The Base Does Not Count: A Special Pattern of Reduplicative Verbs in Omani Arabic[1]

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ملخص

تتسم اللهجة العربية العمانية بوجود أفعال ذات مقطع واحد يتضاعف إلى نمطين، يتمتعان باختلافهما الكلي عن المعنى الذي يشير إليه الجذر في الأساس. ونظرا لكون هذه الأفعال طويلة من الناحية التركيبية وذات معنى يصعب التكهن به ولها دلالات برجماتية متنوعة، فهي تشكل ظاهرة لغوية فريدة في اللهجة العربية العمانية. إضافة إلى أنها لا تمت بصلة إلى جذورها فقد وجد أنها تستخدم برجماتيكيا في سياقات التذمر والنصح والترفيه، حيث تفيد التأكيد وتعبر عن مشاعر عميقة للمتحدث تقود إلى تقوية العلاقات بين من يستخدمون هذه الأفعال في محادثاتهم. لا توجد وفرة في المراجع التي تدرس المضاعفات اللغوية من الناحية البرجماتية وفي المقابل تكثر الدراسات التي تهتم بدراسة معاني هذه المضاعفات. وبالتالي ستوفر هذه الدراسة فهما للبعدين السياقي والبرجماتي.

Abstract

Omani Arabic has a large number of reduplicative verbs whose base is composed of a single syllable C_1aC_2. The base reduplicates into two distinct shapes $C_1aC_2C_1aC_2$ or $C_1aC_2C_2aC_2$ which are semantically intriguing as they acquire a new lexical meaning distinct from that expressed by the base. Being structurally long, semantically inaccessible and pragmatically succinct, OA reduplicative verbs predict an unprecedented shift in word formation in OA. Not only do they stand in a strange semantic relation with their bases, they are observed to be pragmatically versatile as they are used to serve the functions of griping, advising and entertaining. Such functions are untapped; previous work on reduplication has been devoted to the meanings of reduplication at the lexical level. The functions at the level of discourse and context have long been overlooked. This paper describes reduplicative verbs structurally and semantically. Dialogues where OA reduplicative verbs surface are presented to explore their functions as used within the youth circle. This helps contextualize the level at which reduplicative verbs surface hoping to offer an understanding to both the contextual and discoursal levels of reduplicative verbs.

Key words: Omani Arabic, reduplicative verbs, semantic difference, pragmatic functions, linguistic shift

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[1] I would like to thank the anonymous IJAL reviewers for their constructive comments on earlier versions of this paper.

1. Introduction

Reduplication is a morphological process that repeats the base or part of the base to indicate lexical, morphological or grammatical contrasts. In Omani Arabic (henceforth OA), the base, composed of a single syllable C_1aC_2, reduplicates into two distinct shapes $C_1aC_2C_1aC_2$ or $C_1aC_2C_2aC_2$. The vowels in the reduplicated verbs are invariantly {a}, forming a unique linguistic phenomenon due to 1) the semantic divergence between these verbs and their bases and 2) the freedom enjoyed by these verbs to switch the order of the base consonants to express a different meaning (see 1.e and 1.f below).

1. $C_1aC_2C_1aC_2$ verbs

Base	Gloss	reduplicative verb	Gloss
a. kar	Flee	Karkar	Giggle
b. far	throw; flip the book pages fast	Farfar	loiter, wander aimlessly
c. xaT	handwrite; draw a line	xaTxaT	stagger; walk with intense care
d. ʃaħħ	Diminish	ʃaħ-ʃaħ	dance happily
e. Taʃ	stand up	Taʃ-ʃaʃ	splash water
f. Taʃ	stand up	Taʃ-Taʃ	feel panicky

Reduplication in Arabic marks a lexical meaning with various semantic functions including, but not limited to, emphasis, repetition, intensification and frequency. Close observations of these verbs reveal that they also enjoy conversational meanings and metalinguistic functions. Past studies of reduplication in other dialects of Arabic (Pidgin Arabic dialects by Avram: 2011; Modern Standard Arabic by McCarthy and Prince 1990 and by Suçin 2010; Iraqi by Igaab nd; Jordanian by Anani 2012; Juba Arabic, Turku, Gulf Pidgin Arabic, Pidgin Madam and Romanian Pidgin Arabic by Avram 2011) were limited to the lexical dimensions. Since OA reduplicative verbs enjoy a special status which merits exploration, and in light of the fact that they are on the rise in the language, this paper is an attempt to expose the contextual functions of OA reduplication within the framework of Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) which posits that social contexts and accurate manifestations of accompanied contextualization cues are crucial to disambiguate the meanings of an utterance.

As this paper is the first work on OA reduplicative verbs, to the best of my knowledge, and the second on the conversational functions of reduplication (Hasan, nd), it hopes to holistically describe the scope of this phenomenon by answering the following research questions:

1.   How are reduplicative verbs formed?

2.   What are the meanings taken by them? Is there a correlation between the meaning of the base and its derived reduplicative verb? How are they related or different?

3.   What are the metalinguistic functions played by these verbs? What are the conversational cues that signal these functions?

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 lists the generic features of OA reduplicative verbs. I discuss OA reduplicative verbs in relation to scholarships in Arabic reduplication in section 3. In section 4, I report information about data collection and methodology. Section 5 presents the results and discussion. This section also outlines the semantic and pragmatic functions of the reduplicative verbs. In section 6, I conclude the paper.

2. Generic Features of Reduplicative Verbs

The collected reduplicative verbs were analyzed and observed to have the following linguistic features:

1) Semantically, not all the bases are in active use in OA, nor do all carry a meaning (e.g. [naq] 'no gloss' [naqnaq] 'talk continuously and annoyingly'). In fact, the reduplicative verbs are more commonly heard and used than their bases (e.g. [ʕassas] 'clean' is more often heard than [ʕas] 'clean', with the latter indicating a single wipe incapable of removing dust or dirt. This places caution about assigning a specific meaning to the base or identifying a unified semantic function for the resulting reduplicative verbs. However, it is fairly clear from the responses of native OA speakers that the scope of semantic functions includes intensity, repetition of action, and may serve as onomatopoeic forms.

2) When the bases carry meaning, their meaning is vastly different from that of the reduplicative verbs. Around 38 reduplicative verbs belonging to this type are collected and will be semantically and pragmatically analyzed in the subsequent sections:

2) Reduplicated verbs with meaning different from bases

Base	Gloss	reduplicative verb	gloss
kan	Hide something inwardly	Kankan	wear heavy clothes to feel warm
fat	break into small pieces	Fatfat	rat on; cannot keep a secret
daq	Knock	Daqdaq	feel extremely tired
Mak	drink directly from the bottle	Makmak	do things sluggishly

3) The majority of reduplicative verbs come from nonexistent bases (about 111 forms belong to this type). In other words, neither do the bases exist in the language nor do they have any meaning. How and from where reduplicative verbs acquire their unique meanings are not known. Greenberg (nd), who analyzed verbal reduplication in Hebrew, listed similar reduplicative verbs such as [girger] 'gurgled' and [riʃreʃ] 'rustle'. These are observed not to be related to any existing binary or ternary form (p.4). To illustrate, [girger] does not semantically relate to [gar] 'lived', nor does [raʃ] 'poor' relate to [riʃreʃ]. Observe the following examples from OA:

3) Underived reduplicated verbs

Base	gloss	reduplicated verb	Gloss
	-	TarTar	spoil someone too much; unnecessarily
-	-	laʕlaʕ	talk nonstop
-	-	Faqfaq	laugh loudly in an unacceptable manner
-	-	Katkat	crawl like a baby

3. Previous Studies on Arabic Reduplicative Verbs

Although the phenomenon is phonologically and pragmatically intriguing, reduplicative verbs have not been studied in OA, to the best of my knowledge. Other dialects of Arabic like Egyptian, Iraqi and Jordanian also exhibit reduplicative verbs which were mainly explored semantically. I observe that these dialects also exhibit reduplication on other lexical units like nouns and adjectives while OA mainly exploits verbal reduplication. For instance in Turku, "a

pidginized variety of Arabic, formerly used in Chad" (Avram 2011) and borrows from Sudanese Arabic, only nouns and adverbs are reduplicated to express an intensifying or distributive meaning. Moreover, these dialects may also suffix a string of segments to the reduplicative form to exhibit a grammatical contrast (a shift from verb to noun or vice versa), a behavior nonexistent in OA. I observe that Omani youth constantly reduplicate verbs and are not heard to repeat nouns and adverbs. In other dialects of Arabic such as Saudi, the adverbs *wajidwajid* and *ʃwajʃwaj,* meaning [many] and [few] respectively are very common.

Verbs are considered to be the core component of grammar in Arabic (Badawi et al 2004; Ryding, 2005). Since Arabic heavily relies on root and pattern morphology, each word is referred to the tri-consonantal verb which has been viewed as the reference to the semantics of the word. Like Arabic, OA seems to place importance on verbs whose semantics come mainly from their tri-consonantal bases. Reduplicative verbs in OA enjoy special semantics (intensity, repetition, onomatopoeic, etc.). However, unlike Arabic which references the root as the only encoder of meaning, OA reduplicative verbs relinquish the role of the base as the sole determinant of meaning since they bear different meanings, as apparent by the behavior of reduplicative verbs in OA. There are two pieces of evidence to back up the claim, First, the verb [Tafar] means 'to make an unprecedented, revolutionary move', while in OA it bears the meaning of 'to leave for good'. Second, the OA verb [waddaf] has two opposite meanings. In the interior dialects of Oman, it is used to mean 'add', while in the coastal areas [waddaf] means 'to be over; finish'. This reveals that verbs in OA may take unique meanings regardless of the meanings taken by their bases.

Avram (2011) mentions reduplication of verbs as part of his thorough discussion of the meanings expressed by the various lexical forms (nouns, adjectives and adverbs) exhibiting reduplication in five Arabic varieties: Juba Arabic, Turku, Gulf Pidgin Arabic, Pidgin Madam and Romanian Pidgin Arabic. According to Avram, reduplication of verbs is by far the most frequently occurring type as it expresses a sense of plurality or diffuseness, and illustrates intensification and distributiveness. In Juba Arabic, there is an intriguing type of reduplication whereby reduplicated nouns acquire lexical meaning as in *[nus]* 'middle; half' > *nus-nus* 'average' and [*saba*] 'morning' >*[sabá-sabá]* 'dawn'. The reduplicative verbs in OA also acquire a lexical meaning distinct from that expressed by the base. Observe the data in 4 below:

4) Reduplicative verbs with Meaning different from the Bases

Base	gloss	reduplicative verb	Gloss
kar	flee	kar-kar	Giggle
ħan	miss; feel homesick	ħan-ħan	clear throat
xaʃ	hide	xaʃ-xaʃ	shake things repeatedly
daq	hit	mdaq-daq	feel tired or drained out
qaT	complete; finish	qaT-qaT	Giggle
fax	remain seated but is unwanted	yet-fax-fax	live in luxury; be proud of something
ʃak	doubt	ʃakkak	Sew
xaʃ	hide	xaʃ-ʃaʃ	move between two things
das	hide	das-sas	spy on someone
maT	Stretch	maT-TaT	walk slowly
ħam	develop a fever	ħam-ħam	say hmmmm
mak	drink directly from the bottle's mouth	mak-mak	do tasks sluggishly
ɣar	deceive	ɣar-ɣar	Gurgle
ħas	touch; feel	ħas-sas	be emotional or sensitive about things
tam[2]	finish; complete	tam-tam	speak intangibly
mal[3]	feel bored	mal-mal	Stagger
fax	sit	fax-fax	hide behind something
Saħ	recover	Saħ-ħaħ	mark correctly
ʃab	lit fire	ʃab-bab	chill down oneself
raq	be thin; soft	raq-qaq	knead the dough

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[2]In Modern Standard Arabic, the form is [tamm]. But in OA, the {m} is not geminated.
[3]Similarly, the last consonant in [mal] is not geminated in OA. It is, as rightly pointed out by an *IJAL* anonymous reviewer, geminated in Modern Standard Arabic.

ħab	love	ħab-bab	when the fabric of cloth produces an ane-like dots
laħ	insist	laħ-laħ	live in luxury
xaD	shake	xaa-xaD	rinse one's mouth
ʃab	lit fire	ʃab-ʃab	lit so much fire
xaʃ	hide something	xaʃ-xaʃ	shake too much
Taʃ	stand up	Taʃ-ʃaʃ	splash water
daħ	hit	daħ-daħ	study really hard
daʕ	"leave it!"	daʕ-ʕaʕ	talk unwantingly; say too much; not keep a secret.
Dam	hide	Dam-Dam	Criticize
bax	snort	bax-bax	feel lazy
taf	spit	taf-taf	to tear into pieces
xaT	write	xaT-xaT; xat-xat	Stagger
mar	pass	mar-mar	Torture
hab	go; leave	hab-hab	walk aimlessly
tar	pull	tar-tar	be at the very end of a queue of walking individuals
gaz	cut	gaz-gaz	be in extreme pain
ʃaħħ	diminish	ʃaħ-ʃaħ	dance happily
Sal	when the dates secrete black syrup like honey	Sal-Sal	spill too much water

Despite the prevalence of reduplicated verbs in Gulf Arabic, reduplication discussed in Avram only focused on Gulf Pidgin Arabic. Thus, the study only listed a single reduplicated verb and a few reduplicative nouns and adverbs borrowed from Hindi, which Gulf Arabs use to make themselves understandable to Hindi expatriates.

Avram also reports an undocumented function for reduplication that relates mostly to adjectives which "may be reduplicated to correspond to the plural in the noun being qualified" (p. 234). This semantic function is quite common cross-linguistically as it has also been documented to relate to reduplication in the Indonesian languages (Dalrymple 2012).

In Juba Arabic, a base reduplicates twice yielding three similar words consecutively following one another. More dramatically, it has also been observed that "reduplication of a verb and repetition of a noun can co-occur in the same sentence" (Avram 2011:236). These two features are not present in OA reduplicative verbs. None of the conversations reported or reconstructed include three repetitions to the base. Furthermore, OA reduplicative verbs have not been studied in relation to their context. Thus, no conclusion can be made here with regard to the co-occurrence of nouns and reduplicative verbs.

Igaab's (nd) study of reduplicative compounds in Iraqi Arabic identifies four groups into which reduplicative compounds are classified: "the two elements can be of the same meaning or different from each other in meaning; or one of the two parts is meaningless; or the whole compound is meaningless." (p. 1). Her classification which is mainly based on the meaning of both the base and reduplication raises a concern about the role and function of the base in OA reduplicative verbs. The base's meaning does not seem to link in any way to the meaning taken up by the reduplicative verbs (e.g. [ħan][4] means to 'miss; feel homesick'). When it reduplicates, [ħan-ħan] means 'to clear one's throat'. Such a vast difference in meaning is unexpected, let alone inaccessible. In fact, it is extremely hard, if not impossible at all, to predict the meaning of OA reduplicative verb from the meaning of its base. Most probably, the meaning of the reduplicative verb has evolved to have its own lexical entry that does not relate to the meaning of the base.

Reduplicative verbs are extremely common in the current dialects of Arabic. This can be confirmed by Anani (2012), who explores more than 123 Arabic reduplicative verbs in relation to their semantic functions. He argues that the stem from which these are derived is semantically transparent and often refer to onomatopoeic or kinesthetic functions, increase or decrease in size, motion, or muscular effort. I counted 32 forms with these functions or similar in OA. These conform to the general semantics assumed to be taken up by reduplication in Arabic dialects and other languages as well. Investigating the most frequent words that co-occur with reduplicative verb, Anani concludes that reduplicative verbs determine the semantic reference of the whole expression. This consistent semantics of Jordanian reduplicative verbs serve to illustrate that reduplicative verbs need to fit the context in which they occur. Both the verbs and their collocations work hand in hand to determine the meaning of reduplication.

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[4]Since the {n} in [ħan] is not doubled or geminated, unlike Modern Standard Arabic, then the reduplicated verb is onomatopoeic. I thank an *I JAL* reviewer for drawing my attention to this fact.

Both Hasan's and this study are concerned about the contextual and discoursal functions of reduplication, an area believed to be untapped. Hasan (nd) explores these crucial aspects in light of the dense use of reduplication in nursery rhymes. Hasan shows that reduplication is mainly employed by nursery rhymes to "instill values and refine morals in the hearts and souls of children" (p.1). Therefore, reduplication constitutes a word play that can enrich language. The current study also goes beyond the semantic functions to reveal the performative acts and discoursal usage of OA reduplicative verbs.

On a structural level, McCarthy and Prince (1990) studied reduplication in Standard Arabic morphologically and phonologically. They identified three morphological tendencies of reduplicative verbs in Arabic: their prosodic shape takes two close syllables CVC CVC, they lengthen the second syllable by inserting a vowel {a} CVC CVVC, and they suffix –ah to turn the reduplicative verb into an abstract noun. OA only takes the first strategy, shaping into two closed syllables. In OA reduplicative verbs, the reduplicant always follows the base. Kreitman (2003) explored diminutive reduplication in Modern Hebrew. Similar to OA reduplicative verbs, diminutives in Hebrew shape into a bisyllabic form with a pre-specified vocalic material. Different from OA, the last syllable gets repeated and infixed in the middle of the base form. Hebrew examples of this pattern include [gezer] 'carrot' → [gzarzar] 'baby carrot', [lavan] 'white' → [levanvan] 'white-ish' and [zakan] 'beard' → [zkankan] 'little beard' (pp. 101 and 112).

4. Data Collection and Methodology

This study explores two types of data: collected reduplicative verbs and a survey on the pragmatic and contextual use of these verbs. In Fall 2014, Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 semesters, the researcher taught the course ENGL2327 Phonology and Morphology to three sections of 60 Arts and Education students majoring in English as a Foreign Language. In that course, students are exposed to reduplication as one of the common morpho-phonological processes observed in the world languages. They were taught about the definition, types, and meanings of this linguistic phenomenon. They were also given data relevant to reduplication from languages other than English to analyze morphologically. They were then asked to affirm if the phenomenon also exists in OA and they managed to come up with a few examples. They were, then, asked to collect as many reduplicative verbs as they could think of, to give their meaning(s), their bases, and note if the bases express similar or different meaning(s) than the collected reduplicative

verbs. A total of 195 reduplicative verbs were collected and classified into four patterns: those which express intensity and repetition of the base, those which express meanings different from the bases, those that are underived from bases, or those whose bases are semantically null. Relevant to this study are reduplicative verbs whose meanings are significantly different from their bases. Those are about 38 forms of the whole corpus (listed in the discussion section).

The same students were later given a survey to report on the pragmatic, contextual and conversational uses of the reduplicative verbs they collected. There were five questions on the survey, the first of which asked respondents to pick up two reduplicative verbs and record two situations or real conversations in which these verbs occur. If they did not have any, they were asked to reconstruct one or two. The four additional survey questions asked the students to describe the context when reduplicative verbs surface, the gender of the users, their age, the relationships of the interlocutors and the feelings incurred when such reduplicative verbs surface in the conversations. The respondents were also asked to speculate on any social or cultural functions served when interlocutors decide to use reduplicative verbs.

The context of reduplicative verbs, gender and age were elicited to be provided when reduplication occurs. The relationships of the interlocutors were explored if the use of reduplication is restrictive to family circle, relatives or may extend to include friends, classmates and strangers (i.e. outsiders). The question about feelings was asked to gain a sense of the nature of reactions and emotions involved in the turns of conversation where a reduplicative verb occurs.

Interlocutors employ strings of words with an assented meaning to inform, reflect, apologize, promise, gripe or complain and carry out endless speech acts. The Speech Act Theory (henceforth SAT) founded by Austin and Searle posits that utterances are mapped into a set of *performative* acts associated with intended meanings and tied up to social contexts. According to Goffman (quoted in Schiffrin 1994: 97), language is "situated in social circumstances". Therefore, language does not function in isolation from social contexts because the "use of language is socially and culturally relative" (Schiffrin 1994:98). Therefore, an ambiguous utterance will only be elucidated through familiarity with the setting, social context and other indispensably accompanying non-verbal speech aspects including, but not limited to, gestures, facial expressions and supra-linguistic elements like stress, intonation and pitch. The current

study employs the parameters of Speech Act Theory to identify the performative acts emerging from the use of reduplicative verbs by Omani youth.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Semantics

The morphology in the verbs via gemination, affixation or reduplication tends to express plurality of action (hence called pluractionality), repetition in time, distribution in location, etc. (Greenberg: nd). The Arabic of Oman and Zanzibar is one variety of Arabic in which the verbal measure CieC suggests various types of pluractionality (Greenberg 1991). However, OA reduplicative verbs contradict the long-held assumption that reduplicated forms are related to the forms postulated as their bases. There is no relation between the meaning encoded in the base and that expressed by reduplicating it. Linguistically, derivatives follow their bases in meaning. The deviation in meaning between the bases and their reduplicative forms, if noted, stems from normal functions admitted to operate as a result of repetition (please see examples above).

The range of meanings expressed by OA reduplicative verbs are variable but seem at most to be directional. When the base expresses a state or feeling, its reduplicative verb expresses action. To illustrate, the bases in a., b. and c. in 5 below relate to mental states while their derived reduplicative verbs express some sort of action. On the other hand, bases in d., e. and f. are action or physical verbs whose reduplicative verbs relate to emotional state. Still, there is no connection in meaning between the two. This directionality is by no means applicable to the whole corpus. A legitimate question here is from where OA reduplicative verbs acquire their special meanings. I propose that these reduplicative verbs initially had the meaning of their bases with the regular semantics encoded in Arabic reduplication like intensity, repetition, etc. But, later on, they acquire their own meaning and become separate entities unrelated to their bases. This semantic change, of course, has led to their having their own entry in the lexicon of OA speakers who identify them with different meanings from their bases.

5) Varied but directional reduplicative verbs

a. ħan   miss; feel homesick   ħan-ħan   clear throat

b. ʃak   doubt   ʃakak   Sew

c. ħab[5]	love	ħab-bab	when the fabric of cloth produces an ane-like dots
d. daq	hit	mdaq-daq	feel tired or drained out
e. bax	snort	bax-bax	feel lazy
f. gaz	cut	gaz-gaz	be in extreme pain

Another semantic function exploited by reduplicative verbs is the incassative which indicates no "attempt to do anything in particular, merely an aimless or undirected activity" (Wonderly, 1951: 83-84, quoted in Greenberg, 1991). Quite a significant number of this type of reduplicative verbs and other types refer to aimless talk, intangible speech, and unwanted chatter. However, this reading to these reduplicative verbs is problematic as it only refers to the meanings expressed by the resultant verbs ignoring the relation between reduplicative verbs and their bases. The forms in 6 below are a few representative examples.

6) Reduplicative verbs with the incassative function

a. hab	go; leave	hab-hab	walk aimlessly
b. tam	finish; complete	tam-tam	speak intangibly
c. mal	feel bored	mal-mal	stagger
d. daʕ	"leave it!"	daʕ-daʕ	to talk unwantingly; say too much; does not keep a secret.

In the following section, I will discuss the social contexts where reduplicative verbs surface and their associative discoursal meanings.

5.2. Social Contexts

One approach to discourse analysis is Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) which entails the importance of social contexts and accurate manifestations of accompanied contextualization cues to disambiguate the meanings of an utterance. In the literature of Arabic reduplication, it was noted that it is pointless to explore the meanings of reduplication through sense or denotation as the meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its individual parts (Anani 2011:3). Therefore, the meaning of reduplication should be investigated through looking at the various

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[5]In response to an *IJAL* reviewer's comment that "The base comes from Arabic 'hubb' but the reduplicated form is related to 'habb' (grain), I would like to stress that (1) hub and not hubb In fact, 'habbab' would not be a case of reduplication but an instance of Form II".

contexts in which they occur. In order to do so, I conducted a survey to elicit the contexts of the occurrence of reduplicative verbs. A total of 21 conversations were recorded to serve as data to this linguistic phenomenon.

Conversations reveal that reduplicative verbs are used by both genders in their casual everyday speech. They are found in conversations between a mother and her daughter, a daughter and her grandmother, a grandfather with his grandson, two roommates in a college dormitory, and two sisters watching a movie. Thus, they surface in the family circle or between persons with the same or similar social distance/ relationship. They mainly surface between people of similar/same social distance or people with high rank addressing those of low rank, but never the opposite.

The nature of the recorded conversations is casual. The ambiance reveals intimacy and a desire to initiate or sustain genuine solidarity. The mutual understanding of these verbs between the interlocutors is evident through smooth turn-taking and willingness of the respondent to use another reduplicative verb to accommodate to the conversational mode.

The social contexts are varied and range from casual conversations between two close friends to two colleagues in ministerial posts. The study reveals that OA reduplicative verbs are mostly used to mock, incite, blame, emphasize, annoy and entertain (make someone laugh). Respondents confirm that they resolve to reduplicative verbs in their conversations to emphasize their points and avoid saying too much by selecting a reduplicative verb that expresses much meaning. So, added up to the meanings of these reduplicative verbs are meanings of intensification and strength or urgency of situations or topics discussed.

There is no particular age at which reduplicative verbs surface. I specifically asked the respondents if they could limit their use to particular age groups. They unanimously agreed that the reduplicative verbs are used by adults, teenagers and the elderly. However, more research is needed to substantiate these intuitions. The study aimed at exploring the extensive use of reduplicative verbs in the speech of young Omanis (teenagers and youths). When asked whether young children can use reduplicative verbs, they stated that children do not use them. Therefore, there is an underlying assumption that only teenagers, adults and the elderly use reduplication.

5.3. Socio-cultural Functions of Reduplicative Verbs

It is evident that the meaning of reduplicative verbs is culturally attributed. Since the meaning of the base does not contribute to the new meaning acquired by the reduplicative verb, it is safe to assume that through mutual communication speakers reach a consensus about the meaning of the reduplicative verb which is not devoid of the cultural elements surrounding interlocutors. Moreover, there are emergent conversational cues that support the function played by the reduplicative verb. I reckon that many surfacing meanings of these reduplicative verbs are specific to the dialect of Arabic spoken in Oman.

When analyzing the social occurrence of reduplicative verbs, it is crucial to focus on the actual social events embedded in the cultural web in an attempt to discern how interlocutors create social order and employ conversational strategies like managing topics, turn-taking and adjacency pairs. Below, I discuss the prevalent social functions of reduplicative verbs supported by real and reconstructed conversations.

5.3.1. Commiseration

Not only is language restricted to such crucial functions, it, "as a powerful interactional tool, also enables interlocutors to sustain good relations and interact effectively" (Goffman 1967:299). Surveying the real and reconstructed conversations where OA reduplicative verbs surface, it is evident that interlocutors have understanding of the intended meaning and commiserate with their interlocutors. Each interlocutor attunes to the intention of their interlocutor and commiserates through the use of reduplicative verbs. Conversations are observed to run smoothly, affectionately and easily. Below I show the context of a number of recorded conversations followed by the actual conversations translated into English.

Conversation (a)

Amira expressed her frustration at her unsuccessful attempt to make a cake, through the use of two reduplicative verbs. She was seeking the commiseration of her friend, Noura, by telling her that she always makes gooey and moist cakes, but today, her cake was fluffy and hard.

    a.1) Noura: "ʔaxbariʃ Amira?"

        News.[2pf]   Amira

        "What is up, Amira?"

      *Amira: "sawe:t ke:kah w ga:tmit **falfal**-ah w **taftaf**-at. Fi alʕa:d-ah ʔðbuTha!"*

        Made[past] cake & turned [past] fluffy & hard into pieces. In mostly cooked properly

"I made a terrible fluffy and hard cake. Usually, my cake is perfect!"

Noura expressed empathy towards Amira. It is evident from Noura's response that she could not visualize how the cake looked. As a speaker of OA, I see the use of these two reduplicative verbs to be successful at two levels: vivid description and catchy language that invites empathy. The response given by Noura below illustrates mutual understanding of the topic discussed and proper reaction.

a.2) Noura: ma ʕali:h ma kul marah jiđbuT alʔakl w inti: tawiʃ titʕlmi aTTabx.

No on Not every time perfect cooking & you just learn cooking.

Don't worry. It is not every time we make perfect meals. You just learned how to cook.

Despite her miserable feeling at how her cake turned t, Amira told her friend that she was more frustrated at her brother who made fun of her cake. She also used reduplicative verbs to show how annoyingly her brother was. The reduplication she used was very effective as it entertained Noura who laughed and, in turn, managed to draw a smile in her upset friend's face.

a.3) Amira: "ma bas ha:ð ailli:[pronoun, pl]xalla:ni ʔaʕaSab"

Not only this what made me angry

"This is not the only thing that made me angry."

Noura: "ʕagab ʔe:ʃ baʕad"

So what else

"So, what else?"

*Amira: "ʔaxoji ʝiglis ʝit**karkar** w ʝit**faqfaq** ʕalliʝi: w ʕala alke:kah illis awe:tha"*

My brother sat laughing uncontrollably & too much on me and the cake I made

"My brother was uncontrollably laughing at me and the cake I made."

Noura:"hahahaha tʕi:ʃi w ta:kli ɣe:rha"

"hahahaha may you make another unsuccessful cake and be made fun of!"

Amira: [smiled]

5.3.2. Making Accusation

Conversation (b)

In a college dormitory during the period of final examination, Mariam was trying to concentrate on studying, while her friend kept chattering and talking about her day at college. To show her annoyance, Mariam used a reduplicative verb to show how unbearable her friend's chattering was:

71

*b.1) Mariam: "Hajoor waaɟid t**daʕdaʕ**itra:ʃ"*

     Hajoor (nickname for Hajer) too much chatter I see

    "I see you are chattering too much today!"

Two linguistic cues show absolute anger at Hajer: First, the use of a derogatory nickname to address Hajer, and second the reduplicative verb which implicitly expresses infuriation. Hajer, of course, needed to equally respond to her friend's frustration. She also used two consecutive reduplicative verbs to (1) defend herself and (2) accuse her friend of being the one who wastes time.

*b.2) Hajer:"tara:ni ʔabaak t**SaħSaħ**e:n. ʔarohi ma ʔaʃofik tra:gʕi:n."*

     Because I want wake you up. Myself no see revise

    "Because I want to wake you up. I do not see you studying"

    *"min ðe:k assaʕah galsah t**farfar**i:n ha ʔawra:q"*

    from that hour sat turning the pages

    "For an hour now, I see you only turning the pages aimlessly"

In many conversations, intensity is obvious. This is illustrated in the conversation below where a mother woke up to find out that the housekeeper did not tidy up the mess created in the dining hall the night before. Her older daughter used a reduplicative verb to announce that the housekeeper, instead of working, had only been whining uselessly since early morning. The verb *qamqam*[6] is specific to the Omani variety and exclusively used with someone who is good at complaining about things without trying to do something about them. The verb is associated with continuous verbal complaint.

Conversation (c)

c.1) Mother: "we:n haðia ʃaɣa:lah? Albe:t mitlaʕwaz! na:ħðah min aSSaba:h mu tsawi:?!"

     Where this maid the house untidy woke up from morning what did

    "Where is this housemaid?! The house is a mess! She woke up too early to do what?"

*Older sister: "ma aħi:dha, ga:lash ʕinda TTa:wlah tit**qamqamm**"*

     Not know, sat   beside table whining!

    "I really don't know. She was sitting at the table complaining!"

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[6]An anonymous *IJAL* reviewer draw my attention to the fact that in some North African varieties, gemgem is used with more or less the same meaning.

Six of the recorded conversations indicate that the social function of frustration is accompanied with pain (be it physical or emotional). Observe the following conversation where a fire ant bit Amel who used a reduplicative verb to intensify the physical pain she had.

Conversation (d)

d.1) Amel:"ladaɣni sqa:T!

    Bit me fire ant

    "A fire ant bit me!"

Friend:"Allah ʃʕi:niʃ"

   Allah help you

   "May Allah be with you in your pain!"

*Amel: "wallah ʔaħisuh ʝit**samsam***"

   By Allah feel hurting

   "I swear I feel it is hurting a great deal"

Most often, a solution or cure is suggested as the conversation below illustrates. But, it seems above that the friend has no cure for the fire ant's bite. In the conversation between a little sister and her mother, not only did the mother propose a solution, she also offered to prepare it herself. For the mother to make sure the solution would be effective, she reduplicated the action verb 'gurgle', emphasizing that the gurgling cannot be done only once.

d.2) Little sister: "mah ħalqi ʝʕawarni"

     Mom throat hurting

     "Mom, I have a sore throat!"

Mother: "ʔaswiliʃ ma:ʝ w malħ"

    Make you water and salt

    "Shall I prepare for you water and salt?"

Little sister: "muh ʔasuwi:boh"

d.3)   "What will I do with it?"

Mother: "tɣarɣari boh"

    Gurgle by it

    "Gurgle it!"

A generic socio-cultural function observed in the conversations is expressing annoyance. Two women were sitting opposite to two teenage girls. One of the them said:

73

Conversation (e)

e.1) Woman (1): "do:m   bas ga:lsa:t ʃitsasaranw ʃitkarkaran"

Always only sat   confining secrets& giggling

"The always spent their time talking and giggling!!"

The other woman also used two reduplicative verbs in order to show agreement and mutual annoyance.

e.2) Woman (2): "mbu:nhin   ma ʕindhin ʃuɣlah kuluh tlaʕli:ʕ w tfaqfi:q[7]"

Usually   no have   work all   talking & laughing

"They usually do not do any serious work except talking and laughing"

Reduplicative verbs are also used by mothers to warn their girls not to do something strange to the Omani culture or to imitate fashions of other cultures. Observe the following frequently repeated piece of advice by concerned mothers:

Mother:"la titdawdawni!"

No innovate

"Don't innovate!"

The verb [dawdaw] is quite strong in the Omani culture. It encodes doing a culturally and religiously unacceptable deed. Usually, the deed is innovative or unknown to the original culture and habits of Omanis. To sum up, I highlighted the most frequent social functions of reduplicative verbs through selected conversations. It is evident that reduplicative verbs are used often in casual conversations and they serve varied social and cultural functions. More discussion will follow.

5.4. Constraints on Reduplication

It is apparent from the conversations above that reduplicative verbs are commonly used on various casual occasions. They surface in conversations between two sisters, two friends, a mother and her daughter, two brothers, a daughter with a grandmother, etc. Individuals that have intimate relations frequently use reduplicative verbs; no reduplicative verb is used between a person of high status (e.g. a professor) and low status (e.g. a student). This restricts the use of reduplication to the family circle or the circle of persons of similar social status.

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[7]The vowel in the second syllable of the reduplicated forms is {i:} here because these are the nouns of the reduplicative verbs.

It has also been observed that reduplicative verbs can freely be used by teenagers, adults and elders. It is worth noting that some of these reduplicative verbs sound funny. They are definitely pure dialectal in nature. They are commonly used since they are expressions that bond and tie people who come to see that their interlocutors speak the same down-to-earth language.

Such broad use of reduplicative verbs reveals the high frequency enjoyed by these verbs. The survey reveals that they are on the rise as they express true feelings and emotions. People are becoming more open to each other confiding their problems and concerns to others and looking for expressions accurately conveying their intentions.

6. Conclusion

OA reduplicative verbs constitute an intriguing understudied socio-linguistic phenomenon whose semantics and pragmatics reveal current linguistic and communicative preferences of Omanis. They are on the rise and quite productive as they frequently surface in intimate and familial conversations. Further studies may be needed to investigate their occurrence and frequency of use in adults' speech.

The fact that the meaning expressed by the derived reduplicative verbs does not relate in any way to the meaning encoded in the base illustrates sophistication in assigning a derived form a new lexical meaning. Such independence requires special understanding as the meaning can hardly be guessed from the base. Overall, it is quite surprising that Omanis tend to lengthen a verb and assign it a new meaning in a world where people take short-cuts, simplify communication, and use abbreviations and props.

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