

Echo-words in Sinhalese

OF the different types of repetitives found in various Indian languages, echo-words are of great interest. They are noticed in Indo-Aryan as well as Dravidian and other families of languages. Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, in his 'Origin and Development of the Bengali Language' (Introduction p. 176) points out a few such forms in a variety of modern Indian languages, and discusses in brief their behaviour. He also hints at the possibility of establishing some relationship among languages through similarity in the formation of echo-words.

In the present article¹ an attempt is being made to state the formation of echo-words in Sinhalese, and to indicate their function.

Professor Emeneau, in his article² on the echo-words in Toḍā, gives us a fairly detailed account of such formations in that language. e.g.

<i>po:t</i>	<i>po:t,xi:t</i>	<i>song</i>
<i>ka:k</i>	<i>ka:k,ki:k</i>	<i>crow</i>
<i>ni:ɹ</i>	<i>ni:ɹ,xi:ɹ</i>	<i>water</i>

He points out that in Toḍā, an echo-formation is a reduplicative one, with the insertion of a substitutional morpheme between the stem and the reduplicating portion. Thus in his own words, a noun makes "an extended form by partial end-reduplication, with the insertion of an element between the noun and the reduplication."

Professor Zellig S. Harris too analyses³ certain echo-formations in Koṭā like:

<i>puj^v</i>	<i>tiger</i>	>	<i>puj^v-qij^v</i>	<i>any tiger</i>
<i>kaḷḷ^v</i>	<i>thief</i>	>	<i>kaḷḷ^v-qilḷ^v</i>	<i>some thief</i>

and groups all the echo-words into one morphemic unit, with the meaning 'any, some, and the like' and says that the general form of the unit is *qiX*, where *X* is whatever follows the initial CV of the first member of the compound.

1. I have derived much profit from my discussions on this subject with Professor G. H. Fairbanks of Cornell University, and with Mr. M. W. S. de Silva of the University of Ceylon.

2. *New Indian Antiquary* 1 1938-39 pp. 109-117.

3. *Readings in Linguistics*, p. 112.

The above statements of Emeneau and Harris are as applicable to Sinhalese, as they are to Toḍā and Koṭā. The only difference lies in the nature of the so-called substitution morpheme, or the initial segment of the echo. *e.g.*

<i>datə</i>	<i>tooth</i>	>	<i>datə-patə</i>
<i>kæ:li</i>	<i>pieces</i>	>	<i>kæ:li-bæ:li</i>

In most of the echo-formations in Sinhalese, it is either the uninflected form of a noun, or an adjective, that forms the base. However there are instances where a noun with a case inflection or a verbal form also forms the base.

The schematizing of this formation in Sinhalese becomes clearer when we examine a sufficient number of examples. The examples noted below are in the order of the consonant that forms the initial segment of the echo, which Professor Emeneau called the substitutional morpheme. It may be noted that in Sinhalese this particular consonant is *p* or *b* most often, and rarely *v*, *h* or *d* (?:).

p	<i>as-pas</i>	<i>arranged, orderly</i>
	<i>atə-patə</i>	<i>hand etc.</i>
	<i>daṅga-paṅga</i>	<i>mischief, naughty doing</i>
	<i>avul-pavul</i>	<i>confused</i>
	<i>atərin-patərin</i>	<i>from here and there</i>
	<i>ædak-pædak</i>	<i>a bend or curvature</i>
	<i>hit-pit</i>	<i>thought, consciousness</i>
	<i>ivum-pivum</i>	<i>cooking etc.</i>
b	<i>tadə-badə</i>	<i>hard, pressed</i>
	<i>kata:-bata:</i>	<i>talks</i>
	<i>kaṅḍə-baṅḍə</i>	<i>body</i>
	<i>tattū-battū</i>	<i>knocking at</i>
	<i>yakku-bakku</i>	<i>devils</i>
	<i>kavicci-bavicci</i>	<i>couches</i>
	<i>karettə-barettə</i>	<i>carts</i>
	<i>ka:r-ba:r</i>	<i>motor vehicles</i>
	<i>a:ni-ba:ni</i>	<i>yawning</i>
	<i>sa:ri-ba:ri</i>	<i>sarees</i>
	<i>ka:nsi-ba:nsi</i>	<i>melancholy</i>
	<i>hættə-bættə</i>	<i>skirts etc.</i>

<i>kæ:li-bæ:li</i>	<i>pieces</i>
<i>iṅgi-biṅgi</i>	<i>hints</i>
<i>usi-busi</i>	<i>urging on, instigation</i>
<i>suddə-buddə</i>	<i>pure</i>
<i>su:t-bu:t</i>	<i>suits</i>
<i>sereppu-bereppu</i>	<i>sandals</i>
<i>roḍu-boḍu</i>	<i>dirt</i>
<i>kollo-bollo</i>	<i>boys</i>
<i>ko:t-bo:t</i>	<i>coats</i>
<i>ko:tu-bo:tu</i>	<i>sticks</i>

v	<i>mæra-væra</i>	<i>obstinate, rowdy</i>
h	<i>ba:rə-ha:rə</i>	<i>vows</i>
d	<i>mahatə-dehetə</i>	<i>build, stature.</i>

t, m (see below).

Although normally the initial vowel of the base occurs as the initial vowel of the echo as well, in certain cases a different vowel seems to occur. *e.g.*

<i>gaman-biman</i>	<i>journeys</i>
<i>ivak-bavak</i>	<i>smell, sense, indication</i>
<i>ka:si-bu:si</i>	<i>coins, money</i>
<i>kaṭu-boṭu</i>	<i>bones</i>
<i>vadəna-podəna</i>	<i>giving birth to</i>
<i>udav-padav</i>	<i>help</i>
<i>tovil-pavil</i>	<i>devil dancing ceremony</i>
<i>aḍukku-puḍukku</i>	<i>cooked food</i>
<i>mudal-hadal</i>	<i>money</i>
<i>vihilu-tahalu</i>	<i>jokes</i>
<i>tərəmə-tirərəmə</i>	<i>extent</i>
<i>iḍam-kaḍam</i>	<i>lands</i>

Whether any of these forms have been borrowed from or have been modelled on similar forms in Dravidian languages needs investigation.

The reduplicating segment of an echo-word can be schematized as :
R = CVX

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where C = p, b, (v, h, d, t, m, k)

added to the initial vowel of the base or replacing the initial consonant of the base.

V = repetition of the initial vowel of the base or (in some cases) replacement by a different vowel.

X = whatever appears in the base after the first vowel.

It may be added that the allomorphs occurring as the reduplicating segment and beginning with p, b etc., are always in complimentation. The function of an echo-word is to indicate generalization or 'any, some and the like' as is referred to by the base.

As against the echo-formation referred to above, in certain other instances, reduplication seems to have taken place in the reverse order. The meaningful base is the second member, and the first member is an echo of it. e.g.

<i>aka:-maka: (daməṇava)</i>	<i>to erase</i>
<i>olə-molə</i>	<i>fierce, savage, unruly</i>
<i>a:vəṇə-me:vəṇə</i>	<i>ministering to, rendering service.</i>

In another type which, to all appearances, conforms to echo-formations, neither member can be considered the base as the meaning is attached to both segments as a whole, and not to either of them.

<i>a:ṇi-ba:ṇi</i>	<i>control</i>
<i>anaṇi-manaṇi</i>	<i>frivolous talk, gossip</i>
<i>aḍḍə-dəḍḍə</i>	<i>confused, flurried</i>
<i>laṭṭə-paṭṭə</i>	<i>gossip</i>
<i>ə:li-mə:li</i>	<i>lazy, indolent</i>
<i>daṇḍi-paṇḍi (ga:nəva)</i>	<i>to labour in haste</i>
<i>daḍi-biḍi (ga:nəva)</i>	<i>to bustle about.</i>

A few of them like *daḍi-biḍi* seems to be also onomatopoeic. *Anaṇi-manaṇi* may probably be a contaminated form that has had a separate origin. In any case these forms need an explanation, as they largely conform to the echo-pattern.

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