Adjective Reduplication in Kyoto Japanese: 
A Preliminary Survey

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1. Introduction

Reduplication in Japanese has been extensively studied in traditional Japanese linguistics (e.g. Hachiya (1998)) as well as in other approaches to the Japanese language (e.g. Shibasaki (2005)). However, as far as the present author is aware, the peculiar features of reduplicated adjectives in the Kyoto dialect of present-day Japanese have not been observed, apart from some sporadic mention of its existence by non linguists (e.g. Kanoo (1993), Irie (2005), Irie (2009)). This paper introduces and briefly discusses the characteristics of reduplicated adjectives in the Kyoto dialect of present-day Japanese, with comparison to adjectives of a similar type in present-day standard Japanese. The data to be discussed concerning reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese are based on my observation of spontaneous conversations between native conversations of Kyoto Japanese and elicitation tests on the same speakers.

2. Adjective Reduplication in Standard Japanese

In a standard analysis of Japanese grammar, adjectives in present-day standard Japanese are subcategorized into the following two groups: \textit{i}-adjectives and \textit{na}-adjectives. They are so called because their citation forms end with the suffix \textit{−i} or the suffix \textit{−na}. The rationale behind this subcategorization is purely morphosyntactic, and not based on semantic considerations.

In present-day standard Japanese, adjective reduplication is found only for \textit{i}-adjectives and not for \textit{na}-adjectives. Reduplication in \textit{i}-adjectives is total, with the suffix \textit{−shii} attached to the composite unit made up of the base (namely, the stem) and the reduplicant. The reduplicant receives phonological adjustment to the effect that its initial segment is rendered voiced if that segment represents a voiceless consonant. The meaning of a reduplicated \textit{i}-adjective is not obtained compositionally nor fully predictable, though it may well be motivated. The examples in (1) below will illustrate these features.
These and other reduplicated i-adjectives can be used both attributively and predicatively.

Now, notice that the reduplication process for i-adjectives is not a productive one in the present-day standard Japanese and that only a limited number of i-adjectives can participate in this word-formation process. Thus, as the examples in (2) below indicate, the operation in question is not unanimously applicable to all the i-adjectives.

(2) a. furu-i → *furuburushii  (Cf. (1c))
'old'

b. tsuyo-i → *tsuyozuyoshii  (Cf. (1d))
'strong'

c. ama-i → *amaamashii  (Cf. (1e))
'sweet'

d. atsu-i → *atsuatsushii  (Cf. (1f))
'hot'

Notice, moreover, that some reduplicated adjectives do not have the potential base adjective, as the examples in (3) below exhibit.
(3) a. *koo-i → kogooshii  
  "divine"

b. *take-i → takedakeshii  
  "brave"

c. *fute-i → futebuteshii  
  "impudent, brazen"

d. *zuu-i → zuuzuushii  
  "impudent, shameless"

Turning to na-adjectives, they do not undergo the process of reduplication as is already mentioned. Thus, as the examples in (4) below illustrate, reduplicated forms based on na-adjectives are systematically excluded, whether they are used attributively (ending with the suffix -na) or predicatively (ending with the suffix -da).

(4) a. kiree-na / kiree-da → *kiree(na)kireena / *kiree(da)kireeda  
  "beautiful"

b. shizuka-na / shizuka-da → *shizuka(na)shizukana / *shizuka(da)shizukada  
  "quiet"

c. yawaka-na / yawaka-da → *yawaraka(na)yawarakana / *yawaraka(da)yawaraka  
  "soft"

d. yutaka-na / yutaka-da → *yutaka(na)yutakana / *yutaka(da)yutakada  
  "wealthy"

To summarize this section, in present-day standard Japanese, the process of reduplication is applicable only to a select number of i-adjectives and the meaning of a reduplicated i-adjective is largely unpredictable.

3. Adjective Reduplication in Kyoto Japanese

In sharp contrast to present-day standard Japanese, the Kyoto dialect of present-day Japanese abounds in reduplicated adjectives, though their occurrence is almost exclusively limited to spontaneous spoken speech. The examples in (5) below, heard by the present author, as well as the attested examples in (6), will showcase how the relevant reduplicated
adjectives are used in everyday, unconstrained conversation.

(5) a. Anna takaitakai toko-ni aru no, tore-hen.
    such high place-DAT exist thing can.take-NEG
    ‘I can’t take a thing that is on such a very high place.’

b. Arui-te i-tta-ra, osooso naru
    walk-CONTINUATIVE SUFFIX go-PERFECT-if late late become e.
    SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLE
    ‘If you walk to the place, it will become very late.’

b’. Ano hito, kowaikowai nen.
    that person scary SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLE
    ‘That person, he is very scary.’

(6) a. Chikkoichikko mon ya sakai, naku-sa-n
    tiny thing COPULA since lose-LINKING SUFFIX-NEG
    AUX SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLE
    ‘Be careful not to lose it, since it’s a very tiny thing.’
    (Kanoo 1993:88 [glosses and translation by MT])

a’. Iya soo desu non.
    Oh so COPULA INTERROGATIVE PARTICLE far far place-from
    thank you kimono-TOP HONORIFIC PREFIX-for.the.first.time
    ‘Oh, is that so? Thank you for coming from the very distant place. As for
    kimono, is this your first experience?’
    (Irie 2005:66 [glosses and translation by MT])

b. Takao-no momiji-ga aoko a na-tte
    Takao-GEN maple-NOM red red become-LINKING SUFFIX
    come- LINKING SUFFIX POLITSE SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLE
    ‘The maple leaves of Mt. Takao are getting scarlet-tinged.’
    (Kanoo 1993:88 [glosses and translation by MT])

As the above examples show, reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese can be used both attributively (5a, 6a, 6a’) and predicatively (5b, 5b’, 6b). And their meanings are predictable and regularly obtained in the sense that intensity or emphasis is expressed with respect to the scale denoted by the adjective base.

Note that reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese do not represent mere
repetitions of the identical adjectives but that they have the status of a word in terms of both phonology and morphology. They constitute a single intonational group, with no pause between the base and the reduplicant, as the orthography in (5) and (6) above suggests, and phrasal units are excluded from the base or the reduplicant, as the following examples indicate.

(7) a. sugoi kowai hito
    very scary person  ‘a/the very scary person’

   a'. *sugoikowai(sugoi)kowai hito
    very.scarry.(very.)scary person

   a". *kowaisugoikowai hito
    scary.very.scarry person

   b. ?sugoi kowaikowai hito
    very scary.scary person

   b'. suggoi kowaikowai hito
    veeery scary person  ‘a/the veeery scary person’

The examples in (7a’) and (7a") demonstrate that adjective phrases, such as sugoi kowai ‘very scary’, cannot function as a component part of reduplicated adjectives. The examples in (7b) and (7b’) show that reduplicated adjectives can be modified by an adverb, thereby forming an adjective phrase, similarly to the adjective phrase sugoi kowai ‘very scary’ in the example in (7a). The mild deviance in acceptability for (7b) is probably due to the functional redundancy induced by the meaning of the adverb sugoi ‘very’ and the intensity or emphasis expressed by the reduplicated adjective kowaikowai ‘very scary’. This type of deviance disappears when the adverb expresses more than simple intensity or emphasis, as shown in (7b’).

Similarly, the phrase oso naru ‘become late’, which is made up of the adjective oso ‘late’ and the verb naru ‘become’, and the phrase kowai nen ‘scary + ASSERTION’, which is composed of the adjective kowai ‘scary’ and the sentence final assertion particle nen, cannot enter into the reduplication process in question. Compare (5b) above with (8a) below and (5b’) above with (8b) below.
Now, let us consider other notable features of reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese. Adjective reduplication in this dialect can be said to constitute a productive word formation process. It appears that any i-adjective can be reduplicated as the examples in (9) below show.

(9) a. omo-i → omoiomoi / ommo(i)omoi

'heavy' \(\rightarrow\) 'very heavy'

b. karu-i → karuikai / karru(i)karui

'light' \(\rightarrow\) 'very light'

c. waka-i → wakaiwakai / wakka(i)wakai

'young' \(\rightarrow\) 'very young'

d. yowa-i → yowaiyowai / yowwa(i)yowai

'weak' \(\rightarrow\) 'very weak'

e. niga-i → nigainigai / nigga(i)nigai

'bitter' \(\rightarrow\) 'very bitter'

f. samu-i → samuisamui / sammu(i)samui

'cold' \(\rightarrow\) 'very cold'

g. furu-i → furufuri / furru(i)furui

'old' \(\rightarrow\) 'very old'

b. tsuy-oi → tsuyoitsuoi / tsuyyo(i)tsuyoi

'strong' \(\rightarrow\) 'very strong'

c. ama-i → amaiami / amma(i)amai

'sweet' \(\rightarrow\) 'very sweet'

d. atsu-i → atsuiatsui / attsu(i)atsui

'hot' \(\rightarrow\) 'very hot'
As is evident from the above examples, two types of processes are recognized for adjective reduplication in Kyoto Japanese. One is the process where the base (namely, the stem plus the suffix –i) is simply reduplicated, with the reduplicant identical to the base. The other process involves a consonant lengthening with respect to the onset of the second syllable in the base. This second type of reduplication process additionally deletes the suffix –i that is attached to the stem. Note that there are some native speakers of this dialect who do not accept the reduplicated adjectives produced by the first process, while all of them readily accept those adjectives produced by the second process. This fact indicates that the second process is more basic than the first one.

Na-adjectives can also be reduplicated, as shown by the examples in (10) below.

(10) a. kiree-na → kireenakireena / kirreenakireena (Cf. (4a))
   ‘beautiful’ → ‘very beautiful’

b. shizuka-na → shizukanashizukana / shizzukanashizukaya (Cf. (4b))
   ‘quiet’ → ‘very quiet’

c. yawaka-na → yawarakanayawarakanaka / yawwarakanaawarakanaka (Cf. (4c))
   ‘soft’ → ‘very soft’

d. yutaka-na → ?yutakanayutakana / yuttakanayutakana (Cf. (4d))
   ‘wealthy’ → ‘very wealthy’

e. tsubura-na → ?tsuburanatsuburana / tsubburanatsuburana
   ‘round and pretty’ → ‘very round and pretty’

Two types of reduplication processes are operative here as well. One is the process in which the base (namely, the stem plus the suffix –na) is reduplicated to give the reduplicant identical to the base. The second process includes the same type of consonant lengthening as is recognized for the second process for reduplicated i–adjectives mentioned above. Notice that the mild deviance in acceptability observed in (10d) and (10e) indicates that the second process here is more basic than the first one.

For reduplicated i–adjectives, the linking suffix –ka and the tense or aspectual suffix –(t)ta are attached to the composite unit composed of the adjective base and the reduplicant, as shown in (11a) to (11c). Essentially the same remark applies to reduplicated na-
adjectives: the linking suffix \(--ya\) and the tense or aspectual suffix \(--ta\) are added to the right edge of the composite unit composed of the adjective base and the reduplicant, as shown in (11d) to (11f).

\[(11)\]
(a) \(\text{omo-ka-tta} \rightarrow o(m)moomo-ka-tta\)
\(\text{‘was (were) heavy’} \rightarrow \text{‘was (were) very heavy’}\)

(b) \(\text{karu-ka-tta} \rightarrow ka(r)rakaru-ka-tta\)
\(\text{‘was (were) light’} \rightarrow \text{‘was (were) very light’}\)

(c) \(\text{waka-ka-tta} \rightarrow wa(k)awaka-ka-tta\)
\(\text{‘was (were) young’} \rightarrow \text{‘was (were) very young’}\)

(d) \(\text{kiree-ya-tta} \rightarrow ki(r)reekiree-ya-tta\)
\(\text{‘was (were) beautiful’} \rightarrow \text{‘was (were) very beautiful’}\)

(e) \(\text{shizuka-ya-tta} \rightarrow shi(z)zukashizuka-ya-tta\)
\(\text{‘was (were) quiet’} \rightarrow \text{‘was (were) very quiet’}\)

(f) \(\text{yawaraka-ya-tta} \rightarrow ?ya(w)warakayawaraka-ya-tta\)
\(\text{‘was (were) soft’} \rightarrow \text{‘was (were) very soft’}\)

This feature further confirms that reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese are words, and not repetitions of the identical words.

The mild deviance in acceptability observed in (11f) might be explained by some principle of preemption of synonymy. That is, the deviance is incurred by the existence of the following, perfectly acceptable phrase, which includes a reduplicated \(i\)-adjective and expresses the same meaning as ?ya(w)warakayawaraka-ya\(-tta\): ya(w)warakayawaraka-\(ka\)-tta.

Finally, as is already touched upon for \(i\)-adjectives, the verb \(nar\) ‘become’ attaches the right edge of the reduplicant. Similarly for \(na\)-adjectives. Consider the following examples.

\[(12)\]
(a) \(\text{omo-(ku/o)-nar\u2013} \rightarrow o(m)moomo-nar\u2013\)
\(\text{‘become heavy’} \rightarrow \text{‘become very heavy’}\)

(b) \(\text{karu--(ku/u)-nar\u2013} \rightarrow ka(r)raraku-nar\u2013\)
\(\text{‘become light’} \rightarrow \text{‘become very light’}\)
c. *waka-(ku/a)-naru* → *wa(k)awaka-naru*
   'become young' → 'become very young'
d. *kiree--n(i)-naru* → *ki(r)reekiree-n(i)-naru*
   'become beautiful' → 'become very beautiful'
e. *shizuka--n(i)-naru* → *shi(z)zukashizuka-n(i)-naru*
   'become quiet' → 'become very quiet'
f. *yawaka--ni-naru* → *?ya(w)warakayawaraka-ni-naru*
   'is (are)soft' → 'become very soft'

Again, the mild deviance observed in (12f) might be explained in terms of preemption: the acceptable reduplicated *i*-adjective *?ya(w)warakayawaraka-naru* expresses essentially the same meaning as *?ya(w)warakayawaraka-ni-naru*.

4. A Future Perspective

The peculiar features of reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese should of course be explained beyond mere description. While this paper is only a first step to the description of reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese, a key to their explanation might have been found. That is, they might have developed from the following iconic expressions for emphasis.

(13) a. *omo-i* → *ommo-i*
   'heavy' → 'heeeavy, HEAVY'
b. *ama-i* → *amma-i*
   'sweet' → 'sweeet, SWEET'

Recall that the reduplicated adjectives that include an iconic expression of this type as its base can be said to be more basic. Arguably, reduplicated adjectives in Kyoto Japanese are based on the iconic expressions of the kind shown above and the iterative expressions that denote emphasis such as in (14) below.

(14) a. *Mainichi mainichi* *sono koto-o kangae-ta*
    every day every day that thing-ACC think-PERFCT
    'I thought about it every single day.'
b. *Sugoi, sugoi!*  
   terrific terrific  
   `Wonderful!'  

**References**


