

Reduplication

Reduplication of nouns

A limited number of nouns can be duplicated to mean *every* or *each*:

日 [ɲit33] day → 日日 [ɲit33 ɲit21] every day, each day
年 [nein22] year → 年年 [nein22 nein22] every year, each year
晚 [man22] year → 晚晚 [man22 man22] every evening, each evening

枪 [tiaŋ33] gun → 枪枪 [tiaŋ33 tiaŋ33] every shot, each shot
拳 [kun22] fist → 拳拳 [kun22 kun22] every punch, each punch
刀 [ɔu335] knife → 刀刀 [ɔu33 ɔu33] every chop, each cut

Reduplication of classifiers

Classifiers, in general, can be duplicated to mean *every*, *any*, or *all*:

只只 (猫) 都靚 [dziak33 dziak33 (miu55) du55 liaŋ33]
CL-CL (cats) all pretty They (The cats) are all pretty.

个个 (苹果) 都甜 [gɔi33 gɔi33 (pein22) gɔ55) du55 hiam22]
CL-CL (apples) all sweet They (The apples) are all sweet.

The negative takes the form '冇 CL' with rising tone change:

(尼 猫) 冇只靚 [(nai55 miu55) mɔu33 dziak335 liaŋ33]
(the cats) no-CL[↑] pretty None of them (the cats) are pretty.

(尼 苹果) 冇个甜 [(nai55 pein22) gɔ55) mɔu33 gɔi335 hiam22]
(the apples) no-CL[↑] sweet None of them (the apples) are sweet.

Reduplication of verbs

Result from the contraction of 'V — V' (alternatively 'V 下'):

称一称 [tsein33 yit55 tsein33] → 称称 [tsein33 tsein33] (称下 [tsein33 ha21]) weight
讲一讲 [gɔŋ55 yit55 gɔŋ55] → 讲讲 [gɔŋ55 gɔŋ55] (讲下 [gɔŋ55 ha21]) mention briefly
数一数 [su55 yit55 su55] → 数数 [su55 su55] (数下 [su55 ha21]) count

Result from the contraction of 'V 下 V 下':

行下行下 [haŋ22 ha21 haŋ22 ha215] → 行[↓]行[↓] [haŋ221 haŋ225] while walking
数下数下 [su55 ha21 su55 ha215] → 数[↓]数[↓] [su511 su55] while counting
倾下倾下 [kein33 ha21 kein33 ha215] → 倾[↓]倾[↓] [kein331 kein335] in the middle of chatting

行[↓]行[↓] 佢 嘅声 麦翻 [haŋ221 haŋ225 kui33 baŋ21 siaŋ33 mak32 fan55]
walking s/he bang-sound fall over Walking along, she suddenly fell down with a thud.

Certain two syllable verbs (AB) can be repeated in the form of ABAB to reduce intensity:

几时过来 商量商量咯 [gi55 si215 gə33 ləi33 siaŋ33 liaŋ22 siaŋ33 liaŋ22 lə55]

when come over talk-talk SFP

So maybe we could get together and discuss it sometime?

Reduplication of adjectives

Repetition of many adjectives combined with tone change can be used to denote different degrees of intensity — a mechanism also found with less frequency in Cantonese but not in Mandarin:

红 [həŋ22] red → 红红¹ [həŋ22 həŋ225] reddish → 红¹红 [həŋ225 həŋ22] scarlet, very red

辣 [lat32] spicy → 辣辣¹ [lat32 lat325] somewhat spicy → 辣¹辣 [lat325 lat32] very hot

醉 [dui33] drunk → 醉醉¹ [dui33 dui335] a little bit drunk → 醉¹醉 [dui335 dui33] really drunk

The Cantonese equivalent to the 'mild' form is the addition of 哋 with tone rise:

红 hung⁴ red → 红红¹哋¹ hung⁴ hung² dei² reddish → 红¹红 hung² hung⁴ scarlet, very red

个 女 夜夜 都 未 曾 返 闺 [gəi33 nui55 yia325 yia32 du55 miəŋ32 fan33 gi33]

CL daughter late-late still not-yet back home

My daughter still hasn't come home though it's so late at night.

佢 扮 到 靚靚 至 去 拍拖 [kui33 ban32 ɔu33 liaŋ335 liaŋ33 dzi33 hui33 pak33 tɔ55]

s/he make-up till pretty-pretty then go date

She makes herself up beautifully before going on a date.

Certain two syllable adjectives (AB) can be repeated in the form of AABB to make them stronger:

清楚 [tein33 tsə55] → 清清楚楚 [tein33 tein33 tsə55 tsə55] nice and clear

干净 [gən33 diaŋ32] → 干干净净 [gən33 gən33 diaŋ32 diaŋ32] nice and clean

苦苦 匿匿 [fu55 fu55 net55 net55] (taste) bitter

狭狭 楔楔 [giap32 giap32 hiap33 hiap33] cramped in space

黏黏 nak⁵nak⁵ [tsi33 tsi33 nak55 nak55] sticky

唠唠 叨叨 [ləu22 ləu22 dəu32 dəu32] annoyingly chattering, nagging

hui³hui² 乱乱 [hui22 hui22 lən32 lən32] (things) disorderly

四四方方 [tu33 tu33 fəŋ33 fəŋ33] square

虔虔 诚诚 [kein22 kein22 sein22 sein22] clean

Certain two syllable adjectives (AB) can be repeated in the form of ABAB, with the last syllable in the high rising tone:

自由自由¹ [du55 yiu22 du55 yiu225] relaxing, at easy

热滞热滞¹ [ŋet32 dzai21 ŋet32 dzai215] sultry

和暖 和暖¹ [və22 nən21 və22 nən215] lukewarm

三八三八¹ [lam33 bat55 lam33 bat55 (?ə55)] gossipy, nosy

Onomatopoeic and sound-symbolic (vivid) reduplication

Formed with the suffix 响[hiaŋ55]/声[siaŋ33] 'sound':

佢 拍 门 拍 到 嘑嘑响 [kui33 pak33 mən22 pat33 ɔu33 baŋ21 baŋ21 hiaŋ55]

s/he pat door pat until bang-bang-sound Bang bang, he knocks at the door.

佢 瞓 到 𠵼𠵼²¹ 𠵼𠵼²¹ 声 [kui33 fun33 ɔu33 𠵼𠵼²¹ 𠵼𠵼²¹ siaŋ²²]
 s/he sleep until ngok-ngok-sound Zzzz ... she is sleeping soundly.

ABB forms, made up of an adjective (A) and a reduplicated syllable (B) are reduced to AB[ə³³], and can be further contracted to AB with tone change. The non-reduced ABB forms are used occasionally, especially if they are Cantonese cognates. Sandhi occurs frequently at the syllable boundary between B and the weakened ə³³.

冻冰冰 [əŋ33 bein55 bein55] ice cold → 冻冰 ə³³ [əŋ33 bein55 (n)ə33] → 冻冰¹ [əŋ33 bein553]
 白雪雪 [bak32 lut55 lut55] snowy white → 白雪 ə³³ [bak32 lut55 (t)ə33] → 白雪¹ [bak32 lut553]
 韧麻麻 [ŋin33 ma22 ma22] (meat) tough → 韧麻 ə³³ [ŋin33 ma22 ə33] → 韧麻¹ [ŋin33 ma223]

More examples (with sandhi omitted):

Taishanese		English	Cantonese
短	[ɔn55 dzut55 ə33]	short	
圆碌(碌)	[yɔn22 lək33 lək33/ə33]	round	圆碌碌
烂	[lan32 dət33 ə33]	torn and worn	烂 doe ³ doe ³
红卜(卜)	[həŋ22 bək55 bək55/ə33]	red	红卜卜
矮	[ai55 dut55 ə33]	short (of height)	矮腩腩
干	[gɔn33 piəŋ55 ə33]	dry	干噌噌
软	[ŋun33 nəp33 ə33]	downy soft	软脰脰
散	[lan55 ləu33 ləu33/ə33]	loose, scattered	散修修
生勾勾	[saŋ33 ŋəu33 ŋəu33]	raw	生勾勾
酸	[lən33 gaŋ33 ə33]	sour	
咸	[ham33 ŋin55 ə33]	unfavorably salty	
脆	[tui33 tək55 ə33]	crunchy crunch	脆卜卜
薄	[bək32 tsiak55 tsiak55/ə33]	thin	薄 cet ⁷ cet ⁷
薄	[bək32 yiam22 ə33]	thin (of poor quality)	
白濛	[bak32 məŋ33/55 ə33]	misty white	白濛濛
白雪	[bak32 lut55 lut55/ə33]	snowy white	白雪雪
皱	[tsəu22 lut33 ə33]	wrinkled	皱搵搵
滑脬	[vat32 lut55/33 ə33]	smooth	滑脬脬
涩	[səp33 tat33 ə33]	coarse (to the touch)	噉涩涩
新	[lin33 laŋ33 ə33]	brand new	新 kwaak ⁷ kwaak ⁷
脰	[nəm22 bəŋ55/33 ə33]	(food) tenderly soft	脰 bet ⁹ bet ⁹
轻	[hiaŋ33 piəŋ55 ə33]	light (of weight)	轻飘飘

Taishanese		English	Cantonese
淡	[ham33 biat33 ə33]	tasteless, insipid	淡茂茂
凉浸	[liɑŋ22 dim33 ə33]	(weather) cool	凉浸浸
暖	[nɔn33 vut33 ə33]	(weather) warm	
厚	[həu21 mək33 ə33]	thick	
掂	[iam32 liu33 ə33]	straight	直笔甩
黑墨	[hak55 mak32 ə33]	dark, inky black	
齐茸	[tai22 tap55/33 ə33]	even, uniform	齐茸茸

AAB forms are rare and consist mostly of Cantonese loanwords:

嘈嘈闭 [təu22 təu22 bi33] noisy

沙沙滚 [sa21 da21 gun55] slipshod, careless, negligent

刹刹静 [ʰat55 ʰat55 tiaŋ21] (of place) quiet, empty, lonely

Misc. notes

There are *verb-object* words with the appearance of syllable reduplication:

数数 [su55 su33] *count-numbers* → to count; counting

油油 [yiu22 yiu225] *paint-paint* → to paint a house; house painting