A typological investigation of iconicity and preferred form in reduplication
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This paper explores issues of REDuplication research which are basically pending since the programmatic typological sketch by Moravcsik (1978). RED has attracted the attention of linguistics for some time now because of a) being a morphological process without a phonologically constant exponent but rather deriving its reduplicant shape directly from the respective base form, and b) commonly expressing meanings of a relatively limited set across different languages, pertaining to various notions of plurality, intensity and, interestingly, diminution. An integrated account of phonological and semantic properties of RED focusing on typology is still largely fragmentary, though, not least because work on RED semantics has lagged behind phonologically oriented studies ever since the seminal dissertation by Wilbur (1973).

Deepening (by incorporating more detailed formal and functional analyses of RED patterns) and widening (by including partial RED as well) recent typological approaches to RED offered by Rubino (2005) and Stolz et al. (2011), the present paper investigates the intra- and cross-linguistic make-up of RED systems in the vein of a mono-constructional, non-holistic typology (Himmelmann 2000), based on a modified version of the 100 languages core sample underlying the maps in the WALS (Haspelmath et al. 2005). It is hypothesized that there is much less arbitrariness concerning RED form and meaning in language(s) than has normally been acknowledged and that this can be ascribed to the specific ways in which the general principles of structural preference (Vennemann 1988) and iconicity take effect in RED.

It is shown that formally the structure of reduplicants obeys the synchronic (and diachronic) maxim (Vennemann 1988: 2–3), languages employing partial RED always displaying CV reduplicants, and often only these, frequently at the cost of exact base copying (additionally, languages in which the process is less or no more productive often exhibit relics of CV patterns only, preferentially with fixed segments). Moreover, the long-standing claim of partial RED strictly depending on full RED at least has to be reconsidered carefully in light of the data at hand. Functionally, a revised view of iconicity is able to capture the prevalence (perhaps exclusiveness) of certain meanings in RED, the essentially iconic but derived nature of diminution being reflected in the fact that a diminutive use seems to imply a pluralizing function of RED in a language. This argument elaborates on an idea developed by Kouwenberg and LaCharité (2005) and is supported by independent evidence (e.g. approximative plurals, diminutive semantics universals and echo-words). What emerges is thus a more systematic picture of the RED phenomenon which is characterized by typological implications and generalizations.

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