

Reduplication in the Ibibio Language

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Abstract: This study investigates the morphological processes of reduplication in the Ibibio language. Its objectives are to ascertain if construction morphology can account for reduplication in the Ibibio language, what word class can be reduplicated and how reduplication occurs. This study adopts construction morphology as the theoretical framework and the data for the analysis were generated by introspection since the researcher is a native speaker of Ibibio and the standard Ibibio language was adopted. This study reveals that construction morphology can account for reduplication in the Ibibio language as data were analysed using construction morphology. It also reveals that in the Ibibio language, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and numerals are reduplicated completely while verbs and some adjectives reduplicate partially taking the consonant verb (CV) format as prefix (dá, dé, bó, kà, bé etc).

Keywords: reduplication, Ibibio, construction morphology

1. Introduction

This study examines reduplication, which is a morphological process. Word formation, as a morphological process, cuts across languages and languages employ different morphological processes such as affixation, prefixation, suffixation and reduplication etc. to form new words. Morphological processes can be viewed from two perspectives: inflectional (the process by which past tense, plural or present particles are arrived at); and derivational (which entails processes where new words are formed from existing ones) (Agbedo, 2000; Finch, 2000).

Earlier works on reduplication include: Marantz (1982), Moravcsik (1992), McCarthy (1982), McCarthy and Prince (1993), Sapir (1921), Urua (1990) among others. Sapir (1921:76) states:

Nothing is more natural than the prevalence of reduplication; in other words, the reduplication of all or part of a radical element. The process is generally employed with self-evident symbolism, to indicate such concepts as distribution, plurality, repetition, customary activity, increase in size, added intensity.

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In this study, reduplication in the Ibibio language is investigated. For a research to be carried out successfully there must be a driving force for such a work. Over the years, many scholars have made great contributions to the development of the Ibibio language; however, not much has been done on other morphological theories to be used to account for reduplication in the language although a lot has been done on reduplication as a whole. This paper will attempt a construction morphological analysis of reduplication in Ibibio. For the purpose of this work, the researcher will attempt to apply construction morphology in the analysis of reduplication as a word formation process in Ibibio.

Word reduplication as a feature of language is present in many languages including the Ibibio language. The study's main aim is to ascertain the possibility of using construction morphology to account for formation of new words and the word class involved in this formation. It also aims at identifying which word class reduplicate completely or partially or both. The significance of this work cannot be overlooked. This work will not just be an outline for further research, but also help learners of the language identify word class that reduplicates in the language.

The data for this work were generated purely by introspection due to the fact that the researcher is a native speaker of the language. The researcher also consulted secondary sources like textbooks, library, online sources etc. for data collection. This work is limited to reduplication in the Ibibio language, using construction morphology. It will concentrate more on how words are reduplicated, which word class is involved in the reduplication process in the language.

Following Greenberg (1963) in Essien (1990) classification, the Ibibio language belongs to the lower cross language group of the Niger Congo language family. The Ibibio people constitute the fourth major ethnic group in Nigeria after the three major ones. The Ibibio language is the dominant language in Akwa Ibom State spoken by about 4 million speakers living in Akwa Ibom State and other states in Nigeria.

2. Theory of construction morphology related to reduplication

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the construction morphology by Booji (2010). This theory of word formation which claims that complex words i.e. the morphological operations can be listed as lexicon which is a repository in the human brain that contains a native speaker's content of his language and that new words are not generated by transformational operations but that each morphological entity, compound or complex are listed in the lexicon. The theory generates rules known as schemas to analyse the word formation processes such as deviations, reduplication, compounding etc., but this theory will take into account schemas for reduplication and affixations.

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According to Booji (2010), compounding and affixation are referred to as concatenative morphology since their mode of operations is that of concatenating roots, stems and affixes. A special form of concatenative morphology is reduplication. The schema below shows rule for word formation:

(a) <[V_i V_i]N_j ↔ [Intensive /repetition Action of SEM_i]N_j>

this schema will account for reduplication in the work, where VV presents verb verb combination and the variables _i, _i and N_j stand for the lexical indexes on the phonological, syntactic and semantic (SEM) properties of words. However, VV will represent nouns and adjective combination, nouns and adverb combination, adjective and adjective combination adjective and adverb combination, numerals and quantifiers.

(b) <[[X] A_i ness]N_j [property of SEM_j]SEM_j>

this schema will account for partial reduplication. Although the variable x is used by Booji to represent adjectives, in this study the variable ‘-ness’ will be used as the root word while X is the verb or adjective as the case maybe. Therefore the schema will be modified to:

(b') <[[Ness] prefix X]N_j [property of SEM_j] SEM_j>

Due to the explicit rule of reduplication, accounted by the construction morphology theory the researcher considers it the best theory to account for reduplication although it can as well be handled by other theories.

3. Complete reduplication in the Ibibio language

In the Ibibio language, there are two basic types of reduplication: the partial and the complete reduplication. The complete reduplication is derived by the repetition of the base. The consonants, the tones and the vowels of the base are completely copied by the reduplicant. In the derived form, one half is the base while the other is the reduplicant (Mbah, 2006). As earlier stated, nouns in Ibibio are reduplicated to adjectives, adjectives to adverbs, adverbs and adverb, adjective and adverb. The schema (a) can be used to account for reduplication in the examples as follows.

(1) Nouns + Nouns = Adjective

Nouns	Gloss	Nouns	Adjective	Gloss
a. Ndom	‘clay’	ndom	ndom ndom	‘clayey’
b. Uyai	‘beauty’	úyai	uyai uyai	‘beautiful’
c. Uwak	‘plenty’	uwak	uwak uwak	‘plentiful’
d. Éno	‘gift’	énó	énó éno	‘cheerful giver’

(2) Nouns + Adjectives = Adverbs

Nouns	Gloss	Adjectives	Adverbs	Gloss
a. Íno	‘thief’	ínó	ínó ínó	‘stealthily’
b. Mkpá	‘death’	mkpá	mkpá mkpá	‘deadly’

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c. Imam	‘laughter’	imám	imam ìmám	‘joyfully’
d. Ádàn	‘oil’	ádàn	ádàn ádàn	‘oily’

(3) Adjectives + Adjectives = Adjectives

Adjectives	Gloss	Adjectives	Adjectives	Gloss
a. Afia	‘white’	afia	afia afia	‘whitish’
b. Ábùbéd	‘black’	ábùbéd	ábùbéd ábùbéd	‘blackish’
c. Ùfiob	‘hot’	ùfiob	ùfiob ùfiob	‘hot’
d. Ékàmmà	‘big’	ékàmmà	ékàmmà ékàmmà	‘big’
e. Àyán	‘long’	àyán	àyán àyán	‘tall/long’

(4) Adjective

Adjective	Gloss	Adverb	Gloss
a. Mmém	‘soft’	mmém mmém	‘softly’
b. Mfóòn	‘beautiful’	mfóòn mfóòn	‘beautifully’
c. Nnen	‘straight’	nnen nnen	‘straight’
d. Idiok	‘bad’	idiok idiok	‘badly’
e. Mfóón	‘good’	mfoon mfoon	‘greatly’

(5) Numerical

Numerical	Gloss	quantifies	Gloss
a. Kied	one	kiedekied	one each
b. Ìbá	two	ìbá ìbá	two each
c. Ita	three	ità itá	three each
d. Duop	ten	duopoduop	ten each

From the examples above illustrated, 1-5 and a-e respectively, it can be observed that the root word reduplicates completely carrying over the tone marks from the base to the reduplicant and this goes to confirm Akinlabi and Urua (1996) who spell out that words reduplicate completely when the tone reduplicates with a segment.

4. Partial reduplication in the Ibibio language

In partial reduplication, a CV is added to the root morpheme, this CV is usually the first two sounds of the base word. This CV is added to the base word as prefix and reduplicated partially. As earlier stated, partial reduplication is evident in the Ibibio language and the schema (b') will be used to account for it.

Examples of partial reduplication in Ibibio

Base word	Gloss	Reduplicant	Gloss
Dép	buy	dé dép	‘be buying’
Dáppá	dream	dá dáppá	‘be dreaming’
Díppé	lift	dé díppé	‘be lifting’
Bót	mould/create	bó bót	‘be moulding’
Yáiyá	beautiful	yá yáiyá	‘be beautiful’

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Kàppá	interpret	kà kappa	‘be interpreting’
Bén	take	bé bén	‘be taking’
Wai`	teai	wa wai	‘be tearing’
Wét	write	wé wét	‘be writing’
Nék	dance	né nék	‘be dancing’

5. Conclusion

This study found out that in the Ibibio language not all word classes can reduplicate. Prepositions, pronouns etc. do not reduplicate completely or partially. It further found out that in partial reduplications, nouns and adverbs do not reduplicate partially and the derivand of partial reduplication is the addition of the prefix CV. It is worthy to note that tones were not deleted during the process of reduplication in the Ibibio language. In essence, reduplication does not delete tones rather it maintains and carries over the tones. This study reveals that the Ibibio language has both the partial and complete reduplication. The study also revealed that since the language does not allow consonant clusters thus a vowel is inserted as the case of ‘kied’ ↔ kied(e) kied to reduplicate completely (Urua, 2000; Mbah, 2006). From the data used in the analysis, it can be said that construction morphology theory can account for reduplication in Ibibio language.

The study of reduplication in the Ibibio language cannot be exhausted. Nouns, adjectives and adverb reduplicate completely in the language but it does not mean that are all the nouns that reduplicate and also some adjectives and verbs reduplicate partially. This study goes to confirm that there are two types of reduplication in Ibibio language and that construction morphology theory can account for reduplication. The researcher recommends that further empirical analysis should be carried out in reduplication and other morphological processes in the Ibibio language and other languages in general.

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