

Reduplication in West Germanic: A comparison of Dutch, Afrikaans and American English

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Reduplication as a productive morphosyntactic process in West-Germanic is usually only associated with Afrikaans (1).

- (1) Dis *diep-diep* in die gene opgesluit, ... (Taalkommissiekorpus)
'This is capsuled in the genes very deeply, ...'

The morphosyntax, phonology and semantics of this phenomenon in Afrikaans has been extensively investigated (Botha 1988, Conradie 2003, Van Huyssteen 2004, Den Besten et al. 2012), however, the only systematic corpus study that goes beyond qualitative data description is Van Huyssteen (2004). In other West Germanic languages, hardly any attention has been paid to reduplication as a true part of the morphosyntactic system, with the exception of Hohenhaus (2005) for British English (cf. Mattiello 2013 on 'reduplicatives' like *chit-chat* and *nitty-gritty*).

This paper presents a cross-linguistic comparison of reduplication in Dutch, Afrikaans and American English (henceforth AE), based on a recent and extensive corpus study. The corpora that were used are the *SoNaR* corpus (Dutch), the *Taalkommissiekorpus* (Afrikaans), and the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (AE). The main variables that were annotated for are (i) the syntactic category of the reduplicated element, focussing on the main lexical categories (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition), (ii) the semantic function of the reduplication, namely intensification (e.g. (1)), vocative (e.g. *man man*, *why do you say that?*), and 'prototypical X' (e.g. *meisje meisje* for a girl who behaves prototypically girl like), and (iii) morphosyntactic function (e.g. V-V reduplication in Afrikaans can be used to create a gerund (Botha 1988)).

As a general result, it is striking that not only in Afrikaans, but also in Dutch and AE, the frequency of reduplication cases is quite high. This is especially surprising for Dutch, as this phenomenon is not thought to be part of the morphosyntactic system in the language. This study thus shows that this assumption needs to be reconsidered. The results furthermore show that in all three languages, we find cases of reduplication across all lexical categories. As for the semantic functions, we see that intensification is very common in all languages, but that 'prototypical X' only occurs in Dutch and AE. This shows that on the semantic side, Dutch and American English reduplication are closer to each other compared to Afrikaans.

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