Reduplication and Pluractionality in Javanese

Introduction. Javanese (Javanese; jav; Austronesian) is spoken in the eastern and central parts of Java by about 68 million speakers (Vander Klok, 2024). The primary source for this work is a Javanese language consultant, Mutia Terian (MT), with whom several elicitation sessions were conducted as part of a Field Methods class at Simon Fraser University. Data were collected through a variety of methodologies, including translation tasks based on written contexts in English, felicity/grammaticality judgements based on pictures captioned in Javanese, as well as multiple-choice back-translation tasks. My analysis of the resulting data focuses on when and how verbal reduplication may be used in Javanese (with and without applicative morphology) to express pluractionality, as well as how the semantics of the original verb may affect possible interpretations of the reduplicated form.

Background. Full and partial reduplication occurs productively in Javanese to express a variety of concepts such as plurality, repetition, intensificiation, and more (Miyake, 2011). Oftentimes, the exact meaning of a verb's reduplicated form is not entirely predictable, and may be quite different depending on the semantics and specifics of the original verb.

(1) *bocahé* *turu~turu* *wae.*
Child-the REDUP-sleep only
'The child keeps falling asleep.'

(2) *aku* *lunga* *mangan~mangan.*
1.SG go AV.REDUP-eat
'I am going to eat out (with friends).'
(Miyake 2011:50, 57)

In (1), the reduplicated verb *turu-turu* expresses an ongoing action, or one that repeatedly occurs over a certain time frame (i.e, the child repeatedly wakes up and falls asleep again). In (2), there are now implicit co-agents (friends), so that the plural participants together create plural events of eating. This event plurality is otherwise known as PLURACTIONALITY, and will be the focus of the analysis.

Pluractionality, as defined by Newman (1980), describes a plurality of actions, or plural events. Further distinction is made by Wood (2007) between event-internal and event-external pluractions: Event-internal pluractions are generally characterized by events that are spatio-temporally contiguous, require a large cardinality of events, and share the same theme argument or progress towards a shared telos. In contrast, event-external pluractions have no strict requirements on spatio-temporal distance between events, may be satisfied by simpler event plurality, and have no requirements on shared telos.

New data on applicative verb forms with/without full reduplication. Unlike the earlier examples, verbal reduplication in (3) is not necessarily required here for pluractionality (ii., iii.) as long as the applicative suffix *-ake* is attached to the verb. This is a new finding, as previously only the *-(n)i* applicative suffix has been described as having an inherent pluractional meaning/function (Sumarlam, 2004; Vander Klok & Evans, 2022). However, the pluractional

interpretation in (3) is restricted to an event-internal analysis, as the actions must be contextually repeated during the same instance (ii., iii.), rather than during separate instances, as in (iv.) (MT).

(3)	*Ani*	*nuthuk-*(ake)*	*tembok-(n)e*	*Joko*	*nganggo*	*palu*
	Ani	AV.hit-APPL	wall-DEF	Joko	with	hammer
	(i.)	#‘Ani hits Joko’s wall with a hammer (once).’				
	(ii.)	?‘Ani repeatedly hits Joko’s wall with a hammer many times.’				
	(iii.)	‘Ani hits Joko’s wall with a hammer a few times.’				
	(iv.)	#‘Ani often hits Joko’s wall with a hammer (different times).’				

An example of an event-external pluractional is found in (4), as the reduplication of *nuthuk* with *-(a)ke* allows for a habitual reading (iv.).

(4)	*Ani*	*nuthuk~nuthuk-(a)ke*	*tembok-(n)e*	*Joko*	*nganggo*	*palu*
	Ani	AV.REDUP~AV.hit-APPL	wall-DEF	Joko	with	hammer
	(i.)	#‘Ani hits Joko’s wall with a hammer (once).’				
	(ii.)	‘Ani repeatedly hits Joko’s wall with a hammer many times.’				
	(iii.)	?‘Ani hits Joko’s wall with a hammer a few times.’				
	(iv.)	‘Ani often hits Joko’s wall with a hammer (different times).’				

Generally, reduplicated verbs in Javanese are permitted to acquire applicative suffixes the same as their non-reduplicated forms. In addition to the permitted forms and structures of verbal reduplication in Javanese, the full analysis will focus on the type of predicate in use, and highlight how its semantics may affect pluractional interpretations or not.

References

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