



Reduplication in Sinhala

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Abstract

Reduplication, as seen in many languages of the world, is the systematic repetition of phonological material within a word for semantic or grammatical purposes. Generally, two broad types of reduplication are distinguished, depending on the size of the reduplicant: full vs. partial reduplication. Full reduplication refers to the repetition of the entire word, word stem (root with one or more affixes), or root. Partial reduplication is manifested in a number of forms such as consonant germination, vowel lengthening, or nearly complete copy of a base (Carl Rubino 2005). Sinhala employs reduplication in both of its spoken and written varieties in varying degrees and for various effects. In its written form, reduplication fulfills some stylistic functions and is mostly manifested in poetry, riddles, songs, anecdotes and narrations. The colloquial Sinhala uses reduplication in ordinary discourse and can be seen irrespective of the dialectal varieties.

The aim of this paper is to examine reduplication phenomenon in Sinhala in the broader spectrum of reduplication patterns and functions evidenced in many languages of the world. Data for the present study consisted of sentences with reduplication types and functions that can be distinguished in Sinhala. A sample of 60 sentences with such reduplication were used. The researcher consulted 05 adult native speakers of Sinhala for their grammaticality judgments about those sentences. Some major conclusions about the study are that reduplication can be observed at phonological, morphological/morpho-syntactic, and lexical levels in Sinhala and Sinhala manifests reduplication over a broad range of categories such as noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. As noted in other languages, in Sinhala too both complete and partial reduplication can be observed and the reduplicated element functions as a single lexical item. Thus, reduplication is a very important linguistic tool that contributes significantly to word formation and richness of the expressive power of language. Nevertheless, from a typological perspective, Sinhala is quite impoverished when viewed against the broader spectrum of reduplication types, sub-types, functions, and even in the areas of language affected by reduplication. Despite reduplication being a pervasive phenomenon in Sinhala, the extent of its application is limited mostly to echo-formations. As for grammatical functions, present participle aspect marking was the only grammatical function it fulfills in Sinhala.

Keywords: impoverished, reduplication, Sinhala