

Iconic Coding of Conceptualization: Hakka Reduplicative Constructions*

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Previous studies on the meaning of reduplication have proposed plausible accounts of the relatedness among various senses associated with it. The iconicity principle is often acclaimed as the motivation behind this process. However, reduplication can be associated with senses such as intensification and attenuation that are inconsistent with each other. The latter even seriously challenges the iconicity principle. To resolve this fundamental problem, this study, using Hakka reduplicative constructions as illustration, has the following claims. First of all, it is argued that iconicity indeed works for reduplication, conforming and non-conforming senses included. Crucially, it is demonstrated that reduplication is among an array of linguistic expressions along a scale, which increases their extensiveness. For the purpose of communication, a reduplicative form, just like other linguistic expressions, is a strategy for the speaker to manifest his conceptualization of the world. Next, it is maintained that the seemingly inconsistent senses—particularly intensification and attenuation—can be resolved when the use of reduplication is taken into consideration. The senses associated with a reduplicative form can be explicitly elucidated once a larger linguistic context is examined at the same time. Essentially, the background knowledge assumed by the speaker will bring forward the best interpretation of a reduplicative form when suitable. In sum, the study not only gives a systematic and thorough investigation into Hakka reduplicative constructions in particular but also attests to the fact that iconic coding of a speaker's conceptualization is the key motivation behind such a linguistic strategy.

Key words: iconicity, imagic iconicity, diagrammatic iconicity, iconic coding, conceptualization, Hakka reduplicative constructions

1. Introduction

Reduplication refers to the process whereby a whole construction in question or part of the construction in question is reiterated to form a new construction—the former

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being a total reduplication whereas the latter a partial reduplication. Whereas many previous studies focus on the phonological and morphological alternations due to the repetition of the sound stream of linguistic expressions, others probe into the meaning properties exhibited by the reduplicative forms. In many languages around the world—whether Indo-European, Native American, Indonesian, Sinitic—reduplicative processes are well attested (cf. Moravcsik 1978, Regier 1998, Zhang 1999, Conradie 2003, Tai 1993). Various parts of speech are involved as components of reduplicative forms, including verb, noun, adjective, adverb, numeral and interjection (cf. Conradie 2003). Earlier studies have come up with general semantic characterizations of reduplicative constructions.

The most conspicuous observation lies in the repetition of form delineating the repetition of meaning. Hence, reiterated lexemes can refer to (1) plurality (e.g., *baabana* ‘coyotes’ vs. *bana* ‘coyoto’ in Papago; *renren* ‘everyone’ vs. *ren* ‘person’ in Mandarin; *vala-vala-valakā* ‘children’ vs. *valakā* ‘child’ in Rukaic) or (2) increased quantity (e.g., *čors čors kalel* ‘to march four by four’ vs. *čors* ‘four’ in Turkish; *yi dai dai mi* ‘sacks of rice’ vs. *yi dai mi* ‘a sack of rice’ in Mandarin); repeated constructions can signal (3) repeated action (e.g., *-pikpik* ‘touch it lightly repeatedly’ vs. *-pik* ‘touch it lightly’ in Tzeltal; *tobi-tobi* ‘keep crying’ vs. *tbii* ‘cry’ in Rukaic), or (4) duration of action or extension of an action or state (e.g., *khāw, dāən, dāən: paj naan* ‘He walked and walked for a long time’ vs. *dāən* ‘walk’ in Thai); and repetition can indicate (5) emphasis or intensification (e.g., *lal-lal* ‘very red’ vs. *lal* ‘red’ in Hindi; *lau-lau-sit-sit* ‘very honest’ vs. *lau-sit* ‘honest’ in Taiwanese Southern Min). In addition to these examples, many examples from different languages are, however, widely used to characterize totally discrepant meanings such as diminution (e.g., *walawer* ‘small creek’ and *wer* ‘creek’ in Agta) or attenuation (e.g., *maji-maji* ‘somewhat wet’ and *maji* ‘wet’ in Swahili; *lau-sit-lau-sit* ‘kind of honest’ in Taiwanese Southern Min).¹

With regard to the aforementioned generalizations of reduplicative constructions, analyses have been proposed to encompass all the senses. Regier (1998), adopting Lakoff’s (1987) idea of radial categories, claims that all the senses can be subsumed by two forces—iconicity and semantic extension. Specifically, he proposes that cross-linguistically

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¹ Examples of Papago, Turkish, Tzeltal, Thai, Agta, and Swahili are cited in Moravcsik (1978). Examples of Mandarin are cited from Zhang (1999), the Taiwanese Southern Min examples are from Tsao (2001), and examples of Rukaic are taken from Zeitoun (2001).

three core meanings are associated with reduplication—baby, repetition, and plurality. Attenuation and diminution are extended from the baby sense; continuation comes from repetition; intensification and other related senses are developed from plurality. In a similar vein, after citing data from different languages and examining data from various Chinese dialects, Zhang (1997, 1999) proposes an image schema to account for the iconic relationship between linguistic expressions and cognitive motivation.

Several other relevant studies regarding reduplication are Tsao (2001) and Conradie (2003). Unlike previous studies that focus solely on reduplicative forms, Tsao (2001) considers reduplication within the sentence. After comparing verbal and adjectival reduplication in both Mandarin and Taiwanese Southern Min, he proposes a radial structure for verbal reduplication in general, maintaining that with tentativeness as the core, all other senses including delimitness, metalinguistic use, short duration, rapid completion and trying action out can be derived. On the other hand, Conradie (2003), investigating Afrikaans reduplication, contends that the types of iconicity exhibited by the data can be accounted for with the interaction of iconic principles and grammar.

2. Iconic coding of language

Setting aside for the moment such atypical cases as attenuation and diminution, most scholars agree that iconicity motivates the coding of linguistic expressions, including the coding of reduplicative forms of language. Langacker (1991) holds that coding refers to “the relationship between a conceptualization one wishes to express and the linguistic structures activated for that purpose” (294). In other words, syntactic coding is not arbitrarily determined but strategically governed by the conceptual principle. Communication being a problem-solving activity, speakers look for target linguistic expressions to manifest their conceptualization (Langacker 1987, 1991, 1999). Linguistic structures, mirroring conceptual structures, reify what is conceptualized of the world by language users.

Essentially iconicity refers to the conceived similarity between linguistic form and conceptual structure (Haiman 1983, 1985, 1999, Harm 2003, Fischer & Nänny 2001, among others). Two types of iconicity are often recognized: imagic iconicity and diagrammatic iconicity. Whereas the former refers to oral/aural, tactile, visual signs, the latter consists of structural and semantic kinds (Fischer & Nänny 2001). Between the two types of iconicity, diagrammatic iconicity, which is more relevant to the current study, lies in the fact that the essence of a diagram is that the relationship between the parts of a complex sign resembles the relationship between the parts of the concept it represents (Harm 2003:225). There are two kinds of diagrammatic iconicity: isomorphic principle and motivational iconicity. Isomorphism is defined as one meaning standing

for one prototypically clustered set of meanings connected through family resemblances (Harm 2003:226). Motivational iconicity delineates that “categories that are marked morphologically [...] are also marked semantically” (Haiman 1983, 1985).

Such a principle has been employed to tackle many linguistic phenomena cross-linguistically. Tai (1993), for instance, proposes several cases from Chinese grammar to demonstrate iconic motivations behind them, including word order sequence (e.g., a temporal sequence principle in Tai (1985)), distance, separateness, juxtaposition, and reduplication. Harm (2003) provides another illustration of a tendency towards iconic coding in German word formation. Most importantly, such a principle neatly explicates reduplicative forms as argued by Conradie (2003) in dealing with Afrikaans reduplication. Crucially, according to the principle, the larger a form is, the more content is conveyed as noticed by Lakoff & Johnson’s (1980) metaphor more-of-form-is-more-of-content or Hiraga’s (1994) quantity iconicity, which specifies the correlation between the quantity of form and the quantity of meaning. Accordingly, since prototypically simple structures represent simple concepts whereas prototypically complex structures represent complex concepts (Lakoff 1987), reduplication is therefore utilized to characterize meanings such as plurality, increased quantity, iteration, intensification, and the like.

3. The issues

It is highly likely that iconicity plays a crucial role for the explanation of the senses associated with reduplication. Previous studies have provided quite a promising picture in terms of how various meanings are extended through semantic mechanisms. Reiger (1998), Zhang (1999), Tsao (2001), and Conradie (2003), for instance, represent such successful endeavors. Nevertheless, previous studies have somehow left out how to unify inconsistent senses—such as intensification vis-à-vis diminution/attenuation. The current study hence would like to approach this fundamental but unresolved problem that has been associated with reduplication in general. The iconicity principle offers a very plausible perspective for the analysis of reduplication. However, non-conforming data with senses such as diminution and attenuation go against such a principle. In fact, Zhang (1997, 1999) specifically points out two unresolved issues in previous studies of reduplication both cross-linguistically and cross-dialectally. On the one hand, adjectival reduplication sometimes denotes emphasis or intensification as in *yi tong tong shui* 一桶桶水 ‘a big barrel of water’ or *gua de gao gao de* 掛的高高的 ‘(something) is hung quite high’, but sometimes diminution or attenuation as in *yi wan wan fan* 一碗碗飯 ‘a small bowl of rice’ or *ge-zi gao gao de* 個子高高的 ‘(someone) is somewhat tall’. On the other hand, although most forms of verbal reduplication characterize iteration or extension of duration, some cases delineate shortening of duration as in {*Ta tui-xiu zhi*

hou, kan kan shu, xia xia qi... 他退休之後，看看書，下下棋... ‘He sometimes reads and sometimes plays chess after his retirement.’} (1997:42). Whereas he maintains that a repetition of language form is a manifestation of speakers’ cognitive conceptualization of the world and therefore should be the prototypical norm and that iconicity provides a key to the motivation behind reduplicative forms universally, he does not explain how atypical senses like diminution or attenuation can be subsumed under such a principle. Furthermore, as already mentioned previously, Tsao (2001) maintains that tentativeness is the core meaning of reduplication in both Mandarin and Taiwanese Southern Min, whereas triplication denotes vividness. If reduplication and triplication both undergo a similar conceptualization process, there remains an unresolved discrepancy.

As a matter of fact, in these studies, almost all the senses associated with reduplication are taken from the reduplicative forms alone. Except for Tsao (2001), who has taken sentential context into consideration, none of the other analyses have put reduplicative forms in context. In other words, the actual usage of reduplicative forms has not been incorporated into the proposals of those studies. As a result, research results are often quite confusing though not impossible as in the cases of *yi tong tong shui* 一桶桶水, which denotes a big barrel of water and *yi wan wan fan* 一碗碗飯, which denotes a small bowl of rice. Likewise, whereas *lau-sit-lau-sit* 老實老實在 Taiwanese Southern Min means ‘kind of honest’, *lau-lau-sit-sit* 老老實實 means ‘very honest’. These issues are definitely worth exploring so as to display reduplication consistently and holistically. In examining these issues, there are two reasons for drawing upon Hakka reduplicative constructions. First, although Hakka contains numerous reduplicative constructions (cf. Zhang 1998, Chiang 2002, Chung 1998, Lo 1988, Lu 1999, among others), they have rarely been referred to. Furthermore, since Hakka data have been paid less attention to in terms of theory constructing in previous studies, an in-depth analysis should yield strong empirical evidence to validate theory.²

4. Does iconicity really work?

In this section, data from Hakka language will be used to demonstrate how the iconicity principle can indeed account for not only conforming data but also for apparently non-conforming data. It is crucial to this study that the overall linguistic context must be taken into account when a reduplicative example is discussed. It is claimed that, as a reification of the speaker’s conceptualization of what he perceives of

² The data of Hakka reduplicative constructions are mainly taken from the following sources: *Miaoli Hakka Stories*, *Dongshi Hakka Stories*, and Hakka Stories from *Hakka Monthly*.

the world, reduplicating linguistic form is doubling meaning. By the same token, to triplicate a form is to represent even stronger extensiveness. And all the various senses associated with reduplicative constructions do demonstrate iconic grounding.

To re-examine reduplicative constructions in general, let us go back to the very essential notion introduced earlier—namely language as a strategy to conceptualize what is perceived by the speaker, in line with what is claimed by Langacker (1987, 1991, 1999), among others. Langacker (1987, 1999) calls it a usage event, whereby a linguistic expression is paired with a conceptualization symbolizing its complete contextual understanding. Accordingly, any linguistic choice should involve a communicative objective, be it passive-active alternation, dative alternation, or reduplicative constructions. For immediate communicative purposes, speakers can choose from an array of linguistic expressions to reify what is conceptualized in order to respond to a given situation. Langacker has put it quite well (1987:73): “[l]inguistic creativity is best examined...in the overall context of human knowledge, judgment, and problem-solving ability.”

In accordance with this line of argumentation, the iconicity principle is such an endeavor to delve into the motivation behind various ranges of manifestations of speakers’ understanding of the world. Based on this principle, what is exhibited by reduplicative constructions seems to fall well into place. A reduplicative noun construction usually indicates plurality; a reduplicative adjectival or adverbial construction usually signifies intensification; and a reduplicative verbal construction usually represents repetition or extension of duration. However, these generalizations, although self-explanatory, do not take usage within the larger linguistic context into consideration. When a larger linguistic context is examined, the very same patterns of reduplication can be interpreted in different fashions. Furthermore, senses such as attenuation and diminution that are observed to be associated with some cases of reduplicative constructions but that do not follow the generalization deserve further investigation. In what follows, arguments are to be provided to reveal that all the senses, including the seemingly non-conforming ones, can be subsumed under one single principle when language usage is taken into consideration. In particular, it is claimed that to express what is conceptualized of the world, a speaker chooses among various linguistic strategies, reduplication included. And the senses associated with reduplicative constructions are to be determined by the holistic integration of the meanings of the linguistic context.³ It is also maintained that the account

³ In accord with usage event in Langacker’s sense, context, following Schiffrin’s (1994) definition, refers to the background knowledge that is assumed by speakers and that leads to both language usage and its interpretation. I thank one of the reviewers who pointed out the necessity of explicit characterization of the term ‘context.’ Furthermore, such a stream of thought accords with what is declared by construction grammar in the shape of Goldberg (1995) and Jackendoff (1997), among others. But the essence of the constructional approach is not

advanced here can be generalized to all the phenomena exhibited by Hakka, Taiwanese Southern Min, and Mandarin.

First of all, let us start from the non-conforming senses—namely the so-called attenuation and diminution. The issue at hand is the following: Why would a speaker choose to augment a linguistic form to express a contraction of meaning? Such a strategy obviously goes against the cognition of language users. Even worse, there is no generalized rule as to which form increases meaning and which form decreases meaning, as we can see from the phenomena displayed by so many different languages (cf. Zhang 1997, 1999).⁴ Furthermore, such a complex cognitive activity is not only puzzling to native speakers but also inscrutable to second language learners.⁵ Therefore, it is high time to probe into this issue more carefully. Are there any reduplicative constructions associated with senses that are so inconsistent to the representations of the forms to begin with? This study is going to argue that the answer is negative. More specifically, it is going to claim that attenuation or diminution implies a relative sense, compared with other stronger senses represented by other linguistic strategies. For instance, observe the following linguistic expressions from Hakka which increase the amount of quality owned by the object described. Here *fung*¹¹ ‘red’ is illustrative:⁶

- (1) a. yit⁵-diam³¹ zu⁵⁵ m¹¹ fung¹¹
 a little all NEG red
 ‘not red at all’
 b. yit⁵-diam³¹-diam³¹ fung¹¹
 a little red
 ‘a little bit red’

detailed in this study and is left for the reader to pursue.

⁴ For example, Tsao (2001) points out that for disyllabic adjectives in the form of AB, there are two methods of reduplication. Whereas ABAB is used mainly for metalinguistic tentativeness, AABB is used to denote vividness. The issue arising here will be discussed below.

⁵ Reluctant to agree with Zhang’s (1997) judgment of the meanings of the data, Wang (1999), realizing the problem mentioned here, has put in considerable effort to explain the non-symmetric mapping of form and meaning of some reduplicative constructions. Although she has employed cognitive principles to explicate the issue, the fundamental problem pointed out here remains unaccounted for.

⁶ Hakka is here romanized in Pinyin. The following abbreviations are used for grammatical functions: AG, agent marker; ASP, aspect marker; CL, classifier; COMP, complementizer; NEG, negation marker; Q, question marker; POSS, possessive marker; PART, particle. The sinogram version of the Hakka data is provided in the appendix.

- c. *fung*¹¹ *fung*¹¹
 red red
 ‘kind of red’
- d. *fung*¹¹ *fung*¹¹ *fung*¹¹
 red red red
 ‘very red’
- e. *an*³¹ / *cin*⁵⁵ *fung*¹¹
 very / very much red
 ‘very very red’
- f. *si*³¹ *fung*¹¹ / *fung*¹¹ *do*⁵⁵ *voi*⁵⁵ *si*³¹
 die red red COMP will die
 ‘extremely red (in a derogatory sense)’

As shown by the above data, whereas the predicate *fung*¹¹ ‘red’ alone denotes the predication of a certain property, it is seldom used by a speaker to characterize what is perceived in the world. On the contrary, the other expressions, which arise from different strategies, are often employed to delineate the amount of redness a certain object has, depending on the degree of redness perceived by the speaker. The depiction indicates that a reduplicative form as in (1c) indeed is associated with a certain amount of increase of property but that such a sense is relatively smaller, compared with the quantity associated with other linguistic forms such as triplication as in (1d) or modification by degree adverbs as in (1e). Examples in (1f) overstate the redness of the object by using extreme case formulations in Norrick’s (2004) sense. Such an amount of quantity is relatively larger when compared with those denoted by (1a) or (1b), which clearly indicates a small degree of redness. In fact, examples from (1a) to (1f) increase the degree of redness on a scale, depending on what linguistic methods are utilized. Consequently, reduplication can sometimes signify intensification but can sometimes represent attenuation. By constructing a scale over which a reduplicative form ranges, it is not so surprising after all that contextual factors can indeed indicate very clearly which sense a reduplicative form will have.⁷ It is also evident that triplication can never be associated with attenuation or diminution, whereas some forms of reduplication do. As far as iconicity is concerned, more form should be indicative of more content (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

In fact, there is a corollary following from this line of argument. According to

⁷ One of the reviewers point out a very significant issue that was not dealt with in this study—namely prosody. Nor, in fact, is the issue of tone sandhi dealt with here. While it is true that phonological aspects can definitely influence the meaning of any linguistic form, such exploration will be left for another occasion.

iconic coding, the semantic discrepancy between the AABB type and the ABAB type in Hakka (as well as in Taiwanese Southern Min) is quite natural. According to Tsao's (2001) generalization, AABB denotes vividness and ABAB tentativeness. Upon closer scrutiny, we can see that AABB, which reduplicates A and B separately, illustrates double reduplication (i.e., in a shape of XXYY). ABAB, on the other hand, a reduplicative construction for disyllabic forms, recopies AB only once (i.e., in a shape of XY). Consequently, AABB usually denotes stronger meaning than ABAB does. Data from both Hakka and Taiwanese Southern Min support such an explanation, which also accords with Tsao's (2001) insight. Consider the following examples from Hakka.⁸

- (2) ng¹¹ he⁵⁵ mo¹¹ vuk² dai⁵⁵,
 you are NEG home live
 gi¹¹ pien¹¹ ngi¹¹ pien¹¹ ngi¹¹ mai⁵⁵ bun²⁴ ng¹¹ oi⁵⁵ mo¹¹?
 he cheap-cheap sell to you will Q
 'Since you don't have a place to live, he can sell (his house) to you in a kind of low price. What do you think?'
- (3) A¹¹-dung²⁴-gu²⁴ pi⁵⁵-giu²⁴ fung¹¹ dong¹¹ dong¹¹, yin²⁴-vi⁵⁵ mo¹¹ vi⁵⁵-sen²⁴-zi³¹,
 A-dung-male nose red quite quite because NEG tissue paper
 gin²⁴-song¹¹ iung⁵⁵ sam¹¹-ciu⁵⁵ cut² pi⁵⁵-sui³¹,
 often use sleeve wipe water
 su³¹-ciu⁵⁵ zo³¹-yi³¹ wu¹¹ wu¹¹ ngang⁵⁵ ngang⁵⁵, giet² sam²⁴ cen¹¹ lap⁵.
 sleeve already black black stiff stiff cover three layer wax
 'A-dung's nose is very red. Because he doesn't have any tissue paper, he often wipes his (sneezing) nose with his sleeves. Therefore, the sleeves are extremely dark and stiff as if they were covered with several layers of wax.'

These two examples, taken in a larger context, show a clear semantic contrast between the two types of reduplication. Whereas *pien¹¹ ngi¹¹ pien¹¹ ngi¹¹* in (2) connotes 'sort of',

⁸ Several types of reduplicative patterns are observed in Hakka. While researchers might not agree upon all the patterns, the following ten types are often mentioned: AA type (e.g., *giang²⁴ giang²⁴* 驚驚 'somewhat afraid'), AAA type (e.g., *bao¹¹ bao¹¹ bao¹¹* 飽飽飽 'completely full'), ABB type (e.g., *giang³¹ vang¹¹ vang¹¹* 頸橫橫 'very arrogant'), AAB type (e.g., *kiong¹¹ kiong¹¹ oi⁵⁵* 強強要 'to get something by force'), AAAA type (e.g., *so¹¹ so¹¹ so¹¹ so¹¹* 鬼鬼崇崇 'really sneaky'), ABAB type (e.g., *fung²⁴ sen¹¹ fung²⁴ sen¹¹* 風神風神 'quite awe-inspiring'), AABB type (e.g., *qiang⁵⁵ qiang⁵⁵ li⁵⁵ li⁵⁵* 淨淨利利 'very clean'), ABAC (e.g., *tai⁵⁵ zu³¹ tai⁵⁵ yi⁵⁵* 大主大意 'making a decision without consultation with the authorities'), ABCB type (e.g., *pi¹¹ yong²⁴ gut² yong²⁴* 皮癢骨癢 'very audacious'), ABCABC type (e.g., *cu⁵⁵ pi⁵⁵ lon³¹ cu⁵⁵ pi⁵⁵ lon³¹* 臭屁卵臭屁卵 'being a braggadocio'). Only some relevant types will be discussed in this study. The reader is referred to Chiang (2002).

*wu*¹¹ *wu*¹¹ *ngang*⁵⁵ *ngang*⁵⁵ in (3) signifies intensification.

The two examples illustrated in (2) and (3) lead us to propose a second argument advanced in this study—how linguistic context helps play a role in the interpretation of a reduplicative form. As a matter of fact, whether a reduplicative form should be interpreted as attenuation or intensification is highly dependent on the context in which it occurs. The seemingly inconsistent senses associated with reduplicative forms can be easily straightened out once the meanings of the other elements in the same linguistic context are taken into account. Consider the following passage, in which three cases of reduplicative forms in an AA type are found:

- (4) *gi*¹¹ *gong*³¹: *ngai*¹¹ *he*⁵⁵ *vi*¹¹-*do*⁵⁵ *oi*⁵⁵ *zo*⁵⁵ *ge*⁵⁵ *gien*¹¹ *meu*⁵⁵,
 he said I am due to want construct that CL temple
*ng*¹¹ *di*²⁴ *a*²⁴, *vuk*²-*ka*¹¹ *ge*⁵⁵ *dung*¹¹-*si*¹¹ *zo*⁵⁵-*ha*³¹ *mai*⁵⁵ ***qiang*⁵⁵-*qiang*⁵⁵**,
 you know PART home POSS stuff all sell empty empty
*za*³¹-*ha*⁵⁵ *ciu*⁵⁵ *cun*¹¹-*do*³¹ *ng*¹¹ ***tin*⁵⁵-*tin*⁵⁵**, *ng*¹¹ *han*¹¹ *an*³¹ *heu*⁵⁵-*sang*²⁴,
 now only left-ASP you just just you still very young
*iu*⁵⁵ *sang*²⁴-*loi*¹¹ ***ziang*¹¹ *ziang*¹¹ *nge*¹¹**, *en*¹¹ *yu*⁵⁵ *mo*¹¹ *se*⁵⁵-*ngin*¹¹-*e*¹¹,
 and look pretty pretty PART we also NEG kids
*ng*¹¹ *bun*²⁴ *ngai*¹¹ *bai*⁵⁵-*tok*²,
 you AG me beg
*ga*⁵⁵-*do*³¹ *ge*⁵⁵ *qien*¹¹ *ciu*⁵⁵ *na*²⁴-*loi*¹¹ *zo*⁵⁵ *ge*⁵⁵ *gien*¹¹ *meu*⁵⁵.
 Marry-ASP POSS money then take come build that CL temple
 ‘He said: My intention is to rebuild that temple, you know. We have sold everything in our house. You are the only thing left. Since you are still so young, and look kind of pretty, and since we don’t have any kids, I’m begging you to marry (that rich man). The money we got from your marriage will be used to construct that temple.’

This passage is taken from a story about a man who wants to renovate a run-down temple housing the idol of Guanyin, goddess of mercy. After selling everything in his home, he still does not have enough money for the job. He therefore begs his wife to pose as his sister so he can marry her off to a rich man, who would then give them a handsome sum of money in return. Then this fellow could use the money thus acquired to rebuild the temple. Now from the background knowledge adduced from the linguistic context, the three AA type reduplicative forms differ in meaning. The first (*qiang*⁵⁵-*qiang*⁵⁵ ‘completely empty’) expresses how the couple is still short of cash, despite having sold off every single item in their home. Hence the reduplicative form in question denotes intensification. Likewise, the second reduplicative form (*tin*⁵⁵ *tin*⁵⁵ ‘just’) imparts intensification to emphasize the fact that the wife is the only saleable object left in the

house. The third reduplicative form *ziang¹¹ ziang¹¹ nge¹¹* ‘kind of pretty’, however, delineates attenuation. The speaker is trying to convince his wife that with her young and pretty looks she could fetch a good price, if she were willing to marry the rich guy. Notice that the particle *nge¹¹* after *ziang¹¹ ziang¹¹* helps to characterize the “sort of” flavor as the discourse unfolds.

Here is another example to illustrate these points:

- (5) “A¹¹-mei¹¹-oi²⁴! Yu²⁴ gui³¹ yo²⁴!” ya³¹ ge⁵⁵ se⁵⁵-moi⁵⁵ bien⁵⁵-zo⁵⁵
 my goodness! Have ghost PART this CL lady become
 yit⁵ ge⁵⁵ ziin²⁴ det²-ngin¹¹-giang³¹, muk⁵-zu²⁴ fung¹¹ fung¹¹ yu⁵⁵ tiet⁵ tiet⁵,
 one CL really gain-person-fear eye-ball red red and protruding
 gui¹¹ mien⁵⁵ qiang¹¹ qiang¹¹ qiang¹¹ teu¹¹-na¹¹-mo²⁴ cong¹¹ cong¹¹,
 whole face green green green head hair long long
 sat⁵-ma¹¹ le¹¹-cut² gui²⁴ cak² cong¹¹ ge⁵⁵ gui³¹-mien⁵⁵-guk².
 tongue stick-out whole foot long POSS ghost-face-rice bag
 “My goodness! A ghost!” This lady has become a really horrible ghost. Her
 eyes very red and protruding, her face terribly green, her hair quite long, and
 her tongue sticking out one-foot long, she is one hundred percent a ghost.’

This excerpt from a ghost story describes how a she-ghost would turn into a beautiful lady to induce a strong fellow to carry her across a river, only later to drown him. Along with the exclamations of the storyteller, the underlined phrases all serve as modifiers reinforcing the horrific ambience in the storyteller’s commentary on the hideousness of the ghost. In this example, three reduplicative forms, one triplicate, and a hyperbolic expression are placed in series to magnify the horrendousness of the ghostly apparition, signifying intensification as well as emphasis. In other words, as the discourse unfolds, these linguistic expressions are strategically piling up all together not only to enhance the vividness but also to reinforce the horribleness of the ghostly face.⁹

One last example for discussion has to do with verbal reduplication, as illustrated below:

⁹ Given a more complete linguistic context, the meaning of intensification associated with the reduplicated forms stands out. On the other hand, one of the reviewers commented that some speakers could get a sense of ‘somewhat redness’ for the expression *fung¹¹ fung¹¹* in this example as a contrast to the ‘strong greenness’ of *qiang¹¹ qiang¹¹ qiang¹¹*. Such an interpretation, although less plausible when more textual information is given now, does not show a divergence of the explication of this study since the study claims that reduplicative constructions should be interpreted relatively rather than absolutely and that reduplication should get weaker interpretation than triplication.

- (6) Gi¹¹ (fu¹¹-li¹¹) na¹¹ ngiuk² got² got² got² got² le¹¹,
 He fox take meat chop chop chop chop PART
got² got² yu²⁴-ge⁵⁵ so³¹-cai⁵⁵ got² got² le¹¹,
 chop chop some place chop chop PART
 a⁵⁵ ciu⁵⁵ oi⁵⁵ zu³¹ bun²⁴ lo³¹ a¹¹-gung²⁴ siit⁵.
 PART then want cook for old man eat
 ‘He (the crafty fox) chopped the meat continuously—chopping this piece, and
 chopping that piece. Then he was going to cook the meat for the old man to
 eat.’

In this example, the first chunk with four repetitions of the verb *got²* ‘chop’ indicates continuously repeated actions over an extent of time. The other two reduplicative forms, however, signal iterative actions here and there over a shorter period of time. The iconicity principle is observed—a quadruple form expressing stronger intensification over a longer duration than a double form. As a consequence, the tentativeness or shortening of duration associated with reduplicated verbs as observed by previous researchers comes from less intensive repetitions and hence shorter extension of time. For example, in the case of {*Ta mei tian xia xia qi, kan kan shu...* 他每天下下棋, 看看書...}, the reduplicative verbs portray sporadic repetitions of the activities of playing chess or reading books, thus imparting a flavor of shortened duration.¹⁰

5. Conclusion

In sum, this study consists of three main ideas. First, it is argued that the iconicity principle works across the board, from reduplication and triplication to extreme case formulations, and to hyperbolic expressions. These linguistic strategies basically line up on a scale, strengthening their intensification along a scale as the form gets longer and larger. It is for a communicative purpose that a certain linguistic form is chosen by a speaker, based on his conceptualization of the world. Hence, it follows that with regard to the inconsistency of the meaning associated with reduplicative constructions, the iconicity principle can, in fact, subsume all the senses. Attenuation or intensification can be interpreted not absolutely but relatively. In particular, as a strategy of a speaker for communication, a reduplicative construction is employed flexibly to denote sometimes attenuation and sometimes intensification.¹¹ A by-product outcome of this claim has to

¹⁰ The explication here is in response to one of the reviewers’ comments on the shortening of duration associated with reduplicative verbs.

¹¹ One reviewer suggested that intensification and attenuation might be related to lexical content rather than linguistic context. The example used is *zhu lan lan* 煮爛爛 ‘cooked to become

do with an already well-taken observation that certain linguistic forms cannot be reduplicated. For example, Zhang (1997) or Wang (1999) both point out that achievement verbs which cannot be extended to a certain period of time such as *si* ‘to die’ in Mandarin cannot be reduplicated. According to the current proposal, it is very natural since such verbs do not involve evaluation of a state of affairs on a scale.

Closely related to the first point, the second argument advanced in this study is that the flexibility of interpretation of reduplication—sometimes intensification and other times attenuation—is left for the contextual factors to bring out the most conspicuous sense when appropriate. Hence even for the same reduplicative form, diverse interpretations can be found. A by-product brought forward by this argument is that there is no need to invoke the baby sense in order to incorporate senses such as diminution and attenuation as claimed by Regier (1998). Not only is the reduplicative process much more complicated than that of children’s but the semantic and pragmatic function of a reduplicative form is very different from that produced by a baby (Hsu 1996). Such an *ad hoc* explanation can hence be avoided in the current study.

Finally, previous studies, including Chiang (2002), Zhang (1998), Lu (1999), Chung (1998), and Lo (1988), have elucidated clearly the main structural patterns and the various semantic functions associated with reduplicative constructions in different Hakka dialects. Their descriptive generalizations still beg for explanatory accounts. Such a task is accomplished by this study. Furthermore, it is also claimed that the explanation proposed in this study can be generalized to Taiwanese Southern Min and Mandarin, whose reduplicative constructions exhibit more or less similar linguistic behavior. Essentially, it is argued that given larger context, the iconic principle can subsume all the senses including seemingly opposite senses such as intensification and attenuation. In a nutshell, this study not only gives a systematic and thorough investigation into Hakka reduplicative constructions in particular but also testifies to the fact that a unified analysis for the reduplicative constructions in general can be proposed.

tender’ in Mandarin, which corresponds to $zu^{31} lok^2 lok^2$ 煮洛洛 in Hakka. According to the reviewer, some informants can get a sense of attenuation in this expression. While the correlation between reduplication and lexical content is an issue worthy of future exploration, two points can be mentioned on this occasion. First, out-of-context intuition checking, as implied by this study, is probably why inconsistent senses get associated with reduplication since speakers do not have a clear baseline to compare various degrees of intensification with. Second, for this specific example, Hakka allows triplication as in $zu^{31} bi^{31} lok^2 lok^2 lok^2$ 煮畀洛洛洛 ‘to cook something to the extent that it becomes very tender’. Therefore, that the reduplicated form depicts a weaker sense, if compared with this triple form, is indeed a welcome result predicted by the study.

Appendix: Sinogram version of the Hakka examples¹²

- (1) a. 一點也無紅 b. 一點點紅 c. 紅紅
d. 紅紅紅 e. 慫紅/盡紅 f. 死紅/紅到會死
- (2) 汝係無屋待，佢便宜便宜賣分汝愛無？（《苗栗縣客語故事集（一）》，p.116「光中暗中」）
- (3) 阿冬牯鼻溝紅噹噹，因為無衛生紙，經常用衫袖擗鼻水，手袖早已烏烏硬硬，結三層蠟。（《客家雜誌》170 期，p.38「東城檔案」）
- (4) 佢講：佢係為著愛做該間廟，汝知呀，屋家个東西全部賣淨淨，者下就存著汝定定，汝還慫後生，又生來靚靚地，恩又無細人仔，汝分佢拜託，嫁著个錢就拿來做該間廟。（《苗栗縣客語故事集（一）》，p.102「因果的故事」）
- (5) 「阿姆娘！有鬼唷！」這個細妹變做一個真得人驚，目珠紅紅又凸凸，歸面青青，頭那毛長長，舌麻凸出歸尺長个鬼面殼。
（《客家雜誌》66 期，p.64「棺材枋落油鑊，大甲河講古」）
- (6) 佢（狐狸）拿肉割割割割咧，割割有个所在割割咧，啊就愛煮分老阿公食。
（《東勢鎮客語故事集（四）》，p.126「聰明个兔同狡怪个狐狸」）

¹² Since the appendix tries to show as correctly as possible the sinograms, some of them are different from those given in the original sources.

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概念化的象似編碼：客語重疊結構的研究

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過去研究重疊結構的語意大多把重點放在重疊結構多重語意的關連性，其中，「象似性」的原則常被認為是重疊步驟的動因。然而，重疊結構既可表示增強也可表示弱化兩個不一致的語意，而弱化的語意更是嚴重挑戰了「象似性」。為了解決這個議題，本文以客語重疊結構為例，提出以下的主張。首先，語言使用者對外在事物概念化後，為了溝通的需要選擇不同的語言結構表達，而重疊結構只是表現擴張性其中的一種選擇，故而，「象似性」確實是其背後的主要動因。其次，「增強」或「弱化」等的語意應該放在語言情境中來討論，重疊結構會因語境的需求而表現不同的語意。本研究以客語重疊結構為例，不僅將客語的重疊結構做了有系統的檢視，同時也提出重疊結構是語言使用者概念化外在事物的一種語言形式的選擇。

關鍵詞：象似性，圖形象似性，圖解象似性，象似解碼，概念化，客語重疊結構