

Reduplications

Some words in English simply repeat themselves: the second part is identical with the first, *pooh-pooh*, or repeats the first part with a change of vowel, *riff-raff*, or of consonant, *teeny-weeny*. These are called reduplicative words. Here are some everyday English examples.

Repeating without change

bye-bye hush-hush haha bla bla girly girly gaga mama boo boo
yum yum pooh – pooh fifty-fifty

Repeating with change of vowel

flip-flop mish-mash knick-knack pitter-patter wishy washy topsy-turvy
sing-song see-saw ping-pong hip hop riff-raff zig-zag tittle -tattle

Repeating with change of consonant

hurdy-gurdy mumbo-jumbo walkie-talkie hanky-panky willy-nilly boy toy
hotchpotch higgledy-piggledy hocus-pocus criss-cross legal eagle teeny – weeny
fancy pants fuddy-duddy hob nob humdrum helter-skelter nitwit

Reduplications

Match the reduplications with their correct definition.

willy - nilly	not quite right, not exact
fuddy duddy	assortment, unordered variety
pooh - pooh	to not agree with, dismiss
see - saw	poor, not good people
hob nob	a snobby, pretentious person
mumbo jumbo	strange talk, can't understand
riff-raff	to go back and forth across
nitwit	abrupt right and left turns
criss-cross	without order
hocus pocus	delicious, good tasting
fancy pants	hang around higher social class
topsy turvy	disorder, upside - down
yum yum	magic actions, strange actions
wishy - washy	playground ride
teeny - weeny	stupid person, idiot
mish mash	very small, tiny.
zig - zag	a strange person

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Reduplications

WORKSHEET 1

You are going to listen to a short talk given by Professor David Crystal about language change and new developments in English.

SPEAKING



1. Discuss these questions with other students

- a. What are the main religious faiths in your country?
- b. What types of Christianity do you know of?
- c. Have you ever seen a U.S. style religious TV program? How would you describe it?
- d. How are religious faiths treated in your country?
 - The majority of the population believe strongly in a religion
 - Many people regularly go to a holy place to worship
 - Religion is a tradition in my country, but not many people follow it now
 - Some parts of society are very critical of religions
 - There are many different faiths and religions in my country

VOCABULARY

2. Match these words and phrases to their definitions

a. a duplicate	very open or out-going, not hidden
b. a consonant	not serious or honest
c. to clap your hands	laughing at something in a negative or critical way
d. mocking	to make a noise with your hands, in applause
e. extrovert	strong sounding letter sounds, not vowels
f. superficial	a copy or double for something

Reduplications

LISTENING SECTION 1



3. Now, listen to Professor Crystal talking about a special type of word. He focuses on one particular example. Answer these questions.

- a. What is special about this type of word?
 - i. It is made of any two words
 - ii. It is made of two words that have very similar sounds
- b. What is the example word that is connected to religion?

4. Listen again and decide if the following statements are true or false, according to Professor Crystal.

- a. The other two examples he gives are 'willy-milly' and 'Ping-Pong'
- b. Happy-clappy came in in the 1970s
- c. The word refers to a type of Christian
- d. This type of person hides their feelings and emotions
- e. The word is only used in this religious context

Reduplications

WORKSHEET 2

LISTENING SECTION 2

5. Happy-clappy describes a type of person. It also carries a feeling. What feeling do you think this word carries?

- a. A respectful feeling
- b. A critical or disrespectful feeling
- c. A feeling of disbelief
- d. A feeling of belief and acceptance

Listen to Section 2 of the talk and check your ideas. Were you correct?

6. Are the following sentences true or false?

- a. Happy-clappy has a strong negative meaning or feeling
- b. Happy-clappy is an adjective
- c. If someone is happy-clappy, they show deep genuine emotion
- d. Professor Crystal thinks it is good to behave in a happy-clappy way on the BBC

Listen again to check your answers.

Reduplication

WORKSHEET 3 - EXTRA WORK

VOCABULARY

1. Look at the tapescript and find words or phrases that mean the following.

- a. feelings
- b. a dislike of something which you find unpleasant or inappropriate
- c. full of interest and excitement

LANGUAGE

2. Match the other reduplicated words from the talk with their definitions

a. Ping-Pong	i. a sport or game known as table tennis
c. willy-nilly	ii. do something without care and attention

3. Here are some more reduplicated words. Try to match them to their definitions.

You can often use one of the words in the reduplicated pair to help you guess the meaning e.g. Happy-clappy (Happy is an emotion)

Sometimes, the sound of the reduplicated pair will help you find the meaning e.g. Ping-Pong (the sound of the ball in table tennis)

legal eagle

boohoo

tip-top

hotpot

walkie-talkie

wishy-washy

pitter-patter

mama

- a. _____ describes the sound a child makes when crying
- b. _____ is a meal cooked in one container. It has meat and vegetables.
- c. A _____ is a very good lawyer
- d. _____ is the sound a child's feet make when walking quickly
- e. _____ means something is very good, it is the number one
- f. A _____ is a machine for communicating by speech over distance
- g. _____ means something is rather vague or indefinite. It lacks substance
- h. _____ means mother

Happy-clappy - Reduplications

TAPEScripts



Listening Section 1

This is one of those reduplicated words, where the two words are almost the same, but they just change one little part: change the vowel, or change the consonants in this particular case - usually the consonant at the front, like "willy-nilly" - and "Ping-Pong" is one where the vowel changes. Well "happy-clappy" came in in the, oh 1980s I suppose, referring to a member of usually a Christian charismatic group, characterised by enthusiastic handclapping and a very extrovert emotion, set of emotions being expressed – but it isn't restricted to that. I've heard it used in all sorts of other contexts as well.

Listening section 2

It's a mildly mocking word. If somebody says that somebody is "happy-clappy", there's a sort of feeling of distaste about it. And the thing is, that the idea has moved beyond the religious circumstance now. It refers to anybody showing some kind of extrovert emotion, some kind of rather superficial feeling very often. You might say of somebody "he's got a very happy-clappy attitude". It means he's just producing his emotions without much thought all the time. So anybody who gets very enthusiastic and suddenly becomes a little over the top... starts to act out something... I'm now getting very happy-clappy about all this... 'cos I'm so happy to be on the radio, and now ... well, this isn't really very appropriate for the BBC, is it?

Happy-clappy

ANSWER KEY

SPEAKING

1.

b. Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, Church of England, Methodist, Evangelical
(this last one is the type from which the word 'happy-clappy' has come from)

VOCABULARY

2.

a. a duplicate	a copy or double for something
b. a consonant	strong sounding letter sounds, not vowels
c. to clap your hands	to make a noise with your hands, in applause
d. mocking	laughing at something in a negative or critical way
e. extrovert	very open or out-going, not hidden
f. superficial	not serious or honest

LISTENING SECTION 1

3.

a. ii. It is made of two words that have very similar sounds
b. Happy-clappy

4.

a. False – willy-nilly and Ping-Pong
b. False – it appeared in the 1980s
c. True – a member of a Christian charismatic (evangelical) group
d. False – They show their emotions openly during the religious service.
e. False – he has heard it used in other contexts too

LISTENING SECTION 2

5.

b. A critical or disrespectful feeling

6.

a. False – it is 'mildly mocking', so it is not so strong
b. True – we say 'a happy-clappy person'
c. False – the feeling is that the emotion is superficial, not deep
d. False – he thinks it is not appropriate

Happy-clappy

EXTRA WORK

- 1.**
 - a. emotions
 - b. distaste
 - c. enthusiastic

LANGUAGE

- 2.**
 - a. i. Ping-Pong is table tennis
 - b. ii. Willy-nilly means without order, care or attention
- 3.**
 - a. **Boohoo** describes the sound a child makes when crying
 - b. **Hotpot** is a meal cooked in one container. It has meat and vegetables.
 - c. **A legal eagle** is a very good lawyer
 - d. **Pitter-patter** is the sound a child's feet make when walking quickly
 - e. **Tip-top** means something is very good, it is the number one
 - f. **A walkie-talkie** is a machine for communicating by speech over distance
 - g. **Wishy-washy** means something is rather vague or indefinite. It lacks substance
 - h. **Mama** means mother
