

# Reduplication of Nouns and Adjectives in Indonesian

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Indonesian, like other Austronesian languages, makes extensive use of the morphological process of reduplication in all of its major word classes: nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The wide variety of types of reduplication exhibits a nuanced set of semantic elements, diverse discourse functions, and numerous morphological forms.<sup>1</sup> By way of introduction, I present a review of the literature on reduplication in Indonesian. The body of the paper focuses on a few of the commonly occurring contexts in which the fully reduplicated nouns and adjectives (with no affixation) occur and the meanings associated with these reduplicated forms.

## 1. Review of the literature on reduplication in Indonesian

There is a rich variety of forms of reduplication in Indonesian, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, question words, and connectors. This wealth of reduplicated forms is associated with a wide range of semantic elements including, plurality, collectivity, diversity, intensity, reciprocity, diffuseness (distributive), iteration, facsimile, concessive, and imperfective aspect. It should be noted that plurality is not a unitary concept and can entail indefiniteness, extensiveness, as well as summation.

The following list summarizes the major forms of reduplication in Indonesian. (See M.D.S. Simatupang 1983 for a more complete description):

- a. Full reduplication of a lexical item with no phonological change, such as *kaya kaya* from the adjective *kaya* 'rich'.

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- b. Reduplication with vowel change, *bolak-balik* from the preposition, *balik* 'behind'.
- c. Reduplication with a consonant change, such as *ramah-tamah* from *ramah* 'jovial, friendly'.
- d. Reduplication with affixation. A non-exhaustive list of reduplication with affixation includes reduplication of the verb *lari* 'to run' in *berlari-lari*, the adjective *malas* 'lazy' in *bermalas-malas*, the adjective *tinggi* 'high' in *setinggi-tinggi*, the verb *lompat* 'to jump' in *melompat-lompat*, the verb *cinta* 'to love' in *cinta-mencintai*, the noun *katung* 'tortoise' in *terkatung-katung*, the noun *malam* 'night' in *semalam-malaman*, and the noun *ibu* 'mother' in *keibu-ibuan*.

Following the work of A. Moeliono (198:166-167), the two primary meanings associated with reduplicated nouns are: 1) non-singular with a sense of plurality, collectivity, or diversity and 2) resemblance. For example, *rumah-rumah* 'house' may have any of the three non-singular meanings, houses, a group of houses, or various houses. The construction *dedaunan* 'foliage' is derived from the base word *daun* 'leaf', thus exemplifying another form for expressing the collective meaning. The second basic meaning, facsimile or resemblance, is illustrated by the reduplicated construction *mobil-mobilan* 'toy cars' from the word *mobil* 'car'.

Moeliono (1988:212) briefly characterizes adjectives as having two functions: modifying verbs, thus becoming adverbs (See no. 1 below.); and modifying nominals and in this function, exhibiting the meaning of diversity. (See no. 2 below.)

1. *Dia lari cepat-cepat.*

He run fast

'He runs quickly.'

2. *Soal ujian kemarin mudah-mudah.*

Problem exam yesterday easy

'The problems on the examination yesterday were all easy.'

Rosen (1977) attributes three meanings to Indonesian reduplicated forms: 1. Diffuseness or distributive function of reduplicated verbs in which the NP agent, object or locative becomes non-singular or diffuse (see number 3 below.); 2. Metaphoric quality of reduplicated nouns with the affixation *ke-* or *-an* carries the meaning of pseudo-noun. For example; *kuda-kudaan* means 'rocking horse' and is derived from the noun, *kuda* 'horse'. Verbs also can obtain a metaphoric quality, *berkaca-kaca* 'to shine' from the verb *berkaca* 'made of glass'. The final meaning attributed to the reduplicated adjective is 3. Intensity with adjectives that are reduplicated with the *se-* prefix and *-nya* suffix. (See number 4 below.)

3. *Dia mau melihat-lihat di toko itu.*

He wants look in store that  
'He wants to just look around in that store.'

4. *Dia lari secepat-cepatnya.*

He run fast fast  
'He runs as fast as he can.'

Despite Rosen's general agreement with Moeliono (1988), she makes the categorical statement that, "Diffuseness is not the same as plurality, and the function of reduplication in Indonesian is not to mark the plural" (Rosen 1977:4). The dismissal of the use of reduplication as a plural marker distinguishes her analysis from that of Moeliono (1988), Simatupang (1983), and Gonda (1949).

M.D.S. Simatupang (1983:137-143) offers a detailed analysis of the forms and meanings of reduplication in Indonesian, supporting Moeliono (1988). Simatupang reiterates Gonda's suggestion of decades earlier that increasingly the reduplicated noun indicates plurality in contemporary Indonesian, whereas in Classical Malay texts reduplication of nouns was primarily used to indicate diversity (Gonda 1949:171-172). Although diversity and plurality are closely associated with each other, there is an important difference. Diversity carries a distributive sense and emphasizes the qualities of separateness and difference among the entities.

"During the 20th century the Malay language has, in fact, extended this use of duplicated nouns and they have, moreover, gradually assumed a purely plural meaning" (Gonda 1949:179). He suggests that this shift may be attributable to the influence of the Dutch language.

This paper looks at the function of fully reduplicated (non-affixed) nouns and adjectives in order to explore the role of these forms for expressing the collective and distributive meanings.

## 2. Analysis of the Data

In section 2, I present data from written and spoken Indonesian that illustrate the forms, meanings, and contexts of fully reduplicated nouns and adjectives in Indonesian. The data were gathered non-randomly from native speakers, print media, short stories, and literature from the 1920s. All the examples from published materials are referenced, the remaining examples are from native speakers.

Before proceeding with the examination of the data in 2.1, I present examples of non-singular nouns, expressed without reduplication. In the first case, a collective and generic meaning for a group of people is expressed using the lexical term, *kaum*, meaning group or class of people. (See sentence number 5 below.) Another lexical term, *para* signifies a referential yet indefinite group of people. (See number 6 below.) In both 5 and 6 the non-singular groups of people are viewed collectively as one entity without any interest in considering the characteristics that distinguish the individual members of the group from each other. Note that reduplication is never used with generic meanings.

### 5. *Kaum muslimin tidak makan masakan itu.*

Group Moslem not future eat dish that  
'Moslems do not eat that food.'

### 6. *Para petani tidak dapat hasil yang banyak tahun ini.*

Plural farmer not get result rel.prn much year this  
'The farmers did not get a good crop this year.'