

On « Reduplicated Imperatives » in Sardinian

The aim of this talk is to account for a long-standing problem in Romance Philology: the nature and the status of V-V (verb-verb) compounds in Sardinian. The originality of such a morphological pattern has been recognized since the early work of Antonio de Nebrija (1492). However, recent publications on verb-based compounds have mainly been concerned with V-N compounds, and V-V formations have not been discussed so far, with the notable exception of Thornton (2008) and Stefanelli (1998-99). In the recent studies dealing with V-N compounds, it has been argued that the verbal element used in these constructions is either a lexeme, or some kind of morphomic unit. As far as Italian is concerned, Thornton (2008) holds the view that V-V compounds such as *fuggifuggi* (lit. ‘run away-run away’), *pigiapigia* (lit. ‘push-push’) or *copiacopia* (lit. ‘copy-copy’) are action nouns formed by reduplication of a verb form, and the action denoted by the noun is said to be performed by several agents. Following Spitzer (1918) and (1951-1952), it is argued that this lexeme-formation device originates from the lexicalization of speech acts involving descriptive / historical imperatives (for a similar view concerning Spanish V-V compounds, see Bustos Gisbert (1986: 314)).

Both the diachronic scenario and the semantic interpretation of V-V compounds will be discussed taking into account Sardinian nouns such as *linghe-linghe* (lit. ‘lick-lick’), *lughe-lughe* (lit. ‘shine-shine’), *kanta-kanta* (lit. ‘sing-sing’), *faghe-faghe* (lit. ‘do-do’), *curri-curri* (lit. ‘run-run’), etc, which include either actions nouns or entity nouns. We will consider whether the “descriptive” interpretation correctly accounts for the Sardinian data: Sardinian does have a productive pattern of reduplicated verbs used as gerundive complements of motion and stative verbs (cf. such examples as *stai kanta kanta* (lit. ‘stay sing-sing’), *stai tussi tussi* (lit. ‘stay cough cough’), *andai tzoppi-tzoppi* (lit. ‘go limp-limp’), *andai abbarra abbarra* ‘go stop stop’, *andai fraga fraga* ‘go smell smell’, etc.). The various hypotheses put forth in the literature to explain such morphological constructions will be discussed: the 3rd person sg. (present indicative) hypothesis, the “bare stem” hypothesis, the “lexeme” hypothesis and the Imperative hypothesis. In some languages, it has been argued that V-V compounds may be analyzed as a kind of serial-like construction (cf. in modern Greek such constructions as *éla pés mu* ‘C’mon tell me!’ discussed by Joseph (1990)). At first glance, it would be tempting to analyze in the same way the Sardinian V-V compounds. We will therefore examine whether Sardinian data favour one or other of these hypotheses, and we will ask whether a unique morphological pattern must be recognized in a give language. We will consider as well whether Sardinian data are subject to any prosodic constraint on the size of the verbal element involved in this formation device: should the bisyllabic trochee recognized as a prosodic pattern governing the structure of Sardinian V-V compounds? Such a bisyllabic constraint has been claimed to be at work in many morphological phenomena (hypochoresis formation, clipping, etc.). A typological survey of imperative constructions will be proposed, and it will be shown that having recourse to imperatives in Morphological Processes is a widespread phenomenon: the basicness of imperatives will be seen to be at least partly responsible for their ‘recycling’ in Morphology (cf. Floricic (2008)).

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