



REDUPLICATION IN OLÙKÙMI AND ÒWÒ DIALECTS OF YORÙBÁ: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

*Reduplication is a morphological process where a part or a whole of the base is copied to derive a new word. The existing research literature reveals that the previous studies on reduplication concentrated on the standard Yorùbá, comparatively there is a dearth of research on Yorùbá dialects in respect to reduplication, particularly the lesser-known dialect like Olùkùmi. Therefore, this study intends to fill the gap by exploring the morpho-semantic properties of reduplicated word in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects of Yorùbá within the paradigm of Morphological Doubling Theory (MDT) proposed by Inkela and Zoll (2005). The primary aim of this study is to describe and compare reduplication in terms of form and meaning in the two dialects. Data were drawn through observation and interview of the four purposively selected native speakers, each in Olùkùmi spoken in Ugbodu spoken in Delta state and Òwò spoken in Òwò town, Ondo state. The findings reveal that reduplication is a productive morphological process in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects as shown on its significant roles in language use and communication. Both dialects employ partial and total reduplication to convey varying semantic purposes which include but not limited to lineage, plurality, adjective, adverb, measurement, agent and emphasis. However, it is shown in the study that total reduplication does not perform agent function in Olùkùmi as fisherman is expressed as **enẹ kpeza** instead of **kpezakpeza**. This study not only shed more light on the morpho-semantic properties of reduplication in Olùkùmi and Òwò but also serves as a vehicle of language documentation, preservation and revitalization especially the lesser-known dialect like Olùkùmi.*

Keywords: Partial Reduplication, Full Reduplication, Morphological Doubling Theory, Reduplicant, Copying

1. Introduction

Reduplication, a universal linguistic process enriched with phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic features is attested in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects of Yorùbá. Reduplication is common morphological process which is achieved by cloning a part or a whole of the base to derive a new word. It is a feature in languages that involves duplication of part of word or the whole word for achieving special meaning (Hurskainen, 2024), In the same vein, Khaled and Amal (2024, p.2) define reduplication as ‘the repetition of a certain component of a morphological base for a certain morphological purpose.’ Reduplication could also be viewed as the partial or total doubling of the same word to lay emphasis on certain position both in verbs and written discourse to derive a complete new form (Imran, et al, 2024). While defining the concept of reduplication, Inkelas and Downig (2018:50) consider reduplication thus:



Reduplication involves the doubling of the same component of a morphological base for some morphological purpose. Unlike other morphemes, reduplicative morphemes depend for their forms on some linguistic property or properties of root, stem or word, which serve as the base of reduplication. The relevant properties can be phonological or morpho-semantics.

It is inferred from the research literature above that reduplication involves copying, doubling, repetition or cloning of the base either partially or completely with linguistic properties such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Different scholars have given different names to reduplication in the existing literature. It could mean repetition, doubling, duplication and cloning. It could also be said that there are two types of reduplication; partial – partial copying of the base and total or complete- total copying of the base. While distinguishing between partial and complete reduplication, Khanjan and Alinezhad (2020) clarify that the whole word is repeated in complete reduplication, whereas, some phonological changes or occurrence of the repetition of few parts of the base word take place in partial reduplication. Also, in full or complete reduplication root is copied whereas in partial only consonantal or vowel alteration is at work in the base form (Rubino, 2005). Added to distinction between partial and full reduplication, yebade (1992) as recorded in Arokoyo (2006:34) remarks that full reduplication involves total copying of the root words without tonal or stress differences while partial reduplication is the repletion of the part of the word or phrase.

Reduplication operates at different linguistic levels. It could occur at word level (lexical), phrases (phrasal), and sentences (syntactic) (Hurch, 2005). Being one of the productive morphological processes, reduplication reflects or implies varied linguistic or grammatical functions depends on the individual languages. Reduplication is mostly employed in varying languages to demonstrate increase in the meaning of the base in terms of quantity or quality (Moravesik, 2013). It performs different functions which include but not limited to emphasis, plurality, distribution, number, attenuation, pejorative, intensity, conditionality, pretence, reciprocity and among others. (Rubino, 2005; Arokoyo, 2006; Downing, 2015; Inkela and Ali, 2020 Imran et al, 2024; Khaled et al, 2024).

The existing research literature reveals that the previous studies on reduplication concentrated on the standard Yorùbá. There is a dearth of research on Yorùbá dialects in respect to reduplication, particularly the lesser-known dialect like Olùkùmi. This study aims to fill the gap as it might be the first work in the research literature that explores comparative study of reduplication in Olùkùmi and Ọ̀wò dialects. The ultimate goal of this study is to explore reduplication in Olùkùmi, a lesser-known and sandwiched dialect of Yorùbá spoken in Ugbodu, Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria and Ọ̀wò dialect spoken in Ọ̀wò town, Ondo state. The research paper mainly aims at comparing the processes of reduplication in both Olùkùmi and Ọ̀wò to examine their forms, and to compare the functions of reduplicants in the two dialects while the specific objectives are (1) to identify different types of reduplication attested in Olùkùmi and Ọ̀wò dialects (ii) to describe and compare the process of reduplication in the two dialects, and (iii) to compare the forms and functions of the reduplicants in Olùkùmi and Ọ̀wò dialects. The research will employ both primary and secondary sources of data collection and the data collected will be analyzed within the framework of Morphological Doubling Theory proposed by Inkela (2005).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Frame Work

Morphological Doubling Theory (MDT) is a Morphological Theory proposed by Inkela and Zoll (2005) to examine reduplication. It is a theory that advocates a partial or total doubling of morpho-semantic properties of the base word in order to generate new words. MDT is a sub-theory of Dual Theory of Reduplication that classifies reduplication into Phonological Doubling and Morphological Doubling. The former entails phonological reduplication in which reduplicated forms are considered as an abstract morphemes while the latter treats reduplicants as doubling of morpho-semantic properties of the base in an attempt to derive new word. MDT is a morpho-



semantic (form and meaning) centred process of reduplication which is a product of a double insertion of a morphological part. In this theory, reduplicated forms and base are both elements of a structure, and this structure also includes shared meanings and patterns (Imran, 2024). This study will adopt MDT where morphological and semantic properties of Olùkùmi and Ọwọ̀ reduplicated forms would be investigated.

2.2. Extant Research Literature on Reduplication

Reduplication being a prevalent productive morphological process across languages, has caught attention of several scholars. Scholarly works are abound in reduplication and these works are varying in their approaches to reduplication as it performs multiple functions in languages. In this section, we will review recent and relevant existing research literature on the morpho-semantic properties of reduplication which is in line with the focus of this study.

Ali, et al. (2024) conduct a comparative study of reduplication in Hunza, Nafar and Yasin dialects of Burushaski with the aim to identifying the nature and function of reduplication in Brushaski, identifying areas of differences and determining the degree of productivity of reduplication in the three speech forms. It is a descriptive synchronic study that employs sampling technique for data collection. The study reveals that Hunza, Nafar and Yasin dialects demonstrate both lexical and morphological reduplication in different forms. Partial reduplication with consonant alteration at nominal level has high level of productivity than the partial reduplication which involves vowel shift in the three dialects as shown in the work.

Hurskain (2024) explores the use of reduplication in Swahili language as to carry out an exhaustive qualitative inquiry into the use of reduplication in the language by comparing how writers employ reduplication in their various works. The percentage of reduplication employed in some particular texts are calculated. The author compares the use of reduplication in thirty-seven books written in Swahili and concludes that reduplication is predominant and productive in the areas of verb and pronoun and Swahili poets make use of reduplication more than other writers.

Another interesting and relevant research literature on reduplication is Safitri, et. al. (2024). The authors describe and compare reduplication in Tagalog and Indonesia languages using qualitative methods to analyze their data. The results of the study reflect some areas of similarities and differences in the reduplicated forms of the two languages. The similarities are obvious in some word-formations, meaning and class while they are different in terms of forms when the base is reduplicated which results into change of meaning. Also, in Tagalog, partial morphological reduplication changes word-formation and meaning which usually results into change of tense of the reduplicant while Indonesia does not exhibit this kind of feature. This work shows how reduplication has diverse functions across the human languages. In short, reduplication could be inflectional or derivational as demonstrated in Tagalog and Indonesia.

Abu-Abas and Alomari (2024) explore reduplication in Jordanian Arabic in terms of form and meaning, The data collected for the study were analyzed within the context of Morphological Doubling Theory proposed by Inkelas and Zoll (2005). The study focuses on the productivity of full reduplication in Jordanian Arabic as the authors showcase multiple communicative functions (continuity, repetition, denoting state or mood, and speed) and pragmatic roles such as violence, annoyance and exaggeration of full reduplicated forms. Added to this is the work of Imran, et. al (2024) which investigates reduplication in Rangri language within the paradigm of Morphological Doubling Theory in order to examine the functions of partial reduplication, full reduplication and non-sensical reduplication. Results showed that the aforementioned varied forms of reduplication are productive in Rangri language as they indicate grammatical categories such as adjective (dholi dholi “white”), adverb (gel-gel “altogether) verb (gha:l gha:l “ full to the brim”), noun (goude goude ‘ till knee’) and verb (tur-tur ‘ nonsense’).

Arokoyo (2006) conducts an examination on a comparative study of reduplication in Hausa and standard Yoruba in order to describe the morpho-semantic insights of the reduplicants in the two languages. Arokoyo (2006:20) identifies two types of reduplication- total reduplication (Yoruba: dádádára ‘ very good’ Hausa: mazamaza ‘quicly’) and partial reduplication (Yoruba: títà ‘act of



selling' Hausa:bubbugu 'bitting') Going by the author, Hausa demonstrates both inflectional and derivational reduplication while Yoruba makes use of the latter. It is evident in the study that some phonological modifications such as vowel alteration, germinate consonant, tone alternation (Hausa) and vowel insertion (Yoruba) are at work in the derivation of reduplicants. Arokoyo also added that reduplication performs inexhaustive grammatical functions which include but not limited to noun formation,, adjectival, intensifier, degree, lineage, plurality, individuality or singleness and agreement. However, she argues that Yoruba reduplicated forms do not express agreement and plurality. We observe that Arokoyo's submission that Yoruba reduplication does not express plurality is oversight. Yoruba total reduplication signals plurality as demonstrated below:

Páálípáálí 'cartons' Mo ra iwè ní páálípáálí ' I bought the book in cartons'

Ílánílá 'big' Mo ra iwè ílánílá ' I bought big books'

Páálípáálí and **ílánílá** express plurality in the examples above and therefore proves Arokoyo's (2006) assertion that full reduplicated forms do not mark plurality wrong. This reveals that reduplication is one of the strategies Yoruba employs for marking plurality.

Khaleed, M. (2020) carries out an investigation on semantics of reduplication in English and Arabic. It is a descriptive study that describes and compares the functions of reduplication in the two languages. Arabic and English do not only attest partial/total, free/bound and continuous/discontinuous forms of reduplication but also share some semantic features such as repetition, affection, plurality, nonsense, instability, movement, spread out, contrast, continuity, completion and lack of control in common. According to Khaleed, M (2020) , the two speech forms employ reduplication in tongue twisters, nursery rhyme, prayers, lyrics, games, advertisement. , slogan , newspaper , among others. He concludes the semantic similarities between English and Arabic aver the view of universality of semantic features in the languages of the world.

2.3. Extant Works on Olùkùmi and Ọwọ̀

Elesin-Ajikola (2025) explores polar question in Olukumi with a view to examine the process involved in the derivation of polar question, investigating the response to a polar question in Olukumi and analyzing Olukumi polar question derivation within the frame work of minimalist theory. The study finds out that Olùkùmi employs high tone morph that takes the last volcanic anchor of an affirmative sentence as a polar marker. The work also reveals that the response to polar question could be either be *héhéhé/báà ni* 'Yes/ it is or *hèhè/èè ghò/báà* 'No/it is not so' Eleshin Ajikobi (2025) concludes that forms and derivation patterns of the Olùkùmi polar system varies from standard Yoruba.

Kareem (2025) explores a syntactic analysis of focus construction in Yoruba Olùkùmi located in Aniocha, Delta State and Yoruba Ìlọ̀rín spoken in Ìlọ̀rín, Kwara State. The paper aims to compare and contrast focusing in the two Yoruba dialects while the main objectives are to: identify focus marker, analyze varied constituents that can be focused in the two speech forms and compare the similarities of Olukumi and Ilorin in terms of focusing. The study analyzes the data collected within the paradigm of Government and Binding Theory. The results of the study reveal that Olùkùmi and Ìlọ̀rín dialects adopt 'ni' as focus marker. Also, it is demonstrated in the study that these dialects' constituent focusing involves the movement of target constituent to the sentence-initial position, on the other hand, sentence focusing signals attachment of particle 'ni' to the sentence final. Furthermore, it is discovered in these dialects that whenever a subject NP is moved for focusing, the extraction site is adjusted with resumptive pronoun 'ó', while the extraction site of the genitival NP is mended with resumptive pronoun 'rè'. The author concludes that there is no difference between Yorùbá Olùkùmi and Yorùbá Ìlọ̀rín in the aspect of focus construction and therefore submits that focusing is one of syntactic evidence that establishes Olùkùmi as a dialect of Yorùbá spoken outside Yorùbá communities within Nigeria. Oshodi (2016) explores focus constructions in Ọwọ̀. He establishes that only nominal and verbal items can be focused in Ọwọ̀. It is said that unlike in standard Yoruba, focus marker does not directly follow focused item in Ọwọ̀, rather, it appears in sentence-final position. The study posits that pronominal, *oun* obligatorily combines together with focus marker to realise focus construction in Ọwọ̀.



3. Methodology

This qualitative-driven study focuses on the forms and functions of the reduplicated forms in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects of Yorùbá. Olùkùmi and Òwò are chosen for this study not only because they are underexplored but also to reveal the genetic relation of the former, being an isolated and controversial dialect of Yorùbá with Òwò, a well established Yorùbá dialect as to stand on the existing claims by Obisesan (2012), Kareem (2021) and Elesin-Ajikobi (2023) that Olùkùmi is a dialect of Yorùbá spoken outside Yoruba communities in Nigeria.

The study employs both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The study utilized purposive sampling techniques as the data were collected from Olùkùmi spoken in Ugbođu, Delta state and Òwò spoken in Òwò town, Ondo state. The primary source of data collection involves observation and interview. Purposively selected native speakers of the duo dialects were observed during their unconscious conversations and were also interviewed with the aid of the structured items in standard Yorùbá and English languages which the informants were asked to provide responses in their mother tongues (Olùkùmi and Òwò). Related Journal articles, published/unpublished theses, library and Internet were consulted as secondary source of data collection.

The data collected were analyzed in two categories: form and function. The form was categorized into partial and full reduplication. The morphological formation and phonological modifications in the process of the derivation of both partial and full reduplication were duly explored. Function, on the other hand was elicited in terms of their usages in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects. The functions such as plurality, emphasis, adverb and adjective were analyzed. The data were transcribed and translated into English language for the ease of the readers.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Partial Reduplication in Olùkùmi and Òwò Dialects

Partial reduplication as one of the morphological processes involves copying or dubbing of part of the root words to form a new word for the purpose of effective communication. Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects employ partial reduplication as a morphological process to create new words. Examples (1&2) demonstrate this.

1. Olùkùmi

- a. yú 'to go' →yyú→yíyu 'act of going'
- b. gho'to come'→ghgho→ghígho 'act of coming'
- c. han'to flow'→hhan→híha 'act of flowing'
- d. gbàzẹ'to take order'→gbgbàzẹ→gbíggbàzẹ 'act of taking order'
- e. tàkàtàkà'to catch fire'→tàkàtàkàtà 'act of catching fire'
- f. taara'straight'→taarata 'straight'

2. Òwò

- a. yú 'to go'→yyú→yíyu 'act of going'
- b. rẹn to walk'→rrẹn→rírẹn 'act of walking'
- c. gbànrẹn 'to go'→gbgbànrẹn→gbíggbànrẹn 'act of going'
- d. sọn 'to sleep'→ssọn→sísọn 'act of sleeping'
- e. rà 'to buy'→rrà→rírà 'act of buying'
- f. geere 'exact' →geerere 'exactly/ accurate'

It is obvious with the given examples that Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects copy or dub part of the root words with some phonological adjustments to derive new words. The phonological rules of the two dialects do not permit consonant clusters and therefore introduce epenthesis V-high tone /i/ .to unbundle the clusters. (1a-d&2a-d) showcase backward reduplication as the parts of the root words



copied to the left before the insertion of the V-high tone. Front reduplication could also be witnessed in (1e&f & 2e&f) where **-ta** and **-re** as parts of the root were copied to the front of the root to form new words. Going by the given data, partial reduplication could be categorized into changing and non-category changing partial reduplications. Examples (1a-d & 2a-e) demonstrate category changing partial reduplication in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects as their root lexical category(which are verbs/vp) different from the reduplicated forms (which are nouns). (1e&f & 2f) are class maintaining partial reduplications . Both the lexical category of the roots and the reduplicated forms are the same.

4.2 Full Reduplication in Olùkùmi and Òwò Dialects

Olùkùmi and Òwò exhibit full reduplication in creating new words for effective communication. Full reduplication as a systematic copying of a complete root word is productive in the two dialects of Yorùbá. Although it is extensively productive in Òwò than Olùkùmi as demonstrated in (3&4) below:

3. Olùkùmi

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| a. | òwúrò ‘morning’ | →òwúrò-òwúrò | ‘every morning’ |
| b. | òdón ‘year’ | →òdón-òdón | ‘every year’ |
| c. | kpátá ‘whole’ | →kpátákpátá | ‘everything’ |
| d. | óyínyè ‘month’ | →óyínyè-óyínyè | ‘every month’ |
| e. | òkè ‘up’ | →òkè-òkè | ‘up up’ |

4. Òwò

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| a. | gbóma ‘to carry baby’ | → gbómagbóma | ‘kidnapper’ |
| b. | osin ‘month’ | → ososin | ‘every month’ |
| c. | kpeja ‘to kill fish’ | →kpejakpeja | ‘fisherman’ |
| d. | òdón ‘year’ | → òdóndón | ‘every year’ |
| e. | òkè ‘up’ | → òkè-òkè | ‘ up up’ |

Examples (3&4) reveal that elision as a phonological process (as shown in 4a-d) is at work in the process of forming new word via full reduplication especially in Òwò. This affirms that there is interface between morphology and phonology. It also reveals that phonology is a language specific as elision is obligatory in Òwò but not applicable in Olùkumi despite they are both dialects of Yorùbá. In addition, full reduplication could be class changing (see 4a&c) or class maintaining (3a-d & 4b,d&e).

Going by our observation on the data collected for this study, it is noteworthy to say that Olùkùmi has lost a semantic effect of reduplication like **agent** or **actor** due to distance, time and space. Olùkùmi would rather say **akpeza /eni kpa eza** ‘fisherman’ and **agbóma/eni gbé oma** ‘kidnapper’ than **kpejapeja** ‘fisherman and **gbómagbóma** ‘kidnapper’ as expressed in Òwò and standard Yorùbá.

5. Functions of Reduplication in Olùkùmi and Òwò Dialects

Reduplicated forms exhibit different semantic functions in Olùkùmi and Òwò which include but not limited to plurality, lineage, measurement/ scaling, adjective, adverb and emphasis. Below are the examples:

5a. Degree

Olùkùmi

kéké

lálálá

b. Lineage

oma-oma

Òwò

díedíè

láéláé

omama

‘little by little’

‘never’

‘grandchildren’



c. Measurement

èzi- èzi	méjin méjin	‘in twos’
ègwá-ègwá	mègwà-mègwà	‘in tens’

d. Plural

kpúkpánkpúkpán	kpúkpánkpúkpán	‘reds’
fúfúnfúfún	funfunfun	‘whites’

e Adjective

kpíkpa	fénne fénne	‘red’
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f. Emphasis

taara→ taarata	taara→ taarata	‘straight’
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Contrary to Arokoyo’s (2006) claim that Yorùbá reduplicants do not exhibit plurality as semantic feature, examples (d) demonstrates productivity of plurality in Olùkùmi and Òwò dialects of Yorùbá which is also applicable to standard Yorùbá as it can be shown in the following sentences:

Olùkùmi

Ojó ra atso kpukpan (singular)	‘Ojo bought a red cloth’
Ojó ra atso kpukpa kpukpan (plural)	‘Ojó bought red clothes’

Òwò

Ojó ra atso kpukpa (singular)	‘Ojo bought a red cloth’
Ojó ra atso kpukpa kpukpa (plural)	‘Ojó bought red clothes’

Standard Yorùbá

Ojó ra atso pupa (singular)	‘Ojo bought a red cloth’
Ojó ra atso pupa pupa (plural)	‘Ojó bought red clothes’

6. Conclusion

This study investigated reduplication in Olùkùmi and Òwò in terms of form and function. Reduplication in the duo dialects are productive, serving a various communicative functions. When morphemes are dubbed in Olùkùmi and Òwò , the lexical class of the resultants could change or maintain the lexical class of the root. It is apparent in the study that the two dialects demonstrate partial and full forms of reduplication. However, Olùkùmi has lost agentive reduplication, it could not express agent or occupation via partial reduplication process. This could be as a result of distance , time and the influence of the neighbouring languages. This research is a little efforts towards language preservation , language documentation and Yorùbá dialectology.

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