

Consonant copying and tone harmony in Vietnamese reduplicatives

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0. Introduction

Reduplicatives are very commonly used in Vietnamese, not only in colloquial conversation but also, very frequently, in poetry and lyrical prose. According to our reckoning, there are around 4000 lexical items in which changes of meaning correspond to modifications in the phonological shape of words. These modifications follow rules which consist in copying and replacing certain pieces of the phonological word, thereby creating consonant, rime or vowel alliterations as well as patterns of tone harmony.

There are two types of reduplicatives: primary and secondary. Secondary reduplicatives are derived by rules from primary ones, as in the following examples:

<u>Base</u>	<u>Primary</u> <u>reduplicatives</u>	<u>Secondary</u> <u>reduplicatives</u>
bênh	bập bênh	bập bà bập bênh
"to surge up"	"bobbing"	"bobbing incessantly"
khềnh	khập khềnh	khập kha khập khềnh
"protruding"	"uneven, bumpy"	"very bumpy"
mơ	lơ mơ	tơ lơ mơ "not to
"to dream"	"dreamy, vague"	understand at all"

In this paper, we are concerned with one category of primary Vietnamese reduplicatives where one phonological word is a free morpheme and the other

is a bound morpheme. In this category, the bound morpheme is entirely made up of phonological pieces, which are produced by rules. We will describe five different ways in which this can be done.

These primary reduplicatives all involve copying certain segments of the root (free morpheme) and adding certain segments in a systematic fashion. However, the tone of the root is not copied; instead, the tone of the bound morpheme must agree in a certain way with the tone of the root. This pattern of the agreement relies upon a classification of Vietnamese tones into two series: 1 and 2. Roots may have all 6 tones available in Vietnamese, but the tone of the bound morpheme is not independent: the tone of the root and the tone of the bound morpheme must belong the same class. In other words, this is a case of tone harmony.

1. VN tone series

All finals:

Series	1: "ngang" (no mark); "hỏi" (̣); "sắc" (́)
	2: "huyền" (̣); "ngã" (̣̃); "nặng" (̣̣)

Stop finals:

Series	1: "sắc" (́)
	2: "nặng" (̣̣)

2. Patterns

a) Meaning: "alternating"

Shape: Preposing a bound morpheme constructed by:

- Copying the initial consonant of the root
- Replacing the rime by the phonological sequence -âp
- Using one of only two possible tones: "sắc" and "nặng"
- Harmonizing the tone:
 - "sắc" if root has a tone of series 1
 - "nặng" if root has series a tone of 2

Exx.	kênh "warped "	cáp kênh "uneven "
	dênh "overflow"	dập dênh "bobbing"
	lửng "half-way; half-done"	lấp lửng "half-submerged"
	chững "stop short"	chập chững "toddling"

b) Meaning: " perfect and pleasant "

Shape: postposing a bound morpheme consisting of:

- copy of initial consonant
- rime replacement: -ăn
- bound tones: "sắc" or "nặng"
- tone harmony: "sắc" with series 1;
"nặng" with series 2

Exx.	nhỏ "small"	nhỏ nhắn "tiny, nice"
	xinh "pretty"	xinh xắn "nice-looking"
	tròn "round"	tròn trặn "plump, round"
	nhã "courteous"	nhã nhặn "very courteous"

c) Meaning: "very"

Shape: postposing a bound morpheme consisting of:

- copy of initial consonant
- rime replacement: -ang
- bound tones: "ngang" or "huyền"
- tone harmony: "ngang" with series 1;
"huyền" with series 2

Exx.	nhẹ "light"	nhẹ nhàng "very light"
	dễ "easy"	dễ dàng "very easy"
	hở "half-opened"	hở hang "opened; discovered"
	xôn "sting; smart"	xôn xang "agitated; feeling perplexed"

d) Meaning: "very" (with positive quality)

Shape: postposing a bound morpheme consisting of:

- copy of initial consonant
- rime replacement: -e
- bound tones: "hỏi" or "ngã"

- tone harmony: "hỏi" with series 1;
"ngã" with series 2

Exx.	gọn "neat, tidy"	gọn ghẽ "pleasingly tidy"
	mới "new"	mới mẻ "very new"
	vui "pleased, glad"	vui vẻ "very glad, joyful"
	rành "know well"	rành rẽ "know very well"

e) Meaning: "a little"

Shape: preposing a bound morpheme consisting of:

- copy of the whole syllable (except the tone)
- change the final stop of the bound morpheme to the corresponding nasal
- bound tones: "ngang" or "huyền"
- tone harmony: "ngang" with series 1;
"huyền" with series 2

Exx.

p > m	đẹp "beautiful; handsome"	đềm đẹp "a little bit beautiful"
t > n	khít "fitting well"	khìn khít "fit rather well"
k > ng	khác "different"	khang khác "rather different"
ch > nh	sạch "clean"	sành sạch "rather clean"
m > m	chậm "slow"	châm chậm "rather slow"
n > n	ngắn "short"	ngăn ngắn "rather short"
ng > ng	nặng "heavy"	nẫng nặng "rather heavy"
nh > nh	nhỉnh "a little bigger"	nhinh nhỉnh "a shade bigger"
rỉ "ooze out"	ri rỉ "exude"	
dễ "easy"	dê dễ "rather easy"	
khẽ "soft, light"	khe khẽ "rather softly, light"	
cũ "old"	cũ cũ "rather old"	

rỗ "pock-marked (face)"	rô rỗ "a little bit pock- marked"
đỏ "red"	đỏ đỏ "reddish"
bự "big, thick"	bự bự "rather big"
sợ "be afraid"	sờ sờ "be afraid a little bit"
lạ "strange "	lạ lạ "rather strange"

3. Conclusion

Each pattern gives a choice of only two possible tones for the bound morpheme, one belonging to series 1, the other to series 2. The choice between the two is determined by the series of the tone of the root; as a result, both tones in a reduplicative belong to the same series 1 or 2. This is a clear case of tone harmony, exactly parallel to cases of vowel harmony found in some other languages and in Vietnamese also.

Each pattern has rules for copying phonological pieces of the root. For this purpose, the main division of the root is between a rime and an initial (not including the semivowel -w-). There are also changes in the final consonants, but these are related to restrictions between the tones and the final consonants.

In the 5 patterns described above, we find recurrent associations between meaning and phonological shapes. Therefore we can say that these are cases of morphology. The only difference between the morphology of Vietnamese reduplicatives and traditional morphology is that the affixes are not attached to the root in forming a single word; instead they constitute a full syllable, which according to Vietnamese grammar must be a separate phonological word. But, as in true morphology, the affix and the root cannot be separated by anything. Reduplicatives are single lexical words made of two phonological words.

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