

Lexicalised yet transparent: A peculiar reduplication pattern in Sipora Mentawai and its implications for Austronesian disyllabicity

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Austronesian languages are well known for preferring content lexemes to be disyllabic in form. Diachronically, they are known for recruiting unorthodox repair strategies to maintain this disyllabicity, including reduplicating material from any monosyllables that emerge diachronically (e.g., Proto-Malayo-Polynesian *tuRut > Old Javanese *tut* > modern Javanese *tutut* ‘to follow’, cf. other examples in Blust 2007). Also characteristic of some conservative Austronesian languages is a pattern where a disyllabic lexeme may have a surface form consisting of the lexicalised reduplication of a monosyllable of the form CV(C) (Chrétien, 1965). In this talk, we will present evidence that lexemes of this sort in Sipora Mentawai, a conservative Austronesian language of the Sumatran branch of Malayo-Polynesian, are not simply reduplicants in terms of their phonemic content, but seem to be stored in the lexicon as a monosyllabic ‘root’ of the form CV(C) plus a requirement for a fully transparent process of reduplication which interfaces with both the phonology and morphology. This shows that the reduplication of a lexical item can be lexicalised while remaining morphologically and phonologically decomposable, posing a number of questions for how reduplication should be represented formally.

An example of such a lexeme is given in (1-a). That the reduplication is a component of the lexeme can be shown that the same material without reduplication has no meaning of its own (1-b), though monosyllables may be lexemes in their own right (1-c). When a monosyllabic ‘root’ is lexically reduplicated, both of the reduplicants are of the surface form of the latter reduplicant *in situ*: the onset of both is treated phonologically as if it were preceded by the coda, and the coda of both is treated as if it were in whichever environment is observed for the rightward syllable (examples in (2), note that nasals are typically realised as voiceless plosives in coda position; other phonological processes are not described here for reasons of space). This suggests that reduplication is occurring ‘after’ phonological processes, but that the phonology presumes that a reduplicative element is present in its treatment of the syllable onsets. Furthermore, when the content of the latter syllable is modified by affixation, as in (3) (note that $kC \rightarrow C/-\#$), this content is *also* reflected in the reduplication, suggesting that reduplication occurs *after* other *morphological* as well as phonological processes. Finally, when the content of an erstwhile monosyllabic ‘root’ is resyllabified within the phonological word such that its content no longer tautosyllabic, it is only the element which remains within the first syllable that contains ‘root’ material which is reduplicated (4). This suggests that lexicalised reduplication has essentially the form σ - (i.e., reduplicate the first syllable of the root material) and is applied after regular syllabification processes have proceeded. It also suggests that such reduplication is stored alongside a monosyllabic ‘root’ as a feature which only occurs for some roots and not others, while not having any identifiable meaning of its own (it cannot be treated as a morpheme).

Possible diachronic origins as well as their implications for the lexicon in Sipora Mentawai and other Austronesian languages will be explored in depth in the full talk.

- (1) a. /mɛnmɛn/ ‘saliva’
b. */mɛn/ - ?? (not a lexeme)
c. /rɔn/ ‘to be strong’
- (2) a. /sɛnsɛn/ ‘to splash’ → [tʃɛt̪ː̚.tʃɛt̪ː̚] (expected [sɛt̪ː̚.tʃɛt̪ː̚])
b. /tɔktɔk/ ‘to be depleted’ → [tɔʔ̚.tɔʔ̚] (expected [tɔk̚ː̚.tɔʔ̚])
- (3) /bɛkbɛk/ ‘edge’ + /ɛn/ POSS → [bɛt̪ː̚.bɛt̪ː̚] (expected [bɛk̚ː̚.bɛt̪ː̚])
- (4) /pu-/ UNERG + /tuktuk/ ‘to grow’ + /-an/ NMLZ → [pu.tu.tu.kat̪ː̚] (expected [pu.tuk̚ː̚.tu.kat̪ː̚])

References

- Blust, R. A. (2007). Disyllabic attractors and anti-antigemination in Austronesian sound change. *Phonology*, 24:1–36.
- Chrétien, C. D. (1965). The statistical structure of the Proto-Austronesian morph. *Lingua*, 14:243–270.