

Systematically Altered Whole-Syllable Reduplication in Western Armenian

This paper aims to show that it is possible to determine the origin of a contact phenomenon based on its linguistic and geographical distribution, and consequently to chart its development in the languages in which it is not original. The phenomenon in question is systematically altered whole-syllable reduplication (SAWSR), also variously known as emphatic reduplication or “pre-specified reduplication” (Steriade 1988) with quasi-fixed segmentism. This morphological device is used in Western Armenian (“WA”) as an intensifier or emphatic form, by which a portion of the base is prefixed to the base with a different consonant than that of the base consonant, such as in *garmir* ‘red’ → *gas-garmir* ‘extremely red’, *šidag* ‘straight’ → *šip-šidag* ‘completely straight’, *barab* ‘hollow’ → *bas-barab* ‘fully hollow’ *jergar* ‘long’ → *jep-jergar* ‘really long’. This phenomenon has been remarked upon for WA (Donabédian-Demopoulos 2018), but never systematically studied as it has been in Modern Turkish (Demircan 1987, Dobrovolsky 1987, Amini 1992, Inkelas 1999, Wedel 1999, 2000, Kılıç & Bozşahin 2013).

Emphatic reduplication is explored here as a morphological phenomenon induced by contact with Turkish via prolonged periods of bilingualism, c.f. *dop* ‘full’ → *dop-dolu* ‘chock-full’, *beyaz* ‘white’ → *bem-beyaz* ‘thoroughly white’, *yuvarlak* ‘round’ → *yus-yuvarlak* ‘very round’, *çıplak* ‘naked’ → *çır-çıplak* ‘stark naked’ (Godel 1945, Şendoğan 2017), etc.. With additional examples from Cappadocian Greek (and other minority Anatolian Greek dialects), Sakha, and Oroqen, we give a historical account of this imported morphological mechanism through the lens of Johanson (2013)’s thesis, which explains that when foreign elements of a grammar are copied into another language, they merely serve as models and are never identical to the way the donor language has encoded the borrowing. The WA data is from the author’s native knowledge, along with Ačarean (1902, 1941) and Abrahamian (1959), and the Greek dialectal data is from Alektoridhis (1883).

The choice of linker morpheme (/p/, /s/ or /ps/ in WA, but /p/, /s/, /m/, and /r/ in Turkish) is analyzed both synchronically and diachronically and we show that the newer SAWSR patterns found in WA and Anatolian varieties of Greek are in fact the result of Turkish influence, since we can also demonstrate that SAWSR existed further back than early Ottoman Turkish. This contact phenomenon evolved in the languages that borrowed the device. Although the borrowing of linguistic structure into one’s native dialect from a mutually unintelligible dialect or language is clearly much harder than borrowing from a readily intelligible dialect, and the circumstances in which it is possible at all remain a subject of debate (Ringe & Eska 2013:59), it is at least plausible to propose that such wholesale morphological borrowing could only occur in situations of long-standing, community-wide bilingualism, and likely only from the high-prestige speechform to the low-prestige speechform.

Since the rules for SAWSR differ between WA and Turkish (and in turn, the Cappadocian Greek model differs from both), we can conclude that this phenomenon has been copied into WA only selectively. As for the linker morpheme, the environments which characterize its shape in Turkish are far more enhanced than in WA (Bağrıaçık & Janse 2016), which means that the conditions have been relevelled in the recipient language – in Turkish it is the morphology-lexicon which determines the form of the suffix, whilst in WA it is the phonetic value of the adjacent C, in other words, the initial C of the base. We also hope that we have added another variant to the emphatic reduplication literature – one which interweaves with elements of borrowed morphophonology.

In Turkish and other Turkic languages, we see that the choice of infix morpheme is determined by both the morphology and lexicon, while in WA and Cappadocian, it is determined by the phonetic value of the adjacent consonant, which suggests that this diffusion is a case of ‘selective copying’ (Johanson, 2002).

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