Two imperative types in all the Scandinavian languages

1. Introduction
According to the standard grammars in the Scandinavian languages, there is one type of imperative in the Mainland Scandinavian languages, while there are two types in the Insular Scandinavian ones (see Faarlund et al 1997, Garbacz and Johannessen 2013, Postma and van der Wurff 2007, Teleman et al 1999, and Thráinsson 2007.) In this paper I will show that the five languages are much more similar than has been assumed in the literature, and that there are actually two distinct types of imperatives (morphologically and syntactically) in all these languages. Then I will show how this can be analysed syntactically.

2. Imperatives as they are described in the literature
In Norwegian and Danish, the form of the imperative is equal to the infinitive minus the infinitive vowel suffix, i.e. the stem:

(1) reise (inf.) – reis! (imp.) (Norwegian and Danish system)
go
go

In Swedish, the form of the imperative depends on the verb class. Some verbs follow the same rule as those in Norwegian and Danish, (2b), but some retain the infinitive – a (2a).

(2) a. titta (inf.) – titta (imp.) (Swedish)
look
b. släcka (inf.) – släck! (imp.)
swith off

Imperatives normally appear without a subject, but if they do, the subject is placed after the imperative in all three languages, here exemplified by Swedish:

(3) lägg du den där (.) ! (Swedish, Childes tea20_26.cha)

Negation, on the other hand, behaves syntactically differently in the three languages. In Norwegian, it is usually preposed, while in Danish and Swedish it is postposed.

(4) a. NEG – IMP (Norwegian)
b. IMP – NEG (Danish and Swedish)

In Icelandic and Faroese, however, there are two distinct imperatives. One is assumed to be an inflected imperative, and the other an infinitive. The inflected imperative morphologically follows the same rule as in Norwegian and Danish: it uses the stem form:

(5) fara (inf./can be used in imp.) – far! (2.sg.imp) (Faroese and Icelandic)

In (6) we see that the two imperative functions have different syntactic behaviour with respect to negation.
In Icelandic, the negation is placed after the imperative verb, (but like in Faroese, there also exists a non-finite option, in which the negation precedes the verb).

3. Data overlooked in the literature
It seems from the literature that while the Insular Scandinavian languages have two types of imperative, the mainland Scandinavian languages have only one type – the inflected one. But since all the Scandinavian languages are so closely related, it would be reasonable to expect the same distinctions in all the languages. Johannessen and Garbacz (2013) show that one of the word orders for the inflected Norwegian imperative is considered to be more formal than the other. It further appears that in Icelandic and Faroese, there is a pragmatic difference between the two imperative forms. I suggest we therefore look at the language of different domains. Then we find the world of parents and children. Child-directed speech in the three Mainland Scandinavian languages actually has an imperative variety that is very similar to the Icelandic and Faroese infinitive variety. This imperative also syntactically different from the well-known inflected imperative. I illustrate with Norwegian:

4. Analysis
I will present a syntactic analysis based on Platzack and Rosengren (1998) and Eide (submitted).

References

(6) a. Far **ikki** til hús! (Faroese)  
    go.IMP not to house  
    ‘Don't go home’

b. **Ikki** fara til hús! (Faroese)  
    not go.INF to house  
    ‘Don't go home’

(7) a. **Farðu** ekki heim! (Icelandic)  
    go.IMP.you not home  
    ‘Don't go home’

b. bare tygge ikke spise (Childes, Norwegian)  
    just chew.INF not eat.INF  
    ‘Just chew, don’t eat!’