

Title: Imperative in Evolution, Acquisition, and Certain Compounds
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Verb-noun (VN) compounds (*pickpocket, turncoat, daredevil, Marwood*) are exceptional in that they are exocentric (not headed). Moreover, in Serbian equivalents, the verb indisputably surfaces in the imperative form:

<i>ispi-čutura</i>	‘empty-flask, drunkard’
<i>vrti-guz</i>	‘spin-butt, fidget’
<i>jebi-vetar</i>	‘screw-wind, charlatan’
<i>Budi-mir</i>	‘Be-peace’ (name)

Jackendoff (1999) proposes that the evolution of syntax has preserved ‘fossils’ of its previous stages. VN compounds arguably constitute the most plausible candidates for evolutionary fossils because of (i) the simplest possible syntax: non-hierarchical concatenation, with no functional categories; (ii) verb in the unmarked mood form; (iii) underdetermined theta-role assignment; (iv) basic vocabulary, often coarse/vulgar, denoting body parts/functions.

If proto-language operated with a limited concrete vocabulary, this compounding strategy, and concatenation in general, would have augmented its expressive power enormously. It is conceivable that humans used verbs to issue commands even in a one-word stage (cf. today’s imperative), as well as in compounds for naming/nicknaming purposes, before using verbs to express propositions. If so, then it is not completely surprising that a (fossilized) imperative form is found in Serbian compounds. Furthermore, formation of thousands of these compounds (now largely lost) may have been encouraged by ancient verbal duels/rituals, which rewarded originality and coarse humor.

Imperative is among the first productive verbal forms used by children (e.g. Bar-Shalom & Snyder 1999). VN compounds themselves appear early in acquisition, as will be shown. It is conceivable that imperative is a paradigm case of an unmarked mood form, and that for that reason it emerges early, whether in evolution or acquisition.

Jackendoff, R. 1999. “Possible stages in the evolution of the language capacity.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 3.7.

Bar-Shalom, E. & W. Snyder. 1999. “On the relationship between Root Infinitives and Imperatives in Early Child Russian.” *Proceedings of BU Conference on Language Development* 23.