

## On the Characteristics of Adjective Reduplication in Indonesian and Chinese and its Implications for Chinese Language Teaching

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents a contrastive analysis of adjective reduplication in Indonesian and Chinese, two typologically distinct languages. Although reduplication is a common linguistic device across languages, its forms and functions vary considerably, posing particular challenges for Indonesian learners of Chinese. Drawing on dictionary, corpus, and literary data from both languages, the study compares adjective reduplication in terms of structural forms, syntactic functions, and grammatical marking mechanisms. Five similarities are identified: both allow word-class change; function as attributives, adverbials, predicates, and objects; enhance descriptiveness and coloristic meaning; exhibit increased intensity (quantity iconicity); and resist degree adverbs. Four differences are found: Chinese has five reduplication patterns (vs. eleven in Indonesian); Chinese uses syllable-based segmentation (vs. word-based); Chinese employs the particle *de* (vs. affixes and prepositions); and Chinese encodes degree only (vs. degree + plural quantity). Pedagogical implications for Indonesian learners include contrastive restructuring for structural differences, function-first sequencing for grammatical marking, and semantic constraint awareness for focus differences, complemented by the strategic use of cross-linguistic commonalities as positive transfer anchors. The study extends quantity iconicity to cross-typological comparison and offers a systematic contrast of grammatical marker systems (particles vs. affixes/prepositions) within a corpus-based, multi-dimensional framework.

### KEYWORDS

Adjective; Chinese Language Teaching; Contrastive Analysis; Indonesia and China; Reduplication

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian and Chinese belong to different language families and grammatical types. From a genealogical perspective, Indonesian is a member of the Malayo-Polynesian language family, whereas Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family. From the perspective of grammatical typology, Indonesian is classified as an agglutinative language, which relies

heavily on affixation and morphological changes. In contrast, Chinese is an isolating language, characterized by invariable word forms and a reliance on word order and function words. Despite these fundamental typological differences, both languages employ reduplication as a productive grammatical device.

Adjective reduplication, in particular, is complex in form and rich in semantic function, significantly enhancing linguistic expressiveness in both spoken and written discourse. However, not all adjectives can be reduplicated in either language, and widespread non-correspondence exists between the two systems. An adjective that is reduplicable in Indonesian may correspond to a non-reduplicable adjective in Chinese, and vice versa. Such mismatches, together with differences in how speakers of the two languages conceptualize external realities, lead to disparities in lexical correspondence, morphological patterning, modes of expression, and grammatical meaning, thereby affecting both word-formation and syntactic functions. Consequently, the diversity of adjective reduplication makes it difficult for Indonesian learners to avoid the negative effects of native language transfer when acquiring Chinese as a second language.

Addressing these challenges is of both theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, a systematic contrastive analysis of adjective reduplication in Indonesian and Chinese can contribute to our understanding of how reduplication operates across typologically distinct languages. Practically, identifying specific similarities and differences between the two systems can inform the design of more effective pedagogical materials and instructional strategies for Indonesian learners of Chinese, a population that is growing significantly worldwide.

Previous research has extensively examined adjective reduplication in Chinese. Seminal works by 朱德熙 (1982), 吕叔湘 (2003: 100), and 石毓智 (1996) have classified reduplication patterns and analyzed their syntactic and semantic properties. These scholars distinguish between word-formation reduplication and inflectional reduplication. In word-formation reduplication, the meaning and syntactic function of the base form remain unchanged after reduplication. In inflectional reduplication, by contrast, the reduplicated form differs significantly from the base in both meaning and syntactic function, while the base can be used independently. For example, the Chinese adjective 好 *hǎo* (good) reduplicated as 好好 *hǎohǎo* (very good); 干净 *gānjìng* (clean) becomes 干干净净 *gāngānjìngjìng* (very clean); 笔直 *bǐzhí* becomes 笔直笔直 *bǐzhíbǐzhí* (perfectly straight).

A similar distinction is found in Indonesian linguistics, where reduplication is likewise divided into word-formation and inflectional (syntactic) types (Chaer, 2002: 183). The present study focuses exclusively on inflectional adjective reduplication in both languages. Scholars such as Chaer (2002: 183–184), Simatupang (1979: 20), and Arifin (2007: 89) have described the morphological patterns of Indonesian reduplication, identifying four types: partial reduplication (reduplication of the first syllable), full reduplication, full reduplication with sound change, and reduplication with affixation. Based on this classification, Surinah (2017) identified eleven distinct forms of adjective reduplication in Indonesian. However, systematic contrastive studies specifically comparing adjective reduplication between Indonesian and Chinese remain scarce. In response, Surinah (2017) conducted a contrastive analysis focusing exclusively on the formal properties of adjective reduplication in the two

languages. That study identified differences in the number of reduplication patterns (five in Chinese versus eleven in Indonesian) and in segmentation units (syllable-based in Chinese versus word-based in Indonesian).

Nevertheless, this earlier study did not extend its analysis to syntactic functions, semantic functions (e.g., degree intensification in Chinese vs. plural of the subject in Indonesian), grammatical marking (Chinese particles vs. Indonesian affixes and prepositions), or pedagogical applications. These dimensions remain unexplored.

To fill this gap, the present study conducts a systematic contrastive analysis of adjective reduplication in Indonesian and Chinese, extending beyond formal comparison to include three additional core dimensions: syntactic forms, semantic function, and grammatical marking. Based on the findings of this contrastive analysis, the paper proposes a set of evidence-based pedagogical strategies tailored to Indonesian learners of Chinese. These strategies aim to mitigate negative transfer, enhance instructional efficiency, and ultimately help students master the grammatical rules of adjective reduplication in Chinese, thereby contributing to both contrastive linguistics and country-specific Chinese language teaching. The data sources for this paper include dictionaries, corpora, as well as various literary works and newspapers in both Indonesian and Chinese.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study conducts a contrastive analysis of adjective reduplication in Chinese and Indonesian across four dimensions: structural forms, syntactic functions, grammatical meanings, and pedagogical implications. The research procedures are described as follows.

### **Contrastive Principle: Functional Equivalence**

Cross-linguistic comparison cannot rely on language-particular descriptive categories, because each language has its own unique categories that are not directly comparable across languages (Haspelmath, 2010). Instead, typologists use comparative concepts—analytical tools designed specifically for cross-linguistic comparison, independent of any single language's descriptive system. These comparative concepts may be defined on the basis of universal semantic notions, general formal properties, or other comparative concepts (Haspelmath, 2010). Following Croft (2016), comparative concepts combine functional and formal traits: a function is understood as the combination of semantic content and information packaging, and a strategy is a particular form used to express a function. Thus, two structures from different languages are comparable if they serve the same function, regardless of differences in their surface forms or structural positions.

This study adopts a functional equivalence approach grounded in the notion of comparative concepts. Grammatical structures in Indonesian and Chinese are considered comparable if they serve the same core function—such as attributive modification, adverbial modification, or degree intensification—even if their formal realizations differ. For example, the Chinese prenominal *de* (的) construction and the Indonesian postnominal *yang* construction are both treated as attributive modification structures because they function to qualify a noun. The structural asymmetry between them is not ignored but explicitly analyzed as a key difference that may lead to negative transfer. This

functional principle is applied consistently across all three comparison dimensions: syntactic function, grammatical marking, and semantic focus.

### Comparison of Structural Forms

To compare the structural forms of adjective reduplication, two designated dictionaries were systematically searched to identify adjectives and their reduplicated counterparts. An adjective was considered reduplicable if it met either of the following criteria: (i) its reduplicated form was listed as a separate entry or usage example in the designated dictionary (dictionary-based criterion), or (ii) its reduplicated form appeared at least once in the corpus (corpus-based criterion). This dual criterion (dictionary annotation plus corpus verification) was applied consistently to both languages to ensure the reliability of reduplicability judgments.

Various patterns of word-formation reduplication and inflectional reduplication were then analyzed and inductively categorized. The statistical analysis and classification in this study focus exclusively on inflectional reduplication, excluding word-formation reduplication from further consideration. Subsequently, the internal structure of inflectional adjective reduplication in both languages was examined. For the structural comparison, data were drawn from *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Yòngfǎ Cídiǎn* (《现代汉语用法词典》, The Dictionary of Modern Chinese Usage) for Chinese and *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI, The Comprehensive Dictionary of Indonesian) for Indonesian.

### Comparison of Syntactic Functions and Grammatical Meanings

This study examines the syntactic functions of reduplicated adjectives in Chinese and Indonesian, specifically whether they can serve as attributives, adverbials, predicates, complements, or objects. For each syntactic function, the distinguishing features are identified and compared across the two languages.

Drawing on cognitive grammar and typological perspectives, the study further investigates the grammatical meanings expressed by adjective reduplication in both languages, with particular attention to the category of quantity. The cognitive and typological motivations underlying the use of reduplication as a grammatical device are also summarized.

Multiple data sources were consulted for the comparison of syntactic functions and grammatical meanings. Multiple data sources were consulted for the comparison of syntactic functions and grammatical meanings. For Chinese, these include *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Yòngfǎ Cídiǎn* (《现代汉语用法词典》, The Dictionary of Modern Chinese Usage), *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn* (《现代汉语词典》, The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary), *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Bābǎi Cí* (《现代汉语八百词》, Eight Hundred Words in Modern Chinese), and the corpus of Center for Chinese Linguistics (CCL) at Peking University (*Zhōngguó Yǔyánxué Yánjiū Zhōngxīn* 北京大学中国语言学研究中心). For Indonesian, data were primarily drawn from *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI, The Comprehensive Dictionary of Indonesian), supplemented by additional examples retrieved from Google Books.

### Pedagogical Implications

Based on the contrastive findings from the preceding three dimensions, this study formulates a set of pedagogical recommendations for teaching adjective reduplication to Indonesian learners of Chinese.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition and Classification of Adjective Reduplication

Reduplication refers to the morphological process in which all or part of a linguistic constituent—such as a root, stem, or word—is repeated to serve a specific grammatical or semantic function (Inkelas & Downing, 2015).

Based on a synthesis of previous research (吕叔湘, 1980: 637-641;王启龙, 2003: 100-188; Surinah, 2017), Chinese inflectional adjective reduplication mainly comprises five types: AA, AABB, ABAB, ABB, and A-里-AB, as illustrated in Table 1. A statistical examination of *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Yòngfǎ Cídiǎn* (现代汉语用法词典, The Dictionary of Modern Chinese Usage) reveals that out of 1,067 Chinese adjectives, 327 (31%) are reduplicable. Among the reduplicated forms, the AABB pattern is the most frequent, accounting for 61% of all reduplicated adjectives. The AA pattern follows at 29%, while the remaining three patterns (ABAB, ABB, and A-里-AB) each constitute less than 10% of the total.

A detailed internal structural analysis further shows that monosyllabic adjectives are more likely to be reduplicated than disyllabic ones: 61.1% of monosyllabic adjectives can be reduplicated, compared to only 26.4% of disyllabic AB-type adjectives. No reduplication was found for adjectives of three or more syllables. These findings indicate that full reduplication (exemplified by the AABB and AA pattern) is the primary means of inflectional adjective reduplication in Chinese.

Table 1. Forms of Inflectional Adjective Reduplication in Chinese

Form	Percentage	Example	Pinyin	Meaning
AA	29%	矮→矮矮	ǎi→ǎiǎi	short → very short
AABB	61%	安静→安安静静	ānjìng→ānānjìngjìng	quite → very quiet/peaceful
ABAB	6%	笔直→笔直笔直	bǐzhí→bǐzhíbǐzhí	straight → perfectly straight
ABB	1%	冷清→冷清清	lěngqīng→lěngqīngqīng	desolate/utterly → desolate and gloomy
A里AB	3%	肮脏→肮里肮脏	āngzāng→āngli āngzāng	dirty → very dirty/filthy

The eleven forms of Indonesian inflectional adjective reduplication identified in KBBI are presented in Table 2. A statistical survey based on KBBI reveals that out of 3,469 Indonesian adjectives, 422 (39%) are reduplicable. This suggests that Indonesian adjectives

are slightly more likely to undergo reduplication than their Chinese counterparts (39% vs. 31%).

**Table 2.** Forms of Inflectional Adjective Reduplication in Indonesian

Form	Percentage	Example	Meaning
abc-ab	0.1%	<i>perlahan</i> → <i>perlahan-lahan</i>	slow → slowly
WW	29.6%	<i>aman</i> → <i>aman-aman</i>	safe → very safe
WW-an	8.6%	<i>besar</i> → <i>besar-besaran</i>	big → very big
ter-WW-an	1.7%	<i>gesa</i> → <i>tergesa-gesa</i>	hurried → hastily
ke-WW-an	6.1%	<i>merah</i> → <i>kemerah-merahan</i>	red → reddish
ber-WW	0.8%	<i>gila</i> → <i>bergila-gila</i>	crazy → wildly
ber-WW-an	2%	<i>acak</i> → <i>beracak-acakan</i>	messy → very messy
WW-nya	12.5%	<i>cerdik</i> → <i>cerdik-cerdiknya</i>	clever → very clever
se-WW-nya	37.6%	<i>baik</i> → <i>sebaik-baiknya</i>	good → the best
with vowel change	0.6%	<i>ingar</i> → <i>ingar-bingar</i>	noisy → noisy and chaotic
W-em-W	0.3%	<i>gilang</i> → <i>gilang-gemilang</i>	glittering → magnificer

Among the eleven reduplicated forms, the se-WW-nya pattern is the most frequent, accounting for 37.6% of all reduplicated adjectives. The WW pattern follows at 29.6%, and the WW-nya pattern at 12.5%. The remaining eight patterns each constitute less than 10% of the total. These figures indicate that the majority of Indonesian adjective reduplication involves affixation (reduplication with affixes), rather than pure reduplication without morphological marking.

### Similarities in Adjective Reduplication between Indonesian and Chinese

A comparison of the two languages reveals five principal similarities with respect to adjective reduplication.

**1. Word class conversion.** In both languages, reduplication can trigger a change in word class. In Chinese, for instance, the adjective *gāoxìng* (高兴, happy) functions as a verb when reduplicated as *gāoxìnggāoxìng* (高兴高兴). A parallel phenomenon is observed in Indonesian, where the adjective *baik* (good), when reduplicated as *berbaik-baik*, acquires a verbal meaning of to reconcile.

**2. Syntactic functions.** Reduplicated adjectives in both Chinese and Indonesian may serve as attributives, adverbials, predicates, and objects. Owing to their strongly descriptive character, they tend to function primarily as adverbial modifiers or ornamental elements in clause structure. Furthermore, in both languages, reduplicated adjectives resist modification by degree adverbs. In Chinese, degree adverbs such as *fēicháng* (非常, extremely), *hěn* (很,

very), and *géwài* (格外, especially) cannot precede a reduplicated form; expressions such as *hěn gāngānjìngjìng* (很干干净净) are ungrammatical. The same restriction applies in Indonesian, where adverbs like *sangat*, *sekali*, or *banget* (very, extremely) cannot modify reduplicated adjectives. For example, *sangat kecil-kecil* is unacceptable, as the reduplicated form *kecil-kecil* already encodes intensified or quantified meaning. This restriction reflects the fact that reduplication itself operates as an internal intensification device, rendering external degree marking semantically redundant.

**3. Descriptive enhancement.** Reduplication consistently enhances the descriptive force of adjectives in both languages. In Chinese, *bó* (薄, thin) becomes *bóbó* (薄薄, delicately thin), and *dàfāng* (大方, generous) becomes *dàdàfāngfāng* (大大方方, gracefully generous and poised). In Indonesian, *perlahan* (slow) reduplicates as *perlahan-lahan* (slowly, at a leisurely pace), illustrating the same phenomenon.

**4. Coloristic meaning.** Reduplication may also add a coloristic or vivid dimension to adjectival meaning. The Chinese *xiǎo* (小, small) becomes *xiǎoxiǎo de* (小小的, tiny) (杨振兰, 1995), while the Indonesian *kilau* (gleam) becomes *kilau-kemilau* (glittering). In both cases, the reduplicated form yields a more vivid expression than its base.

**5. Intensity increase and quantity iconicity.** Finally, adjective reduplication in both languages serves to increase intensity, a property consistent with the principle of quantity iconicity, according to which greater linguistic form corresponds to greater semantic content (张敏, 1997; 石毓智, 1996; 李劲荣, 2004:39; 王世圆, 2019). In Chinese, this is seen in the progression from *jǐn* (紧, tight) to *jǐnjǐn* (紧紧, very tight), and from *jiēshi* (结实, strong) to *jiējiēshíshí* (结结实实, very strong) to *fēicháng jiēshi* (非常结实, extremely strong). In Indonesian, analogous gradations obtain: *bengkak* (crooked) → *bengkak-bengkak* (twisted) → *sangat bengkak* (very crooked); and *aneh* (strange) → *aneh-aneh* (very strange) → *aneh sekali* (extremely strange).

## Differences in Adjective Reduplication between Indonesian and Chinese

Beyond the similarities outlined above, four principal differences distinguish adjective reduplication in the two languages.

**1. Number of reduplication patterns.** Chinese possesses a relatively limited set of inflectional adjective reduplication patterns, primarily five. Indonesian, by contrast, as an agglutinative language with rich morphological resources, exhibits as many as eleven distinct patterns (see Tables 1 and 2 for details). A statistical survey based on dictionaries from both languages reveals that 39% of Indonesian adjectives are reduplicable, compared to only 31% of Chinese adjectives. This indicates that Indonesian adjectives are more likely to undergo reduplication than their Chinese counterparts. Taken together, the two measures—number of patterns and proportion of reduplicable adjectives—suggest that reduplication is a more pervasive and productive mechanism in Indonesian than in Chinese.

**2. Segmentation units.** The two languages adopt fundamentally different units of segmentation in forming reduplicated adjectives. Chinese reduplication is syllable-based, reflecting the fact that Chinese adjectives are predominantly disyllabic compounds in which each syllable typically corresponds to an independent morpheme. For

instance, *piàopiàoliàngliàng* (漂漂亮亮, very beautiful) is derived by segmenting the base adjective *piàoliàng* (漂亮, beautiful) into its constituent syllables *piào* and *liàng*, each of which is then reduplicated. Similarly, *gāngānjìngjìng* (干干净净, very clean) results from segmenting *gānjìng* (干净) into *gān* and *jìng*, followed by reduplication of each syllable. In contrast, Indonesian reduplication is word-based. Indonesian adjectives are typically polysyllabic monomorphemic words, and the entire word constitutes a single morpheme. Thus, *cantik-cantik* (very beautiful) is formed by reduplicating the whole word *cantik*, rather than segmenting it into its constituent syllables *can* and *tik*.

**3. Grammatical marking.** Chinese and Indonesian employ distinct grammatical devices to mark the syntactic functions of reduplicated adjectives. In Chinese, the particles *de* (的), *de* (地), or *de* (得) are used depending on the syntactic role of the reduplicated adjective. Specifically: when functioning as an attributive, the particle *de* (的) is obligatory, as in *chángcháng de huìyì zhuō* (长长的会议桌, the very long conference table); when used as an adverbial, *de* (地) is required, as in *hǎohǎo de xiūxi* (好好地休息, to have a good rest); when serving as a predicate or object, the modal particle *de* (的) appears sentence-finally, as in *tā de liǎnsè ànàn de* (他的脸色暗暗的, his complexion is very dark) and *wū lǐ wū wài dōu shì gāngānjìngjìng de* (屋里屋外都是干干净净的, both inside and outside the house are very clean); when functioning as a complement, the particle *de* (得) is inserted between the verb/predicate and the reduplicated adjective, as in *wǔtái bùzhì de dàdàfāngfāng* (舞台布置得大大方方, the stage is arranged in a generous and graceful manner).

In contrast, Indonesian relies primarily on affixes, prepositions, and fixed collocations. When a reduplicated adjective serves as an attributive, the relativizer *yang* must be used to introduce a postnominal relative clause, as in *Hubungan yang datar-datar saja* (a very plain relationship). When used adverbially, the preposition “*secara*” or “*dengan*” precedes the reduplicated adjective, as in *secara gila-gilaan* (madly, in a crazy manner). When functioning predicatively, most forms are relatively free, except for the WW-nya form, which requires the progressive marker “*sedang*”, *Anaknya sedang lucu-lucunya* (The child is being especially cute right now).

It is particularly noteworthy that when reduplicated adjectives function as attributives or adverbials, both languages employ grammatical markers, yet the structural positions are exactly opposite: Chinese adopts a prenominal marking pattern (Redup-ADJ + *de* + N), whereas Indonesian employs a postnominal pattern (N + *yang* + Redup-ADJ). This structural asymmetry is crucial for explaining a common error among Indonesian learners of Chinese — namely, the transfer of the L1 postnominal structure into Chinese, resulting in ungrammatical word orders such as *guānxì píngpíngdàndàn* (关系平平淡淡, relationship very plain) instead of the target form *píngpíngdàndàn de guānxì* (平平淡淡的<sub>的</sub>关系). The following table (Table 3) provides a functional mapping of grammatical markers in Chinese and Indonesian adjective reduplication.

Table 3. Functional Mapping of Grammatical Markers in Chinese and Indonesian Adjective Reduplication

Syntactic Function	Chinese Structure	Indonesian Structure	Predicted Learning Challenge
<b>Attributive</b> (定语)	<i>Adj-redup</i> + <b>de</b> (的) + <i>N</i>	<i>N</i> + <b>yang</b> + <i>Adj-redup</i>	Word order error (postnominal transfer)
<b>Adverbial</b> (状语)	<i>Adj-redup</i> + <b>de</b> (地) + <i>V</i>	<b>secara/dengan</b> + <i>Adj-redup</i> + <i>V</i>	Marker category error (preposition vs. particle)
<b>Predicative</b> (谓语)	<i>N</i> + <i>V</i> (是) + <i>Adj-redup</i> + <b>de</b> (的) (sentence-final, obligatory)	<i>N</i> + <i>Adj-redup</i> (free, no marker)	Omission of sentence-final <i>de</i>
<b>Objective</b> (宾语)	<i>V</i> (是) + <i>Adj-redup</i> + <b>de</b> (的) (sentence-final, obligatory)	<i>V</i> + <i>Adj-redup</i> (free, no marker)	Omission of sentence-final <i>de</i>
<b>Complement</b> (补语)	<i>V</i> + <b>de</b> (得) + <i>Adj-redup</i>	No direct equivalent	Omission or misplacement of <i>de</i> (得)

**4. Semantic focus.** As discussed above, adjective reduplication in both languages serves to increase intensity, a property consistent with the principle of quantity iconicity, according to which greater linguistic form corresponds to greater semantic content (张敏, 1997; 石毓智, 1996; 李劲荣, 2004:39; 王世圆, 2019). However, despite this shared functional basis, Chinese and Indonesian differ markedly in the semantic focus of adjective reduplication.

In Chinese, reduplication primarily functions to express degree intensification. For example, the expression *wǒ de háizi xiǎoxiǎo de* (我的孩子小小的) means my child is tiny, with the reduplicated form *xiǎoxiǎo* foregrounding the degree of smallness rather than the number of children. The singular interpretation of *háizi* (child) further confirms that the quantity of the subject is not at issue.

In Indonesian, by contrast, reduplication can encode not only degree intensification but also an increase in the quantity of the subject. The expression *anakku kecil-kecil* does not simply mean my child is tiny, but more precisely conveys that my children are all very small. Here, the reduplicated form *kecil-kecil* simultaneously emphasizes the degree of smallness and the plurality of the subject. Crucially, the noun *anak* (child) appears in its singular form rather than as *anak-anak* (children), because the reduplicated adjective itself already marks plurality. Similarly, the sentence *Kumpulkan kertas yang lebar-lebar itu ke sini* does not primarily mean collect those very wide papers here but rather indicates a collection of multiple sheets of paper, foregrounding the plurality of the subject rather than the degree of width. Again, the noun *kertas* (paper) remains in its singular form, as the plural meaning is already encoded by the reduplicated adjective *lebar-lebar*. Thus, in Indonesian, reduplicated adjectives can function as plural markers, making the morphological plural marking on the

noun redundant. This stands in sharp contrast to Chinese, where adjective reduplication does not encode plurality, and nouns must be pluralized through other means (e.g., noun reduplication or numeral-measure words) if plurality needs to be expressed.

### Implications for Chinese Language Teaching

The contrastive analysis presented above identifies three principal types of cross-linguistic differences between Indonesian and Chinese adjective reduplication: structural differences (number of patterns, segmentation units, and attributive word order); grammatical marking differences (Chinese particles vs. Indonesian affixes, prepositions, and relativizers); and semantic focus differences (degree intensification only in Chinese vs. degree-plus-plurality in Indonesian). Each type of difference poses distinct learning challenges for Indonesian learners of Chinese and, accordingly, suggests specific instructional principles rather than a checklist of classroom techniques.

1. Structural Differences: Contrastive Restructuring. The most salient structural differences concern segmentation units and attributive word order. Chinese reduplication operates on syllables, as seen in *piàoliàng* (漂亮, beautiful) → *piàopiàoliàngliàng* (漂漂亮亮, very beautiful), and *gānjìng* (干净, clean) → *gāngānjìngjìng* (干干净净, very clean). Indonesian reduplication, by contrast, operates on whole words, as in *cantik* (beautiful) → *cantik-cantik* (very beautiful), and *aman* (safe) → *aman-aman* (very safe). Moreover, Chinese places attributives before the noun, as in *píngpíngdàndàn de guānxì* (平平淡淡的關係, a very plain relationship), whereas Indonesian places attributives after the noun, as in *Hubungan yang datar-datar saja* (literally relationship which very plain).

These differences predict two types of negative transfer. First, Indonesian learners may fail to segment Chinese disyllabic adjectives into their constituent syllables, producing non-target-like reduplication patterns. Second, they may produce word order errors such as *guānxì de píngpíngdàndàn* (關係平平淡淡) by directly translating the Indonesian postnominal structure into Chinese. To counteract these predicted errors, instruction should prioritize contrastive restructuring—explicitly juxtaposing minimal pairs from both languages (e.g., *piàopiàoliàngliàng de yīfu* 漂漂亮亮的衣服 vs. *baju yang cantik-cantik*) and engaging learners in transformation exercises that convert Indonesian postnominal structures into Chinese prenominal equivalents. Such interventions aim not at rote memorization but at restructuring the learners' underlying segmentation and word order representations.

2. Grammatical Marking Differences: Function-First Sequencing and Marking Asymmetries. Both languages employ grammatical markers when reduplicated adjectives serve attributive, adverbial, predicative, or objective functions. However, the markers belong to different syntactic categories, occupy different structural positions, and are subject to different degrees of obligatoriness.

**A systematic comparison across syntactic functions reveals a pattern of partial functional equivalence with significant parametric variation.**

When a reduplicated adjective functions as an attributive, both languages require a marker, but the markers differ in category and position. Chinese requires the prenominal particle *de* (的), as in *chángcháng de huìyì zhuō* (长长的会议桌, the very long conference table). Indonesian requires the postnominal relativizer *yang*, as in *Hubungan yang datar-datar saja* (a very plain relationship). The structural asymmetry is complete: Chinese is prenominal marking, Indonesian is postnominal marking.

When a reduplicated adjective functions as an adverbial, both languages also require a marker. Chinese requires the particle *de* (地), as in *hǎohǎo de xiūxi* (好好地休息, to have a good rest). Indonesian requires the preposition *secara* or *dengan* preceding the reduplicated adjective, as in *secara gila-gilaan* (madly, in a crazy manner). Here, the difference lies not in position (both are preverbal) but in the grammatical category of the marker: a particle in Chinese versus a preposition in Indonesian.

The predicative function reveals a striking asymmetry in obligatoriness. In Chinese, when a reduplicated adjective serves as a predicate or an object, the sentence-final modal particle *de* (的) is required, as in *tā de liǎnsè ànàn de* (他的脸色暗暗的, his complexion is very dark) and *wū lǐ wū wài dōu shì gāngānjìngjìng de* (屋里屋外都是干干净净的, both inside and outside the house are very clean). In Indonesian, most predicative forms are relatively free and do not require any additional marker. These marking asymmetries predict a gradient pattern of learning difficulty. The attributive function, where both languages require a marker but differ in position, predicts word order errors (postnominal transfer). The adverbial function, where both languages require a marker but differ in category, predicts prepositional errors (e.g., using *secara* directly in Chinese). The predicative and objective functions, where Chinese requires a marker but Indonesian does not, predict omission errors—learners may fail to produce the sentence-final *de* because their L1 does not require any marker in these contexts.

A function-first sequencing approach is therefore motivated. For each syntactic function, learners should first recognize the functional parallel (whether a marker is required in both languages) before learning the specific formal properties of the Chinese marker. Functions where both languages require a marker (attributive, adverbial) should be introduced before functions where Chinese requires a marker, but Indonesian does not (predicative, objective), as the latter require learners to acquire a completely new grammatical obligation. This sequencing reduces cognitive load by building on existing L1 knowledge where possible and systematically introducing new obligations where necessary.

**1. Semantic focus differences: Semantic Constraint Awareness.** The most subtle but potentially most persistent difficulty arises from the difference in semantic focus. Chinese adjective reduplication is semantically restricted to degree intensification, as seen in *wǒ de háizi xiǎoxiǎo de* (我的孩子小小的, my child is tiny), where the singular interpretation of *háizi* (孩子, child) confirms that subject quantity is not at issue. Indonesian reduplication, by contrast, encodes both degree intensification and subject plurality. In *anakku kecil-kecil*, the noun *anak* (child) appears in its singular form, yet the expression conveys “my children

are all very small”, because the reduplicated adjective itself marks plurality. This creates a complementary distribution in Indonesian between nominal and adjectival plural marking.

This difference predicts that Indonesian learners may overextend the plural-marking function of reduplication to Chinese, producing utterances where plurality is marked on the adjective rather than through the appropriate Chinese means (noun reduplication or numeral-measure words). Instruction should therefore focus on semantic constraint awareness. Minimal semantic pairs contrasting Chinese degree-only reduplication with Indonesian degree-plus-plurality reduplication can effectively illustrate this boundary. Learners need to explicitly understand that in Chinese, adjective reduplication encodes degree only, and plurality must be expressed through other grammatical means.

**2. Commonalities as Anchors for Positive Transfer.** Not all cross-linguistic differences lead to learning difficulties. The similarities between the two languages—such as the resistance of reduplicated adjectives to degree adverbs and the negative marker *bù* (不) /*tidak*, as well as the enhancement of descriptiveness and coloristic meaning—can serve as facilitators of learning. These commonalities serve as positive transfer anchors that allow learners to build on existing L1 knowledge rather than starting from scratch. Teachers can leverage these commonalities to build learner confidence and establish an initial foundation before introducing challenging differences. For instance, the fact that *hěn gāngānjìngjìng* (很干干净净) is as unacceptable in Chinese as *sangat kecil-kecil* is in Indonesian provides a useful anchor for explaining the internal intensification function of reduplication. By recognizing that reduplication functions as an internal intensification device in both languages, learners can internalize a general principle that reduces the number of arbitrary rules to memorize. This commonality-first approach transforms potential obstacles into learning facilitators, making the acquisition of Chinese adjective reduplication more efficient, less intimidating, and more rewarding for Indonesian learners. When learners see that reduplication adds vividness and expressiveness in both languages, they are more motivated to master its use in Chinese.

In sum, effective instruction on Chinese adjective reduplication for Indonesian learners requires not a prescriptive list of “dos and don’ts” but a principle-driven approach grounded in systematic contrastive analysis. The three instructional principles proposed above—contrastive restructuring for structural differences, function-first sequencing for marking differences, and semantic constraint awareness for focus differences—are complemented by the strategic leverage of cross-linguistic commonalities as positive transfer anchors. Together, these principles and resources provide a theoretically motivated framework that can be adapted to various classroom contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study has conducted a systematic contrastive analysis of adjective reduplication in Indonesian and Chinese across structural, syntactic, and semantic dimensions. The findings reveal five similarities (word class conversion, syntactic, descriptiveness enhancement, quantity iconicity, resistance to degree adverbs, and negation) and four differences (number of patterns, segmentation units, grammatical marking, and semantic focus). Theoretically, the study demonstrates that quantity iconicity operates across typologically distinct languages, but its semantic scope is constrained by morphological richness. Pedagogically,

three principle-driven strategies—contrastive restructuring, function-first sequencing, and semantic constraint awareness—are proposed for teaching Chinese adjective reduplication to Indonesian learners, complemented by the strategic use of cross-linguistic commonalities as positive transfer anchors.

**Limitations.** This study has two main limitations. First, the data sources are not fully comparable: Chinese data are drawn from multiple dictionaries and a large-scale corpus (CCL), while Indonesian data rely primarily on KBBI due to the absence of a similarly comprehensive corpus. Second, the study does not include learner corpus data to directly verify the predicted error patterns. Future research should address these limitations by developing comparable corpora for both languages and conducting empirical studies of Indonesian learners' actual production of Chinese adjective reduplication.

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