

## **A Comparative Study of Reduplicated Words in Thai and Myanmar Languages**

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### **Abstract**

This paper intends to do a comparative study of reduplicated words in Thai and Myanmar Languages. The data were collected from the books about Proverbs and Sayings derived from reduplicated words in Thai Language, Myanmar Grammar book published by Myanmar Language Committee and books of Myanmar Language. From comparative point of view, reduplicated words in Thai include nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, classifiers, quantifiers, prepositions, conjunctions, onomatopoeic words while the reduplicated words in Myanmar consists of nouns, verbs, verbs with reduplicated last word, reduplicating the word plus a particle (verbs and classifiers), reduplicating the word twice, reduplicating onomatopoeic words. The findings show that both languages have reduplicated nouns, reduplicated verbs and reduplicated onomatopoeic words. Pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, quantifiers, prepositions and conjunctions are used in reduplicated forms only in Thai Language. Moreover, Thai classifiers can simply be reduplicated. However in Myanmar, an original word can be reduplicated but used together with the particle before it.

**Keywords:** Reduplicated words, Thai, Myanmar

### **Introduction**

There are many ethnic groups in the world that have their own language and literature and there are many other that lack of own language and literature. Among many countries residing in South-East Asia, two neighboring countries, Myanmar and Thailand had their own language and literature, culture and traditions. Human society is always changing due to the people living in it, their cognition, their expertise and their creativity. Language is one of the changes they would surely make. As a language changes, so do the word form. U Tin Hla, editor, Department of Translation and Book Publication, Office of University Administration (1968) said in Section 4, Volume 3 of University Article “ according to the linguists, there are four types of language change. They are

- (1) morphological change
- (2) semantic change
- (3) lexical change
- (4) syntactic change”

Therefore, there are word combination and reduplicated word structure in Thai and Myanmar Languages. Parts of speech in Thai consist of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. In Myanmar language, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions and particles constitute the parts of speech. Among many changes occurred in both languages, the similarities and differences of reduplicated word structure are the main focus of the study.

### **Aim**

It is hoped that the present paper highlights the reduplicated word in Thai and Myanmar languages enabling the learner of Thai language to understand the target language better.

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## Material and Method

Comparative method was used with references of the data collected from the books about Proverbs and Sayings derived from reduplicated words from Thai Language, Word Formation Method Books in Thai, Characters of Thai Language, Myanmar Grammar book published by Myanmar Language Committee and books of Myanmar Language.

## Literature Review

Reduplicated words in Thai Language is that according to บรรจบ พันธุเมธา (1971), “the original word is pronounced two times and after that word, the words with the symbol ( ) are known as reduplicated words. Reduplicated words have the same or different meanings of original words”.

อนันต์ อ่วม ศาสตร และ เนาวรัตน์ อ่วม ศาสตร (1976) stated that “Reduplicated word technique is a word structure method in Thai Language and is used to change the meaning of the word as he or she wants. In Thai reduplicated word technique, there are two types: reduplicating the whole word and reduplicating a part of a word.”

สุนันต์ชัยสินกุล (1986) described that “Reduplicating word is a method to form a word in order to increase the usage of the words and to harmonize the words in poems and prosody. There are three kinds of reduplicated word techniques: reduplicating an original word, reduplicating one part of a word and reduplicating a syllable of a word.

According to Dr. ShwePyiSoe (2010), “Reduplicating words in Myanmar Language is a linguistic method that is useful to make a number of the words increase. The whole word or a part of an original word is doubly pronounced and that word is formed as the new word. In this way, that new word is not like an original word and it changes into a word that is totally different from figure, grammar and meanings of an original word.”

In Myanmar Grammar book published by Myanmar Language Committee, it is studied that “adverb altered by reduplicating verb or adjective is known as reduplicated adverb.”

Through the research papers, it is found out that in both Thai and Myanmar Languages, words are used in reduplicated word form and a comparative study of reduplicated structure in Thai and Myanmar Languages is not done yet.

## Research Questions

- (1) What constitute the reduplicated words in Thailand and Myanmar Languages?
- (2) Is the structure of the reduplicated words in Thailand and Myanmar Languages similar or different?

### Findings and Discussion

(I) Inreduplicated word in Thai Language, the varieties of reduplicated words are found as follows.

1. Nouns
2. Pronouns
3. Verbs
4. Adjectives
5. Adverbs
6. Classifiers
7. Quantifiers
8. Prepositions
9. Conjunctions
10. Onomatopoeic words

#### 1. Nouns

Most of reduplicated nouns are the expressions for relatives. There are three types of reduplicated nouns.

1.1 Reduplicated words changed into two words after reduplicating an original word

ลูก > ลูก ๆ

lúuk > lúuk ๆ

Child > Children

For example,

แม่คิดถึงลูก ๆ

máx khít thǐng lúuk ๆ

Mother remembers her children.

1.2 Reduplicated words changed into four words after reduplicating two original words

พี่น้อง > พี่ ๆ น้อง ๆ

phii nǎwng > phii ๆ nǎwng ๆ

the elder...the younger > siblings

For example,

อยู่กันแบบพี่ ๆ น้อง ๆ

yùu kan bǎxp phii ๆ nǎwng ๆ

They treat each other like the siblings of their family.

### 1.3 Words changed into four reduplicated words after reduplicating each of the original word

งู ปลา □ > งูๆ ปลาๆ

ḡuu plaa > ḡuu ḡ plaa ḡ

snake... fish > a little bit

For example,

รู้แต่ งูๆ ปลาๆ

rúu khîx ḡuu ḡplaa ḡ

I know a little bit of it.

It is found that reduplicated nouns still remain as the nouns only.

## 2. Pronouns

Reduplicated pronouns are divided into three categories as follows.

### 2.1 Words utilized as two words after reduplicating an original word

ใคร > ใครๆ

khray > khray ḡ

who > nobody

For example,

ใครๆ ก็ไม่รัก

**khray** ḡkî mây rák

There is nobody who loves me. (There is nobody I love.)

### 2.2 In Thai Language, only one word is utilized as four words after reduplicating two original

words.

อะไร > อะไรๆ

?àray > ?àray ḡ

What > Whatever

For example,

เธอทำอะไรๆ ก็ดีหมด

thəə tham ?à ray ḡkî dii mòt

Whatever he does is the best.

It is observed that reduplicated pronouns still remain as the pronouns only.

## 3. Verbs

Reduplicated verbs are divided into two categories as follows.

### 3.1 Words utilized as two words after reduplicating an original word

ดู > ดู ๆ

duu > duu ๆ

look at > looking at

For example,

ดู ๆ ไป เธอก็น่ารักดี

**duu** ๆ pay thəə kô nû rák dii

Looking at her, she becomes lovely.

### 3.2 Words utilized as four words after reduplicating two original words

ไป มา > ไป ๆ มา ๆ

pay maa > pay ๆ maa ๆ

go...come > finally

For example,

ไป ๆ มา ๆ ก็ต้องมาขอเงินพ่อใช้

**pay** ๆ **maa** ๆ kô tîŋ maa khǎw nən phǎw chá-y

Finally, I came to my father and took the money from him.

It is found out that reduplicated verbs change into adverbs.

## 4. Adjectives

Reduplicated adjectives are divided into two categories as follows.

### 4.1 Words utilized as two words after reduplicating an original word

ขาว > ขาว ๆ

khǎaw > khǎaw ๆ

(white) /phyu thaw/ > /phyuphyu/

For example,

เขาชอบคนขาว ๆ

kháw chǎw khon **khǎaw** ๆ

He likes the white(/luphyuphyu/).

### 4.2 Words utilized as four words after reduplicating two original words

สวย งาม > สวย ๆ งาม ๆ

sǎy ɲaam > sǎy ๆ ɲaam ๆ

/hla pa thaw/ /tint tal thaw/ > /hla pa tint tal thaw/ (beautiful)

For example,

ของสวย ๆ งาม ๆ ใครก็ชอบ

khǎw ɲ **sǎy** ๆ **ɲaam** ๆ khray kô chǎw

Anybody likes the beautiful thing.

It is observed that reduplicated adjectives still remain as the adjectives only.

## 5. Adverbs

Reduplicated adverbs are divided into two categories as follows.

### 5.1 Words utilized as two words after reduplicating an original word

แน่ > แน่ ๆ

nǎx > nǎx ๆ

sure/thay char thaw/ > surely/thaythay char char/ /a thay a char/

For example,

ฝนคงจะตกแน่ ๆ

fǒn khonj jà tòk nǎx ๆ

It is sure that it is going to rain.

### 5.2 Words utilized as four words after reduplicating two original words

เท่าไร > เท่าไร ๆ

thâw ray > thâw ray ๆ

No matter /ballauk le/ > No matter /ballauk/

For example,

สอนเท่าไร ๆ ก็ไม่จำ

sǎwn thâw ray ๆ kǐ mǎy jam

You never learn no matter how much I teach.

It is studied that reduplicated adverbs still remain as the adverbs only.

## 6. Classifiers

In Thai Language, almost every classifier can be reduplicated. But, as most of classifiers which have much original sounds are loanwords taken from Foreign Language, they cannot be reduplicated.

For example, kilometer and apple

Reduplicated classifiers are divided into two categories as follows.

### 6.1 Words utilized as two words after reduplicating an original word

เล่ม > เล่ม ๆ

lêm > lêm ๆ

a (book) > (book)s

For example,

เขาอ่านหนังสือหมดไปเป็นเล่ม ๆ

khǎw ?àan nǎng sǎi mǒt pay pen lêm ๆ

He has already read many kinds of books.

## 6.2 Words utilized as four words after doubling two original words

ชนิด > ชนิดๆ

chá nít > chá nítๆ

category > in categories

For example,

เขาแบ่งสินค้าออกเป็นชนิดๆ

kháw bə̀xɲ sǐn kháa ʔə̀ək pen chá nítๆ

He sorted out the products in categories.

It is found out that reduplicated classifiers change into the plural.

## 7. Quantifiers

In Thai Language, seven words are used in reduplicating quantifiers. They are Ten, Hundred, Thousand, Ten Thousand, Hundred Thousand, Million and Crore.

ร้อย > ร้อยๆ

róoy > róoyๆ

hundred > hundreds

For example,

เขามีหนังสือเป็นร้อยๆ เล่ม

kháw mii nǎɲ sǐi pen róoyๆ lêm

He has hundreds of books.

It is found out that reduplicated words change into the plural.

## 8. Prepositions

Prepositions in Thai Language can be reduplicated and most of reduplicated words are prepositions used in front of nouns.

นอก > นอกๆ

nóok > nóokๆ

outside > outside (far)

For example,

นอกๆ เมืองไป อากาศดีมาก

nóok ɲmɛaŋ pay ʔaa kàat dii mâak

If you go outside the town far, the weather is fine.

It is found out that reduplicated words change into adverbs.

## 9. Conjunctions

It is studied that only one of conjunctions in Thai Language is reduplicated. Although that conjunction has two original words, only the former one is reduplicated.

ทั้งที่ > ทั้งๆ ที่

thǎng thǐi > thǎngǎ thǐi

while, although (/hse/, /hlyak/, /tone/) > while, although (/hse/, /hlyak/, /tone/)

For example,

ครูมาสอน**ทั้งๆ** ที่ไม่สบาย

khruu maɑ sǎwŋ **thǎngǎ thǐi** mây sabaay

Although teacher is sick, she teaches us.

## 10. Onomatopoeic words

There are also onomatopoeic words which imitate the natural sound, the animal sound and sound coming from different situations. Reduplicated words are used as adverbs.

### 10.1 Natural Sound

ครึ้น > ครึ้นๆ

khriin > khriin ǎ

/ohn/ > /ohnohn/

Example (1)

ฟ้าร้อง**ครึ้น**ๆ

fáɑ rǎwŋ **khriin** ǎ

Lighting crackles and thunder rumbles.

### 10.2 Animal sound

ก๊าก > ก๊ากๆ

káap > káap ǎ

/quack/ > /quack quack/

Example 2,

เป็ดร้อง**ก๊าก**ๆ

pèt rǎwŋ **káap** ǎ

Ducks quack.



### 10.3 Sound coming from different situations

ခံာ>ခံာ့

hâa >hâa ၎

laugh /haa/ > /haahaa/

Example 3,

ခော်ခော်ခော်

kháw hũa ró **hâa** ၎

He laughed a lot.

(II) The reduplicated words in Myanmar Language can be found as follows.

1. Duplicated Nouns
2. Duplicated Verbs
3. Duplicating the last part of the word
4. Duplicating the word plus a particle
5. Duplicating the word twice
6. Duplicating the onomatopoeic words

#### 1. Duplicated Nouns

In Myanmar Language, nouns of different types can be formed by duplicating the original nouns.

Example (1)

Fire > Fire! Fire!

Snake > Snake! Snake!

Thief > Thief! Thief!

For such kinds of duplicated nouns, duplicated nouns in the form of exclamations have special semantic functions as exclamation while the other duplicated nouns do not.

Example (2)

Son > son (/tharthar/ )

Father > father (/phayphay/)

Mother > mother (/may may/)

Such kinds of duplicated nouns have the grammar meaning not more than the original one.

#### 2. Duplicated Verbs

Duplicated verbs are the other variations of verbs and quite different in form from their original verbs.

Example (1)

Kaung (be good/well) >KaungKaung (watch well)

Myan (be quick/fast) >MyanMyan (drive fast)

Phyuant (be straight) >PhyuantPhyuant (fire straight)

The new words are in the form of verb modifiers, in other words, adverbs.

The pattern of change can be something like – VxV> V V (duplicated verbs) Adv

Not only monosyllable verbs but also polysyllable verbs can be duplicated and the new verbs become verb modifiers(ie.adverbs)

The pattern is (V.V) x (V.V) > V.V.V.V (duplicated verb) Adv

Example (2)

Nyo-nyin(be unwilling) >Nyo-nyo-nyin-nyin (give sth unwillingly)

Thet-nyar (in favour) >Thet-thet-nyar-nyar (write sth in favour)

Sin-sar (be sensible) > be sensible (do sth sensibly)

### 3. Duplicating the last part of the word

Duplicating the last part of the word means that if an original word has an inseparable part in the last position, such inseparable part is duplicated.

Example:

Mar-kyaw> Mar-mar-kyaw-kyaw (harsh words)

Pay-tay> pay-tay-tay (happy-go-lucky character)

Shount-twa>shount-twa-twa (upset face)

### 4. Duplicating the word plus a particle

When an original word is used with a particle in front position, the original is often duplicated and a new word is formed.

Example (1)

/lwe/ > ah-lwe-lwe (write wrongly)

/sint/ > ah-sint-sint (increase step by step)

/kyein/ > ah-kyein-kyein (try many times)

They are the duplicated words with the particle /ah/.

Example (2)

Lwint> ta-lwint-lwint (spread widely)

Yay > ta-yay-yay (come into one's mind slowly)

Nont> ta-nont-nont (feel miserable)

By using the particle /ta/, they are in the form of verb modifiers. (ie. adverbs)

### 5. Duplicating the word twice

Duplicating the word twice is common in monosyllable verbs.

Example (1)

Htunt> /htunthtunt/ (roll from side to side)

Tunt> /tunttunt/ (slither)

Htaung> /htuanghtuang/ (keep something upright)

Moreover, polysyllable verbs can also be duplicated.

Tunt lei> /tunt lei/ (twist the body)

Kawtlan> /kawtlan- kawtlan/ (walk with open shoulders)

Pwasi> /pwasi- pwasi/(keep nagging)

## 6. Duplicating the onomatopoeic words

When the onomatopoeic words are duplicated, they also carry the form of adverbs.

For example,

Chyut>chyutchyut (swishy swashy)

Kywi>kywikywi (squeak)

Khwek>khwekkhwek (gallop)

In Thai Language, duplicating structure is a significant characteristic of the language and has been used throughout the early times.

พระยาอนุมานราชธน(1979) noted that “When children in Thailand want the adults to do something for them, they are likely to duplicate their words, and this has given a rise in the duplicating system in Thai.” In Thai, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, classifiers, quantifiers, prepositions, conjunctions and onomatopoeic words are often duplicated. After these words are used in duplicated system, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, classifiers, quantifiers, conjunctions and onomatopoeic words do not change in forms while verbs and prepositions change into the form of adverbs.

In Myanmar Language, on the other hand, the changes made while duplicating the words are in line with the linguistic rules. After the nouns, and the verbs are duplicated, they seem to change into the form of modifiers. Duplicating can happen in a complete original word, one part of a word, separable parts of a word, and last or front part of a word. In Myanmar, there are duplicated nouns, duplicated verbs, duplicating the last part of the word, duplicating the word plus particle, duplicating the word twice and duplicating the onomatopoeic words.

Nouns, verbs, and onomatopoeic words in both Thai and Myanmar languages share the same way of duplicating structure. In Thai Language, the classifiers can simply be duplicated. In Myanmar, however, there is no similar structure but an original word can be duplicated and plus with a particle.

One significant thing about duplicated structure in Thai is that the duplicated words formed from an original word have very different meaning from their origins. Such cases are common in proverbs and sayings in Thai. There is no such case in Myanmar, though.

စဉ့်>စဉ့်ာ

yùu >yùu ၊

Live > without any reason

## Example (1)

ဝေ့းၣ် ဧၣ်ကီၣ်မာၣ်သံၣ်

yùuၣ် kháw kî maa dàa chǎnၣ်

He scolded me without any reason.

သီ နီၣ်>သီၣ် နီၣ်

dii chûa >dii ၣchûa ၣ

Be good or bad > whatever

## Example (2)

သီၣ် နီၣ်ၣ် ဧၣ်ကီၣ်ပီၣ်လူၣ်ဂေၣ်

dii ၣchûa ၣkháw kî pen lûuk raw

Whatever it is, he is our child.

But, that fact is not found in Myanmar duplicated words.

### Conclusion

In the two neighboring countries Thailand and Myanmar, their mother tongues are their only official languages. In this paper, the duplicating words in the two languages are described with the use of examples so as to highlight the similarities and differences of duplicating words and systems. However, there is still a gap which is to compare and contrast the duplicating of only a part of a word, but not the complete word in the two languages for further research.

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