

Repetitions and repair in Japanese conversations between nonnative and native speakers: A case of interaction in a homestay setting

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This study investigates the use of repetition and repair in conversations between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) of Japanese by analyzing one case of interaction between NSs (host parents) and a NNS (an Austrian learner) in a homestay setting. To date, little is known about the extent to which the overseas students and their host family members utilize repetition and repair in interaction. Therefore, this study is one of the first attempts to examine repetition and repair in NS-NNS interaction of Japanese in a homestay environment. The study also provides an empirically based contribution to the second language learning, in particular the use of repetition as a communication strategy (e.g., Duff, 2000; Makino, 2012; Park, 2013).

Repeating is one of the performances in speech, which is often seen in naturally occurring conversations. Previous studies show that repetition (1) facilitates the production of speech (Kobayashi & Hirose, 1995; Tannen, 1987; Tannen, 2007), (2) provides a context for a problematic talk to be repaired (Bolden, 2009; Horiuchi, 2011; Hosoda, 2002; Johnstone, 1994; Kobayashi & Hirose, 1995; Robinson, 2013; Rost & Ross, 1991; Svennevig, 2004), and (3) contributes to smoother interaction by showing the listenership, and so forth (Fujimura-Willson, 2007; Horiguchi, 1997;

Kobayashi & Hirose, 1995; Svennevig, 2004; Tannen, 2007). In particular, the current study focuses on analyzing the practice of repair type of repetitions by a NNS and NSs in audio-recorded data of a ten-minute face-to-face naturally occurring conversation in an informal homestay setting.

In the previous studies, researchers found that L2 learners tend to adopt partial or full repeat as a conscious communication strategy in order to clarify an incomprehensible part of the preceding utterances in NS-NNS interaction, especially if NNSs are novice learners of the target language (Horiuchi, 2011; Rost & Ross, 1991). According to Kobayashi and Hirose (1995), this type of repetition can be referred to as repair type of repetition (i.e., repeat-formatted repair in this study). Repeat-formatted repair may enable L2 learners to engage with NSs of the target language, because interaction provides an opportunity for learners to gain exposure to new lexical or grammatical item.

The present study contributes to two research areas: 1) repetition and repair analysis in Japanese, and 2) second language acquisition (SLA), especially in the context of non-instructional interactions (homestay). Firstly, English is the dominant target language of previous research on repetition and repair, and there are few studies focused on languages other than English. Hosoda (2002) conducted one of the pioneer studies, which focused on the form and function of repetition in NS-NS and NS-NNS interactions of Japanese from Conversation Analytical perspectives. However, other than her study, there does not seem to be much research investigating how and to

what extent the speaker repeats previous utterances in NS-NNS Japanese conversations.

This study mainly focuses on the practice of repair related repetition in Japanese. While Hosoda (2002) explored how repetition generally appears in NS-NS and NS-NNS conversations of Japanese, I examined various functions of repeat-formatted repair and factors that initiate the speaker to repeat utterances produced in the previous turn. Since little empirical studies exist regarding the practice of repetition as repair in relation to sequence organization in NS and NNS interaction, this study is of significance in the field of discourse studies of repetition and repair.

Moreover, whereas some researchers have investigated L2 learners' use of repetition in a language classroom setting (e.g., Duff, 2000; Park, 2013; Rost & Ross, 1991), other studies have explored the practices of NNSs' repetition in other contexts (i.e., outside the classroom) (e.g., Hosoda, 2002; Kobayashi & Hirose, 1995). Hosoda (2002) argues that NS-NNS conversations in informal settings (i.e., outside of class) may be constructed similar to teacher-student talk, since interaction provides a number of practices for NNS to deal with problems in speaking, hearing and understanding. Therefore, the findings of this study would provide several pedagogical implications to L2 learning classrooms. However, while Hosoda (2002) investigates NNS's repetition in informal conversations between friends, this study explores the practice of repetition in a homestay setting.

As noted above, there is currently only limited empirical data concerning how NS and NNS of Japanese interact in homestay settings. The findings in

this present case study, therefore, would contribute to SLA studies by suggesting how beneficial non-instructional interaction (in a homestay setting) is in regards to the development of communication strategies, and in particular using repetitions for repair. Furthermore, implications could also apply to institutional interactions in a language classroom.

The focus of the qualitative analysis in this study is on the repetition produced by NS and NNS in repair sequence. Repair is one of the roles of repetition suggested by Kobayashi and Hirose (1995), and they acknowledged that there are four functions (i.e., clarifying, confirming, correcting and restating). According to Schegloff (2000), by using repetition to initiate repair on another person's talk, the speaker indicates that the person has trouble in hearing or understanding what was said, or that the other person may have misspoken in some way. At the same time, the repetition provides evidence of the trouble source in interactions (Bolden, 2009, p. 124). In my data, both NSs and NNS utilize repetition strategically to deal with problematic talk, initiated by themselves or others.

As for self-initiated repetition, speakers were directed to repair their own utterance because there were some initiations by the other interlocutor, through questioning, repeating and pausing in the previous turn. Furthermore, NNS's self-initiated repeat-formatted repair (restatement) may not be accepted by NSs when it lacks some necessary items for understanding, thus resulting in an extended sequence of interaction. On the other hand, NS's self-initiated repeat-formatted repair may help NNS's understanding of what has been discussed, and may encourage NNS to

provide the second pair part. To sum up, while NNS's repetition did not contribute to facilitation of the interaction, the self-repeat-formatted repair by NS worked advantageously in this study.

In other-initiated repetition, even though NNS's full repetition indexes a request for the meaning of a problematic word, NS did not explain the meaning by just repeating the word, because NS may take the repetition as a confirmation. Generally speaking, both clarification and confirmation types of repetition end with the rising intonation (Kobayashi & Hirose, 1995). However, the repetition by NNSs could be misinterpreted by NSs. Robinson (2013) points out that it is important for recipients' of repetition to decide the extent to which the producer of repetition know about the repeated item because the purpose of using repetition varies depending on the producer's knowledge. In this regard, NSs should be aware of this when interacting with NNSs. At the same time, this feature needs to be acknowledged by NNSs as well. NNS also require some strategies to deal with such situations when they are not satisfied with or if they have problems in understanding others' utterances. NNSs, for instance, could explicitly request NSs to explain the meaning of unknown words or phrases by stating "I don't know" or "What does it mean?" (Horiuchi, 2011, p.312).

On the other hand, NS shows that some repeat does not imply that the speaker expects to get a response from the other. In the present study, although the host mother repeated a part of NNS's previous utterance for confirmation, she did not request NNS to respond to it. Rather, NS allowed NNS to continue his speech. It seemed that NS did not expect to get a

response from NNS since the repeat-formed confirmation was overlapped and NNS's talk was not that problematic for the NS to continue interaction. Similar behavior was not confirmed by NNS in this study; however, NNS could possibly perform as NS did if he or she comprehends what is being discussed through interaction.

Other-initiated repetition also sheds light on NS's performance as the target language expert. NS's repetition may function as a provider of example sentences of a non-acquired word, and the repeating was designed to show NNS how the new word can be put into practice. Interestingly, NS did not only provide the meaning of the word but actually taught NNS how it can be used in a sentence by stating a few examples. In this respect, the study shows that the role of NNS (i.e. host parents) could be similar to that of a language teacher in classroom settings.

Findings in this study suggest that living in homestay settings provide potential opportunities for L2 learners to practice language management during interaction when there is a problem. L2 Japanese learners, especially who study or work in Japan, are usually regarded as "outsiders" in Japan. Therefore, they may encounter such situations when they require skills to explain, persuade, negotiate or compromise with others. It is believed that speakers aptly omit some parts of utterances since the topic or contents are commonly intelligible, by the hearer(s) in a conversation, without the need for explicit statement. On the contrary, speakers are likely to repeat previous utterances fully or partially in a dialogue because the interaction is oriented to explanation or negotiation, which requires more careful construction of

speech than having a conversation. Although the L2 under consideration is Japanese, it is expected that this sentiment would also apply in other languages. Indeed, during dialogue-type of interactions, NNS and NSs utilized repetition as a strategy to function as repair, and the repair of the host parents' was found to help the learner to understand what was being discussed.

In conclusion, although NSs' repeat-formatted repair advantageously impacted the NNS's understanding of NS's utterances, NNS's repetitions resulted in extended interaction since repetitions (for confirmation or restatement) were miscomprehended or unintelligible in some cases. Further investigation of NNS's repetition that is accepted by NS is required to find out what elements are necessary to convey the speaker's intention through repeating. In addition, with the aim of developing interactional strategies by using repetitions, practices not only in an informal language learning setting but also in a language classroom would be of importance.

This study only examined a ten-minute conversation among two NSs and a NNS in a homestay setting; therefore, there might be some cases which contradict the findings of this study. Moreover, this study only analyzed audio-recorded data, and the interaction was not video-recorded. As several researchers, such as Mori and Hayashi (2006) and Hosoda (2002), argue the analysis of non-verbal behaviors would enrich findings of Conversation Analytic studies since body movements also have various roles in interaction. Although there are several limitations, I believe that this study indicates a

potentially interesting area for future research as well as for second language teaching from the investigation of repetitions.

(1762 words)

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