

Word reduplication in Mauritian Creole: nouns, adjectives and adverbs

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1. Introduction

- The focus of this paper is the reduplication of nouns, adverbs, and adjectives. Sometimes, reduplication involves a change in syntactic category, such as in the formation of adverbials.
- In other cases, reduplication does not result in a change in syntactic category.
- This second type of reduplication concerns adverbs and adjectives (both pre-nominal and post-nominal).
- The resulting semantic effects are distributivity, repetition, genericity and attenuation.
- In a previous study, Baker (2003) had already noticed that replicating pre-posed and post-adjectives resulted in two different readings: augmentative for pre-posed and attenuative for post-posed. In this paper, I attempt to better characterize the augmentative reading.
- One of the main findings of this paper is reduplicating nouns forms manner adverbials, instead of conveying nominal plurality.
- Another important conclusion that we reach is that one cannot always predict the type of reading that will be obtained by reduplicating a word of a certain category. There is no one-to-one correspondence between categories and types of readings.
- Some of the instances of word reduplication (henceforth, DUPL) described here are found in the Mauritian author Dev Virahsawmy's trilogy of plays *Trilozi Gonaz* (marked TG) from written texts.
- I have created the other examples from instances of overheard conversation
- Note on the grammar of predication. The examples in (1) illustrate copulaless constructions involving adjectives, noun phrases and prepositional phrases in predicative position.

- (1) a. Mo sak lour.
POSS-1SG bag heavy
'My bag is heavy.'
- b. Sa lepidemi- la enn problem mondial.
DEM epidemic DEF a problem global
'This epidemic is a global issue.'
- c. Laplaz devan lotel- la.
beach IN.FRONT.OF hotel DEF
'The beach is in front of the hotel.'

2. Reduplication forms new syntactic categories

In this section, we look at cases where adverbials are formed by reduplicating words from various categories. Manner adverbials either formed by reduplication or undergoing reduplication have been discussed in Baker (2003).

- Manner adverbials may present themselves in different forms: simple adverbs ((2a)), prepositional phrases ((2b)), noun phrases ((2c)), subordinate clauses ((2d)). Manner may also be expressed in a verb phrase ((2e)) or by a serial verb construction ((2f)).

- (2) a. Kashik travay dir.
K. work hard
'Kashik works hard.'
- b. Nadine inn galoup avek savat.
N. PERF run with flip-flop
'Nadine ran wearing flip-flops.'
- c. Zot pe promne lame dan lame.
3pl PROG walk hand in hand
'They are walking hand in hand.'
- d. Gita inn al lamer san ki li dir so bann paran.
G. PERF go sea without COMP 3SG say POSS-3SG PL parent
'Gita has gone to the beach without telling her parents.'
- e. Zot get bien avan zot koze.
3PL look well before 3PL speak
Lit. 'They look well before they speak.' (= 'They speak with caution.')
- f. Rama inn sote inn kas mang lor pie.
R. perf jump perf break mango on tree
'Rama jumped to pick mangoes from the tree.'

2.1 Forming a manner adverbial by reduplicating nouns or adjectives without a distributive reading

- DUPL creates manner adverbials from nouns and adjectives. The output is an adverb or an adverbial phrase.
- The semantic change is that from of a property to an event modifier.
- In example (4), the input is *vites* which is a noun meaning 'speed'. The result of reduplication is an adverb of manner which can be translated by 'at great speed'. Here is a sentence where *vites* is used as a noun:

- (3) Ki vites to loto pe roule?
what speed POSS-2SG car PROG drive
'At what speed is your car driving?'

- Only the reduplicated forms may occur in adverbial position, as shown by the ungrammaticality of the sentence with the simple form in (4b). Example (4c) shows that the reduplicated form may not be modified by a degree adverb.

- (4) a. Bato- la pe aprise vites-vites. [TG]
boat DEF PROG approach speed-DUPL
‘The boat is coming nearer at great speed.’
b. *Bato- la pe aprise vites
boat DEF PROG approach speed
c. Bato- la pe aprise {*bien/ tro} vites-vites.
boat DEF PROG approach very too speed-DUPL

- There exists also an adverb meaning ‘speedily’: *vit* as an example would be:

- (5) Li finn reponn mwa vit.
3SG PERF reply 1SG quickly
‘He quickly replied to me.’

- In example (6a), the input *kare* is a word which may mean ‘a square’ or ‘square’; that is it may refer to an object or it may refer to the shape of an object that is a property.
- When *kare* is reduplicated, the meaning is an event modifier whereby the event is characterized by being fair and square. It could be translated as ‘in a straightforward manner’.
- The simple form cannot appear in this position ((6b)).

- (6) a. Me mo prefer tou lor papie, kare-kare. [TG]
but 1SG prefer all on paper square- DUPL
‘But I prefer everything to be on paper, fair and square.’
b. *Me mo prefer tou lor papie, kare
but 1SG prefer all on paper square

2.2 Forming manner adverbials by reduplicating locative adverbs/prepositions *anba* and *lao*.

- In the following instances, a word which may be a locative adverb or a locative preposition undergoes a process of reduplication in order to form a manner adverbial.
- In terms of semantics, the change in meaning is from a location to an event modifier. There seems to be a loss of the spatial reference, replaced by a metaphoric meaning.
- The word *anba* is an adverb which may mean ‘downstairs’ or ‘on the floor’ as illustrated in (7a) and it is also a preposition meaning ‘under’ or ‘lower than’, as shown in (7b).
- Sentence (8a) illustrates a manner adverbial formed by the reduplication of *anba*, which conveys the meaning ‘slyly’, ‘sneakily’ or ‘in an under-hand manner’.
- Example (8b) shows that *travay anba* is an authorised structure, but that its meaning ‘work downstairs’ is incongruous when combined with *zot manier sa* ‘it is their way’.

- (7) a. To telefonn anba.
POSS-3SG phone under
‘Your phone is downstairs/ on the floor/ in a lower position.’
b. So sak laptop anba biro.
POSS-3sg bag laptop under desk
‘His laptop bag is under the desk.’

- (8) a. Zot manier sa, travay anba-anba. (TG)
POSS-3PL manner DEM, work down-DUPL

‘It’s their way to work underhandedly/ They are prone to work underhandedly.’

- b. #Zot manier sa, travay anba.
 POSS-3PL manner DEM, work down

- *Lao* is an adverb meaning ‘above’ or ‘higher up’ (example (9a)). It is also a preposition meaning ‘on’ or ‘over’ (example (9b)).
- Sentence (10a) shows that when *lao* is reduplicated, the resulting form has the meaning ‘superficially’ or ‘carelessly’.
- As is the case for *anba*, in syntactic terms, the change is from an adverb or preposition into a manner adverbial.
- Sentence (10b) illustrates the simple form *lao* being used in the same position, in which case its meaning is ‘above’ or ‘upstairs’, *i.e.* without a metaphoric connotation.

- (9) a. Get lao.
 look up
 ‘Look up.’
- b. Sa lexame- la inn pas lao mo latet.
 DEM exam DEF PERF pass over POSS-1SG head
 Lit. ‘This exam has gone over my head.’
- c. Rania gard bizou lao larmwar.
 R. keep jewellery over cupboard
 ‘Rania keeps the jewellery on top of the wardrobe.’
- (10) a. Li inn fer travay -la lao-lao.
 3SG PERF do job def above-dupl
 ‘He did the job carelessly.’
- b. Li inn fer travay -la lao.
 3SG PERF do job DEF above
 ‘He did the job upstairs.’

- The use of the simple form *lao* ‘above’ in adverb position is allowed, but with a different meaning from that of ‘superficiality’ or ‘carelessness’.

2.3 Forming locative adverbial(s) with a distributive reading by reduplicating a locative

- *Lakaz* may be a count noun (example (11a)) and may also occur as a bare locative as in (11b). It translates both as ‘house’, ‘home’, ‘maison’ and ‘chez moi/nous’.
- Examples (12a) and (12b) show that both *lakaz-lakaz* and *lakaz* are locative adverbials.
- The input to reduplication is a bare locative and the output is also a bare locative.
- Support for this analysis comes from the fact that the reduplicated form is strictly adjacent to the verb, in the same position as that of the bare locative in simplex form.
- Example (12c) shows that the V + *lakaz-lakaz* construction does not allow for determiners or quantifiers in front of the reduplicated form, providing support for analysing *lakaz-lakaz* as a locative adverbial.

- (11) a. Lalita inn ranz so lakaz.
L. PERF build POSS-3SG house
'Lalita has built her house.'
- b. Vinn lakaz kan to gagn letan.
come home when 2SG have time
'Come to my place when you have the time.'
- (12) a. Li pas lakaz-lakaz pou dimann sarite.
3SG visit house-DUPL PREP ask charity
'(S)he goes from house to house to beg (for money).'
- b. Li pas lakaz pou dimann sarite.
3SG visit house PREP ask charity
3SG visit house PREP ask charity
- c. *Li pas enn lakaz-enn lakaz pou dimann sarite.
3SG visit one house-one house PREP ask charity

2.4 Forming stative predicates by reduplicating nouns: *ros-ros* and *boul-boul*

- DUPL forms properties (14a. the semantic status of the reduplicated form is a property which is ascribed to an inanimate entity.
- The input to reduplication is a noun referring to an inanimate entity.
- One meaning of *ros* is either 'rock(s), stone(s), pebble(s)' or 'hard as a rock'.

- (13) a. Labourer ti tir tou ros pou plant kann.
labourer PAST remove all rock for plant sugarcane
'Labourers had removed all (the) rocks for the planting of sugarcane.'
- b. Enn gro ros ti pe blok sime.
a big rock PAST PROG block road
'A big rock was blocking the road.'
- c. Biskwi- la ros.
biscuit DEF rock
'The biscuit is hard as a rock.'

- It can be seen from (14a) that the reduplicated form *ros-ros* occupies a predicate position. Its syntactic category is hard to define. Example (14b) shows the semantic anomaly caused by combining the simple form *ros* with *sime*.

- (14) a. Sime- la ros-ros.
road DEF rock-DUPL
'The road is rocky / There are stones all over the road.'
- b. ??/#Sime- la ros.
road DEF rock

- *Boul* meaning 'ball, sphere' is a count noun, which unlike *ros* cannot be used predicatively or metaphorically (example (15)).
- When undergoing DUPL, the meaning of *boul* changes to 'lump' or 'lumpy', as shown in (16a). The output of DUPL may be analyzed as a stative predicate. It is also potentially an adjective¹. One piece of evidence for adjectival status is that while the input to reduplication is a noun which may be determined, the output *ros-ros* or *boul-boul* may not.
- The simple form *boul* may not be used as a stative predicate with subject *lapat* (see example (16c)).

- (15) Kikenn inn amenn enn boul pou zwe.
 someone PERF apporter a sphere PREP play
 'Someone brought a ball to play with.'
- (16) a. Lapat- la boul-boul.
 dough DEF sphere-DUPL
 'The dough is lumpy.'
- b. *Lapat- la boul.
 dough DEF sphere-DUPL

2.5 Forming manner adverbials with a distributive reading by reduplicating *ti-bout*

- The next instance of reduplication involves *ti-bout* 'small piece', which consists of the noun *bout* 'piece' and its prefix *ti-* (Baker (2003: 215)).
- When prefixed with diminutive 'ti', it may occur as an adverbial which does not require a preposition (example (17a)).
- The reduplicated form shown in (18), *ti-bout-ti-bout*, is an adverbial occurring at the right end of the Verb Phrase.
- When used in simplex form, *bout* is a noun that has to occur inside a prepositional phrase, in a construction that is syntactically identical to French *en trois morceaux* 'into three pieces'.
- '*an trwa bout*' is a result state.
- Could 'tibout-ti-bout' also be a result state?

- (17) a. Pran maniok koup li ti-bout.
 take tapioca cut 3SG DIM -piece
 'Take the tapioca and cut it into small pieces.'
- b. Pran maniok koup li an trwa bout.
 take tapioca cut 3SG in three piece
 'Take the tapioca and cut it into three pieces.'
- c. Nadia inn tenn so seve blon.
 N. PERF dye POSS-3SG hair blonde
 'Nadia has dyed her hair blonde.'
- d. *Pran maniok koup li trwa bout.
 take tapioca cut 3SG three piece

¹ The issue of distinguishing adjectives from stative predicates in Mauritian Creole is discussed in Alleesaib (2014).

(18) Pran maniok koup li ti-bout-ti-bout. (Baker 2003: 215)
 take tapioca cut 3SG DIM-piece-DUPL
 ‘Take the tapioca and cut it into small pieces.’

- In this section, I have described the formation of adverbials by reduplicating words that may be adverbs/prepositions or nouns. In some cases, a completely new meaning emerges; sometimes, DUPL also conveys distributivity.

3. Reduplication without syntactic change

- This type of DUPL involves adverbs and adjectives (pre- and post- nominal).
- Attributive adjectives in Mauritian may be either precede or follow the noun.
- The list of pronominal adjectives is limited to the items in (19).
- Classifying adjectives typically follow the noun.

(19) a. SIZE
 gran ‘big, large’
 bel ‘big, large, huge’
 tipti ‘small, little’
 long ‘long, tall’
 b. AGE
 vie ‘old’
 ansien ‘ancient’
 zenn ‘young’
 nouvo ‘new’
 c. VALUE
 bon ‘good’
 move ‘bad’
 d. PHYSICAL ASPECT
 zoli ‘pretty, nice, beautiful’
 vilin ‘ugly’

3.1 Locative adverb reduplication : iteration

- Two locative adverbs that may undergo DUPL: *lwin* and *pre*.
- DUPL’s meaning is that of multiple locations, that is, distribution over space.
- *Lwin* is a locative adverb. It may also form part of the complex preposition *lwin ar*, literally ‘far with’, meaning ‘far from’.

(20) Rosie inn bizin al lwin.
 R. PERF must go far
 ‘Rosie has had to go/travel far.’

(21) a. Li inn amenn nou lwin- lwin.
 3SG PERF take 1PL far-far
 ‘He took us to various far away places.’
 b. *Li inn amenn nou bien lwin- lwin.
 3SG PERF take 1PL very far-far

- *Pre* may be translated as ‘close by’ as an adverb. When combined with *ar*, it can be translated as ‘close to, in the proximity of.’

(22) Zot pou promne pre-pre la-mem.
 3PL IRR wander nearby-DUPL here-INTENS
 ‘They will take a walk nearby. / They will do some visiting in the immediate vicinity.’

3.2 Reduplicating pronominal adjectives: dividing up the object and the subject

- According to Baker (2003), pronominal adjectives have an intensive meaning when they are reduplicated. I provide a more accurate semantic description of examples.
- The first construction involves reduplicating a pronominal adjective denoting size such as *gro* ‘large, big’ and *bel* ‘large, big’.
- Reduplication conveys distributivity instead of plurality, since the sentence without reduplication also has a plural meaning.
- The argument noun is in its simple form while its modifier undergoes DUPL.
- The reduplicated form seems to retain its adjectival category.

(23) a. Pou ena gro kado pou tou dimoun.
 IRR have big gift PREP all person
 ‘There will be large gifts for each and everybody.’
 b. Zot inn amenn gro kamion pou sarye ros.
 3PL PERF bring big lorry PREP carry rock
 ‘They have brought big lorries and each will have its load of rocks.’

(24) a. Pou ena gro-gro kado pou tou dimoun. (TG)
 IRR have big-DUPL gift PREP all person
 ‘There will be large gifts for each and everybody.’
 b. Zot inn amenn gro-gro kamion pou sarye ros.
 3PL PERF bring big-DUPL lorry PREP carry rock
 ‘They have brought big lorries and each will have its load of rocks.’

- (25b) presents a deduplicated adjective within the manner/instrument adverbial *ek gro-gro lizie* ‘with big-DUPL eyes’.
- Distributivity applies to the subject ‘*misie*’ Several men watching with their eyes wide-open.
- DUPL applies to subject in meaning, but structurally, to the modifier inside the instrument/manner noun phrase.

(25) a. Bann misie get li ek gro lizie kan li pase.
 PL man watch 3SG with big eye when 3SG walk.by
 ‘(The) men watch her with wide-open eyes as she walks by.’
 b. Bann misie get li ek gro-gro lizie kan li pase.
 PL man watch 3SG with big-DUPL eye when 3SG walk.by
 ‘(The) men each watch her with wide-open eyes as she walks by.’
 PL man watch 3SG with big eye when 3SG walk.by

‘(The) men watch her with wide-open eyes as she walks by.’

3.3 Reduplicating postnominal adjectives: multiple readings

This section focuses on adjectives in attributive position.

3.3.1 Distribution over space with colour adjective

- In this type, the result of DUPL is a dispersive reading.
- It applies to colour adjectives.
- The dress being described in example (26) has yellow spots in multiple locations.

(26) Sara inn met enn rob zonn-zonn.
S. PERF wear a dress yellow-DUPL
‘Sara is wearing a dress that has yellow patterns/spots.’

3.3.2 Attenuative reduplication

- The attenuative reading conveyed by the reduplication of some adjectives, especially colour adjectives, is a very common phenomenon. Moreover, it has been documented by Baissac (1880: 88ff) and Baker (2003: 214), who both trace this pattern to Malagasy. It conveys approximation or vagueness.
- Example (28a) below illustrates the same reading with a taste adjective: *fad* ‘bland’.
- According to Abbi (1992), this type of reduplication is productive in Indo-Aryan languages i.e. taste, quality, colour adjectives.
- Since attenuative DUPL is also found in Seychelles Creole (Bollée 2003: 223), it cannot be attributed to Indo-Aryan influence.

(27) a. Li inn servi nou enn manze fad.
3SG PERF serve 1PL a meal bland
‘(S)he served us a bland meal.’

b. Sara inn met enn rob zonn.
S. PERF wear a dress yellow
‘Sara is wearing a yellow dress.’

(28) a. Li inn servi nou enn manze fad-fad.
3SG PERF serve 1PL a meal bland-DUPL.
‘(S)he served us a somewhat bland meal.’

b. Sara inn met enn rob zonn-zonn.
S. PERF wear a dress yellow-DUPL.
‘Sara is wearing a yellowish dress.’

3.3.3 Characteristic type / generic readings

In the following cases, DUPL conveys distribution over time / frequency. In the case of *brit*, the reduplicated form cannot be applied to an individual. It can only modify the word *manier* ‘manner, disposition’. A

possible explanation may be that the reduplicated form is not ascribing a property to an individual, but is instead a generalization over events.

- (29) a. Sam oule enn travay fasil-fasil.
 S. want a job easy-DUPL
 ‘Sam wants a job that’s always going to remain light.’
- b. Bala so manier brit-brit.
 B. POSS-3SG manner abrupt- DUPL
 ‘Bala has an abrupt manner/ behaves abruptly.’
- c. Bala brit-brit dan so manier.
 B. abrupt- DUPL in POSS-3SG manner
 ‘Bala behaves abruptly.’

There may also be attenuation as an additional nuance in this case. Reduplication conveys that the speaker is unwilling to make a strong assertion. When the simple form is used, the impression is that of a strong assertion.

4. Concluding remarks

One use of DUPL involves changing the category of the simple form. DUPL is used to create manner adverbials, locative adverbials and stative predicates. Bollée’s (2003: 224) analysis of reduplication in Seychelles Creole as a word-formation process also applies to Mauritian Creole, in my opinion. The categories that form the input to reduplication are common nouns and words which occur both as prepositions and adverbs. Sometimes, the common noun is a bare locative. DUPL may convey distributivity along with category change. Two dypes of DUPL may be distinguished in cases where no category change is involved: distributive DUPL or an attenuative DUPL, and sometimes a mix of both. In the first type, distribution may be over time, over multiple locations or among participants in the event. These two types of DUPL take adverbs and adjectives as input.

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