The full reduplication construction in Sicilian.

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This paper documents an unusual reduplicative construction in Sicilian (a Southern “dialect” of Italian). Full reduplication in Sicilian has the common iconic meaning of intensification (nicu nicu = small small, very small), the relatively common sense of “authentic quality” (café café = coffee coffee, real coffee), and of durative aspect (talia talia, look look, looking on) as well as habitual aspect (zu vasa vasa, uncle kisses kisses, uncle who usually kisses) but also the relatively uncommon meanings of indeterminacy (comu vinni vinni, how it came it came, however it came out) and, to the best of my knowledge, almost unique meaning of indeterminate motion through space (caminari casa casa, to walk house house, to walk through the house).

I will examine critically previous attempts at explaining this construction, and primarily Wierzbicka’s mono-semantic account and then develop a cognitive account of the phenomena, in which I argue that the full reduplication construction in Sicilian has three basic meanings: intensity, iteration, and indeterminacy, from which all the senses described above can be analyzed. I also argue that attempts to reduce the various constructions to semantic or pragmatic derivations from a basic sense are not supported by the data.

Data for this study have been obtained from a variety of sources, but primarily from texts collected by Pitré (1875) and from the novels of Andrea Camilleri (1925-), elicitation, and native intuition.

References;


