

Charles Zhang

LING 105

Discussion 1A

14 May 2023

Midpoint Development

1. The Topic

The main topic of my paper will be the analysis of reduplication of verbs and adjectives in Mandarin Chinese and Shanghainese.

Reduplication is a morphological operation in which part of (or all of) a morpheme's base is duplicated and attached to the original base to create a new morpheme. This operation is a form of compounding and is very commonly seen in many languages.

Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in China, and one of the most spoken languages in the world. Mandarin is a language that makes heavy use of compounding to generate words, so many instances of reduplication can be found throughout the language, which makes it a great baseline for an investigation into reduplication. Shanghainese is the largest dialect of Wu Chinese, a language that is mutually unintelligible with Mandarin Chinese, but historically shares a similar geographical origin. This connection makes Shanghainese an interesting comparison point for an investigation into the structure of reduplication across different dialects.

2. The Updated Literature Review

Much of the existing research on reduplication in Mandarin focuses on a structural analysis of compounds constructed using reduplication. A commonly studied phenomenon is the

presence and usage of an ABAB reduplication vs. AABB reduplication, where A and B represent syllables.

A surface level analysis reveals that ABAB reduplication typically occurs with verbs, while AABB reduplication typically occurs with adjectives. This simple phenomenon is then expanded to show that these patterns don't just allow for simple verb-to-verb and adjective-to-adjective generation, but that the ABAB pattern is capable of performing adjective-to-verb conversion and the AABB pattern can perform verb-to-adjective conversion. Finally, there seems to be a variant of ABAB reduplication that results in the form AAB, generated when the internal structure of the verb consists of one verb morpheme and one object morpheme, rather than two verb morphemes. For instance, the word *chīfàn* (meaning “eat”) is composed of a verb morpheme *chī* (“eat”) and an object morpheme *fàn* (“meal”). This can then undergo reduplication to become *chīchīfàn* (“eat a little”). Each of these patterns will be investigated to see if they have counterparts in Shanghaiese.

When looking beyond the scope of word classes, we also see that these various forms of reduplication exhibit strong ties to semantic meaning. In general, the pattern of ABAB is always used as a form of diminishing reduplication, while the pattern of AABB is always used as a form of increasing reduplication. These differences also extend to restrictions on the inputs and outputs of each reduplication process. While selection restrictions for diminishing reduplication seem to be missing concrete ties to morphology, selection restrictions for increasing reduplication are much more closely related to morphology. For example, the adjective *gāoxìng* (“happy”) can be used to construct *fēicháng gāoxìng* (“very happy”). However, once it undergoes increasing reduplication to become *gāogāoxìngxìng* (“very happy”), it is no longer allowed to be modified by *fēicháng* (“very”).

3. The Updated Research Questions

- How is reduplication used in Mandarin Chinese?
- What instances of reduplication are found in the dialect of Shanghainese?
- In what ways are the structures of reduplication, especially those relating to adjectives and verbs, similar or different when comparing Mandarin and Shanghainese?

4. The Method for Data Gathering

I will be collecting the data I need to make my arguments from both published sources and native speakers.

As seen in the literature review, the nature of reduplication in Mandarin is fairly well-documented, which provides a strong foundation for how Mandarin reduplication is constructed. This also has the added benefit of providing useful examples of reduplication in the language, from which I can work from. In addition, I will be relying on both mine and my parents' (who are native Mandarin speakers) knowledge of Mandarin to generate the rest of the data needed to support my claims. However, most of this data will be pulled from the existing literature, since Mandarin is intended to serve as a baseline for this investigation.

For Shanghainese, I will be talking to my mother, who is also a native Shanghainese speaker. Once I introduce the concept of reduplication to her, followed by examples of the phenomenon in Mandarin, she will be able to provide me with enough data to have a working understanding of how Shanghainese speakers use reduplication in their speech. I have already begun to talk with her on the subject to generate initial data points for my analysis. From here, I can compare and contrast this usage with the existing research on the structure of reduplication in Mandarin to answer my research questions.

5. Presentation and Description of Some Essential Data

Mandarin ABAB Reduplication:

打 扫 dǎ sǎo “to clean”	→	打 扫 打 扫 dǎ sǎo dǎ sǎo “to clean a little”
高 兴 gāo xìng “happy”	→	高 兴 高 兴 gāo xìng gāo xìng “have a little fun”

Mandarin AABB Reduplication:

高 兴 gāo xìng “happy”	→	高 高 兴 兴 gāo gāo xìng xìng “very happy”
指 点 zhǐ diǎn “suggest”	→	指 指 点 点 zhǐ zhǐ diǎn diǎn “critical, bossy”

Mandarin AAB Reduplication:

跳 舞 tiào wǔ “dance”	→	跳 跳 舞 tiào tiào wǔ “dance a little”
---------------------------	---	---

Shanghainese Reduplication (AAB and AA? → more data needed):

se qing “clear, refreshing”	→	se se qing “very refreshing”
mo “unclear, dark”	→	mo mo “very dark”

6. The Updated Bibliographical References

Arcodia, Giorgio Francesco. 2007. Chinese: A Language of Compound Words? In *Selected Proceedings of the 5th Décembrettes: Morphology in Toulouse*, ed. Fabio Montermini, Gilles Boyé, and Nabil Hathout, 79-90. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

- Chen, Feng-Yi, et al. "Reduplication in Mandarin Chinese: Their Formation Rules, Syntactic Behavior and ICG Representation." *ACL Anthology*, 1992, <https://aclanthology.org/O92-1007/>.
- Feng, Guanjun Bella. "Lexical category specific constraints: Mandarin verb versus adjective reduplication." *USC Working Papers in Linguistics* 1 (2003): 1-12.
- Lee-Kim, Sang-Im. "Syntax-based phonological asymmetries: The case of adjective reduplication in Mandarin Chinese." *Lingua* 179 (2016): 1-23.
- Melloni, Chiara, and Bianca Basciano. "Reduplication across boundaries: The case of Mandarin." *The lexeme in descriptive and theoretical morphology* 4 (2018): 325.
- Zhengzhang, Shangfang, and Wei Zheng. "Wu dialect." *The Oxford handbook of Chinese linguistics* (2015): 189-202.