

REDUPLICATION IN URHOBO

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ABSTRACT

Reduplication is an important phenomenon in language studies. Its linguistic forms have long been studied in terms of descriptive methods. It is a fertile ground in the study of linguistics because it cuts across the core levels of linguistics. Reduplication process varies from one language to another. Reduplication can function as plurality marker, qualifier, a comparative term, past tense maker etc. This study examines the reduplication processes in Urhobo language. The Urhobo language belongs to the South Western Edoid group of languages. The work focuses on the morphological processes involved in the formation of reduplicated words and their implications. Data was collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary source was from six competent native speakers of the language who are between the ages of 40 and 50 years while the secondary source included literatures from the languages under study. The standard dialect of Urhobo which is Agbarho dialect was selected. Amongst other findings, the following were observed: the formation of adjectives and adverbs are mainly through the processes of reduplication in the language. Reduplication performs both grammatical and lexical functions in language. The application of the consonants/vowels templatic morphology theory to the Urhobo language makes the work a pioneer research. This work is significant because it benefits the owners of the language, students, users and teachers of languages.

Introduction

Reduplication cuts across all the levels of linguistics analysis such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. This work looks as morphological approach. Tannen (1987) views reduplication to be a limitless resource for individual creativity and the central linguistic meaning making strategy. In the languages of the world, morphological processes seem to be elementary that is, the formation of words and their modification looks peripheral. While reduplication appears simple, but very technical processes are involved as it cuts across a wide range of languages and language groups. Although it is widely used in all the levels of linguistics, its productivity varies. Considering the concept of its universality, this research is aimed to study the dynamism of how the concept works, its functions, types and the derivational patterns in the Urhobo language through affixational processes.

Languages all over the world have different ways of exploring the principles and parameters of Universal Grammar (UG) in order to correspond to the structure of the language among the different features of language. One particular term could function differently across the different languages. Reduplication is one of such phenomena that cut across African languages of which Urhobo language is inclusive.

Reduplication is a term in morphology for a process of repetition whereby the form of a prefix/suffix reflects certain phonological characteristics of the root (Crystal, 2011). In other words, reduplication is a process whereby an affix is realized by phonological material borrowed from the radical element which can function as a grammatical element with semantic implication in a language. That is, a situation whereby the repeated part of the word (morpheme) serves some derivational or inflectional purposes.

The People and their Languages

The Urhobo people belong to the Niger-Delta region in Delta State of Nigeria. The neighbours of the Urhobo to the east are the Isoko, to the west are the Itsekiri, to the south are the Ijaw and to the north are the Edo. The Isoko, Itsekiri and the Ijaw are in Delta South Local Government Areas. According to Onigu (2003), the population of the Urhobo people was half a million according to the population census of 1963, more than a million in the 1991 population census. In 2006, the Urhobo at home and those in the Diaspora were estimated to be over five million people.

Data was collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary source was from the native speakers of language while the secondary source includes literature. Six competent native speakers of the Urhobo who are of age between 40 to 50 years were contacted. The Consonantal/Vowels Template Morphology was used to describe and analyze our data.

Reduplication is found in a wide range of languages and language groups. Its level of linguistic productivity varies, and it is sometimes used interchangeably with repetition. Repetition is a term which is used to indicate sounds and concepts that are repeated in one form or the other to provide reinforcement and emotional emphasis (Nadarajan, 2006). Ghomeshi, J. Jackendoff, R. Rosen, N. and Russell, K. (2004) refer to reduplication as child language amongst other definitions. They observe that the term is widely used as a poetic device which occurs when a sound, syllable, word, phrase, line, stanza or metrical pattern is repeated to make it the basic unifying device. Describing the features of repetition, Lausberg (1998) proposes that it has both informative and reinforcing functions. However, Wang (2005) insists that both repetition and reduplication have been used interchangeably because they overlap at some point in different languages as can be observed in Urhobo and Edo languages.

According to Aziza (2007), reduplication is a morphological process in which a part or the whole of a stem is copied and attached to the stem. She identifies two types of reduplication which include partial and full which may be carried out on nouns or verbs in the Urhobo language. She adds that in some cases, semantic effect may be achieved.

Crystal (2008) refers to reduplication processes as a form of repetition whereby the formed prefix/suffix reflects certain phonological characteristic of the root. He observes that the process involved in reduplication has been a particular focus of prosodic morphology. He distinguishes the base from the reduplicated form which performs certain grammatical context. In the same vein, Spencer (1991) refers to reduplication as a morphological operation which is a species of affixation of a prosodic template to a stem, followed by copying that stem and in association to the template.

Wang (2005) states that reduplication is a morphological process in which the root or stem of a word or part of it is repeated. He says that in many languages, reduplication is used as inflection to convey grammatical functions and as lexical derivations to create semantic forms. He adds that there is that general tendency among linguists to overlook its functions at the level of discourse. O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba (2011) agree that reduplication is a common morphological process in some languages. It functions as a grammatical or semantic contrast by repeating all or part of the base to which it applies.

Ekenerho (2014) says that reduplication is a process that copies part or whole of the stem and attaches it to the stem, either before or after it. She adds that nouns, adverbs and adjectives are derived through the process of reduplication in Ika and Urhobo languages. Oyebade (2007) sees reduplication as an affixation process that copies materials from the stem into the affix. He says that reduplication is used to derive nouns in Yoruba and also functions as intensifier. He adds that through the aid of tones, Yoruba uses idiophones to identify particular character traits, etc. Sapir (1921) sees reduplication as the repetition of all or part of the radical element. He posits that reduplication is a natural phenomenon or process that is prevalent in language.

Broselow and McCarthy (1983) view reduplication to be more exotic, though, it is the very unusual phenomenon of infixing where a copy of some portion of the root appears inside the root itself. Although, they say that reduplication is extremely rare in infixing languages but it is of great interest because of the challenges it poses. The essence of reduplication according to Broselow and McCarthy (1983) suggests that, reduplication is a special case of ordinary affixational morphological process where the affixes are phonologically underspecified, receiving their full phonetic expression by copying adjacent segments. They argue that the dictionary entry of the morpheme includes specification of its semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological properties and that what is odd about reduplication as an affixation process is the fact that the skeletal CV template introduced by the affix is underspecified. They say that in order for the morpheme to be phonologically represented, a phonemic melody must be mapped onto every C and V slot in the morpheme template. This is achieved by copying a portion of the segmental representation of the base or even the entire base, to which the underspecified morpheme is attached.

Marantz (1982), Yip (1982), Bell (1983) agree that the development in the works of reduplication is a special case of ordinary affixation morphology, where the affixes are phonologically underspecified, receiving their full phonetic expression by copying adjacent segments. Marantz adds that the fundamental insight of theories into the application of reduplication is that reduplication is accomplished not by special and quite powerful copying transformations as in the Sounds Pattern of English (SPE) framework but rather by the normal morphological device of affixation whereby words are decomposable unto auto-segmental levels (tiers) that is, the skeleton, the CV, the phonemic melody etc. Phonologically, reduplication is described as reduplicated segments such as sequences of vowels/consonants or reduplicated prosodic units that is, syllables. Morphologically, it is described as the reduplication of linguistic constituents such as words, roots stem or base. Syntactically, it describes the lexical categories of the reduplicated word and semantically, it tells the semantic effect of the reduplicated word. Because of the fact that reduplication interfaces among phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, it involves a lot of theoretical approaches (Ghameshi, et. al. 2004).

Frampton (2004) says that reduplication in Arabic is known as a means to indicate the occurrence of a word or an utterance more than one time in one context for the sake of emphasis, threatening, glorification or praises. In other words, when you reduplicate a word in Arabic, it can stand for emphasis, threatening etc. depending on the context. Leonid (2003) posits that reduplication is extremely rich and quite an intricate system of verbal formation in the oldest Indo-Aryan language. He identifies five verbal formation processes of reduplication; they include: perfect, present tense, causative, desiderative and intensive. We shall see data application in our empirical studies.

Rastall (2004) argues that most reduplication forms that appear in the media as ephemeral (short period) in the sense that they tend to appear as play words that do not remain with the language. He encouraged and stressed the need for studies to be done on reduplication beyond their lexical level. Raimy (2000) says that the innumerable processes of reduplication have often been romanticized by providing a blueprint for language expressions. The important contributions of the work are in threefold: (i) its explicit formalization of precedence relationships in the phonology, (ii) its rejection of the reduplicant as the exponent of a terminal in the morphology and (iii) its characterization of over application and under application effects, analysed as the result of the ordering of phonological processes before transfer of the representation to the articulatory interface.

Gil (2005) says that reduplication appears to have various conventions; reinforcement, reiteration, recurrence or repetition but it distinguishes one from the other in certain characteristics. He identifies three of these characteristics to include: (i) it is a mere morphological formation, (ii) its wider structure deals with the repetition of roots of individual words and (iii) its repetitive elements are often juxtaposed.

Inkelas (2008) argues that the fundamental typological distinction pertaining to reduplication is that between phonological duplication and morphological doubling. Phonological duplication, which occurs for a phonological purpose such as providing an onset or nucleus for a syllable or filling in the featural content of an otherwise unspecified timing unit in the representation, is formally related to phonological assimilation. It obeys phonological locality conditions; a target phonologically defined constituents and is sensitive to phonological markedness consideration. The morphological doubling which occurs for morphological purpose such as making a change in meaning or creating a new stem/type, is the result of the doubling of morphological category such as root, stem or affix. He observes that the morphological doubling via the double insertion mechanism is not derived by phonological correspondence and therefore is not subject to any of the phonological properties characteristics of phonological duplication. The two copies related morphemes are morphs semantically are phonologically independent.

Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) say that in reduplication, a continuous substring from either the beginning or the end of a word is copied; and that many languages used reduplication for inflectional or derivational purposes. They identify that in the Ilokano language of Austronesia, reduplication functions for plurality which is very productive. Also, the identification of the reduplicated morpheme must typically follow the structural pattern in the language. From the above definitions/positions, reduplication could be summarized as a template and prosodic morphology which functions in different languages in deriving new lexicons. In other words, reduplication process varies from one language to another. It involves the addition of material whose identity is partially or wholly determined by the base. The base or stem can be repeated

either to the left, to the right or occasionally in the middle of the stem. It is a process which is seen as a common morphological phenomenon that most languages use for derivational or inflectional purposes in forming words or creating new lexemes, plural formation, intensifier, modifier, numeral formation, qualifier, negation, etc. depending on the language of discussion. It was observed however that reduplication cuts across many of the world languages, especially African languages.

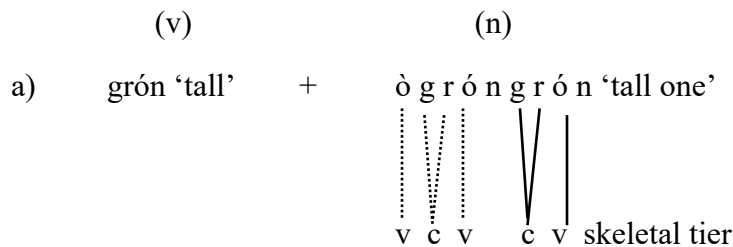
Giannakis (1992) and Stonhan (2006) view reduplication in Arabic as a special morphological strategy for building words considering the fact that Arabic has a consonantal and germination in nature. Tannen (1987) views it to be a limitless resource for individual creativity and the central linguistic meaning making strategy in different languages.

The theoretical framework used for this work is Consonants/Vowels Template Morphology proposed by McCarthy (1982a) which states that for reduplication to work effectively across languages,

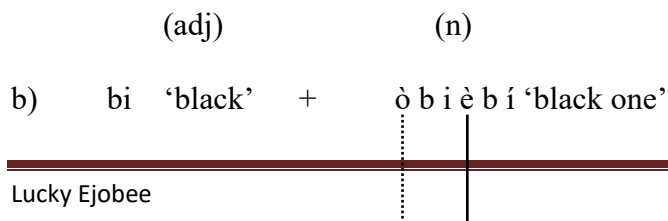
- (i) it introduces an underspecified affix (prefix, suffix or interfix)
- (ii) it creates an unassociated copy of the phonemic melody of the root
- (iii) it associates the copied phonemic melody onto the CV-skeleton one-to-one, with vowels being linked to vowel-slots and consonants with consonant-slots. In case of prefix, the association line goes from left to right while in the case of suffix, it goes from right to left.
- (iv) it erases all superfluous phonemic materials or any CV slots on the skeleton tier that remains unassociated at the end. This he also calls “Mapping Principles of Reduplication”. We applied this to number of data in Urhobo language as discussed below:

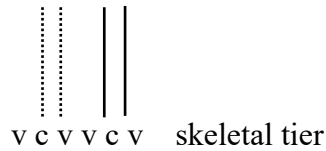
Left to right Reduplication (Prefixation) in Urhobo

1.



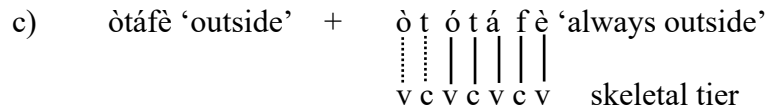
Consonant sounds do not end a word in the Urhobo hence the skeletal tier ends with a vowel sound ‘o’ as observed in 1a above.





(prep)

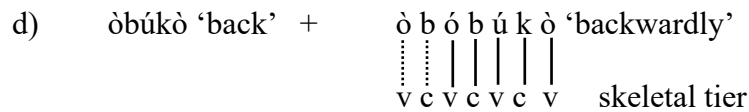
(adj)



Majority of adjectives in the language are done through reduplication process.

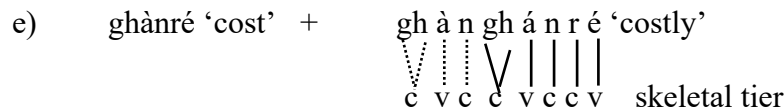
(prep)

(adv)

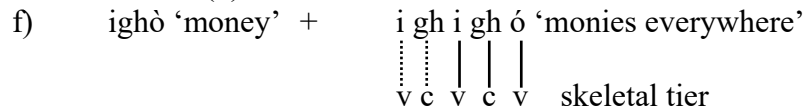


(v)

(adv)



(n)

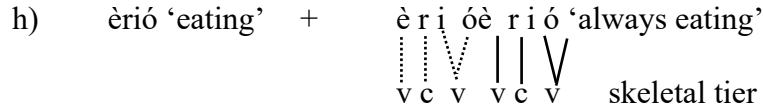


Note that in the process of reduplicating the morpheme(s) to pluralize or to increase the number(s), there is vowel assimilation, deletion or gliding. ATR is also observed in the process. We used reduplication as a tense marker in Urhobo language. It tells us the time in which the action is done or taking place. This is exemplified in the below data.

(n)



(n)



Note: All the broken lines in the data presented above are the reduplicated morphemes using the CV Template Morphology. Where the lines are linked together, there is glide formation, vowel harmony or assimilations.

Right to Left Reduplication (Suffixation) in Urhobo

2.

- a) (n) ùdú ‘heart’ + (adj) ùdúdí ‘strong hearted’
 | | | | |
 v c v c v skeletal tier
- b) (n) òbó ‘hand’ + (adj) òbóbó ‘full of hands’
 | | | | |
 v c v c v skeletal tier
- c) (adj) vòn ‘full’ + (adj) vònvòn ‘very full’
 | | | | |
 c v c c v skeletal tier
- d) (n) òbó ‘hand’ + k ò b ó k ò b ó ‘every/each hand’
 | | | | | | | | | | | |
 c v c v c v c v skeletal tier
- e) (n) àsá ‘place’ + k á s á k á s á ‘every/each place’
 | | | | | | | | | | | |
 c v c v c v c v skeletal tier
- f) èrió ‘eat’ e r i o r i o
 | | | | | | | |
 v c v c v skeletal tier
- g) (adj) ákpátá ‘fast’ (n) ò k p á t á k p á t á ‘most fast one’
 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
 v c v c v c v c v skeletal tier

Reduplication functions as intensifier in Urhobo. It is used to show/describe the degree of the meaning of word as either to qualifiers or modifiers as exemplified in 2a-g above. The reduplicated word tells you more about the root.

Insertion of ‘k’ Morpheme (Interfixation) in Urhobo

3	a)	ke/ko	+	òbó ‘hand’	kòbókòbó ‘every hand’
					⋮ c
	b)	ke/ko	+	órè ‘feast’	kórèkórè ‘every feast’
					⋮ c
	c)	ke/ko	+	òsió ‘rain’	kòsiókòsió ‘every rain’
					⋮ c
	d)	ke/ko	+	àsá ‘place’	kàsákàsá ‘every place’
					⋮ c

The insertion of the ‘k’ morpheme to reduplicate the radical elements in Urhobo occurs both at the word initial and intervocalic positions as illustrated above. This process is very productive in word formation processes in the language especially as it applies to nouns formations.

Summary

We used the CV Template Morphology approach to analyze our data as presented. We illustrated this through the affixational processes as it applies to prefixation, suffixation and interfixation. The broken lines in the data presented indicate the deferent positions of affixes and the root word. In other words, the broken lines are the reduplicated morphemes.

We demonstrated the part of speech in which the root word belongs and the one to which it belongs after the reduplication of the stem. We used the melody tier and the skeletal tier to indicate stem and consonantal/vowels sounds. The following functions of reduplication were observed: (i) it functions as adjectives, adverbs, nouns, preposition, etc.; (ii) it changes the lexical categories from one lexical class to another; (iii) it functions as tense marker; (iv) it serves as an intensifier (v). it serves as plural marker; (vi) it is used to form compound words (vii) it affects the meaning of the root-words that are reduplicated; (viii) it functions as phrasal category; (ix) it is used as a way of emphasizing ideals; (xi) it is used to express surprise/exclamation amongst others in the Urhobo Language

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