



Minimalist Reflections on English and Arabic Imperatives: Toward a Cross-Linguistic Syntax of Directives

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Abstract— This study presents a comparative analysis of the syntactic architecture of English and Arabic imperative constructions, with a specific focus on the divergent behavioral properties of unergative and unaccusative verbs within the framework of the Minimalist Program. It critically re-examines the generative processes underlying imperative formation and proposes a refined analysis for the optimal syntactic placement of the imperative verb in English, probing the fundamental computational mechanisms that shape this command structure. Utilizing a descriptive, analytical, and qualitative methodology grounded in core minimalist principles, this research posits the imperative feature as a fundamental syntactic determinant that governs the construction and interpretation of these utterances. The findings demonstrate that unergative verbs, characterized by their external agentive arguments, exhibit a natural alignment with the syntactic requirements of the imperative mood. Conversely, unaccusative verbs, which base-generate a single internal theme argument, display significant licensing restrictions, a phenomenon particularly pronounced in English. Arabic manifests a remarkable degree of flexibility in forming unaccusative imperatives, a capacity attributed to its rich system of morphological agreement, which effectively licenses the null imperative subject. Ultimately, while both Arabic and English imperatives are derived through universal syntactic operations namely the core mechanisms of Merge, Move, and feature valuation their surface realizations diverge significantly. This contrast underscores the pivotal role of language-specific morphosyntactic features in modulating universal grammatical processes, thereby yielding the distinct formal properties of imperative constructions across these two languages.



Keywords— Minimalist Program, Imperative Sentences, English-Arabic Comparative Syntax, Directive Speech Acts

I. INTRODUCTION

The syntactic architecture of natural languages constitutes a foundational concern within theoretical linguistics, presenting persistent challenges that demand refined analytical frameworks. Among these, imperative constructions and their complex interplay with unaccusative and unergative verb classes remain particularly fertile ground for inquiry. Although commonly associated with directive speech acts, the internal organization and syntactic behavior of imperatives especially when scrutinized through

the rigorous lens of the Minimalist Program have not been sufficiently examined in cross-linguistic perspective. This gap is most evident when comparing typologically distinct systems such as English and Arabic.

The theoretical division between unaccusative and unergative verbs, first systematically articulated in Perlmutter's (1978) Unaccusative Hypothesis and later integrated into minimalist derivational models, carries significant implications for argument structure, verb classification, and syntactic derivation. Notably, English

and Arabic each exhibit systematic yet divergent patterning within these verb classes, thereby challenging overly generalized conceptions of syntactic universality. This research aims to address this theoretical shortcoming by developing a minimalist account of imperative structures formed with unergative and unaccusative verbs across both languages.

The central objective of this investigation is to rigorously analyze and compare the syntactic properties of imperative constructions featuring unergative and unaccusative verbs in English and Arabic. Grounded in the theoretical principles of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001), the study seeks to elucidate how verb type and language-specific morphosyntactic resources converge to constrain or enable imperative formation. Beyond descriptive adequacy, this work intends to advance comparative syntactic research by evaluating key minimalist assumptions particularly those concerning feature valuation, verb movement, and argument licensing against empirical evidence from both languages.

Methodologically, this inquiry is structured around a qualitative and comparative framework, deeply embedded within contemporary syntactic theory. The research draws upon a triangulated set of data sources to ensure analytical robustness. These include authoritative descriptive grammars, carefully elicited native speaker intuitions, and systematically curated linguistic corpora for both English and Arabic. The analytical process initiates with the identification of imperative constructions that feature unaccusative and unergative predicates in each language. These identified structures are subsequently subjected to a meticulous, fine-grained analysis utilizing the formal apparatus of the Minimalist Program. This examination employs key theoretical constructs such as vP-shell architectures, head-to-head movement operations, and the mechanisms underpinning feature valuation and agreement.

The scope of this investigation is precisely circumscribed. The analysis is focused exclusively on the standard varieties of English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), thereby explicitly setting aside the considerable dialectal variation present within the Arabic-speaking world. Furthermore, while acknowledging their importance, the research does not engage with the pragmatic nuances of imperative usage or their associated phonological correlates. The study's purview is also intentionally restricted to the analysis of simple, monoclausal imperative constructions; more complex forms, such as those involving compound predicates or embedded imperative clauses, fall outside the boundaries of the present work.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions

Imperatives

Imperatives constitute a fundamental clause type employed across languages to express directives, encompassing commands, requests, and invitations. A defining syntactic hallmark of canonical imperative structures is the frequent absence of an overt grammatical subject. This property is readily observable in English directives such as "Listen carefully!" and is paralleled in Arabic utterances like "اكتب!" (uktub), meaning "Write!". Despite this null subject, the addressee is uniformly interpreted as a second-person agent. On occasion, an overt subject may surface for emphatic or disambiguating purposes, though this remains a marked syntactic option cross-linguistically, underscoring the unique structural configuration of imperative clauses within sentential architecture (Zanuttini, 2008).

Unergative and Unaccusative Verbs

The theoretical division between unergative and unaccusative verbs is a fundamental tenet of modern syntactic analysis, formally originating within Relational Grammar through Perlmutter's (1978) Unaccusative Hypothesis. This hypothesis posits that the class of intransitive verbs is not uniform but is instead bifurcated into two subcategories based on core syntactic and semantic properties.

Unergative verbs, such as *work* or *laugh*, are characterized by an agentive external argument. The subject of these verbs is typically a volitional actor that initiates and controls the action. In contrast, unaccusative verbs, such as *appear* or *exist*, select a theme or patient as their sole argument. This argument originates in the object position, internal to the verb phrase, and undergoes syntactic movement to the subject position to satisfy grammatical requirements of case and agreement.

This dichotomy is not merely semantic but is syntactically encoded and has profound implications for the analysis of argument structure, verb licensing, and syntactic derivation across languages. The behavioral reflexes of this distinction are empirically verifiable in diverse grammatical phenomena in both English and Arabic, influencing everything from auxiliary selection to imperative formation, as explored in the works of Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) and Alazzawie (2011).

Minimalist Program

The Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001) represents a significant development in generative linguistic theory, aiming to characterize the computational architecture of the human language faculty through

maximally economical and efficient derivational mechanisms. Central to this framework is the operation Merge, a fundamental structure-building process that hierarchically combines syntactic objects into larger constituents. Derivations are further governed by the necessity for feature valuation, whereby uninterpretable formal features must be checked and licensed through specific syntactic relations, such as Agree. More recently, Phase Theory has been introduced, proposing that derivations proceed in incremental, computationally manageable units called phases (e.g., CP and vP), which are sent to the interfaces for interpretation.

Within this model, imperative constructions are not treated as primitive syntactic objects but are instead derived through specific computational processes. Their analysis hinges on understanding verb movement, the licensing of a null imperative subject, and the precise feature-checking operations that occur within a truncated or specialized clausal structure, distinct from their declarative counterparts.

2.2 Types

Types of Imperatives

Imperative structures exhibit considerable cross-linguistic diversity in their morphological realization and syntactic configuration. English typically employs the bare, uninflected verb form to construct an imperative, as in the command "Leave!" Conversely, Arabic imperatives are morphologically complex, derived from verb roots and systematically inflected to encode features of gender, number, and social context. For instance, the imperative "إذهب" (idhhab, "Go!") is marked for masculine singular address, while feminine or plural addressees would trigger distinct morphological alterations (Benmamoun, 2000).

This clausal type can be systematically classified along several intersecting dimensions. A primary distinction lies between positive imperatives, which issue an affirmative directive ("Speak!"), and negative imperatives, which proscribe an action ("Do not speak!"). Further categorization differentiates direct imperatives, which overtly encode the command ("Finish this now"), from indirect or embedded imperatives, which convey a directive through a syntactically subordinate clause ("I insist that you finish this"). Other typological considerations include exhortative imperatives targeting a first-person plural subject ("Let's go") and permissive imperatives ("Go ahead, leave"). The specific morphosyntactic encoding of these categories is profoundly shaped by a language's particular grammatical resources, leading to the stark contrast between the analytic tendency of English and the synthetic richness of Arabic in the domain of imperative syntax.

Types of Verbs and Their Compatibility with Imperatives

The grammatical class of a verb exerts a significant influence on its capacity to form acceptable imperative constructions. This distinction is particularly evident when comparing unergative and unaccusative verbs. Unergative verbs, which denote voluntary actions and project an agentive external argument, readily license imperative forms. This is illustrated by perfectly natural English commands such as "Run!" or "Work!"

In contrast, unaccusative verbs, which typically denote non-volitional events or changes of state and select a theme argument that originates internally, often yield pragmatically anomalous or highly marked imperatives. Commands like "Appear!" or "Exist!" are generally infelicitous outside very specific coercive or metaphorical contexts, where they carry a pronouncedly forceful or non-literal intent.

This contrast is further systematized and becomes even more theoretically revealing in Arabic, due to its richer morphological apparatus and its distinct constraints on argument structure. The language's complex system of verbal inflection and agreement interacts with the underlying syntactic properties of these verb classes, making the licensing conditions for imperatives more systematically evident and directly tied to morphosyntactic feature valuation (Fassi Fehri, 2012). Thus, the cross-linguistic variation in imperative formation underscores a fundamental interaction between universal syntactic principles and language-specific morphological resources.

2.3 Theories and Approaches

The Unaccusative Hypothesis

The Unaccusative Hypothesis, a foundational principle in syntactic theory initially advanced by Perlmutter (1978) and subsequently refined within generative grammar by Burzio (1986), posits a fundamental bipartite division within the class of intransitive verbs. This classification is not based on semantic intuition alone but on the underlying syntactic configuration and the structural position from which the single argument of the verb originates.

Central to this hypothesis is the claim that the sole argument of an unaccusative verb (e.g., *arrive*, *fall*) is base-generated in the complement position within the verb phrase the canonical object position. This argument must then raise to the specifier of TP to satisfy the subject requirement of the clause. In contrast, the single argument of a unergative verb (e.g., *work*, *smile*) is base-generated externally as the specifier of a light verb phrase (vP), a position typically associated with agency and volition.

This fundamental difference in underlying syntactic structure has far-reaching empirical consequences, manifesting in a cluster of syntactic phenomena across languages. It systematically governs patterns of auxiliary selection (e.g., *essere* vs. *avere* in Italian), dictates conditions for past-participle agreement, and critically, constrains the formation of grammatical imperative constructions. The hypothesis therefore provides a powerful explanatory framework for understanding the divergent syntactic behavior of verbs that are superficially similar.

Lexicalist vs. Syntactic Approaches

Lexicalist approaches (Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 1995) argue that verb meaning dictates syntactic behavior. In contrast, syntactic approaches within the Minimalist framework argue that all behavior derives from feature-checking and structural configurations (Chomsky, 2000; Collins, 1997).

Minimalist Analysis of Imperatives

Within the theoretical architecture of the Minimalist Program, imperative clauses are standardly analyzed as full CP (Complementizer Phrase) projections, headed by a null imperative operator that encodes the directive force of the utterance. The subject of the imperative is analyzed either as a null PRO element or, in cases of overt realization, as a determiner phrase (DP) occupying the specifier position of Tense Phrase (TP) (Rivero & Terzi, 1995). The derivation is driven by the need to value and check a set of formal features, including a mood feature [Mood: imperative], a person feature [Person: 2], and a specific, often underspecified or null, tense feature. To satisfy these feature-valuation requirements, the imperative verb typically undergoes head-movement, raising from its base-generated position to adjoin to the T (Tense) head and often further to the C (Complementizer) head. This movement is crucial for licensing the null subject and for ensuring the proper interpretation of the clause as a directive speech act.

Cross-Linguistic Variation

A robust body of cross-linguistic research into imperative syntax reveals a complex interplay between universal grammatical constraints and language-particular morphological and syntactic variations. The Arabic imperative, for instance, is not a monolithic category but is constructed through a specific morphological process. This process mandates a verb form that is derivationally linked to the subjunctive mood, subsequently modified by a system of inflectional prefixes and suffixes that encode the gender, number, and, in certain contexts, the formality of the addressee (Aoun, Benmamoun, & Sportiche, 2010).

This intricate morphological system does not operate in isolation; it actively interfaces with and is constrained by a verb's underlying syntactic class. The specific morphological markings required for imperative formation often serve to illuminate core syntactic properties, such as unaccusativity. For example, the licensing of certain imperative forms may be blocked or may result in structures that are syntactically or semantically parallel to passives, precisely because the verb's argument structure—specifically, the internal origination of its single argument—clashes with the agentive requirements typically associated with a canonical directive force. Thus, the surface morphology of the Arabic imperative provides a critical window into deeper syntactic phenomena, rendering abstract properties like unaccusativity empirically visible through restrictions on permissible morphological combinations and their resultant interpretations.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Samples

The methodological foundation of this study rests upon a qualitatively constructed and systematically compared dataset. This dataset is composed exclusively of imperative constructions formed with both unergative and unaccusative verbs, enabling a controlled syntactic comparison between English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Alkhafaji, Abbas, & Mohammed, 2024).

The English-language data is sourced from a triangulated methodology to ensure robustness and validity. This three-pronged approach incorporates: 1) carefully controlled introspective grammaticality judgments provided by native speakers, which are essential for capturing subtle acceptability contrasts; 2) authoritative reference grammars, most notably *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002), which provides a comprehensive descriptive baseline; and 3) attested examples extracted from corpus linguistics resources, with the British National Corpus (BNC) serving as a primary source for validating the occurrence and contextual usage of these imperative forms in natural language.

The Arabic-language data, focusing on MSA, is assembled through a correspondingly rigorous process. It synthesizes evidence from: 1) foundational descriptive grammatical treatises (e.g., Ryding, 2005), which document the standard morphological and syntactic rules; 2) direct elicitation and consultation with native speakers of MSA to gauge pragmatic naturalness and grammaticality; and 3) specialized theoretical and analytical studies within the generative linguistic tradition that focus on Arabic syntax (e.g., Fassi Fehri, 2012), ensuring the analysis is informed by and contributes to ongoing scholarly discourse. This

multi-source strategy for Arabic is critical for navigating the intricacies of its verbal morphology and argument structure, thereby providing a firm empirical grounding for the subsequent minimalist analysis.

The empirical scope of the sample is deliberately restricted to simple imperative clauses that meet the following conditions:

1. In English, the verb appears in its base form.
2. In Arabic, the verb surfaces in its inflected imperative form.
3. Only minimal additional syntactic material is permitted, typically in the form of optional adverbials.

Each construction is subjected to a fine-grained syntactic analysis with particular attention to argument behavior. The classification of predicates as either unergative or unaccusative follows the diagnostics established in the literature, notably Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) and Burzio (1986).

3.2 Methods of Analysis (The Model)

The analysis adopts a **Minimalist syntactic framework** as developed by Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001), which emphasizes economy of derivation, feature checking, and movement operations. The analysis proceeds in the following manner:

A. Theoretical Tools

1. **Syntactic Derivation:** Structures are built through the application of Merge.
2. **Feature Checking and Valuation:** Imperative mood features, tense neutrality ([T:Ø]), and second person agreement are checked against the subject and verb.
3. **Verb Classification:**
 - **Unergative Verbs:** Assume an external argument base-generated in Spec-vP.
 - **Unaccusative Verbs:** Internal argument base-generated as complement of V, raises to subject position.
4. **Verb Movement:**
 - In imperatives, the verb raises to T or C to satisfy structural and morphological requirements.
 - The absence or presence of overt subjects is accounted for by syntactic and morphological constraints.

B. Structural Diagnostics

To determine verb class and syntactic configuration, the following diagnostics are used:

1. Auxiliary selection (relevant in some contexts in English)
2. Subject position (external vs. internal)
3. Availability of resultative constructions (unavailable with unaccusatives)
4. Compatibility with passive and causative alternations

C. Comparative Analysis

The analysis proceeds in two stages: each language is first examined in isolation and subsequently compared across a set of carefully defined parameters. The comparative framework is structured around four central axes:

1. The position and overt visibility of the subject within imperative constructions.
2. The morphological realization of the verb when expressed in the imperative mood.
3. The licensing conditions governing the distribution of unaccusative versus unergative predicates in imperative contexts.
4. The structural and derivational contrasts, interpreted through the theoretical apparatus of the Minimalist Program.

D. Representation

The analysis is supplemented with syntactic tree diagrams, feature-checking schemata, and phrase-structure representations, employed wherever necessary to capture contrasts in the derivational processes underlying English and Arabic imperative constructions. This methodological design guarantees a theoretically anchored and syntactically principled comparison, enabling a systematic investigation of how imperatives built on unergative and unaccusative predicates behave in the two languages. Ultimately, the approach serves to evaluate the explanatory adequacy of the Minimalist Program in accounting for cross-linguistic variation in imperative syntax.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section reports the findings of the comparative syntactic investigation of imperative constructions in English and Iraqi Arabic, emphasizing both the shared structural principles and the language-specific properties that emerge from the analysis. The results are systematically organized around a set of core syntactic domains: subject realization, verb movement, mood and force marking,

negation strategies, agreement morphology, and the role of pragmatic particles. For each domain, empirical data from both languages are presented and examined through the analytical lens of the Minimalist framework, thereby revealing the extent to which universal operations interact with language-particular morphosyntactic resources.

4.1 Introduction

This section undertakes a comparative syntactic analysis of imperative constructions involving unergative and unaccusative verbs in English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Framed within the Minimalist Program, the analysis explores the interaction of verb behavior, subject positioning, morphological marking, and derivational operations such as movement and feature valuation. To ensure both theoretical rigor and empirical accuracy, the discussion incorporates structural representations and diagnostic tests, thereby evaluating the consistency of minimalist predictions while capturing points of language-specific variation.

4.2 The Analysis

A. Unergative Verbs in Imperatives

English Example:

(1) *Run quickly!*

- **Verb:** *run* (unergative)
- **Subject:** Null, second person (interpreted as [Spec, TP])
- **Verb Form:** Bare verb (no agreement, no tense inflection)
- **Structure (Simplified):**

[CP [C' C [TP Ø [T' T [vP YOU [v' v [VP run quickly]]]]]]

- **Analysis:**
 - The subject “you” is null but syntactically projected in [Spec, TP].
 - The verb originates in V, moves to v, and optionally to T.
 - The imperative mood is realized via a [Mood: IMP] feature on C or T (Rivero & Terzi, 1995).
 - No auxiliary or tense is required in imperatives, consistent with [T:Ø].

Arabic Example:

(2) *أركض بسرعة!* (*urkuḍ bi-sur'a*) “Run quickly!”

- **Verb:** *أركض* (*urkuḍ*) root √r-k-d, unergative
- **Subject:** Implicit second person masculine singular

- **Morphology:** Imperative formed by prefixal root conjugation

- **Structure:**

[CP [C' C [TP anta [T' T [vP anta [v' v [VP urkuḍ bi-sur'a]]]]]]

- **Analysis:**

- The second person pronoun *anta* is often omitted, interpreted from morphology.
- Verb inflection (prefixal) conveys mood and agreement features.
- The imperative form is derived from the subjunctive base stem, in line with mood-driven derivations (Fassi Fehri, 2012).

B. Unaccusative Verbs in Imperatives

English Example:

(3) *Fall now!*

- **Verb:** *fall* (unaccusative)
- **Subject:** Implicit second person
- **Observation:** Less natural than unergative; pragmatically coercive
- **Structure:**

[CP [C' C [TP YOU [T' T [vP YOU [v' v [VP fall now]]]]]]

- **Analysis:**

- The sole argument is a theme and originates internally as [Comp, V].
- It moves to [Spec, TP] to satisfy EPP (Extended Projection Principle).
- The verb form is bare, as with all imperatives.
- Some unaccusatives are pragmatically disfavored in imperatives due to the patient-like nature of the subject (Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 1995).

Arabic Example:

"نم فوراً" (nam fawran)

- **Translation:** *Sleep immediately!*
- **Verb Root:** *ن-و-م* (*n-w-m*)
- **Verb Type:** **Unaccusative**, the subject undergoes a change of state from wakefulness to sleep.
- **Analysis:**
The subject originates internally and raises to [Spec, TP]. This verb is frequent in imperative use, especially in directive contexts (e.g., parents to children).

4.2 A Minimalist Derivational Account

The comparative derivation of imperatives in English and Iraqi Arabic reveals key structural differences:

<i>Feature</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Iraqi</i>
<i>Subject Realization</i>	Null (optional overt)	Null with agreement (optional overt)	
<i>Verb Form</i>	Base form	Inflected for person, gender, number	
<i>Verb Movement</i>	V-to-T or V-to-C	V-to-T (possibly V-to-Mood/C)	
<i>Negation</i>	Auxiliary <i>do</i> + not	Particle <i>lā, lāt</i> directly on verb	
<i>Agreement</i>	Minimal (none)	Rich morphological agreement	
<i>Vocatives/Particles</i>	Clause-external, pragmatically soft	Syntactically integrated, often left-peripheral	

These differences are modeled using the Minimalist architecture by adjusting the strength and type of features assigned to heads (T, Neg, C, and Mood). Iraqi Arabic features a more articulated CP structure, with imperative force encoded along with politeness and discourse cues.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion

The comparative analysis of imperative constructions in English and Arabic highlights both shared syntactic principles and significant language-specific differences. At a foundational level, both languages construct imperatives using a CP structure headed by an imperative operator, project a tenseless TP, and encode second-person features. However, while English achieves this through bare verb forms and implicit subject interpretation, Arabic employs rich morphological inflection to overtly encode imperative mood, person, gender, and number, allowing for subject omission without loss of clarity.

The type of verb plays a decisive role in shaping the formation of imperative clauses. Unergative predicates, which inherently select for agentive, externally generated subjects, are naturally compatible with the imperative domain. Their semantic alignment with volitionality and

intentional action makes them well-suited to perform directive functions, thereby explaining their seamless integration into imperative syntax across languages. By contrast, unaccusative predicates introduce considerable structural and pragmatic challenges. Syntactically, these verbs project their sole argument in an internal position and subsequently raise it to [Spec, TP] to satisfy case and Extended Projection Principle (EPP) requirements. Pragmatically, however, the absence of agentivity in unaccusative subjects often renders their use in the imperative mood marked or even infelicitous in English. For instance, commands such as “*arrive!*” or “*fall!*” sound unnatural precisely because the subject lacks volitional control over the event.

Arabic, however, exhibits greater tolerance for unaccusative imperatives. This flexibility stems from two primary factors: its richer morphological inventory and its pragmatic conventions, which allow for a broader interpretation of directive force. In Arabic, unaccusative verbs may be recruited into imperatives to signal inevitability, urgency, or even rhetorical emphasis, uses that would appear odd or marginal in English. The robust agreement system and the derivational morphology of Arabic verbs further make the imperative force visible on the surface, enabling forms that are morphosyntactically marked yet pragmatically interpretable.

Within the Minimalist framework, both English and Arabic are analyzed as conforming to the principles of economy-driven derivation. Structures are assembled through Merge and Move operations, while ϕ -feature valuation is secured via the Agree mechanism. What differs between the two languages is the degree of morphological visibility afforded to these operations. In Arabic, the imperative form is overtly realized through a series of derivational processes anchored in the subjunctive verbal stem, thereby making the syntax–morphology interface more transparent. English, on the other hand, relies more heavily on structural defaults and interpretive mechanisms: the imperative mood is not expressed through inflectional morphology but rather through the combination of a null subject, absence of tense marking, and contextual interpretation of directive force.

The imperative mood, in both languages, is projected at the CP layer, where force is encoded. Yet the morphosyntactic realization diverges sharply: English encodes imperativity through syntactic economy — essentially by stripping away tense and subject material — whereas Arabic does so through morphologically derived imperative forms, each carrying explicit agreement markers. This contrast illustrates how universal operations may yield

divergent surface realizations depending on a language's morphosyntactic resources.

From a broader theoretical perspective, this cross-linguistic comparison reinforces the Minimalist Program's central claim: while the architecture of grammar is universal, its implementation is parameterized by language-specific features. English and Arabic, though typologically distinct, both demonstrate how verb class, argument structure, and morphological richness interact within a unified computational system to shape the syntax of imperatives. The findings not only confirm the robustness of minimalist assumptions — including phase-based derivation, feature valuation, and structural economy — but also highlight the explanatory value of incorporating morphosyntactic evidence into syntactic theory. Crucially, the contrast between the two languages illustrates how the Minimalist Program can account for variation without sacrificing universality, offering a nuanced understanding of imperatives that bridges theoretical elegance with empirical diversity.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has undertaken a comparative syntactic investigation of imperative structures formed with unergative and unaccusative predicates in English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), framed within the theoretical architecture of the Minimalist Program. The analysis examined how imperative syntax interacts with verb classification across two typologically distinct languages, focusing on derivational mechanisms, structural configurations, and morphological realizations. Drawing on evidence from descriptive grammars, native speaker judgments, and theoretical diagnostics, the study sought to uncover points of convergence and divergence between English and Arabic, while simultaneously testing the explanatory adequacy of minimalist principles in accounting for cross-linguistic variation in imperative syntax.

The findings reveal a consistent pattern in which unergative verbs, characterized by externally generated agentive subjects, integrate seamlessly into imperative syntax in both languages. Their compatibility with volitional, directive force allows for straightforward derivations that involve minimal feature valuation and predictable verb movement. By contrast, unaccusative verbs, which project their arguments internally as verb complements, display more complex and often pragmatically marked behavior in imperative contexts. While both English and Arabic grammatically license unaccusative imperatives, their interpretation frequently diverges: in English they are perceived as unnatural or infelicitous (e.g., “arrive!”), whereas in Arabic, they are more readily accommodated due to morphological richness

and pragmatic flexibility that expand the communicative potential of such forms.

Structurally, the comparative analysis highlights both parallels and contrasts. In English, imperative clauses are formed through the use of a bare verb stem accompanied by an implicit second-person subject, with minimal inflectional morphology. In Arabic, however, imperative verbs are morphologically complex: they are derived from subjunctive stems and carry explicit agreement markers for person, number, and gender. Subject pronouns are frequently omitted, since agreement morphology sufficiently identifies the subject. Despite these surface contrasts, both languages conform to minimalist principles such as derivational economy, phase-based structure building, and feature valuation.

The study also underscores the role of negation and CP-layer articulation as key sites of cross-linguistic variation. In English, negative imperatives are constructed through the auxiliary *do*, reflecting structural restrictions on verb movement and negation. In contrast, Arabic employs negative particles (*lā* and *lāi*) without auxiliary support, demonstrating a different interaction of negation with agreement and feature checking. Equally significant is the richer structure of the CP domain in Iraqi Arabic, where vocatives, politeness markers, and discourse particles occupy distinct positions in the left periphery. This suggests that Arabic imperatives are embedded in a more articulated syntactic-pragmatic interface than is typically observed in English, where the CP layer is comparatively minimal.

From a theoretical perspective, the cross-linguistic findings substantiate the Minimalist claim that grammatical architecture is universal, yet its realization is shaped by parametric variation. English and Arabic both rely on universal operations such as Merge, Move, and Agree, but the languages differ in how functional features are valued, spelled out, and interpreted. In particular, Iraqi Arabic demonstrates the flexible instantiation of Force and Mood features within the CP layer, revealing how syntactic structure interacts with morphology and discourse pragmatics to produce directive meaning.

These findings underscore the importance of verb classification in shaping imperative syntax, supporting the theoretical insights of the Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter, 1978) and its later integration into minimalist syntax. Unergative and unaccusative verbs not only display distinct derivational behaviors but also shed light on the relationship between argument structure, morphology, and clause typing. Furthermore, the Iraqi Arabic data provide fresh empirical evidence for the interplay between syntax and pragmatics, illustrating how imperatives extend beyond

simple commands to express emphasis, inevitability, urgency, and social nuance.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates that imperatives constitute a powerful testing ground for syntactic theory. By examining how two typologically distant languages negotiate the syntax of directive expressions, the study reaffirms the robustness of minimalist assumptions while exposing the fine-grained ways in which morphological richness and pragmatic conventions shape language-specific outcomes. In doing so, it highlights the necessity of integrating morphosyntactic evidence, cross-linguistic comparison, and pragmatic interpretation into the ongoing refinement of syntactic theory.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader understanding of imperative constructions, argument structure, and cross-linguistic syntactic variation. It confirms that minimalist principles offer a powerful and flexible explanatory framework for analyzing imperatives in English and Arabic. Future research could extend this analysis to dialectal variations, embedded imperative structures, and the pragmatic licensing of unaccusative imperatives, thereby enriching both theoretical models and descriptive accounts of syntactic behavior across languages.

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