

Reduplication in Newar Language: An Empirical Study

Rishi Ram Paudyal, *M.Phil.-PhD Scholar*

Faculty, Nepal College of Information Technology, Pokhara University

Email: rishirampaudyal@gmail.com

Abstract

This research paper aims to explore the reduplication practices in Newar language and its linguistic relations with other languages. A field survey was conducted among Newar community in Patan. Data was collected through interviews. The collected qualitative data were analyzed using transcription, reinterviews, and re-field visits. The study found that Newar language is very rich in language reduplication. Newar people use reduplication for a number of purposes: plural marking, expressing frustration, expressing unknown and unwilling states, expressing difficult situations, emphasizing dislikes and refusals, expressing urgency, asking somebody to hold on, politely inviting somebody to come, persuading somebody to go, expressing empathy, asking somebody to remain longer and many more. The intention differs from situation to situation, person to person and as per time. The findings of this research may be helpful for those future researchers who want to study reduplication in other languages. Inclusion of impact of other languages on Newar language in terms of reduplication may enrich the findings.

Keywords: reduplication, Newar language, morphology, phonology, emphasis, encouragement

Introduction

According to Mattiola and Masini (2022), reduplication has been one of the linguistic phenomena for the last ten years and it has greatly attracted the attention of linguists. Klamer and Saad (2020) stated that reduplication occurs when a part of a whole word is doubled in the course of word formation. Likewise, Li and Ponsford (2018) presented the situations where it is called reduplication, i.e. they said that in reduplication a root, stem, or part of a root or part of stem is doubled or repeated to provide specific meaning(s) and this trend is common in the languages of the world. Additionally, Alsamadani and Taibah (2019) reiterated that complex morphology is intertwined in the word formation process which give different ranges of semantic and syntactic meanings and they function effectively. Reduplication is prevalent in different languages, and it serves different purposes. It can achieve its purpose as Weijer and Atta (2020) said either iconically or non-iconically. Iconically, it achieves its purpose by forming a plural, intensive, or distributive, and non-iconically, assigning different meanings such as defining a certain tense or making a conversation between different word classes.

Scanlon (2021) found out that when nouns are used repetitively in one place, next to one another, they refer to different meanings. For Hurch (2005), reduplication is a process in morphology that include the functions of inflections and derivations. Similarly, Rubino (2005) stated that reduplication achieves semantic or grammatical goals by repeating the elements phonologically. In like manner, for Moravcsik (1978), reduplication can even be understood as "reiteration" or "repetitive construction". Further, Inkelas and Zoll (2009) stated that repetition exists in every language which has impact in linguistic units. In the same line as stated above, in Newar language, too, reduplication is repetition such as 'su-su' for 'who all' and 'ts^h u-ts^h u' for 'what all' (Tuladhar, 1985). Newar language referred in paper basically embeds the elements of spoken language of Patan and Kathmandu as their difference is only minimal.

This paper primarily explores in which situations Newar language reduplication is used and what meanings they carry when "repetitive construction" is used. Further, twenty-three situations have been presented with examples for the clarity of meanings and contexts.

Newar People and Newar Language

The three major towns of the valley – Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur - and a number of large hamlets such as Kirtipur, Themi, Sankhu, Panga, Thankot, Tokha, Phirping, Nagarkot, and Banepa are densely populated by Newars (Tuladhar, 1985). There is Newars' presence in major cities and business strategic places across Nepal. Newari speakers are also found in India, for example, in Sikkim and Darjeeling. Not only that, lately, for the purpose of study, jobs, business and migration, Newar people are found in many countries. 'However, due to a general tendency observed among migrant Newars to adopt either Nepali or the language of the mainstream culture around their areas of residence, their number, as native speakers of Newari, is negligible' (Tuladhar, 1985). According to Tuladhar (1985), three major dialect areas are within Kathmandu Valley: one in the northern side including Kathmandu, second one to the eastern side including Bhaktapur, and the third one to the southern side including Patan. Of these three dialects, Kathmandu and Patan language have significant similarities. In other words, their differences are minimal. However, the form of the speech spoken in Bhaktapur is distinct from the Newar spoken in Lalitpur, Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal (Regmi, 2012). The Newar language spoken in Bhaktapur is famously known as Khwopa Newar, which, according to Regmi, shows a number of social variations.

Newari is a Subject, Object, Verb (SOV) language, whose surface syntax is explicitly marked in the form of inflectional case markers and classifiers which reflect underlying thematic relations transparently (Tuladhar, 1985). Tuladhar further argues that it does not

have a productive process of passivization as does English. Only stative passives exist in this language, which, unlike normal passives, can neither take an explicit by-phrase, nor be interpreted as having an understood agent. Newar shares (some of its) lexical, phonological and morphological features with other Tibeto-Burman languages. Konow’s classification of Newari as cited by Tuladhar is presented in Figure 1.

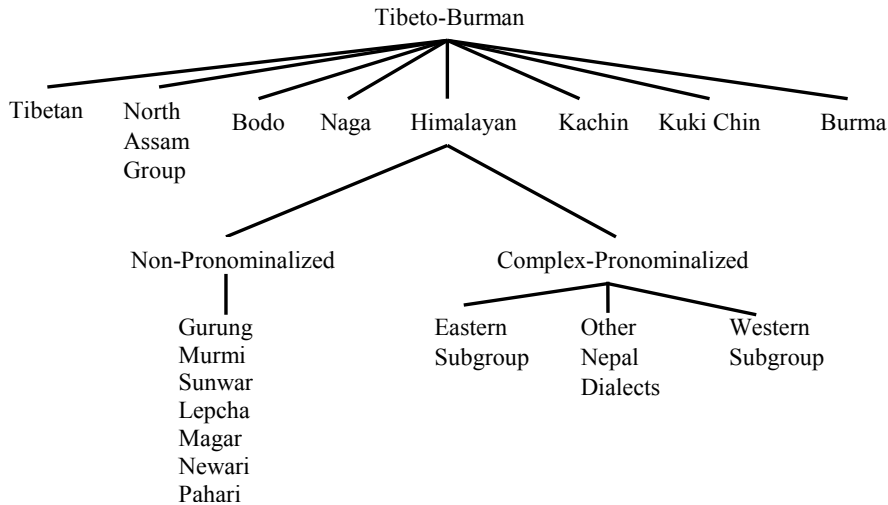


Figure 1. Konow’s classification of Newari

Newar linguistic relations

Newar is a member of Central Himalayish group of languages under Himalayan sub-branch of the Bodic branch of Tibeto-Burman family of language (Regmi, 2012) (Figure 2).

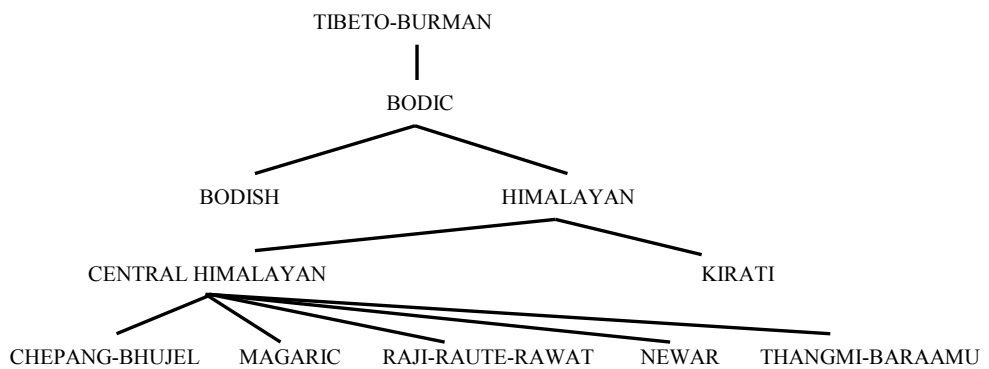


Figure 2. Classification of Tibeto-Burman family of language by Regmi (2012)

Regmi further stated that the other members include Chepang-Bhugel, Magaric, Raji-Raute-Rawat, Newar and Thangmi-Baraamu.

Theoretical Framework

People communicate because they have something to say and what they say carries a meaning as Muller (2016) stated every linguistic unit carries a meaning. Therefore, it is important to study, research and find out the meanings of utterances. We cannot afford to ignore what people say because what they say is important. They must be giving a specific meaning. So, needless to say, reduplication in a language contains very important messages or information. And it is further more useful if we know how duplications are formed what messages they are sending. Inkelas and Zoll (2009) presented two approaches to duplication – phonological copying, and morpho-semantic feature duplication. The duo stated that phonological copying is an essentially phonological process that duplicates features, segments, or metrical constituents. They go on to claim that reduplication results when the morphology calls twice for a constituent of a given semantic description, with possible phonological modification of either or both constituents. Likewise, Raimy (2000) stated that reduplication is the repetition of a sequence of segments.

Methodology

Qualitative method was used to analyze the data. Flick (2014) reiterated that data analyzing step is of prime importance in qualitative inquiry. Data were collected while visiting the field, especially Lalitpur, and also studying literature available both in print and online. While in the field, notebooks, sheets of paper, pens were used to record the information in writing and a mobile phone was used to record the voice. Twelve participants were selected in the field that included the native Newar language speakers whom the researcher met regularly and other people included Newar shopkeepers and other acquaintances on public transportation and streets. After the collection of the data, they were transcribed in English alphabets and meanings were provided. Wherever there were confusions in the field data, the participants were re-contacted physically or through mobile phone and wherever there were ambiguities the available resources were revisited.

Reduplication

Majority of Tibeto-Burman languages have the morphology of reduplication, though its function and productivity varies between languages (Shirai, 2014). Shirai presented an example of nDrapa language of the Qiangic group where through the process of productive reduplication adjectives are turned into nouns. For example, *lel* ‘good, better’

vs. *lelel* ‘good one’ [ibid]. Inkelas and Downing (2015) observed that ‘reduplication is a common pattern cross-linguistically’ and state that when it comes to reduplication, doubling of some elements take place to achieve morphological purpose. They claim that ‘unlike other morpheme types, reduplicative morphemes depend for their form on some linguistic property or properties of the root, stem, or word, which serves as the base of reduplication. The relevant properties can be phonological or morpho-semantic’. For Hanks (1996), many languages have reduplication and it signifies ‘plurality of reference or distributive as opposed to collective plural’. Likewise, Nash (1980) explained that productive verbal reduplication copies the initial foot. Next, Abbi (1991) stated that reduplication stands for repetition of all or a part of a lexical item carrying a semantic modification. Reduplication, thus, can be either partial or complete. In like manner Zaman and Qi (2019) shared similar claim that reduplication is a morphological process where the entire word or a portion of the word is repeated, entirely or with a minimal modification. Likewise, Inkelas and Downing (2015) strongly stated that morphological reduplication, both total and partial, is associated with a wide range of syntactic and semantic functions. Kroeger (2005) also claimed that reduplication involves the repetition of all or part of the base form and that it is extremely widespread, and occurs in many different forms. However, Kroeger sees some critical issues in it which needs clarifying. While analyzing, at least the following three things should be kept in mind:

- a) How much material is copied: the whole word, just one syllable, just a Curriculum Vitae (CV) sequence?
- b) If less than the whole word is copied, which specific portions are copied: which syllable, or which CV sequence?
- c) Where does the copy attach? Reduplication most often occurs as a prefix or suffix (i.e. at an edge of the stem to which it applies); but reduplicative infixes are also found.
- d) Is the reduplicated element an exact copy, or are there changes in vowel quality, initial consonant, etc.? (p. 309)

Reduplication Examples

Nash (1980) presented the lexical nominal reduplication in Warlpiri. Let’s look at two of them how the words take a new meaning when repeated.

ngalikirri	‘grinding stone – the upper one’
ngalikirri-ngalikirri	‘kneecap, patella’
ngapurlu	‘breast, milk’

ngapurlu-ngapurlu	‘multi-barbed spear’
yaka	‘louse’
yaka-yaka	‘sensitive, sore – as spot on body’

In Koyee, one of the languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family, there is a presence of reduplication of adjectives. Rai (2015) claimed that there are both complete and partial reduplicated adjectives in Koyee. He presents the following two examples to support his claim.

umna	bulu	hetsitsi	go
um-na	bulu	hetsi-tsi	go
3SG-GEN	money	little-RED	be.NSPT

‘This knife is smaller than this knife.’

asina	g^h Δ lpa-g^h Δ lpa	mina-tsa	k^h uts-a-ni	t^h e ?
yesterday	money-RED	man-PL	go-PST-3PL	HS

‘Yesterday, the prestigious men had been.’

The **hetsi-tsi** ‘little-RED’ is partial reduplication whereas **g^h Δ lpa-g^h Δ lpa** ‘big-RED’ is full reduplication (p.171).

Reduplication Processes

According to Nash (1980:117) there are regular reduplication processes which are given below:

- (i) reduplication of an entire Nominal root (and some stems) as a stem-forming process
- (ii) reduplication of the first foot of a verbal word subsequent to word-level metrical and harmony rules
- (iii) reduplication (or repetition?) of an entire Verb.

Full/Total Reduplication

According to Inkelas and Downing (2015), total reduplication reduplicates the entire morphological base, as exemplified by plural formation in Indonesian: *kərá* ‘monkey’ → *kərá-kərá* ‘monkeys’. Now let’s look at full reduplication in Malay:

Base Form	Reduplicated
kanak ‘child’	kanak-kanak ‘children’
negara ‘country’	negara-negara ‘countries’
pemimpin ‘leader’	pemmpin-pemimpin ‘leaders’
pelajar ‘student’	pelajar-pelajar ‘students’

(Kroeger, 2005)

Partial Reduplication

Partial reduplication duplicates some phonologically characterizable subpart, e.g., a maximal syllable, as in plural formation in Agta: *takki* ‘leg’ → *tak-takki* ‘legs’ (Inkelas & Downing, 2015). The duo go on to discuss that in the patterns given in the example the reduplicant remains as similar as the base or root ‘while still conforming to size restrictions on the reduplicant’. However, they emphasize, there can be principled differences of other kinds between the segments of the reduplicant and its base, motivated on both phonological and semantic grounds. Let’s see now partial reduplication in Tagalog.

Root	Active Present
bigay ‘give’	nag-bi-bigay
?usap ‘converse’	nag-?u-?usap
trabaho ‘work’	nag-ta-trabaho

(Kroeger, 2005)

Modified Reduplication

Modified reduplication changes the base or root. Let’s see below modified reduplication in Malay:

Root	Collective
sayur ‘vegetable’	sayur-mayur
kuih ‘cake’	kuih-muih
lauk ‘gravy, viand’	lauk-pauk
saudara ‘cousin, relation’	sudara-mara

rumpu	‘grass’	rumpu-rumpu
kayu	‘wood’	kayu-kayu
batu	‘stone’	batu-batu
asal	‘origin’	asal-usul

(Kroeger, 2005)

Functions of Reduplications

Functions of reduplications may vary. Morphological reduplication, both total and partial, is associated with a wide range of syntactic and semantic functions (Inkelas & Downing, 2015). Citing Kiyomi (1993) the duo argued that reduplication is often semantically iconic, expressing meanings that are impressionistically related to its duplicative nature, like pluralization, emphasis, and frequency/repetition.

Reduplication for Plural Marking

Duplication of nouns may form plurals. Nash (1980: 130) presents the following as examples:

kurdu	‘child’
kurdu-kurdu	‘children’
wati	‘man’
wati-wati	‘men’
karnta	‘woman’
karnta-karnta	‘women’
kamina	‘girl, maiden’
kamina-kamina	‘girls, maidens’
wirriya	‘boy’
wirriya-wirriya	‘boys’
purlka	‘old man’
purlka-purlka	‘old men’
muturna	‘old woman, mother (initiated man speaking)’
muturna-muturna	‘old women, mothers (initiated man speaking)’

Reduplication in Newar Language

There is presence of reduplication in Newar language. Tuladhar (1985) stated that with question words like *ts^h ʌ* ‘what’ and *su* ‘who’, plurality is indicated by reduplication of the words: *ts^h u-ts^h u* ‘what all’ and *susu* ‘who all’. Likewise, Regmi (2012) claiming that some adverbs are formed from the reduplication phonoasthetic bases, he presented the following examples:

Base	Derived
g^h usu- ‘move’	/g^h usu-g^h usu/ ‘moving repeatedly’
p^h isi- ‘laugh’	/p^h isi-p^h isi/ ‘laughing repeatedly’
g^h utu- ‘drink’	/g^h utu-g^h utu/ ‘drinking repeatedly’ (p. 31).

In Newari language reduplication is used for plural marking, expressing frustration, absence of knowledge, unwilling to tell where, unknown state, expressing difficult situation or dilemma, expressing unknown state as to how to do things or move ahead; expressing conformation, reiteration; expressing denial; expressing polite approval; expressing polite refusal; asking somebody not to take trouble/not to bother, expressing that’s enough; emphasizing dislike, refusal; expressing urgency; asking somebody to hold on; politely inviting somebody to come, persuading somebody to go.

Reduplication for plural marking

Example (*Tuladhar 1985*):

su-su ‘who-who’ i.e. (who all) PL
ts^h u-ts^h u ‘what-what’ i.e. (what all) PL

Reduplication for expressing frustration, absence of knowledge, unwilling to tell where

Example:

g ʌ nʌ ‘where’ **g ʌ nʌ -g ʌ nʌ** ‘where-where’

Reduplication for expressing unknow state

Example:

g ublʌ j ‘when’ **g ublʌ j-g ublʌ j** ‘when-when’

Reduplication for expressing difficult situation or dilemma

ts^h uja ‘what shall I/we do now?’

ts^h uja-ts^h uja ‘what shall I/we do now? what shall I/we do now?’

Reduplication for expressing unknown state as to how to do things or move ahead

g ʌ t^h e ‘how?’

g ʌ t^h e-g ʌ t^h e ‘how-how?’

Reduplication for expressing confirmation, reiteration

k^h ʌ : ‘Yes, that’s right’

k^h ʌ :-k^h ʌ : ‘Yes, that’s right-yes, that’s right’

Reduplication for expressing denial

mʌ k^h u ‘no-no that’s not true’

mʌ k^h u-mʌ k^h u ‘no-no that’s not true - no-no that’s not true’

Reduplication for polite approval

dzju ‘OK, that’s fine’

dzju-dzju ‘OK-OK, that’s fine-that’s fine’

Reduplication for polite refusal

mʌ dzju ‘No, that won’t be acceptable’

mʌ dzju-mʌ dzju ‘No-no, that-won’t-be acceptable, that-won’t-be acceptable’

Reduplication for asking somebody not to take trouble/not to bother, politely declining

mwa ‘no need to bother, I don’t want’

mwa-mwa ‘no-need-to-bother_no-need-to-bother, I-don’t-want, I-don’t-want’

Reduplication for expressing ‘that’s enough’

g atʌ ‘that’s enough’

g atʌ -g atʌ ‘that’s enough, that’s enough’

Reduplication for emphasizing dislike, refusal

mΛ j ‘I don’t like it’

mΛ j-mΛ j ‘I don’t like it-I don’t like it’

mΛ j ‘I don’t eat it’

mΛ j-mΛ j ‘I don’t eat it-I don’t eat it’

Reduplication for expressing urgency

jakΛ nΛ ‘quickly’

jakΛ nΛ -jakΛ nΛ ‘quickly quickly’

Reduplication for asking somebody to hold on

ase ‘wait’

ase-ase ‘wait-wait’

Reduplication for politely inviting somebody to come (in), persuading somebody to go

dz^h as ‘Please come (in)’ or ‘Please go’

dz^h as -dz^h as ‘Please come (in)-please come (in)’ or ‘Please go-please go’

Reduplication for expressing inability to understand or unwilling to tell why

ts^h aj ‘why’

ts^h aj-ts^h aj ‘why-why’

Reduplication for expressing emphatically what was expected, asked, necessary has been done

d^h unΛ ‘I did the job’

d^h unΛ -d^h unΛ ‘I did the job-I did the job’

Reduplication for expressing what was required to be done has been done or what had to be fixed or done has been done

dzilΛ ‘has been fixed (the problem)’

dzilΛ -dzilΛ ‘has been fixed-has been fixed (the problem)’

Reduplication for expressing what was to be settled has been settled

dzula ‘things have been settled-things have been settled’

dzula -dzula ‘things have been settled-things have been settled’

Reduplication for asking somebody to stay or remain longer. It may be said as a courtesy when a person visiting wants to leave

tsw ‘stay longer-stay longer’

tsw -tsw ‘stay longer-stay longer’

Reduplication for asking somebody to continue writing as a persuasion or encouragement

tswa ‘write-write’

tswa -tswa ‘write-write’

Reduplication for asking somebody to speak without hesitation

d^h a ‘say’

d^h a-d^h a ‘say-say’

Reduplication for asking somebody to come; could mean to their house for a cup of tea or something. It could be used as a courtesy as well

wa ‘come’

wa-wa ‘come-come’

Reduplication for informing someone quickly to go as there is no need to wait or as it is getting late, the speaker is included

nu ‘let's go’

nu-nu ‘let's go-let's go’

Conclusion

Newar language is filled with richness of reduplication which is used to convey different meanings and achieve various purposes. Within the scope the study was conducted, the research found out that in Newari language reduplication is used for plural marking, expressing frustration, absence of knowledge, unwilling to tell where, unknown state, expressing difficult situation or dilemma, and expressing unknown state as to how to do things or move ahead. In addition, the practice of reduplication was widely used while

expressing conformation, reiteration, denial, polite approval and refusal, asking somebody not to take trouble/not to bother and saying 'that's enough'. Similarly, when the situations or contexts demanded that it was required to emphasize dislike or refusal reduplication was common. Further, while expressing urgency, while asking somebody to hold on, while politely inviting somebody to come, while persuading somebody to go, while expressing inability to understand or unwilling to tell why and while responding emphatically that what was expected or asked, the necessary has been accomplished, reduplication was broadly used. Next, reduplication was also freely used to express what was required to be done has been done or what had to be fixed or done has been done. In like manner, reduplication was employed to confirm that what was to be settled has been settled and to ask somebody to stay or remain longer. Besides, in order to show courtesy, encouragement, and persuasion also reduplication was used. Last but not the least, reduplication was also commonly used while inviting people to visit their houses in order to have a cup of tea or some other things. Needless to say, reduplication in Newar language is an ornament, spice, and music which have beautified the language, made it rich in tastes, and made the language melodious.

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