

REDUPLICATION IN THE M'NONG LANGUAGE

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0 Introduction

The M'ong language belongs to the South Bahnaric language subgroup of Mon-Khmer, part of the greater Austroasiatic language family. M'ong is native to the southern and southwest parts of Dak Lak province and the northern part of neighboring Song Be and Lam Dong provinces, all in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The M'ong language is spoken by 67,062 people in Viet Nam (1989 census). This paper on morphological reduplication in M'ong is based on the dialect of M'ong Preh spoken in the villages of Cu Jut and Dakgan in Dak Lak province.

1 The Forms of Reduplication in the M'ong Language

The M'ong language has several forms of reduplication. Each form expresses a distinct meaning and follows a phonetic rule. Reduplication in M'ong is used in some of the following ways: to describe an emotion or an attitude of the speaker in a particular situation, to indicate the degree or the characteristic nature of the base word, or to express onomatopoeia, among others. The reduplicants often consist of either a series of two-syllable or four-syllable units, though some three-syllable units do occur.

1.1 *Two-Syllable Constructions*

The first (or the second) syllable of a two-syllable series generally is a free root and does not change as reduplication occurs, and its meaning also remains the same. This reduplication occurs mainly with adjectives, verbs, nouns and descriptive roots, but it also occurs to a lesser degree with other classes of roots. In onomatopoeic words, the reduplicated syllable has no lexical meaning. There are two types of reduplication which form two-syllable constructions: total and partial reduplication.

1.1.1 Total Reduplication

Total reduplication involves the complete repetition of the original free root. The free root has a syllable structure which falls into one of three structural types: an open syllable (ending in a vowel), a sonorant syllable (ending in a nasal or semivowel), or a closed syllable (ending in a unreleased stop). The following are examples.¹

¹ The script used in this paper is based on the Vietnamese Quoc Ngu alphabet, commonly used to represent other indigenous languages spoken in Vietnamese. Many consonants and are pronounced as they are in English, while the vowels used in this paper require some explanation: 'a' is IPA /a/, 'â' is /ɤ/, 'e' is /e/, 'ê' is /e/, 'i' is /i/, 'o' is /ɔ/, 'ô' is /o/, 'ô'' /ɤ:/, 'u' is /u/, 'u'' /i/. Among the notable exceptions for consonants, 'ng' is /ŋ/ and 'nh' is /ɲ/. Long vowels can be indicated by a line above.

- a) Open syllables: *bro' bro'* 'continuously', *bru bru* 'homeless, neglected', *mhao' mhao'* 'every afternoon'
- b) Sonorant syllables: *blao blao* 'stagger, reel', *iom iom* 'quietly, softly', *blun blun* 'very fast', *hol hol* 'smoulder', *vir vir* 'mooching around/moping about', *đưng đưng* 'flame, blaze'
- c) Closed syllables: *bik bik* 'thumps', *groc groc* 'flock', *hop hop* 'open the mouth wide, gape'

The initial consonant of a reduplicated syllable can be a single consonant or a consonant cluster. The combinations of bilabial voiced stops with liquids such as: [br], [bl], [-br], [-bl] and the single consonant [r] are particularly common in the reduplicated root. Other consonant clusters found in reduplicated forms include: [gr], [gl], [kr], [kl], [dr], [pl], [tr], [nd], [n'h], [r'h], among others.

1.1.2 Partial Reduplication

This reduplication can be divided into several types: (a) changes of the initial consonant, (b) changes of the vowel, (c) changes of the final consonant, and (d) changes of both the vowel and final consonant. Each type is discussed and illustrated below.

(A) Changing of the initial consonant:

In this construction, the vowel and the final consonants of the syllable remain unchanged, while the initial consonant or consonant cluster is changed according to a particular pattern. For the majority of the data fitting this form, the initial consonant of the first syllable is a liquid, either an [r] or an [l], and the second syllable can begin with any consonant. The following are examples of these alternations.

- r - b** : *rik bik* 'swarm, teem - insects', *rôc bôc* 'whisper', *rok bok* 'in a hushed tone'
- r - c** : *riř cřp* 'sound of small bird- tweet tweet', *rřc cřc* 'bend over some work'
- r - d** : *rup dup* 'of house : lowly, shabby', *run dun* 'stooping'
- r - h** : *raâng haâng* 'scorching, burning-hot', *rôk hok* 'wait'
- r - kh** : *rik khik* 'giggle', *rok khok* 'roar of laughter'
- r - ng** : *rôk ngok* 'swarming, teeming (with people)', *rôc ngoc* 'clean, tidy'
- r - s** : *rap siap* 'rustling of leaves, of gravel', *rap suap* 'rustle, rustling'
- r - bl** : *rip blip* 'shine, glitter of eyes', *rêp blêp* 'twinkle'
- r - kl** : *ruk kluk* 'silence of nature', *răk klăk* 'in silence, quiet of people'
- l - h** : *lřt hřt* 'flying low', *lřq hřq* 'sound of agreement'
- l - v** : *lah vah* 'rock', *lřng vřng* 'supple of movements'

(B) Changing of the vowel

(B.1) Change in the pitch only: This change can be predicted for the majority of the data on the basis of the vowel pitch. The tongue height never changes between the first and second syllable, but the pitch always changes from high to low between the two syllables. The change can also be considered as a change from a front vowel to a back vowel with the same tongue height. This applies equally whether the vowel is long or short. Some examples follow.

a. Alternation between long vowels [i-u] and short vowels [ĩ – ũ]:

i - u : *plip plup* ‘chubby, plump’, *hik huk* ‘untidy’, *ntik ntuk* ‘be hanging in the air’,
plih pluh ‘wag’, *bit but* ‘shake, vibrate’

ĩ - ũ : *dĩn dũn* ‘stooping, bending’, *cĩt cũt* ‘sound of pounding rice’, *bĩt bũt* ‘smile, smiling’

b. Alternation between long vowels [e-o] and short vowels [ě-ỗ]:

e - o : *en on* ‘feeble, weak’, *lo le* ‘be abandoned, helpless’, *ceq coq* ‘timid; abashed’,
eng ong ‘be furious; irascible’

ě - ỗ : *ěm ỗm* ‘threaten’, *krěp krỗp* ‘noise of ox cart running on stone-road’

(B.2) Change in the tongue height only: This is a second type of vowel change between the high and close vowels [i, u] and the one low and open vowel [a]. Some examples for the alternation [i-a] and [u-a] follow.

i - a : *brim bram* ‘closely-planted’, *mhip mhap* ‘very dirty, soiled’, *gik gak* ‘strut; go slowly like an important person’, *suít suat* ‘dark, gloomy’

u - a : *hur har* ‘thirst for, hunger for’, *bru bra* ‘be dispersed, flee in all directions’, *rju rja* ‘stay too long, linger’, *ruq raq* ‘drip drop’

(C) Changing of the final consonant

In this case, the final consonant of the first syllable must be a voiceless stop: [p], [t], [c], [k], [q] or a voiceless glottal fricative [h]. The final consonant occurring in the second syllable is either a liquid [l] or [r], a nasal [m], [n], [nh], [ng], or it is zero.

p - l	:	<i>nỏp nỏl</i> ‘durable, be lasting’
c - l	:	<i>khoc khol</i> ‘tattered, in rags’, <i>khuc khul</i> ‘beat about the bush’
k - l	:	<i>hok hol</i> ‘in a mess’, <i>hik hil</i> ‘playful, mischievous’
p - r	:	<i>blip blir</i> ‘boast, talk big’
t - r	:	<i>ndết ndêr</i> ‘helpless’
c - r	:	<i>ngắc ngắr</i> ‘nimble, briskly’, <i>hộc hờr</i> ‘panic-stricken’
k - r	:	<i>gok gor</i> ‘for a long time’
p - ng	:	<i>brip bring</i> ‘a very large quantity’
t - ng	:	<i>hit hing</i> ‘burning, hot’
c - m	:	<i>grắc grắm</i> ‘honest, good’
q - n	:	<i>luq lun</i> ‘grow a paunch’, <i>dhiq dhin</i> ‘fat, corpulent’
h - nh	:	<i>bhioh bhionh</i> ‘have the gift of the gab, loquacious’, <i>jờh jờnh</i> ‘uneven’
h - l	:	<i>bhiah bhial</i> ‘dripping wet’
t - zero	:	<i>vết vê</i> ‘confused, embarrassed’, <i>kut ku</i> ‘cuckoo’

Of the different combinations listed above, the most common pairs found are [k-l], [c-l], [c-r], [t-r]. These account for 51.8% of all final consonant changes found in our field work data.

(D) *Changing of both the vowel and the final consonant*

There seems to be no regularity or predictability to either the vowel quality or the final consonant change. However, there is a tendency for the second syllable to be more sonorant than the first syllable.

blăk blo ‘wander’, *răk rong* ‘take care’, *roh rai* ‘disperse’
blênh blu ‘appear and disappear’, *laq lêng* ‘roll of a drum’

One syllable words can also reduplicate just the initial consonant to form a presyllable. The first syllable is more sonorant than the second syllable.

<i>bok</i> ‘white’	>	<i>bơbok</i> ‘off white, whitish’
<i>duh</i> ‘hot’	>	<i>dơduh</i> ‘luke warm’
<i>nhot</i> ‘tough’	>	<i>nhơnhot</i> ‘slightly tough’
<i>kot</i> ‘strong, thick’	>	<i>kakot</i> ‘a little strong/ thick’

1.2 Four-syllable constructions

Four-syllable constructions occur with two-syllable free roots, which may be completely reduplicated or partially reduplicated. The reduplication formula is expressed with the following symbols.

A- one syllable in the root
 B- a second syllable in the root different from A
 A’- partial reduplication of A
 B’- partial reduplication of B
 x- a syllable, completely different from A or B
 x’- partial reduplication of X

(A) **AB > ABAB** (A two-syllable root is reduplicated completely.)

<i>mbrêh nhaâp</i> ‘scintillate’	>	<i>mbrêh nhaâp mbrêh nhaâp</i>
<i>blê blêp</i> ‘shine’	>	<i>blê blêp blê blêp</i>
<i>du hũ</i> ‘in turn’	>	<i>du hũ du hũ</i>

(B) **AB > AABB** (A and B are both free roots, each one is reduplicated completely. AA always occurs before BB.)

<i>kho ao</i> ‘clothes’	>	<i>kho kho ao ao</i>
<i>ur sai</i> ‘wife and husband’	>	<i>ur ur sai sai</i>
<i>en on</i> ‘mincing’	>	<i>en en on on</i>
<i>gơm ngơi</i> ‘laugh and speak’	>	<i>gơm gơm ngơi ngơi</i>
<i>guq dơk</i> ‘sit and stand’	>	<i>guq guq dơk dơk</i>

(C) **AB > ABAB’** (AB is a two-syllable compound word.)

<i>êng ang</i> ‘strange’	>	<i>êng ang êng rang</i>
<i>cê lét</i> ‘small, unimportant’	>	<i>cê lét kê lanh</i>

(D) **AA' > AA'BB'** (AA' is a two-syllable reduplicated root, and BB' is a partial reduplication of AA'.)

<i>luk lăk</i> 'disorderly'	>	<i>luk lăk tăk tai</i>
<i>vêl vê</i> 'confused'	>	<i>vêl vê cũ cuăng</i>
<i>êl êl</i> 'compel'	>	<i>êl êl dêl dôi</i>

(E) **AA' > xAxA'** (AA' is a two-syllable reduplicated root, x is an open syllable: *mô*, *ma*, *dê* etc.)

<i>laq lăng</i> 'not serious'	>	<i>mô laq mô lăng</i>
<i>ngơq ngơr</i> 'lazy'	>	<i>mô ngơq mô ngơr</i>
<i>blem blom</i> 'corpulent, fat'	>	<i>ma blem ma blom</i>
<i>-brôc -brôc</i> 'timid'	>	<i>dê -brôc dê -brôc</i>
<i>eng ong</i> 'be furious'	>	<i>dê eng dê ong</i>

2 Meanings of reduplicated forms

Two factors which influence the meaning of a construction are the word class of the free root and the form of reduplication. In each construction, the form can express a distinct meaning which depends on the nature of the free root, for example, whether it is a noun, verb, adjective, or descriptive root.

There is often stark contrast between the initial consonants, the vowels, and the final consonants of the two syllables in partial reduplication formations. This contrast in sounds makes the reduplicated word very rich in imagery and description. If the root is a verb, the partial reduplication formation expresses the action while at the same time also expressing the means by which that action occurs. Thus, *rêp blêp* not only means 'twinkle', but it also expresses the means by which this process occurs (i.e. it is the periodic repetition of 'twinkle' with different degrees of light). If the root is an adjective, the partial reduplication formation expresses the meaning more precisely. Thus, *vil* 'round' becomes *vil rdit* 'perfectly round'.

In the M'ong language, the pitch or method of articulation of a vowel or a consonant in total or partial reduplication often has a relationship with the meaning of the construction. Constructions often resemble natural sounds. The shape of the articulators can be associated with the shape, form, or appearance of things. In addition, pitch can indicate colors, varying degrees of light or darkness, or similar distinctions. This is similar to the reflection of the natural world in the sound of music.

It is hard to define exactly how many types of meaning reduplication expresses in the M'ong language. However, based on data collected in the field and from the M'ong-Vietnamese dictionary, the most common meanings are listed and described below.

2.1 There are a large number of onomatopoeic words formed as a result of total reduplication: *crak crak* 'sound of the rain', *dưng dưng* 'sound of the drum', *hurê hữr* 'sound of the wind', *krao krao* 'sound of baby crying', and other similar types. The original free root of the onomatopoeic words is often found with the initial consonant /p/: *păng păng* 'sound of firing', *pin pin* 'sound of car horn', *plop plop* 'sound of applause',

pak pak ‘sound of cutting down trees’, and so on. There are also a large number of two-syllable onomatopoeic words formed as a result of partial reduplication.

rek phek ‘noise of firewood burning’
rek bhek ‘noise of mouse eating rice’
ing iang ‘noise of frog croaking’
kêng kông ‘noise of the bells ringing’

2.2 Noun constructions are commonly used for the names of plants or animals: *ka ka* ‘beech-tree’, *ket ket* ‘tree with rugged leafs’, *bul bul* ‘small ophi cephalidae fish’, and others. Several names of animals and plants are also a result of partial reduplication.

kô kim ‘butterfly’, *mrok mro* ‘cricket’,
geng gong ‘praying mantis’, *hêp tu ru* ‘grass rush’.

2.3 Two-syllable total reduplication formations with a noun as the original free root express the meaning of plurality ‘every x’.

<i>ngih</i> ‘house’	>	<i>ngih ngih</i> ‘every house’
<i>buynh</i> ‘person’	>	<i>buynh buynh</i> ‘every person’
<i>ntôk</i> ‘place’	>	<i>ntôk ntôk</i> ‘every place’
<i>ôi</i> ‘morning’	>	<i>ôi ôi</i> ‘every morning, morning after morning’
<i>nar</i> ‘day’	>	<i>nar nar</i> ‘every day, day after day’
<i>khay</i> ‘month’	>	<i>khay khay</i> ‘every month, month after month’

2.4 Verb constructions carry a sense of repetition and continuation.

<i>đứt</i> ‘to nod’	>	<i>đứt đứt</i> ‘nod repeatedly’
<i>par</i> ‘fly’	>	<i>par par</i> ‘fly repeatedly’
<i>kdắt</i> ‘jump’	>	<i>kdắt kdắt</i> ‘jump repeatedly’

2.5. Two-syllable total reduplicative formations with adjectives or verbs as the original free roots express lightened meaning (e.g., ‘a little x’, ‘somewhat x’).

<i>nơih</i> ‘easy’	>	<i>nơih nơih</i> ‘a little easy’
<i>m’bơi</i> ‘slow’	>	<i>m’bơi m’bơi</i> ‘a little slow’
<i>rgai</i> ‘thin’	>	<i>rgai rgai</i> ‘a little thin’
<i>bên</i> ‘familiar’	>	<i>bên bên</i> ‘somewhat familiar’
<i>bo</i> ‘to love’	>	<i>bo bo</i> ‘to love less’

This lightened meaning is also expressed by two-syllable partial reduplication constructions that can be categorized semantically.

(A) Lightening of smell and taste

<i>ciắt</i> ‘salty’	>	<i>cia ciắt</i> ‘a little bit salty’
<i>nhôt</i> ‘sweet’	>	<i>nhô nhôt</i> ‘a little sweet’
<i>sốt</i> ‘tasteless’	>	<i>sơ sốt</i> ‘plain’

kah 'delicious' > *ka kah* 'tasty'

(B) Lightening level of character, colour, temperature

đăng 'hard' > *da đăng* 'a little hard'
kloh 'clean' > *klo klot* 'a little clean'
ndrêh 'green' > *ndrê ndrêh* 'light green'
guh 'red' > *gơ guh* 'light red, reddish'
duh 'hot' > *dơ duh* 'warm, a little hot'
kăť 'cold' > *ka kăť* 'cool, chilly, a little cold'

(C) Lightening of size, quantity, weight

jêê 'small' > *jê jêê* 'a little small'
têh 'large' > *tê têh* 'somewhat large'
prêh 'tall' > *prê prêh* 'somewhat tall'
gleh 'short' > *gle gleh* 'somewhat short'
jۆk 'heavy' > *jơ jۆk* 'somewhat heavy'
thông 'light' > *thô thông* 'somewhat light'
ۆk 'much, many' > *ơ ۆk* 'not too much/ many'

2.6 The two-syllable partial reduplication form with the rhyme [-en] in the reduplicant occurs in nouns, verbs, and adjectives, giving them general meanings with negative connotations.

tok 'hair' > *tok ten*
môp 'hats' > *môp men*
sa 'to eat' > *sa sen*
nti 'to study' > *nti nten*
ueh 'beautiful' > *ueh uen*
bok 'white' > *bok ben*

2.7 Some partial reduplication forms occur with [-a-] between the two syllables. The first syllable is an adjective root, while the final syllable is a reduplicant with the initial consonant [r-]. This reduplication formation intensifies the meaning.

jۆk 'heavy' > *jۆk a rۆk* 'very heavy'
prêh 'tall' > *prêh a rêh* 'very tall'
gleh 'short, low' > *gleh a reh* 'very short, very low'
toyh 'big' > *toyh a roh* 'very big'
ۆk 'many, much' > *ۆk a rۆk* 'too many, too much'

2.8 Four-syllable reduplication forms emphasize the meaning more fully. The following are examples.

(A) A sense of plurality:

kho ao 'clothes' > *kho kho ao ao* 'many clothes'
ngih vơl 'houses' > *ngih ngih vơl vơl* 'many houses'

(B) A sense of repetition:

<i>sa nhêt</i> ‘eat and drink’	>	<i>sa sa nhêt nhêt</i> ‘eat and drink again’
<i>gơm ngời</i> ‘laugh and speak’	>	<i>gơm gơm ngời ngời</i> ‘laugh and speak again’

(C) A sense of degree of character or characteristics:

<i>en on</i> ‘walk or behave flirtatiously or affectedly’	>	<i>ren en ron on</i> ‘walk or behave more flirtatiously or affectedly’
<i>iệp iệp</i> ‘lean, thin’	>	<i>rep iệp rop iệp</i> ‘very thin with long arms & legs’
<i>săng</i> ‘obscene’	>	<i>săng blah săng blơi</i> ‘completely obscene’

3 Concluding Thoughts

It is worth noting that the M’ngong language sometimes deploys affixation, the main function of which is to change the class or subclass of the word to which it is affixed: e.g., it may turn a verb into a noun, an intransitive verb into transitive verb, etc. The reduplicative formations and their meaning probably have a relationship with affixation in M’ngong. It is the hope of the author to touch upon this subject in the future.

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PROSODY AND THE SEGMENTATION OF MALAY DISCOURSE

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1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine the issues of segmentation in continuous discourse and present a theoretical framework that somewhat eases its segmentation into fragmented parts. The difficulty encountered in segmenting a stretch of speech into separate tone groups provides the impetus for carrying out research of this nature. The paper presents arguments for segmenting discourse into units of speech whose boundaries are defined by audible prosodic cues. The conclusion is that this less restrictive framework enables the identification of prosodic cues in segmentative work and the roles they play in discourse development.

The standard approach to the description of intonation, especially in the British tradition of intonation, is to establish a unit of phonological organization within which the nucleus or focus can be defined. The assignment of tonal features in turn depends on the necessity of having appropriate information points pre-established. The recognition of this central unit in the study of intonation is described succinctly by Scuffil (1982:34) as follows:

All analyses of intonation postulate a unit which is central in the sense that it provides the framework within which intonational features can be described.

These units share a theoretical orientation and characterize some units of intentional description, the neutral and unmarked case coinciding with a clause. The intimate relationship between prosody and segmentation of speech is expressed in the words of Gardiner (1977:4) who postulates that intonation segments utterances into 'phrases signaling to what extent the phrases are related to one another and element within the phrase is the center of attention.'

The fact that it is impossible to utter an extended stretch of speech without some kind of break, and that it is impossible for the hearer to interpret what is said unless what is perceived is chunked into manageable units makes segmentation into divisible unit obligatory. Nevertheless, the decision as to how the verbal content of his discourse should be segmented is optional in the sense that it lies with the speaker. The belief that segmentation of discourse is prosodically identifiable and that often (but not always) segmentation is based on speaker decision in pursuit of a purpose provides the impetus for the investigation into the relationship between segmentation and the role that the segmented chunks play in discourse development.

