What Can Be Contrasted in Contrastive Reduplication?
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If a word is vague, polysemous, or ambiguous, how could saying the word twice make its intended meaning clear? Yet the Contrastive Reduplication construction in English (CR) illustrated in (1) does have the function of clarifying which possible interpretation of a lexical item a hearer should select out of a set of meanings which might be associated with a term in a particular context.

(1)   *Car Talk, 4/2/06*
        A: Do you know any doctors?
        B: I am a doctor.
        A: Oh really? You are?
        B: Well not a **doctor-doctor**, a doctor of education.

If the term is underspecified in its reference to begin with, how should reduplicating the term fully specify which subset of a lexical item's extension a speaker means to convey? In this talk, I explore the question of which types of semantic relations (e.g., polysemy, homonymy, etc) may be disambiguated with CR and demonstrate that previous analyses do not predict the observed patterns in naturally occurring data. I argue that there are numerous scales on which speakers can construe different interpretations of lexical items reduplicated in CRs and that these scales are not predictable from conceptual structure alone. CR is similar to other scalar focus operators such as *just* and *only* in that both context and world knowledge are crucial in understanding the ordering of the alternatives under discussion. Despite the flexibility of the scales employed by CR, there are certain limitations on which interpretations of a lexical item may be contrasted with the construction. The "gaps" in CR may provide evidence for the nature of scalar structure in lexical representations.
        Previous analyses of the construction (Dray (1987), Horn (1993) and Ghomeshi et al. (2004)) mainly use the notion of prototype to explain which sense of a word a CR represents; however, since prototype alone does not uniquely determine the meaning of a CR, additional functions have been attributed to CR, such as marking intensified, default, or salient meanings. I argue that the collection of functions of CR that have been identified is ad hoc and does not actually model all of the different types of CR that can be found in naturally occurring data. For example, the common CR *drink-drink* can contrast possible interpretations of *drink* in at least five different ways:

(2)   a.   You said in an earlier article that if you must have a "**drink, drink**" go with the hard liquor. Why is hard liquor better than beer?
        b.   "Do you want a bottle of wine?" Mac asks. "I think I'll have a **drink-drink**," I say, and when the waiter comes I order a martini.
        c.   (around 3 euros a shot and 8 euros a **drink-drink**).
        d.   *[Two people at fast food restaurant sharing a meal deal]*
                A: What do you wanna get?
                B: I'll probably just get water so if you want a **drink-drink** get whatever you want

e.   A: I am on my own with the BBQ! Come on girls I need some drink ideas. please -Celeste
     B: Are you looking for alcohol? Or just a **drink drink**?

The examples in (2) show that the same CR, *drink-drink*, can mean an alcoholic drink versus a non-alcoholic drink (2a), hard alcohol versus beer or wine (2b), a mixed drink as opposed to a shot (2c), a soft drink as opposed to water (2d), or a non-alcoholic drink as opposed to alcohol (2e). Calling one of these tokens intensified, another default, another prototypical, etc. is not appealing, since it is not predictable from the situation which CR will have which meaning. Rather, by supplying overt alternatives (water, shot, alcohol, etc.) the appropriate dimension on which to order the exemplars of the category is recoverable and the intended sense is clear.

Homonyms in CRs are also unexpected under the prototype/intensification-based analyses. If the two possible meanings of the word are essentially unrelated, how is one more intense or prototypical than the other? Nevertheless, there are naturally occurring examples of CR disambiguating such homonyms, as in (3):

(3)   So... do they fly when you try to hit 'em with a bat???? I mean a baseball bat not a **bat-bat.**

Thus it appears that CR can operate on any kind of meaning differences, selecting between those that are very closely related (2) as well as those which are related only by linguistic form (3). However, while *newspaper* may refer to either the printed journal or the company that produces it, it is not clear that *newspaper-newspaper* can felicitously refer to either one of them. While further work is necessary to explore the relationship between those meanings that can and cannot be disambiguated by CR, the data I present show that previous models do not adequately predict the occurrence of varied and even opposite meanings such as those we encountered for *drink-drink,* the occurrence of homonymic CRs, or the lack of CRs for *newspaper* polysemies. I will address both the advantages and shortcomings of a scalar analysis in modeling the distribution of CR.

Works Cited

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