

Morpho-Semantics of Verbal Reduplication

The case of Mauritian

Fabiola Henri & Grégoire Winterstein¹

The issue: morphological reduplication

- *Attenuative* reduplication (AR) (Baker, 2003) is a productive morphological process.
- ☞ We assume it is a particular type of compounding.
- The interpretation is not iconic.
- The attenuative interpretation operates along different dimensions of meaning:
 - Intensity
 - Frequency
 - Distributivity
 - Pluractionality

Other verbal reduplication types

Phonological: *dodo* 'sleep', *titit/sisit* 'sit', *nana* 'eat'.

Syntactic:

- **Iteration:**

Zan nek sant sega, sant sega enn lazourne.
John just sing.SF sega sing.SF sega one day
'John merely sings the sega, sings the sega all day.'
- **Contrastive or prototypical:**

Zan kontan sante sante.
John like.SF sing.LF sing.LF
'John likes to really sing.'
- **Predicate doubling:**

Ala galoupe (ki) Mari galoupe la.
PART run.LF that Mary run.LF DEF
'What a runner Mary is!'

Mauritian morphology

- Most vocabulary inherited from French (with phonological adaptations).
- No inflection inherited from French. In particular no TMA or agreement morphology.
- Still, Mauritian verbs have two forms: the long form (LF) and the short form (SF).
- The LF almost always derives from the Fr. infinitive or past participle (Veenstra, 2004).
- The SF usually resembles a Fr. PRS.SG.

Morphology of reduplication

The morphomic distribution of SF and LF

Syntax The SF is used when the verb is followed by a nonclausal complement; the LF is used otherwise (Henri & Abeillé, 2008).

Mo ti manz/*manze kari.	Mo ti *manz/manze.
1SG PST eat.SF/LF curry	1SG PST eat.LF/SF
'I ate curry.'	'I ate.'

Discourse The LF is used under Verum Focus, even in the presence of a nonclausal complement (Henri, 2010).

Mo ti krwar Mari pa MANZE/*MANZ kari pou!
1SG PST think Mary NEG eat.LF/SF curry chicken
'I thought Mary DIDN'T eat chicken curry!'

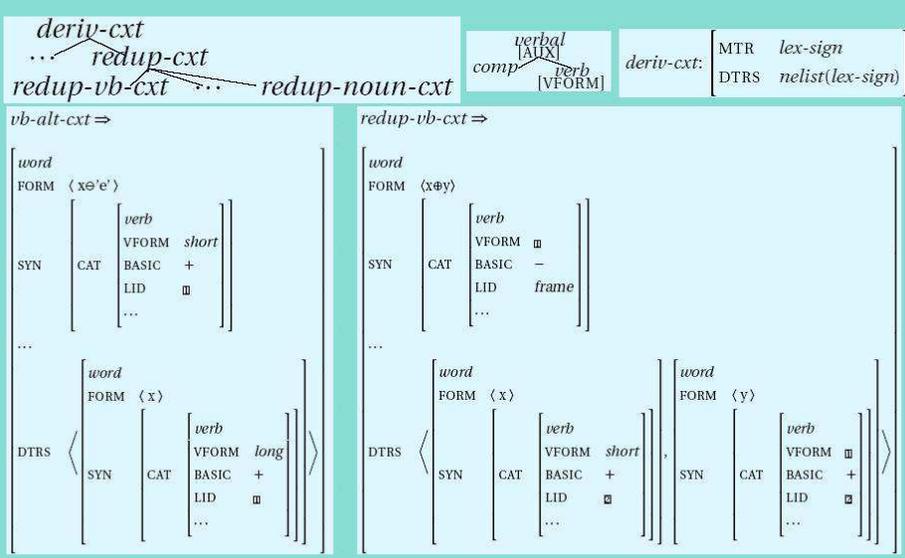
Morphology They are used as bases in attenuative reduplication: the output is the concatenation of the SF and the LF (Henri, 2010).

Why morphology

- ☞ AR is not syntactic: The base does not have properties of a phrasal complement.
 - They have properties of simple verbs.
 - The base and its reduplicant cannot be coordinated.
 - AR bears final syllable stress like other simple verbs.
- ☞ AR is not a phonological phenomenon: The reduplicant is not phonologically predictable but corresponds to the SF. There is moreover no restrictions with respect to syllable structure.

Analysis

- The data argue in favor of an abstractive view of morphology (Blevins, 2006).
- ☞ Postulating stems would complicate the picture.



Conclusions: Morphology

- Verbal reduplication shows a morphotactic import: the reduplicant is always SF while the base alternates with respect to object drop.
- The system relies on implicational morphology.
- Mauritian favors word-based lexeme formation.
- The same analysis can be extended to reduplicated nouns, adjectives and adverbs.
- Even if reduplicated material do not have all the characteristics of compounds, reduplication still can be construed as a case of compounding.

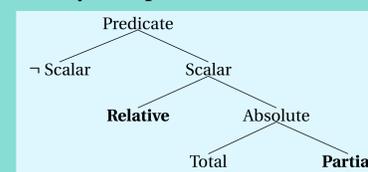
Conclusions: Semantics

- Scalarity is the determining property for licensing reduplication.
- The same analysis can again be extended to reduplicated nouns, adjectives and adverbs.
- Reduplicated verbs are not inherently pluractional.
- ☞ Two issues remain:
 - To determine the relevant scale for reduplication.
 - To handle the coercion mechanism that produces the necessary aspectual scale for reduplication.
- ☞ Bonami (2002) treats aspectual coercion in French.
- ☞ Bonami and Godard (2006) also offer a (simpler) solution in terms of type-shifting.

Semantics of reduplication

Scalar Predicates

- AR is licensed only for *scalar* predicates (Henri, 2010).
- Among scalar predicates, only *relative* and *partial* (see Kennedy & Mc Nally, 2005) predicates can be felicitously reduplicated.



Hypothesis

- AR conveys that the predicate holds of its subject at a degree d_R less than the degree d_S of the non-reduplicated predicate: $d_R < d_S$.
- Interpreting a reduplicated predicate means setting a degree for both the reduplicated and non-reduplicated predicate.
- The constraints on the standards for reduplicated and non-reduplicated predicates are the same.
- If the constraints on standards are consistent, reduplication is felicitous. If no ordering of degree is possible, reduplication is infelicitous.

Type	Constraint on the Standard	Degree ordering for d_S and d_R
Relative	$d_X \in [a, b]$	$a < d_R < d_S < b$
Partial	$d_{min} < d_X$	$d_{min} < d_R < d_S$
Total	$d_X = d_{max}$	Impossible

Coercions

- Verbal reduplication is possible with non-scalar predicates if they can be licensed by an external scale (Henri, 2010):

# Laport la ferme-ferme. door the closed-closed 'The door is somewhat closed'	Zan inn ferm-ferm laport. John PERF close-close.SF door 'John repeatedly and infrequently closed the door.'
---	---

- The scale is obtained by aspectual coercion, i.e. the only possible interpretation is iterative.
- ☞ When no scale is available, reduplication is impossible.
- Using Vendler's classes, we highlight verbs that reduplicate without coercion:

	EVENTS		STATES
	atomic	extended	
+conseq	ACHIEVEMENT rekonet, gagn lekours arive, perdi vini, ale, deboute ...	ACCOMPLISHMENT ranz enn lakaz manz enn samousa rod enn travay sant enn sante zwe monopoli ...	ete, resanble, paret, konsiste, konpran, kontan, kone, reste, ...
	-conseq	SEMELFACTIVE tape, mase, terne, ...	

¹Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle (CNRS & U. Paris- Diderot)

