Reduplication in Phonology

The crucial definitional criterion distinguishing phonological doubling from other repetitive procedures, especially from morphological reduplication in the proper sense, is the following: If we can detect a purpose for its realization then we are dealing with conditions on purely phonological grounds. We insist on holding this claim erect, in spite of the serious objections of various grammarians who claim that every single sound phenomenon must express some meaning and thus a grammatical function, on whatsoever ground the latter might be found.

Pott (1862) also mentions a series of other doubling phenomena, exterior to reduplication proper and, as far as we can see, also in Pott's terms the crucial criterion for drawing the borderline to reduplication is the purely phonological vs. grammatically functional (i.e. semantic, categorical) use of the two in appearance related phenomena.

The diachronic relationship between phonological and morphological reduplication should also be briefly discussed in this context. A diachronic change of morphologization of phonological processes has been described in many instances. It is recognized, that many morphophonemic rules go back to productive phonological processes. But we must at least challenge the question as to whether morphological reduplication with the same regularity might have its origin in phonological doubling. We do not have any diachronic evidence, which might sustain such a historical type of change, neither on theoretical nor on empirical grounds. On the contrary, a series of arguments can be actively adduced against it as preferences of directionality, frequency, conditions and distribution.

Motivation for phonological doubling

In previous publications under the auspices of the *Graz Reduplication Project,* it has been argued that euphony should be re-established as a criterion for the evaluation of phonological and/or prosodic structures (cf. Hurch 2002). The motivation for applying such processes is to create structures, which for one reason or another produce phonologically more appropriate sound patterns. These grounds might variably follow acoustic and/or perceptual regularities. But not all processes, which in their structural change overtly show two realizations of one phonological unit should be adequately described as doubling, insofar as the latter presupposes a certain teleology. An assimilatory (lenitive) tendency which as a by-product results in not-changing, for example, a certain feature, can hardly be analyzed on the same grounds as a fortitive tendency aimed at deliberately repeating some sound portion, in order to conform with an aesthetic category.

Types of phonological doubling phenomena

Phonological doubling phenomena do exist at probably all levels of phonological elements, thus from (non-?)distinctive features to phonological phrases.

Segmental doubling or gemination does usually have rhythmic origin. One example is the process of lengthening of the initial consonant of the final syllables after the syncopation of the penultimate vowel in proparoxytonic words in Late Latin[1]:

(1) Late Latin: gemination

laburu > labbro

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[1] For a thorough discussion of Latin-Romance phonology see Pulgram 1975.

The rhythmic origin of such geminations can properly be understood by examining the opposite tendency of simplification, cf. the Late Latin "Lex Mamilla"*:*

(2) Late Latin: simplification

mamma 'breast' > *mamilla* diminutive

Doubling of portions of the syllable is well known in (poetic) rhyming, which is ideally based on the identity and repetition of that part of the syllable which includes the nucleus and the following material up to the boundary. Use and type of rhyming are mostly governed by stylistic principles.

Doubling of syllables has, for example, been described for Tarahumara. In so-called 'expletive' reduplication in Tarahumara (cf. Brambilla 1953: 8), any final syllable can be echoed with the sequence *k* plus the final vowel, whenever the final syllable is accented, with preferences according to certain intonational position.

(3) Tarahumara (Uto-Aztecan, Mexico)

a. *txopé* > *txopeke* 'pine firewood'

b. *pačí* > *pačiki* 'corn cob' (cf. Brambila 1953: 8)

c. sonó > sonoko 'stubble (field)' (ibid.)

Doubling of rhythmic patterns is used in poetry and it is familiar under the term 'meter': The pre-stabilized sequence of a certain number of feet with a fixed internal and overall structure is regularly repeated in order to create cohesion in the text. Poetic meter is also governed by stylistics.

These phonological doubling processes can be viewed as salient in human perception. The possibilities and regularities of doubling must be regulated more specifically by what is perceived as rhythmically 'better', as being more pleasant, as a higher euphony, as a stylistic means of verbal art, or as a stylistic figure (both the latter in poetry).

References

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