

Partial reduplication in Kitharaka: evidence for copying of a full syntactic tree

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In this talk, we present data about (partial) reduplication from a previously undescribed language: Kitharaka, Bantu. The Kitharaka data are striking in that they offer transparent evidence for the mechanisms underlying (partial) reduplication. In particular, they point to (partial) reduplication being based on a mechanism of copying entire syntactic trees, followed by an independent spellout of the copied tree (partially along the lines of Hyman, Inkelas and Sibanda 1998). This entails that the reduplicant is a syntactic phrase (a tree) rather than a terminal node or a morphological entity, and that the lexicon can store entire syntactic phrases.

As many other Bantu languages, Kitharaka has a reduplication construction in which two syllables of root+suffixes are reduplicated and prefixed to the root. At the most general level, a verb of the form 'prefixes-root-suffixes' takes the form 'prefixes-DUPLICANT-root-suffixes', where the duplicant consists of two syllables corresponding to the material in 'root-suffixes'. The duplicant is a morpheme with its own meaning, namely 'irregularly, quickly, a bit'.

The core point of interest is that the reduplicant need not be an exact copy of the material following it (though it often is). It can diverge in two important ways:

- i. some morphemes may be missing. Given a sequence of a verb with 4 suffixes, V-a-b-c-d, we find duplications of the form [V-a-c-d]-V-a-b-c-d. In the most interesting of such cases, b is a morpheme that can never be duplicated. This is one of the most striking aspects of reduplication in Kitharaka. The first question is thus of course why some suffixes cannot be duplicated, and above all, how can duplication be duplication of a discontinuous stretch of suffixes?
- ii. sometimes the duplicant does copy a suffix of the base, but that suffix surfaces as a different allomorph than the original version on the base. The second question is thus why allomorphy is different in this way.

These reasons for these mismatches become transparent once the structure of the Kitharaka verbal complex itself is understood. Muriungi (2008) provides detailed evidence that the derivation putting together the suffixes and the root includes some phrasal movements. Once these movements are taken into consideration, the data becomes transparent: reduplication copies a continuous stretch of the structure of the verb up to a given point of the derivation. Everything that happens later is not copied. Because of how subsequent movement work, this gives the illusion of discontinuous copying. This also resolves the second question: when an allomorphy is sensitive to the material which has not been copied in the reduplicant, the allomorph in the duplicant will be different from the allomorph in the base.

The descriptive problem is thus solved - with important theoretical implications: a unfinished derivation can be 'copied' and spelled out independently. This is what (Bantu) reduplication consists of. Furthermore, the lexical entry for the duplicant morpheme, states which part of the derivation is copied and hence refers to an entire syntactic phrase. During the talk, I will explore the consequences of these points.