

Introduction

Historical, or narrative, or descriptive, imperatives have been reported from many languages. A well-known and well-investigated example is that of Russian; Balkan examples (Slavic, Romance, Albanian and Turkish) are mentioned in Friedman (2012); a descriptive imperative has also been found and described in spoken Palestinian Arabic (Palva 1975, Henkin 1977, 1994); examples from several Romance languages had already been noted much earlier by Spitzer (1918); a few examples from other continents are given by Aikhenvald (2010, 249).

The historical imperative could be defined as an imperative replacing a past tense form (cf. the term ‘historical present’) and referring to an unexpected, surprising event or to sudden, energetic action, sometimes as a narrative device enabling a vivid account of narrated events.

- (1) Russian (from E. Evtušenko, cited from Xrakovskij & Volodin 1986, 245)
- | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|--|
| <i>Nakuri-l-i</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>zasedani-i,</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>ja</i> | <i>da</i> | <i>i</i> | |
| smoke.up-PST-PL | at | meeting-LOC.SG | and | I.NOM | PCL | PCL | |
| voz'm-i' | <i>i</i> | raskroj | <i>potom</i> | <i>okn-o</i> | | <i>naprotiv</i> | |
| take-IMP.2SG | and | open.IMP.2SG | afterwards | window-ACC.SG | | opposite | |
| <i>mo-ego</i> | <i>stol-a...</i> | | | | | | |
| my-GEN.SG.M | table.GEN.SG | | | | | | |
- ‘They smoked up the room during the meeting and I took it into my head to open the window opposite my table.’ (said by a person explaining how he caught a cold)

The term ‘narrative’ is slightly misleading in that it may suggest a form used in narrating sequences of events, in a similar way as a narrative or historical present. In fact, as Friedman observes for the Balkan languages, “unlike the historical present, which can be maintained over a long stretch of narrative, the narrative imperative is rarely more than a sentence in a longer narrative” (Friedman 2012, 417). Indeed, for Russian, the narrative character is not even mentioned by Xrakovskij & Volodin (1986, 245), who state that the typical context for the use of this type of imperative is the second in a pair of adversative sentences. Actually a contrast is not really required: in most cases the first sentence just provides background information allowing the listener to understand why the information contained in the second sentence is unexpected, cf. (2):

- (2)
- | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|----------|--------------------|
| <i>Proži-l-i</i> | <i>oni</i> | <i>god</i> | <i>duš-a</i> | <i>v</i> | <i>duš-u,</i> | <i>a</i> | |
| live-PST-PL | they.NOM | year.ACC.SG | soul-NOM.SG | in | soul-ACC.SG | and | |
| <i>na</i> | <i>drug-oj</i> | <i>god</i> | <i>ona</i> | voz'm-i | da | i | pomr-i. |
| on | next-ACC.SG | year | she.NOM | take.IMP.2SG | PCL | PCL | die.IMP.2SG |
- ‘They lived a year as soul mates and then suddenly she died.’
(Xrakovskij & Valodin, from Gleb Uspenskij)

¹ The form *voz'mi*, from *vzjat'* ‘take’ is here part of the constructional idiom *vzjat'* + V, denoting an unexpected and apparently unmotivated action. The use of this construction in the historical imperative is frequent, but not obligatory.

How to explain historical imperatives?

This question has two aspects: synchronic and diachronic. Synchronically, we have to account for the presence of historical imperatives as members of a category primarily associated with directive speech acts. If we represent the semantic structure of the imperative as a network, we could view the directive imperative as its centre and at the same time its oldest function from which all other functions evolved; and we could speculate on the mechanisms by which they evolved from it. Up to now, this has not been done, apparently for two reasons: (1) because of certain assumptions about the structure of meaning, and (2) because of difficulties with deriving the historical imperative (and other non-directive imperatives) from the directive function.

One of the most famous references to this problem is Jakobson's 1931 article on the structure of the Russian verb. Jakobson attempts to define a general meaning or semantic invariant (*Gesamtbedeutung*) for the imperative as distinct from more specific or contextually determined types of use. As not all uses of the imperative are directive, the directive meaning cannot be (part of) the semantic invariant, and it must therefore be a contextual variant. Jakobson opts for a more abstract general meaning, describing the imperative as "the mode of arbitrary action" (*Modus der willkürhaften Handlung*): whereas the directive use of the imperative reflects an instance of the speaker's arbitrarily imposing his will, a conditional (hypothetic) imperative reflects an arbitrary assumption, and the historical imperative reflects the narrator's arbitrary interference in the narrated sequence of events, depriving the subject of her/his control over the action and running counter to the inherent logic of events. Jakobson approvingly cites the 19th-century Russian grammarian N. P. Nekrasov as saying that whenever an imperative is used it is not the subject (agent) who is really in control, but the speaker, or narrator ("es gibt [...] keinen wirklichen Zusammenhang zwischen der Handlung und der handelnden Person. Die sprechende Person verfügt sozusagen in diesem Fall über die Handlung").

This way of characterizing the imperative is echoed, eighty years later, in Aikhenvald (2010, 249), who also quotes Nekrasov (though, interestingly, failing to reference Jakobson, who drew Nekrasov's statement from oblivion):

"Impatience and strong assertion conspire to create a strong dramatic effect for imperative forms which no longer have any directive meaning. They always imply control of the subject². And this is reminiscent of the way in which the Russian linguist Nekrasov described the Russian 'dramatic imperative': in sentences involving dramatic imperative, the speaker is 'in charge' of the action".

In more recent work as well, we find attempts at deriving the historical imperative from some general and abstract meaning features allegedly inherent to every use of the imperative. Fortuin (2000, 63), even though rejecting the monosemy approach, states that "by using the imperative the speaker expresses that he gives an impulse directed at the realization of 'V'", and adds that the use of an imperative is always associated with the presupposition that (1) 'not-'V' is given, and (2) "the action breaks the expected course of events". He goes on to argue that "the narrative imperative can be seen as an imperative use where the feature of 'impulse' or 'force' is backgrounded or even cancelled, and where the presupposition that the action breaks the expected course of events is selected as the meaning of the imperative" (Fortuin 2000, 136).

2 This formulation is unclear but I take it to mean the subject is controlled.

As no one seems to have hit upon a convincing mechanism of metaphorization explaining historical imperatives starting out from properly imperatival meaning, the temptation has generally been to invoke semantic features more abstract than (and possibly underlying also) the imperatival function, or perhaps some less essential features of the imperatival prototype brought to prominence in the historical imperative.

More recent research on the rise of grammatical categories has, however, shown that grammatical meanings arise in very specific constructions; the rise of highly abstract categorial meanings is always a secondary development, and they might be argued to be epiphenomenal; cf. Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994) for this view of the origins of grammar.

My aim here will be to look how (in what specific constructions) historical imperatives arise; perhaps this will also enable us to provide an account of non-directive imperatives dispensing with “general meanings”.

Sources for historical imperatives

The first attempt at an explanation for historical imperatives is that of Delbrück (1897, 397), who avails himself of a Russian example:

- (3) *Izdali uvidit lešča da i xvat' ego*
 from.afar see.FUT.3SG bream-ACC.SG PCL PCL catch.EVENT it
zub-ami.
 tooth-INS.PL
 ‘From afar he saw a bream and [he said to himself]: catch him with your teeth!’

and he comments: “Die ursprüngliche Auffassung ist natürlich die: ‘und nun hiess es (sagte er sich): pack ihn mit den Zähnen”.

The example is badly chosen as *xvat'* is actually a verbal interjection or eventive, not an imperative, but the explanation is in itself valid: imperatives used in **inner monologue**, with **ellipsis** of the *verbum dicendi* or *sentiendi*, are a possible source for narrative imperatives.

Another source (already considered in Spitzer 1918) is **apostrophe** (instances of the narrator addressing a character or some personified entity mentioned in his narrative).

Inner monologue and apostrophe are usually indistinguishable, cf. (4):

- (4) Spoken Palestinian Arabic (from Palva 1077)
säkkar ha-l-bāb. t̤əʔʔi ha-s-sandū?
 close.PF.3.SG.M DEF-door **open.IMP.2SG.F** DEF-chest
wanno t̤ālfi ha-l-ğrāb
pull.forth.IMP.2SG.F DEF-socking
 ‘He closed the door. She opened the chest, pulled forth the socking..’
 (i) ‘[and then she said to herself]: ‘Open the chest...’
 (ii) ‘go on, girl, open the chest... [said by the author to her/his character]’

Apostrophe has one advantage over inner monologue as a source for historical imperatives as it does not presuppose animacy/sentiency:

- (5) Italian (from Carlo Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio*)
Il naso, appena fatto, cominciò a crescere:
 the nose hardly made start.PFPST.3SG to grow.INF

e **cresci,** **cresci,** **cresci,**
 and **grow.IMP.2SG** **grow.IMP.2SG** **grow.IMP.2SG**

[*diventò in pochi minuti un nasone che non finiva mai.*]

‘No sooner had he made [the nose] than it began to grow. And it grew, and grew, and grew, until in a few minutes it had become an immense nose that seemed as if it would never end.’

But a narrative imperative originating in inner monologue might have gradually shed the initial restriction to sentient subjects in the process of its becoming conventionalized; one could argue that at the stage reflected in (5) we are already dealing with a narrative imperative as a grammatical device rather than with a stylistic or narrative device.

As we do not have the means to set apart the two mechanisms (inner monologue and apostrophe), I will refer to them below as to one common type of source construction, which we may characterize as “narrative device”.

Whichever of the two narrative devices is involved, two observations are in order:

(i) when an apostrophic imperative is used, one could say, in the spirit of Jakobson’s formulation, that “the speaker is in charge of the action”: in order to make the action advance more rapidly, the narrator interferes in the narrated events by exhorting a character to act more energetically, or (s)he causes a character to exhort herself/himself to energetic action. But this happens at the level of style/narrative technique, not of grammar; when such a monologic or apostrophic imperative is frequently used, it can eventually become a grammatical phenomenon. Monologic or apostrophic imperatives are obvious sources for narrative imperatives, but they do not tell us anything about nature of imperatives apart from their well-known directive function.

(ii) formally, monologic and apostrophic imperatives do not differ from ordinary imperatives: they are normally 2nd person, and normally have no overt subject. These are features allowing us to identify a narrative imperative as originating in inner monologue or apostrophe. They as well, however, can change with time, and as an imperative of monologic or apostrophic origin evolves into a narrative imperative, it can acquire the ability of combining with subjects, and with subjects of different person values at that. Such a development seems to be reflected in the examples in Friedman (2012, 418):

(6) Macedonian
Tetin Momče *beše* *orač:* *eden* *vol* *kupi,*
 uncle PN be.IPF.3SG ploughman one.M.SG ox buy.IMP.2SG
drug *pcovisaj.*
 other.M.SG die.IMP.2SG
 [*Cel život toa raboteše.*]
 ‘Uncle Momče was a ploughman. He would buy one ox and another would die. [His whole life went like that].’

Whereas *kupi vol* ‘buy an ox’ is identical with the canonical imperatival construction used in apostrophe, *drug pcovisaj* ‘the other died’ has an overt 3rd person subject which (though such subjects might have originated as vocatives in apostrophe) attest to a grammaticalization process leading from apostrophic/monologic imperative as a narrative device to a narrative imperative as a grammatical device.

Inner monologue and apostrophe are not the only sources for historical imperatives.

Some historical imperatives cannot be explained in this way.

The Russian historical imperative

According to Xrakovskij & Volodin (1986, 245) the Russian historical imperative always has an overt subject, usually 3rd person, rarely 1st person but never³ 2nd person. This is in such stark contrast to normal imperatives that several authors have explained the Russian historical imperative as a historical accident: according to Stender-Petersen (1930) the historical imperative could go back to an Old Russian aorist, as for some verbs the 2/3SG imperative and the 2/3SG aorist phonetically coincided. This view is endorsed in Daiber (2008). For another explanation in a similar vein cf. Gronas 2006 (the Common Slavonic imperative goes back to an IE optative, and optatives with past tense functions are attested in several IE branches).

Even if we reject Stender-Petersen's explanation, the Russian narrative imperative can probably not be accounted for without recourse to diachrony. We cannot ignore the fact that what is now the 2SG imperative was originally a common form for 2SG and 3SG (2SG and 3SG optative having phonetically coalesced already in Common Slavonic). There are still residual uses of this form in 3rd person function. One is fossilized expressions like *spasibo* 'thank you' < *spasi Bog* 'may God save [you]'. Another can be found in imprecations (Xrakovskij & Volodin 1986, 235), as in

- (7) Russian (Gogol', *The Government Inspector*, cited by Xrakovskij & Volodin)
Provalis' unter-officer-š-a.
sink.through.IMP.2SG non.commissioned.officer-F-NOM
 'The devil take the officer's widow.' (lit. 'may she sink through the ground')

In its central function, the 3rd person imperative was replaced with an analytic construction involving the hortative particle *pust'* (originally the imperative of *pustit'* 'let'):

- (8) Russian
Pust' on **pridet** *sjuda*.
 HORT he.NOM **come.FUT.3SG** hither
 'Let him come here.'

It seems reasonable to assume that in the more peripheral functions the original 3rd person value of such imperatives survived and they were subsequently extended also to 1st person and to the plural⁴. These peripheral functions could have included, on the one hand, the hypothetical (conditional) function, as in

- (9) Russian (example from Jakobson 1931)
Prid-i on, vse by *uladilos'*.
come-IMP.2SG he.NOM everything.NOM IRR turn.out.well.PST.N
 'If he had come, everything would have turned out well.'

³ Fortuin (2000, 139), citing Vinogradov, shows that the 2nd person does in fact occur, but is exceedingly rare.

⁴ This explanation does not apply to the so-called necessitive imperative (as in *ja rabotaj* 'I'm expected to work'), which I have described elsewhere as an echoic (interpretive) 2SG imperative, cf. Holvoet & Konickaja (2011).

On the other hand, we may hypothesize that they also included the narrative use under discussion here. What lends a certain plausibility to this hypothesis is that with regard to formal features the directive imperative and the historical imperative seem to be in complementary distribution: one is typically 2nd person and without overt subject, the other is almost exclusively non-2nd person and almost exclusively with over subject.

There is thus a certain likelihood that the Russian narrative imperative is a 3rd person hortative⁵. This hypothesis needs further verification in a comparative Slavonic context. The original identity of 2sg and 3sg person imperative forms was a common Slavonic feature, so that we could a priori expect residual 3sg imperatives functioning as historical imperatives in other Slavonic languages as well. Nonexistent in West Slavonic, narrative imperatives are attested in South Slavonic, where they seem to reflect a Balkanism (Friedman 2012). The South Slavonic narrative imperative differs from the Russian one in many respects, notably aspect (Friedman 2012), but also syntax: as can be seen from the examples in Miklosich (1868, 795), the South Slavonic narrative imperative is frequently a 2nd sg imperative without overt subject, as expected in the case of monologic or apostrophic imperatives, whereas this type is nonexistent in Russian. It looks therefore as if the two phenomena were unrelated.

If the Russian historical imperative goes back to a 3rd person hortative, it cannot be explained as a monologic or apostrophic imperative. We must therefore look for an explanation for 3rd person hortatives developing into forms referring to unexpected events. There is a parallel for this: 3rd person hortatives referring to unexpected/surprising events are attested in Dutch. The Dutch construction has, however, never been referred to as “historical” or “narrative”, and therefore I will refer to it as “mirative”.

The Dutch mirative hortative

In Dutch the 3rd person hortative is provided by the verb *laten* ‘let’, originally used in a permissive construction but now often behaving as a hortative auxiliary, agreeing with the subject of the verb to which the hortative marking is applied:

- (10) Dutch
Laten *zij* *maar met een oplossing* **kom-en.**
 let.PRS.3PL they.NOM PCL with a solution come-INF
 ‘Let them (lit. ‘they’) come up with a solution.’

The mirative use appears in:

- (11) Dutch
En laat er nu eens zo’n wondermiddel
 and let.PRS.3.SG there PCL PCL such.a miracle.cure
op de markt gekomen zijn!
 on the market come.PP be.INF
 [Althans, daar lijkt het op.]⁶
 ‘Now imagine such a miracle cure actually appearing on the market. [At least that is what it looks like].’

As in Russian, this mirative use stands alongside a hypothetical use:

5 Here I am using the term ‘hortative’ merely because ‘imperative’ is more commonly used for 2nd person forms, not with the purpose of setting apart two distinct categories. We can speak of a common semantic domain of ‘imperatives-hortatives’ as in Van der Auwera, Dobrushina & Goussev (2004).

6 www.trendystyle.nl/.../creme-tegen-haargroei.html -

(12) Dutch (common type of sentences in manuals of geometry)

*Laat ABC een driehoek zijn met de hoek ABC groter
let a triangle be.INF with the angle greater
dan de hoek BCA.
than the angle*

‘Let ABC be a triangle with angle ABC greater than angle BCA.’

I want to suggest this is not a coincidence, and there is a common motivation for hypothetical and mirative use. Hypothetical use consists in the speaker appealing to the addressee to imagine a certain state of affairs so that speaker and hearer can go on to consider together what would follow from it. This involves a process of subjectification: in the case of a normal hortative, the addressee is asked to undertake something in order that a certain state of affairs might be realized; in the case of hypothetical use, this happens only in the mind of the addressee, who is just asked to make an imaginative effort. In the case of mirative use the addressee is also asked to make an imaginative effort, but in this case this effort is not viewed as a precondition for some further reasoning concerning the logical consequences of the state of affairs described, but only as enabling the addressee to accept a piece of information that is otherwise hard to accept because it is unexpected. In both cases it is possible for this exhortation to an imaginative effort to be made explicitly, cf.

Hypothetical effect:

(13) *Imagine you are in a sinking boat and surrounded by sharks. How do you survive?*⁷

Mirative effect:

(14) *She had a very sheltered childhood. And then suddenly – imagine the most rebellious teenager suddenly being given a throne.*⁸

It is conceivable that, in diachronic terms, the conditional use underlies the mirative use. The effect of a conditional 3rd person hortative is to say ‘imagine *p* happening; now we can go on to consider what follows from *p*’. The effect of a mirative 3rd person hortative is to say ‘imagine *p* happening; you will then realize what has actually happened’. Strictly speaking, only the element ‘imagine *p* happening’ is common to both types, but it is possible that most languages assign, by default, a conditional reading to hortatives for which the conditions of immediate situational relevance *qua* directives are not satisfied (like, e.g., *let the Earth be flat*), so that such hortatives invite a continuation in the form of an apodosis (‘... it will follow that...’); only some languages dispense with this continuation, and this is then taken as a sign that the event described has actually happened, and that it is surprising enough to require an imaginative effort on the part of the addressee.

The Lithuanian mirative and historical imperative

A language not hitherto mentioned in the literature on narrative imperatives is Lithuanian. Indeed the term “narrative” or “historical” imperative is not used in Lithuanian grammar, but the Lithuanian Academy Grammar does note the use of 2sg imperatives “to express surprise” (Ulvydas, ed. 1971, 61). This is illustrated in (15):

7 <https://www.quora.com/Imagine-you-are-in-a-sinking-rowboat-surrounded-by-sharks-How-would-you-survive>

8 <http://www.npr.org/2016/11/27/503489407/julia-baird-paints-a-stronger-more-likable-victoria-the-queen>

- (15) Lithuanian
Nu ir pasitaiky-k tu man, kad būtent
 PCL PCL **happen-IMP.2SG** **you(SG).NOM** **me.DAT** that precisely
šit-q ryt-q mano mylim-a ses-ė
 this-ACC.SG morning-ACC.SG my beloved-NOM.SG.F sister-NOM.SG
atsirado su siuntinuk-u visoki-ų gėrybi-ų
 turn.up.PST.3 with parcel-INS.SG various-GEN.PL goodies-GEN.PL
*iš nam-ų.*⁹
 from home-GEN.PL
 ‘Now imagine my beloved sister turning up precisely this morning with a parcel full of goodies from home.’

This mirative imperative is part of a construction consisting of

- the 2SG imperative, followed by
- the NOM.SG pronoun *tu* ‘you’ (even with verbs that do not licence an animate subject that could be addressed), followed by
- the ethic dative *man* ‘me’ (i.e. a dative not licenced by the verb and expressing the speaker’s interest in, or affectedness by, the situation described by the verb).¹⁰

The origin of the Lithuanian mirative imperative is easy to reconstruct as all the successive stages in its development seem to be extant. As imperatives normally require animate addressees, the construction with happenstance verbs illustrated in (17) must be secondary with regard to constructions with verbs licencing animate subjects, as in (18):

- (16) Lithuanian
Ir gim-k tu man taip – per
 and **be.born-IMP.2SG** **you(SG).NOM** **me.DAT** like.that during
*pat-į viduržiem-į!*¹¹
 very-ACC.SG.M midwinter-ACC.SG
 ‘How strange to be born like that in the middle of the winter!’

As an imperative normally presupposes agentivity, this construction must, in its turn, be secondary with regard to a variety with verbs involving control on the part of the subject, as in (17):

- (17) Lithuanian
Nu ir sugalvo-k tu man tok-į
 PCL PCL **think.of-IMP.2SG** **you(SG).NOM** **me.DAT** such-ACC.SG.M
*pavojing-q aparat-q pasigaminti.*¹²
 dangerous-ACC.SG device-ACC.SG construct.INF
 ‘What an idea to construct such a dangerous device.’

9 <http://pienuzydejimas.blogspot.com/2009/09/puikus-rudeninis-savaitgalis.html> (accessed March 2017)

10 According to the Academy Grammar (Ulvydas, ed., 1971) the 3SG.M pronoun *jam* can also be used instead of *man*, but this does not seem to be characteristic of the modern standard language.

11 <http://www.vaikystes-sodas.lt/Austejos-blogas/I-am-Malala.-Arba-astuntasis-MS-gimtadienis.-/16988>

12 <http://www.andriusgrigaliunas.lt/2014/11/kontaktinis-suvirinimo-aparatas.html>

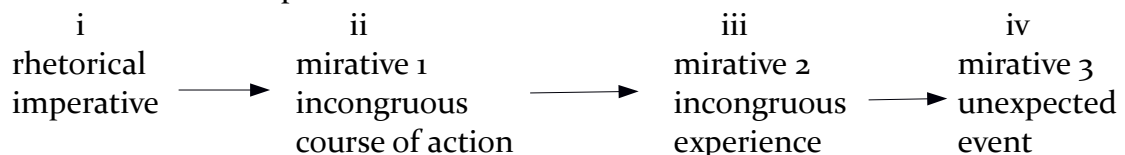
But even this variety cannot be the original form of the construction, because there is no obvious explanation for the use of an imperative to describe astonishment at an incongruous course of action. Ultimately, therefore, the mirative construction must be traced back to the rhetorical imperative (on this construction type cf. Bravo 2017). Rhetorical imperatives are a device commonly used in many languages to express impossibility (for English cf. Donne’s *Go and catch a falling star!*):

- (18) Lithuanian (DLKT, from André Eivaitė: *Kontora. Tarnybinis detektyvas*)
Aha, ras-k tu man vald-išk-q
 INTERJ find-IMP.2SG 2SG.NOM me.DAT government-ADJ-ACC.SG
įstaig-q,
 office-ACC.SG
 [kurioje nebūtų laiko pro langus paspoksot.]
 ‘Ah, just try to find a government office [where one doesn’t have time enough to stare out of the windows].’ (implied sense: there is no such government office)

This last link in our reconstruction is confirmed by the fact that we can find cases of ambiguity between a rhetorical imperative and an ‘incongruous-course-of-action’ reading, cf.

- (19) Lithuanian
Nu bet išei-k tu man atostog-ų
 PCL PCL go.out-IMP.2SG 2SG.NOM me.DAT holiday-GEN.PL
per Jonin-es.¹³
 during Midsummer-ACC.PL
 (i) ‘Just try to take a holiday during the Midsummer days.’
 (ii) ‘What an idea to take a holiday during the Midsummer days.’

We can now characterize the successive stages in the development from rhetorical imperative to historical imperative as follows:



The fourth type is the one that comes closest to a historical/narrative imperative in the sense that it can be used in a narrative context as a device to move the action forward:

- (20) Lithuanian
Gyveno Plungėje du kaimyn-ai ir atsitik
 live.PST.3 PLN-LOC two.NOM.M neighbour-NOM.PL and happen-IMP.2SG
tu man taip, kad pas abudu kaimyn-us
 2SG.NOM me.DAT so that at both.ACC neighbour-ACC.PL
tą pači-q dien-q gimė sūn-ūs,
 that.ACC.SG same-ACC.SG.F day-ACC.SG be.born.PST.3 son-NOM.PL

¹³ <https://www.tax.lt/temos/1320-atostoginiai/13>. In the given context this sentence is used in the “incongruous-course-of-action” sense.

[*ir dar, per pačias Petrines ir Povilines*].¹⁴

‘There lived two neighbours in Plungė and chance would have it that in both households sons were born on the same day and, what is more, on the very day of Saints Peter and Paul.’

Though we could still call this imperative in a certain sense mirative, it clearly undergoes a shift towards what we could call a historical imperative, as it provides an essential link in a narrative. It is at this stage that the Lithuanian mirative imperative becomes fully comparable to the Russian one. To show the functional similarity, let us take a Russian example also containing a happenstance verb, like (22):

(21) Russian (NKRJa, from Saltykov-Ščedrin)

I slučis’ emu odnaždy na usmireni-i
and **happen.IMP.2SG** him.DAT one.day at punitive.action-LOC.SG
v odn-om pomeščič’-em imeni-i byt’, i
in one-LOC.SG.M landowner.ADJ-LOC.SG.M estate-LOC.SG be.INF and
uznaj on ot gospodin-a pomeščik-a,
learn.IMP.2SG he.NOM from Mr.-GEN.SG landowner-GEN.SG

[*čto glavnyj naustitel’ vsej smuty est’ mestnyj svjaščennik.*]

‘And it so came about that he was present one day at a punitive action at some country gentleman’s estate, and he learned from the gentleman [that the main instigator of the unrest was the local priest].’

This is not to deny that there are major differences between the Russian and the Lithuanian grams: the Russian type is not restricted to happenstance verbs, as the form *uznaj* ‘learned’ in the second part of (22) shows. Nevertheless, the two constructions are clearly similar.

The rise of a mirative imperative from a rhetorical imperative in Lithuanian calls for a comment. Bravo (2017, 99) points out the similarity between rhetorical and conditional imperatives. In both cases, the addressee is requested to imagine a certain state of affairs; this imaginative effort will bring the addressee to the (unexpected) realization of the impossibility of the proposition implied by this imperative. A rhetorical imperative could, in a way, be described as a rhetorical use of the conditional imperative. In this sense, rhetorical imperatives are reminiscent of the hypothetical 3rd person hortative discussed above for Dutch. There is a difference, however, with regard to what Bravo (2017, 91) calls the intentional component contained in rhetorical imperatives: rhetorical imperatives presuppose (generic) human subjects and agentive (volitional) verbs; the shift towards mirative function in Lithuanian must therefore pass through an intermediate evaluative stage (the incongruous-course-of-action meaning) before reaching mirative meaning through a process of extension to inanimate subjects and non-volitional verbs. In the case of 3rd person hortatives the path to mirative function is straightforward, as hypothetical 3rd person hortatives do not show the restriction to animate, volitional subjects characteristic of directive hortatives (cf. *Let ABC be a triangle* as against *Let John come in*).

14 <http://lietuvsdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/petra-lietuva-myli-o-povilo-ne-pilietybes-istatymo-vingrybes.htm>

In conclusion

We can consider historical and mirative imperatives as one, not quite homogeneous, construction type basically denoting unexpected events, with differences between individual languages as to the extent to which it has been put to use as a narrative device. In principle, we could set narrative and mirative imperatives apart, but the line of division is not neat.

We thus get the impression we are dealing with a cross-linguistically identifiable gram-type, with convergent developments from different sources leading to it. This convergence might, however, be merely apparent. In fact, we can distinguish two clusters:

(i) historical imperatives arising from narrative devices such as inner monologue and apostrophe (as we have no means of setting these apart, we should treat them as one single source type). Here we have a development leading directly from the properly directive imperative used as a narrative device to a narrative imperative as a grammatical device.

(ii) historical imperative originating as mirative imperatives (a form characterizing an unexpected event becomes a means of characterizing dramatic turns in a narrative, or just a quickened pace of narration). Mirative imperatives are themselves of different origin, but in any case the mirative use arises from the properly directive use through processes of metaphorization or subjectification.

The question arises if there are really convergent developments, or whether it is just a coincidence. There is a problem with assuming convergence: cross-linguistically identifiable gram-types (like the perfect, the progressive etc.) are normally defined semantically (cf. Bybee & Dahl 1989). The historical imperative would have to be defined formally and semantically at the same time. This entails assuming the existence of an archetype of unexpected / unmotivated / arbitrary events for whose expression the imperative would be eminently suited. This would be a kind of vindication of Jakobson's (and Nekrasov's) idea. The notion of such a convergence remains, however, problematic, and coincidence seems more likely.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC—accusative, ADJ—adjective, DAT—dative, DEF—definite, EVENT—eventive, F—feminine, FUT—future, GEN—genitive, HORT—hortative, IMP—imperative, INF—infinitive, INS—instrumental, INTERJ—interjection, IPF—imperfect, IRR—irrealis, LOC—locative, M—masculine, N—neuter, NOM—nominative, PCL—particle, PF—perfect, PFPST—perfective past, PL—plural, PLN—place name, PN—personal name, PP—past participle, PRS—present, PST—past, SG—singular

SOURCES

DLKT—Corpus of Modern Lithuanian, <http://tekstynas.vdu.lt/tekstynas>

NKRJa—Russian National Corpus, www.ruscorpora.ru

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