

Reduplication or reduplicátion-reduplication?
A contrastive study of reduplication processes in Afrikaans and Dutch

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1. Introduction

The morphosyntax of Afrikaans is often, with undue haste, considered to be very similar to that of Dutch (see e.g. Biberauer 2018, Cavarani-Pots 2020, Conradie 2007, De Vos 2003 for discussion). This squib concerns one of the most prominent differences in the morphosyntactic systems of the two languages, namely reduplication. In Afrikaans, reduplication is a productive means of word formation. It has a wide range of functions, including morphosyntactic ones, semantic ones and pragmatic/expressive ones (Botha 1988, Conradie 2007, Den Besten et al. 2012, Van Huyssteen 2000, 2004, Van Huyssteen & Wessing 2007, among many others). For instance, reduplication can be used to create an adverbial form replacing a present participle out of a verb (1) (one of the morphosyntactic functions), it can be used to semantically intensify (2) or attenuate (3) the unreduplicated form (two of the semantic functions), or it can be used to indicate the speaker's heightened emotional state, for example about the proximity of the accident in (4) (one of the expressive functions).

- (1) Die leeu loop **brul- brul** weg.
the lion walks roar roar away
'Roaring repeatedly, the lion walks away.' (Botha 1988: 2)
- (2) *Flinkdink*, die vinnige spelletjie vir **slim- slim** mense.
Flinkdink, the fast game.DIM for clever clever people
'*Flinkdink*, the fast game for very clever people.' (Conradie 2003: 20)
- (3) Sy **voel- voel** met haar voet hoe warm die water is.
she feel feel with her foot how warm the water is
'She tentatively puts her foot into the water to feel how warm it is.' (Combrink 1978: 78)
- (4) Die ongeluk het **hier- hier** gebeur.
The accident has here here happened
'The accident has happened right here (scarily close to me!)' (Biberauer, p.c.)

In contrast, standardly, reduplication is not considered to be part of the morphosyntactic system of Dutch at all (e.g. it is not mentioned in the handbook of Dutch Morphology by Haas & Van Trommelen 1993). It has come to our attention, though, that reduplication is starting to be used more and more in informal/spoken Dutch. The use of reduplication in Dutch lacks the morphosyntactic functions that Afrikaans has, but can definitely be used for intensification (5), just like in Afrikaans (cf. (2)).

- (5) De foto werd **gauw- gauw** getrokken.
the picture was.PASS quickly quickly taken
'The picture was taken very quickly.' (SoNaR corpus)

Another semantic function of reduplication that seems to be winning ground in informal/spoken Dutch is to indicate that the noun, verb, adjective etc. referred to has the most prototypical or 'real' semantic reading of the unreduplicated form, henceforth referred to as the 'prototypical X' function. An example is given in (6).

- (6) Dat ik niet zo'n **meisje- meisje** ben.
that I not such.a girl girl am
'That I'm not really a typical girl.' (SoNaR corpus)

A second example is a personal encounter of this use. One of the authors lives above a pharmacy, and recently had to go there to do a covid test. She is on name-to-name base with two of the pharmacists. When she entered the pharmacy, one of them calls to the other, who is in the back: ‘Ah, Cora is here for her test!’ The other pharmacist pops her head around the corner, recognizes her, and says:

- (7) Oh, je bedoelt *Cora Cora!*
Ah, you mean Cora Cora.
‘Ah, you mean the real Cora (the one we know)!’

This ‘prototypical X’ function has already been observed for British English by Hohenhaus (2005), and it thus might have come into Dutch as an influence from English. An example from English is given in (8).

- (8) ‘There was a bath in the guest house, well, not a **bath-bath**, rather a large sink.’
(Hohenhaus 2005: 299)

As far as we are aware, this new use of reduplication in informal/spoken Dutch has not been observed yet by linguists, let alone systematically investigated. Even though the literature on Afrikaans reduplication is vast, it seems that this ‘prototypical X’ function has not received any attention. This can either mean that this function simply has not developed in Afrikaans reduplication. Alternatively, it does exist in Afrikaans, but is as new a phenomenon as it is in Dutch, and therefore has not come on the radar of linguists yet.

The aim of this squib is to present the initial results of a contrastive corpus study on reduplication in Afrikaans and Dutch, focusing on the semantic functions of these reduplication forms, and in particular on the ‘prototypical X’ function. In the next section (section 2), we present the methodology of our corpus study. In section 3, will present some highlights of the results. In section 4, we conclude, and discuss future directions for research on reduplication in Afrikaans and Dutch.

2. Methodology

2.1 Afrikaans

For Afrikaans, we have extracted the data from the *Korpusportaal* corpus (Viva 2018). This is a corpus of 300 million words, which contains mostly Standard Afrikaans and written language, but also some literature and transcriptions of spoken language. In order to do this, we first selected all reduplications from a unigram list of the *Taalkommissie* subcorpus and searched for those by lemma in the *Korpusportaal*. We extracted examples for more than 500 different lemmas. These hits were categorized per part of speech and while not officially categorizing item per item, we extracted examples for each lemma per part of speech and usage. In the future, we plan to manually categorize all at least a random sample of 100 hits per lemma.

2.2 Dutch

For Dutch, we have extracted data from the OpenSoNaR corpus (Oostdijk et al. 2013). This corpus contains 500 million words. The corpus dates from 2015, which is problematic for our purposes, given that reduplication is such a young phenomenon in Dutch. We will come back to this in section 4. As there is no straightforward way of extracting instances of reduplication in this corpus, we have made a list of nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs, which according to our own judgments, can be used in reduplicated form. We then looked up all the reduplicated forms of the words on this list with the advanced search option of the corpus. We manually annotated all hits found per reduplicated word, unless there were more than 100 hits for that word. In that case, we took a random sample of 100, and annotate only those.

3. The results: some highlights

3.2 Afrikaans

The reduplications we have found have as base a noun, verb, adjective, adverbs or numeral. The outputs of the reduplication process included all those base forms, but also adverbials used as present participles (for verb reduplication, cf. (1)), or adverbials from numerals (e.g. *ons het drie-drie gery* ‘we drove three

by three'). As these latter, morphosyntactic uses of reduplication are not the focus of this squib, we will not discuss them any further.

Regarding the semantic functions of the reduplications, we can make the following observations per syntactic category. In the reduplications whose base is an adjective or adverb, we find that the most frequent semantic function is intensification. An example is given in (9). In (10), an example of intensification is given where the form is triplified, which is probably used to make the intensification even stronger.

(9) Adriaan stap **kwaad- kwaad** na die voordeur toe...
Adriaan walks angry angry towards the front door at
'Adriaan walks very angrily towards the front door...'

(10) In sy kombuis in daai **diep- diep- diep** stem...
in his kitchen in that deep deep deep voice
'In his kitchen, in that extremely deep voice...'

Moving on to reduplications with a verbal base, we see that intensification as semantic function is also quite common (11). As was the case with the adjectives and adverbs, we also find cases of triplification, illustrated for the same verb *drup* 'to drip' in (12). It seems that in (11) the reduplication functions to indicate iterativity (which is, in a way, a subform of intensification, see e.g. Abraham 2005 and Kouwenberg and LaCharité 2005 for discussion). In (12), then, the triplification seems to result in the true intensification of the dripping event. We assume that the intensification can either lie in the amount of water that is dripping, or the duration of the dripping event.

(11) Reën **drup- drup** teen my vensterruit.
rain drip drip against my window
'Rain is (repeatedly) dripping against my window.'

(12) Die water **drup- drup- drup-** van die jakarandaboom ...
the water drip drip drip of the jacaranda
'A lot of water is dripping/The water keeps on dripping of the jacaranda...'

Furthermore, we also find many verb reduplications whose function is onomatopoeic rather than intensifying, an example of which is given in (13).

(13) Iets **biep- biep** bokant haar kop.
something beep beep above her head
'Something is beeping above her head.'

Regarding nouns, we find mostly onomatopoeic forms, and a few intensifications – setting aside loan reduplications (e.g. *agar-agar*) and idioms like names for children's games (e.g. *bal-bal speel* 'to play ball'). Furthermore, in the category nouns we find the only occurrence of the semantic function 'prototypical X' in the entire data set, namely *blues-blues* (14). Interestingly, this is a loan word from English, which might mean that if the 'prototypical X' function will gain more ground in the future in Afrikaans, we should expect it to start with English loan words.

(14) Ons doen van Eagles- blues, **blues- blues** en selfs Briels- blues...
we do of Eagles blues blues blues and even Briels blues
'We'll be playing a bit of Eagles-blues, real/typical blues, and even Briels-blues...'

Taken together, intensification and onomatopoeic forms are very frequent in Afrikaans reduplication, whereas the only reduplication with the 'prototypical X' function we found in the data is an English loan word, namely *blues-blues*, to refer to typical blues.

3.3 Dutch

The reduplications we have found have as base a noun, verb, adjective or adverb. The outputs of the reduplication process are always the same category as the base form, since Dutch reduplication cannot result in a category change. Interestingly, notwithstanding the fact that reduplication is not considered part of the morphosyntactic system of Dutch, that we only searched for a limited set of base words, and that the SoNaR corpus data is not extremely recent, we still found quite a lot of hits per syntactic category. This means that the idea that reduplication does not exist in Dutch should be reconsidered. Let us now turn to the discussion of the semantic functions per syntactic category.

With regard to the adjective and adverb reduplications, we see that the majority of the cases have the intensification function – setting aside the idiomatic expression *iets blauwblauw laten* ‘to not act on something’. An example of an adjective reduplication is given in (15), and one of an adverb reduplication in (16). As in Afrikaans, we also find cases of triplification in the dataset, always targeting an even higher degree of intensification.

- (15) En altijd **lelijk lelijk** hoesten, en uh dokter terughalen...
and always ugly ugly cough and uh doctor call.back
‘And always coughing very badly, and [having to] call the doctor back...’
- (16) Moet dat nu echt zo **rap rap**?
must that now really so quickly quickly
‘Does that really have to go that super fast?’

Furthermore, we see that among the adverb reduplications, there are none with the ‘prototypical X’ function, whereas among the adjective reduplications, there are quite a few instances. These include cases of colors, in which the most prototypical shade of that color is targeted, but also other types of gradable adjectives, such as *mooi* ‘beautiful’ (17) and *ziek* ‘ill’ (18). Interestingly, we also found a case of a non-gradable adjective among the ‘prototypical X’ reduplications, namely *dood* ‘dead’ (19).

- (17) Ik hou niet van **mooi mooi**; dat is niet interessant.
I love not of beautiful beautiful that is not interesting
‘I don’t like typical beauty; that’s not interesting.’
- (18) **Ziek ziek** of ziek in het hoofd?
ill ill or ill in the head
‘Really ill (physically ill) or mentally ill?’
- (19) Hersendood mss, maar nie **dood- dood**.
brain.dead maybe.ABBR but not dead dead
‘Maybe brain dead, but not really dead.’

Moving on to the set of verb reduplications, we mostly find intensification forms, for example (20).

- (20) Dan zo altijd maar moeten **werken werken** en presteren...
then so always but must work work and perform
‘Always this having to work so much and perform...’

We also find a few cases of the ‘prototypical X’ function, even though the cases are less clear than in the set of adjective reduplications. An example is given in (21) for the verb *slapen* ‘to sleep’. The writer most likely wants to make clear that he/she is not speaking about *slapen* in the metaphorical sense of having intercourse with each other (referred to as *hubba hubba*), but is really referring to sleeping.

- (21) Geen hubba hubba, **slapen slapen**.
no hubba hubba, sleep.INF sleep.INF
‘No intercourse, actual sleeping.’

Well known, but only dating back from 2016 and hence not in our corpus yet, is the quote (22) from the TV show *Temptation Island*, which was so iconic it was used in 2019 in an advertising campaign for road safety¹:

- (22) Je hebt kijken en je hebt **kijken- kijken**.
you have look.INF and you have look.INF look.INF
'There is looking and there is really looking at something.'

In the set of noun reduplications, we find many cases of a more vocative use, in which the noun is actually more used as a discourse element, and is not integrated in the sentence (23).

- (23) **Jongen jongen**, wat onnozel zeg.
boy boy what silly say
'Boy boy, how silly.'

Besides this use, we find some cases of intensification, but also quite a few cases of the 'prototypical X' function, illustrated in (24) for the noun *man* 'man' and in (25) for the noun *werk* 'work'.

- (24) Het probleem is dat je een **man- man** wilt.
the problem is that you a man man want
'The problem is that you want a real man.'
- (25) ... een DDR-achtige fixatie op **werk- werk**.
... a DDR-like fixation on work work
'... a DDR-like fixation on real work.'

Summarizing, in Dutch we found intensification forms of reduplication across all categories. The 'prototypical X' function was not found with adverb reduplication, and only a few instances of this function with verb reduplications. In the adjective and noun reduplications, there are quite some cases of this latter function, even with a non-gradable adjective, *dood* 'dead'.

4. Conclusion and outlook

With this squib we have presented a first exploration of the semantic function of 'prototypical X' in comparison with some other semantic functions in Afrikaans and Dutch reduplication. We found that this function occurs quite frequently in Dutch adjective and noun reduplications. Given that the phenomenon in Dutch is very young, and the data from the SoNaR corpus are not that recent, we feel that our findings might only be the tip of the iceberg of this function in Dutch reduplication used nowadays. In future work we aim at using newer data of a more spoken/informal nature, to get a better picture of how often it is actually used, and what the exact restrictions are on the type of base form. With respect to Afrikaans, we only found one instance of the 'prototypical X' function, which was a loan word from English. As for Afrikaans, we aim at looking into a more recent and more spoken/informal language data set in the future as well. Finally, we would also like to investigate this function in South African English, to compare it to the findings regarding this function in British English by Hohenhaus (2005).

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¹ <https://www.hln.be/tv/verkeerscampagne-gebruikt-kijken-kijken-uitspraak-van-temptation-haroon-ze-hadden-me-wel-eens-kunnen-bellen~a764c415/>

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