

CONTRASTIVE FOCUS REDUPLICATION IN ENGLISH
(THE SALAD-SALAD PAPER)*

ABSTRACT. This paper presents a phenomenon of colloquial English that we call Contrastive Reduplication (CR), involving the copying of words and sometimes phrases as in *It's tuna salad, not SALAD-salad*, or *Do you LIKE-HIM-like him?* Drawing on a corpus of examples gathered from natural speech, written texts, and television scripts, we show that CR restricts the interpretation of the copied element to a 'real' or prototypical reading. Turning to the structural properties of the construction, we show that CR is unusual among reduplication phenomena in that whole idioms can be copied, object pronouns are often copied (as in the second example above), and inflectional morphology need not be copied. Thus the 'scope' of CR cannot be defined in purely phonological terms; rather, a combination of phonological, morphosyntactic, syntactic, and lexical factors is involved. We develop an analysis within the parallel architecture framework of Jackendoff (1997, 2002), whereby CR is treated as a lexical item with syntactic and semantic content and reduplicative phonology. We then sketch an alternative analysis, based on current assumptions within the Minimalist Program, which involves movement into a focus-like position with both the head and the tail of the resulting chain spelled out.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a phenomenon of colloquial English that has previously received scant attention in the literature, which we call Contrastive Reduplication (CR). Examples of this construction are given in (1):¹

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¹ Most of the examples in this paper come from a corpus we have gathered of examples occurring in natural speech, written texts, or in films and television shows (available at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/linguistics/russell/redup-corpus.html>). Examples drawn from the corpus are indicated by the sign ©. All examples show the reduplicant in small caps, even when not in the original text.



- (1)a. I'll make the tuna salad, and you make the SALAD–salad. ©
- b. LIKE-’EM-like-’em? Or, I’d-like-to-get-store-credit-for-that-amount like-’em?² ©
- c. Is he French or FRENCH–French?
- d. I’m up, I’m just not UP–up. ©
- e. That’s not AUCKLAND–Auckland, is it? ©
- f. My car isn’t MINE–mine; it’s my parents’.
- g. Oh, we’re not LIVING-TOGETHER–living-together.

As illustrated in these examples, CR targets nouns (1a), verbs (and optionally pronominal material to their right) (1b), adjectives (1c), verb particles (1d), proper names (1e), pronouns (1f) and lexicalized expressions (1g).

The semantic effect of this construction is to focus the denotation of the reduplicated element on a more sharply delimited, more specialized, range. For instance, *SALAD–salad* in (1a) denotes specifically green salad as opposed to salads in general, and, in the context in which (1e) was used, *AUCKLAND–Auckland* denotes the city in New Zealand as opposed to other cities that may happen to have this name. For a first approximation, we characterize this effect as denoting the prototypical instance of the reduplicated lexical expression.

CR is quite common in North American English. We have recorded it used by speakers in their 20s and in their 70s; by speakers of British English, and even by native speakers of other languages (when speaking English). The phenomenon is of course much rarer in written corpora (though we have one example from John Steinbeck, (3e) below); we have however found numerous instances of it in film and television transcripts.

CR is of interest for a number of reasons. First, although reduplication has been studied in many languages of the world, it has rarely been cited as a grammatical phenomenon of English. In fact, CR is not the only reduplication process in English: there are at least six others of various degrees of productivity:

² This example also contains an instance of another construction, the ‘you-can-put-anything-you-want-before-the-head’ construction. Our corpus of CR, especially in the television scripts, is rife with such examples, which also deserve analysis. See note 27 for some discussion.