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CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN RELATION TO REDUPLICATION: A CASE STUDY OF 6 (SIX) TWO-YEAR-OLD HAUSA CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This paper represents a psycholinguistic study of aspects of reduplication in the Acquisition of lexical items by 6 Hausa children between the ages of 2 to 3. Various linguistic theories and grammatical models have been used to analyze adult language at the expense of infant speech. A fuller understanding of human linguistic system might be possible by investigating it from childhood. Not much has been done in the area of child language research in Hausa and probably none in reduplication in child language. Hausa language is very rich in reduplication which is both a phonological and morphological process in Hausa language as in most languages of the world. Reduplicative productions of the children were coded and analyzed. The aspects of reduplication identified in the data included; CV reduplication of CV syllable, reduplication by harmonizing consonants, whole word repetition and onomatopoetic sound imitation. Other patterns observed are, reduplication across word boundaries and reduplication in baby talk (BT). Reduplication in child languages serves various functions. These functions of reduplication were discussed in relation to hypotheses about the function of reduplication in child language. The common strategy employed by the children was that of maintaining a place for a consonant, where children use CV syllable structure to insert another consonant that is easier for them to produce.

KEYWORDS: Acquisition in Relation to Reduplication

INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is referred to as a gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in a communicative situation (Yule, 1996). Child language acquisition can also be said to be unconscious development of language by human child where he/she is undergoing other maturational developments (Hawkins 1984 and Akmajian, et al 2001). This according to Fowler (1974) comes with 'thoughtless ease'. This implies that with the exception of a severely handicapped minority, all children acquire at least one language. This has led many linguists such as (Chomsky 1961) to believe that the ability to learn a language is at least partly due to genetic programming which is specific to human beings. Many studies and researches (Crystal 2010 and Evans 2014) have been carried out, which ultimately show that there are no other species that have anything like the human communicative capabilities. Children all over the world follow the same step at approximately the same time in acquiring language (Crystal, 2010). This has supported the above hypothesis that language is partly due to genetic programming.

The innateness of language contains some language universals which are later shaped by the particular form of language(s) a child is exposed to (Jindal and Syal, 2007). It means that despite the many variations among languages, there are certain general patterns called universals that are evident. These include the variation in sounds, words, sentence

structure etc.

The Paper

This paper is mainly concerned with the process of word development as it relates to reduplication in child language. It intends to verify this claim using the speech of some Hausa children collected in a naturalistic environment. The study will then go further by investigating extra grammatical reduplication such as onomatopoetic sound – imitations then discuss their reduplicative and compensatory modifications of non-onomatopoetic adult target words. The present study apart from verifying Oyebode's claim (i.e. if the same can be said of the Hausa child) intends to examine the frequency of reduplication in relation to syllable maintenance and whole word repetition.

The earliest studies of child language acquisition have focused on vocabulary acquisition patterns, the content of early lexicons, lexical comprehension, relationship between production and comprehension, child's apparent conceptual knowledge, syntactic development (Finegan 2012). Here in Nigeria, the few studies carried out are longitudinal studies of language development of a single child focusing on second language acquisition, phonological development in childhood, semantic analysis of the holophrase of an African child, mother–child–linguistic interaction, syntactic development of a Hausa child, code – switching in language development of a bilingual child.

The present study has specifically chosen one of the phonological processes in child language development that is also a very interesting phonological and morphological process in adult language which is reduplication. Various linguistic theories and grammatical models have been used to analyze adult language at the expense of infant speech. A fuller understanding of human linguistic system might be possible by investigating it from childhood. This has been a neglected area of study in Nigeria. It is also what prompted this study.

Reduplication

In Crystal (2010), reduplication is defined as 'a morphological process by which the root or stem of a word or only part of it is repeated'. Reduplication is common in most languages of the world; it serves different functions in different languages. It is an interesting phonological process that many children go through in the area of lexical development. Stark (1980) reported that long before children begin word production (25 – 50 weeks after birth) all typically developing infants go through a stage of reduplicated or canonical babbling. Canonical babbling is characterized by repetition of identical or nearly identical consonant/vowel combinations, such as 'nanana', 'dadada' or 'bababa' etc. It appears as a progression of language development as infants experiment with their vocal apparatus (Oller 1980).

Brief About the Hausa Language

Hausa is a West Chadic language spoken in many parts of West Africa; precisely Northern Nigeria, the southern parts of the neighboring Republic of Niger, Benin, Northern Togo, Northern Ghana etc, (Dustan, 1969). It is used by many international media and it is taught in Europe and America. It is spoken by the Hausawa and a large number of non-native speakers. It is studied at all levels of education. Therefore, it is used both in and outside the classroom. It is one of the best documented and most extensively researched sub-Saharan African languages. The language has thirty two (32) consonants, five (5) simple vowels and two (2) diphthongs.

Scope

This study confined itself to Hausa words as produced by the subjects of the research. It looked especially at CV

combinations because reduplication in child language acquisition is said to be typically of CVCV pattern (Hawkins, 1984). Furthermore, the research is limited only to the reduplicated lexemes and this is largely so because understanding how children acquire a lexicon is far more central to the field of child language than understanding why some children do so more rapidly than others (Crystal 2011).

Methodology

This research is a cross – sectional study on aspects of reduplication in Hausa child. The study focuses on child's reduplication from two years of age. This is because the study is interested in reduplication alone as linked to phonological, morphological and lexical awareness in order to distinguish the various roles reduplication may have in child's language. A study on reduplication by Leroy and Morgenstern (2005) pointed out that reduplication before a child attains two years is a period when mechanical constraints seem to be transformed and, reduplication is linked to physiological constraints, mechanical constraints and the acquisition of language behaviors. This cross-sectional study would allow us to note the differences (if any) of the phonological simplification processes used by children, as noted by Leonard (1982).

The Subjects

The data came from the three boys and three girls. All of them are Hausa monolinguals with no evidence of hearing defect. They were all raised in monolingual families within the Sokoto metropolis except subject 'UH' Umar Hassan who is raised in Birnin Kebbi town of Kebbi State. Both Sokoto state and Kebbi state are predominantly Hausa speaking states.

Each of the subjects has the initial letter of their names to identify him/her. Their age at the start of data collection is also indicated, it is written in years and months.

Table 1

S No	Name	Age Gender	Initials	
1	AbdurRahman Is'haq	2:2	Male	AI
2	Ahmad Nasir Ahmad	2:2	Male	AN
3	Umar Hassan	2:0	Male	UH
4	Maryam Ibrahim	2:2	Female	MI
5	Kauthar Ibrahim	2.1	Female	KI
6	Rahma Idris	2:1	Female	RI

Sampling Technique

Since it is a cross sectional study of many children, we made a random sampling. We just picked any child that is within the age range stipulated in this study (i.e. from age 2 upwards). Hausa is the first language of all the parents. They speak only Hausa to the children. The parents are educated and willing to assist in the data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

In this study, all the reduplicated lexicons of the 6 children were collected over a period of five months. Sampled speeches were tape recorded and written down instantly in spontaneous interaction with parents and older siblings. The audio recording was made on a cassette by means of a tape recorder with a high quality in built microphone. However, it was very difficult to use the tape recorder because the (children) directed their attention to the recorder, thereby making it more difficult to record. So, most of the data collected were hand written by the parents of the subjects. Sometimes, the children were asked to say certain words following the corpus provided by the first subject of the study, who happened to

be a late talker; because at two years old, he had a very limited number of words in his lexicon. However, it was realized that as far as reduplication is concerned he was a very interesting case. He made use of reduplication extensively. Even, though he was slower in a way, he followed the normal developmental patterns as other children. The subject is one of the researchers' children and that gave them (researchers) the advantage of watching him closely and studying his response to language. This case might illustrate the argument of Ferguson (1977) that: 'extensive use of reduplication may represent an overall developmental strategy in phonology, possibly, typical of slow developers'.

The data collection was not done at the same time for all the subjects. The researchers tried to find children who were 2 years old and whose parents were willing to assist.

In the process, the researchers visited each subject's family at least once a month, and also called the mothers on phone from time to time, to remind them of the data collection and ask about the well being of the subjects. The visits were meant to serve both as a rapprochement between the researchers and the parents and to enquire about the corpus and the child's language development.

Data Collection

There are three media techniques which are important to this research based on Ochs and Slueffelin (1979). The three media approach involves the use of: a diary, audio tape recording and video tape. However, the present researchers made use of diary and audio tape only because the study is basically on language production.

Data Analysis

This section presents the data collected during the course of the study. It also contains samples of the analysis of such data based on the following sub-topics. Thus,

(i) CV Reduplication of CV Syllable (ii) Consonant Harmony (iii) Whole word repetition (iv) Reduplication beyond word level (v) Reduplication in Baby Talk (vi) Hypocoristic for Names (vii) Onomatopoetic Sound Imitation (viii) Tone in Child Language and (ix) Functions of

Reduplication from 2 -5 years

CV Reduplication of CV Syllable

This is generally the most common type of reduplication in child language. This type of reduplication is found in child language even before attainment of two years. In fact, during the babbling stage, it has been observed that, after an initial period, babbling becomes reduplicated (Oller, 1980, Leroy and Morgenstern 2005). Even though it is difficult to attribute specific communicative intent to children's first use of reduplication, sounds are reduplicated in exactly the same way with formation of syllabic sequences (Traxler 2012). McNeil, et al (1997) propose that these initial aspect of language productions reflect mechanical constraints and could be the result of the rhythmical alternations, when a child opens and closes his/her mouth.

It is therefore, not surprising that all the subjects in this study from age 2 exhibit, as in Table C below, a correct production of the CV + CV reduplication patterns with specific communicative intent. Most of the lexical items correctly produced by the children in this study were the CV + CV reduplication syllable patterns except perhaps, for few words that contain phonemes that some of the children did not fully master. For example, subjects AT, MI, RI that produced {kaka} as {tata} thereby substituting a velar stop consonant with the alveolar stop.

Table 2

Subjects	Child Form	Target Form	Gloss
AI	Mama	mama	mother
	Baba	Baba	father
AN	Mama	mama	mother
	Kaka	Kaka	Grandparent
UH	Yaya	Yaya	Elder sibling
	Kaka	Kaka	Grandparent
MI	Baba	Baba	father
	Mama	mama	mother
KA	Baba	Baba	Father
	Mama	mama	mother
RI	Baba	baba	father
	Tete	keke	Bicycle

Perhaps we can attribute this performance to children's phonological play activity and experimentation which enabled them to discover phonological regularities in the organization of their mother tongue, that is, if it is viewed in a cognitive perspective.

Whole Word Repetition

Repetition is a term which is used to indicate sounds and concepts that are repeated in one form or the other to provide reinforcement and emotional emphasis. Ghomeshi et al (2004) refer to repetition as child language, amongst its numerous definitions, this definition is very important to this study. Dore, et al (1976) referred to the whole word repetition in child language as one type of pre-syntactic device that serves as a bridge to syntax. This definition is in conformity with Wang's (2005) opinion that reduplication exists at the lexical level while repetition exist at the syntactic level. Crystal (2011) considers repetition as a form of syntactic reduplication. By implication this type of reduplication does not serve lexical or inflectional purposes and does not form new words. This is evidenced from the following:

Table 3

Subjects	Child Form	Target Form	Gloss
AI	Na ni nani na wana nana ne	bá ni nawã ne	Give me, it's mine!
	Bàyi bàyi bánchô	bàri ban so	Stop that, I don't want
AN	Ná yi tütà tütà totai	ná yi kükà sosai	I cried (so much).
HU	ná yi tütà tütà	Yaya	Elder sibling
MI	mãmá, màmá in ti in ti	Màmá in ci?	Mama, can I eat?
RI	táinà yámà nàyámà nàyámà	Sái nà rámà.	I will retaliate.

According to Evans (2014), repetition is a device in child language development that provides an opportunity for children to learn complex intonation patterns without the load of coding meaning relation between the words spoken. This could be the case with the above presentation because the repeated words are spoken in sentential contour. The form of repetition above serves as a means of intensifying or emphasizing the content of the utterances as in English when one says He's a big boy', or in a more grammatical way in Hausa 'ba ni maza — maza' (Give it to me, now now).

The utterance of subject UH indicates a use of repetition to express meaning that has something to do with quantity. Moravsik (1978) remarks that "a tendency has been noted for language to use reduplication patterns for the expression of meaning that has something to do with quantity of referents, and she calls this tendency an onomatopoetic use of a form device. This function of repetition is also often grammatical in adult language; for instance, in Hausa, 'goma'

(ten) > 'goma-goma' (ten each).

Subject MI above uses repetition to attract and keep her mother's attention. Here the repetition is done with little or no pause. This is in line with Leopold's (1949) suggestion that word repetition generally has equal stress on each repeated word with a slight pause between each; and that the distinction between the reduplication and the word repetition is based primarily on stress and pause patterns. Even though the language of this research is not stress timed, there are other supra-segmental features such as tone in the children's utterances.

In sum, from the analysis, there is a sort of whole word repetition (in most cases, persistent repetition of utterances) in the language of the children under study which is parallel in adult targets forms but which may serve different grammatical functions from adult language. In this study, therefore, repetition may express any of the following notions to the adult listener.

- An unnecessarily repetitive quantity becoming a nuisance value

- An unnecessarily repetitive quantity becoming an obsession

Reduplication beyond Word Level

Reduplication in Hausa child language is observed to extend across word boundaries as in the following.

Table 4

Subjects	Child Forms	Target Forms	Gloss
AT	Atatatutu	Na taka tutu	I marched on feaces.
KA	dadadida dadawo	Babangida ya dawo	Babangida is back.
RI	Bibibaba	cibin baba	Daddy's spoon.

It seems that children's need for economy of effort prompts reduplication even beyond lexical items. The subject KA can produce 'baba' (in isolation) as in the target form, but did say 'dadadida' because the child has created her own system by reduplicating from right to left which gave rise to 'dadadida'. Thus, it can also be concluded that, at' this stage of language development, children have their own individual creative capacity to reduplicate.

Reduplication in Baby Talk

Baby talk (BT), motherese, parentese, mommy talk, caretaker speech, infant-directed speech (IDS) or child directed speech (CDS), is a non-standard form of speech used by adults in talking to toddlers and infants. Onyenobi (1997) refers to baby-talk as the speech of adults to children between ages 1 and 3 years, while Ferguson (1964) sees it as a register that is a set of characteristics distinguishing lexical and social context of use rather than by linguistic community. Nelson and Benedict (1974) say that BT is a typical mixed language where the speakers try to adjust themselves to the verbal habits of their listeners and to establish a common code suitable for both interlocutors in a child- adult dialogue. This study is mainly concerned with reduplication what could be called one of verbal habits of a child's speech.

Snow, et al (1979) reported a number of features of BT prevalent in mother's speech to infants. Some of the features that have direct link with this paper are: The lexical features, some examples are 'potty' and 'nana' (Ferguson 1964)The redundancy features which consist of more immediate repetition and more repetition of the same words or phrases over a period of time (Snow, 1976).

From the above features, reduplication has been identified as one of the characteristics of BT (Crystal 2010 and

Crystal 2011). What this study is particular about is what influences reduplication in BT.

Some examples of widely-used BT words and phrases in Hausa:

Table 5

All the Subjects	Baby Talk	Semantic Representations
	rümáh — rumáh	to keep quiet or to calm down a child(a lullaby).
	Tàtà	to walk (rather unsteadily).
	Oyoyô	welcome (Source:A coinage from Yoruba, meaning: ekaabo, won ti de o (the o shows an exclamation mark.
	Ojuju	A masquerade (Source: A coinage from Yoruba, (Ogbomosho) meaning: Egungun.

The above examples are usually delivered with a cooling pattern of intonation different from that of normal adult speech, high in pitch. Baba-waziri (1997b) and Babajide (2000) point out that the high pitch and other phonological features of BT may have evolved because they elicit orienting behaviors and become signals to the infant child that he is being addressed.

Clark and Clark (1997) reported that this type of communication is always accompanied by gestures initiated by adults. It is not easy to draw clear hypothesis on the question of what influenced reduplication in BT. Ferguson (1977); Fromkin and Rodman (1978) and Lyons (1981) are of the opinion that mechanical phenomena typical of children's babbling may have influenced parental speech. Reduplication in BT may also induce more intentional reduplications in child language. What is intriguing is that the process is dynamic and that a lot of childhood reduplication has been introduced into the adult norms of the community in many languages, Leroy & Morgenstern (2005).

Hypocoristic for Names

Hypocoristic — from Greek *hypokorizerthai* means to use child talk. - Hypocoristic can therefore said to be forms of child-talk especially that which approximate to the pronunciation of names.

Perhaps most languages that use baby-talk also use a baby-talk form approximating the names pronunciation. From the discussion above, it is obvious that Hausa language uses baby talk (as shown below) and also employs hypocoristic for names which are mostly used as baby-talk to address children. Most names in Hausa have hypocoristic forms such as the following table:

Table 6

Names	Hypocoristic Forms
Ramlah	Ramlolo
Sale	Salele
Ladi	Ladidi
Hafsa	Hafsoso

In Table 5 above, it is quite curious to note that the names are generated by either changing the last vowel sound or reduplicating the last syllable as in Ramlah - Ramlolo, Hafsa - Hafsoso or just reduplicating the last syllable as in Sale - Salele, Ladi - Ladidi.

These types of formations are used to convey tenderness and affection, intimacy or endearment especially when referring to children.

Onomatopoeic Sound Imitation

Onomatopoeia.-suggesting something that makes a sound - is the imitation of natural noises by speech sounds or suggests the sources of the sound that it describes. Phonomime is another name for onomatopoeia which means words that mimic actual sounds, while phenomime are mimetic words used to represent non-auditory senses

Reduplication is used as a process to enumerate series of similar referents. It therefore has a clear iconic quality, relating the content of the verbal production to the extra-linguistic world.

Common occurrences of onomatopoeias include animal noises, objects such as clocks, machines and their sounds etc., are all described with onomatopoeia. For animal sounds, words like quack (duck), bark (dog), roar (lion) and meow (cat) are typically used in English. Onomatopoeia are not universally the same across all languages, they conform, to some extent, to the broader linguistic system they are part of, hence, the sounds of a clock may be 'tick tack' in English and 'tik-tak in Dutch' or 'tick-tack' in French etc.

In our analysis of children's use of reduplication, imitations are found that indicate reduplication and repetition of sound imitations in playful variations. The children's playful use of onomatopoeia in this study is written only as an attempt to describe or transcribe the sounds, as the researchers perceived them, as shown in the data AD below.

Thun, (1963) rightly proposed that there are more natural noises than speech sounds to describe them.

Table 7

Subjects	Types of Sound Imitation	Types of Object Imitated
AI	kan kan kan (adult kwan kwan kwan)	Sound of a door knocking
AN	bush busha busha	Sound of a gun
HU	a'am, a'm, a'am	A chewing sound
	umme umme umme.	Sound of cat
MI	hu hu hu	Barking of a dog
	tutu lutu tutu lulu	A cock-crow
KA	tatu tatu tatu	
	bum bum bubbum bum	Sound of a vehicle
RI	tututa tututa tututa toti	Galloping of a horse
	pi pi pi	Sound of a vehicle horn

In all the above, children used the CV syllable structure in tripled form (after which there is pause) except for subject RI who used CVC structure in 'pup pup pup' and the VVC of subject KA 'a'am' of eating also in triplication. The sounds mentioned are mostly of those of animals and echoes of toys and onomatopoetic imitation of perceptual impressions used for denoting a referent in an iconic way.

Grammatically speaking, the sound imitations may serve as nouns or verbs or even both. This is so, because word classes are hardly differentiated i.e. words may be polyvalent as with the above. Dressier (2003), has observed that children's use of onomatopoeia partially and superficially resembles a reduced version of an isolating language (i.e. a language that may not have inflection and little grammatical word formation). Because of their love for reduplication, children can sometimes give names to things they have never seen in an iconic way. One of the subjects of this research; RI, saw a turkey for the first time and said to her mother: "Bibi, blob" probably because of the size or movement of the bird.

Traxler, (2012), report that child language contains more iconic references than the adult target form, similar to

extra-grammatical morphology and also due to a small amount of constraints by the arbitrariness of grammar and lexicon. We can expect that child language includes a greater amount of extra-grammatical reduplication than adult language. This may not be true of the Hausa language which seems to have iconic representation for most things, actions or situations as stated in our literature review in the last part of 2.6 above.

Functions of Reduplication in Child Language

Reduplication serves many functions in child language, depending on the various stages of language acquisition. The reduplication in this study is the later reduplication in language acquisition. Leroy & Morgenstern (2005) propose that reduplication in child language starts as early as from the babbling stage to 3 years of age. Reduplication from 2 years can therefore be considered as later form of reduplication in language acquisition. From the data in this study, reduplication can probably be said to serve the following functions:

- Reduplication is used for emphases i.e. to emphasize what children say when they produce sounds, words or phrases with more intensity. We can call this "the expressive" functions of reduplication, after Bloom (1978).

- Reduplication is used as a transition to adult target language i.e. a tool in the construction of the lexicon.

- Reduplication is also used with an iconic quantity which prepares the user for the use of the plura.

- Adult reduplication belongs to morphology as several authors (Dressier 2003 and Hurch, B. 2005) argue.

- Often reduplication is pragmatically iconic, if the morphological meaning involves repetition or greater duration or higher intensity (Dressier 2003).

CONCLUSIONS

As far as language acquisition is concerned, it seems clear from observations that reduplication in child language development is a remarkable capacity of the child to attain adult target by processing, generalizing and forming hypotheses in a variety of ways which may be largely innate or develop through some sort of learning through maturation.

Various child language researchers (Hoff 2001, Dressler 2003 and Adegbite 2009) are of the view that data from first language acquisition can support the approach to language typology as representing a basic level of language. And it is clear from this study that an understanding of human linguistic system might be possible by investigating child language.

The children in this study produced their own reduplication rules, testing them with those of their input and adjusting them until they approximated correctly to the adult speech. In this study we were also able to verify Oyebade's (1990) claim that reduplication in child language is not after all arbitrary as appeared to have been implied by Clark and Clark (1997). Therefore, the best way to appreciate the process of language acquisition is to understand the challenges the child faces and the ways in which such challenges are overcome.

Finally, it is hoped that this paper will spur further researches in finding out how children in other Nigerian languages utilize the phenomenon of reduplication.

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