When negative imperatives aren't negative

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This talk focuses on the behaviour of negation and clitics in the context of imperatives in French. Standard descriptions contrast positive *Fais-le!* 'Do it!' with enclisis with negative *(Ne) le fais pas!* 'Don't do it!' with proclisis. I adopt a view of imperatives in terms of a pragmatic irrealis mood feature within Rizzi's (1997) exploded CP. Defective/impoverished morphology allows (positive) imperatives to check their inflection and the irrealis mood on a single functional head (in the same way that the morphology allows a form like *aux* 'to the' to check case and definiteness on a single head). The presence of negation, generated as a NegP hosting the (overt or null) Neg head, prevents this from happening because the key negative feature intervenes between the relevant inflection and mood features within the Rizzi/Cinque exploded IP/CP (in the same way that the presence of the universal quantifier blocks *aux* in *à tous les* 'to all the'). However, in the context of imperatives the difference is only visible in the presence of clitics. I adopt Shlonsky's (2004) approach to cliticisation which suggests (a) that clitics head CliticPs, (b) that 'cliticisation' involves the movement of the verb to the relevant Clitic head, and (c) that enclisis is found (rather than proclisis) whenever two necessary and sufficient conditions are satisfied, namely (i) that the verb is inflectionally complete (i.e. all its inflectional features have been checked) under the Clitic head and (ii) that the verb moves at least as far as the Clitic head. Thus, enclisis is found with positive imperatives because, with defective/ impoverished morphology, they are inflectionally complete before they combine with the clitic. Proclisis is found with negative imperatives because, with NegP and, now, CliticP intervening, between the heads on which inflection and mood are checked and preventing their collapse into a single head, the verb is not inflectionally complete at the point at which it combines with the clitic. Forms like *Fais-le pas!* 'Don't do it!', the existence of which is denied by some scholars and native speakers, but examples of which abound in vernacular usage, must them be deemed to have a radically different structure, without a NegP within the inflectional domain. Yet such innovative forms are expected to exist in the light of the Jespersen's Negative Cycle of variation and diachronic development, whereby declaratives such as *Il (ne) vient pas* 'He's not coming' (with an abstract NegP, albeit but possibly phonologically null negative head) give way to *Il vient pas* (with no NegP at all).