Reduplication as a Tool for Morphological and Phonological Analysis in Awetí

Sebastian Drude

Verbal reduplication in Awetí is always full reduplication of the stem, quite independently from its CV structure. There are no different formal reduplication types, but there is some variation in the semantic effects according to the verb class (transitive, active intransitive, stative). The reduplicated active verbs with consonant-final stems show an additional unstressed -e, which also occurs in some simple verbs and in certain forms of stative verbs. Reduplication provides evidence that this -e and a related -zâ are separate morphs, different from inflectional affixes and the stem. Reduplication also contributes to deciding several phonological questions; most importantly, the abstract morpheme-final archiphonemes /P, T, K/ are confirmed. Also, the analysis of inherently oral vowels different from neutral vowels, be it in complementary distribution, has been strengthened. Although reduplication is not always a clear criterion to distinguish derivation from inflection, it can reveal the ‘underlying’ form of derivational affixes.

1 Introduction

This study describes reduplication in verb forms of Awetí, a Brazilian indigenous language spoken by a small group living in three villages in the region of the headwaters of the Xingu River in Mato Grosso, central Brazil. Awetí does not belong to but is the closest relative of the well-known Tupí-Guaraní subfamily, the largest well-established branch of the Tupí family. Mawé, Awetí and Tupí-Guaraní together constitute a major branch of Tupí, “Mawetí-Guaraní” (Rodrigues and Dietrich 1997; Drude 2006; Drude and Meira, forthcoming).

The study of reduplication can contribute to the understanding of phonological and morphological units and processes. This is shown by discussing reduplication in connection with key issues in Awetí: nasalization, abstract morpheme-final phonemes, and the identification of the stem and of morpheme boundaries. To a lesser degree, reduplication can also be used for the identification of derivation vs. inflection.
Sections 2 and 3 serve as a basis for the paper. Section 2 summarizes the phonological system of Awetí. Section 3 gives some basic morphological properties and presents some diagnostic affixes used in the remaining sections. Then section 4 gives a short general overview of verbal reduplication in Awetí. Section 5 describes the basic patterns of reduplication found with active (transitive and intransitive) verbs. The members of a small particular subclass of these active verbs end in an unstressed syllable; these are treated in section 6. Section 7 uses evidence from reduplication for a closer look at certain (morpho-)phonological alternations at the beginning and end of verbal stems. Reduplication with stative verbs is treated in section 8. Finally, section 9 discusses the domain of reduplication if derivational affixes occur. The most important findings are summarized in the conclusion in section 10.

2 Phonemes and Phonotactics of Awetí

Awetí has six oral vowels /i, ɨ, u, e, a, o/ and their nasal counterparts /ĩ, ɪ̃, ū, ẽ, ã, ō̃/. In most non-final syllables one of six additional 'neutral' phonemes /i̱, ɨ̱, u̱, e̱, a̱, o̱/ occurs, marked by (non-IPA) underlining. These are phonologically unspecified for orality or nasality and acquire these features phonetically due to nasal harmony.

Besides the basic consonantal phonemes /p, t, k, kw, ᵟ, m, n, ŋ, j, w, ts, z, h, l, r/, a small group of more abstract underspecified phonemes is postulated due to neutralizations. In particular, the contrast between the simple stops and their nasal counterparts (/p:m, t:n, k:ŋ/) is neutralized in the coda, giving rise to the archiphonemes /P, T, K/, which harmonize with the nasality or orality of the preceding vowel (see section 7). The abstract (underspecified) archiphoneme /P/, for instance, contains only the property "bilabial." Depending on the environment, it is realized after oral vowels as an unreleased [p̚] (before pause or stops) or as a 'lenited' [β] (before vowels—/T/ and /K/ are lenited to to [ɾ] and [ɣ], respectively), and as [m] after nasal vowels or before nasal consonants.

At the beginning of certain (in particular, modal and nominalizing) suffixes, there is an abstract consonantal phoneme /°/. After [m, n, ŋ] (that is, after /P, T,