

Two Perspectives on Malagasy Reduplication: Derivational and Optimality Theoretic Analyses

(Abstract)

The present paper contrasts two analyses of Malagasy reduplication: a rule-based analysis and an analysis based on Optimality Theory. Malagasy is an Austronesian language (spoken in Madagascar) with a productive reduplication morphology that applies to both stems and prefixed forms. In this paper, we focus on the reduplication of a class of verbs in Malagasy. These verbs often appear with an active voice marker “*an-*” that triggers alternation in the root-initial consonants. The data used in the current work was collected from the author’s fieldwork. Compared to the previous work [2], the current data contains many more cases of the reduplication of “*an-*” verbs, especially of the phonological variants in reduplication. The rule-based analysis tries to explain the phonological variants by using variable rule ordering. Copying starts from the stressed syllable to the end of the root (e.g. [saláma]/[salàmaláma]; [lèibé]/[leibèbé]). The deletion of the root-final syllable ([lavitra] “*far away*” / [làvidávitra] “*far, far away*”) is attributed to the ordering of *Epenthesis* before *Incorporation*, an analysis that also applies to compounding of words with phonologically “weak” final syllables [1] (e.g. [sátroka] “*hat*” + [fótsy] “*white*” / [sàtropótsy] “*white hat*”). On the other hand, the phonological variants (e.g. [táo] “*do*” / [manàotáo] or [manàonáo] “*do over and over*”) are accounted for by using the variable ordering of the rules *Copy*, *Incorporation*, and *Prefixation*. For example, cases where the onset-assimilation over-applies to the last syllable is treated as the result of ordering *Copy* after *Prefixation* ([táo] / [manàonáo]).

The Optimality Theoretic analysis of “*an-*” verb reduplication uses a popular framework – Correspondence Theory [3]. Although Correspondence Theory has achieved much success in explaining reduplication phenomena in other languages, several problems need to be resolved before it can be applied to Malagasy. The first problem is the identification of the base. Correspondence Theory assumes that a duplicated form can be analyzed into two parts: a *base* as the source of copying and a *reduplicant* as the copied materials. However, in Malagasy, it is not immediately clear how they should be identified. Assuming that the base precedes the reduplicant, we analyze Malagasy reduplication as a suffixation process. The deletion of base-final weak syllables is treated as a consequence of the competition between two repair strategies: deletion and epenthesis. The second problem arises from the stress-driven copying pattern. Such patterns are accounted for by using constraint rankings that favor minimal copying, yet preserve the stressed syllable and adjacency of base and reduplicant. The last problem of the OT analysis is the variation in the initial consonant of the reduplicant (e.g. [sása]/[manása]/[manàsanása]; but [vaky]/[mamáky]/[mamàkiváky]). We analyze such variation through variable ranking between base-reduplicant correspondence and input-reduplicant correspondence.

Compared to the concise rule-based account of Malagasy reduplication, the Optimality Theoretical approach invokes a large family of correspondence constraints between three classes of correspondents: *Input*, *Base*, *Reduplicant*. Although those constraints are individually motivated in the OT analysis of other languages, their complex interaction in Malagasy obscures some of the insights expressed in rules. Therefore, these results lead us to argue in favor of phonological rule as a valuable analytic tool for understanding reduplication.

A short list of examples:

- (1) sátroka “hat” + fótsy “white” sátropótsy / sátroka-fótsy “white hat”
- (2) lèhibé “big” lehibèbé “very big”
- (3) salàma “health” salàmalàma “very fit”
- (4) lávitra “far away” làvidávitra “far, far away”
- (5) latábatra “table” latàbatábatra “little table”
- (6) manáo “do” manàonáo / manàotáo “do repeatedly”
- (7) mamáky “break” mamàkivàky “break intensively”
- (8) manása “invite” manàsanása “invite casually”
- (9) mamádika “turn over” mamàdibádika “roll”
- (10) manófa “wave” manòfanófa / manòfaófa / manòfófa “wave repeatedly”

References

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