

A Study on the Morphological Process of Reduplication in English and Ùkwuàni Languages

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Abstract

This research is a contrastive analysis of the morphological processes of reduplication in English and Ùkwuàni languages. Its purpose is to establish points of divergence while noting convergence in the formation of reduplicants in a bid to predict learning difficulty which an Ùkwuàni L₁ learner of reduplicant words may encounter. The theoretical frame for this research is on Marantz and Selkirk's theories. The primary and secondary source of data was utilized. Data analysis reveals that some reduplicants have no phonological effects on the base to which they are attached. Other reduplicants in English change phonologically whereas they do not in Ùkwuàni. This study has therefore, helped in identifying the difficulty associated with phonological changes encountered by the Ùkwuàni L₁ learner of English during the learning process. It recommended that in language pedagogy, English L₂ and Ùkwuàni L₁ teachers particularly in the Niger Delta region should utilize effectively the ordering of difficulties in learning.

Keywords: Morphology, Language, English, Ùkwuàni, Reduplication.

Introduction

This research work on reduplication focuses on aspects of word formation. It is a contrastive analysis of the morphological processes in English and Ùkwuàni. Language as defined by Collins Dictionary (2023) is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing. You can use language to refer to various means of communication involving recognizable symbols, non-verbal sounds or actions.

Statement of the Problem

The multilingual situation in Nigeria is very complex and therefore, becomes necessary to investigate an aspect of the linguistic circumstances surrounding the existence of the languages side by side. When speech communities come in contact with each other, one is bound to influence the other. As the languages in contact look for common ground, English or the Nigerian pidgin may become the home language. There is usually linguistic interference, transference and language modification. This is in congruence with Corder, 8.P. (1958) observation that one explanation (of L₂ error) is that the learner is carrying over the habits of his mother tongue into the second language.

An effective way of enhancing the language competence of learners is by accounting systematically for those L₂ patterns that are likely to constitute mother tongue interference

(MTI). Conducting a contrastive analysis (CA) of the L_1 and L_2 would reveal these features which are similar in the L_1 and L_2 which will thus facilitate learning and those features which are dissimilar. It is these differences that are likely to constitute MT interference and serve as sources of learning difficulty. Adebisi, A. (1972) cites Quirk *et al.*, when he writes that, "At the opposite extreme are interference varieties that are so wide-spread in a community and of such long standing that they be thought stable..." The Ùkwuàni user of English is not immune from this interference problem. It is on this note that an aspect of word formation reduplication in English and Ùkwuàni would be investigated.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame for this study is based on Marantz, Alec's 1982 theory on word formation. Marantz theory is based on McCarthy, John's proposals which have had a considerable impact on subsequent research into reduplication. Reduplication appears to be non-concatenative, hence it has important implications for autosegmental theories of phonology and morphology. With a linear phonological framework, certain reduplications would have been handled by means of (a set of) transformational rules which would have had the effect of copying a string from the root. Marantz (in Spencer, Andrew 151) proposes that reduplication is essentially affixation, but that what is affixed is a CV skeleton or prosodic template. The phonemic content of the reduplicative affix is then obtained by occupying the complete phoneme melody of the root and linking it to the affixal CV template respecting the principles of association familiar from autosegmental phonology. Marantz theory is based on the fact that morphological structure is accounted for solely by phrase structure rules.

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis for this study is:

1. There is no significant difference in the phonological changes of reduplicants in English and Ùkwuàni.

Review of Related Literature

Contrastive linguistics is concerned with the process of a monolingual becoming a bilingual. Contrastive Analysis involves the systematic comparison of two languages, an L_1 and an L_2 with the aim of identifying their similarities and differences. As Carl James (27) puts it: Contrastive analysis is made up of microlinguistic and macrolinguistic analyses. The goal of the former is the description of the linguistic code, without making reference to the uses to which the code is put, or how messages carried by this code are modified by the context in which they occur.

Robert Lado (1957:2) proposes the theoretical foundations for CA when he argues that those elements (in the L_2) which are similar to (the learner's L_1) will be simple for him, and those elements that are difficult will be difficult for him to comprehend. His work provides a comprehensive theoretical framework and it suggests a systematic procedure for

conducting CA. However, some linguists have challenged the adequacy of contrastive linguistic studies. According to Antenberg and Granger (2002) several reasons such as overprediction of learner's problem and inappropriate application of behaviourist's concepts (Encyclopedia of the English Language). There are several interrelated factors that can explain this revival. On the one hand, the integration of European countries in a multilingual and cross cultural space has created a real need for comparing and contrasting languages and cultures. (Artenberg and Granger, 2002:3). Due to the challenge of its adequacy, many language analysts have begun to turn to error analysis (EA) as a more reliable method of accounting for learners' errors. Nevertheless, linguist believe that contrastive analysis is useful in predicting learners errors.

Transfer Theory: The Psychological Component

As hybrid discipline, CA has both a linguistic and psychological component. CA rose as part of the behaviourist learning theories which is formulated within the theory of psychology. Chomsky (1957) believes that there are considerable similarities between languages' deep structures and that these structures reveal properties common to all languages that surface structure conceals.

According to cook, V. (1969) In Sajavaara and Fairweather:13) the work of Lado (1957) and Weinreich, Uriel (1953) with second language matched the overall structural paradigm laid down for linguistics by Bloomfield L. (1933). Slabakova (2000) explored the acquisition of telicity marking in English by Spanish and Bulgarian learners', Yang and Huang (2004) studied the impact of the absence of grammatical tense in Chinese on the acquisition of English tense aspect system. Frank *et al.*, (2002) and Vigliocco *et al.*, (1996). Specifically examined the usage of subject verb agreement.

Linguistic Component

The linguistic level for this study is the morphological component. At this level, different theoretical frameworks are available for executing CAs depending on the type of CA one aims at conducting. Two types of contrastive analysis have been identified- the horizontal and vertical CA.

The L₁: Ùkwuàni

The Ùkwuàni comprise one of the major ethnic groups of the Delta State region. The others being Igbo (Asaba), Itsekiri, Ijaw, Isoko, Ika and Urhobo (This Day, 2003). But it must be stated here that Ùkwuàni people are not Igbos as claimed by This Day (2003). Ùkwuàni people (also called Ndokwa). Ndokwa is coined from Ndisumili and Ùkwuàni, the two groups that make up the Ndokwa people are one of the tribes in the Southern part of Nigeria in the Western part of the Niger Delta. They are found majorly in the Northern part of Delta State and in some parts of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. Ùkwuàni is the second largest ethnic nationality in Delta State after the Urhobo people. It is also the largest in Delta North region which is referred to as Anioma.

Ndokwa land consists of three Local Government Areas (Ndokwa West, Ndokwa East and Ùkwuàni). There are over three dozens of towns and villages in Ndokwa. The three most popular ones are Kwale, Aboh and Obiaruku. Ùkwuàni lies between latitudes 5° 48'N and 5° 01' N and longitudes 6° 08'E and 6° 32'E of Delta State. It has common boundaries in the North with Ika South and Aniocha South Local Government Areas. Isoko South and Isoko North bound it in the South while it also has a common boundary with Ughelli North and Ethiope East Local Government Areas and Edo State as well as River Niger in the West and East, respectively. This explains why Ùkwuàni people find it very easy to spread out and mix up with other tribes. The rivers in the region are Niger, Ethiope, Adofi and Umu while the Ase Creek is the major Creek. (Spearman, October 10, 2023). Ùkwuàni has a population of 500,000 inhabitants (Joe Project Store 2023). According to Ozah, (2021) there is neither Ndokwa language, people nor culture. Only Ndokwa Local Government. But Ùkwuàni language, people, culture and history exist way back into timelessness.

Reduplication in English

Spencer (1991:162) states that one form of affixation is rather different from the standard prefixation and suffixation operations, so much so that it is not universally regarded as affixation. This is phenomenon of reduplication, in which some part of a base is repeated, either to the left or to the right or occasionally in the middle. According to Katamba (1993:183), what is less straightforward, though by no means rare, is reduplication that does not involve constituent copying. In Maori, for instance, reduplication does not always copy elements that are identifiable as constituents. Browse low and McCarthy (1984:24) summed up the essence of reduplication in CV-template morphology, stating that:

Reduplication is a special case of ordinary affixational morphology where the affixes are phonologically underspecified, receiving their full phonetic expression by copying adjacent segments (Katamba:184).

As Wikipedia (2023) online puts it, in linguistics, reduplication is a morphological process in which the root or stem of a word (or part of it) or even the whole word is repeated exactly or with a slight change. Studysmarter (2023) defines reduplication as a linguistic term that refers to the repetition of a word to create a new word with a modified meaning. It states further that in many languages, including English, reduplication is used to convey a range of meanings, such as intensification, pluralisation or repetition. Examples of reduplication in English include words like "chitchat", "zig-zag" and "pitter-patter".

Reduplication in Ùkwuàni

Iwemi (2023) designed a study to reveal the reduplication in Igbo language. Its major objective is to spell out as clear as possible the morphological processes of reduplication in the language. Oghiator F.E. (2022) states that there are no derivational suffixes for a change of word class in Ùkwuàni as in the English Language. In Ùkwuàni language, some adjectival are changed to reduplicants. Okumo (2020, says that Ùkwuàni is a harmony language. It operates a nine vowel system which is neatly divided into two mutually exclusive sets

(+ATR) (Advance Tongue Root) and (-ATR) (Retracted Tongue Root). Hyman (1975: 233-235) distinguishes between complete and partial harmony where complete vowel harmony is seen as a kind of repudiation. Ejaite Clem (2015) embarked a contrastive Tonal Pattern in Urhobo and Ùkwuàni and concludes that there are differences and similarities of tone in some words in both Urhobo and Ùkwuàni languages.

Full Reduplication in Ùkwuàni

In Ùkwuàni, full reduplication implies a repetition of the base. That is, the base is copied only to the right. Mostly full reduplicants in Ùkwuàni are descriptive. Hence, reduplicants here belong to the word class known as adjectives.

Research Methods

The researcher visited some Ùkwuàni speaking communities such as Ogume, Kwale, Ashaka and Ushie in Ndokwa West and East Local Government Areas and observed their patterns of forming reduplicants. The investigator ensured that the persons been observed do not know that they were been observed. In the process the researcher compiled diary on reduplicants.

Hypothetical Statement

There is no significant difference in the phonological changes of reduplicants in English and Ùkwuàni. From table 1 below, there is no phonological implication for the reduplicated items as obtainable in English language. Rather, what we have is headedness, as the noun classes are realized as adjectives. Therefore, reduplicants in Ùkwuàni are mostly adjectival or adverbial. It can therefore, be assumed here that Marantz's principle is not applicable to reduplication in Ùkwuàni. Instead, when a word is reduplicated, its word class changes as can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Reduplicated items in Ûkwuàni

S/N	Word	Reduplicant	Literal Translation	Dynamic Translation
1.	Anu (N)	anu anu (Adj) vcv vcv ànú ànú	Senseless+ senseless	Insensible
2.	Oku (N)	oku oku (Adj) vcv vcv ókú okú	Talk + talk	Talkative
3.	Ela (N)	ela ela (adj) v c v v c v é l'a é l'a	Mad + mad	Insane (or busy)
4.	Egwu (N)	egwu egwu (Adv) vccv vccv éghú éghú	Play + play	Playful
5.	Nko (Adv)	nko nko (Adv) ccv ccv nko nko	Fast + fast	Hurriedly
6.	Uyin (N)	uyin uyin (dv) vccv vccv úyí úyí	Dirt + dirt	Dirty
7.	Okpo (Adj)	okpo kpo (Adj) vccv c cv ókpo kpó	Filth + filth	Filthy
8.	Ekwa (N)	ekwa ekwa (v) vcc v vcc v ékwa ékwa	Cry + cry	Crying
9.	Eja (N)	eja eja (Adv) v c v v c v édzá édzá	Sand + sand	Sandy
10.	Oso (V)	Oso so (Adv) Vcv c v ósó ósó	Run + run	Fast
11.	Nma (Adj)	Nma ma (Adj) C c v c v Nmá ma	Beauty + beauty	Beautiful

Source: Field Work, 2023

Reduplication in English

Applying Marantz theory, it is observed that the kind of reduplication that takes place here is that copying or deletion takes place from left to right with different phonological changes (suffixing). Marantz proposals are broadly acceptable by linguists working in this model, although there are some relatively minor differences in the way they apply them. See table 2 below:

Table 2: Reduplicated items in English

Word	CV-Skeleton
Nitwit	cvc cvc n i t w i t
Knick-knack	cc cv cv cc cv cv k n i k n a k
Honey-bunny	cvc cv cvc cv cvc cv cvc cv h o n i b ʌ n i
Bye-bye	cv v ba cv v ba b a i c v v
Tidbit	cvc cvc t i d b i t
Itty-bitty	vcc cvc cv vcc cvc cv i t y b i t
Clap-trap	cv v cc cv cv v cc cv k i æ p t r æ
Hilly-billy	cvc cv cvc cv cvc cv cvc cv h i l b i l
Boogie-woogie	cvc cv cvc cv cvc cv cvc cv b u g w u g
Dilly-dally	cvc cv cv cvc cv cv d i l d a e
Helter-skelter	cv cc cv cc cv cv cc cv cc cv h e l s k e

Source: Field Work, 2023

Conclusion

Marantz's theory of re-duplication states that reduplication is essentially affixation but what is affixed is a CV-Skeleton, or prosodic template. The phonemic content of the reduplicative affix is then obtained by copying the complete phoneme melody and linking it to the affixed CV-template respecting the principles of association familiar from auto segmental phonology. The affixation of a CV-skeleton or prosodic template affects the phonological behaviour of reduplicants in English.

The differences, therefore, in the reduplicated items that result in the formation of new words in English and Ùkwuàni are:

- i. Reduplicated words in English have phonological implication as can be seen in table 2 but this is not so in Ùkwuàni.
- ii. Reduplication in English is the interface between phonology and morphology as reduplicants either undergo auto segmental change or total copying. This is not so in Ùkwuàni.
- iii. Reduplicants in English are either prefixing or suffixing. Ùkwuàni does not display any phonological change. In Ùkwuàni, reduplicational process is one directional and it is purely morphological.

Based on the observation from table 1 and 2 above, the learning difficulties that an Ùkwuàni L₁ learner of English will encounter are:

- a. Learner may not know that reduplication in English have phonological implication.
- b. They may not know that reduplication is the interface between phonology and morphology
- c. They may not also know that reduplication in English is either prefixing or suffixing.

Therefore, except the learner is taught that in English, phonological changes sometimes of fairly drastic kind may occur in the base, that such alternations should be handled in the word formation component by means of special rules regarded as partial suppletion and not in the phonology and that there are rules (truncation rules) which selectively delete certain morphemes which are adjacent to other morphemes in Ùkwuàni L₁ and English L₂, he/she may superimpose the structures by generalization and thereby generating patterns such as hanky-hanky, spick and spick, hully-hully, nicky-nicky etc.

In other words, the learner may misunderstand the morphological changes that occur in reduplication in English since there is no such phonological, behaviour or pattern in Ùkwuàni, rather what is obtainable is the issue of headedness. That is he/she is likely to find it confusing in comprehending the two directional copying patterns found in English since it is one directional in Ùkwuàni (i.e. left-to-right).

Hierarchy of Learning Difficulties

Table 3 below shows a theoretical hierarchy of the learning difficulties which an Ùkwuàni L₁ Learner of English reduplicants is likely to encounter:

Table 3: Constructed Hierarchy of Learning Difficulties

S/N	Derivations	Nature of Difficulty
1.	Partial suppletion	Phonological change takes place. This is unique to English
2.	Deletion rule	Deletion might take place to the right or to the left (two directional). This is unique to English

Source: Field Work, 2023

Recommendations

From a pedagogical point of view, the ordering of difficulties in table 3 above is from the most difficult to the least difficult. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The hierarchy should be utilized by English language teachers in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria particularly among Òkwuàni L₁ Learners of English in order to equip them with the best strategies for teaching reduplication.
2. Government should make more funds available such as Education Trust Fund (ETF), Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) to education linguists, contrastive analysts and other individuals who are interested in investigating Òkwuàni and other languages.

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