

Topics on Descriptive Linguistics: the case of reduplication in Nheengatu and Tsonga

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INTRODUCTION

Reduplication is a non-concatenative process of word formation and it is iconic:

kunhã uwatá-watá pituna pukusawa
woman 3sg-RED~to.walk night during
The woman walks during the night (Navarro, 2016)

The repetition of the root gives the word its final meaning

(Hurch, B., & Mattes, V., 2009)

Nheengatu is a tupian language spoken by ~19.000 speakers (Ethnologue) in Brazil.



Tsonga is a bantu language spoken by 3.7M speakers (Ethnologue) in Mozambique.



GOALS

- To analyse the use of reduplication in Nheengatu and Tsonga;
- To find commonalities between the languages;
- To propose solutions for problems found in grammatical descriptions.

METHODS

From the point of view of:

- Morphophonology
- Transitivity
- Aspect (stative and dynamic)

Materials analysed about:

- **Nheengatu:**
 - One grammar;
 - One course for university students.
- **Tsonga:**
 - One paper on reduplication;
 - One grammar;
 - One book on Tsonga verb
- Typological problems have been raised from functional-cognitive frameworks (Croft, 2002).

PROBLEMS

In Nheengatu:

- Some words typically classified as adjectives can be inflected in the same way as verbs

apigawa i-katú
man 3sg-to.be.good
The man is nice (da Cruz, 2011)

*apigawa katú
man to.be.good

PROBLEMS (cont.)

In Nheengatu:

- Adjectives can be reduplicated in the same way as verbs:

u-tuká-tuká ukena
3sg-RED~to.knock door
He kept knocking on the door

da Cruz 2011:

Nheengatu has no adjectives; they are, in fact, stative verbs.

In Tsonga:

- Re-reduplication is only possible with partial reduplicated forms:

màmàni a-re-remel-ilè
1-mother 1-RED-to.shake-PAS
The mother shook

màmàni a-reremela-reremel-ilè
1-mother 1-RED-to.shake-PAS
The mother repeatedly shook

- The concept of psychological micro-repetitions, as proposed by Langa (2013), is a subjective approach to deal with iconicity of reduplication:

ku-bòm-bòmèl-à
INF-PaRED-to.submerge-FV
To submerge

ku-bòmbòmèlà-bòmbòmèl-à
INF-RED-to.submerge-FV
To submerge repeatedly

Langa, 2013

CONCLUSIONS

- Grammatical descriptions of Tsonga can explain problems in the descriptions of Nheengatu (and vice-versa)
- Comparing languages as different from each other as Nheengatu and Tsonga helps develop a typology of reduplication
- Eurocentric grammatical descriptions lead to misunderstandings

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