

Discontiguous Reduplication

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Discontiguous partial reduplication patterns, in which a string of segments in the reduplicant corresponds with a discontiguous string of segments in the base, have been observed in various languages in the Austronesian and Austroasiatic language families, including Nakanai, Ulu Muar and other dialects of vernacular Malay, Kammu, Semai, East Temiar, and others. Several such patterns involve base-reduplicant faithfulness to initial and final segments at the expense of some or all medial segments, as shown below in (1) – (3).

- (1) Nakanai Type VI Reduplication (Johnston 1980)
sio ⇨ s₁o₃-s₁io₃ “carrying on ceremonial litter”
- (2) Semai Expressive Reduplication (Diffloth 1976)
taʔəh ⇨ t₁h₅-t₁aʔəh₅ “appearance of large stomach constantly bulging out”
- (3) Ulu Muar Malay Type III Reduplication (Hendon 1966)
tariʔ ⇨ t₁a₂ʔ₅-t₁a₂riʔ₅ “accordion”

In this talk, I argue that discontiguous reduplicants arise as a result of fundamental constraints on phonological properties of particular languages, such as sonority sequencing constraints for Nakanai, syllable structure constraints for Semai, and prosodic correspondence constraints for Ulu Muar Malay. I show how the interaction of these constraints with CONTIG-BR and constraints on reduplicant size yields discontiguous base-reduplicant correspondence strings. All three patterns of discontiguous reduplication shown in (1) – (3) share a common analysis composed of three parts:

- an identified set of constraints which outrank MAX-BR, since discontiguous reduplication is partial reduplication, not total reduplication
- an identified set of constraints which outrank CONTIG-BR to motivate the discontiguity observed
- a ranking of these constraints which derives the shape of each type of reduplicant

Previous literature, e.g., the asymmetric anchoring theory of Nelson (2003), accounts for such patterns with EDGE-ANCHOR constraints, which are violated if either segment at an edge of the base does not have a correspondent at that same edge in the reduplicant. Although Nelson presents analyses using EDGE-ANCHOR which successfully generate these discontiguous correspondence relations, I argue that the inclusion of this constraint in the grammar is both unnecessary and undesirable. Edge anchoring can be derived by more fundamentally well-motivated phonological constraints, weakening the empirical motivation for EDGE-ANCHOR as a necessary constraint in UG. Furthermore, EDGE-ANCHOR refers to both edges of the base as targets for anchoring, whereas only the left edge has been argued to be phonetically and psychologically prominent (Beckman 1998). As such, EDGE-ANCHOR proves to be more of a weakness of positional faithfulness theory than an asset to it. I argue that my analysis is not only descriptively equivalent to asymmetric anchoring analyses hinging on EDGE-ANCHOR, but it is also theoretically superior because it relies only on anchoring of segments in prominent positions, i.e., segments at the left edge of the base, and it captures language-specific observations that an asymmetric anchoring analysis misses.