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# ‘Less than Zero’: the Case of (Italo-)Romance Vocatives and Imperatives

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Imperatives and Vocatives have long been neglected as a category, probably due to their speech-rooted character, a feature which has contributed to leave them outside morphological and syntactical research (cf. however Maiden 2007, Swearingen 2011 and Maiden, Swearingen & O’Neill 2009 for a notable exception). Typological studies on Imperatives have however been proposed on several occasions in recent years (see Khrakovskij (2001), Aikhenvald (2017), etc. which offer an overall picture of the properties of this category). The aim of this contribution is to analyze the case of two related categories: Romance truncated Vocatives (cf. the Italo-Romance Vocatives in (1)) and a subclass of Romance Imperatives, namely the allomorphic reduced Imperatives some of which are presented in (2) (cf. Huber-Sauter 1951: 65sqq.). The data in (1a-d), which have been recorded among speakers of the Regional Italian spoken in Sardinia, are typically found in the Central-Southern part of Italy. They show that these Vocative forms may retain nothing else than the stressed C(C)V syllable of the noun (cf. Rohlfs 1966: 448-449, §§317-318) or all the segmental material up to the stressed syllable. Needless to say, the segmental shape of these Vocatives may vary according to the Regional Italian taken into account (cf. the data of the Taviano Salentine Italian discussed by Kenstowicz 2019):

(1)

Full form	Vocative	Full form	Vocative
a. 'pje:ro	'pje	f. an'to:njo	an'to
b. 'sandro	'sa	g. te'rɛ:za	te'rɛ
c. 'silvja	'si	h. fran'tʃɛsko	fran'tʃɛ
d. 'franʝo	'fra	i. kor'ra:do	kor'ra
e. salva'tɔ:re	'tɔ (< 'tɔ:re)	j. ɟu'zɛppe	ɟu'zɛ

(2)

French	Italian
a. ekut > kut ‘listen!’	a. as'petta > as'pe ‘wait!’
b. atā > tā ‘wait!’	b. 'gwarda > 'gwa ‘look!’
c. ʁəgəʁd > gəʁd ‘look!’	c. 'tʃɛni > 'tʃɛ ‘hold!’
d. aʁɛt > ʁɛt ‘stop!’	d. 'tɔʎli > 'tɔ ‘take!’
	e. as'kɔlta > as'kɔ ‘listen!’
	f. 'mɔstra > 'mɔ ‘let me see!’

Spanish

Sardinian

- |                        |                        |                          |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. 'tɔma > 'tɔ 'take!' | a. 'tɛnɛ > 'tɛ 'hold'  | c. 'nara > 'na 'say'     |
| b. 'mira > 'mi 'look!' | b. 'mira > 'mi 'look!' | d. 'tɔkka > 'tɔ 'go on!' |

The questions to be addressed here are of various nature: a) can the competing Imperative forms in (2) be analyzed in terms of ‘overabundance’? Observe *en passant* that examples such as Italian *gua’ / guarda* ‘look!’ or *aspè / aspetta* ‘wait!’ clearly contradict Thornton’s claim that in Italian “(...) only verbs which have an asyllabic stem have overabundance in the 2SG.IMP cell » (Thornton 2019 : 249); b) do the Imperative and Vocative forms listed in (1)-(2) obey any prosodic template? c) is the monosyllabic shape of some of these reduced Imperatives due to frequency effects, a thesis defended among others by Mańczak (2004)? d) to which extent these reduced forms can be said to obey the ‘Phonetic Laws’ of the respective languages? Needless to say, it has long been recognized that frequency can lead to drastic phonetic reductions (cf. Schuchardt 1885 on the question of frequency and Sound Laws). It was pointed out – at least since Pott (1852) – that the highly irregular aspect of verbs like Italian *andare*, French *aller*, Span. *andar*, Occitan / Catalan *anar*, Rheto-Rom. *la / na*, etc. was due to frequency effects (cf. as well Mańczak 1980, 1982, 2001, 2008, etc.). It will be shown that monosyllabic Imperatives and Vocatives owe their reduction to another parameter: they belong to the “appeal sphere”. On the one hand, this speech-rooted feature is clearly responsible for the reduction of these forms: they cannot be said to obey any Prosodic Template and they may violate the Minimality Constraint of the languages in which such a constraint is active (cf. Floricic & Molinu 2012). It will be shown that the speech-rooted feature of Vocatives and Imperatives also is responsible for their “marked” status. The markedness of Imperatives and Vocatives will be discussed, and it will be argued that it cannot be reduced to frequency effects (cf. Haspelmath (2006)). It has repeatedly been observed that Imperatives may show transcategorial shifts, and the development of ‘discourse markers’ or attention-getting devices from Imperatives is widely attested typologically (cf. Aikhenvald 2017: 24). It will be shown that such a transcategorial shift is not only responsible for the reduction of various Imperatives; it is also responsible for the semantic change they may be subject to (cf. the case of Italian 'tɔ 'take!' from 'tɔλλi 'take away’, which parallels Latin *em* ‘there!’ from *eme* ‘take!’ (< *emere* ‘to acquire, buy, purchase’) (cf. Umceta Gómez 2017).

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