

THE MORPHOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC DIMENSIONS OF REDUPLICATION
IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract: This article examines the linguistic functions of reduplicative units in both English and Uzbek, emphasizing their expressive, emotional, and stylistic capacities. Drawing on the view of renowned linguists such as Carl Rubino, E.A. Moravcsik, and Nils Thun, the paper discusses the types and functions of reduplication, including full, partial, and phonological variations. Furthermore, it highlights the cultural and communicative functions of reduplication in folklore, proverbs, songs, and fairy tales, presenting a comparative typological analysis. The study also explores the challenges of translating reduplicative structures and underscores their cognitive, aesthetic, and pragmatic value. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of systematic and interdisciplinary approaches, including cognitive semantics and corpus-based methods, to fully understand the evolution, functions, and linguistic significance of reduplication.

Keywords: reduplication, morphology, semantics, stylistics, comparative linguistics, folklore, translation theory, cognitive linguistics.

1. Introduction.

In contemporary linguistics, reduplication – the repetition of a word or part of a word – stand out as a significant morphological and stylistic device. It is widely observed in a variety of world languages, including English and Uzbek, though with distinct structural, semantic, and functional features. Comparative research on reduplication between languages is essential for understanding universal and language-specific mechanisms in morphology, phonology, and semantics.

Carl Rubino defines reduplication as “*the systematic repetition of phonological material within a word for semantic or grammatical purposes*” [1]. He emphasizes that reduplication may serve to indicate pluralization, intensification, aspectual distinctions, or emotional nuances depending on the language context. In Uzbek, for example, forms like “tez-tez” (frequently) or “qorayib-qorayib” (darkened repeatedly) convey nuanced semantic and emotional shades. In English, however, reduplication often functions as a stylistic or idiomatic tool, as seen in phrases like “goody-goody” or “wishy-washy”.

Linguist E.A. Moravcsik highlights reduplication as a universal linguistic phenomenon found in many typologically diverse languages, asserting that it is “*an important morphological process, used in a variety of ways from word formation to grammatical marking*” [2]. The need for comparative analysis arises from the fact that reduplication operates differently in analytic and agglutinative language systems. Uzbek, being an agglutinative Turkic language, utilizes reduplication productively for expressive, morphological, and syntactic purposes. English, on the other hand, use reduplication more restrictively, often within colloquial or idiomatic expressions.



This contrast calls for detailed cross-linguistic research to understand how reduplication interacts with linguistic structure and cultural context.

Moreover, as Nils Thun noted, terminology surrounding reduplication has varied across studies, with terms like “*doubling*,” “*germination*,” and “*repetition compounds*” being used interchangeably. He advocated for standardizing “*reduplication*” as the most accurate and descriptive term [3].

Comparing reduplicative structures in English and Uzbek not only reveals how linguistic devices reflect cognitive patterns and cultural values but also informs translation theory, language teaching methodologies, and stylistic analysis. As Steven Pinker argues in “*The language instinct*,” language is an innate human ability shaped by cognitive tendencies, and phenomena like reduplication reflect these deep-seated cognitive patterns [4].

Thus, this study seeks to explore the linguistic roles of reduplicative units in English and Uzbek, emphasizing their morphological, semantic, and stylistic dimensions, and to underscore the importance of comparative research in revealing both shared and divergent linguistic strategies.

2.Result and discussion.

The term “reduplication” is derived from the Latin re- (“again”) and duplicare (“to double”), and in linguistic term, it generally refers to the repetition of phonological material- a whole word or part of a word – either to create a new lexical item or to modify the meaning of the base form. In English, the term became standardized through the typological and structural studies of linguists such as Nils Thun and Carl Rubino, though historically it had been referred to using less consistent terminology like “*doubling*,” “*germination*,” “*repetition compounds*,” and “*isosyllabic constructions*”.

Nils Thun emphasized the necessity of a unified term and identified “reduplication” as the most accurate descriptor due to its functional, structural, and typological clarity. He noted that although reduplicative forms vary in appearance and function, their common feature is the repetition of phonological segments for expressive, grammatical, or semantic purposes.[3]

2.1. Morphological productivity and structural differences.

Reduplication, as a morphological phenomenon, reveals significant differences in terms of structure and productivity in Uzbek and English due to the languages’ typological distinctions – Uzbek being agglutinative and English analytic in nature.

In Uzbek, reduplication is a highly productive morphological process, used extensively in word formation, semantic intensification, and stylistic enrichment. The Uzbek language permits several patterns of reduplication, including:

1.Full reduplication – where a word is repeated entirely to express intensity, plurality, or continuity: *katta-katta* – “*very big*”, *yurib-yurib* – “*walking continuously*”

2. Partial reduplication with phonological variation- where only a part of the word is repeated, sometimes with vowel or consonant alteration: *duk-duk yurak* – “*throbbing heart*”, *hapqirib-hapqirib* – “*panting*”

Affixed reduplication- combining reduplication with affixes for expressive or diminutive purposes: *mayda-maydagina* – “*very tiny*”, *yupqa-yupqagina*- “*very thin*”

As Norqulova explains, reduplication in Uzbek functions as a derivational tool that creates new lexemes or modifies existing ones to express emotional depth, rhythmic balance, or semantic intensity. This is especially evident in poetic, colloquial, and folkloric language. Uzbek reduplication is thus morphologically systematic and part of an active word formation model, illustrating the language’s agglutinative nature.[5]



In contrast, English employs reduplication infrequently and primarily as a stylistic or expressive feature, not as a systematic morphological device. Reduplication in English generally takes on one of the following forms:

1. Exact repetition: *bye-bye, no-no*
2. Ablaut reduplication: *zig-zag, tip-top*
3. Rhyming reduplication: *super-duper, boogie-woogie*
4. Echo reduplication: *walkie-talkie, hurly-burly*

According to Rubino, These forms are largely fixed expressions rather than generative patterns. They often appear in informal contexts, nursery rhymes, or idiomatic speech, and serve phonological or rhetorical purposes such as rhythm, humor, irony, or emphasis. Unlike Uzbek, English reduplication does not participate in active grammatical inflection or derivation, and its productivity is limited to lexicalized phrases.[2]

Uzbek allows reduplication to affect lexical class, intensity, frequency, and affective tone, using both full and partial patterns systematically. This flexibility is supported by its morphological regularity and root-based morphology. English reduplication, however, is typically non-productive, highly lexicalized, and rarely used for forming new words. Its forms are often fixed in usage and rely on sound play, not grammatical necessity.

Feature	Uzbek	English
Language type	Agglutinative	Analytic
Morphological productivity	High	Low
Reduplication types	Full, partial, affixed	Exact, ablaut, rhyming, echo
Function	Derivation, intensification, emotion	Style, sound play, emphasis
Role in grammar	Word formation	Idiomatic / stylistic
Use in formal registers	Frequent	Rare

These contrasts reflect broader typological differences between the two languages. Uzbek’s rich morphological system supports productive reduplication, while English relegates reduplicative forms to stylistic, idiomatic, and child-directed registers.

2.2. Semantic and pragmatic functions.

Reduplication, beyond its morphological structure, serves vital semantic and pragmatic roles in both English and Uzbek, albeit in typologically and culturally distinct ways. These functions reflect not only linguistic forms but also cultural thought patterns, emotional expression, and rhetorical strategies.

Uzbek reduplication often modifies or intensifies meaning by signaling quantity, quality, emotional tone, or frequency. As an agglutinative language with a rich system of expressive morphology, Uzbek uses reduplication to create subtle semantic shades in discourse.

1. Intensification of quality or state: *qorayib-qorayib* – “deeply blackened” (used metaphorically for exhaustion or sadness), *yupqa-yupqagina* – “very thin/delicate”
2. Repetition of action or continuity: *tez-tez* – “frequently”, *yura-yura* – “walking continuously”
3. Semantic contrast or irony: *Boy-boy deysan, lekin qo’lida qarz daftar* – used sarcastically to express a mismatch between appearance and reality.



As noted by Norqulova, Uzbek reduplication carries strong emotive and evaluative connotations, often reinforcing the speakers attitude, sarcasm, or empathy. It frequently appears in proverbs, folk poetry, and oral narrative, where it adds semantic depth and cultural resonance. [5]

Reduplication in English, though not morphologically productive, serves important semantic purposes, particularly in stylistic or colloquial registers. It often conveys:

1. Emphasis or intensity: *He was running and running and running...*- indicates continuity or urgency.
2. Mediocrity or ambivalence: *so-so, meh-meh* – expresses neutrality or indifference.
3. Playfulness or humor: *boogie-woogie, itsy-bitsy* – used for diminutives or humorous exaggeration.

According to Rubino, English reduplication “frequently serves to add rhetorical or expressive coloring to informal discourse,” often through sound symbolism or stylistic repetition, rather than modifying grammatical category.[6]

In Uzbek, reduplication is a pragmatic strategy to express emotional attitudes, highlight information, or maintain rhythmic balance in spoken interaction:

- *Hapqirib-hapqirib*- used to dramatize physical or emotional distress.
- *Shivirlab-shivirlab* – expresses gentleness or secretiveness
- *Yura-yura boribdi* – narrative continuity in folk tales.

These usages function within culturally embedded pragmatic frames, enriching the interpersonal and affective tone of speech. [7]

In English, reduplication often carries pragmatic meanings tied to attitude, sarcasm, or social intimacy:

- *Oh, look at Mr. smarty-pants!* – conveys sarcasm or mock praise.
- *Whatever is whatever*- implies resignation or indifference .
- *No-no*- indicates prohibition or mild reprimand, often in child-directed speech.

Moravcsik notes that English reduplication is often “discourse-oriented,” reflecting speaker stance, emotion, or social register more than grammatical necessity. [2]

2.3. Reduplication in oral and artistic traditions.

Reduplication is not only a linguistic mechanism but also a powerful stylistic and expressive tool, particularly in oral folklore, literature, , poetry, and musical traditions. Both Uzbek and English languages use reduplicative structures in these domains, but the form, function and frequency of their usage reflect cultural, linguistic, and stylistic differences.

Uzbek oral literature – including folk tales (ertaklar), proverbs (maqollar), riddles (topishmoqlar), and songs (qo‘shiqalar) – frequently employs reduplication to convey rhythm, emotion, continuity, and emphasis. These units often reflect deep cultural concepts, aesthetic forms, and the emotional worldview of the Uzbek people.

a) Folk tales and epics.

In folk tales, reduplication adds a musical and narrative rhythm to the storytelling.

- “*Yura-yura boribdi, o‘ylay-o‘ylay yetibdi...*” – He kept walking and walking, thinking and thinking ...

This repetitive structure not only emphasizes the duration of the action but also helps young listeners memorize the flow of the story. According to Norqulova, such reduplicative forms enhance the tale’s emotional tone and linguistic melody.

b) Proverbs and sayings.

Reduplication in Uzbek proverbs intensifies meaning and often delivers didactic or ironic messages.

- “*Ko‘r-ko‘rona ish qilma*” – Don’t act blindly.



This example create rhythmic symmetry and reinforce the moral or philosophical lesson being conveyed.

c) Song and poetry.

In Uzbek music and poetic traditions, reduplication functions to enhance rhythm, imagery, and expressiveness.

- "*G'uvullab-g'uvullab daryo oqadi*" – The river flows roaring and roaring.

This example show how reduplication contributes to emotional climax and aesthetic appeal, especially in songs or doston recitations. Reduplication in Uzbek poetry plays a key role in maintaining musicality, imagery, and cultural expression. [7]

d) Riddles and children's verse.

Reduplication enhances sound play and mnemonic effect in riddles.

- "*Ding-ding etadi, quloqqa yetadi...*" – It goes "ding-ding", reaches the ear...

In such examples, repetition adds playfulness and sound imagery, helping to capture children's attention and stimulate their imagination.

English also features reduplication in nursery rhymes, folk songs, idiomatic expressions, and literary devices, although often for stylistic, humorous, or rhythmic purposes.

a) Nursery rhymes and children's songs.

Reduplication is common in English nursery rhymes, where it helps create memorable rhythm and fun sounds.

- "*Hickory Dickory Dock*"

- "*The itsy-bitsy spider climbed up the waterspout...*"

- "*Fee-fi-fo-fum*" (*From Jack and the Beanstalk*).

These forms are often non-semantic but are used for entertainment, sound imitation, and phonological pleasure. [8]

b) Folk phrases and refrains.

Reduplication appears in idiomatic or folkloric expressions.

- "*Row, row, row your boat*"

- "*Twinkle, twinkle, little star...*"

Such lines use repetition for emphasis and harmony, enhancing the lyrical quality of oral performance.

c) Poetry and Literary usage.

Poets and authors sometimes use reduplication to express continuity, emotion, or irony.

- "*...and he laughed and laughed...*"

- "*Again and again she tried...*"

This use of repetition highlights emotional weight or temporal emphasis, similar to how it functions in Uzbek. Literary critics like Geoffrey Leech argue that such forms "heighten the poetic function of language through rhythmic echo". [9]

d) Humor and irony.

In colloquial English, reduplication also conveys sarcasm, playfulness, or mild criticism.

- "*goody-goody*", "*lovey-dovey*", "*no-no*", "*smarty-panty*"

These expressions often appears in dialogue to enhance tone or attitude, reflecting pragmatic intent rather than morphological need. As Rubino and Moravcsik observe, reduplication in both languages serves as a poetic and expressive resource, yet in Uzbek it forms a more systematic element of oral aesthetics and emotional depth, while in English it is more formulaic and rooted in style and rhythm.

2.4. Reduplication in songs.

Reduplication serves as an important linguistic and stylistic device in both songs and idiomatic speech in Uzbek and English, albeit with notable differences in form, function, and



cultural resonance. In both traditions, reduplication enhances rhythm, expressiveness and emotional tone, but the motivations and usage contexts reflect unique linguistic and cultural patterns.

In Uzbek musical tradition, both folk and modern songs utilize reduplication to enhance rhythmic structure, emotional depth, and poetic imagery. These units contribute to the aesthetic harmony of the lyrics and often carry semantic significance beyond mere repetition.

- "*Ko'zlarim qora-qora, yuragimni o'g'irladi*"- "Your eyes are so very dark, they stole my heart"

In this example the reduplication qora-qora intensifies the description and emotional tone. These forms are deeply embedded in Uzbek poetic-musical culture, where melody and meter are closely aligned with phonetic patterns. As noted by Norqulova, reduplicative forms in songs help maintain metrical balance, and also create a musical echo effect that strengthens emotional impact.

Reduplication continues to be used in contemporary songs, often with metaphorical or dramatic effect.

- "*Sevaman-sevaman, yuragim faqat sen bilan*"- "I love and love, my heart only beats for you"

In this example the emotional repetition sevaman-sevaman adds intensity and devotion.

In English music, especially in pop, blues, rock, and children's songs, reduplication plays key stylistic role. It enhances rhyme, melody, and playfulness, and sometimes conveys semantic or emotional nuances.

- "*You keep me hanging on and on and on ...* (Kim Wilde) In this example repetition of on and on reflects continuity, frustration, or emotional buildup.

- "*Bye-bye baby, baby goodbye...*" (The Four Seasons) Here reduplication bye-bye and repetition baby enhance melodic flow and emotional softness.

3. Conclusion.

Reduplication, as a linguistic phenomenon, offers deep insights into the morphological, semantic, stylistic, and cultural systems of both Uzbek and English languages. While Uzbek with its agglutinative structure, exhibits high morphological productivity, allowing reduplication to serve a range of grammatical, emotive, and stylistic functions, English treats reduplication as a more restricted, stylistic device, largely confined to idiomatic, colloquial, or literary contexts.

The comparative analysis reveals that in Uzbek, reduplication is fully integrated into the processes of word formation, semantic intensification, and emotional expression. It is especially prominent in oral traditional, folk literature, and musical heritage, where it adds rhythmic harmony, emotional resonance, and aesthetic richness. Conversely, in English, reduplication is primarily lexicalized, often fixed in forms, and used to convey humor, irony, childlike playfulness, or emphasis, particularly in songs, nursery rhymes, and idiomatic expressions.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of reduplication in cognitive and pragmatic domains. It reflects cultural perceptions, communicative strategies, and conceptual metaphors within each language. As seen in both languages, reduplication is not merely a phonological or morphological tool but a carry of social meaning, emotive coloring, and aesthetic tradition.

The investigation also demonstrates the relevance of interdisciplinary approaches – drawing from typology, cognitive linguistics, translation theory, and corpus-based studies – to fully understand the role and evolution of reduplicative units. Especially in translation, reduplication poses challenges due to its form-bound expressiveness, making it a crucial area for further study in comparative linguistics and pedagogical application.



Ultimately, this comparative analysis of reduplication in English and Uzbek not only enriches our understanding of each language's internal structure but also contributes to broader insights in linguistic universals, cross-cultural communication, and stylistic dynamics. It reveals that despite structural and functional differences, reduplication remains a universal human strategy for amplifying meaning, expressing emotion, and shaping linguistic beauty.

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