

Nominal Echo-Formations in Northern Pakistan

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Abstract

There is a morphological process “echo-formation”, or so-called “echo-word”, in South Asian languages. In this presentation, I will discuss nominal echo-formation in some of the languages spoken in Northern Pakistan to clarify the fixed segments (segments that are unchanged in reduplicated forms) and the degree of identity avoidance for echo-formation in each language. And then I will advocate that the existing definition of “echo-formation” is not appropriate.

Previous studies on echo-formation have employed a morphological definition of echo-formation, such that a stem X is reduplicated with a partial transformation (so it changes to X') and results in an echoed form X-X'. The development of this formation is said to involve a system of identity avoidance, so that the echo does not exactly repeat the base form.

Among the five languages in Northern Pakistan on which I have done field research, there are two in the west (Khowar and Kalasha) that show a number of forms that appear to be echo-forms, but are completely reduplicated, that is, X-X. The formal results, at least, do not correspond with the existing definition mentioned above. But semantically they correspond to other forms that have been developed by echo-formation (that is X-X') and they need to be treated in the same way. On the other hand, the other three languages show identity avoidance in all such reduplicated forms. Domaaki shows only identity avoidance, but Burushaski and Shina also avoid similarity of a reduplication to the segments of its base. The fixed segments in these three languages illustrate different groupings in their avoidance systems, Domaaki and Burushaski show common sets of fixed segments while Shina shows another kind. In this way, it is clarified that the echo-formation processes of these languages vary in some facets within such a small area. I advocate that echo-formation should be defined not solely in terms of morphophonology, but also with reference to semantics.