

Revisiting Reduplication

Toward a description of reduplication of predicative signs in Swedish Sign Language

Language of presentation: English

Previous studies on Swedish Sign Language (SSL) have shown that reduplication expresses a variety of meanings (Bergman 1983; Bergman & Dahl 1994). However, no study had looked specifically at reduplication, and stative predicates were always excluded from investigation. Also, the interaction between the manual and oral component in reduplication had previously been somewhat overlooked, as had the interaction between reduplication and negation. Thus, the current study had as its objective to investigate the use of reduplication in predicative signs in SSL, with special importance given to these previously overlooked areas (i.e. stative predicates, oral reduplication, and negation).

This study investigated *reduplication* of predicative signs in SSL by using a small-scale corpus, as well as using informant data from consulting sessions with a native signer. The small-scale corpus used for the study was based on previously recorded material for the Swedish Sign Language Corpus Project (Mesch 2011), and the ECHO project (Bergman & Mesch 2004), as well as other pre-recorded material used for teaching purposes. This material consisted of narrative texts, interviews, and spontaneous dialogue texts. These data were discussed with a language consultant (a native signer of SSL), and some complimentary data also stem from the consultation sessions.

The study found that reduplication in SSL typically expresses plurality of events and/or referents, but may also express intensification, ongoing event or generic activity. There is a distinction between external and internal pluractionality: external pluractionality is associated with a frequentative/habitual reading, where one singular event is repeated over time (see Example 1); internal pluractionality is associated with an iterative reading, where one event consists of several individual repetitions (see Example 2). There is a strong tendency for lexically monosyllabic signs to be associated with pluractional readings of reduplication, whereas lexically repeated signs are strongly associated with ongoing events or generic activity. For stative predicates, reduplication usually only works with temporary state statives, expressing one state recurring over and over (see Example 3), or with one state—temporary or inherent—being associated with several distinct individuals at the same time (see Example 4).

Investigating the use of the oral component in a reduplicated sign showed that there is a significant difference in the use of oral reduplication with pluractional and non-pluractional expressions of reduplication. Oral reduplication is more often associated with pluractional meanings than with non-pluractional meanings (see Table 1). The study also found a phenomenon not previously described: *oral reduplication* without manual reduplication. This means the manual component is articulated with a single movement, but that several reduplicated mouth movements accompany this movement. This process expresses the ongoing function with telic predicates, and focuses on the telic predicate as a single event in progress, thus replacing the function of manual reduplication.

Though previous studies found that SSL cannot negate reduplicated signs (cf. Bergman & Dahl 1994), my study found a few instances of constructions with reduplication being negated, though with other strategies than the regular negation strategies, e.g. by putting the negator outside the intonational phrase containing the reduplication (see Example 1).

Example 1:

VARY ALWAYS HUG++ / NOT neg
g-NO
'It varies. We don't always hug.' (lit. 'Always hug is not the case.')

(SSLC01_006 01:50)

Example 2:

WHOLE-DAY FROM TEN TO FOUR SLALOM++++
'All day, from 10 to 4, we were slalom skiing over and over.' (Fjällresa 02:42)

Example 3:

FRIDAY EXCITED PRO-1 FREE-FROM-WORK+++ FRIDAY> PERFECT
THEME-BUOY-----
'Then on Fridays I was excited, because I had Fridays off. It was great!'

(SSLC01_162 03:44)

Example 4:

GROW-UP PRO-1 ALONE DEAF POSS-1 SIBLING INDEX-CIRCULAR

HEARING+++ INDEX-CIRCULAR
'I grew up as the only Deaf. My siblings are all hearing.' (SSLC01_160 02:26)

Table 1: The distribution of oral reduplication for different meanings

	<i>Pluractionality</i>	<i>Ongoing event</i>	<i>Generic activity</i>	<i>Intensification</i>	TOTAL
<i>No oral reduplication</i>	54	39	22	7	122
<i>Oral reduplication</i>	46	6	2	0	54
TOTAL	100	45	24	7	176

References

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