

# ANGLICA

An International Journal of English Studies

29/2 2020

## EDITOR

Grażyna Bystydzieńska [g.bystydzienska@uw.edu.pl]

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Martin Löschnigg [martin.loeschnigg@uni-graz.at]

Jerzy Nykiel [jerzy.nykiel@uib.no]

Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż [m.a.sokolowska-paryz@uw.edu.pl]

Anna Wojtyś [a.wojtys@uw.edu.pl]

## ASSISTANT EDITORS

Magdalena Kizeweter [m.kizeweter@uw.edu.pl]

Dominika Lewandowska-Rodak [dominika.lewandowska@o2.pl]

Bartosz Lutostański [b.lutostanski@uw.edu.pl]

Przemysław Uściński [przemek.u@hotmail.com]

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITOR

Barry Keane [bkeane@uw.edu.pl]

## ADVISORY BOARD

Michael Bilynsky, University of Lviv

Andrzej Bogusławski, University of Warsaw

Mirosława Buchholtz, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń

Jan Čermák, Charles University, Prague

Edwin Duncan, Towson University

Jacek Fabiszak, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Elżbieta Foeller-Pituch, Northwestern University, Evanston-Chicago

Piotr Gąsiorowski, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Keith Hanley, Lancaster University

Andrea Herrera, University of Colorado

Christopher Knight, University of Montana,

Marcin Krygier, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Krystyna Kujawińska-Courtney, University of Łódź

Brian Lowrey, Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens

Zbigniew Mazur, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

Rafał Molencki, University of Silesia, Sosnowiec

John G. Newman, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Jerzy Rubach, University of Iowa

Piotr Ruskiewicz, Pedagogical University, Cracow

Hans Sauer, University of Munich

Krystyna Stamirowska, Jagiellonian University, Cracow

Merja Stenroos, University of Stavanger

Jeremy Tambling, University of Manchester

Peter de Voogd, University of Utrecht

Anna Walczuk, Jagiellonian University, Cracow

Jean Ward, University of Gdańsk

Jerzy Welna, University of Warsaw

Florian Zappe, University of Göttingen

## GUEST REVIEWERS

Magdalena Bator, University of Social Sciences

Bartłomiej Czaplicki, University of Warsaw

Joanna Esquibel, Independent scholar, Æ Academic Publishing

Dafina Genova, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University

Oleksandr Kapranov, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Artur Kijak, University of Silesia

Paweł Kornacki, University of Warsaw

Marcin Opacki, University of Warsaw

Marta Sylwanowicz, University of Social Sciences

Agnieszka Pantuchowicz, SWPS University of Social Sciences  
and Humanities

Paulina Pietrzak, University of Lodz

Anna Warso, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities

Jarosław Wiliński, Siedlce University of Natural Sciences  
and Humanities



UNIVERSITY  
OF WARSAW

*Paweł Ziomek*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1574-9132>

Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities

# Corpus-based Analysis of Verbal and Nominal Reduplication in Colloquial Singapore English

---

## Abstract

Reduplication has always been an important subject of morphology and language typology. Cross-linguistic studies have identified 45 functions of reduplication in 108 languages. Total reduplication is recognised as productive and systematic in Colloquial Singapore English (CSE), possibly due to language contact. The paper aims to present the cases of verbal and nominal reduplication in CSE described in the linguistic literature, and juxtapose them with the examples from the Singapore component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-SIN), which seem to be indicative of discrepancies in form and functions.

**Key words:** reduplication, corpus study, persuasion, affection, intensification, Colloquial Singapore English (CSE)

---

## 1. Introduction

Reduplication is a common word-formation process present in many languages. It has been extensively analysed cross-linguistically in terms of form and functions (e.g. Pott 1862; Wheatly 1866; Thun 1963; Moravcsik 1978; Rubino 2005; Fischer 2011). Reduplication is also particularly common in Colloquial Singapore English (CSE), as a possible result of substratal influence, and affects various grammatical categories (Lim and Wee 2001). However, due to space limitation, the paper aims to present the cases of nominal and verbal reduplication in CSE described to date and correlate them with corpus data. Prior to the analysis, the following sections provide background information on the form and selected functions of reduplication across languages with reference to CSE, as well as the methodology used for data interpretation.

## 2. Overview

The linguists understood reduplication differently and used different terminology, therefore various terms describing the same process have been used. Pott (1962) recognised *reduplication* as a partial repetition of a word, while for the total repetition of a word he used the term *geminatio*. Similarly, Gonda (1949, 171, in Thun 1963, 7) used word *geminatio* for the whole duplication of the word, together with *doubling*, *duplication* and *iteration*, and perceived *reduplication* as “the repetition of part of the word, usually at the beginning, but sometimes at the end”. On the other hand, to Sapir (1921, 76, in Thun 1963, 7), *reduplication* meant “repetition of all or part of the radical element”. Flexner (1975, 605, in Dienhart 1999, 7) maintained that *reduplication* “is considered any process whereby a word, syllable, or sound is repeated as part of an additional syllable in a word or as an additional word or word element in a compound word or phrase”. For Moravcsik (1978, 301), however, the Hungarian word *papa* [‘father’] should be regarded as reduplication for the reason that the sequence *pa* does not carry any meaning in that language. Since the above mentioned terminology appears to be ambiguous, it seems necessary to unify the terms and select the definition that best describes the phenomenon under question. For the purpose of this paper, *geminatio* is used for double consonants only; the terms (*re*)*iteration*, *doubling*, *duplication* and *repetition* are used for linguistic copying of any element, while *reduplication* is understood as “a pattern where the double or multiple occurrence of a sound string, syllable, morpheme or word within a larger syntagmatic unit is in systematic contrast with its single occurrence, with the iterated elements filling functionally non-distinct positions” (Moravcsik 1992, 323). Furthermore, the term *reduplication* denotes both the process and its product; a unit before undergoing reduplication is hereafter referred to as the *base*, whereas the repeated unit is described as the *copy*.

## 3. Forms of reduplication

In regard to form, reduplication can be divided into total and partial reduplication. Total reduplication involves the repetition of the whole base<sup>1</sup> (BASE + COPY<sup>n</sup>), e.g. Tausug *dayang* ‘madam’ – *dayangdayang* ‘princess’ (Rubino 2005, 14). The process, although not fully productive, is also present in Standard English, e.g. *to knap-knap*, *goody-goody*, *tap-tap*, *clutter-clutter* (Thun 1963, 211). Partial reduplication, in which just part of the base is copied, can take several forms. In one variation, the copy can be found in the initial (1a), medial (1b) or final part of the base (1c), cf. (Lǐ and Ponsford 2018, 54):

- (1a) *-mi'i* ['die out'] *-mi'i~mi-ki* ['always dying out']  
 (1b) *óokusunika* ['push'] *óoku<suun~>sunika* ['push (intensive)']  
 (1c) *maha* ['pant'] *aha~maha* ['panting very strongly']

In another variation, the copy can precede the base (2a), be infixed (2b), or follow the base (2c), cf.:

- (2a) *'o'out* ['burn'] *'o~'o'out* ['burn very much'] Rapanui  
 (Du Feu 1996, 191)  
 (2b) *hugándo* ['play'] *hu<gá~>gando* ['playing'] Chamorro  
 (Topping 1973, 103)  
 (2c) *gàdéyé* ['be fragile'] *gàdéyé~déyé* ['be quite fragile'] Zialo  
 (Babaev 2010, 137)

Again, some examples of partial reduplication can be found in English, i.e., *itsy-bitsy*, *egg-peg* or *tiddy-iddy* (Thun 1963).

#### 4. Functions of reduplication

Reduplication is associated with a number of morpho-syntactic and semantic properties. Recent studies have identified 45 functions of reduplication in 108 languages (see e.g. Li and Ponsford 2018). For instance, it can encode continuity (2a), intensification (3b), attenuation (3c) or affection (6d), (Lim and Wee 2001, 97), cf.:

- (3a) *teriak* ['to shout'] *teriak-teriak* ['to keep on shouting'] (Malay)  
 (3b) *cantik* ['beautiful'] *cantik-cantik* ['very beautiful'] (Malay)  
*hong* ['red'] *hong-hong* ['very red'] (Chinese)  
 (3c) *berjalan* ['to walk'] *berjalan-jalan* ['to walk around'] (Malay)  
*shuo* ['to say'] *shuo-shuo* ['to say a little'] (Chinese)  
 (3d) *jie* ['sister'] *jie-jie* ['elder sister'] (Chinese)

In some languages the same reduplication may serve opposite functions (Rubino 2005, 19). For instance, in Ilocano (Philippines), the CVC-distributive prefix used for nouns denotes limitation when employed with numbers, e.g. *sab-sábong* ['various flowers'] – *wal-waló* ['only eight']. Reduplication can also denote plurality (4a), create a new word (4b), or change the word class (4c), cf.:

- (4a) *lawi* ['to make a hole'] Luiseno, Uto-Aztecan, (California)  
*law-lawi* ['make two wholes']  
*lawa-láwi* ['to make many holes, more than two']  
 (4b) *wil* ['wheel'] *wilwil* ['bicycle'] Tok Pisin  
 (4c) *kandu* ['blood'] *kandukandu* ['red'] Kayardild (Pama-Nyungan)

## 5. Reduplication of Verbs in CSE

According to Wee (2004, 109), reduplication of verbs in CSE follows two patterns and encodes two different meanings. Reduplication involving one copy (5a–c), schematised as  $(BASE_V + COPY)_V$ , denotes attenuation; on the other hand, reduplication with two copies, represented as  $(BASE_V + COPY + COPY)_V$ , signifies continuity (5d–f), cf.:

- (5a) Don't always stay in the house. Go outside **walk walk**.  
 (5b) No traffic police... **stop stop** a while.  
 (5c) Ya, I was sick but really, nothing serious. **Cough-cough** a bit then no more already.  
 (5d) I **walk-walk-walk** then I fall down.  
 (5e) The bus no good, always **stop-stop-stop**.  
 (5f) Why you **cough-cough-cough** whole day long?

Wee (2004, 110) maintains that the reduplicated verbal forms are here “more casual or less sustained” than the base verb. Therefore, *walk walk* in (5a) means ‘stroll’, which suggests that the action “is now less directed or oriented towards a specific destination”. By reduplicating *stop* in (5b) the speaker wishes to stop for a short time. Analogically, reduplication in (5c) denotes having a slight cough. What is more, adverbials such as *a while* and *a bit* in (5bc) also indicate that the activities last for a rather short time. In Wee’s words (2004, 110), “the semantics of attenuative reduplication is really that of an activity performed over a short time frame and a meaning such as ‘casualness’ is an implicature rather than part of the semantics per se” so the primary goal of attenuative reduplication is to limit the time of the action and thus make it more casual or less focused. In contrast, the triplicated verb in (5d) indicates on-going activity lasting for a longer period of time. Similarly, *stop* (5e) repeated two times stresses the fact that the bus keeps on stopping, while *cough cough cough* (5f) is tantamount to ‘keep on coughing’.

According to Rejendra Singh (p.c., in Wee 2004, 109–111), the two models of verbal reduplication are related so that attenuative reduplication is subsequently subject to that of continuity. More specifically, attenuative reduplication provides a short time frame for the action described by the verb. This corresponds to “delimitative aspect” marked by verb reduplication in Mandarin Chinese,

which means “doing an action ‘a little bit’ or for a short period of time” (Li and Thompson 1981, 232). Such a reduction of the time period can then be an input for continuity reduplication, which results in the extension of the time frame in which the action is performed. Following that theory, the model of continuity reduplication should be modified to  $((\text{BASE}_V + \text{COPY}) + \text{COPY})_V$ . As it stands now, verbal reduplication serves as a morphological device to show semantics either of a shorter or a longer time period depending on the number of copies.

It is also worth mentioning that verbal reduplication is conditioned by certain constraints. According to Lim (1996, in Fong 2004, 92), only verbs that consist up to two syllables reduplicate, so *participate participate* or *continue continue* are considered unacceptable. What is more, verbs undergo reduplication only in the infinitival form, so formations listed in (6) are also ill-formed.

- (6a) \*He **plays-plays** for a while only *lah*.  
 (6b) \*She **danced-danced** for a while then stop already.  
 (6c) \*The phone **rang-rang** for a while and then stop already.

Another factor influencing the reduplication of verbs is their aspectual class (Fong 2004, 93). In terms of aspectual qualities, verbs can be classified into four categories, i.e. States, Activities, Accomplishments and Achievements (Rothstein 2004, 6). To distinguish between them various diagnostics have been proposed (see, e.g., Dowty 1979, 60). In the case of CSE, however, tests suggested by Lim (in Fong 2004, 93–95) should be applied since they “(...) have a local flavour that CSE speakers can relate better to, and avoid certain pitfalls that some of Dowty’s tests have in relation to CSE data”. The tests operate in relation to CSE as follows:

A) If a verb phrase (VP) can occur with *go* or *go and* it can be classified as an Activity or an Accomplishment. Otherwise, VP is labelled as States or Achievements, cf.:

- (7a) \*You *go and* know (the answer). (State)  
 (7b) I *go and* swim later. (Activity)  
 (7c) \*I *go and* notice the painting. (Achievement)  
 (7d) She *go and* paint finish a picture. (She will go and complete painting a picture) (Accomplishment)

What is more, a VP is also a State or an Achievement when it occurs with *go* or *go and* but is used to exert rhetorical or pragmatic effect, cf.

- (8a) Who ask you to *go and* believe him? (It’s your fault for believing him) (State)  
 (8b) My hamster *go and* die today. (My hamster died on me today) (Achievement)

B) If a VP can occur with *for a while* and the adverbial modifies the whole event denoted by the verb it is either a State or an Activity (9ab). If, however, *for a while* occurring with a verb modifies the sentence in a way that the result of an action described by the verb lasts for a while, the verb belongs to Achievement or Accomplishment category (9cd), cf.:

- (9a) I know the answer *for a while*. (State)
- (9b) I swim *for a while*. (Activity)
- (9c) I lost my wallet *for a while*. (Achievement) (The wallet was lost for a while)
- (9d) Mary go to John's house *for a while*. (Marry stayed at John's for a while, not was going there for while) (Accomplishment)

However, if a VP fails to occur with *for a while* it is categorised as an Achievement, cf.:

- (10) \*I notice the painting *for a while*. (Achievement)

To better illustrate aspectual classes with regard to the constraints on verbal reduplication, Fong (2004, 95) provides the following examples:

- (11a) She **sweep sweep** the floor only what. [*go and* sweep, sweep *for a while*]
- (11b) **Push push** a bit can? [*go and* push, push *for a while*]
- (11c) \*Don't bother to ask him lah. He only **know know** a bit. [*\*go and* know, know *for a while* and forget it]
- (11d) \*So fierce for what? **Forget forget** a bit only what. [*\*go and* forget]
- (11e) \*Can **walk walk** to the beach. [*go and* walk]

As shown in (11), even mono- or disyllabic verbs may be resistant to reduplication. The reason for such selectiveness may be that reduplication of verbs is sensitive to their aspectual class. The tests show that sentences (11a) and (11b) include Activities as both *sweep* and *push* occur with *go and* and *for a while*. The verb in (11c) falls into State category since it does not occur with *go and*, while the adverbial *for a while* modifies the whole sentence. Similarly, the verb in (11d) does not occur with *go and*, whereas *for a while* refers to the result state after forgetting. Therefore, the verb 'to forget' is categorised as an Achievement. Finally, *walk* (11e) is an Accomplishment since it satisfies *go and* criterion (*go and* walk to the beach) and, when conjoined with *for a while*, the adverbial does not refer to the duration of walking to the beach, but to being on the beach for a while. To justify such restrictions, Ho (1998, in Fong 2004, 96) claims that only verbs categorised as Activities which denote unbounded process without inherent endpoints undergo reduplication.

## 6. Reduplication of Nouns in CSE

According to Wee (2004, 107), reduplication of nouns in CSE involves mono- and bisyllabic words, and can be schematically presented as (BASE<sub>N</sub> + COPY)<sub>N</sub> where both a base and a copy are nominal (12). It affects nouns which mainly refer to either family members or close friends. As a result, nominal reduplication indicates affection and intimacy, cf.:

(12a) Where is your **boy-boy**?

(12b) We **buddy-buddy**. You don't play me out, ok?

Consequently, *boy-boy* in (12a) means 'boyfriend' or 'son'<sup>2</sup>, while *buddy-buddy* (12b) refers to a very close male friend (Wee 2004, 106-107). Similarly, the names of individuals also undergo reduplication, which encodes affection, as in (13):

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| (13a) I'm looking for Ry-Ry.        | (Henry)          |
| (13b) Have you seen Yeoh-Yeoh?      | (Choon Yeoh)     |
| (13c) Jeff-Jeff, come and see this. | (Jeffrey)        |
| (13d) Su-Su, come here.             | (Suzie is a dog) |

All examples in (13) are first abbreviated to a one-syllable word and then reduplicated so that a speaker addresses Henry as *Ry-Ry* (13a) and Choon Yeoh as *Yeoh-Yeoh*<sup>3</sup> (13b). The process results in the affectionate form indicating a close bond between the speaker and the addressee. As (13d) shows, nominal reduplication encoding affection is also possible with the reference to pets. Therefore, reduplications such as \**Monday-Monday*, \**cow-cow*, \**water-water* are considered ill-formed, as they include common nouns for which the feeling of affection is unlikely to hold (Wee 2004, 107).

Wong (2003) believes that reduplication of names involves only monosyllabic words and produces one copy. He elaborates on its use by elucidating sociolinguistic factors that influence this grammatical device in CSE. According to him, reduplication of address forms is possibly derived from Chinese languages and motivated by the cultural attitudes of CSE speakers, which play a significant role in establishing social identities and the integrity of multiethnic speech community.

The scholar distinguishes hetero- and homotonal reduplication of names represented by two different set of pitch contours. In heterotonal reduplication one set has the pitch contours of 21–35 (approximating tone 2 and 3 of Mandarin), which may be represented by diacritics, e.g., *bǒy bóy* and *Wěi Wéi*. The other reduplication has the same pitch contours for both characters irrespective of the pitch contour, therefore the two characters are pronounced the same way, as in *Mēw Mēw* (Mew Yuen) and *Cute Cute*<sup>4</sup> (Wong 2003, 61; 2014, 63).



Heterotonal reduplication of names seems to be child-oriented and indicates that the addressee is little and needs care. In Wong's words, its "use reflects kind of affection or good feelings on the part of the speaker, who presumably wants good things for the addressee" (2014, 66). The scholar provides an example of parents and relatives of an older generation endearingly referring to a child as *bōy bōy* (tonal) instead of using his personal name *Adam*, either as a form of address or as a reference to a third person in speech, cf.:

- (14a) (...) because of keeping an eye on **boy boy** for the whole day.
- (14b) (...) **boy boy** knows how to walk for a few steps.
- (14c) Adam **boy boy** has grown a fair bit now (...)
- (14d) **Boy Boy** has added a few more spoken words to his existing ones.

Even though *boy boy* is not a personal name, *Adam boy boy* may come from *Adam boy*. Such expression is sometimes used in Singapore English to address a small boy. It seems plausible that reduplication of *boy* is a calque from Cantonese '仔' /tʰsai/ ['son'] reduplicated to *tsāi tsāi*. Therefore, *bōy bōy* functions like a reduplicated name and encodes the same pragmatic attitude as, for instance, *Mín Mín* (Wong 2003, 63).

Wong (2014) hypothesises that adults reduplicate names to facilitate communication with children and help them to remember their names. This idea seems to be supported by the observation that reduplicated structures are present in the language development of infants (Abbi 1992, 156). Based on personal observations, he claims that reduplication appears to be used more often by mothers than fathers due to stronger maternal bond, and the assumption that mothers interact with children most frequently. Reduplication of names can also be used by older family members addressing adult children of a younger generation to show affection and build a family-like relationship. Such reduplication (an extension of mother-child prototype) may imply that the addressee is perceived as small, childlike, emotionally dependent or needs special attention reserved for a child. In consequence, adults may find the reduplication embarrassing as it may undermine their status as independent individuals. Finally, reduplication of names can be extended to friends and colleagues to demonstrate familiarity and some form of affection between interlocutors, which still marks age differences between them.

By contrast, homotonal reduplication seems not to be as common among CSE speakers as heterotonal reduplication. According to Wong, homotonal reduplication can be used, for instance, between two colleagues who perceive themselves as equals in terms of age and other forms of ranking. Such reduplication may demonstrate some form of affection, positive feelings and a degree of familiarity between the interlocutors. Interestingly, the use of hetero- and homotonal reduplication seems not to exclude one another given the fact that people can relate each other in various ways. For instance, the older friend can relate to the

younger either as *Cute Cute* or *Wěnwén* (Jiāwén) depending on the context and attitude (2014, 67-68).

## 6. Data and Methodology

The corpus used for the analysis is the Singapore component of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE-SIN) including eleven corpora of different varieties of English. ICE-SIN was compiled by the members of the Department of English Language and Literature from the National University of Singapore. The corpus comprises over 1 million words in 500 texts, which are grouped into written and spoken categories. Spoken texts are transcribed dialogues and monologues, while the written ones come from printed and non-printed materials. Since reduplication is a characteristic feature of CSE and as such should not occur in a written language, any repetitions of words found in written texts were not taken into consideration. Altogether, the spoken part of the corpus contains 665,029 words collected in 300 texts. The texts included in the spoken part of the corpus were processed with Antconc 3.2.4w. software, using Regex search option to identify repetitive units. A detailed classification of spoken categories in ICE-SIN is presented below:

Dialogue S1	Monologue S2
<b>Private – 100 texts</b>	<b>Unscripted – 70 texts</b>
Direct conversations – 90 texts (S1A-001-90)	Spontaneous commentaries – 20 texts (S2A-001-020)
Telephone calls – 10 texts (S1A-091-100)	Unscripted speeches – 30 texts (S2A-021-050)
<b>Public – 80 texts</b>	Demonstrations – 10 texts (S2A-051-060)
Classroom lessons – 20 texts (S1B-001-020)	Legal presentations – 10 texts (S2A-061-070)
Broadcast discussions – 20 texts (S1B-021-040)	
Broadcast interviews – 10 texts (S1B-041-050)	<b>Scripted – 50 texts</b>
Parliamentary debates – 10 texts (S1B-051-060)	Broadcast news – 20 texts (S2B-001-020)
Legal cross-examinations – 10 texts (S1B-061-070)	Broadcast talks – 20 texts (S2B-021-040)
Business transactions – 10 texts (S1B-071-080)	Speeches (not broadcast) – 10 texts (S2B-041-050)

Table 1: Schematic representation of the spoken text types in ICE-SIN

## 7. Examples of verbal reduplication in ICE-SIN

The corpus data provided 14 cases of verbal reduplications which follow the theories presented thus far. Exemplified reduplications in (15) follow the (BASE<sub>v</sub> + COPY)<sub>v</sub> model and seem to perform attenuative function. For instance, *cook cook* (15a) implies that the process of cooking lasts for a short period of time and may be considered as easy and casual. Analogically, *see see* (15d) suggests a short time frame as the speaker emphasises that his interlocutor sees another person only three days a week. What is more, all 10 reduplications in (15) involve mono- and disyllabic verbs which belong to Activity category resistant to aspectual class constraints.

- (15a) So probably I'll **cook cook** for them lor <ICE-SIN:S1A-007#123:1:B>  
 (15b) No because Denise knows I don't just don't **play play** lor <ICE-SIN:S1A-052#72:1:B>  
 (15c) So they just go in they **look look** whatever looks interesting and then they just take it out <ICE-SIN:S2A-031#55:1:A>  
 (15d) But that means you only **see see** her for three days Thursday Friday Saturday <ICE-SIN:S1A-057#15:1:A>  
 (15e) If you **send send** her out of the kitchen ah there won't any noise leh <ICE-SIN:S1A-064#39:1:B>  
 (15f) But can use like uhm it's a the the bar in the middle of the pool so you can **swim swim** <ICE-SIN:S1A-080#281:1:A>  
 (15g) So every time you just **chop chop** ah <ICE-SIN:S1A-084#116:1:A>  
 (15h) Then later on **shake shake** you know <ICE-SIN:S1A-008#129:1:A>  
 (15i) So I was very hesitant so I told him I need to **think think** about it <ICE-SIN:S1A-036#120:1:B>  
 (15j) So you just **refresh refresh** lah <ICE-SIN:S1A-084#253:1:A>

The data in (16) illustrate 4 reduplications adhering to (BASE<sub>v</sub> + COPY + COPY)<sub>v</sub> pattern, and expressing the continuity of the action expressed by the verb. As a result, triplication of *talk* (16a) or *work* (16b) extends the time frame of the actions. Again, all verbs fall into Activity category with no constraints on reduplication.

- (16a) Then she saw me. Then after she sat she **talk talk talk** <ICE-SIN:S1A-88#127:1:A>  
 (16b) And then it happens that one of my good friend my very good friend he is now in China doing mission **work work work** for six months <ICE-SIN:S1A-078#65:1:B>  
 (16c) So these guys **go go go** then when you report nuh <ICE-SIN:S1A-096#304:2:E>

- (16d) They have these women who who take some potion to seduce men things like that and they appear with the cloth **fly fly fly** <ICE-SIN:S1A-030#317:1:B>

However, ICE-SIN also listed some cases of verbal reduplication inconsistent with the from paradigm. The data in (17) include 4 examples in a form different from the infinitive, cf.:

- (17a) I like the part so touching the Joe came back his uncle **came came** to visit his art gallery <ICE-SIN:S1A-090#185:1:B>  
 (17b) Quite terrible **watching watching** them <ICE-SIN:S1A-051#225:1:A>  
 (17c) Oh I basically I've been just **watching watching** movies and going shopping and uh bought a lot of things <ICE-SIN:S1A-074#28:1:B>  
 (17d) So when the moment I came home from tuition I can't even go into the room so I was **crying crying crying** <ICE-SIN:S1A-069#291:2:C>

As mentioned above, only infinitival verbs belonging to Actives can reduplicate in CSE. Therefore, reduplications in (17a–d) should be considered unacceptable because the verbs are in the preterite, or in the present participle. The VP in (17a), for instance, is an Accomplishment rather than Active. However, despite being morphologically marked and non-Actives, the reduplicated forms in (17a–c) seem to convey attenuative meaning. Triplication of *crying* in (17d), as any other triplication, appears to denote continuity although it does not agree in form.

Apart from the cases in which the base does not meet reduplication criteria, the corpus search engine listed 7 reduplications which follow the form paradigm, but convey the unpredicted meaning, cf.:

- (18a) Don't don't think lateral. **Think think** simply. <ICE-SIN:S1A-005#171:1:A>  
 (18b) If you don't you see logic problem is application of set principles **set set** rules lah <ICE-SIN:S2A-040#28:1:A>  
 (18c) <unclear> word </unclear> no no **tell tell** me about your golfing <ICE-SIN:S1A-042#279:1:A>  
 (18d) Yah okay **read read** the last paragraph <ICE-SIN:S1B-008#147:1:A>  
 (18e) Go on **open open** <ICE-SIN:S1A-056#85:1:C>  
 (18f) **Walk Walk** to Botanical Gardens <ICE-SIN:S1A-049#29:1:C>  
 (18g) I do but how to how to get out of Singapore. I mean so many obligations then got to stay **finish finish** my work. <ICE-SIN:S1A-050#56:1:A>

Even though the cases in (18) include single-copy reduplications it remains doubtful whether they serve attenuative function. In (18a) the speaker reduplicates *think* probably to persuade the interlocutor to think in a simple way or to express a strong advice to do so, rather than think for a short time. Similarly, reduplication in (18b) or (18c) might be interpreted as urging someone to set the rules or

to tell something more about golfing. By analogy, *read read* (18d) and *open open* (18e) seem to imply that the speakers encourage their interlocutors to take the actions denoted by the reduplicated verbs, or to perform those actions immediately. Reduplication of *walk* (18f) might emphasise the speaker's willingness and persuasive attitude to go to Botanical Gardens. Moreover, the verb *walk* falls into Accomplishment category since, in accordance with Lim's test, the adverbial *for a while* would refer not to walking for a while to Botanical Gardens but to staying there for a while (compare the examples (18a) and (18d)). The same aspectual class can be observed in (18g), where the function of reduplication is highly ambiguous. Therefore, the given examples might be indicative of intensifying or persuasive function of verbal reduplication not mentioned in the literature on the subject. Interestingly, ICE-SIN provided 8 cases of verbal reduplications targeting modal verbs, cf. (19):

- (19a) Because the thing is I just want I **need need** to know roughly how much it'll cost lah <ICE-SIN:S1A-096#28:1:B>
- (19b) Ya **should should** be quite fun <ICE-SIN:S1A-097#73:1:B>
- (19c) I'm **should should** be free to live my life as I wish <ICE-SIN:S1B-025#77:1:H>
- (19d) But the day **might might** come as we talk about the free trade uh (...) <ICE-SIN:S1B-033#10:1:A>
- (19e) **Can can** ya lah <ICE-SIN:S1A-094#209:1:B>
- (19f) **Can can can** take a thousand <ICE-SIN:S1A-026#144:2:D>
- (19g) Cannot no cannot walk around and **cannot cannot cannot** close your eyes and you got to the and must always like that <ICE-SIN:S1A-065#41:1:A>
- (19h) **Must must** have description also <ICE-SIN:S1A-034#X298:1:C>

The data show that reduplication of modals appears to serve a function quite distinct from attenuation and continuity. It can be hypothesised that multiple reduplications here underpin the meaning of the verb. For instance, *need need* (19a) creates the impression that the speaker indeed needs to familiarise himself with the costs of production of a certain product. Similarly, reduplicated *should* (19bc) or *might* (19d) appear to emphasise the assumption conveyed by the verbs, as does the reduplication of *can* (19e–g) and *must* (19h). Hence, reduplication seems to perform intensifying function.

## 8. Examples of nominal reduplication in ICE-SIN

As regards nouns, the ICE-SIN corpus yielded 10 examples of nominal reduplication. Three cases include reduplication of monosyllabic names, which seem to satisfy the reduplication criteria in terms of form and functions, cf.:

- (20a) A: Uhm my brother's wha the two sons oh very naughty  
 B: Oh I know Nicholas and who ah  
 A: Heh the other one doesn't have got a Christian name  
 B: Oh doesn't have ah  
 A: So one is **boy boy**. One is **Wei Wei**. Ah very tedious... <ICE-SIN:S1A-091#84:1:C>
- (20b) A: I can't I can't recall having it you know. I've asked you to check with Nina because uh she was handling the thing...  
 B: Because **Jin Jin** said uh she returned the tape to you... **Jin Jin** was the one who did the taping of the Friday Background and said uh news opening piece... <ICE-SIN:S1A-015#125:1:A>

In (20a) two women talk about their younger family members. One tells about her two small nieces she is strongly attached to, while the other mentions her two nephews. Reduplication of *boy boy* seems to be derived by the same process that reduplicates Chinese names exemplified in (13), while *Wei Wei* appears to fit the paradigm of reduplication denoting affection expressed by a family member of an older generation. In (20b), two colleagues discuss activities regarding their duties at work, and one of them refers to a third person as *Jin Jin*. Even though ICE-SIN fails to include tonal marking to distinguish between heterotonal and homotonal reduplication, the context of conversation seems suitable for the use of homotonal reduplication among friends. However, it remains questionable whether *Jin Jin* should be regarded as a homo-tonally reduplicated name, or as the official names given at birth. The examples listed in (21) include reduplications of disyllabic words with one copy, cf.:

- (21a) Say who told you my **mummy mummy** is a graduate? She study more than you. She knows better than you. <ICE-SIN:S1A-006#180:1:B>  
 (21b) No this this this woman's uh new **boyfriend boyfriend** uh also work in SBC but is uh <unclear> word </unclear> <ICE-SIN:S1A-006#201:1:B>

In (21a), *mummy mummy* obviously points at a close relationship between a parent and a child. Interestingly, in this case the speaker is younger than the addressee. The reduplication in (21b), however, seems disputable. Reduplicated *boyfriend* refers to a certain woman's boyfriend, yet, as indicated by the phrase "this woman's" the speaker does not seem to be her close friend. It seems difficult then to suggest that her boyfriend is spoken of with affection. Hence, the reduplication here may rather serve the function of pointing to a particular person or just pointing out that the woman has got a new boyfriend. The remaining cases in (22) seem not to follow the pattern of nominal reduplication or serve discussed functions, cf.:

- (22a) Can you imagine the time where they took over was harsh and the country was poor and it was just *work work work work work* and no play <ICE-SIN:S1A-072#137:1:B>
- (22b) And Hong Kong now and people are there people there are very materialistic. They just make **money money money money** regardless.
- (22c) This it's getting quite bad in Shanghai and the there're heads and heads and heads everywhere you go just you see **people people people** everywhere. <ICE-SIN:S1A-072#73-75:1:B>
- (22d) And the **money money money** all over the place you have got to have a whole bunch of accountants to look after the money to look after the oil to look after the stock <ICE-SIN:S2A-046#62:1:A>
- (22e) But I do find that what you need is **discipline discipline discipline** and that is really the ultimatum of uh part-time education. <ICE-SIN:S1B-022#72:1:G>

In (22a) two speakers talk about hard times when Mao Tse-tung went to power. By reduplicating *work* four times, the speaker is apparently trying to emphasise constant work or the fact it was laborious, or perhaps both. The same intensifying function may be identified in (22b), where two speakers express their opinion about the cities they live in. Speaker B is complaining about money-oriented inhabitants of Hong Kong and by reduplicating *money* seems to highlight their materialistic nature. Similarly, reduplication of *people* (22c) and *money* (22d) suggests that the speaker wishes to emphasise their number or amount. Similarly, triplication of *discipline* in (22e) may well stress the importance of discipline when studying part-time.

## 9. Conclusions

The theoretical literature abounds in studies categorising and exploring numerous forms and functions of reduplication. The process is extremely common and motivated on morpho-syntactic, semantic and pragmatic grounds across languages. Given that it seems not to be productive in English, reduplication in CSE may be attributed to the influence of substrates languages. The researches to date have shown that reduplication in CSE is regarded as systematic and patterned. It encodes continuity and attenuation in case of verbs, and closeness and affection in case of nouns. What is more, reduplication of names appears to show linguistic resourcefulness of CSE speakers to mark culture-specific relationship between interlocutors such as age, seniority and generation differences, which are clearly marked in Chinese languages and placed higher in the hierarchy of values in comparison to Anglo culture. The corpus data show that verbal reduplication is indeed productive in CSE and follows established paradigms (14 cases); however, ICE-SIN provides also a substantial number of counterexamples implicating different proprieties

(19 cases). Firstly, verbal reduplication seems to affect, although quite rarely, not only infinitives but also verbs in the preterite and past participle. Secondly, it also targets verbs irrespective of the aspectual class. Finally, the majority of verbal reduplications in ICE-SIN seem to imply persuasion to perform the action denoted by the verb or intensify the verb meaning. Similarly, nominal reduplication also appears not to fully satisfy the paradigms in terms of form or function. Among 10 nominal reduplications identified in ICE-SIN, only 4 examples imply affection and involve one copy of a mono- and/or disyllabic word. All the others seem to perform relatively demonstrative, intensifying, or emphatic function. What is more, ICE-SIN showed the cases of reduplication with more than two copies and/or involving more than two syllables. Based on the ICE-SIN data with the ratio of 58% of *erroneous* reduplications to 42% of *correct* ones, it might be concluded that verbal and nominal reduplication in CSE is a multifaceted process with more aspects than have been so far described in literature on CSE. In-depth studies conducted on a large population seem necessary to get insight in the nature of reduplication in CSE and account for such discrepancies.

## Notes

- 1 The base can be copied two or more times (triplication, quadruplication, etc.); however, for the purpose of the paper, the term *reduplication* denotes all cases despite the number of copies.
- 2 According to Wong (2003, 67), *boy boy* is not polysemous and, even though it may have the same referent, it does not mean ‘boyfriend’ or ‘son’. The expression can be used to address one’s son or one’s boyfriend because of its unitary pragmatic meaning that allows itself to apply to a boyfriend and a son.
- 3 A full Chinese name consists of the family name followed by the personal name. In Chinese-Singapore culture, the personal name usually has two characters. The first character is typically shared by siblings and sometimes even by paternal cousins of the same gender within one family. Moreover, it can also stand for generation, so that each generation uses a different character. The other character is normally involved in reduplication (Wong 2003, 62).
- 4 *Cute Cute* is nickname of a petite girl given by her older female colleague. The reduplicated character is not tonal (Wong 2014, 63).

## References

- Abbi, Anvita. 1992. *Reduplication in South Asian Languages: An Areal, Typological, and Historical Study*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.



- Babaev, Kirill V. 2010. *Zialo: The Newly-Discovered Mande Language of Guinea*. München: Lincom Europa.
- Dienhart, John M. 1999. "Stress in Reduplicative Compounds: Mish-Mash or Hocus-Pocus?" *American Speech* 74.1: 3–37.
- Dowty, David. 1979. *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing.
- Du Feu, Veronica. 1996. *Rapanui*. London: Routledge.
- Fischer, Olga. 2011. "Cognitive Iconic Grounding of Reduplication in Language." *Semblance and Signification*. Ed. Pascal Michelucci, Olga Fischer, and Christina Ljungberg. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 55–81.
- Flexner, Stuart Berg. 1975. "Introduction to the Appendix." *Dictionary of American Slang*. Comp. and ed. Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Crowell. 596–608.
- Fong, Vivienne. 2004. "The Verbal Cluster." *Singapore English. A Grammatical Description*. Ed. Lisa Lim. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 92–97.
- Gonda, Jan. 1949. "The Function of Word Duplication in Indonesian Languages." *Lingua* 2: 170–197.
- Ho, Hung Yee Ivy. 1998. "A Study of Reduplication in Singapore Colloquial English." B.A. Honours, National University of Singapore.
- Li, Charles N., and Sandra A. Thompson. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lǐ, Yuèyuán and Dan Ponsford. 2018. "Predicative Reduplication: Functions, their Relationships and Iconicities." *Linguistic Typology* 22.1: 51–117.
- Lim, Choon Yeoh. 1996. "Reduplication in SCE". B.A. Honours, National University of Singapore.
- Lim, Choon Y., and Lionel Wee. 2001. "Reduplication in Colloquial Singapore English." *Evolving Identities: The English Language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Ed. Vincent B.Y. Ooi. Singapore: Times Academic Press. 89–111.
- Moravcsik, Edith. 1978. "Reduplicative Constructions." *Universals of Human Language*. Vol.3: *Word Structure*. Ed. Joseph H. Greenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 297–334.
- Moravcsik, Edith. 1992. "Reduplication." *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Ed. William Birght. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 323–324.
- Pakir, Anne, ed. 1992. *International Corpus of English – Singapore Component*. National University of Singapore (CD-ROM).
- Pott, August F. 1862. *Doppelung (Reduplikation, Geminatio) als eines der wichtigsten Bildungsmittel der Sprache, beleuchtet aus Sprachen aller Welttheile*. Lemgo, Detmold: Meyer.
- Rothstein, Susan. 2004. *Structuring Events: A Study in the Semantics of Lexical Aspect*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- Rubino, Carl. 2005. "Reduplication: Form, Function and Distribution." *Studies on Reduplication*. Ed. Bernard Hurch. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 11–30.
- Sapir, Edward. 1921. *Language. An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York.
- Thun, Nils. 1963. *Reduplicative Words in English. A Study of Formations of the Types Tick-Tick, Hurly-Burly and Shilly-Shally*. Sweden: Uppsala.
- Topping, Donald M. 1973. *Chamorro Reference Grammar*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Wee, Lionel. 2004. "Reduplication and Discourse Particles." *Singapore English. A Grammatical Description*. Ed. Lisa Lim. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 106–117.
- Wheatly, Henry B. 1866. *Dictionary of Repetitive Words in the English Language*. London: Asher and Co.
- Wong, Jock. 2003. "The Reduplication of Chinese Names in Singapore English". *RASK* 19: 47–85.
- Wong, Jock. 2014. *The Culture of Singapore English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.