6. ON THE HISTORY OF REPETITIVE VOCABULARY: CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE

This chapter is based on Sinitic and Vietnamese materials since together they form quantitatively the most comprehensive sub-corpora, both in terms of lexical and general historical background material, within the total corpus. Instead of aiming at an exhaustive overview of the history of repetitive vocabulary in the two languages, which in a work concentrating on synchrony would naturally be quite beside the point, the present study prefers to be more specific about three topics. One of them deals with the similar role played by consonant clusters in the development of repetitive vocabulary in the histories of the two languages, while another focuses on highlighting a difference in choice between Chinese and Vietnamese as to the type of duplication favored in the course of their development. This choice refers to loss of partial repetition in the former compared to its emphasis in the latter to the extent that, without exaggeration, the concept 'repetition proper' in the Vietnamese context can be taken to imply partial repetition in particular. The third topic concerns the examination of repetition against the background of a major historical development common to both languages: the tendency toward lexical disyllabism consequent to the simplification of syllable structure. In this connection, the tendency in question is seen in the light of views on its development in the Chinese lexicon, but surely, to the extent that these views are meant to be universal, they are naturally applicable to Vietnamese, or to any other language, too.

Beside the evidence for initial clusters provided by the use of e.g. *fǎn qiè*, loan-words in neighbouring languages, cognates in Sino-Tibetan languages, as well as literary versus colloquial forms of words, rhyming lexemes and polysyllabic words in various Sinitic speech forms, Chan (1984: 300-311) has investigated one more source for reconstructing initial consonant clusters, namely the alternation between disyllabic and the so-called sesquisyllabic[265] forms in the modern Yue dialects, especially in the dialect of Zhongshan, Guangdong province. As the syllabic structure in Sinitic speech forms does not generally allow sesquisyllables, a synchronic analysis regards them as reductions from full polysyllabic ones, while diachronically they can be seen as having been expanded to two full syllables in order to fit the simplified syllable structure. The following suggestions by Chan for consonant clusters in Old Chinese are accompanied by both the full citation form of an item

265 Forms that are a syllable and a half in length (Chan 1984: 300). In Chan's case, the concept of 'half a syllable'refers to a unit consisting of a consonant followed by a schwa.

and, separated by a slash, the same item with the corresponding alternating sesquisyllabic form, from the Yue dialects. The name of the dialect of origin, if other than Zhongshan, is given in parentheses after the dialectal forms:

(1) *kl-/*kr-

[kɔːk^{2} lɔːk^{5} t'ɐu^{51}] / [*kəlɔːk^{5}* t'ɐu^{51}] 'corner'[266]

(2) *pl-/*pr-

[tiːm^{22} pɐt^{5} lɐt^{5}] / [tiːm^{22} *pəlɐt^{5}*] 'very straight'
[tsɪk^{3} pɐt^{5} lɐt^{5}] / [tsɪk^{3} *pəlɐt^{5}*](Cantonese)

(3) *bl-

[hɐm^{51} pAː^{51} lAːŋ^{51}] / [hɐm^{51} *bəlAːŋ^{51}*] 'all'
[hɐm^{33} pAː^{33} lAːŋ^{33}] / [hɐm^{33} *bə^{o} lAːŋ^{33}*] (Cantonese)

The sesquisyllabic forms found in the cited Yue dialects can be interpreted as attesting to the first stage in the break-up of initial consonant clusters, where the schwa was inserted between the adjacent consonants, thus creating the sesquisyllable. It has been suggested by Packard (1998: 10) that many apparent partial repetitive lexemes in Old Chinese, such as *geu-leu* 'hunch-backed', for example, have actually come into being through the division of monosyllabic words with initial consonant clusters, into two syllables.

In Vietnamese, the different initial consonants of the constituent syllables of such rhyming lexemes as *thèn lẹn* 'shy, slightly ashamed' and *thuồng luồng* '(legendary snake-like) monster', when examined more closely, turn out to represent the components of a historically earlier initial consonant cluster (*t'l-* ; **thlẹn*, **thluồng*) (Chu 1998: 58). The occurrence of initial consonant clusters in Vietnamese, with especially the lateral *-l-* as the second component, is not something from the very distant past, since A. de Rhodes (*Dictionarium anamiticum lusitanum et latinum*, 1651) noted how people in the north still had *bl-*, *tl-*, *ml-* and *pl-* as initials in a number of words in the 17th century (Hoang 1985: 110-111). A traveller to Vietnam as late as the end of the 18th century claims that the word form *trăm* could still be represented by *klang*[267] in Da Nang in Central Vietnam (Hoang

266 Polysyllabic lexemes with the meaning 'corner' with *k-* as the initial in the first and *l-* in the second syllable have been found outside the Yue dialect area. In Yangzhou (Eastern Mandarin dialects) it is *ka? la?*, *ko lo* in Changsha (Xiang dialects) and *kok lok* in Nanchang (Gan dialects) (Chan 1984: 301).

267 The *tr-* in *trăm* derives from a Proto Mon-Khmer **kl-* (see e.g. Hoang Dung 1998: 7).

Dung 1995: 11)[268]. In addition to the clusters just cited, Vietnamese presumably also had such complex initials as *vl-, *xl-/xr-, *sl-, *cl-, *kl-/kr- and *gl- at an earlier stage of its development (Hoang 1985: 111).

The order of the constituents of an earlier initial cluster as initials of the constituent syllables in the new rhyming lexemes is not necessarily iconic of their original order, as demonstrated by the subsequent items where both alternatives have been realized: *bẩu lẩu/lẩu bẩu, thòng lòng/lòng thòng, bônh lông/lông bônh* (Hoang 1985: 112). The second alternative, with the constituent containing the second component in the assumed cluster coming first, has been very productive in the history of Vietnamese (Hoang 1985: 112).

Although repetition in Old Chinese was of two kinds, complete and partial, with emphasis on the latter (Packard 1998: 8-9), it is the former type that has stood the test of time, with the dialect of Tengxian being an exception in the present Sinitic corpus. In Vietnamese, the opposite state of affairs has prevailed, and it is the purpose of the following few paragraphs to sum up processes which have contributed to its preponderance.

Diachronically, repetitive development in Vietnamese starts from a monosyllabic syllable morpheme[269], which in repetition undergoes regular phonetic and semantic alterations and finally, if nothing interrupts the course of events, it may end up as a constituent in a semantically opaque repetitive lexeme. The whole process starts with the transposition of the stress in a repetitive pair of syllables to the second syllable, establishing an opposition of phonetic length between the two syllables, which eventually leads to the rise of the regular alternation of broken and plain tones of the same register within a disyllabic repetitive form (Hoang 1985: 103-104). The formation of these tendencies is corroborated by phonological material from the 15th century (*Quốc âm thi tặp/ Collected poems in the national language*) and dictionaries from the 18th and 19th centuries (Hoang 1985: 104).

As noted earlier, one change in the segmental structure of Vietnamese repetitive lexemes, resulting in alliterative lexemes (A A/x)[270], concerns the alternation between pairs of homologous syllable-final nasals and stops (*-m – -p*, *-n – -t* and *-ŋ – -k*) . Historically, the process in question signifies dissimilation of pairs of

268 Hoang Thi Chau (1989: 227-228) thinks that the fact that a velar nasal appears as a final consonant instead of a bilabial nasal in *klang* indicates that the person from whom it was elicited was a speaker of a speech form in which a bilabial nasal could not function as a syllable-final consonant.

269 Vietnamese repetitive forms are generally divided into two types: primary and secondary. Primary repetitives are disyllabic and derived from monosyllabic bases while secondary duplicatives are trisyllabic or quadrisyllabic and based on disyllabic repetitive derivatives (see e.g. Vu 1991: 435). This processual priorisation is naturally supposed to be iconic of a diachronic priorisation.

270 The Vietnamese linguistic tradition, however, regards these as regular repetitive forms, but due to the decision to make formal similarity/difference between the base and the repetitive syllable a basic classificatory principle, such forms are considered alliterative in this study.

identical final consonants, nasals or stops, i.e. (i) *-m – -m* or *-p – -p* —> *-m – -p*; (ii) *-n – -n* or *-t – -t* —> *-n – -t*; (iii) *-ŋ – -ŋ* or *-k – -k* —> *-ŋ – -k*, as indicated by the material in Tabert's dictionary (*Dictionarium anamitico-latinum*, 1838). Note how the tones in the examples of this dissimilatory process change according to the principle mentioned in the previous paragraph. E.g.:

(i)	bìm bìm	—>	bìm bịp
	lộp lộp	—>	lồm lộp
	xấp xấp	—>	xăm xấp
(ii)	kịn kịn	—>	kìn kịt
	giốt giốt	—>	giôn giốt
	sạt sạt	—>	sàn sạt
(iii)	nằng nằng	—>	nằng nặc
	ách ách	—>	anh ách
	rực rực	—>	rừng rực

(Hoang 1985: 106-107)

Concluding from the quantitative relationship between the sets of data representing the two types of undissimilated final consonants in Hoang (1985: 106-107), it is more probable for the pair of finals of a given item to be derived from stops than from nasals.

Another dissimilatory change in segmental structure consequent to repetition consists of differentiation of the vowel in the rhyme of the unstressed (= the first) constituent in a repetitive form leading to the formation of an alliterative repetitive form (A A/x). One tendency is for a back vowel to change to a front vowel: *lác* —> *lác lác* (Tabert's dictionary) —> *lếch lác* (modern Vietnamese) (Hoang 1985: 109).

The initial consonants of a repeated item have also been subjected to dissimilation in the course of time in Vietnamese, yielding rhyming lexemes (A x/A) as a result. E.g.:

thê	—>	thê thê	—>	lê thê
điu	—>	điu điu	—>	liu điu

(Hoang 1985: 101-102)

During the history of Vietnamese, compounds, especially of the co-ordinate type, have quite often provided new entries for the Vietnamese repetitive lexicon. Chu (1998: 58) points out how bleaching of one of the constituents has a role in this development. It is not only compounds with an unmistakable repetitive outer appearance that have suffered this fate, but Hoang (1985: 120) also points out conscious efforts by speakers to make disyllabic lexemes formally more compatible

with a repetitive pattern. These changes are often accompanied by semantic shifts. Assimilation of initial consonants to achieve alliteration is an example of such efforts and it is the consonant of the second syllable which assimilates to that of the first syllable. E.g.:

đong lưa (refers to a way of speaking) —> đong đưa 'shifty (in one's words)'
khách thứa 'guest' —> khách khứa 'guests and visitors'
quanh go —> quanh co 'meandering, tortuous'
(Hoang 1985: 120-121)

Statistics based on material dating from the 17th century (see Hoang 1985: 118), where about 80% of the total set of repetitive lexemes is comprised by partially duplicative items, and within this 80% the vast majority are alliterative, show convincingly how in Vietnamese the concept of repetition typically signifies rule-governed formal differentiation, in opposition to Sinitic speech forms where it refers to similarity in form. Against this background, the traditional definition of repetition in Vietnamese as involving both similarity and dissimilarity, referred to earlier in the study, is easy to comprehend.

A shift from monosyllabic to disyllabic words has been a major developmental change in the history of the Chinese language. The three subsequent explanations represent three different interpretations of its cause.

According to the traditional functionalist view, this shift was initiated by the simplification of the Chinese phonological system, which resulted in homophonisation of previously distinct syllables. In response to this, disyllabic words were created to safeguard communication endangered by multiplication of homophonic monosyllabic lexemes. One possible source for the obtention of disyllabic vocabulary items was repetitive structures. Repetitive forms consequently had, alongside the kind of functions they have today, the additional task of providing disyllabic lexemes for the Chinese lexicon (see Packard 1998: 6-9).

In contrast to the traditional view, Cheng (1981b: 57-58)[271] has proposed that disyllabism occurred first, causing the simplification. Cheng argues that social forces were responsible for the pressure to enlarge the lexicon and that repetition was an effective enough means to meet the need to expand vocabulary during a more moderate, earlier phase of social development. Later, as this phonological method of word formation proved inadequate for the purpose of providing new vocabulary for the needs of increasingly sophisticated Chinese society, other means were adopted to fulfill the requirements of rapid growth in vocabulary. In any case, Cheng claims that it is this multiplication of disyllabic lexemes which brought about phonological simplification, since the original phonological distinctions needed for keeping monosyllabic lexemes apart, became non-functional.

271 In Packard 1998: 6-7.

Feng (1998: 197-260)[272] offers the view that the tendency to disyllabism can be explained by prosodic factors. The phonological simplification of the syllable in Old Chinese resulted in its inability to bear a monosyllabic prosodic foot structure. In prosodic phonology in general, the structure of the prosodic foot typically consists of one relatively strong and any number of relatively weak syllables. While a foot in Old Chinese may have consisted of more than one syllable, a monosyllabic foot was also possible, since the maximal syllable structure in Old Chinese allowed consonant clusters both in syllable-initial and syllable-final position. In prosodic terms, such a syllable is structurally super-heavy, and heavy syllables with complex structures may form feet by themselves, while light syllables with simple structures may require another syllable for this purpose. Thus with the attrition of its phonological structure, the Old Chinese syllable, by becoming structurally light, lost its capability to form a foot on its own.

More specifically, it is syllables with a CVC structure that can serve as carriers of prosodic feet, while those with a CV structure are too light in this respect. Why? The reason for this crucial difference in eligibility resides in the fact that CVC satisfies the so-called foot binarity principle, which states that prosodic feet must be binary under syllabic or moraic analysis (Feng 1998: 228 [McCarthy & Prince 1993: 43]). As the rhyme of a syllable, the structural operative unit of prosodic foot, may in Feng's view contain one or two moras and as each mora dominates at most one segmental element, it is easy to see how Feng, relying on the moraic theory of syllable structure and the foot binarity principle, arrives at the conclusion that CV, with its one mora, cannot alone form a foot, while the bimoraic CVC will naturally serve the purpose. Since according to the prosodic hierarchy in prosodic morphology, a foot is directly dominated by the prosodic word, and the minimal prosodic requirement for a word is the presence of one foot, i.e. two morae or two syllables, the motivation for the need of disyllabic words becomes clear, as well as the relevance of repetitive structures as possible candidates for lexicalisation.

As the explanation based on the moraic theory coupled with the foot binarity principle and complemented by the notion of prosodic hierarchy in the sense explained above, is presumably meant to be universally applicable to all languages, one may reasonably assume that comparable circumstances, in terms of prosodic phonology, came to prevail in Vietnamese after its evolution from a language having a typically Mon-Khmer sesquisyllabic word-structure with a great variety of rhymes, no tones, and complex initials to a monosyllabic language quite comparable to Old Chinese in its later phase with few final consonants, distinctive tones and no initial consonant clusters[273], and can be regarded as factors in promoting the

272 In Packard 1998.

273 This characterization of the development of Vietnamese, without comparison to Old Chinese, is due to Diffloth (1991: 125).

tendency toward lexical disyllabism, for the realization of which repetition offers one obvious source.

If, according to Feng, CV in the Chinese context seems to be unable to act as a lexical framework for prosodic reasons alone, how is it possible that there are apparently quite a few monosyllabic words of precisely the CV type in Standard Chinese, for example? Vietnamese is not devoid of them either.