:

1. To let the students realize the three forms of French imperative and the other imperative usages by comparing with Myanmar language
2. To make the students understand the place of French pronouns in imperative mood and to make the sentences more correct and effective
3. To share the knowledge to the ones who want to use the French imperative mood correctly and

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. When are the French imperative sentences used?
2. What are the similarities between French and Myanmar imperative usages?
3. How do French imperative sentences differ from those of Myanmar?

METHOD

For this study, comparative and analysis methods are used based on the manuals *Latitudes 1& 2* which are the manuals for first year and second year French B.A course, referring the sentences from French grammar books and internet websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to **J. Coruble- Leclec'h et al** and French grammarbooks, there are four types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory sentences. Each type of sentence can be affirmative or negative form. Of these four types of sentences, as **Le Figaro** (*Le Figaro.fr* Conjugaison <https://leconjugueur.lefigaro.fr/>) said, imperative is used to express an order in the positive form or a defense in the negative form. It can also be used to make a request, express a desire, give advice or make a suggestion in the name of an order. In writing, the order is expressed from the infinitive. This allows the notion of order to be softened a little. The imperative is not the only one to express order. For reasons of politeness, it is preferable to express an order indirectly, often with a question: Could you come for a moment please?

4. In contrast to French, Myanmar has five types of sentences. As it is said in **Myanmar Grammar** book published by **Myanmar Language Commission**, Myanmar sentences are divided into five types on the basis of what it means: declarative sentence

(ထုတ်ဖော်ဝါကျ), interrogative sentence(မေးခွန်းဝါကျ), negative sentence (ငြင်းပယ်ဝါကျ), the sentence used to urge(တိုက်တွန်းဝါကျ) and to express a wish (ဆန္ဒဝါကျ).The last two sentences are used as imperative sentences in French because they express an order, a request, a desire, an advice, a suggestion and a wish.

တိုက်တွန်းဝါကျ။ ။အမိန့်ပေးခြင်း၊ စေခိုင်းခြင်း၊ နှိုးဆော်ခြင်း၊ တောင်းပန်ခြင်း၊ တောင်းဆိုခြင်း၊ စသည်တို့ကိုပြသော ဝါကျတို့ကို တိုက်တွန်းဝါကျဟုခေါ်သည်။

ဆန္ဒဝါကျ။ ။ဆုတောင်းခြင်း၊ ဆုပေးခြင်း၊ ကျိန်ဆဲခြင်း၊ ကျိန်ဆိုခြင်းတို့ကိုပြသော ဝါကျကို ဆန္ဒဝါကျဟုခေါ်သည်။

I. CASE STUDY

The imperative (l’impératif) is not actually a tense. It is one of four moods in the French language. Although French language has two tenses in this imperative mood, *past imperative* (l’impératif passé) is almost never used, especially in spoken French. Therefore, what we are going to study is present imperative (l’impératif présent).

II.1. Types of sentences expressing imperative mood

In French, Imperative mood is used especially in the sentences expressing an order, an advice, a command, a suggestion and a wish.

1. Sortez! (Get out!) (*an order*)
2. Prenez ces médicaments! (Take these medicines!) (*an advice*)
3. Apporte-moi le journal! (Bring me the newspaper!) (*a demand*)
4. N'oublions pas les livres! (Let's not forget the books. (*a suggestion*))
5. Soyez heureux! (Be happy!) (*a wish*)

In Myanmar language, imperative is used to urge, to express an order, a demand, an exhortation, a request, a wish and an oath or a curse.

တိုက်တွန်းဝါကျ။ ။ အမိန့်ပေးခြင်း၊ စေခိုင်းခြင်း၊ နှိုးဆော်ခြင်း၊ တောင်းပန်ခြင်း၊ တောင်းဆိုခြင်း၊ စသည်တို့ကိုပြသော ဝါကျတို့ကို တိုက်တွန်းဝါကျဟုခေါ်သည်။

သာဓက။ ။

- (၁) ခုံပေါ်မှာမတ်တပ်ရပ်ပါ။ (အမိန့်ပေးခြင်း) an order
- (၂) ဤစာပုဒ်၏ အဓိပ္ပါယ်ကိုရှင်းပြပါ။ (စေခိုင်းခြင်း) a demand
- (၃) တိုင်းရင်းသား အချင်းချင်း သွေးစည်းညီညွတ်ကြလော့။ (နှိုးဆော်ခြင်း) an exhortation
- (၄) ကျွန်တော်တို့သွားပါရစေ။ (တောင်းဆိုခြင်း) a request

ဆန္ဒဝါကျ။ ။ ဆုတောင်းခြင်း၊ ဆုပေးခြင်း၊ ကျိန်ဆဲခြင်း၊ ကျိန်ဆိုခြင်းတို့ကိုပြသော ဝါကျကို ဆန္ဒဝါကျဟုခေါ်သည်။

သာဓက။ ။

- (၁) လိုအင်ဆန္ဒတစ်လုံးတစ်ဝတည်းပြည့်ပါစေ။ (ဆုပေးခြင်း) (a wish)
- (၂) ဘုရားစူးရစေရဲ့။ (ကျိန်ဆိုခြင်း) (a swear)

(၃) ဤမှန်သော သစ္စာစကားကြောင့် ငါ့သားသုဝဏ္ဏသာမသည် မြားဆိပ် လျှောစေသတည်း။
(ဆုတောင်းခြင်း) (an oath)

II.2. Formation of French imperative sentence

To form the imperative, the subject pronouns **tu**, **vous** or **nous** are omitted and keep the verb in the present tense.

- Prendre (To take): tu prends (You take) → prends ! (take!)
- Faire (To do/make): vous faites (You do) → faites ! (do/make!)
- Aller (To go): nous allons (We go) → allons ! (let's go!)

Three forms of imperative can be seen in French. The second person singular “**tu**” form is used as familiar form among the members of family, friends and the young people.

Écoute! (Listen!) နားထောင်(စမ်း)။

Dépêche-toi! (Hurry up!) မြန်မြန်လုပ်(စမ်း)။

Ne fais pas d'histoire!(Don'tmake a fuss !) ပြဿနာမရှာ(စမ်း)နဲ့။

The second person plural “**vous**” form is used for a group of people or to address one person in the polite form.

Écoutez! နားထောင်(ကြ)ပါ။

Dépêchez-vous! မြန်မြန်လုပ်(ကြ)ပါ။

Travaillez bien! အလုပ်ကြိုးစား(ကြ)ပါ။

In order to show the politeness, “s’il te plaît” in “tu” form and “s’il vous plaît” in “vous” form are added.

Ne refuse pas, *s’il te plaît!* (Don't refuse, *please!*)

Attendez-moi, *s’il vous plaît!* (*Please, wait for me!*)

The first person plural “**nous**” form is used to give an order that involves oneself as well as others, though it often expresses a suggestion.

Dépêchons-nous! (**Let's** hurry !)

Allons voir un film! (**Let's** have dinner at the restaurant !)

Typically the conjugation of the second person singular form “Tu” ends with “s”.

- Tu regardes la télé. (You watch TV)
- Tu écris très bien. (You write very well)

Yet, in the imperative form, the final “s” in the second person singular of an **-er** ending verb must be dropped. It must not be dropped for the other verbs.

- Mange! (Eat!) →Tu manges (You eat/ You are eating.)
- Prends ton manteau! (Take your coat) → Tu prends ton manteau.(You take your coat.)

However, when the pronoun “**y**” and “**en**” are linked to it, the “s” is retained in order to make it easier between the two elements by pronouncing the “s” as a “z”.

- Manges-en! (Eat some!)

- Vas-y! (Go there!)

II.3. Imperative negative form

In imperative negative form, as the particles **ne** and **pas** are placed before and after the verb respectively, it is found similar to Myanmar imperative negative sentence.

Ne regarde **pas**! (Don't look!) မကြည့်နဲ့။

Ne partez **pas** ! (Don't leave !) မသွားပါနဲ့။

Ne faites **pas** de bruit ! (Don't make noise !) မဆူကြနဲ့။

Ne sortons **pas** ! (let's not go out !) အပြင်မထွက်ကြနဲ့။

II.4. Use of pronouns in imperative sentence

In French sentences, object pronouns are placed before the verbs. This form is similar to Myanmar sentences where objects are found before the verbs. However the students who are familiar with English usually place these object pronouns after the verb as it is done in English.

1. Tu téléphones à ton professeur?(Are you calling your teacher?) မင်းဆရာကိုဖုန်းဆက်လား။

→Oui, je **lui** téléphone.(Yes, I am calling **him**.) ဟုတ်ကဲ့။ ကျွန်တော်သူ့ကိုဖုန်းဆက်ပါတယ်။

2. Ne mangez pas ces gâteaux! (Don't eat these cakes!) ဒီကိတ်မုန့်တွေကိုမစားနဲ့။

→ Ne **les** mangez pas! (Don't eat **them**!) **အဲဒါတွေကိုမစားနဲ့။**

Yet, in affirmative sentence, the pronoun is placed after the verb.

1. Invite- **les**! (Invite **them**!)

2. Attends-**moi**! (Wait for **me**!)

3. Aidez-**la**! (Help her!)

II.5. Imperative form of pronominal verbs

In French, when the pronominal verbs are conjugated, reflexive pronouns must be placed before the verbs.

- Tu te réveilles. (You wake up.)

- Nous nous reposons. (We are taking a rest.)

- Vous vous débrouillez. (You manage.)

For [pronominal verbs](#), the subject pronoun is dropped and the object pronoun is placed after the verb and is attached with a hyphen. “Te” becomes “toi” in this situation.

- Réveille-toi! (Wake up!)

- Reposons-nous! (Let's take a rest!)

- Débrouillez-vous! (Manage yourself !)

There is no pronominal form in Myanmar language.

II. 6. The use of imperative mood in the other forms

The imperative is often replaced with the alternatives like subjunctive, infinitive, conditional mood and the future form.

II.6.1. The use of imperative in subjunctive form

The imperative is also used to express an indirect request made in the third person. When we don't want to refer directly to the third person, subjunctive mood is used at the place of imperative form.

- Qu'ils attendent! (Let them wait!)
- Qu'ils soient heureux! (May they be happy!)
- Qu'elle parte! (Let her leave!)

II.6.2. The use of imperative in future form

This form is mostly used in administration.

- Les personnes concernées se présenteront au secrétariat.
- (Those concerned will report to the secretariat.)

II.6.3. The use of imperative in infinitive form

It is used especially in the manuscripts in order to remind the reader of certain information, instructions and guidance.

- Refermer le tube après usage. (Close the tube after use.)
- Appliquer deux fois par jour. (Apply twice a day.)

II.6.4. The use of imperative in interrogative form

The imperative is not the only form to express order. For reasons of politeness, it is preferable to express an order indirectly, often with a question. This form is used both in French and in Myanmar when we want somebody to do something conscientiously.

- Pourriez-vous passer chez moi un instant ? (Could you drop by my house for a moment ?)
- Tu ne vas pas faire les devoirs? (Aren't you going to do homework ?)

II. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In French, The imperative mood is found primarily in the sentences expressing an order, an advice, a command, a suggestion and a wish. There is not much difference from Myanmar language where it is used to urge, to express an order, a demand, an exhortation, a request, a wish and an oath or a curse. Then, in the imperative negative form, the way that the particles **ne** and **pas** are placed before and after the verb is similar to Myanmar imperative negative sentence. For the object pronouns, as they are placed before the verbs, this is similar to Myanmar sentences where the objects are found before the verbs. Regarding the pronominal verbs in French, reflexive pronouns must be placed before the verbs but there is no pronominal form in

Myanmar language. In French when we don't want to refer directly to the third person, subjunctive mood is used instead of imperative form, yet this usage for the subjunctive is not found in Myanmar. For the use of the infinitive form, it is used to remind the reader of certain information, instructions and guidance in both French and Myanmar. Lastly, the use of imperative in interrogative form can be found both in French and in Myanmar when we want somebody to do something conscientiously. In most respects, it is assumed that there are similarities as well as the differences between French and Myanmar imperative usages.

III. CONCLUSION

Myanmar students learning French whose grammar is completely different from their mother tongue also have the influence of the English language that they have learned from their childhood at primary school. In this paper, among four French personal moods, the usages of imperative mood are studied by providing the example sentences in imperative, subjunctive, infinitive and interrogative forms so that the students could overcome the difficulties they could encounter in the use of imperative sentences and they can construct French sentences correctly and appropriately by thinking in Myanmar. After studying this paper, the students can realize that there are similarities as well as the differences between French and Myanmar imperative sentences and they will be able to write and speak these usages correctly and exquisitely with different forms of sentences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Kyi Shwin, the rector of the Yangon University of Foreign Languages for giving me chance to write this paper. Then I owe my gratitude to Dr. Mi Mi Aung, prorector, and Daw Mi Mi Pyone, Associate Professor and Head of French Department for the encouragement. I am also grateful to Committee for Research Project Management and Ethics of YUFL. Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to all my teachers who taught me French language with their great kindness and allowed me to reach my current level of French.

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