

Reduplication In Urdu-Hindi Nonsensical Words: An OT Analysis

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Abstract : Reduplication in Urdu-Hindi affects all major word categories, particles, and even nonsensical words. It conveys a variety of meanings, including distribution, emphasis, iteration, adjectival and adverbial. This study will primarily discuss reduplicative structures of nonsensical words in Urdu-Hindi and then briefly look at some examples from other Indo-Aryan languages to introduce the debate regarding the same structures in them. The goal of this study is to present counter-evidence against Keane (2005: 241), who claims “the base in the cases of lexical and phrasal echo reduplication is always independently meaningful”. However, Urdu-Hindi reduplication derives meaningful compounds from nonsensical words e.g. gũ mgũ (A) ‘silent and confused’ and ɖəb ɖəb-a (N) ‘one’s fear over others’. This needs a comprehensive examination to see whether and how the various structures form patterns of a base-reduplicant relationship or, rather, they are merely sub lexical items joining together to form a word pattern of any grammatical category in content words. Another interesting theoretical question arises within the Optimality framework: in an OT analysis, is it necessary to identify one of the two constituents as the base and the other as reduplicant? Or is it best to consider this a pattern, but then how does this fit in with an OT analysis? This may be an even more interesting theoretical question. Looking for the solution to such questions can serve to make an important contribution. In the case at hand, each of the two constituents is an independent nonsensical word, but their echo reduplication is nonetheless meaningful. This casts significant doubt upon Keane’s (2005: 241) observation of some examples from Hindi and Tamil reduplication that “the base in cases of lexical and phrasal echo reduplication is always independently meaningful”. The debate on the point becomes further interesting when the triplication of nonsensical words in Urdu-Hindi e.g. aẽ baẽ ʃaẽ (N) ‘useless talk’ is also seen, which is equally important to discuss. The example is challenging to Harrison’s (1973) claim that only the monosyllabic verbs in their progressive forms reduplicate twice to result in triplication, which is not the case with the example presented. The study will consist of a thorough descriptive analysis of the data for the purpose of documentation, and then there will be OT analysis.

Keywords : reduplication, urdu-hindi, nonsensical, optimality theory

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