Reduplication in the Urhobo Language

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Abstract: *This study investigates reduplication in Urhobo. Reduplication in Urhobo is a morphological attitude of creating an emphatic word from existing lexical items. The objective of this study is to investigate how reduplication is being formed in the Urhobo language. This research shall give attention to only the process of reduplications that are prevalent in Urhobo language. The research data elicited for this study is restricted to only aspects of reduplication that are prevalent in Urhobo language. This includes; adjectives, nouns, verbs and phonological particles. Six native speakers of Urhobo were consulted for the grammatical judgments about the data. The study reveals that Urhobo employs reduplication both in spoken and in written form for the purpose of placing emphasis in narrations. Complete word and other morphological entity are reduplicated in Urhobo for semantic purpose. Such has been referred to as Morphological doubling. The study further revealed how Urhobo uses reduplication in ordinary discourse to make emphasis on important idea. Finally, the study reveals that reduplication is used in inflections to convey a grammatical function, such as plurality, intensification, etc., and in lexical derivation to create new words. It is often used when a speaker adopts a tone more "expressive" or figurative than ordinary speech and is also often, but not exclusively, iconic in meaning.*

Keywords: *Adjectives, complete, nouns, phonological particles, reduplication, Urhobo, verbs*

1.1   Background to the study

This study focused on reduplication process in the Urhobo language. Language, according to Jike and Ogege (2007), expresses not only our thoughts but conveys a critical synergy between our collective perception and our leverage of influence over social reality. One unique aspect of the socio-cultural linguistics of Urhobo is the reduplication process employ in conveying critical idea over social realities. Reduplication has been defined by Aziza (2007), as a morphological process in which a part or the whole of a stem is copied and attached to the stem When only a part of the stem is copied, the process is called partial reduplication but where the copying involves the whole stem, the process is called complete reduplication. While Imu, (2021), Imu, & Ejobee (2021), and Imu, & Cookey (2022) see reduplication as morphological processes in the formation of complex words, or in the creation of new words.

Special cognitive properties of reduplication differentiate it from other additive and modificatory morphological procedures. That is, morphemes in reduplication are not specified with respect to their segmental form, but the phonological form depends on the form of the base. Despite the preliminary formal character of the definitions, reduplication is clearly a word formation procedure and is not

phonologically motivated. Because of this particular characteristic, there are two relevant levels for the categorization of the different types of reduplication, be it a cross-linguistic or a language internal study, the formal and the functional level. With some languages or language comparisons it might be useful to compose a list of the functional reduplication types, especially if there is only one formal type, as for example complete reduplication in Urhobo. Generally, it is more convenient to start from the formal level, whereas the different formal types usually can be listed unambiguously, the functional types often overlap or can be described only vaguely.

In Urhobo morphology reduplication is applied in forming complex words (see Imu, (2021), Imu, & Ejobee (2021), and Imu, & Cookey (2022)). Most time, Urhobo applied reduplication to emphasis an important idea in a morphological construction. This has attracted the attention of linguists including the present study to review the process of reduplication in the language. Perhaps Urhobo language speakers are not familiar with the phenomenon, but they can find it in almost every noun phrase and the verb phrase of the language. Reduplication in linguistics 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.

Reduplication is used in inflections to convey a grammatical function, such as plurality, intensification, etc., and in lexical derivation to create new words. It is often used when a speaker adopts a tone more "expressive" or figurative than ordinary speech and is also often, but not exclusively, iconic in meaning. Reduplication is found in a wide range of languages and language groups, though its level of linguistic productivity varies. Reduplication is the standard term for this phenomenon in linguistics literature. Other terms that are occasionally used include cloning, doubling, duplication and repetition.

Reduplication is a repetition of a whole stem in producing a word. Reduplication can be studied in many languages including Urhobo language. The point of investigating reduplication process in Urhobo language is arrived at on how words are pronounced to mean another term and to lay emphasis on what we are trying to say. One of the uniqueness of Urhobo language is emphasis. Urhobo is one of the African languages that places emphasis on specific words by reduplicating words or the items of words.

1.2   Reduplication and repetitions

Reduplication is a word formation process in which some part of a base (a segment, syllable, morpheme) is repeated, either to the left, or to the right of the word or, occasionally, within the middle of the word. While 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.

 Ghomeshi et. al. (2004) refers to it as child language, amongst its numerous definition. It 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. In describing the features of repetition, Lausberg (1998) proposes that it has both informative and reinforcing functions. However, Wang (2005) insists that both repetition and reduplications have been used interchangeably because they overlap at some point. This is evident in the Malay Language, where repetition is used interchangeably with reduplication. The Malay phrase kata ganda refers to a multiple word while kata ulang is used to denote repeated words. Both kata ganda (reduplication) and kata ulang (repetition) are used in inflections to convey a grammatical function,

i.e., plurality, intensification, as well as in lexical derivation to create new words. This is unlike the English Language, where repetition is used to signify a more "expressive" tone or figurative speech which is also often, but not exclusively, iconic in meaning e.g. They were amazed at this big, big voice coming out of this tiny girl. Distinction between reduplication and repetition is clear, and cannot be equated in Urhobo.

2. Literature review

2.1 Conceptual definitions

Matthews (2007) define reduplication as the second morphological process that operate in the formation of new word. It is a process whereby another shade of meaning is produced by reduplicating whole or part of the root.

Ifode (2002: 216) said Reduplication "involves a repetition of part of a word or a whole simple word which already existed.

According to Inkelas and Zoll (2005), there are two basic approaches to reduplication: the phonological copying and morpho-semantic (MS) feature reduplication. Phonological copying is a process that copies the whole or part of a phonological constituent, feature, or segment. The morpho-semantic feature reduplication is triggered by a morphological, rather than phonological, process of reduplication, which generates a new semantic function.

2.2 Theoretical studies

Several authors have argued in favour of the hypothesis that the existence of partial reduplication implies the existence of full reduplication (Rubino, 2005a, b). This seems to be true because morphology begins from phonology. Without sound there is no word or word formation. This has drawn the attention of scholars to the proposal of morphological theory of reduplication and phonological theory of reduplication.

The morphological theory of reduplication known as Morphological Doubling Theory (MDT) developed in Inkelas and Zoll (2005), is an approach to reduplication in which morphological constructions can call for two instances of the same morphological constituent, where ''same'' is defined at the level of meaning, not phonology. Morphological doubling can target a whole word, a stem, a root, or even an affix. It is not phonological in nature. In MDT, there is no phonological correspondence between the two copies of the relevant morphological constituent. Double morphological insertion, not the phonological grammar, is the mechanism producing duplication. Phonology is, nonetheless, crucially involved in many morphological doubling constructions. As is well known, morphological reduplication is often accompanied by the phonological modification of one or both copies.

Then, the phonological duplication. This is the approach applied by Walker (2000a, b, c, 2003), Mpiranya (2006) and Hansson (2001, 2007). Phonological duplication can be defined generally as any increase in the number of positions in which a given feature, segment, or even string appears in the output, relative to the input, (Hansson, 2007). Phonological duplication involves the extension to another segmental position of phonological features which would independently be present in the output.

There are possibilities for formal as well as for functional types of reduplication and languages make use of these options in very different ways and to very different extents. What is interesting and sometimes puzzling is the way in which the forms and the functions are matched. In the "ideal" case of one-to-one

correspondence in terms of distinctiveness, i.e. isomorphism, one form would express exactly one meaning and one meaning would be expressed by exactly one form. For example, Lampung has a clear distinction between intensification by complete reduplication and diminution by partial reduplication (e.g. balak+balak 'very large' – xa+xabay 'somewhat afraid'. Walker 1976, cited Rubino 2005b: 20).

2.3 Empirical studies

Aziza (2007) 's work gave examples of reduplication in group. One of the group is verb stem + verb stem = adjective. Here, according to her, if verb stem is monosyllabic, complete reduplication takes place. e.g., bi 'be black' biebi'blackish'. Partial reduplication on the other hand takes place with only the first syllable prefixed to the full stem. Other group of reduplication in Urhobo according to her are: prefix + verb stem + verb stem = adjective/clause, gerund + gerund, particle + noun + particle + noun and then noun + noun. Examples of reduplication are discussed under the above groups based on their semantic effect, (Aziza, 2007). Similar method was applied in the present study. However, the verb stem + verb stem = adjective is discussed as complete adjective reduplication in Urhobo. The example bi and biebi cited in Aziza (2007) as seen above is an adjective reduplication. When we talk about partial reduplication and complete reduplication in Urhobo, the process is mostly common on adjectives, nouns and verbs.

Ejobee (2018) worked on reduplication in Urhobo and used the CV Template as a theoretical frame work. The study revealed the syllable of the reduplicated words and demonstrated the part of speech in which the root word belongs and the one to which it belongs after the reduplication of the stem. Among many others, the study revealed that reduplication in Urhobo functions as tense marker and as plural marker. There are some phenomena which are lightly similar to the present study. A number of data presented in the present study are achieved through affixation or insertion a whole or parts.

Mbah (2006) worked reduplication in Ibibo; the study revealed that the consonants, the tones and the vowels of the base in Igbo, are completely copied by the reduplicant. In the derived form, one half is the base while the other is the reduplicant.

3. Reduplication in the Urhobo language

In Urhobo, reduplication is a linguistic form which contains systematic non-recursive repetition of phonological material for morphological or lexical purposes.

Data presented for this study are grouped into two; the complete reduplication and the partial reduplication. For the complete reduplication, we considered data that are with morphological constituent (the simplex form) and data that are copied as a whole. e.g. a root, a stem, a word, or, much less frequent as an affix. Examples in Urhobo are:

Gbe 'be dirty' gbe + gbe = gbegbe 'dirty'

Dan 'be sharp' dan + dan = dandan 'sharp'

For the partial reduplication, we focused on data where a portion of the simplex form, smaller than the whole, is copied, or, in the case of lexical reduplication, that the lexeme contains a certain segmental string twice or more. The reduplicated "portion" can be a segmental or a prosodic defined unit, i.e. a phoneme sequence, a syllable, a foot, etc.

Lexical reduplications can be classified in different ways as following: First, complete reduplications and partial reduplications. Reduplication can also be group according to their lexical categories such as noun, verb, adverb and adjective. This we intend to achieve by grouping them broadly under the complete reduplication and the partial reduplication respectively.

3.2   Complete reduplication

In Urhobo, complete reduplication can be achieved in three ways;

i.)   Words that are monosyllabic are completely repeated, to achieve reduplication process in the formation of new words. Examples are seen in example 1 – 11 below.
1.) Gbe 'be dirty '   gbe+gbe   =   gbegbe   'dirty'
2.) Gan 'be strong'   gan+gan   =   gangan   'strong'
3.) Dọn 'to lean'   dọn+dọn   =   dọndọn   'lean'
4.) Gron 'be tall'   gron+gron =   grongron   'tall'

The above examples are monosyllabic adjectives that are completely reduplicated without any insertion. However, there are also some monosyllabic adjectives that cannot complete reduplication without insertion. In other words, there are complete reduplications of monosyllabic adjectives without insertion and there are complete reduplications of monosyllabic adjectives with insertion.

Below are examples of complete reduplication of monosyllabic with insertions.

5.) Bi 'be black'   bi+e+bi   =   biebi   'black'
6.) Sun 'be elastic'   sun+e+sun   =   sunesun   'elastic'
7.) Bun 'be plenty'   bun+e+bun   =   bunebun   'plenty'
8.) Rho 'to big'   rho+a+rho   =   rhoarho   'big'

ii.)   The second way of having complete reduplication in Urhobo, is through some adjectives with disyllabic. Examples are:
9.)   Zighi 'be rough' zighi+zighi =   zighz 'rough'
10.)   Yagha 'be scarter'   yagha+yagha = yaghayagha 'scatter'
11.)   Gunu 'be bend' gunu+gunu =gunugunu   'bend'
    iii.)   The third way or processes of complete reduplication is by attaching a morpheme *kẹ* as prefix to some noun. Though regular phonological processes like assimilation, deletion or contraction, tone adjustment etc. may take place to achieve the new word. Examples are
    iv.)   **Particle+Noun + Particle+ Noun:**
12.) Kẹ+amwa   +   kẹ+amwa   =   kamwakamwa
     Cloth   every cloth

13.) Kẹ+obọ   +   kẹ+obọ   =   kobọkobọ
     Hand   any hand

14.) Kẹ+orere   +   kẹ+orere   =   korerekorere
     Town   every town

15.) Kẹ+ukpe   +   kẹ+ukpe   =   kupkekupke
    Year   every year

16.) Kẹ+ẹdẹ   +   kẹ+ẹdẹ=   kẹdẹkẹdẹ
    Day   everyday

17.) Kẹ+asan   +   kẹ+asan   =   kasankasan
    Place   any place

In the above examples there is vowel deletion from the particle. However, the particle is not considered as word but a supporter. Therefore, its' deletion does not prevent the formation from been a complete reduplication.

3.3   Partial reduplication

According to Aziza (2007), "When only a part of the stem is copied, the process is called partial".

Disyllabic adjective stem

These are disyllabic adjectives that when they are reduplicated to form new words they cannot be completely duplicated. Deletion must occur. Examples in Urhobo are:

18.)   Hanvwe+hanvwe 'to small'   =   hahanvwe 'small'
19.)   Ghanre+ghanre 'be expensive'   =   ghaghanre 'expensive'
20.)   Yovwi+yovwi 'be beautiful'   =   yoyovwi 'beautiful'
21.)   Vware+vware 'be red'   =   vwavware 'red'

In the above examples we can see that the first adjectives are not completely reduplicated, only the second adjectives that are fully reduplicated at the new stage. Therefore, they are partial reduplication because deletion occurs in one part of a whole word.

Examples of gerund with partial reduplication

22.) Ekpirho+ekpirho   =   ekpeekpirho
    To fold   folding

23.) Eduvwo+eduvwo   =   edeeduvwo
    To pierce   piercing

24.) Ẹkọn+ẹkọn   =   ẹkẹẹkọn
    To plant   planting

25.) Emuo+emuo   =   emueemuo
    To carry   continuous carrying

26.) Ẹsuọ+ẹsuọ   =   ẹsuẹẹsuọ
    To sing   continuous singing

27.) Ẹda+ẹda   =   ẹdẹẹda
    To drink   continuous drinking

28.) Ẹfọrhọn+ẹfọrhọn =   ẹfẹẹfọrhọn
    To wash   continuous washing

29.) Oshọ+oshọ   =   oshoshọ
    To fear   continue in fear

30.) Ẹriọ+ẹriọ   =   ẹriẹẹriọ
    To eat   continuous eating

In the above examples there are assimilation in final vowels that are duplicated to form the new gerund and there are deletions.

3.4 Noun + Noun partial reduplication

In this construction, partial reduplication occurs involving only the initial vowel and consonants of nouns which are prefixed to the full noun. Examples are:

31.) Igho+igho   =   ighigho
    Money   plenty money

32.) Irere+irere   =   irirere
    Towns   so many towns

33.) Iwenvwi+iwenvwi =   iwiwevwi
    Houses   so many houses

34.) Egọ+egọ   =   egegọ
    Bottles   so many bottles

35.) Epkẹn+ekpẹn   =   ekpekpe
    Sand   so many sand.

4.   Summary of findings

 The study reveals that there are two type of reduplication in Urhobo, the complete reduplication and the partial reduplication, and that monosyllabic adjectives are usually complete reduplication in Urhobo. It also reveals that there are complete reduplications with insertion and that there are others without insertion. From data analysis in section three above such as in example (8)*rho* 'big'   rho+a+rho 'biggish' **.** Nouns, adjectives and verb reduplicate completely in the language but it does not mean that all the nouns, adjectives and verbs reduplicate either completely or partially.

4.2   Conclusion

This revealed that reduplication is not a new ground. Enormous work of research has been carried out on this topic. But that does not mean that it has been exhaustively investigated, especially in the Urhobo language. We therefore recommended that further research should be carried out to graze other aspects

of this topic, such as the semantic analysis and phonological analysis of word formation processes in the Urhobo language. This study we go a long way to serve as a landscape to further research works. Finally, the study of reduplication in Urhobo cannot be exhausted but we believed that these study and the findings have been able to add to the existing literatures in the area of morphology, especially in the Urhobo language.

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