

Review of: "The Reduplication that Denotes Ethnomathematical Signification: Exemplification from the Bidayuh Somu Language"

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Review: The Reduplication that Denotes Ethnomathematical Signification: Exemplification from the Bidayuh Somu Language

This paper is unpublishable in its current form owing to the numerous mistakes in grammar, word choice, and punctuation. It is clearly written by a non-native speaker of English and has not been properly proofread and rewritten by a professional native speaker of English. This would be the absolute minimum required for it to be considered for scholarly publication in any English-language venue.

Beyond this issue, however, there are some other matters worth the author's attention, starting with the rather oddly worded title. What exactly is meant by "ethnomathematical signification"? All reduplication, inasmuch as it is denotative of plurality, duality, generality, etc., has a "mathematical" purport, of sorts. But so do, e.g., plural markers, some demonstrative adjectives, and many other morphosyntactic features dealing with counting, quantity, magnitude, and the like. The effect of the title is to suggest that reduplication in Bidayuh Somu is somehow exceptional by virtue of its ethnomathematical signification, but in fact, it is merely reduplication doing what reduplication does across languages, albeit perhaps in a more varied form than one normally encounters in individual cases. But the types of reduplication found here seem to be similar to types found in other languages. For instance, total reduplication of the nominal is also found in Indonesian, indicating plurality (although not obligatorily; "cats" can be rendered as *kucing* or *kucing kucing*, e.g.). The comparable process in Bidayuh Somu apparently can also involve the prefixing of *ti-* (*payat-payat* vs. *ti-payat*, 'jars,' e.g.), but the author never explains whether there is any difference. It would also be interesting to know the genetic relationship, if any, between this language and Indonesian; if it isn't related, is this reduplication perhaps a result of contact-induced change? If it is, then are the reduplicative prefix syllables *buN-* and *niN-* perhaps cognate with Indonesian *ber-* and *mem-*? These are fairly obvious queries that any linguist with areal expertise would make.

The author might do well to have a look at reduplication found in other language groups. Full reduplication of both nouns and verbs is found in Mandarin, although not as productively as in this language, apparently. Partial reduplication of verbs is found in both Sanskrit (reduplicative stems indicating the perfect and some forms of the aorist, for example, whose stems change form, with, e.g., *ca-* reduplicating for *ka-*, etc.; *ca-kara*, 'he made,' e.g.). Sanskrit also reduplicates nouns (*dine-dine*, 'day by day'). Meanwhile, Tamil and the Dravidian languages have a very productive system to indicate generality by changing the first syllable in a reduplicated noun; in Tamil, this syllable is *ki-*, so *vaNDi-kiNDi* means 'cars

and such' (these languages have an affixal and not reduplicative plural, however). Finally, Sinhala has a large number of "reduplicated near homophones," in which two words with both related meanings and similar sound structure are customarily paired, as in *tel-mal*, 'oil and flowers' (both elements of religious ceremonious) and *pirit-wirit*, 'customs and observances.' These are just a few ways in which reduplication and reduplication-like patterning are found in languages of this reviewer's acquaintance; it is also very widespread in African languages, and is probably found to some degree in nearly every language (cf. English *higgledy-piggledy*, *singsong*, colloquial reduplication with *schm-*, as in *teacher-schmeacher*, etc.; in English, most reduplication is not a productive process, although it is in many, if not most, English pidgins, like Tok Pisin).

In sum, this paper, if treated strictly as an account of reduplication in Bidayuh Somu, is worth revising and publishing as such, provided the English is standard. If it aspires to anything like the title implies, however, it should probably furnish some treatment of reduplication in other languages, particularly those that, like Indonesian and Tok Pisin, are in the general region and may be expected to have features in common.