REDUPLICATION AND AFFIXATION IN VIETNAMESE

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Abstract : Two types of word-formation processes, reduplication and affixation, are always confused in Vietnamese. In order to draw a clear distinction between these, we will examine : two types of reduplication with tonal change, whose semantics are attenuation and intensification ; two types of affixation, the meanings of which are intermittence and generalization.

Keywords: Vietnamese morphology, reduplication, affixation

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese is considered as a monosyllabic language because of the following features :
- The syllable is well defined. Its structure can be represented as : C_iVC_f/T (C_i : initial consonant ; **V** : vowel ; **Cf** : final consonant ; **T** : tone). To put it simply, each syllable contains an initial represented by C_i, a nucleus or rime represented by **VCf**, and a tone **T**.
- The overwhelming majority of Vietnamese syllables corresponds to a morpheme and the equivalence *syllable=morpheme=word* is largely justified.
- Each syllable whether it is a morpheme/word or not is transcribed separately from the others when it is written.

Two types of derivation, namely reduplication and affixation, are always confused. The latter *is regularly taken to be the former because most affixation involves some process of* reduplication. In order to draw a distinction between these, we will examine :
    a) two types of reduplication which we label as *attenuation* and *intensification*
    b) two types of affixation which we will call *intermittence* and *generalization*

2. REDUPLICATION

Due to the syllabic structure, reduplication may take various forms. It can be a segmental change, a tone alteration, or a perfect reproduction of the base. In the first case, according to Thompson (1965 :139-140), we can distinguish different subtypes, depending on the nature of resemblance : (1) *vocalic chameleon affixes* differ from their bases only in vowel ; (2) *riming chameleon affixes* retain the nucleus of bases, which usually (but not always) includes the tone ; *alliterative chameleon affixes* retain the initial of the bases. Here we are concerned only with reduplications involving tonal change, i.e. the ones where the bases are copied except for their tones. Since we are dealing with tone alteration, it is necessary to give a picture of the historical Vietnamese tone system :

Register	Even	Oblique short	Oblique long
high	*ngang* ( )*	*sắc* (´)	*hỏi* (?)
low	*huyền* (`)	*nặng* (.)	*ngã* (~)

*unmarked

1.1 Attenuation

This kind of reduplication is used to soften the force or scope of the bases, which are mostly verbal. For example, the attenuation in meaning between the base *đỏ* and its reduplicate *do đỏ* is equivalent to the one between *red* and *reddish* in English. For a verb like *chạy* 'to run', its reduplicate form *chạy chạy* means 'to seem to be running, to do sth similar to running'. Here are the features of attenuative reduplication :
- it is a single reduplication, i.e. the base is repeated only once
- it is a derivation with tone change
- it always results in a prefixation, i.e. the morpheme created by reduplication is placed in front of the base
- the prefix has the even tone of the same register as the base.
Examples with bases (in bold) of 6 different tones :

    (1) *con* 'small'   > *con con* 'rather small'
    (2) *buồn* 'sad'   > *buồn buồn* 'somewhat sad'
    (3) *cứng* 'hard'   > *cưng cứng* 'somewhat hard'
    (4) *nặng* 'heavy'   > *nằng nặng* 'somewhat heavy'
    (5) *lỏng* 'fluid'   > *long lỏng* 'somewhat fluid'
    (6) *trễ* 'late'   > *trề trễ* 'rather late'

Due to the features of this type of reduplication, bases with even tones result in perfect chameleon prefixes. But if we take into consideration the stress pattern, only the base syllable is stressed. As stress is not symbolized in orthography, on can confuse easily many instances of attenuatives with distributives or iteratives (Thompson, 1965 :151-2) ; however, the stress patterns of the last two are different. Examples (stressed syllables underlined) :

(7) *Phi cười cười* (*Phi* 'name', *cười* 'smile', *cười cười* 'attenuative')
Phi seems to be smiling

(8) *Phi cười cười* (*Phi* 'name', *cười* 'smile', *cười cười* 'iterative')
Phi smiles/laughs (and) smiles/laughs (all the way)

(9) *Người người đều vui* (*người* 'person', *người người đều* 'everybody', *vui* 'happy'
Everybody is happy

(7) is the case of an attenuative with the second syllable-base stressed ; in (8) the two syllables are of the same stress ; a pause or even a coordinating particle, *và* 'and' or *rồi* 'then', is possible between them. Thus it is difficult to say which of the two syllables stands as the base. For this reason, it is more appropriate to treat the iterative *cười cười* as a compound, not as a reduplicative. Note the difference in meaning between (7) and (8). Their written forms are identical, but result from two distinct word-formation processes, phonetic on the one hand, syntactic on the other.

In (9), the base is a nominal, not a verbal as in attenuative derivation. Furthermore : (i) the syllables take the same stress ; (ii) distributives require the occurrence of a preverb, either *đều* 'equally' or *cũng* 'also'. Distributives should then be considered a syntactic compound, not a reduplicative. Another point that contributes to make distributives more a compound than a reduplicative is that distributives concern lexical items such as indefinite pronouns, *ai* 'who', *đâu* 'where', *gì* 'what',... Take, for instance, *ai* 'who' and repeat it, then add the preverb *cũng* 'also', we will then obtain the expression *ai ai cũng...* 'everybody'. Compare (10) and (11) :

(10) *ai chạy* 'who runs ?'
(11) *ai ai cũng chạy* 'everybody runs'

But (11') below with *ai* 'who' not repeated is perfectly synonymous with (11) :

(11') *ai cũng chạy* 'everybody runs'

(11') clearly shows that the 'every' meaning is tied not to the reduplication of *ai* but to the obligatory presence of *cũng* 'also'. If it were not the case, then the claim of Moravcsik (1978 : 316) would be false : « Specifically, I have found no clear example of an unreduplicated constructions' meaning properly including the meaning of the corresponding reduplicated one, or of the two overlapping... ». The point made here is that reduplication should be taken as a technical term ; mere repetition does not always result in reduplication.

Tonal change can lead to segmental modification. In Vietnamese, syllables with final stops have only oblique tones, *sắc* (oblique short high) or *nặng* (oblique short low). Thus a syllabic base ending in a stop cannot have a prefix with an even tone unless the final stop is replaced by its corresponding homorganic nasal, i.e. p >m ; t >n ; ch [c] >nh ; c [k] >ng. Examples :

(12) *hẹp* 'narrow'   > *hèm hẹp* 'be rather narrow'
(13) *sát* 'be close to' > *san sát* 'be somewhat close to'
(14) *sạch* 'be clean'   > *sành sạch* 'be rather clean'

(15) *đặc* 'be thick'   > *đằng đặc* 'be rather thick'

1.2 Intensification

Intensive reduplication also relies on tonal change. Examples (bases in bold, stressed morphemes underlined) :

(16) *con* 'small'   > *côn con* 'be very small'
(17) *sát* 'be close to'   > *sát sat* 'be very close to

Note that in (16) the prefix *côn* with the *hỏi* tone does not conform to the tonal arrangement of attenuative, and that in (17) besides the difference in tonal pattern as compared to the attenuative counterpart, we have a suffixation, not a prefixation. In addition, intensives can also be the result of multiple reduplication, as in (18)-(20) :

(18) *con* 'small'   > *côn còn con* 'be very very small' [2 red.]
(19a) *sát* 'be close to'   > *sát sàn sat* 'be very very close to' [2 red.]
(19b) *sát* 'be close to'   > *sát sat sàn san* 'be very very very close to' [3 red.]
(20a) *sạch* 'be clean'   > *sách sành sạch* 'be very very clean' [2 red.]
(20b) *sạch* 'be clean'   > *sách sạch sành sanh* 'be very very very clean' [3 red.]

(20b) shows that an intensive can be formed both by prefixation and suffixation. In an intensive, the last morpheme is stressed whether it is the base or not. To set up its stress pattern, we begin with the last syllable and go backward with the alternate order stressed-unstressed. *In other words, when an intensive has an odd number of syllables, the odd-numbered ones are stressed, but when it has an even number of syllables, the stressed syllables are the even-numbered ones.*

Another difference between the attenuative and the intensive is that intensive reduplication applies only to a limited number of bases while attenuative is possible with almost any verb, specially state verb. Furthermore, the tonal arrangement in intensive is yet to be defined. Meanwhile, all we can say is that a reduplication with tone change that does not fit in an attenuative scheme is an intensive.

As far as semantics is concerned, since mutiple reduplication is possible with intensive, we can assume that unlike attenuation, intensification has different degrees of emphasis. Additional reduplication of the same form goes with an additional meaning accruement of the base.

2. AFFIXATION

Below we will discuss to types of affixation, namely prefixation and suffixation. It will be become clear that affixation always involves some form of partial reduplication but it should not be defined as such.

2.1 Intermittence

(21) and (22) clearly illustrate the case of a subsyllabic morpheme prefixation, where the *-ập* prefix is used :

      (21) *phồng* 'inflate'   > *phập phồng* 'inflate (and deflate) alternately'
      (22) *ngừng* 'to stop'   > *ngập ngừng* 'to hesitate'

(21) and (22) are considered an affixation because whatever the morphology of the base, the prefix always contains *-ập* ; the repetition of the initial consonants is mechanical having no semantic value. Indeed, in (21)-(22), only the Ci is repeated and the mere repetition of this phoneme is not paired off with any change of meaning. On the contrary *-ập* is the recurrent element which brings some modification to the semantics of the base. Note that the prefix always takes the oblique short tone of the same register as the base. The tone correspondence between base and prefix, the repetition of the Ci explain a fact : although Vietnamese admits subsyllabic morphemes whose tone is not yet determined, these should be realized in one syllabic unit ; affixation of subsyllabic element must satisfy the phonological condition of monosyllabicity of the language. The existence of subsyllabic morphemes is hardly recognized by students in Vietnamese linguistics, especially when these are not yet assigned a tone. Another difficult problem is to get at the semantics of the *-ập* like affixation. Let us examine some more examples :

      (23) *nhô* 'to move up'   > *nhấp nhô* 'to bob'
      (24) *mô* 'knoll'   > *mấp mô* 'rolling, switchback (road)'
      (25) *ló* 'to appear'   > *lấp ló* 'to appear and disappear by turns'
      (26) *loé* 'to flare up'   > *lấp loé* 'to twinkle'

The above examples show that whether the base is verbal or nominal, the derivative is always verbal. Through (21)-(26), it seems clear that the meaning of a base prefixed with *-ập* is realized as *alternately, by intermittence, by turns*. In (22), from *ngừng* 'to stop', the derivative is *ngập ngừng* 'to stop intermittently > to hesitate' ; in (21) from *phồng* 'to inflate', the derivative is *phập phồng* 'to inflate (and deflate) alternately'. A *mấp mô* road (ex.24) is a road that has *mô* 'knoll' at intervals.

2.2 Generalization

With the same affix *-ập*, a suffixation instead of a prefixation will amount to a generalization of the meaning of the base. The suffixation of *-ập* obeys the same phonetic pattern as *its* prefixation, i.e. *-ập* is now part of a syllable whose initial consonant is the same as that of the base, and whose tone is an oblique short tone of the same register. Examples :

      (27) *nghiện* 'be addicted (to) '   > *nghiện ngập* 'be addicted and likewise'
      (28) *ngượng* 'be embarrassed'   > *ngượng ngập* 'be embarrassed and likewise'
      (29) *dáng* 'manner, look'   > *dáng dấp* 'manner, look, and the likes'

A verbal base in the above examples can take a complement, its corresponding derivative cannot. For instance, with *nghiên* in (27) we can add *rượu* 'alcohol' to obtain *nghiên rượu* 'alcohol addicted', but **nghiên ngập rượu*. Thus the -*âp* suffix functions as a complement whose meaning is the same as the base, and the resulting construction paralleling a coordinate compound has a more general reference than the base. Derivatives suffixed with -*âp* are not numerous but -*âp* has a variant, -*ap*, that goes with bases ending in -*âm* or -*âp*. Examples :

(29) *chậm* 'slow '   > *chậm chạp* 'be slow and likewise'
(30) *vâp* 'to stumble'   > *vâp vâp* 'to stumble and do likewise'
(31) *mập* 'be fat'   > *mập mạp* 'be fat and likewise'

3. CONCLUSION

The above study has characterized two different types of word-formation processes.

    - Reduplication is a productive formation in the sense that new derivatives are coined freely and tend to belong to the spoken language. Although reduplication always involves affixation, it is to be defined in terms of the morphology of the processes (viz. operational morphology), not in terms of the morphology of the affixes (viz. segmental morphology). Indeed, the form of the affixes in a reduplication depend on the phonetic shape of the base, and consequently it is impossible to characterize a reduplication through the fixed form of an affix. For this reason, dictionaries rarely mention reduplicative constructions which are related to the morphology of the process.

    - Affixation is not productive in the sense that its derivatives are not coined freely. Most important of all, the morphology of affixes in this kind of derivation is not predicted from the morphology of the base. For this reason, they as individuals have to be entered and explained in dictionaries as well as the derivatives of which they are part. When it deals with subsyllabic morphemes, affixation requires a partial repetition of the base which is however not paired off with a particular meaning distinction.

In conclusion, we can say that among the four derivations studied here, attenuation and intensification are true reduplication (and pseudo affixation) while intermittence and generalization are true affixation (and pseudo reduplication).

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