Chapter 2

Reduplication in Mapuzungun: Form and Function

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Mapuzungun has reduplicative structures based on elements other than verb stems that are of very limited productivity. With verb stems, however, several formal patterns can be distinguished, which consist of the repetition of the lexical verb stem plus the addition of an apparently grammaticalized version of one of three verb roots or a zero morpheme. The previous literature has attempted to identify form/function correlations for these more or less productive verbal reduplicative patterns, and the present paper contributes to the discussion by surveying older studies and exploring several cases that suggest that such form/function correspondences are substantially less straightforward than a casual observer might think.

1 Introduction

In this paper we present an overview of reduplication in Mapuzungun, the language of the Mapuche people who live in what is now Argentina and Chile. The language shows different degrees of vitality in the areas where it is still spoken or at least known; it seems to be more vital in Chile than in Argentina. It seems to be in a terminal stage in many rural communities in Argentina, especially in the provinces of La Pampa, Río Negro and Chubut. Since most of the Mapuche population lives on the western side of the Andean ridge, the majority of the native speakers are found in Chile. The language, also called Mapudungun, Mapucheñungun, Mapuchedungun, Chezunungun and Chedungun (cf. Díaz-Fernández 2006, Zúñiga 2006, 44) includes several mutually intelligible dialects; Chesumun or Williche, an obsolescent variety found in southern Chile, is markedly different from the other dialects. Mapuzungun has been considered a language isolate, although some authors tried to relate it to different families. Among the attempts to establish a genetic relationship for this language we briefly mention the following ones. Stark (1970) tried to relate Mapuzungun to the Mayan family. Hamp (1971) followed Stark’s hypothesis and included the Uru-Chipaya group. Loos (1973) thought there were similarities between this language and Proto-Panoan. For Grimes (1978, 48), it is “possibly Penutian.” Key devoted two main papers to prove a genetic relationship with
“Araucanian” (i.e. the varieties of Mapuzungun) and the Pano-Tacanan family (Key 1978a, 1978b). Finally, Croese (1999) proposed a new relationship for the Mapuche language, this time with the Arawak family; this hypothesis was further explored by Díaz-Fernández (2011).

The main sources on which this work is based are Augusta’s dictionary (1916), which we checked thoroughly to get as complete a list of possible cases of reduplication as possible, a corpus recorded by the first author in Mapuche communities in the province of Chubut, Argentina, from 1987 up to the present, and the second author’s field notes from his work in the province of Araucanía, Chile, from 1998 up to the present. Other sources we consulted are Díaz-Fernández (2003 vol. 2), Fernández Garay (2001), Harmelink (1996), Hernández Sallés et al. (1997), Smeets (2008), and Vúletin (1987). It is important to mention that several reduplicated items recorded by Augusta (1916) are obsolescent on both sides of the Andean ridge. Some of these items are still current in certain areas while others were unknown at least to the vernacular speakers who were interviewed in Mapuche communities in Chubut, Argentina.

The remainder of section 1 sketches the basics of Mapuzungun phonology. After outlining a general terminological and analytic introduction to reduplication (section 2), we briefly consider some formal aspects of reduplication in Mapuzungun (i.e. morphological make-up of the reduplicated units and the lexical classes involved in reduplication) in section 3. Verbal reduplication is addressed in section 4, and section 5 closes the paper with some conclusions. The appendix briefly deals with inherent reduplication and noun reduplication.

Compared to other languages of the Southern Cone, Mapuzungun has a relatively simple phonology.1 There are six vocalic phonemes, viz. u (/u/), e (/e/), o (/o/), a (/a/), i (/i/), and ü (/ɨ/), the latter of which occurs as epenthetic segment in order to avoid tautosyllabic consonant clusters. There are also three glides, viz. y (/j/), w (/w/), and g (/ɰ/), which can appear word-initially before the homorganic vowels i, u, and ü. In addition, word-final /o/ can be realized as [u] (except with monosyllables like ko ‘water’). The consonantal phonemes are shown in Table 1 below. The palato-alveolar and retroflex obstruents are affricates; the others are simple plosives. Liquids are approximants; all except

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1 Mapuzungun examples are written here by means of the so-called Alfabeto Mapuche Unificado (AMU) ‘Unified Mapuche Alphabet,’ which was the product of the Encuentro para la Unificación del Alfabeto Mapuche (Meeting for the Unification of the Mapuche Alphabet), held in Temuco, Chile, in May 1986. The original AMU has d instead of z for the interdental fricative.