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Reduplication patterns in Georgian

Cross-linguistic study of reduplication has shown that reduplicants are less marked in particular ways than the remainder of the outputs of a language, e.g. in Optimality Theory this is captured by the 'emergence of the unmarked' ranking (McCarthy & Prince 1994, 1995, Carlson 1997, among others). Since reduplication generally yields an unmarked subset of what a language may allow in the way of prosodic and segmental structures, reduplicative patterns of Georgian are discussed in order to substantiate several claims made in Butskhrikidze (2002): (i) the minimal word in Georgian is disyllabic; (ii) harmonic clusters can be analysed as complex segments; (iii) C + /v/ combinations can be analysed as complex segments; (iv) /s/ + obstruent can be analysed as a complex segment; (v) obstruent + sonorant is the most unmarked consonant cluster; and (vi) Georgian maximally allows two-member consonant clusters stem-initially.

There are numerous compounds in Georgian that are formed by reduplication. Reduplication occurs in verbal forms, e.g. to mark continuative aspect or intensity and in nominal forms, e.g. to form the collective plural. Reduplication is widely used in onomatopoeia, too. The reduplicant commonly attaches to a base as a suffix. Total reduplication, which involves copying of a complete base, is quite common. Partial reduplication is also found. It obeys the general co-occurrence restrictions of the language. All the reduplication data discussed in this paper come from the extensive study of verbal and nominal reduplication by Ertelishvili (1970, 1980).

The reduplication data discussed in the paper illustrate that Georgian prosodic words can reduplicate totally when they meet the condition of disyllabicity. In non-disyllabic words, vowel deletion or epenthesis is applied in order to meet the disyllabic constraint. Thus the reduplicative patterns support the claim made in Butskhrikidze (2002) that the Georgian minimal prosodic word is disyllabic. Note that the claim does not exclude the existence of monosyllabic words in Georgian, e.g. /xe/ 'tree', /da/ 'sister', etc., but treats them as marginal to the language system.

The consonantal pattern of reduplication shows that Georgian can reduplicate bases which have, at most, two-member consonant sequences. These sequences are harmonic clusters, which are sometimes extended by the bilabial sonorant /v/ or by the clusters of the consonant + sonorant type. Note that long consonant sequences occur in words, e.g. /brj/ in /brjen-i/ 'wise' and /mk'vr/ in /mk'vriv-i/ 'dense', but do not participate in any reduplication process. Reduplication simply does not apply to words or stems with long consonant sequences. Perhaps this is an indication that stems or words that have synchronically long sequences are, in fact, morphologically complex.

In addition to constituency patterns, reduplication reveals the markedness of the distributional patterns of consonant clusters. Consonant clusters are commonly found in base-initial position, while base-final clusters other than harmonic clusters are excluded. The distributional patterns of consonant clusters also show that the longest clusters are word/stem-initial in Georgian.
In sum, reduplication data presented in this paper support claims made in Butskhrikidze (2002): (i) the minimal word in Georgian is disyllabic; and (vi) Georgian maximally allows two-member consonant clusters stem-initially.