

# Repetition Types and Functions in Interview

— In the case of non-native speakers of Japanese —

Miki HASHIGUCHI\*

## 1. Introduction

According to Kuno (1980), the main purpose of ellipsis in discourse is to lessen redundancy. There can be said to be some correlation between ellipses and repetition. What, then, are the functions of repetition in discourse? Makino (1980) suggests that “it is the patterning of repetition that vitalizes sentences and discourse”. As the proverb “History repeats itself” indicates, our daily lives abound with the repetition of past experiences, whether unconsciously or consciously. In conversation as well, any current utterance can be seen as repeating prior utterances. While analyzing data corpuses provided in the course of discourse analysis, examples of repetition by non-native speakers of Japanese, the use of which seems to vary from beginners to superior speakers, were observed.

The purpose of this paper, through the analysis of the repetition patterns of five non-native speakers of Japanese during an interview, is to see what types repetition they use according to their Japanese oral proficiency levels and what functions they serve. The analysis of repetition is first linked to prior research. The outline of the data examined is shown. In the subsequent section, the types and functions of repetition are surveyed by citing short examples from the data. Finally, the purpose served by repetition in the case of non-native speakers of Japanese is explored from the viewpoint of teaching Japanese.

## 2. Repetition in discourse

First, an analysis of repetition with reference to prior research is necessary. In this paper, attention is focused mainly on the research carried out by Deborah Tannen (1989).<sup>1</sup> Tannen suggests that repetition is at the heart not only of how a particular discourse is created, but how discourse itself is created. She suggests that syntactic repetition in conversation is to serve the following functions --production, comprehension, connection, interaction, and conversational coherence. As for forms of repetition, she first distinguishes self-repetition and allo-repetition (repetition of others). Secondly, she defines a scale of fixity in form, which ranges from exact repetition (the same words uttered in the same rhythmic pattern), to repetition with variation, and to paraphrase (similar ideas in different words). Tannen also includes patterned rhythm, in which completely different words are uttered in the same syntactic and rhythmic paradigm as a preceding utterance. There is also a temporal scale ranging from immediate to delayed repetition. There are other various forms of repetition which Tannen refers to, but her statement that “all these boundaries are fuzzy” seems to be important.

In this paper, the forms of repetition mentioned above are all considered in the analysis, though delayed repetition should be restricted to refer to delay within an interview discourse. Repetition of

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\* 鹿屋体育大学 National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya, Kagoshima, Japan.

back-channel (*aizuchi*), such as *Ee*, *Hai* and *Un*, and repetition considered as the speaker's habit are not analyzed here. On the other hand, repetition which can seemingly be attributed to the speaker's lack of grammar is examined here, because the final section analyzes repetition from the viewpoint of teaching Japanese. Examples from data are presented here with back-channel by the interviewer omitted, so that it can be more easily assessed.

### 3. The Data

This study is based upon the analysis of data in the form of transcripts of audio recordings of five non-native speakers of Japanese being interviewed by native Japanese speakers in the OPI (Oral Proficiency Test). The five subjects had different proficiency levels of Japanese--one novice, one intermediate-low, one intermediate-high and two superiors--in order to assess the differences in their repetition types and functions according to their ability level.

Table 1: Data Collected

Sample	Level	Name
①	novice	Robert
②	intermediate-low	Eric
③	intermediate-high	李
④	superior	Danny
⑤	superior	David

### 4. Repetition types and functions

In this section, the repetition types and functions used by the subjects are surveyed by presenting examples of repetition occurring in each of the four Japanese proficiency levels. The hypothesis is that repetition types and functions used by non-native speakers during an interview vary from novice to superior level. That is, the functions of repetition at the novice level might be linked to production and comprehension, while at superior level they are connected to such techniques as emphasis, interacion and coherence.

#### 4-1. Repetition types and functions at the novice level

By analyzing data ① from Robert, both self-repetition and allo-repetition (repetition of others) are found. Especially, repetition of some parts of interviewer's questions, which could be omitted because the context is already clear, is frequent. The following example is from his self-introduction:

[(1) ~ (27) J=interviewer; N=interviewee]

(1) J : あ、1年生ですか。じゅあ今年プリンス頓大学にはいましたか。

N : うん、今年入りました。

J : あ、そうですか。ええとじゃあ専門がありますか。

N : まだ、専門が、わか、まだ分かりません。

What is the function of this kind of repetition? From the native speaker's viewpoint, such repetition sounds redundant. At the novice level, however, it may serve some crucial functions in the context of the interview. By repeating some parts of the preceding questions, Robert might be indicating to the interviewer that he has received the questions, while at the same time wishing to confirm whether he has understood them or not. According to Tannen's classification, this can be said to function in comprehension and in interaction. Another function this repetition might serve is the showing of respect to the interviewer.

Other features exhibited in Robert's utterance include the preference for exact repetition rather than paraphrase, and for immediate repetition rather than delayed repetition. When delayed repetition is observed, it is restricted to within one utterance. Self-repetition, in which he repeats his own words and phrases in one sentence, are extremely frequent, as follows:

(2) J : あ、そう。じゃ、えーと、晩ご飯はロックフェラーで食べますか。

N : ……でも、ちょ、時々は一 football か football からは一、football は遅い、遅いで、あの一、終わ、終わっています。だから、あの小さいダイニングホールで、晩ご飯を食べます。…あの一、食べます。

Such self-repetition, whether in one sentence or in one utterance, may have a productive function. That is, repetition enables a speaker to produce fluent speech while formulating what to say next.

Repetition, which can be attributed to Robert's lack of confidence in grammar, such as in the use of the conjugations of verbs and adjectives, and numerals, are found in some examples, as follows:

(3) J : …どうしてあれ、ん、アメリカンフットボールを始めましたか。

N : うーん …僕はー … なんか、American football は、楽しいと、違う人、ぶつ、ぶつかってる、ぶつか、ぶつからー、ぶつかられーる、だから、American football 好きです。

(4) N : うん、映画大好き。出もー … それもあまり、見ません。……

高いすぎ、すぎますから、ふふ。

(5) J : …今ええとロバートさんはどんなクラスを勉強していますか。

N : あー、日本語の、ひゃくー、100 語、クラス、っていう 100 語もん、というあと一、にー2 年の、日本語勉強します。

This kind of repetition may be restricted to non-native speakers, and its function during an interview can be considered to be linked to production as well.

At the novice level, we can find paraphrase used as another form of repetition:

(6) N : うーん、混んでいますから。たくさん、あの … ひとがいっぱいいますから。

The paraphrases used by Robert might function in comprehension. That is, he seems to use paraphrase to ensure that the interviewer can understand him.

#### 4-2. Repetition types and functions at the intermediate level

For the intermediate level, data ② from Eric and data ③ from 李 are examined. Eric is classified as intermediate-low, and 李 as intermediate-high. Firstly it is an important feature that at this level, in comparison with the novice level, very little contextually unnecessary repetition is to be found. That is, words and phrases understood clearly from the context are not repeated by the speakers. Secondly we can find many types of repetition function as a connection both at the intermediate-low and the intermediate-high levels. Repetition is used as a cohesive device. Tannen refers to cohesive devices as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Repetition of sentences, phrases, and words shows how new utterances are linked to earlier discourse, and how ideas presented in the discourse are related to each other.

Examples (7)-(9) (7 and 8 from Eric, and 9 from 李) show repetition as cohesive devices.

(7) N : えー今はホームステイをしているから ホームステイの家族がいろいろな …

(8) N : えとーICU の program が終わったら北海道行くつもりですけど  
北海道の program は にしゅうかんだけ、だから …

(9) N : 親切じゃない、じゃなくて、なんかこう、こう日本がちょっとね、親切すぎです。

J : あー、そうですか。

N : はい、なんか、あたしが分からないところとか、分からない問題聞いた時、ま、韓国は、あ、  
そうそうそう、で、簡単に説明しますが、ここ日本の場合はちょっとね、… 親切すぎに説明  
したから、…

It may be important to observe this kind of repetition, separated by other utterances by the interviewer and interviewee. It seems to have some relation to the flow of thought and memory.

An important difference between the intermediate-low and intermediate-high non-native speaker is that at the former level there is still some repetition caused by grammatical weakness, as in the case of the novice as in example (10)-(12), but very little at the latter level.

(10) N : あーえとー、にーにーにーげつ、二ヶ月ーぐらい、

(11) N : … あんまりよく、あー、家族もみんな忙しいので、よくあお、あお、会えないと言いま  
した、…

(12) N : … えっと、大学院行き、ん、行きに、行きになったら、行きたら、と …

At the intermediate-high level, repetition is found to interactively function for persuasion (13), involvement (14) and evaluation (15) etc.

(13) J : … あの一、マクドナルドの場合はただ、… 簡単な仕事ですけど。

N : でも、簡単な仕事だけど、ちょっとね、1日、んー、私が5時間とか4時間ずっとたつ、立っ  
たまま、こうお客さん来るとき、お仕事してるでしょう。だから、すごく疲れたと思うから、  
結構た、簡単だと、ちょっとね。だから、あたしーね、あの、無理だと思うけど、650円

はちよつとね、私は、できないんです。

(14) J : あ、なるほどね、いいところがたくさんありますねー。

N : たくさんありますよ。

(15) N : … なんか、貿易勉強した後で、韓国、あ、機会があれば、日本で。で、日本で就職はちよつと問題あるでしょ。だから、ま、機会があるかどうか分からないけど、もし、機会があれば、日本で2年間くらい勤めたいんですけど。なんか、問題があると思います。

At the intermediate-high level, paraphrases not only of the speaker's own utterances but also those of the interviewer, are found as well:

(16) J : あーそう。随分、勉強熱心でしたね。

N : はい。一生懸命、勉強しました。

The reflexive Japanese pronoun “*jibun*”, which is considered an empathy marker, functions in involvement at this level as follows:

(17) N : はい。で、あたし、あの、自分、韓国人だけど、…

(18) N : … 早く就職して、あたし自分の好きな、こ、仕事したいんです。

#### 4-3. Repetition types and functions at the superior level

Tannen refers to the function of coherence as interpersonal involvement and remarks as follows:<sup>2</sup>

This may be the highest-level of function of repetition-- in the sense in which Gregory Bateson (1972) adapts Bertrand Russell's notion of logical types to describe the metamessage level of interaction: the level at which messages about relationships are communicated.

Repetition as a coherent device, at the superior level, is found here, as the following examples (19)-(21) from David's data show:

(19) J : 言葉があるわけですからねえ。

N : ええ、言葉はあるし—それについての文献がたくさんあるから—、…

(20) J : 小説なんかで、そういう不良少年をね、描いた—小説、あるいは映画っていうのはあるでしょうね。…

N : ええ、あの—ある—ようですけども あ、たとえばまあ不良少年っていえば、

(21) J : つまり常識の世界にはね。

N : 常識の世界でも

J : や、あるですよねー。

N : あるですよねー。やはりねー。

At the superior level, the highest frequency of repetition as cohesion among the four levels examined here is to be found. And this kind of repetition occurs even when separated by several pages

of transcript.

- (22) N : … オーストラリアの方が平等的なような気がしますね。(p.2 of ④)  
 N : … 平等的な、あのやり方が凄く大事に思われるのは … (p.4 of ④)
- (23) N : … あの一内面生活っていうかあの、精神生活を大事にしたいって …  
 N : … あの内面生活とか精神生活をもっと大事にしなくちゃならないと …

We can find paraphrases of clauses, larger word units and phrases, frequently used by both ④ Danny and ⑤ David. This kind of repetition can be considered to function for comprehension and for connection such as emphasis.

- (24) N : 金持ちと貧乏の差が、一番大事なんじゃないのかなあと僕は思うんで、  
 N : お金のいる人は、すごくいい、ところに行けるし、お金のない人は、もう、全然、ほろほろのところにしか行かれないというのは、やっぱおかしいと …
- (25) N : やはり近代社会の問題として考えてるので 日本の問題じゃなくあるいはアメリカだけの問題じゃなくて …

The fourth finding, and one of particular interest, is that speakers at the superior level use patterned rhythm, in which different words are uttered in the same syntactic and rhythmic paradigm as in the preceding utterance.

- (26) N : より良い教育 より良い住環境 より良い食生活ということ …  
 (27) N : やはりアメリカに関して言えば、あるいは日本に関して言えば、

## 5. Conclusion

Repetition types and functions have been discussed through the presentation of samples of non-native speakers at four levels of Japanese oral proficiency -- novice, intermediate-low, intermediate-high and superior. The deductions made may be imperfect due to the analysis of only a very restricted amount of data. There may be a tendency for repetition at the novice level to function predominantly for production and comprehension, while at the intermediate and superior levels it functions in the context of connection, interaction and coherence. Five functions of repetition suggested by Tannen seem to form the following hierarchy from the perspective of Japanese learners:

coherence > interaction > connection > comprehension > production

The more proficient the learners are, the more frequently they use the functions on the left of the hierarchical axis in an interview discourse. In order to prove this, analysis of more data from all levels, including advanced, will have to be carried out in the near future. Through the analysis of repetition from transcripts, the particular aspects in which Japanese learners experience difficulties when speaking can be seen. Teachers of Japanese as a foreign language can benefit from studying this and apply what they have learnt in the future.

## Notes

- 1 Deborah Tannen, 1989, p.50
- 2 Ibid. p.52

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## 日本語学習者のインタビューにあらわれる繰り返しの発話と機能 — 発話資料を基に —

橋口 美紀

### 要 約

本稿では、インタビューにおいて既に出現した発話を繰り返すという行為が、相手との相互作用の上でまた会話運営上のような機能や効果をもたらさうかを、日本語学習者の発話資料をもとに考察する。まず、先行研究として英語の会話の分析を行なったデボラ・タンネン(1989)の繰り返しの種類と機能を確認し、本稿で扱う繰り返しの種類について述べる。次に、アメリカ外国語教育協会によって開発されたOral Proficiency Interview (OPI) のインタビュー(日本語)を受けた日本語学習者5人(初級1, 中級2, 超級2)の発話資料をもとに、その繰り返しの種類と機能を分析する。最後に日本語教育の観点から、繰り返しのタイプと機能の違いを4つのレベル別に考察する。分析からは、タンネンが指摘している5つの機能が確認されたが、超級レベルになるにつれ coherence や interaction, connection の機能が増え、初級レベルでは comprehension や production の機能をもつ繰り返しが多いという結果になった。

キーワード: OPI, repetition, coherence, interaction, comprehension