Vietnamese Color Terms

The interaction of classifiers and reduplication

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Outline

• Background
  • Vietnamese Language
    • Relevant Phonology
  • Reduplication
  • Classifiers
• Hypothesis
• Methodology & Design
• Discussion & Future Research
Background

- National language of Vietnam
- ~76 million speakers
- Austro-Asiatic language family
- 3 mutually intelligible dialects
  - Northern (standard)
SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

• Primarily monosyllabic
  • compounding and reduplication make di-syllabic and tri-syllabic words

• Debate:
  • the prosodic word versus the syllable
  • existence of Vietnamese morphology
  • compounding and reduplication suggest morphology is both present and productive
**Tone**

- Contour tone language
  - change in pitch over syllable/word
- Standard orthography exhibits 6 tones
- Southern Vietnamese exhibits 5 of these tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Diacritic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ngang or level</td>
<td>(no mark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huyền or falling</td>
<td>ò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sặc or high-rising</td>
<td>ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nạng or low-dropping</td>
<td>ơ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hối or gradual fall and rise</td>
<td>ŕ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngã or broken fall-rise</td>
<td>ŕ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reduplication

- Repeating part of or whole words for semantic or grammatical purposes (Rubino 2011)

- Productive total and partial reduplication in Vietnamese adjectives and adverbs
  - Total Reduplication (whole word)
  - Initial Reduplication (onset)
  - Final Reduplication (rhyme)
  - Tone Shift (alternate within register)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Tone Shift</th>
<th>Final</th>
<th>Initial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sáng sáng</td>
<td>säng sáng</td>
<td>sáng láng</td>
<td>säng sủa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloss</td>
<td>rather bright</td>
<td>rather bright</td>
<td>bright and clear</td>
<td>bright and clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nguyen & Ingram (2007)

Tone Shift Constraint: not available for level or falling tone.

Research focused only on phonological forms of reduplication.
**Classifiers**

- Numeral classifiers are sometimes called “measure words”
  - must appear with numeral to support quantification of noun
- Some languages allow numeral classifiers to act as a definite article (Vietnamese)
  - CL + N = more specificity
  - CL camera is a specific camera vs. any
Hypothesis 1

• Reduplication forms systematically affect the base adjectives meaning.

Hypothesis 2

• The presence or absence of a CL in the NP modified by the ADJ will directly effect the possible patterns of reduplication.

• Expectation: more reduplication possible due to specificity.
Methodology

• Native Informant
  • 21 year old female
  • PhD Student in UD Linguistics Department
  • Native speaker of Southern Vietnamese dialect with knowledge of Northern dialect
  • Has lived in the US longer than 5 years
• Test used 5 monosyllabic color words

• Monosyllabic tokens to avoid complications of reduplication in compounds

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>white</td>
<td>trắng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black</td>
<td>đen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red</td>
<td>đỏ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue/green</td>
<td>xanh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>vàng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Elicited compatible monosyllabic nouns.
- Intentional choice to avoid English/cultural influence on elicitation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>tóc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case</td>
<td>hộp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scarf</td>
<td>khăn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pen</td>
<td>bút</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wall</td>
<td>tường</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skin</td>
<td>da</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Test Design

• Sentential minimal pair to control for use of CL only

• Tested NP in subject position only due to time constraints on research.
  
  • (No CL) ‘All N ADJ were burned.’
  
  • (CL) ‘The N ADJ were burned.’

• Informant was asked (1) which reduplicated forms of the ADJ were possible and (2) the glosses for each form.
Findings

• Both hypotheses were confirmed.
  • The reduplicated forms systematically affect the base adjective’s meaning. (Gradation Pattern)
  • The presence of a classifier licenses all
Gradation Pattern

Tone Shift

“kind of ___”

Bare Form

“very ___”

Total

Initial

Similar meaning: Slight intensity difference.
## Results

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Gloss</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giấy trắng</td>
<td>white paper</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tô</td>
<td>tô giấy trắng</td>
<td>CL white paper</td>
<td>trắng trắng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da trắng</td>
<td>white skin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bố</td>
<td>bố da trắng</td>
<td>CL white skin</td>
<td>trắng trắng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ‘Skin’ Factor

- Initial reduplication is only possible for NPs containing the noun ‘skin’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CL</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da trắng</td>
<td>white skin</td>
<td>Tất cả da trắng đã bị cháy.</td>
<td>All white skin was burned.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bọ</td>
<td>bọ da trắng</td>
<td>CL white skin</td>
<td>Bọ da trắng đã bị cháy.</td>
<td>The white skin was burned.</td>
<td>Full Gradation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skin Readings

- White: ‘very milky white skin’
- Black: ‘very dark, burnt skin’
- Red: ‘very rosy skin’
- Blue/Green: ‘very pale, sickly skin’
- Yellow: ‘very pale, sickly skin’
A NOTABLE EXCEPTION

- No use of final reduplication in any elicitation
- Nature of adjectives tested may play a part
- Appears to be in complementary distribution with Initial Reduplication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CL</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>da trăng</td>
<td>white skin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bố</td>
<td>bố da trăng</td>
<td>CL white skin</td>
<td>trắng trắng</td>
<td>trắng troe</td>
<td>trắng trắng</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Vietnamese reduplicated forms create a systematic gradation pattern exhibiting different levels of intensity.

• The interaction of reduplication and the use of classifiers in Southern Vietnamese is clearly systematic. The presence of a classifier allows full reduplication, while the absence blocks reduplication.
Suggestions for Future Research

• Test color adjectives in Object NPs
  • He likes all/the white scarves.
• Test other kinds of adjectives.
  • Preliminary results suggest temporal adjectives (old/new) act similarly to color adjectives. Semantic Exception = Idea.
• Cross-Linguistic Analysis
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• CONTACT INFORMATION
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References


