

## Reduplication and Indication of Plurality in Indonesian

Asako Shiohara

ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

This study aims to elucidate semantic/ pragmatic conditions in which plurality is indicated by morphological reduplication of a noun base in Indonesian.

It is widely accepted that Indonesian does not have the grammatical category of number; thus a morphologically unmarked noun is used to denote either a single entity or plural entities, though reduplication of a noun base may be used as an optional device for indicating plurality. For example, Sneddon (1996: 17) suggests the following two points.

- (i) A noun is not usually reduplicated unless it is unclear from context whether one or more than one is referred to and then only if this is important to what the speaker wishes to convey.
- (ii) Reduplication does not occur if a whole class of things is referred to. (e.g., *Anjing suka tulang*. 'Dogs like bones.')

However, according to the research of the present author, some speakers judge the use of the reduplicated form as obligatory when the noun refers to plural entities which exist in the place of utterance. For example, when an addresser invites an addressee to read plural books in front of them, the books are normally expressed by the reduplicated form of a noun *buku-buku*, rather than the corresponding unmarked form *buku*.

- (1) *Silahkan baca buku-buku/ ?buku ini.*  
Please read book.REDPL book this  
'Please read these books.'

This observation disagrees with the Sneddon's argument (i) above. We could therefore argue that the indication of plurality by reduplication is obligatory, at least, in some semantic/ pragmatic conditions, and its apparent optionality can be explained by a broader interpretation of Sneddon's claim (ii) above: that an unmarked noun can refer to a class of things rather than a specific entity or entities.

### References

Sneddon, James Neil. 1996. *Indonesian: A Comprehensive Grammar*. London and New York: Routledge.