

Duplication in Cameroon English: Pleonasm or Heightening the Degree of Idea Expressed?

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Abstract

The phraseology of New Englishes is always characterized by linguistic features which make it peculiar and distinctive either in form, structure or meaning. One of these features is duplication. Studies have indicated that the usage of duplication among English speakers is more widespread than assumed to be and needs in depth study. This paper, therefore, examines the semantic features in Cameroon English whereby some aspect of meaning is duplicated in ESL learners' grammar in terms of functions. Findings reveal that respondents come up with unnecessary duplications (pleonasm) - redundant features which contribute no extra meaning - as well as duplications which heighten the effect or degree of the idea or language point expressed. The paper argues that, though duplication features are redundant and do not change the fundamental proposition of a language point or idea, the doubling in Cameroon English is linked to emotive language use such as iconic of intensity and provide useful means for expressing emphasis.

Keywords: Cameroon English, duplication, heightening the degree of idea expressed, pleonasm

1. Introduction

Language use is a social activity and the study of actual instances of language that have been used, or being used by speakers and writers is the concern of modern linguists (Taiwo, 2001).

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As such, socio-linguists, pragmatists, discourse analysts and text linguists have been able to show how language relates to the social context of its use and how meanings are made in everyday linguistic interactions (Hasan, 1985). Furthermore, when we look at language from the point of view of the textual metafunction, we are trying to see how speakers construct their messages in a way which makes them fit smoothly into the unfolding language event. Speakers constantly organize the way their message is worded in order to signal to the listeners how the present part of their message fits in with other parts (Thompson, 2004:141). It is against this backdrop that the rhetoric of duplication in Cameroon English caught my attention.

2. Duplication

Duplication is broadly construed as a semantic process in which the meaning of a word or expression is reproduced. In this light, Lewis (1983: 197) states that x and y are duplicates iff they have the same intrinsic² properties. He goes further to define duplication as follows:

...two things are duplicates iff (1) they have exactly the same perfectly natural properties, and (2) their parts can be put into correspondence in such a way that corresponding parts have exactly the same perfectly natural properties, and stand in the same perfectly natural relations (Lewis 1986: 61).

Following this definition, the question that comes up in our mind is to wonder why users or speakers of a language will have to duplicate linguistic items or expressions; considering that what has been duplicated has already been expressed. In the course of observation and investigation, it comes out clearly that the essence of duplication is to lay emphasis on a point, idea or linguistic item expressed; that is, to heighten the degree of the idea expressed (e.g. He kicked it with his right leg). However, this it is also noticed that some duplications do not heighten the degree of the idea expressed but breed a semantic anomaly; that is, the addition of a superfluous expression which is already included in that which is said (e.g. three a.m. in the morning). This semantic anomaly is known in the literature as pleonasm. The origin of the word “pleonasm” is the Ancient Greek *πλεονασμός* which means “superabundance, excess” (Gardani, 2013).

²) P is intrinsic iff P can never differ between duplicates

Pleonasm, a multifaceted phenomenon, can be broadly defined as a pervasive semantic feature that occurs at all levels of linguistic analysis and language processing, including discourse, the lexicon, morphology, and syntax. It is a type of semantic anomaly where some aspect of meaning is felt to be unnecessarily duplicated. For instance, in “John kicked it with his foot” the expression “with his foot” is felt to be redundant because it contributes no extra meaning: “with the foot” is an essential part of the meaning of “kick”. Likewise, in “a female actress”, ‘female’ is redundant because ‘female’ is adequately signalled by the derivational affix -ess. In the same vein, expressions such as “a new innovation” and “an illegal murder”, are pleonastic. Thus, it will not be erroneous to share the view that pleonasm is a semantically vacuous addition of a transparent word to a word that is already characterized for the semantic property expressed by the added word. To this end, Gardani (2013:4) opines that

pleonasm often occurs in form of pure addition of modifiers to lexemes which inherently encode the meaning expressed by the modifier, e.g., dead corpse, briefly sketch; Spanish *aniversario anual* ‘annual anniversary’; French *conversation orale*; German *mündliches Gespräch* ‘oral conversation’; or the additive use of a synonymous gram meme, e.g., Italian *ma però* ‘(lit.) but but’.

In the same line of thought, an originally lexical item can also be the source of syntactic pleonasm due to grammaticalization as illustrated by Rowlett (1998) through the French sentential negation *ne ... pas*. Rowlett (ibid) quoted by Gardani (2013) holds that, initially, the noun *pas* “step”, from Latin *pass(um)*, served as a reinforcement in the clause *je ne vais* “I do not go” → *je ne vais pas* “I do not go any step”. Rowlett (ibid) moved ahead in saying that, *pas* was dessemanticized later to acquire the grammatical function of negation. From this time, the negation *pas* is a pleonastic addition to the negative adverb *ne*. Pleonasm is frequent in the expression of partial relations (Olsen, 1996; Okamoto, 2002; Lehmann, 2005; Rehbein and Genabith 2006), word-internal agreement (Stolz 2007), and externalization of inflection (Haspelmath 1993).

Furthermore, it is healthy to point out here that the expression, “John kicked it with his left foot” is not pleonastic. Although the word “kicked” incorporates the idea of “with the foot”, the noun “foot” is necessary to allow “left” to be specified. Also, mere repetition does not necessarily lead to pleonasm.

For instance, in the sentence "That was very, very good", the word "very" repeated is not pleonastic because the second "very" makes a distinctive contribution to the meaning by heightening the degree of goodness expressed. Similarly, "Peter shrugged his shoulders" is not pleonastic, although there is nothing else one can shrug. The reason appears to be that there is a subtle difference of meaning between "Peter shrugged" and "Peter shrugged his shoulders": the former directs attention to the meaning of the gesture, while the latter highlights the action itself (Cruse 2006:128). As such, some case studies have been carried out (e.g. Stolz 2010), Haspelmath, 1993; Lehmann, 2005; Gardani, 2013) with focus on either externalized inflection, theoretical frame, or affix typology to ascertain the presence of this phenomenon in language.

3. Data

The data for this study is both written and oral. The oral data is obtained from formal and informal conversations of both secondary and university students, at different settings, over the last four years. Some of the data also comes from a variety of radio and television programmes. The written data is obtained from test and examination scripts of graduate and postgraduate students of the English Department at the University of Yaounde I, the University of Bamenda, and the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde. These students were chosen because of their exposure to English Language in terms of continuous writing and field of study. They also have exposure to the English language as the medium of instruction and they have studied and are studying different aspects of the language.

With the assistance of some English language experts in the country the present researcher identified impressive number of duplicated linguistic items in the written and extemporaneous speech of the subjects. It is healthy to point out here that some of the data identified have already been drawn attention to in Simo Bobda (2002) wherein he cautions ESL learners and speakers to watch the English they speak in order to maintain the standard British English speech. Although the duplicated features are redundant and do not change the fundamental proposition of a language point or item, in Cameroon English, some of the doubling is linked to emotive language use such as iconic of intensity and provide useful means for expressing emphasis as the results below illustrate.

4.Results

The results show *prima facie* that subjects duplicate words and phrases to heighten the degree of what is expressed. But a careful look into the data shows that most duplicated words are superfluous expressions whose meaning is already included in what has been said. This is what is known in the literature as pleonasm. The majority of the data collected fall in this category as the illustrated in the table below.

Table: the number of instances and percentage score in types of duplication

Duplication	Number and percentage
Emphatic	19 (25.33%)
Semantic anomaly	56 (74.67%)
Total	75 (100%)

As can be inferred in the table above, there are nineteen instances (25.33%) of duplicated words or phrases that denote the idea of heightening the degree of what is said; and, fifty-six (74.67%) of superfluous expressions which are either already included on what is said or add no additional meaning to what is said. This is feasibly illustrated in the pie chart below.

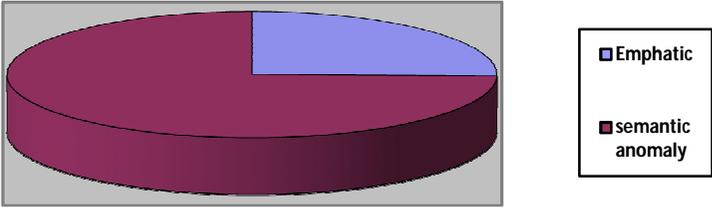


Fig. The pie chart on the percentage score in the use of duplication

This chart clearly shows that the subjects scored 25.33% in producing duplicated words or phrases that denote emphasis and 74.67% in producing semantic anomaly duplicated words or expressions. With this finding, we could deduce that, in striving to heighten the degree of the idea expressed, users of English in Cameroon go an extra mile in producing pleonastics that give a peculiar flavour to the English they produce. A detailed analysis of this result is presented below.

4.1 Emphatic Duplication

Emphatic duplication indicates the addition of a superfluous expression which is already included in that which is said to heighten the degree of what is expressed or to achieve emphasis. In some situations, it is the first element of the pair that is an emphaser (e.g. "Joan has given birth to **two twins**", "The kumba-Mamfe road is untarred and will remain so for **many many** years to come", "Kate gave her spouse a **long long** kiss at the council hall", "Deborah told us a **true true** story", "A **long long** time ago, Cameroon was under the German rule", "Mary likes going out with **small-small** boys", "John likes to do **kind kind** things"); in others, it is the second element that is the emphaser (e.g. "**We the students** of LMA will organize a welcome party", "**We the players** are ready for the match", "In **this** church **here**, you preach one thing and practice the opposite", "That is **my own** way of doing things", "**I** don't like **me** to disturb people while they are having a nap", "I am **very very** disturbed, to say the least").

Furthermore, there is duplication to strengthen a statement (e.g. "I **saw** it myself, **with my own eyes**"). Also, there is the addition of an adverb to qualify an adjective (e.g. "I hope you perform **more better** than this next term"; "John has given us a **very perfect** example"; "The unification monument in Yaounde is **very unique** in every aspect". The qualification of the adjectives with these adverbs serves the pragmatic function of intensifying the speaker's emotional feeling. In addition, there is the use of standard monotransitive verbs into ditransitive verbs (e.g. "Laura was afraid to take her one of your pair of shoes", "I will like to have me just a sip of the palm wine"). An overt object in such cases adds an extra argument to the sentence. The duplicated pronoun, which expresses a non-prototypical object function, is grammatically unnecessary because it is not required for the main proposition. Although it is grammatically unnecessary, it is, however, not meaningless because such expressions are associated with emphasis and speaker involvement.

4.2 Semantic Anomaly Duplication

This is the addition of redundant features which contribute no extra meaning to what is said as exemplified below.

- 1) I have **voiced out** my objections to the plan to management. ('to voice' means to say what you think about a particular subject, especially to express a doubt, complaint, etc. that you have about it. One cannot voice what he thinks about a subject without it coming out; as such, the addition of the adverbial 'out' is a superfluous expression which is already included in the verb 'voice')
- 2) The Operation Sparrow Hawk is a **new innovation** in fighting embezzlement. ('innovation' is a new idea or method. Thus, the idea of new is expressed by the word 'innovation'.)
- 3) **Please, kindly** remember to close the windows before you leave. (either 'please' or 'kindly' is used to make a request more polite, e.g. "For further information, please contact your local library".)
- 4) We arrived at **6 o'clock p.m. in the evening**. ('6 o'clock p.m.' is in the evening. Thus, the adverbial of time 'in the evening' is an unnecessary duplication and adds no meaning.)
- 5) The only **male actor**, in the film we just watched, played his role well. (an actor is obviously a male character; consequently, the preceding of this NP with the adjective male is superfluous because it is already included in the NP 'actor')
- 6) Please don't **repeat again** what I have just told you to anyone else. ('to repeat' is to say or tell people something more than once, e.g. "Would you mind repeating what you just said?". So the addition of the adverb 'again' (meaning 'one more time') is unnecessary)
- 7) My daughter **walks on foot** to school every morning. ('to walk' is to move along by putting one foot in front of the other, allowing each foot to touch the ground before lifting the new, e.g. "He walks two kilometres to work every day". This clearly shows that when we walk, we move on foot. Consequently, to say that 'one walks on foot', the expression 'on foot' is redundant)

- 8) The angry man **kicked** the bucket **with his foot**. ('to kick' is to hit someone or something with a foot, or to move the feet and legs suddenly violently, e.g. 'He kicked the ball as hard as he could'. This shows that 'kicking' implies that it is done with the foot)
- 9) In president's speech, he **dwelled lengthily on** the plight of the sick and the hungry. ('to dwell on something'(a phrasal verb) is to keep talking about something for a very long time. The breaking of the phrasal verb with the expression 'lengthily' is superfluous as the idea is already included in the verb 'dwelled on')
- 10) Do you recognize the **hand writing** on the envelope? ('writing' is a person's style or writing with a pen on paper which can be recognized as their own, e.g. "Can you decipher the writing on this envelope?"). This reveals that the idea of 'writing' already includes 'hand')
- 11) When I suggested a visit to the old people's home, the president **nodded his head** in agreement. ('to nod' is to move your head down and then up, sometimes several times, especially to show agreement, approval or greeting, e.g. "She looked up and nodded for me to come in")
- 12) We saw him **peeping with his eyes** into our room. ('to peep' is to secretly look at something for a short time, usually through a hole. So there is no way one will peep without making use of the eye. So 'peeping' includes the idea of using the eye)
- 13) My younger brother left home **at the age of sixteen years old**. (the expression 'at the age of' already includes the idea 'years old')
- 14) **Should in case** you ever need anything, please do not hesitate to contact me. (either the expression 'in case' or the modal 'should' is used when referring to a possible event in the future, e.g. "Should the money not be forthcoming, we will have to go to court".)
- 15) The SAWA people meet for **annual** festival **every year**. (in this sentence, 'annual' and 'every year' mean the same thing. Therefore, using them both is redundant.)
- 16) **As from now henceforth**, the said building shall be the property of John Ewane. (the expressions 'as from now' and 'henceforth' express the same idea; i.e. starting from this time)
- 17) The Imam slaughtered a **male ram**. (a 'ram' is obviously a male sheep; consequently, the preceding of this NP with the adjective male is superfluous because it is already included in the NP 'ram')

- 18) They used to live in a big house with lots of servants, but they have come down in the world **ever since then**. ('ever since' and 'since then' express the same idea; i.e. continuously since that time)
- 19) What are the **future prospects** of this association? (the expression 'prospect' means the possibility that something good might happen in the future, e.g. "The prospect of working full-time fills me with dread". So, the expression 'prospect' in this already includes the idea of future. This makes the use of the word 'future' to qualify prospect redundant.)
- 20) Janet's husband is **just a mere** taxi driver in Yaounde. (either 'just' or 'mere' is used to emphasize that something is not large or important, e.g. "The committee is a mere appendage of the council and has no power on its own".)
- 21) The dress is **blue in colour**. (the adjective 'blue' denotes 'colour'. Thus, 'blue' and 'colour' mean the same thing)
- 22) **If in case** anyone rings for me, please tell them I'll be back in the office at 3 o'clock. ('if' and 'in case' express the same idea; i.e. they are used to say that a particular thing can or will happen only after something else happens or becomes true, e.g. "If she hadn't called, I wouldn't have known".)
- 23) Where are you **at this present time**? (the expressions "at this time" and "at present" express the same idea, i.e. now.)
- 24) **The following people** are invited for lunch. **They are:** Doris, Stephen, Dave and Isabella. (the expression "the following" people already involves the idea of listing that is expressed by the expression 'they are'.)
- 25) **Owing to the fact that** you are my friend, I will pay the debt. (the phrases 'owing that' and 'the fact that' mean the same thing, i.e. because. Thus, one is redundant in the above sentence.)
- 26) These animals always **return back** to the same breeding ground. (the verb 'to return' means to come or go back to a previous place, e.g. "David returned to find his house had burned down". This denotes that the addition of the adverbial 'back' is superfluous.)
- 27) **At this point in time**, we have to take important decisions. (the expressions 'at this point' and 'at this time' express the same idea, i.e. at the moment.)
- 28) We were unable to get funding and **so therefore** had to abandon the project. (the conjunction 'so' means "and for that reason, therefore", e.g. My knee started hurting so I stopped running. This denotes that the idea of 'therefore' is already included in the expression 'so'; thus, the addition of the adverb "therefore" is superfluous)

- 29) The teacher **frowned his face** and drew a red pen firmly across the page. (the verb 'to frown' means to bring your eyebrows together so that there are lines on your face above your eyes to show that you are annoyed or worried, e.g. "He frowned as he read the instructions, as if puzzled". Therefore, the expression 'his face' already implies in the verb 'frowned')
- 30) The train will arrive in Ngaoundere at 8 o'clock **a.m. in the morning**. (8 o'clock a.m. is in the morning. The addition of the expression 'in the morning' is a duplication that carries no meaning.)
- 31) Susan likes **pork meat**. ('pork' is the flesh of a pig while 'meat' is that of a cow. Thus, the expression 'pork meat' insinuates a mixture of the flesh of pig and cow. However, this is not the case. The interlocutor is referring to the flesh of pig; thus, the addition of the expression 'meat' is superfluous.)
- 32) Catherine **said with her own mouth** that you are a liar. (the verb 'to say' means to pronounce words or sounds e.g. "Small children find it difficult to say long words"; to express a thought, opinion or suggestion, or to state a fact or instruction, e.g. "He said goodbye to all his friends and left".)
- 33) Believe **you** me or not, that is the truth. (It is healthy to point out here that semantic anomaly duplication also features in the grammar of the subjects through the use of overt "you" in second person imperatives. Another example is "Get you back into your seat".)

4.2.1 Thematisation

In systemic-functional grammar, thematisation is the textual component which considers a sentence or a clause as a message. Thus, Thompson (2004:141) opines that

when we look at language from the point of view of the textual metafunction, we are trying to see how speakers construct their messages in a way which makes them fit smoothly into the unfolding language event... speakers constantly organize the way their message is worded in order to signal to them [the addressees] how the present part of their message fits in with other parts.

To this end, Halliday and Matthiessen, (2004:64) hold that a sentence can be partitioned into theme and rheme (sentence = theme + rheme). The Theme is the point of departure of the message; that is, what locates and orients the clauses within its context.

Thompson and Thompson 2009:58) compliments this definition by stating that “theme is the starting point of the message and Subject is the “resting point” of the argument”. On the other hand, the rheme is the remainder of the message, the part in which the theme is developed. Halliday and Matthiessen (ibid: 73) go further to distinguish between the theme which functions as subject (unmarked theme) and theme that is something other than the subject (marked theme). The subject-theme is the fronted sentence element (e.g. You are the one I blame for this). In this example, the personal pronoun “you” is the subject-theme (unmarked theme). The theme that is marked (e.g. You I blame for this) is the pronoun “you” in the latter example, which is something other than the subject of the sentence. It is this movement of a sentence element to the position occupied by the subject-theme which is referred to, in the literature, as thematisation.

- 34) **You politicians you** are held responsible for the poor state of roads in our community.
- 35) **Me I** will tell him the truth in his face.
- 36) **Me I** really look forward to a good match.
- 37) **These children they** are liars.
- 38) **The players they** are well prepared for the match.
- 39) **The people of this Region they** think they have been abandoned.

These constructions, which underscore the logic of many African languages, are communicative strategies used by speakers in order to reorder the English language, thereby reflecting their thought channel (Bamiro, 1995:197).

4.2.2 Affix Pleonasm

Affix pleonasm occurs either when “an affix that normally serves to add a particular unit of meaning gets attached to a root whose meaning already includes that unit” (Covington 1981:33). Pleonastic affixes in Cameroon English are mostly suffixes (e.g. broadcasted, splitted, equipments) as the examples below illustrate.

- 40) The football championship was **broadcasted** live on television and radio.
- 41) The teacher **splitted** the children into three groups.
- 42) All the medical **equipments** must be sterilized before use.
- 43) The rain has caused a lot of **damages** in town.

There is also pleonastic derivational realization of augmentation as exemplified with 'detailly' 'instalmentally' and 'to welder' below.

- 44) Financial issues will be discussed **detailly** in the next meeting.
- 45) After the calculation of the debt was done by the executive committee, Pa John was told to pay the money **instalmentally** over a period of six months.
- 46) I need someone **to welder** the wheel drum of my car.

As can be inferred above, the morphosyntactic features of these word forms are realized by the stem of each of the words. In Cameroon English, derivational suffixes which are added to them are claimed to be a "semantically vacuous addition".

4.2.3 Pleonasm that adds no Meaning

Another type of pleonasm, that is noticed in the subjects grammar, is the use of a word or phrase which does not add any meaning to the meaning of the idea expressed. Thus, the added word or phrase can be removed from the sentence without changing its meaning as the examples below illustrate.

- 47) **Actually**, it does not matter. (=It does not matter).
- 48) We **just** said **that** he was late. (=We said he was late).
- 49) I am **more or less** okay with him. (=I am okay with him).
- 50) My uncle is a **true** Christian. (=My uncle is a Christian).

4.2.4 Sentimental Pleonasm

Another type of pleonasm occurs where the same sentiment is expressed more than once as the sentence below illustrates.

- 51) Failure to plan **ahead for the future** of the youths is risky.

In this sentence, the adverb 'ahead' and the phrase 'the future' mean the same thing. Thus, 'ahead' is superfluous, as is 'for the future', since all planning is, by definition, 'ahead' and 'for the future'. In this vein, the sentence can be reduced to "Failure to plan for the youths is risky" while retaining its original meaning.

52) I **almost wished** I were dead.

It would be more effective to remove 'almost' in order to reduce the sentence to "I wished I were dead" which is a more powerful sentiment.

53) It might seem to be the case that I appear to be almost afraid".

Again, more powerful to say: "I was afraid".

4.2.5 Information Pleonasm

Pleonasm also occurs in the subject grammar in situations where the same information is presented in several ways as the sentence below illustrates.

54) I will not!" **he exclaimed, loudly.**

Here the writer is repeating himself. Not only is there an exclamation mark and thus no need for 'exclaimed', but it's also highly debatable whether it's possible to exclaim any other way than 'loudly'. Another instance is where the writer presents multiple images to say the same thing.

55) He was scared. He'd never felt this kind of fear before. The terror was overwhelming..

4.2.6 Adverbial Pleonasm

It is preferable to use strong verbs in preference to adverbs. It does not mean that adverbs should be avoided; but, that it is not okay to use an adverb as an excuse for failing to find the correct verb as exemplified by the data below.

56) Catherine **walks slowly** to school. (To 'walk slowly' is much less effective than to 'plod' or 'trudge'.)

The analysis of the above data reveals that there are sometimes two or more acceptable lexical items available to convey a meaning. Subjects play it safe by inserting the two alternatives, leaving the burden of choice to the addressee or reader.

This inability to decide the appropriate word from some alternatives inscribes peculiar morpho-syntactic features in the grammar of these subjects. The changes inscribed in the morpho-syntactic features of the grammar of the subjects are products of realities in a new language speaking context like Cameroon wherein there are a plethora of languages surrounding the acquisition of the English language.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the use of duplication in Cameroon English in two different perspectives – pleonasm and heightening the degree of the idea expressed. In the context of heightening the degree of the idea expressed, duplication is used either to achieve emphasis, strengthen a statement, intensify the speaker's emotional feeling, or add extra argument to a sentence. As pleonasm, duplication denotes a superfluous expression which is already included in that which is said. Thus, they are redundant features which contribute no extra meaning to what is said. So, some aspect of meaning is felt to be unnecessarily duplicated. Though the use of duplication in Cameroon English, to an extent, is to emphasize the idea expressed, its usage has made pedagogues find themselves at crossroads since the goal of teaching is to achieve simple, clear, precise and concise meaning by avoiding wordiness, tautology and redundancy.

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