# Affix pleonasm—towards a typology of a multifaceted phenomenon

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Pleonasm is a pervasive phenomenon that occurs at all levels of linguistic analysis and language processing, including discourse, the lexicon, morphology, and syntax. Pleonastic formations are attested in a wealth of languages and, within each language, at several stages of its evolution. Therefore, pleonasm is an ideal candidate both for the investigation of individual languages and for large cross-linguistic studies. While a few case studies on single languages have been published (e.g. Stolz 2010), no work committed to this multifaceted phenomenon from a typological orientation has been produced hitherto (nor do Haspelmath 1993 and Lehmann 2005 constitute any exception, for the former focuses on the subtype of externalized inflection, and the latter is rather concerned with providing a general theoretical frame of pleonasm in language, and inevitably has a quite constrained empirical foundation).

The present paper aims to contribute a first step towards a typology of pleonasm, in terms both of the range of features/meanings/functions which are realized pleonastically, and the rich evidence that the languages of the world provide. The focus is on pleonastic affixation in both inflectional and derivational morphology. The empirical basis is a large body of data drawn from a variety of typologically heterogeneous languages.

The paper attains the following goals: Firstly, it provides a precise definition of affix pleonasm by constraining its conceptual scope based on semantic and functional (i.e. morphosyntactic) motivation; secondly, it distinguishes two main types of pleonastic realization, viz. implicit pleonastic marking, e.g. the addition of the overt feminine marker *-aa* to inherently feminine nouns in Hausa (Newman 1979), vs. explicit pleonastic marking, e.g. the Modern Greek *manulitsa* 'mommy', which is formed via diminutivizing *-ul(a)* + *-its(a)* suffixation of the base *man(a)* 'mother'; thirdly, it details the realizational scope of affix pleonasm with respect to: (a), the areas of grammar in which it occurs, viz. morphosyntactic features, such as case, number, gender, person, and a wealth of derivational formations, including the agent nouns, abstract nouns, processes of intensification, among many others; (b), the parts of speech which it affects, viz. nouns, adjectives, verbs, adjectives, and conjunctions; and, (c), the position that pleonastic affixes assume, viz. suffixes before interfixes and infixes.

In light of the evidence provided, the paper suggests that neither a purely diachronic nor a purely synchronic perspective helps us properly understand the dimension of affix pleonasm in terms of its motivations and psycholinguistic salience. Rather, a gradual variationist approach is propelled forward, in order to be able to account both for sociolectal and idiolectal variation, and the role that pleonasm plays in language acquisition, intermediate evolutionary stages (e.g. along the path of grammaticalization), and language contact.

References:

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