On Romanian Imperatives

Martin MAIDEN

1. Introduction

My purpose in this study is to provide a brief historical and comparative synopsis of the morphology of second person (and particularly second person singular) affirmative imperatives in Romanian, as a prelude to an intended, more wide-ranging, study of imperative morphology in the Romance languages in general. Surprisingly little has been written about imperative morphology in a typological, cross-linguistic, perspective (cf. van der Auwera and Lejeune 2005: 287)[1], and the Romance domain is no exception. Within Romanian and the Romanian dialects, there has been much very valuable work on details of imperative morphology[2], but little attempt to discern the broader patterns of development. Drawing on the work of earlier scholars, it is these general patterns that I shall here attempt to identify and to explain.

Latin second person affirmative imperatives[3] were thoroughly 'integrated' into the inflectional paradigm of the Latin verb in the sense that their form was, almost without exception, predictable on the basis of other forms of the infectum. The imperative comprised infectum lexical root + thematic vowel in the singular (e.g. ARA, TENE, PONE, DORMI, and infectum lexical root + thematic vowel + TE in the plural (e.g., ARATE, TENETE, PONITE, DORMITE).

Exceptions were very few. There were no special imperative root allomorphs (Latin overwhelmingly lacked root allomorphy associated with mood, tense, person or number), and such irregularities as there were involved the inflectional endings. For example ESSE has 2sg. imperative ES, identical to the second person present indicative, while DICERE, FACERE and DUCERE show bare roots without inflectional vowel in the singular (DIC, FAC and DUC), as a result of phonological apocope of final -E (cf. Sihler 1995: 602)[4].

What Romanian inherits from Latin is a compactly integrated system of imperative formation readily inferrable from other parts of the paradigm. To take the plural first, there is in Romanian absolute identity between 2pl. imperative and 2pl. indicative, reflecting a type of loss of the Latin distinctive imperative inflectional morphology widely attested across Romance languages: *arați, țineți, puneți, dormiți*. The sole exception is *a fi* 'to be', where the plural imperative is identical to the second person plural subjunctive, *fiți*.

[1] The most salient exceptions are Xrakovskij (2001) and Veselinova (2003)

[2] Including negative imperative morphology (see, e.g., Frâncu 1980), with which I shall not be concerned here.

[3] I am not concerned with future imperatives of the type ESTO, ESTOTE, nor with the imperative inflections of the passive, since these have no continuation in Romance.

[4] For the status of FER, FERTE, imperatives of FERRE, see Sihler ib. and also Ernout (1927: 288f.).

Philologica Jassyensia, An II, Nr. 1, 2006, p. 47-59

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

Various general morphological and phonological adjustments between Latin and Romanian (deletion of the third person inflection -T, neutralization of certain vocalic distinctions in unstressed vowels, and modifications[5] involving final -S), lead us to predict pervasive *syncretism* (i.e., identity of form) between the 2sg. imperative and certain present tense forms, such that in first, second and third conjugation verbs the 2sg. imperative should emerge as identical to the 3sg. indicative, while in the fourth conjugation it should become identical to the 2sg. indicative. In the first conjugation, and often in the other conjugations, this is exactly what happens (2sg. imperative *ară, ține, pune* = 3sg. present *ară, ține, pune*; 2sg. imperative *dormi* = 2sg. present *dormi*). Yet the second person singular positive imperative is also a locus of major paradigmatic 'disintegration' in the history of Romanian and the Romanian dialects, in that we witness the emergence of numerous new forms whose inflectional endings, or lexical roots, or both, are erratically unpredictable from the rest of the paradigm and consequently require separate lexical specification in the grammar. These innovations have a significant place in general Romance historical morphology in two respects. First, although the emergence of root allomorphy associated with person, number, tense and mood is a defining feature of Romance, as opposed to Latin, verb morphology, the cause of such novel allomorphy is usually linked to regular sound change, even if it is by no means always wholly explained by it (see Maiden 2003; 2005). The Romanian imperative, in contrast, reveals sources of novel allomorphy (including suppletion) which have no historical connection with sound change, but invite quite different modes of explanation. Second, and as in Latin, Romance inflectional desinences are normally transparently aligned with morphosyntactic properties of the verb (person, number, tense, mood or combinations thereof), and it is most unusual to find endings which are idiosyncratically restricted to a particular lexeme or to a small subclass of lexemes, yet such anomalous behaviour is exactly what the Romanian 2sg. imperative sometimes presents.

2. The anomalous second person singular imperatives

Romanian has a number of 2sg. imperatives whose form is diachronically anomalous, in that their development is not predicted by the general phonological and morphological development of the language, and/or synchronically anomalous, in that it constitutes an idiosyncratic exception to the general structure of Romanian verb morphology. The principal examples can be represented schematically as follows:

Latin	predicted outcome	16thc Romanian	modern standard Romanian	modern dialects[6]
DA 'give'	*da*	*dă*	*dă*	*dă*
STA 'stand'	*sta*	*stă, stăi, stai*[7]	*stai*	*stăi, stai*

[5] The exact nature of the fate of final -s is controversial. See, for example, the account given in Maiden (1996). What matters here is that the merger of the 2sg imperative with the 2sg. indicative is predictable in terms of more general changes in the history of the language.

[6] See especially *ALR II*, maps 2090, 2091, 2092, 2101, 2215, 2229, *ALRR Maramureş* IV 1019, plates CI, CIII, CXIV, *NALRR Transilvania* questions 1935, 1944, etc.

[7] I shall return later to the origins of modern standard Romanian *stai*, and the widespread dialect form *stăi*. *Stă* is attested alongsde these other variants in the sixteenth century, and we may assume it to be an old

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

FAC 'do'	*fa*	*fă*	*fă*	*fă*
LAUA 'wash'	*la*	*lă*	*lă*	*lă*
UA(DE) 'go'	*va*			*vă, va*
UENI 'come'	*vii*	*vino*	*vino*	*vină, vino*
DIC 'say'	*zi*	*zi*	*zi*	*zi*
DUC 'lead, bring'	*du*	*du*	*du*	*du*
ADUC 'bring'	*adu*	*adu, adă*	*adu*	*ádu, ádo, ádă*

2.1. Zi, du, adu and fă

Zi, *du*, *adu* and *fă* are remarkable precisely because they do show the predicted diachronic developments from Latin (the vowel of *fă* is irregular, and will be examined later): they have maintained, throughout history, and in all Romanian dialects, a quite exceptional root-shape, in which the root-final consonant characteristic of the rest of the paradigm is missing (cf. the Latin and Romanian 2sg. present indicative DICIS, DUCIS, ADDUCIS, FACIS > *zici*, *duci*, *aduci*, *faci*). These imperatives show almost[8] no sign of analogical attraction toward the root-shape of the rest of their paradigm. The imperative *adu* presents an additional feature which Lombard rightly considered 'assez étonnant': quite unlike all other members of its paradigm (*adúc*, *adúci*, *adúce*, etc.), *ádu* (and its dialectal variants *ádă* and *ádo*) is almost always[9] stressed on the initial vowel. In fact, it is the only Romanian verb-form to display a stress alternation *within* the lexical root. Lombard (1955: 1070f.; 1080)[10] sees here a survivor of the early Latin stress pattern, already archaic in classical times, in which prefixed verbs were stressed on the prefix (ÁDDUCO, ÁDDUCIS, ÁDDUCIT; imperative ÁDDUC, etc.), but this seems to be pure speculation[11].We are probably safer in suggesting that the model of other polysyllabic imperatives, which are never stressed on the final syllable, has prevailed over the stress pattern of the rest of the paradigm of *adúce*. Further examples of the prevalence of characteristically 'imperative' morphology over lexical transparency, will be seen in the following section.

2.2 Anomalous imperatives in -ă

The monosyllabic imperatives in *-ă* (*dă, stă, fă*[12] *lă, vă*) all show an irregular[13] development of Latin stressed A which normally, in Romanian, should yield /a/ (cf. the

imperative whose developent was parallel to *dă.* Cf. Schmid (1949: 31); Lombard (1955: 454); Tiktin (1924: 142); Densusianu (1938: 247); Chivu et al. (1997: 140f.).

[8] Densusianu (1938: 245f.) mentions some attestations of imperative *face* in the 16C; see also Kovačec (1971: 144).

[9] See *ALR II*, map 2090; the type *adú* occurs at points 130 (Poiana Sibiului), 172 (Arpaşul-de-Jos) and 574 (Mihăileni).

[10] Puşcariu (1964: 104), however, believes that stress has shifted onto the first syllable of this word, as part of a tendency for commands to be stressed on the first syllable.

[11] In fact, ÁDDUC is regularly given as an example of the position of the stress remaining fixed after the loss of final -E in the imperative (e.g., Skutsch 1970 (=1892): 127). Overall, preservation of an early Latin stress pattern seems very doubtful in this case. I am grateful to John Penney for his advice on this point.

[12] The alternative form *fa*, reported by Weigand (1902: 191; 1904: 55) for Moldova, and particularly used as an interjection with female names, may well be a shortened form of *fată.*

[13] Lombard (1955: 1092) allows the possibility of a phonological development (cf. also Caragiu-Marioţeanu 1969: 274n6), but this is simply unsupported by the general evidence of the phonological

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

infinitives DARE and STARE > *dare / da* and *stare / sta* and, in Aromanian and Meglenoromanian, 3sg. present indicative DAT and STAT > *da* and *sta*)[14]. The origin of such forms is best understood by looking first at the development of imperative DA and STA (and the similarly monosyllabic Romanian *la*[15] < LAUA) to *dă, stă* (and *lă*). There seems to be little doubt that this reflects the analogical influence of the first conjugation imperative in *-ă* (cântă etc.)[16]. The present, imperfect[17], infinitive and participles of the verbs *a da* and *a sta* already had first conjugation inflectional endings, a fact which promoted the replacement of etymological *da, sta* and *la* with *dă, stă* (and *lă*) not only in the 2sg. imperative but also in the 3sg. present. Here the comparative evidence of Aromanian and Meglenoromanian is crucial: in these varieties, as we saw above, the vowel *ă* has been extended only into the imperative, not into the 3sg. present: we may infer from this that the analogical influence of the first conjugation was transmitted *first via the imperative*, and only later into the the third person singular present.

The imperative f*ă* for expected **fa* is surely modelled on the imperatives *dă* and *stă*: that *fă* acquires its vowel from d*ă* and *stă*, rather than from first conjugation imperatives in general, is a reasonable assumption, given that *a face* does not otherwise have first conjugation inflectional morphology, and some dialects of Maramureş provide useful support for this claim. Here, as in general in Daco-Romance (and Italo-Romance), the negative 2sg. imperative is identical to the infinitive (e.g., *cântă*, *a cânta*, *nu cânta*; *dă*, *a da*, *nu da*). *ALR Maramureş* shows f*ă* everywhere, but along the valley of the Iza[18], instead of expected *nu face* (the infinitive is here *face*), we have a negative imperative *nu fa*, exactly matching imperative *dă* vs. negative *nu da*, and therefore clearly analogically modelled on this verb[19].

The imperative v*ă* 'go' is practically the only Daco-Romance remnant of UADERE, the Latin verb which in other Romance languages provides much of the present tense of the verb 'to go'. It is in effect an 'imperative-only'[20] defective verb, cited by Densusianu (1938:501) from the sixteenth century *Palia de la Orăştie*, and still widely attested in Romanian dialects (and especially those of western Romania: Teaha 1961:115)[21]. The change from *va* to *vă* clearly shows the influence of da > d*ă* and *sta* > *stă*, where speakers appear to have made the generalization, specific to 2sg. imperatives, that monosyllabic forms in *-a* change their vowel to *-ă*.

---

history of Romanian. Latin A gives *ă* regularly in unstressed syllables, and in stressed syllables only under complex phonological and morphological circumstances which are not met here.

[14] Cf. *ALR II* 2223. Also Schmid (1949: 10f.; 11n3).

[15] *ALR II* 2215 shows imperative *la-te* for Aromanian.

[16] See Schmid (1949: 10f.); Rosetti (1964: 130); Graur (1968: 218-21).

[17] The current imperfect forms *dădeam, stăteam* are a relatively recent innovations for earlier *stam* and *dam*.

[18] Points 223 (Giuleşti), 232 (Rozavlea), 233 (Ieud), 235, (Săcel), 236 (Moisei), 237 (Gura Fântânii), 238 (Vişeul de Jos).

[19] Cf. also Lombard (1955:1093; 1149f.).

[20] Some linguists (e.g., Lombard 1955:408f.; Puşcariu 1975:173; Teaha 1961:115) hold that a third person singular form, *va*, also survives, for example in the expression *mai va* meaning 'there is still some time to go', 'you'll have to wait a bit' (e.g., *mai va până la vară* 'hold on until summer', 'it'll be a while until summer'). I am struck by the fact that Romanians whom I have asked about this expression have invariably paraphrased it with an imperative (e.g., *mai aşteaptă până la vară*), and I would not exclude the possibility that it is historically an imperative form. For *vai* in Aromanian see Caragiu-Marioţeanu (1969:274n8), also Papahagi (1974:1252), where there is also an apparent example of *vai* used as a subjunctive.

[21] Also Weigand (1897:296); Papahagi (1925:89); Lombard (1955:1208f.); Puşcariu (1975:173).

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

What of anomalous *-ă* in the bisyllabic imperatives *vină* and *adă*? The former is the imperative of *a veni* right across the northern half of Romania with northern Bucovina and Bessarabia (see Pătruț 1963; also question 1952 of *NALR*)[22] and it is almost certain (see below) that it underlies the form *vino* found in other Romanian varieties. Nowhere[23] does the etymologically predicted outcome (UENI > **vii* – or variants with a palatalized nasal) actually occur. The emergence of *vină* seems, then, to belong with *dă, stă, vă, fă* as an early, 'common Romanian', morphological change. The exact mechanism of its emergence cannot be observed directly, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that speakers analysed the ending *-ă*, already characteristic of other very common, basic and frequent imperatives such as 'give', 'stand', 'do', as the appropriate ending for another very basic imperative, namely 'come'. It is perhaps significant that 'come' might have been the only member of this particular 'club' to have, originally, an imperative ending in *-i* (**vii*). The incidence of *adă* is rather rarer (although already attested in the late sixteenth century: Chivu et al. 1997:140f.), but is extensively attested in Transylvania, Maramureş, Moldova (see *ALR II*, map 2090) and Bucovina and Bessarabia (Mărgărit and Neagoe 2000:113). I concur with Puşcariu (1975:4), Lombard and others (see Lombard 1955:1071 and note 1) who attribute it to the analogy of imperative *dă.* If 'bring' has been more resistant to the analogy than 'come', this is probably because, unlike 'come', *ádu* would have been supported by the model of *du*, imperative of *a duce*.

2.3. Anomalous imperatives in -o.

In modern standard Romanian the imperative of *a veni*, is not *vină*, but *vino*, and this is the only verb-form in the language to display an inflection *-o. Vino* is also the general form of the imperative in dialects of the southern half of Romania and in trans-Danubian dialects. In Istro-Romanian, and at a few places in southern Romania there is also *ádo*, corresponding to standard *adu*[24].

Pătruț (1963) reinforces beyond reasonable doubt the generally held[25] view that the origin of imperative *-o* in *vino* must be the vocative desinence *-o*. This *-o*, of Slavic provenance, is characteristic of nouns and proper names ending in unstressed *-ă* or *-a* (e.g., *Ana, mamă* 'mother'*, soră* 'sister'*, popă* 'priest' -vocative *Ano!, mamo!, soro!, popo!*). The geographical extent of vocative *-o* (broadly, the southern half of Romania and all trans-Danubian dialects) is almost exactly coextensive with that of imperative *vino*, and instances of imperative *ádo* all fall within the relevant territory. On this view,

[22] See *ALR II*, map 2101. There is an occasional variant *vin* (Mărgărit and Neagoe 2000:113 for the Ukraine; *ALR II* point 682 (Somova). Lombard (1955:576) reports a variant *vine*.

[23] We may have a survivor of the etymologically expected reflex in the dialect of Lipova in Crişana, reported by Weigand (1897:296) where the *negative* imperative of 'come' is given as *nu vin´*. This is neither the infinitive (the form normally, but not always, found in negative imperatives), nor the positive imperative (which is *vină*).

[24] See *ALR II*, map 2090, points 2 (Pecenişca), 705 (Piua Petri), 784 (Nucşoara) , 791 (Negreni), 872 (Măceşul de Jos), 886 (Izbiceni); 02 (Jeiăn).

[25] See, e.g., Puşcariu (1922: 42); Krepinsky (1938/39: 4f.). Lombard's (1955: 769f.) 'phonological' account, involving the emergence of a hypothetical **vinu* on the model of *ádu*, followed by the effects of an alleged tendency to open final [u] to [o], is simply too contrived to carry conviction.

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

vină must be the older[26] form of the imperative, and *vino* must have been created from *vină* analogically on the model of mamă -vocative *mamo*, etc.; we may assume a similar history for *ádo* < *ádă.* That imperative and vocative morphology should coincide is not surprising: there is an inherent overlap between them, in that vocatives have among their functions the essentially imperative force of instructing the addressee to pay attention. Moreover, vocative and imperative forms frequently cooccur in utterances (*Mario, vino încoace*, etc.). Another relevant factor may be the identity already existing between the masculine imperative in *-e*, and the imperative ending *-e* of many verbs (e.g., *cuscre, ține*). More problematic is why only original *vină* (and *adă*) should acquire imperative *-o*, but not other, first conjugation, verb forms with imperative *-ă*[27]. The reason why *dă, fă, vă* and stă do not do so is plainly that the vocative desinence in nouns (*mamo, prieteno, țiganco*, etc.) is always preceded by a root containing at least one syllable, whereas these verb forms lack syllabic roots. That *vină* and adă are alone susceptible to the introduction of the vocative inflection is probably a consequence of two facts: that both are extremely high frequency imperatives expressing very basic meaninsg ('come' and 'bring'), and that they are already paradigmatically 'estranged' by virtue of being non-first conjugation verbs idiosyncratically displaying first conjugation imperative inflections.

2.4. Further coincidences of vocative and imperative

Vino and *ado* are not the only examples of morphology shared by the imperative and the vocative. Various Romanian dialects, especially those of Maramureş (see Dan 1963; Faiciuc 1973) have 'truncated' vocative[28] forms of first names and kinship terms, involving deletion of all phonological material to the right of the stressed vowel. Thus from Maramureş: *nevastă> nevá*; *nepoată> nepoá*; *tată> ta*; *Alexa > Alé*; *Părasca > Părá*, etc. Exactly the same kind of truncation occurs in the 2sg. imperative of 'augmented'[29] fourth conjugation verbs, especially in trans-Danubian dialects and in Maramureş. An example from Megleno-Romanian (Capidan 1925: 158; 161f.)[30] is present *sirbés, sirbéş, sirbéaşti, sirbím, sirbíț, sirbés*; imperative sg. *sirbeá*, pl. *sirbíț*. The elusive 'missing link' in this analysis would be some dialect in which truncation occurs both in the imperative and vocative, but only there. Truncation in the imperative occurs in Maramureş and in all trans-Danubian dialects; truncation in the vocative occurs in Maramureş but not (it seems) in trans-Danubian dialects. But in Maramureş (as also in Istro-Romanian), truncation in augmented verbs also affects the third person singular indicative (cf. *ALRR Maramureş* 1058/61: 3sg. pres. *horé* 'dance' = 2sg.

[26] It is true that in sixteenth century texts only vino occurs (cf. Densusianu 1938:233), but this does not necessarily mean that vino must be older than vină (pace Lombard 1955: 576). It simply means that vino was established earlier than the 16th century.

[27] Two such forms, *bago* and *lasso* are cited by Weigand (1898: 91) for Aromanian, and are later accepted by Capidan (1932: 451). Pătruț (1963: 89n10) suspects this inflectional *-o* is a feminine object pronoun (i.e., *bag-o* 'put it'). But if Weigand made a mistake, then so apparently did the investigator for *ALR II* map 2084, who records *bago*, at Peştera in Bulgaria (but also *bagă-ț* in map 1647). See also Krepinsky (1938/39: 5).

[28] Various Romanian scholars draw attention to parallels in Italo-Romance. See also Maiden (1995).

[29] Dan (1963: 529) mentions truncations in other kinds of imperative in Ardeal, Bucovina and especially Maramureş: e.g., *ta* (< *taci*), *tre* (< *treci*).

[30] For Maramureş, see for example *ALRR Maramureş* maps 1125; 1061; 1626/27/28; for Aromanian Capidan (1932: 449; 452); for Istro-Romanian Puşcariu (1926: 174; 178; 179).

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

imperative *horé*). Despite these distributional and geographical discrepancies, it seems difficult to escape the conclusion that the occurrence of truncation in both imperative and vocative is linked (cf. Dan 1963: 529). This is certainly the assumption of Puşcariu (1964: 184f.), who also cites certain other types of truncated imperative such as *au* for *auzi*, and explicitly attributes Istro-Romanian 3sg. present forms in *-é* to the imperatives in *-é*.

2.5. An inflectional anomaly in fourth conjugation verbs

Romanian fourth conjugation verbs (those with infinitives in *-i* or *-î*) fall into two classes. One, comprising the overwhelming majority of such verbs, displays a functionally 'empty' element (an 'augment') immediately following the lexical root and limited in distribution to the singular and third person forms of the present indicative, together with the second person singular imperative (e.g., *iubesc iubeşti iubeşte...iubesc; iubeşte!*). The other class, small in number but comprising some verbs of very high token frequency, lacks the augment (e.g., *dorm dormi doarme...dorm; dormi!*). Lexical membership of the 'augmented' and 'unaugmented' classes fluctuates greatly, both over time and across dialects (cf. Maiden 2003; Orza 1978). But there is virtually no variation with regard to the distribution of the augment within the paradigm: if a verb takes it, then the augment always appears in all the parts of the verb specified above. There are just two classes of exception: one is a small group comprising almost exclusively onomatopoeic verbs (cf. Lombard 1955: 893-99; Moroianu 1995: 96f.; Maiden 2003: 32n106) which optionally lack the augment in the third person singular (e.g., *a clănțăni* 'to chatter' 1sg. *clănțănesc clănțăneşti clănțăne clănțănim clănțăniți clănțănesc*; similarly *a fleşcăi* 'to squelch', *a bocăni* 'to bang away', etc.); the other is a small group of second person singular imperatives. Of the imperatives, probably the best established in the standard language is *ghici!* 'guess!' (cf. 2sg. *ghiceşti* 3sg. *ghiceşte*), a form also found extensively across Romanian dialects (see *ALR II* map 2102). Lombard (1953; 1955: 568; 587f.; 644; 646f.; 653; 673-75) discusses other imperatives[31] lacking an expected augment: *tule-o* 'get lost', *pârle-o* 'buzz off', *feri* 'get out of the way', *griji* 'mind out', *paşi* 'get going', *ciuci* 'duck', *zbughi-o* 'hop off, shoo', *bui* 'go up!'[32].

It is probable that these unaugmented imperatives are paradigmatically 'stranded' remnants of an earlier stage at which these verbs had not yet assumed the augment[33]. Of their function, Lombard (1953: 29; 37) observes that they all serve to express rapid commands, with meanings such as 'go (away)', 'look out', 'guess'. Also (Lombard 1955: 674): „Les formes brèves conviennent spécialement aux commandements, aux exhortations. Il est assez naturel que, parmi les diverses formes verbales, l'impératif goûte particulièrement la brièveté"[34]. In other words, they seem to

[31] See also *ALR II* maps 2102/3/4 and 2111.

[32] I can only share Lombard's puzzlement (1955: 649-52.; 679n1; 771; 1147) at the rare and truly peculiar imperative *sucă*, attested in popular poetry for the verb *a suci* 'twist' (more usually *suceşte!* in modern Romanian). Could *sucă* somehow exceptionally preserve the stem of Old Church Slavonic *sukati*, the etymon of *a suci*? To this example we must add the (encliticized) form *suce-l*, specifically reported by Todoran (1960: 43) as an augmentless imperative of *a suci*. Conceivably, the morphologically exceptional nature of this verb owes something to its use as a recurrent command uttered during the process of weaving: the example of *sucă* quoted by Tiktin (1924: 1542) occurs in the phrase *Sucă-mi-te, suveicuță*, 'Twist on for me, little shuttle'.

[33] One does not find the converse, with augments in the 2sg. imperative only.

[34] Perhaps the most pervasive anomaly in the inflectional morphology of the Romanian 2sg. imperative is also the most difficult to explain. It involves non-first conjugation verbs where, instead of the

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

serve primarily as 'interjections' (a point to which I shall return in my conclusion), where brevity is advantageous. And here probably lies the link with the onomatopoeic augmentless forms: these latter are not exactly 'interjections', but they are similar in serving to attract the hearer's attention to particular kinds of noise: in a forms such as *clănțăne*, what is being foregrounded is simply the noise heard, 'chatter chatter', rather than verb's morphological specifications.

2.5. Defective and suppletive imperatives

Romananian has a number of verbs which are 'defective' by virtue of existing *only* in the imperative[35]. These fall into two kinds: those which are survivors of verbs which once had complete paradigms, and those which originate as interjections[36]. I have already mentioned that *vă* in modern dialects is in effect 'defective', surviving only in the imperative; some Transylvanian dialects have analogically created a plural form of this imperative, of the forms *vați* or *vareți* (cf. *DLR* s.v., *vă*; Teaha 1961: 280). Another case is the reflex of *passare, originally 'pass', which is virtually restricted to (singular and plural) imperatives by the sixteenth century (Densusianu 1938: 499; Rosetti 1964: 146; Chivu et al. 1997:140f.), and is certainly so restricted in modern dialects (cf. Pop 1948:408; Puşcariu 1975: 112). There are also 1pl. *blem* (as well as *blăm*) and 2pl. *blați* meaning 'go', remnants respectively of Latin AMBULEMUS[37] and AMBULATIS / AMBULATE, widely attested (especially in the 1sg.) in the sixteenth century (Densusianu 1938: 233f.; Lombard 1955: 674; Chivu 1997: 140f.; 342). Kovačec (1971: 145) records 2sg. *ból'e*, 1pl. *ból'em*, 2pl. *ból'eț* as suppletive imperatives for the verb *ji* 'go' in Istro-Romanian; it is unclear to me[38] whether these forms are etymologically related to *blem* etc[39]. We may also note 2sg. imperative *curi* 'run', stated by Weigand

etymologically predicted endings *-e* in second and third conjugation verbs, and *-i* in the fourth conjugation, the distribution is generally sensitive to *transitivity*, intransitive verbs taking *-i* (e.g., third conjugation *mergi* 'go', *plângi* 'weep'; fourth conjugation *dormi* 'sleep', *fugi* 'run, flee'), and transitive verbs taking *-e* (e.g., third conjugation *prinde* 'catch', *trimite* 'send'; fourth conjugation *simte* 'feel', *ascute* 'sharpen'). In my view, no cogent explanation of this fact, or of its relation to other anomalous phenomena in the 2sg. imperative, has been put forward. The best we have is Graur's claim (1961; 1968: 118-21) that an alleged tendency to raise and close unstressed vowels (favouring *-i* over *-e*), leads to a propagation of *-i* whch was, however, blocked before a consonant. Since the typical 'blocking' environment was that of a following clitic (cf. modern imperative *crezi* 'believe' but *crede-mă* 'believe me'), and since clitics were typically direct objects, *-e* was analysed as a transitive marker, and generalized to other transitive verbs. Pending a more satisfactory account, we can at least observe that *vezi* 'see', and *auzi* 'hear', probably because of the frequency of their use as interjections, constitute exceptions to the generalization of transitive *-e*.

[35] Veselinova (2003: 161) finds 'imperative-only' verbs sparsely represented but scattered across a wide range of the world's languages. These observations on Romanian tend to confirm her suspicion that they are more common than generally recognized.

[36] Cf. Veselinova (2003: 163).

[37] To my knowledge, this is the only remnant in Daco-Romance of a Latin 1pl. present subjunctive inflectional ending. As for the lexical verb, AMBULARE does of course survive in the verb *a umbla*, but these special imperatives seem to be synchronically external to the paradigm of *a umbla. Blem* has also provided the basis for an innovatory 2pl. *blemați* (cf. Rosetti 1952: 24).

[38] Lombard (1955: 1030) implies that the form is in origin an interjection.

[39] It is difficult to say whether the form *i*, used by Aromanian shepherds and cart drivers to gee up horses and mules (Capidan 1932: 451f.), could be an isolated remnant of Latin I! Compare Rohlfs (1968: 281n1) for a possible parallel in Tuscan.

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

(1900: 55) to survive despite otherwise general replacement of this verb – in the meaning 'run' – by forms in root-final *-g* (*curg*), or by *a alerga*.

The interjection *haide* (and its shortened form *hai*) is of Turkish origin[40], and means roughly 'come on, get going, off we/you go'. That is has been analysed as a verbal imperative is shown by the fact that, optionally, it adopts the verbal inflectional endings seen in 1pl. *haidem*, 2pl. *haideți* (cf. Lombard 1955: 1029f.; *ALR II* map 1426). The reanalysis of this interjection as a verb is, in fact, a 'Sprachbund' phenomenon observable also in Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian and Serbian. Another (colloquial and informal) interjection is *na* 'here is, take this', widespread not only in various Balkan languages, but also western and eastern Slavic languages, and is almost certanly a loanword of Slavic origin (see Joseph 1981: 146f.). In some Oltenian and Transylvanian varieties (see Weigand 1900: 55; Teaha 1961: 280), 2sg. *na* has an analogical 2pl. *nareț*[41]. But the main evidence of the analysis of *na* as a verb is syntactic[42]: it can take direct objects (e.g., *Na cărțile astea* 'take these books') and can host clitics in a way exactly parallel to imperatives (e.g., *Na-le* = *Ia-le* 'Take them'). There are striking syntactic and morphological parallels[43] in the behaviour of the particle *na* in Greek and other Balkan languages (cf. Joseph 1981: 142f.). The presentative particle *iată* 'T/Here is/are', generally taken to be a Slavic loan (< *eto*), similarly takes clitic objects and direct object noun phrases (e.g., *Iată-le* 'There they are').

The imperative is also a locus of 'suppletion', whereby certain verbs have in their imperative a verb of different etymological origin from the rest of the paradigm. In Istro-Romanian (Puşcariu 1926: 192; 193) the verb *mere* 'go' has suppletive imperatives 2sg. *pas* and 2pl. *pasets*[44]. For Megleno-Romanian, Capidan (1925: 162) indicates that the inherited 2sg. imperative of *viniri* 'come', namely *vinu*, has all but disappeared in favour of the imperative form *jela*, borrowed from Greek[45]. The 2sg. imperative of *stari* 'stand' shows the form *stoi* (and *toi*) which despite a partial resemblance to the indigenous verb, is suppletive in the sense that it is demonstrably borrowed from Bulgarian (cf. Tiktin 1924: 142). A still etymologically mysterious suppletion in the verb 'to come' occurs in various dialects of the western Carpathians, with 2sg. imperatives of the type *iúre*, cited by Weigand (1897:296), for Vidra de Sus, and by *ALR II*, map 2101, for point 95 Gârda de Sus[46]. For the same verb, the informant for

[40] See also Elwert (1965: 1242f.).

[41] Both *nareț*, and the form *vareț*, mentioned above, are peculiar in that the *-reț* ending is characteristic of *negative* imperatives (formed using the infinitive). In the case of *nareț*, Weigand suggests the analogy of *da*: presumbaly the model would be *nu da -nu dareț* 'don't give'. But Ionică (1974: 267) also cites a positive imperative *haidereți* in Oltenia.

[42] Compare also Lombard (1936: 261); Joseph (1981: 144f.).

[43] Joseph (1981: 147n9) discusses some possibly parallel developments of 'plural' forms of *na* in Czech, Polish, Byelorussian and Ukrainian. See also Lombard (1936: 264-66) for similar examples, including inflected verb-forms from interjections in old French and German dialects.

[44] This is the same verb that elsewhere appears to be 'imperative only', and supports Veselinova's view (2003: 163) that suppletion can originate in imperative-only verbs.

[45] This imperative is suppletive already in Greek (cf. Veselinova 2003: 161), and from Greek it is also borrowed as a suppletive imperative into Bulgarian (ib. 165).

[46] *ALR II* map 1440 gives a clearly cognate imperative form at Gârda de Jos where the medial consonant is represented by a special symbol representing a 'nasal dental of brief duration in which the soft palate does not fully descend'. This suggests that the [r] of *iură* is derived from a nasal (a phonetic process

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

NALRR Transilvania[47] question 1952, point 364 (Mihai Viteazu), specifically states that the interjection *hai*, not *vino*, is used as the singular imperative, while at 262 (Beclean), the informant comments that *haide* and plural *haideți* are the preferred imperatives (cf. also *ALR II* map 2101, point 574 (Mihăileni) and map 1440, for points 235 (Voiniceni), 157 (Vînători), 250 (Petreştii de Jos) and 272 (Boiul Mare)).

3. Conclusion

My purpose in this study has been to provide a historical and comparative sketch of the 'anomalous' nature of the morphology of imperatives in Romanian. Veselinova's extremely informative treatment (2003:153-66;221) of 'suppletive imperatives' makes it clear that what we observe for Romanian is not peculiar to that language. Veselinova shows that suppletion in imperatives of verbs of motion, borrowing of suppletive forms through language contact, 'imperative-only' verbs, and the incursion of 'hortative particles' (interjections) into motion verbs, if overall rare, are present in a number of languages (principally of Africa and the Arabic middle east). My study not only adds Romanian to the list of languages manifesting such developments, but collocates suppletion among a larger class of 'morphologically anomalous' developments to which imperatives are diachronically prone.

It is unsurprising, and well-known cross-linguistically, that suppletion affects semantically very basic and frequent verbs, such as verbs of motion. The question is why the imperative in particular should display morphologically unusual, including suppletive, developments. Veselinova (2003:165f.;197) rightly asserts that the occurrence of suppletion in imperatives is not haphazard, and goes on to say that it is semantically and functionally motivated by high 'relevance' of imperative meaning to the meaning of the verbs affected; in particular 'command and motion form a coherent semantic whole'. A priori, this is not self-evident, for it is not clear why imperative meaning is more 'relevant' to the lexical meaning of the verbs affected than any other property of the verb (such as person), but I believe that the status of interjections[48] plays a major role in explaining this special status of imperatives. Interjections express a class of semantically very 'primitive' meanings such as 'go/come'[49], 'take/give', 'take heed', prominent in all spoken, face-to-face, discourse and whose expression may well be acquired before more complex morphological structure not only by children learning

characteristic of dialects of this area), and that the form is either a variant of *vină* or somehow influenced by it. The development of the first syllable remains however obscure.

[47] I should like to record here my thanks to Dr. Ion Mării and his colleagues at *Institutul de lingvistică şi filologie "Sextil Puşcariu"*, in Cluj, not only for giving me access to as yet unpublished parts of *NALRR Transilvania*, and other materials, but also their invaluable expertise on points of interpretation.

[48] At times, linguists have been divided as to the status (imperative or interjection?) of a given Romanian form. The form *zbughi* is defended as a 'verb' by Lombard (1953:29-31; 1955:653) – on the morphological grounds that there exists also an infinitive *zbughi* – against Tiktin's and Candrea's belief that it is an 'interjection'. But as Lombard (1953:29) says, *zbughi* 'sert à narrer d'une manière vive, évocatrice, une fuite soudaine, une disparition rapide', and performs a narrative function often served by an 'interjection narrative', such as *zvâc* or *tronc*. The imperative *fugi* 'go, flee, run' may be similarly used as a 'narrative interjection' (Lombard 1953:31).

[49] Yet another anomalous development in the imperative of a verb meaning 'flee, go away' is exemplified by Transylvanian *fu* (cf. Lombard 1955:769), and Megleno-Romanian *fui* (Capidan 1925:162) for expected *fugi* or *fuz*. See also *ALR II* map 2100 for points 012 (Liumnița), 02 (Jeiăn), 102 (Feneş), 141 *fuj* (Micăsasa).

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

their native language, but also by adults in contact with foreign languages (cf. also Elwert 1965)[50]. Verb-forms expressing the same 'primitive' meanings may well be learned initially as interjections, before their paradigmatic relation to the verbs of which they are part is learned by speakers. It is precisely the status of such basic imperatives as interjections acquired prior to verbal morphology and probably stored independently of the verbs to which they are related that facilitates the survival of morphological archaism, the introduction of idiosyncratic irregularities, and even the suppletive borrowing of imperative forms from other languages. It is also the fact that these interjective verb-forms display what speakers can identify as inflectional marking of person, that facilitates the creation of 'inflected interjections' (cf. also Puşcariu 1943:125).

Bibliography and Abbreviations

ALR II = Atlasul Lingvistic Român. *Serie Nouă*, Vols 1-7. (dir. E. Petrovici), Cluj, 1956-.

ALRR Maramureş = Neiescu, P., G. Rusu and I. Stan, *Atlasul Lingvistic român pe regiuni. Maramureş*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1969-.

Byck, J., *Imperativul în limba română*, in Jacques Byck, *Studii şi articole*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1967, p. 131-142.

Canarache, A., *Verbe defective în limba romînă*, „Limba română", 9/1960, p. 10-20.

Capidan, Theodor, *Meglenoromânii*, Bucureşti, Cultura naţională, 1925.

Capidan, Theodor, *Aromânii, dialectul aromân: studiu lingvistic*, Bucureşti, Imprimeria naţională, 1932.

Caragiu-Marioţeanu, Matilda, *Verbul*, in I. Coteanu (ed.), *Istoria limbii române*, II, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1969, p. 255-79.

Chivu, Gheorghe (et al.) *Istoria limbii literare române: epoca veche* (1532-1780), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1997.

Dan, Ilie, *Un vocativ regional*, „Limba română", 12/1963, p. 527-31.

Densusianu, Ovid., *Histoire de la langue roumaine,* Tome II, *Le seizième siècle*, Paris, Leroux, 1938.

DLR = Dicţionarul limbii române. Serie nouă, Vol. XIII, Partea I (*V-veni*), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1997.

Elwert, Theodor, *Interjections, onomatopées et système linguistique. A propos de quelques exempes roumains*, in *Actes du Xe Congrès International de Linguistique et de Philologie Romanes,* Bucureşti, 1965, p. 1235-46.

Ernout, A., *Morphologie historique du latin*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1927.

Frâncu, C., *Formele de persoana a II-a singular de la imperativul negativ al verbelor „a avea", „a fi", „a (a)duce", „a face", „a zice"*, „Limba română", 29/1980, p. 26-33.

[50] There is, by the way, an interesting parallel with the borrowing of the vocative inflection *-o*, which is the only Romanian inflectional desinence of undisputedly foreign (Slav) origin, and which will also have been prominent in face-to-face, 'attention securing', discourse between Romanian and Slav speakers. Its extension within Romanian from nominal to imperative morphology (*vino, ado*) further serves to underscore the close link between imperatives, and vocatives having the force of 'interjections'. It is not clear to me why Petrucci (1999:106f.) assumes that not only vocative *-o*, but also imperative *-o*, must be the result of 'language shift' carried out by Slavs acquiring Romanian. Vocative *-o* could easily be borrowed in the circmstances I describe, and we have no evidence that the type *vino* is not the result of a later, internal, extension within Romanian. To judge from Pătruţ (1964), borrowing of Slav *-o* may have occurred twice, the second time more recently in Maramureş, under Ukrainian influence.

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

Graur, Alexandru, *Note asupra persoanei a II-a sg. a imperativului în romîneşte*, „Studii şi cercetări lingvistice", 12/1961, p. 159-61.
Ionică, Ion, *Grairuile din sudul Olteniei*, University of Bucharest [thesis], 1974.
Joseph, Brian, *On the synchrony and diachrony of Modern Greek „NA"*, „Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies", 7/1981, p. 139-154.
Kovačec, August, *Descrierea istroromânei actuale*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1971.
Krepinsky, Max, *Influence slave sur le verbe roumain*, „Slavia", 16:1-49, 1938/39, p. 220-268; 481-534.
Lombard, Alf, *L'infinitif de narration dans les langues romanes*, Uppsala / Leipzig, Almqvist & Wiksells / Harrassowitz, 1936.
Lombard, Alf, *Un groupe d'impératifs abrégés en roumain*, „Studia Neophilologica", 25/1953, p. 21-39.
Lombard, Alf, *Le Verbe roumain. Etude morphologique*, Vols I, II, Lund, Gleerup, 1955.
Maiden, Martin, *Evidence from the Italian dialects for the internal structure of prosodic domains*, in J.C. Smith, and M. Maiden, (eds.), *Linguistic Theory and the Romance Languages*, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 1995, p. 115-31.
Maiden, Martin, *On the Romance inflectional endings „-i" and „-*e", „Romance Philology", 50/1996, p. 147-182.
Maiden, Martin, *Verb augments and meaninglessness in Romance morphology*, „Studi di Grammatica Italiana", 22/2003, p. 1-61.
Maiden, Martin, *Morphological autonomy and diachrony*, „Yearbook of Morphology 2004", 2005, p. 137-75.
Mărgărit, I., V. Neagoe, *Cercetări asupra graiurilor româneşti vorbite în nord-estul Bulgariei (regiunea Loveci)*, in Maria Marin, Iulia Mărgărit, Victorela Neagoe, Vasile Pavel (eds), *Cercetări asupra graiurilor româneşti de peste hotare,* 2000, p. 10-29.
Moroianu, C., *Observaţii asupra radicalului verbelor onomatopeice*, „Limba română", 44/1995, p. 92-98.
NALRR Transilvania = Rusu, G., V. Bidian, and D. Loşonţi, *Noul Atlas lingvistic român pe regiuni. Transilvania*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1992-.
Orza, R., *Sufixele „-ez" şi „-esc" în graiurile limbii române*, „Studii şi cercetări lingvistice", 33/1978, p. 35-42.
Papahagi, T., *Cercetări în Munţii Apuseni*, „Grai şi suflet", 2/1925. p. 22-89.
Papahagi, T., *Dicţionarul dialectului aromân general şi etimologic*, Second ed., Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1974.
Petrucci, Peter, *Slavic Features in the History of Romanian*, Munich, Lincom, 1999.
Pop, Sever, *Grammaire Roumaine*, Berne, Francke, 1948.
Puşcariu, Sextil, *Istroromânii*, Bucureşti, Cultura naţională, 1926.
Puşcariu, Sextil, *Die Rumänische Sprache. Ihr Wesen und ihre volkliche Prägung*, Leipzig, Harrassowitz, 1943.
Puşcariu, Sextil, *Limba Română II. Rostirea*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1964.
Puşcariu, Sextil, *Etymologisches Wötrterbuch der rumänischen Sprache*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1975
Pătruţ, Ion, *Consideraţii în legătură cu vocativul romînesc în „-o"*, „Romanoslavica", 7/1963, p. 87-93.
Rohlfs, Gerhard, *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti. Morfologia*, Turin, Einaudi, 1968.
Rosetti, Alexandru, *Observaţii asupra limbii lui Dimitrie Cantemir în „Istoria ieroglifică"*, „Buletin ştiinţific. Secţiunea de ştiinţă, limbii, literatură şi arte", 1/1952, p. 17-38.
Rosetti, Alexandru, *Istoria limbii române*, vol. I, Bucureşti, Editura ştiinţifică, 1964.
Sihler, Andrew, *A Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

Skutsch, F., *Plautinisches und Romanisches: Studien zu plautinischen Prosodie*, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1970 (1892).
Schmid, Heinrich, *Zur Formenbildung von* dare *und* stare *im Romanischen*, Bern, Francke, 1949.
Teaha, Teofil, *Graiul din Valea Crişului Negru*, Bucureşti, 1961.
Tiktin, H., *Rumänisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. III. Bucureşti, 1924.
Todoran, Romulus, *Graiul din Vîlcele (raionul Turda)*, „Materiale şi cercetări dialectale", 1/1960, p. 31-126.
van der Auwera, Johan and Ludo Lejeune, *The morphological imperative*, in M. Haspelmath, M. Dryer and D. Gil (eds), *The World Atlas of Language Structures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 286-89.
Veselinova, Ljuba, *Suppletion in verb paradigms. Bits and pieces of a puzzle*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Stockholm, 2003.
Weigand, Gustav, *Körösch- and Marosch-Dialekte*, „Jahresbericht des Instituts für rumänische Sprache" 4/1897, S. 250-336.
Weigand, Gustav, *Die Sprache der Olympo-Walachen nebst einer Einleitung über Land und Leute*, Leipzig, 1898.
Weigand, Gustav, *Die rumänischen Dialekte der kleinen Walachei, Serbiens und Bulgariens*, „Jahresbericht des Instituts für rumänische Sprache", 7/1900, S. 1-92.
Weigand, Gustav, *Die Dialekte von Grossen Walachei*, „Jahresbericht des Instituts für rumänische Sprache", 9/1902, S. 234-324.
Weigand, Gustav, *Die Dialekte der Bukovina und Bessarabiens*, Leipzig, 1904.
Xrakovskij, Victor S., *Typology of Imperative Constructions*, Munich, Lincom, 2001.

Sugli imperativi romeni

Nel presente studio viene sfruttata la ricca messe di dati dialettologici di cui disponiamo su singoli aspetti dell'imperativo romeno per offrire una breve rassegna storico-comparativa degli sviluppi morfologicamente 'anomali' dell'imperativo (soprattutto di seconda persona singolare) nel romeno e nei dialetti romeni. In base a questa la casistica dell'imperativo dacoromanzo verrà inserita nel quadro più ampio delle ricerche comparative e tipologiche sull'imperativo nelle lingue del mondo, rilevandosi alcuni tratti ricorrenti nella formazione dell'imperativo che sembrano collocare certi tipi d'imperativo semanticamente molto basici in una posizione intermedia tra verbo e interiezione.

Trinity College, University of Oxford
Great Britain

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)

BDD-A765 © 2006 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-10-09 17:17:28 UTC)