

A Focus Account for Contrastive Reduplication: Prototypicality and Contrastivity

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Lee, Binna. 2007. A Focus Account for Contrastive Reduplication: Prototypicality and Contrastivity. *SNU Working Papers in English Linguistics and Language* 6, 78-90. This paper sets forth the phenomenon of Contrastive Reduplication (CR) in English related to the notion of contrastive focus (CF). CF differs from other reduplicative patterns in that rather than the intensive function, denotation of a more prototypical and default meaning of a lexical item appears from the reduplicated form resulting as a semantic contrast with the meaning of the non-reduplicated word. Thus, CR is in concordance with CF under the concept of contrastivity. However, much of the previous works on CF associated contrastivity with a manufacture of a set of alternatives taking a semantic approach I claim that a recent discourse-pragmatic account takes advantage of explaining the vague contrast in informativeness of CR. Zimmermann's (2006) Contrastive Focus Hypothesis characterizes contrastivity in the sense of speaker's assumptions about the hearer's expectation of the focused element. This approach makes possible adaptation to CR and recovers the possible subsets of meaning of a reduplicated form in a more refined way showing contrastivity in informativeness. Additionally, CR in other languages along with similar set-limiting phenomenon in various languages will be introduced as targets of contrastive focus in general.

Keywords: Contrastive Reduplication, Contrastive Focus, contrastivity, pragmatic

1. Introduction

This paper sets forth the linguistic phenomenon of what is called Contrastive Reduplication (henceforth CR) (Ghoemshi et al. 2004) which marks a distinction from the prior studies of focus by taking a pragmatic-focus framework rather than a semantic one. In many recent works on reduplication patterns, CR has been unfairly treated as a mere repetition or as a lexical duplication that simply functions as an intensifier. However, CR is understood to be quite unique apart from

the family of reduplication forms shown in various languages which are intensively studied in phonological and morphological aspects. CR occurs frequently in daily conversational interactions rather than written discourse and displays interesting semantic characteristics as it is not merely a repetition or duplicated form of a lexical element for intensive use.

Consider the colloquial use of construction given in (1).¹⁾

- (1) a. I'll make the tuna salad, and you make the SALAD-salad.
- b. Oh, we're not LIVING-TOGETHER-living-together.
- c. My car isn't MINE-mine; it's my parents'.
- d. I had a JOB-job once.
 [a 'real' 9-to-5 office job, as opposed to an academic job]
- e. Are you LEAVING-leaving?

(from Ghomeshi et al. 2004)

As illustrated in the examples of (1), the reduplicated form SALAD-*salad* has the semantic function of elucidating possible interpretation of a word that is associated with the term in a context. So in (1a), the CR denotes plain, normal salad as opposed to other specific salads (e.g. *chicken salad*, *shrimp salad*, etc.) overall and (1b) is understood as living together as roommates (which is the general interpretation of living-together) not lovers. Besides the prototypical effect, additional CR semantic properties are that CR is not limited to nouns but can be produced in various lexical categories like verbs (*LEAVING-leaving*) or adjectives (He is *HANDSOME-handsome?*), etc.. In other instances, proper names (She's *MARY-Mary?* as in the Mary the speakers know) and lexicalized expressions (*LIVING-TOGETHER-living-together*) are also possible candidates for CR.

Likewise, CR is a target for many lexical categories and also functions to determinate the prototypical, default meaning of the reduplicated item it targets and plays to make disambiguation of the distribution of the different senses of the same expression. So it can be asserted that the semantic influence of this unique duplicated construction is to limit and "to focus the denotation of the reduplicated element on a more sharply

1) A corpus of the examples of the construction of CR in English discussed in Ghomeshi et al. (2004) can be found in the website <http://www.umanitoba.ca/linguistics/russell/redup-corpus.html>

delimited, more specialized range." (Ghomeshi et al. 2004; 308)

CR is considered to have a repeated word or a phrase (chunk) within the expression for the semantic effect of contrastiveness in a sense. The reduplicated form is not redundant as it has a construction that contains a repeated form with a distinct use from the unduplicated form. The difference is clearly shown in (2).

- (2) a. I'll make the tuna salad, and you make the SALAD-salad.
*b. I'll make the tuna salad, and you make the salad.

Without the reduplicated form placed in (2b), the sentence is ungrammatical as there exist no semantic effect of differentiation. Thus, this kind of reduplicated form differs from other reduplication process in English as emphasizing is not the exact consequence expected. Furthermore, CR is of interest for the it displays a narrowing effect to a prototypical variant of the non-reduplicated form.

The primary goal of this paper is to show an account of focus pragmatic framework for the CR in English along with other types of devices in various languages having resembling narrowing semantic effects. As the intended meaning of CR is of our interest, the issue of contrastive focus should shed light on this construction. It should be asserted that this type of contrast in informativeness is in concordance with contrastive focus which also requires a set of contrastive sets as alternatives. However, what is exactly contrasted here in meaning in CR remains a vague issue and the rightful approach of contrastiveness and focus should be under consideration in specific details. I argue that a pragmatic reason lies in the contrastiveness in CR, not a semantic one. Further issues will be discussed in the following sections.

The organization of this paper is as follows. The succeeding section introduces previous studies of the CR construction with some insights on contrastive focus. In section 3, the focus semantic approach on CR will be considered in specific details for a more adequate explanation of the phenomenon. The final section puts forth the conclusion of this paper with reference to the significance of the pragmatic approach of dealing with CR.

2. Previous works on CR and prototypicality

What makes CR more intriguing is its semantic distinction from other reduplication patterns. CR can be characterized as a distinctive kind of reduplication phenomena. Majority of the research on reduplication construction crosslinguistically highlighted the phonological and morphological aspects of the construction rather than the semantic or pragmatic effects.²⁾ Likewise, the analysis of the semantic function of reduplication was limited to diminution and pluralization, and repetition for intensification.

There has been minority report in the linguistic literature on the phenomena of reduplication patterns related to contrastive informativeness (Dray 1989, Horn 1992, Ghomeshi et al. 2004). Despite the resemblance in CR with other reduplication phenomena, CR can not be characterized by prosodic features or morphologically-based rules as displayed in complex reduplicated phrased forms like 'Do you *LIKE-'EM-like-'em'?*

Moreover, the semantic characteristic of CR is to have more focus on the denotation of the reduplicated form with more limited and specialized bounds for meaning. A clearer explanation is given by Horn (1992), He claims: "As a rough approximation, we can say that the reduplicated modifier singles out a member or subset of the extension of the noun [or verb, or adjective, or preposition - JG et al.] that represents a true, real, default, or prototype instance (p. 48)." Thus, CR has a prototypical and focused meaning in contrast. Horn's (1992) work on CR was fundamentally to categorize the semantics of this pattern into four types; prototypical meaning, literal meaning, intensified meaning, and 'value-added' meaning.³⁾

2) Setting aside the CR, in general, reduplication construction is shown in at least six different patterns by Ghomeshi et al. (2004). The instances given below in (i) a-f. are the cases of such.

- (i) a. 'Baby-talk' reduplication, e.g., choo-choo. wee-wee.
- b. Multiple partial reduplications, e.g., hap-hap-happy.
- c. Deprecative reduplication, e.g., table-shmable.
- d. 'rhyme combinations': super-duper, willy-nilly, pall-mall, okey-dokey, hanky-panky,...
- e. 'Ablaut combinations': flim-flam, zig-zag, sing-song, pitter-patter, riff-raff, mish-mash...
- f. Intensive reduplication: You are sick sick sick!

3) Examples below are cases of (ii)a. prototypical meaning, b. literal meaning, c. intensified meaning, and d. 'value-added' meaning. (Ghomeshi et al. 2004)

Analyzing CR on account of pragmatic mechanism was also considered by Levinson (2000). Levinson examines the reduplicated structure or repetitions within the framework of his theory of *Generalized Conversational Implicatures* (GCIs).⁴ He explains that I-implicature, which is one of the three principles that derives possible implicatures, is the general, default or stereotypical meaning of a linguistic pattern that enables the hearer to clearly understand the utterance of the speaker who aim to clarify oneself from the most simple expression with unmarked uses. On the other hand, the M-implicature denotes that marked constructions are used for reference to non-stereotypical situations. Considering the reduplication phenomenon a marked form of the unreduplicated one, Levinson seeks a pragmatic account due to implicature arising to address CR. His approach is based on pragmatic mechanism which shows the nature of these structures. However, Levinson did not distinguish CR from other reduplication forms which is of our concern in the present paper.

As a lexical word or a phrase may often leave ambiguity or lack in precision, CR could be an option to clarify these cases in means of establishing a prototypical denotation in contrast to a more wider generalization or more limited range of interpretation. This is clear in the examples of (3).

- (3) a. She is just a COW-cow.
 b. Should I wear a HAT-hat?

As shown, the nouns are in CR forms with the reduplication signaling the default denotation of the lexical item intended. Both the examples in (3a) and (3b) restricts the denotation to a prototypical ones. It is noteworthy that the use of CR is to restrict meaning of a lexical item

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- (ii) a. I want the SALAD-salad.
 b. A: Maybe you'd like to come in and have some coffee?
 B: Yeah, I'd like that.
 A: Just COFFEE-coffee, no double meanings.
 c. I'm nervous but not NERVOUS-nervous.
 d. We're not LIVING-TOGETHER-living-together. We are roommates.

4) See Levinson (2000) for more adequate explanation on generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs). He characterizes three principles (I, M, Q principles) to explain the pragmatic effect of certain linguistic structure arising implicatures.

and that CR can not be constrained to functional items.

In some cases, proper names can also be CR under the condition that the names are to be clearly distinguished from other denotations of the same word the speaker and hearer know. In this instance, prominence and salience may be used as the function to pick out the referent:

- (4) a. So was the guy I saw at the gym DAVE-Dave, or just Dave?
 b. Oh, that's BEACON-STREET-Beacon-Street!

In both cases (4a) and (4b), the discourse participants must have a shared background knowledge or information about the denotation of the proper name so the most salient candidate of denotations will be determined as the appropriate meaning. As from such examples, the term 'prototypical' does not predict the observed patterns to be disambiguated as the other CRs and does not independently determines the meaning of this construction as considered in previous analysis. Rather, additional functions make attributions to CR perhaps even intensification, default and salient meanings. One single meaning interpretation can not cover up all the examples of CR found in natural conversation. The issue of the prototype related to CR will be discussed more in the following section.

Moreover, contrastiveness in reduplication exist not only in English but also in other languages as well. For instance, Spanish and Russian also appears to have CR construction. An example of Spanish CR is given below in (5). This duplicated form also displays the real, default and prototypical meaning in the reduplicated form CASA.

- (5) No es una CASA-casa.
 'This isn't a real [sic] house.' [Horn 1993: 49]

Additionally, the semantic effect of CR can also be expressed morphologically in some languages just like other reduplication form can be in concordance with morphological forms with symmetric meanings. Poser (1991) claims that the prefix *ma-* in Japanese can be interpreted as to restrict the denotation to a prototypical meaning. The examples in (6) illustrates this fact.

(6) Japanese prefix *ma-* (Poser 1991)

<i>mae</i> 'front'	<i>maNmae</i> 'right in front'
<i>siro</i> 'winter'	<i>mafuyu</i> 'dead of winter'
<i>kita</i> 'north'	<i>makita</i> 'due north'
<i>aka</i> 'red'	<i>makka</i> 'deep red'

Considering the fact that prefixes may maintain the same semantic function that CR has, other instances of prefixes limiting denotations to the 'true, real, genuine' meaning can be found in other languages. In Korean, the prefixes 'han-', 'cham-', 'cin-' etc. are to be matched with the prototypical denotation of a lexical item.

(7) Korean prefix 'han-', 'cham-', 'cin-'

<i>yerum</i> 'summer'
<i>hanyerum</i> 'the peak of summer'
<i>mosup</i> 'appearance'
<i>chammosup</i> 'the true look of one's appearance'
<i>bemin</i> 'culprit'
<i>cinbemin</i> 'the real culprit'

Thus, CR and prefixes share semantic restrictive function as they have the denotation of limiting effects shown in various languages. Both should be considered as a general phenomenon that is possibly analyzed within a unitary theory of meaning with relevance to contrast in informativeness.

3. Theories of focus interpretation and CR

3.1 Contrastive Focus (CF)

A certain form of meaning can represent something more than plainly truth conditions. As one case, there is a wide range of constructions in English that are known to exhibit some form of focus. In general, focus is featured by a prosodic feature like nuclear pitch accent. While prosodical characters may involve in the combination of focus and

meaning interpretation, contemporary theories of focus shed light on the semantic or pragmatic applicance.

Contrastive Focus involves sets of alternatives with great significance to the notion of contrastiveness. However, the contrast of informativeness and the range of alternatives are quite vague and still unclear. Despite the problematic issues that arises in contrastivity, the notion of focus has been widely discussed in the semantic and pragmatic fields with merely dissimilar views on the concept.

Focus interpretation from a semantic perspective shows semantic objects, focus semantic values, which are shaped by construction-specific rules (Rooth 1992, 1996). This kind of view take it that intonational focus has a grammatical coordinate which is shaped by rule-based mechanisms. Rooth's (1985, 1992) alternative semantics is also considered to be a semantic approach as the basic idea is to analyze focus items on grounds of question-answer criterion on a rule-based account.

In contrast, pragmatic approach to focus makes no specific reference to linguistic patterns. Rather, pragmatic factors are correlated to the relevant focus optionally (Rooth 1992, Roberts 1996). Pragmatic theories exclude focus attached to linguistic items as being focus operators.

Lee (2003) makes a semi-pragmatic proposal with the question-answer criterion still motivated. This testing device is to make a distinction between contrastive topic (CT) and contrastive focus (CF).⁵⁾ CF is said to be preceded by an alternative disjunctive question. similar to the result of making a set of alternatives.

In a more recent research, Zimmermann (2006) departs from the previous researchers and claims a new discourse-pragmatic account on the phenomenon of contrastivity. He argues that focus should not be related with the terms of contrastivity or exhaustivity on a semantic basis.

Approaching CF as a discourse-pragmatic phenomenon, contrastivity signifies that "a particular content, or a particular speech act is unexpected to raise the hearer's attention, and to get him to shift his background assumptions accordingly, is to use additional grammatical marking, e.g. intonation contour, syntactic movement, clefts, or morphological markers." (p.2) To reiterate, CF is largely connect to the background assumptions of discourse participants, especially the information related

5) From Lee's (2003) analysis of distinguishing contrastive focus (CF) and contrastive topic (CT), CT is thought to be preceded by a conjunctive question.

to the hearer's suppositions. The CF is affirmed in a hypothesis as below:

(8) **Contrastive Focus Hypothesis** (Zimmermann 2006)

Contrastive marking on a focus constituent *a* express the speaker's assumption that the hearer will not consider the content of *a*, or the speech act containing *a* likely to be(come) common ground.

Contrastive Focus Hypothesis suggests that contrastivity does not refer to the contrast in a set of alternatives in the linguistic conditions. Rather, the contrast lies in the information by the speaker in stating an linguistic expression and the expectation of the hearer's assumption. This approach has an advantage over the previous 'alternatives'-based contrastivity due to the fact that some data shows contrastive foci without explicit other choices of the same type. CR is also considered to be examples of non-productive construction of alternatives in some cases. The position advocated in the present paper is to evaluate the focus of CR from a discourse-pragmatic theory based on Contrastive Focus Hypothesis.

3.2 CR and CF

The semantic association of focus to a set of alternatives provides insights for contrastiveness. CR can be parallel to CF in that contrast in informativeness evokes when reduplication results to a narrow meaning. The semantic characteristic splits between the two as illustrated in the following examples:

- (9) a. I didn't give the book to JOHN. [CF]
 Contrast set: (John, Bill, Dave, Sue,...)
 b. I didn't give the book to JOHN-John. [CR]
 Contrast set: (John₁, John₂,...)
- (10) a. It wasn't a GOAT. [CF]
 Contrast set: (goats, horses, pig, sheep ...)
 b. It wasn't a GOAT-goat. [CR]
 Contrast set: (prototypical goats, non-prototypical goats, figurative goats)

(Ghomeshi et al. 2004)

As shown in the examples (8) and (9), CF and CR shares the semantic effect of contrast in informativeness. The difference between the two lies in what is contrasted. CF indicates the contrast from other words of the compatible type but CR makes contrastiveness within other possible meanings. As mentioned, CF has a narrowing effect in the selection of the denotation of a lexical item.⁶⁾

The question arises whether to consider the set-shrinking effect of CR as producing a set of alternatives from the consequence of contrastive focus. The duplicated form has a strong intonational focus that is commonly seen in contrastive focus elements. I argue that the function of narrowing down the range of applicable referents of a lexical form should not be interpreted as a consequence of semantic focus but rather a result of pragmatic effect involved. In the next section, the treatment of CR as evoking alternatives from a semantic focus view or analyzing CR on a pragmatic account will be explored.

4. Is the focus on CR semantic or pragmatic?

In this section, I argue that CR can not have a clear set of alternatives in many cases and that the Contrastive Focus Hypothesis has advantage over other focus theories in explaining the semantic gap.

Some instances of CR seem to suggest that simply the concept of prototypicality per se isn't the right diagnosis for the clarification of interpreting the meaning of the contrast. For there seems to be a number of ways on which speakers affirm different interpretations of lexical items reduplicated in CRs. It is unpredictable to catch the subset of a lexicon's extension a speaker means to deliver from conceptual structure alone. Take the example in (11).

(11) ...you mean thought-about-it-considered-it or just

6) Lasersohn's (1999) account of explaining the set-limiting effect from a description of pragmatic "slack regulators" may correspond to CR with a strong similarity. Slack regulators are to be said to narrow or restrict the pragmatic halo of the linguistic patterns they associate with. The difference between 'slack regulators' and CR is in the types of sets relevant. Lasersohn characterizes a pragmatic halo in terms of truth-conditions. Slack regulators evokes fewer truth-conditionally false statements appropriate in a given context. However, CR precludes denotations that are comparatively less prototypical.

CONSIDERED-IT-considered it.

In (11), rather than the prototypical meaning of the lexical item 'consider' (which is itself problematic to consider as verbs having more default meaning is unclear with no particular objects as selective denotations), the context itself supplies possible alternative meanings in the reduplicated form suggesting applicable range on which meaning is to understand and be recoverable and the intended sense is clear.

Also, proper names are also possible candidates for CR but the criterion for determining the denotations are not normal, default and prototypical meanings but rather the most salient and prominent object that the discourse participants share knowledge about. This is illustrated in example (12).

(12) Do you mean JOHN-John?

Contrast set:

(the most salient John we know in this context,
other non salient Johns??)

This vagueness of the clear-cut options of the meaning of CR makes an unstable position for the composition of a set of alternatives. If the meanings from the lexical item is determined by factors beside the prototypical meanings and contrast in informativeness arises not by alternative sets but by the speaker and hearer's background assumptions in contexts, a discourse approach might be favored in explaining these muddy areas.

The Contrastive Focus Hypothesis makes clarification of the CR as the supposition of the discourse participants about the common assumptions within the linguistic context displays an important role pragmatically. Not only CR but the other languages that take prefixes as the similar device to restrict the denotation of a duplicated word to prototypical meaning also can be implied to go under the pragmatic account that the interlocutors background assumptions are factors of focusing elements on the marked form.

What should be significant here is that the application of a marked structure over an unmarked structure must come with pragmatic effects in terms of an informational excess for the hearer. Thus this should be not be acknowledged in a stipulation of a set of alternatives in the

linguistic item as contrastive focus reading requires the presupposed set to be a set containing more than one element.

5. Conclusion

This paper sets forth the CR construction on a discourse-pragmatic focus account. CR has distinctive semantic interpretation due to a limiting effect on the denotation of a lexical element. As a corollary, CR seems to play the role of determining possible interpretation of a lexical form a hearer should decide from a set-shrinking effect. Contrast in informativeness arises due to the restriction on the denotation of the non-reduplicated form.

The notion of contrastivity here should not be considered as making a set of alternatives from a lexical item. Rather contrastivity arises due to pragmatic factors like the speaker's assumption about the hearer's expectation of information on a focus constituent. The speaker will use a contrastive focus marking in a linguistic expression if he or she assumes that the hearer will not be fully aware of the assertion of the expressed form or speech act. Contrastive Focus Hypothesis makes possible explanation not only for CRs but also the prefixes in some languages that shows corresponding semantic effects in showing contrastivity. The present paper does not discuss issues concerning the extended research on the correlation with focus and prototypicality for generalization which will be left for further research.

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