

# Japanese Learners' Repetition in Conversation in Relation to English Proficiency Level

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This study of Japanese learners' use of repetition in conversation examined: (1) the relation between the frequency of repetition and English language proficiency, and (2) the differential use of three major repetition functions: production, repair, and interaction. Spoken data from learners at three proficiency levels (N =18), collected during regular class activities, were analyzed using a schema of repetition functions developed on the basis of the data collected. The results showed that: (1) the frequency of repetition decreased for high proficiency learners, (2) overall, learners repeated most frequently for the production process, less for repair, and the least for interaction, and (3) the higher groups repeated for the interaction process with greater frequency than the lowest group, whereas no significant differences were found for the other two processes. The results suggest that repetition is a possible L2 strategy for facilitating production as well as for smooth conversational interaction.

この研究では、日本人学習者の会話における繰り返しの使用が、以下の2つの観点から調査された。1) 繰り返しの頻度と英語力との間の関係、2) 産出、修復、相互行為という繰り返しの3つの機能によって、繰り返しの使用が異なるかどうか。英語力の異なる3つのグループ、計18人の学習者の話し言葉のデータが、通常の授業における活動の中から集められ、このデータをもとに開発した繰り返しの機能の分類法を用いて分析された。その結果、英語力が高くなるにつれて繰り返しは減ること、一般的に言って、産出の過程での繰り返しが多く、修復のための繰り返しはそれより少なく、相互行為のための繰り返しは最も少ないこと、英語力の高いグループは相互行為のための繰り返しを英語力の低いグループよりも多用しているのに対して、産出および修復のための繰り返しには英語力の違いによる頻度の違いには有意差が

見られないことがわかった。この結果は、繰り返しは、円滑な会話の相互行為のためだけでなく、産出を容易にするためにも、第二言語ストラテジーとして使われるということを示唆している。

Repetition is characteristic of spoken discourse; it is commonly observed in everyday conversation of both children and adults. Given this observation, researchers have tried to explain why repetition is pervasive in conversation. Keenan (1974, 1977) examined repetition in first language (L1) child-child discourse and described its functions. According to her studies, children do not repeat simply to imitate, but rather to satisfy specific communicative intents such as greeting, querying, answering and confirming. Unlike many psycholinguists who viewed repetition as imitation, Keenan (1977) argued that “the child is learning to communicate” through repetition (p. 133).

Tannen (1987a, 1987b), analyzing adult L1 conversation, considered repetition as performing four major functions: production, comprehension, connection, and interaction. Repetition usually facilitates the production of language by enabling a speaker to use ready-made utterances or to “set up a paradigm and slot in new information” (Tannen, 1987a, p. 581; see also Brown 1977, p. 113 for a similar observation). The discourse containing such redundant information, in turn, may benefit the interlocutor in comprehending what has just been said. Further, repetition performs a referential and tying function, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) have described. It also can contribute to managing the business of conversation by performing a variety of interactional functions such as keeping the floor, showing listenership, providing back-channel responses, and stalling (Tannen, 1987a, p. 583). Tannen argued that these functions combined “operate simultaneously to create coherence in discourse as it builds on interpersonal involvement” (p. 601).

Whereas Tannen focused on repetitions in cross-utterances, Maclay and Osgood (1959) looked at self-repetitions (or “same-speaker repetitions” following Norrick’s [1987] terminology) as part of hesitation phenomena, which is closely related to language production. They defined “repeats” as “all repetitions, of any length, that...[are] judged to be non-significant semantically” (Maclay & Osgood, 1959, p. 24) and counted their frequency in spontaneous adult L1 speech, together with that of three other hesitation types (filled and unfilled pauses and false starts). They found that repeats involving function words frequently occurred prior to lexical words such as nouns and verbs, and concluded that

repeats served the same function as pauses, "providing time for selection among diverse lexical alternatives" (p. 39).

In addition to its part in the production process, especially at the planning stage, repetition also plays a role when the speaker attempts to repair self-recognized problems in utterances. For example, in the case of "retraced false start," (Faerch & Kasper, 1983b, p. 216), the speaker usually repeats a part of the utterance such as in "they will be they will try," in which "they will" is repeated. This kind of repetition provides a context for the trouble source to be repaired, and often occurs in spontaneous speech (Maclay & Osgood, 1959).

Repetition serves varied functions in spontaneous L1 conversation, involving many facets of the speech production process and a number of discourse functions. Similar observations have been made in child second language (L2) acquisition (Itoh & Hatch, 1978; Peck, 1978) and in adult L2 learner interaction studies (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long, 1980; Pica, Young & Doughty, 1987). Nevertheless, as Schmidt and Frota (1986) have clearly pointed out, there is a paucity of research in such areas as L2 acquisition and learning processes, and few studies have thoroughly investigated L2 learners' repetition. In spite of this, some studies suggest that frequency of repetition changes as L2 proficiency develops. Schmidt and Frota (1986) analyzed self-repetitions by a beginning adult learner of Portuguese and found them used significantly less over a several month period, with some change in the kinds of functions being performed. Furthermore, Hirose and Kobayashi (1990), viewing repetitions as one interlanguage performance feature, examined those in false starts and self-corrections and found that frequency related to proficiency level. These studies imply that repetition may contribute to the development of second language proficiency, but are still far from describing in full how it may do so. Perhaps, as Keenan (1977) noted in the case of child L1 acquisition, L2 repetition gives way to other syntactic devices that fulfill the same functions. Before this can be fully addressed, however, we need first to describe more precisely how much and in what ways L2 learners repeat in relation to their language proficiency.

### The Study

The present study investigated the relation between repetition and English proficiency level and the differential use of three major repetition functions, production, repair, and interaction, by Japanese learners. This study first developed a schema of repetitions in spoken discourse, based on previous research and the data collected, and then used this

schema for quantitative analysis. A sample size of 18 learners was adopted so that the results could be assumed to be further generalizable (cf. Schmidt & Frota, 1986). The study addressed two research questions:

1. Does English proficiency level affect Japanese learners' use of repetition?
2. Is there any difference among the three major repetition functions (production, repair and interaction) used by Japanese learners?

### Method

*Subjects:* A total of 18 Japanese university students were chosen from a sample of 43 students who had taken the TOEFL and an oral test. The oral test (total points possible = 60), consisting of warm-up questions, picture-descriptions and an opinion-statement task, was administered individually. Given the significant correlation between the scores on these two tests ( $r=.88$ ), selection was made primarily on the basis of oral test scores. The six highest scoring students, the six lowest scoring, and six chosen at random from among remaining students were placed in three groups with the following characteristics: high (TOEFL mean = 572, range = 550-603; oral test mean = 53.8, range = 45-60), intermediate (TOEFL mean = 516.5, range = 487-553; oral test mean = 37.5, range = 37-40), and low (TOEFL mean = 457.3, range = 407-480; oral test mean = 24.7, range = 18-27). One way analysis of variance indicated significant differences among the three groups both for TOEFL ( $F=30.7$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and oral test scores ( $F=60.2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Data Collection:* The subjects were placed in six homogeneous groups: two for high, two for intermediate, and two for low. Each group carried out a discussion in English in a normal classroom situation, where the topic ("What are the good points of international marriage?") was introduced by the teacher and relevant information provided through a video.<sup>1</sup> From the tape-recorded discussions, the first 16 minutes of conversation by each group were transcribed for analysis, six total, two from each proficiency level.

### Data Analysis

*Forms of repetition:* Long (1983) defined repetition as partial or full repeat of an utterance made by the same speaker (self-repetition) or the interlocutor (other-repetition), with its form ranging from exact repeti-

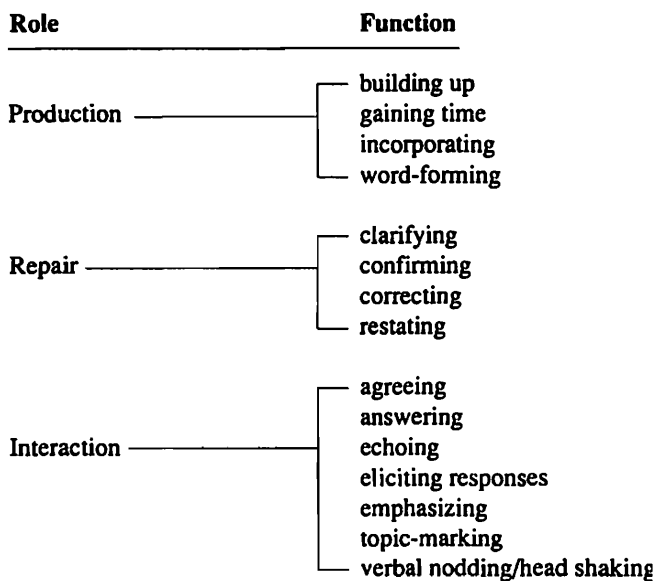
tion, to modification, to paraphrase. Exact repetition is the repeating of a part of the preceding speaker's or the speaker's own utterance without any evident auditory changes. On the other hand, modification contains variations, such as change of tense or noun form and change of intonation; and paraphrase, in which the speaker expresses the same ideas in slightly different words, replaces one form with another without changing the original meaning.

Repetition can occur at any linguistic level, from syllabic to clausal, but most units in the present data consisted of one or two words, along with some phrasal or clausal repetition. We considered as repetition any repeat that recurred within five conversational turns taken by the speakers (Long, 1983; Pica & Doughty, 1985), except those occurring in reference to a topic or a subtopic being discussed (see *Criteria for Classification*). "Any repeat" here means that repetition was not limited to repeats defined as "non-significant semantically" (i.e., *II* saw a very very big boy), as in Maclay and Osgood's study (1959, p. 39), but also included those used in larger units, such as *building up*, which is made up of repetition and expansion (e.g., so *they need they need* a lot of patience), and those in a *retraced false start* consisting of repetition and correction or insertion (e.g., *they* understood uh *they* understand) (Faerch & Kasper, 1983b). Furthermore, the boundary was established as within five conversational turns partly because, due to simultaneous or short utterances, turn taking sometimes occurred so quickly that it did not allow the speaker to interrupt for immediate repetition. However, it should be noted that most repetitions occurred either within a single turn or across adjacent turns.

*Major roles of repetition:* From the perspective of the operations repetitions play in learner conversation, we identified, through analysis of the spoken data and transcripts of it, the three major roles of *production*, *repair* and *interaction* and within these 15 repetition functions, as shown in Figure 1. The identification of the roles and functions was made on the basis of the present spoken data as well as of what the previous literature had suggested.<sup>2</sup> In this section, we first explain each repetition role and then briefly discuss the criteria we established to distinguish one from another.

1. *Production-related repetition:* One of the major roles of repetition is to facilitate speech production. This function has been observed in the speech of L1 children and adults (Maclay & Osgood, 1959; Norrick, 1987; Peters, 1983 [cited in Schmidt & Frota, 1986]; Tannen, 1987a), and can be assumed to play a greater role in that of L2 learners, particularly

Figure 1: Schema of repetition functions



those with limited proficiency. In conversation, where participants have to produce talk relevant to a topic, it may be demanding for learners to do this in the target language (Knox, 1994). Thus, they are likely to employ repetitions as one device for simplifying speech production.

The *production* role is assumed to be related to a planning stage, one of the two stages of speech production identified in this study (the other, *repair*, is described next). In this stage, learners set up a communicative goal and develop plans for linguistic constituents (Ellis, 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). More specifically, repeats used for *production* contribute primarily to facilitating the planning or encoding process during speech, specifically in *building up*, *gaining time*, *incorporating* and *word-forming*. In *gaining time* speakers, by repeating part of their utterances exactly, can pause to formulate what to say next. In *incorporating*, they simplify the task of production by borrowing or reusing part of the preceding speaker's or the speaker's own preceding utterance (see Appendix for a detailed characterization and examples). Repeats used for these functions should be understood as contributing to the prospective production of a yet unmade utterance, as illustrated in this case of *building up*.<sup>3</sup>

- (1) S: But I think it is good point uh because *he can he can have uh he can have* a chance to decide

In (1), the goal of the speaker was apparently to create the unit "he can have a chance to decide," however, before reaching the goal, he retraced to the beginning twice, appearing to repeat "he can" and "he can have," to plan the rest of the unit.

2. *Repair-related repetition*: Another role of repetition, *repair*, a second stage of speech production, is comprised of *clarifying*, *confirming*, *correcting* and *restating*. Repairs, generally self-repairs, are observed to occur in two instances: when a speaker runs into some difficulty at the time of executing an initial plan, and when a speaker considers the already executed plan unsatisfactory in expressing intended meaning (Faerch & Kasper, 1983b, p. 215). This study focuses only on the latter case of repair because when a speaker employs repetitions, it is for an already executed utterance that is found to be problematic, e.g., grammatically incorrect or "not sufficiently contextualized" (Levelt, 1989, p. 461). Unlike repeats for *production*, those for *repair*, perform an operation on items already produced, as shown below. (Each dot represents a pause of approximately a half second.)

- (2) S: When they were in the U.S. Japanese husband are very kind to her because lady first and other. Very kind to her but when he *come came* back to Japan perhaps he is very busy because of job. And *he don't he* · · · now *he doesn't* care about her · · ·
- (3) S: Yeah, yeah, we know the *many couples* uh · · · *many* international marriage *couples* are broken uh-for example Mizutani Yutaka and · · ·

Repeats here were self-initiated correction (2), where the speaker used modification to change the tense of the verb "come" from present to past, and self-initiated clarification (3), where the speaker inserted the new information "international marriage" between *many* and *couples*.

In addition, repair also deals with the interlocutor's difficulties in comprehending preceding utterances. Generally repetitions, including those with slight modification, facilitate comprehension by providing redundant information (Tannen, 1989), and this function serves well when the interlocutor has problems understanding the intended meaning. Thus, repeats are utilized when a speaker restates the same information in response to a request, as in (4), and when interlocutors confirm what they heard by changing the intonation of the original item, as in (5).

- (4) S3: If if you are you *make yourself understood*, so do you *marry* a foreigner?  
S2: Er pardon please  
S3: If you *make yourself understood*, do you *marry*?
- (5) S3: Forget what they are called anyway they are *arranged marriage*

S1: Yeah

S2: Arranged marriage?

S3: Definitely

3. *Interaction-related repetition*: In the case of repetition across utterances, some of the functions mentioned above are inherently of an interactive nature. However, the third role of repetition, *interaction*, was more narrowly focused in this study. *Interaction* primarily facilitates smooth conversational interaction or simply manages the business of conversation (Tannen, 1987a). More specifically, repeats classified under *interaction* often constituted part of an adjacency pair, as Norrick (1987) observed, and contributed to or signaled the hearer's recognition of the speaker's message. This includes *agreeing, answering, echoing, eliciting responses, emphasizing, topic-marking* and *verbal nodding/head shaking* (see Tannen, 1989 for detailed description of functions of repetition used by adult L1 speakers).

*Criteria for Classification*: Given the three roles of repetitions identified, it should be noted that repetitions potentially play multiple roles in discourse which are not mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, the present study aimed to classify repetitions into the functional categories which were subsumed under the roles; therefore, several criteria were established to distinguish one role from another. First, the formal aspect of an utterance was considered in terms of whether any addition was made in the second occurrence, particularly to distinguish *production* from *repair*, where this distinction can sometimes be blurred because problems may occur both in the planning and the execution of speech (Faerch & Kasper, 1983b) and also because "repair/correction is found where there is no hearable error, mistake or fault" (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977, p. 363). Second, in dealing with the problem that repetitions can perform multiple functions in conversation (Norrick, 1987; Tannen, 1989), we determined the roles of repetitions based on their relatively more characteristic or salient function, by giving consideration to how the use of repetition related to the illocutionary force of the discourse (or the speaker's intention), as well as to formal aspects.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in relation to the multiple roles of repetitions, the present study did not include a tying function (or "connection" in Tannen's term, 1989) as one of the categories. Although we understand that this role is important, especially in terms of linking one speaker's idea to another's through lexical repetitions, it often overlapped with one of the three roles identified in this study, as shown in the dyad below.



- (6) S1: ... if he has two nationalities or he, he has two language ... I afraid, I afraid he may has *no culture*  
 S2: *No culture?*  
 S1: He may have *no culture* ... because ... uh ... I heard that uh as I said before I heard that that uh that that uh bi-bilingual children has *no culture*.  
 S2: Really?

In this conversation, "no culture" is recycled three times. When S1 used this phrase, S2 immediately checked to see what the speaker meant (*repair*). The first speaker responded to S2's question by repeating the phrase (*interaction*), and further incorporated it into his new utterance (*production*). When the repetitions of the phrase perform these three roles, they appear simultaneously to contribute to creating coherence in this discourse. However, because the roles of repetition often overlap, and because this study focused on the use of repetitions in coping with face-to-face communication rather than in creating discourse coherence, the roles of repetition were limited to *production*, *repair* and *interaction*. In this connection, lexical items being recycled in reference to a topic or a subtopic being discussed, in spite of their tying function, were not treated as repetitions unless they were performing one of the three roles (see Norrick, 1987, pp. 247-248, for a similar approach).

*Counting Function Frequencies and Repeated Words:* Repetitions were counted in terms of both frequency and number of repeated words. When a repetition occurred within one of the 15 functions identified (cf. Table 1 in Appendix), it was counted as one occurrence and then the number of repeated words constituting such a function was counted. In counting repeated words, only those that occurred in the second utterance were taken for the count, by assigning one point to a single word and a half point (0.5) to a "partial word" repeat of one or more than one syllable. (The numbers in the parentheses to the right indicate the total number of repeated words per occurrence of function.)

- (7) S: So the *difficulty difficulty* is in taking care of ... (1)  
 S: And problem about the job or ... (0.5)  
 S: But if you have a ... if you have a chance ... (4)

Prior to data analysis, interrater reliability between the two researchers was tested, using part of the spoken data collected. For the occurrence of repetition, the raters achieved an average of 96% agreement, and for counting repeated words, 98%. Further they reached 93% agreement for coding the functions. All the transcripts were then coded by the two raters separately. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. We relied upon both

audiotaped and transcribed data for data analysis.

Statistical computation followed the coding. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on each factor was applied to determine whether use of repetition was affected by two independent factors: proficiency (high, intermediate, and low) and role (production, repair, and interaction).

### Results

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of frequencies of repetitions per 100 words, and Table 2 displays the results of a repeated measures ANOVA.

As shown in Table 2, the results of the repeated measures ANOVA revealed significant main effects for the two factors of proficiency [ $F(2, 15)=3.59$ ,  $p = .05$ ] and role [ $F(2, 30)=15.32$ ,  $p < .00$ ]. There was no significant interaction between these two factors.

Table 1: Means and SDs of repetition frequencies per 100 words

Role	Low		Intermediate		High	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Production	5.96	3.74	4.92	1.72	2.87	1.30
Repair	2.80	1.88	2.73	0.91	1.72	1.06
Interaction	0.52	0.65	2.02	1.13	1.41	0.69

Table 2: Two-way ANOVA of dependent measures (frequencies of repetition)

Source of variation	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Proficiency	16.237	2	8.119	3.593	0.05
Role	99.257	2	49.628	15.315	0.00
Proficiency $\times$ Role	24.577	4	6.144	1.896	0.14

Thus, the two major factors of proficiency and role were found to affect use of repetition in the spoken discourse. The *post hoc* comparisons (Newman-Keuls test), used to locate differences among the three proficiency groups, indicate that, overall, the two lower groups (low and intermediate) used repetitions significantly more often than the high group ( $p < .01$ ), whereas no difference was found between the former

two groups [mean total frequencies per 100 words: 9.28 for low, 9.67 for intermediate, and 6.00 for high].

The learners' use of repetition also involved different mean total numbers of repeated words for each group; although the two lower groups used repetitions with nearly the same frequency, the low group used more repeated words per 100 words than the intermediate, and the high group employed the fewest repeated words per 100 words (21.36 for low, 17.44 for intermediate, and 9.08 for high). This in turn led to a difference in the number of repeated words per occurrence of repetition among the three groups (the low group used 2.30 words, the intermediate group 1.80, and the high group 1.51).

Regarding the roles of repetition, the results showed that, overall, learners used repetitions most frequently for *production*, less frequently for *repair*, and least frequently for *interaction* (mean frequencies per 100 words: 4.58, 2.4 and 1.32, respectively). This general tendency holds true for all three groups; nevertheless, the results of the *post hoc* comparisons (Newman-Keuls test) showed that the only comparison that achieved significance was that between the two lower groups in their use of *interaction*, whereas no significant differences were found between any pairs of groups with respect to the roles of *production* and *repair*. Regarding *production*, although the three groups appeared to differ in their mean frequencies (5.96 for low, 4.92 for intermediate, and 2.87 for high, see Table 2), this was not strong enough for statistical significance, most likely because it was overridden by individual differences, particularly among the low level learners whose frequencies for *production* ranged from 0.77 to 32.90. Also for *repair*, such individual differences, in addition to the small group differences (2.80, 2.73 and 1.72, Table 2), may account for the non-significant results. Regarding *interaction*, of the two higher groups showing differences from the low group, it was the intermediate, not the high, that used repetitions for this role with significantly higher frequency.

### Discussion

The findings of the present study suggest that frequency of repetition relates to both proficiency level and the role of repetition. As learners increased their language proficiency to an advanced level, they tended to repeat less frequently, particularly for *production* and somewhat for *repair*. On the other hand, low and intermediate learners repeated with nearly the same degree of frequency, but their use tended to differ in terms of role and length of repeated unit. The low group repeated more frequently for *production*, whereas the intermediate made more repeti-

tions for *interaction*. Further, the low group produced more words per repetition than the other two groups.

Many of the repetitions were employed during two stages of speech production, planning and monitoring. The fact that the most frequent use of repetition related to the planning stage indicates that learners generally need time to establish a linguistic plan for their intended meaning and that those with inadequate oral proficiency need the most time. They repeat to gain time to make a lexical or syntactic decision, just to keep the floor, or to stall while trying to reach such a decision. This is particularly true for the low level learners in this study who had seemingly adequate grammatical knowledge for understanding the target language (mean scores for TOEFL = 457.3), yet had not highly automatized their processing skills (Faerch and Kasper, 1983a), perhaps due to a lack of opportunity for "comprehensive output" (Swain, 1985), in which learners may be pushed more to produce their desired meaning. Thus, as illustrated in the case of *building up* below, they often resorted to step-by-step repetitions, where the learner "moves backward and forward from planning to execution" (Ellis, 1986, p. 176).

so they . .  
 so they . .  
 so they have uh . .  
     they have mm  
     they have idea . mm . .  
     they have idea what they  
                     what they should do

This case of *building up* with many layers indicates that the speaker in the above example apparently had a problem establishing a linguistic plan for the intended meaning. In fact, it appears that the learner did not have a whole plan for all the constituents of the utterance in the beginning. The speaker appears to have "alternate[d] between the planning of individual constituents and their execution" (Ellis, 1986, p. 176), in that he seems to have been making lexical and/or syntactic decisions one at a time. In this process, the speaker repeated or paused until he made a decision by retrieving an interlanguage rule or an item, employing all possible means, notably both formal and functional reduction strategies (Faerch & Kasper, 1983a), and then applied the selected rule or item to the context. In fact, it appears the speaker used such strategies, given that he simplified the utterance by omitting an article (an) and a preposition (on), and perhaps also that the goal of the utterance was changed due to limited language ability. (This interpretation is based

on the learner's L1 elaboration of what he had intended to say immediately after the original utterance was made.)

Utterances by higher level learners also contained *building up* with layers, although their use of *building up* involved fewer layers, thus resulting in fewer words per occurrence on average (3.33 words for low, 2.50 words for intermediate, and 2.21 words for high). This implies that whereas the higher level learners presumably have less difficulty in retrieving specific rules or items, they, too, employ *building up* when such rules or items are not readily available. Considering that *building up* is being used by learners at all three proficiency levels, it would be reasonable to conclude that it is a strategy frequently used by L2 learners for producing utterances. However, whether the use of this strategy is limited to learners or not is an open question for future investigation.

In terms of frequency of repetition for *repair*, no significant differences were found between group. As opposed to *production*, where the learners tended to repeat less frequently as they became more advanced, proficiency level did not affect the learners' repetition for *repair* as much. The learners in this study were found to monitor the already executed utterances from many perspectives including lexical, syntactic, and phonological, as well as informational, although such monitoring might have been assisted or initiated by interlocutors' feedback.

However, the learners' attention appears to be selective in monitoring; that is, they did not attend simultaneously to all aspects of their utterance, in that some sources of trouble were noticed and others were not. When the sources were recognized, the learners tended to interrupt to rectify the trouble, thereby using repetition in the process of retracing. They corrected or clarified the already executed plan by replacing an initially selected item with another for grammatical/semantic change or refinement. For example, in the utterance "the TV program like that uh in NHK on NHK," the speaker retraced to the beginning of a prepositional phrase to correct the preposition "in" and repeated the rest of the unit. In the case, "*love is over no love is all*," the speaker also retraced to the boundary of the unit for semantic change from "over" to "all," even though she did not realize the problem until reaching the end of the unit.

As the above cases illustrate, the extent to which the learners retraced appears to depend on the location of a trouble source within a syntactic unit and their identification of the trouble as a problem. Nevertheless, the differences in mean number of repeated words per occurrence of *correcting* among the three groups (2.78 for low, 1.64 for intermediate, and 1.40 for high) suggest that the length of retracing differs among the learners, which is perhaps related in part to the lower

level learners' delay in recognizing the trouble as trouble, as well as, in part, to their difficulty in repairing the trouble.

For *interaction*, all three groups employed repetitions less frequently than for *production* and for *repair*. However, the two higher groups, particularly those at an intermediate level, tended to make more frequent repetitions for *interaction* than the low group. The intermediate learners have developed sufficient oral skills to encode their message in the target language, but a lack of fluency appears to necessitate the use of repetition to facilitate smoother conversational interaction. In fact, by either self- or other-repetition, they performed a variety of discourse functions, namely *agreeing*, *answering*, *echoing*, *emphasizing*, and *verbal nodding/head shaking* more often than advanced learners. It seems that the high level learners did not require as much use of repetition because of well-developed oral skills or because of use of other strategies for achieving the same goal. The two examples of *agreeing* below illustrate such characteristics for each of the two groups.

[Intermediate]

S1: But but husband is bad. I think.

S2: Yes yes.

S1: He was very influenced by surrounding.

S2: Yes yes yes he is bad. Umm I also think.

[High]

S1: Sometimes maybe dif- er you know it may be interesting to find out differences . . .

S2: Yeah, sometimes you can you can enjoy it . . .

In these conversations, the participants were discussing cultural differences that internationally mixed background couples might run into in their daily lives. S2 in each conversational exchange was showing agreement with what the previous speaker S1 had said. In the first exchange, the intermediate learner did so by repeating the same structure and words (" . . . he is bad. I also think") used in the first utterance of S1 (though lexical substitution and lexical addition were included). On the other hand, in the second exchange, the high level learner showed agreement not by simply repeating the preceding utterance but in a more sophisticated way, i.e., by referring back to the previous speaker's idea using a different structure and lexical choice (enjoy). Although the utterance by the high level learner contained two repetitions, one other-repetition (sometimes) for *incorporating* which also appears to show rapport with the previous speaker, and one self-repetition (you can you can enjoy it) for *building up*, no repetition was actually used for the

function of *agreeing*. Because of their higher oral proficiency, advanced L2 learners, like native speakers, have more syntactic/lexical choices available in formulating what they want to say and may be able to make a lexical or syntactic decision fairly quickly. Thus, there appears to be less necessity for them to rely upon a repetition strategy for conversational interaction.

In short, as these examples suggest, L2 learners' repetitions, like those of L1 children (Keenan, 1977), may gradually decrease once other syntactic devices or strategies are acquired to perform the same functions. However, similar to the speech of adult L1 speakers, repetitions do not entirely disappear even from the speech of advanced learners as long as the repetitions contribute to creating "coherence in discourse and interpersonal involvement in interaction" (Tannen, 1989, p. 97). Finally, in the case of low level learners, infrequent use of repetition for interactional purposes can be explained by their inadequate oral proficiency, which leads to frequent message abandonment or code-switching to L1, thus resulting in a minimal amount of interaction-related repetition.

#### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

The limitations of the present study should be mentioned. First, because the study used audiotapes rather than videotapes to identify learners' repetitions, the analysis was limited in terms of utilizing evidence from nonverbal behavior such as facial expressions and body movements. Second, the scope of the study was confined mainly to learners' self-repetition, rather than fully examining interactional other-repetition, mainly because of relatively fewer instances of this type. The study should be supplemented by research which investigates L1 English speakers' repetition, given a similar task, because the amount and functions of repetition by native speakers can be expected to differ from those of EFL/ESL learners. The comparison between L1 and L2 speakers of English may broaden the perspectives on repetition functions, providing richer insight into repetition than the present study. Further studies should also explore differences in the use of repetition among L2 learners based on within- and between-subject comparison, such as between learners from different linguistic backgrounds. These studies would show more precisely whether repetition is a learner-specific strategy related to a particular language being learned or the particular cultural group learning it. Lastly, the studies should investigate how repetitions, particularly those used for production, interact with other performance features (notably pauses) whose functions are similar to those of repetitions.

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### Notes

1. This topic was chosen for several reasons. First, the discussion was conducted as a class activity for a cross-cultural course, and so the topic was relevant. Second, a similar topic ("Are you for or against international marriage?") was one of the most popular among 10 topics Japanese university students had discussed in English (Hirose & Kobayashi, 1991).

2. The functions of word-forming, restating, eliciting responses, topic-marking, and verbal nodding/head shaking were created based on the present spoken data. The other functions, building up, gaining time, incorporating, clarifying, confirming, correcting, agreeing, answering, echoing, and emphasizing, were drawn from the literature.

3. Because we assigned students within each discussion group sequential numbers from 1 to 3, S1, S2, and S3 do not necessarily refer to the same students in the excerpts cited in this paper.

4. Despite obvious difficulties in exactly determining illocutionary force, the analysts' interpretation was based on the conversational partners' reactions to the speaker's utterance.

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### Appendix: Characterization of Repetition Functions

Function	Definition	Examples
<i>Production</i>		
building up	When constructing or formulating new linguistic units, the speaker retraces to the beginning of the units, and in retreating, repeats and then builds up a phrasal or clausal unit.	(a) I think there are ah <i>some cases . . . some cases</i> of international marriage. (b) They might need er they might need more efforts.
gaining time	This involves self-repetition of mostly one word when the speaker attempts to gain time to plan or formulate what to say next.	I think <i>II</i> don't want to marry a foreigner <i>because</i> . mm <i>because I I . . . I</i> make her understood . . .
incorporating	This occurs in either self-repetition (a) or other-repetition (b). In (a), the speaker reuses a lexical item or syntactic structure from her own preceding discourse, whereas in (b) incorporates part of the prior utterance made by an interlocutor into her own utterance.	(a) <i>He do in a way of</i> America and he came back <i>he do in a way of</i> Japanese. (b) S1: Kobayashi-san said the children have to decide... S2: Ah nationality S1: <i>Nationality</i> when he grew up.
word-forming	This is a syllabic self-repetition, occurring at a syllable boundary.	my <i>grand-grand</i> mother lives in Hiroshima.

<i>Repair</i>		
clarifying	This involves both self- and other-repetition. In self-initiated clarification (a), the speaker attempts to clarify his own speech by retreating to add further information. In an other-initiated case (b), the interlocutor requests clarification by repeating part of the prior speaker's utterance with rising intonation, which requires further elaboration or explanation from the speaker.	(a) So you mean . . . you mean ah <i>which way</i> ah <i>which natural way</i> ah not national . . . (b) S1: There may be difficulties from political situation I mean <i>political</i> situation between the wife's country and the husband's country. S2: Political? S1: Er..for example, if the wife's country has er . . . is . . .
confirming	This involves only other-repetition. By repeating part of the preceding speaker's utterance, often with rising intonation, the interlocutor checks to see if she has correctly heard or understood what was said, and requires no additional information.	S1: One is Japanese the other is in case in case of in case that the other uh English or <i>American</i> S2: <i>American?</i> S1: Yeah maybe their chi-the child can speak two language
correcting	This involves both self- and other-repetition. In self-initiated correction (a), the speaker corrects his own errors, whereas in other-initiated correction (b), the interlocutor corrects the preceding speaker's errors.	(a) Love is over no love is all. (b) S1: Perhaps he will forget English if without umm be taught S2: Being taught.

restating	The speaker restates the semantically same utterances. The urge to restate comes both from the speaker and from the interlocutor. This, therefore, involves (a) self-initiated restatement and (b) other-initiated restatement.	<p>(a) So they have grown in differ place <i>so they have</i> differ backbone backport? backbone..so dakarasuuimasen [so I'm sorry] <i>so they have differ backbone</i></p> <p>(b) S3: So I after we overcome the crisis we will we will we shall have grown more as a human being. And . . . do you understand? S2: No no S1: If after we overcome the crisis maybe we shall have grown up as a human being.</p>
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*Interaction*

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agreeing	This occurs only in cases of other-repetition, and forms the second half of an adjacency pair. The interlocutor shows agreement or acknowledges the speaker's utterance by repeating partly or fully, with falling intonation.	S1: That's a <i>good idea</i> . S2: Yeah good idea.
echoing	This is the second half of an adjacency pair performed through other-repetition. The interlocutor responds to a yes/no question by repeating the speaker's utterance exactly with falling intonation.	S1: Junior high? S2: Junior high.

eliciting responses	This is self-repetition with rising intonation when the speaker attempts to draw ideas or opinions from the interlocutors and at the same time avoid silence among them.	<i>Do you have an idea . . . do you have an idea . . . anyone have . . . anyone have?</i>
emphasizing	This self-repetition is used when the speaker wants to emphasize the point being made (a) or turn the interlocutor's attention to the point (b).	(a) There are <i>many many</i> . . . conflict. (b) I think it's uh it's uh . . . <i>special</i> . . . of international marriage. <i>Special case.</i>
topic-marking	The speaker signals the topic she is going to deal with at the beginning of an utterance, followed by discussion of the topic.	Uh <i>religion</i> what what ah how do they deal with <i>religion?</i>
verbal nodding/ head shaking	The speaker shows either an affirmative or negative response by continuing to utter "yes" or "no." Some are uttered rather mechanically without any obvious intent, more for showing listenership or rapport, whereas others are uttered with emotional involvement. The two are not always distinguishable.	S1: But but husband is bad I think. S2: Yes yes.. S1: He was very influenced by surrounding. S2: <i>Yes yes yes</i> he is bad .. em I also think

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