



Repetition of Prior-Turn in Ordinary Urdu Conversation

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Abstract- Repetition of prior-turn is a quite frequent practice in ordinary conversation. The present study aims at highlighting the form and function of repetition of prior-turn in ordinary Urdu conversation. For the purpose, five group conversations by Urdu speakers were recorded, with a total time of about a hundred and thirty minutes. The recorded data were transcribed adopting transcription conventions from Schegloff (2000). The analysis of data reveals that, in group conversations, repetition of previous turn is mainly used as an effective strategy to keep the floor, where there are more than one possible candidates for the next turn and where there is 'threat of losing the floor'. Moreover, speakers repeat part of previous turn as a strategy to 'buy' time, a notion supported by the fact that such repetitions are sometimes closely followed by non-expletive phrases which do not add anything new in the ongoing conversation, but rather function as regular 'fillers'.

Keywords: prior-turn, conversation, Urdu

I. INTRODUCTION

Repetition has been described as one of the most misunderstood phenomena (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1983). Indeed, repetition is a human, social activity, clearly part of our everyday conduct and behavior and not just a marker of a "disfluent" or "sloppy" speaker (Schegloff, 1987). In her book "Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue and imagery in conversational discourse" Deborah Tannen attempts to answer the question: *Why is there repetition in conversation?* To achieve this, Tannen deals with production, comprehension, connection and interaction. Tannen also explains pre-patterning by exemplifying cases of fixed expressions and collocations. In this case, Tannen supports the view that combining fixed expressions with other linguistic items without losing their meaning is possible and common.

Repetition is more than emphasis or a mental stutter: Johnstone's well-regarded collection (1994) includes twenty-eight different scholarly discussions of repetition and its 'structural, cognitive, and interactional' (Martin 1995: 576) functions from a wide range of situations and disciplinary orientations. In one of her studies, Johnstone (1987) comments that repetition is how speakers illustrate 'the underlying paradigmatic structure' of the discourse.

Dornyei & Thurrell (1994) maintain that repetition is a conversational strategy for dealing with communication 'trouble spots'. In their research on both native and non-native speakers, Stuart & Lynn (1995) found that non-native speakers resorted to repetition strategy more frequently than native speakers. Repetition in native speakers and non-native speakers' speech, as a strategy of repair, has been intensively investigated (e.g., Schegloff et al., 1977; Tarone, 1980; Wong, 2000; Cho, 2008; Laakso, 2010).

According to Hsieh (2011:163), "Pragmatically speaking, repetition, both self-repeats and other-repeats, can be used to double up the illocutionary force, i.e., to do emphasis or to do persuasion, by means of repeating the linguistic form." Tyler (1994:672) suggested that certain repetition patterns work as meta-discourse markers, which signal to the listener how to interpret new information in an unfolding discourse. Similarly, Murata (1995) believes repetition to be a culture-specific signal of conversational management, and considers immediate repetition of words and phrases as one feature of communicative behaviours. His study reveals that the use of immediate repetitions is closely related to the turn-taking system.

In analyzing repetition and intensity, Bazzanella (2011) asserted that “Repetition, besides being a useful cognitive device (as a simplifying/clarifying device, a filler, and a support both for understanding and memorizing), an efficient text-building mechanism and a widespread literacy and rhetorical device, is a powerful conversational and interactional resource.”

The literature review reveals that repetition is a natural phenomenon, which is used as an effective tool to accomplish various pragmatic/conversational functions. Further, according to researchers, culture plays a significant role in determining what pragmatic function repetition performs in ordinary conversation.

II. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The conversation analyzed below is between females who are college students and the physical context is that of the college cafeteria. As the first conversation unfolds, they talk about some fund raising for charity purpose. One of the girls suggests that they should help ‘Giya Baji’, neighbour to the girls, as they are from the same locality. And it is here that we have the first instance of repetition:

Conversation No 1

- 6 Sonia: [hamari ()] giya
 7 Bajihainna (.1) un ko cancer haina=
 8 Rida: =hangiy[a baji
 9 Sonia: [giya b]aji (.2) to ham log kehrhy thy
 10 k UNko q nadain

As can be observed, the repetitions by Sonia in line 9 is immediately preceded by overlap. It seems plausible to propose that, as Sonia is faced by the possibility of losing the floor to the other participant, she avoids this possibility by repeating part of Rida’s turn in line no. 09, thereby making it clear that she intends to keep the floor. This is exactly what is achieved by Sonia, as she is not challenged, and, as a result, she keeps the floor till she has said what she wants to say.

Again there is another instance of repetition of prior turn by Hira in the following excerpt from the same conversation:

Conversation No 1

- 25: Afia : ya[r vo]vakayi [mai cancer hai]
 26 :Hira : [O] [vovakayimai] boht needy hai
 27 :Sonia: [O]
 28: Hira [O] vovakayimaiboht needy hai< .h.h.hhm logo un hi ko de dety
 29: hain

Again, it is observed that Hira here struggles here for the floor and maintains only with the help of repeating the prior talk. In fact she makes the other participants realize that she has something more to say and should thus be let to keep the floor. Also, here we see overlaps as a result of the struggle for taking the floor by the possible candidates.

Conversation No. 3

- 86: Khadija: yarkasam se [mai ne to ()]
 87 sadia: [mai ne (.1) suno]>mai ne to<
 88: emmm ye kiyana k em:::merijonandhainna to (.h.h) unho ne
 89: koi-em-koi – emm- meryhzbndneunkokahatha k apsary le lena
 90 unho ne kahathamainaleti q k apniapni choice hotihai [O]

At this point in this conversation, the girls are discussing marriage practices in different cultural practices in different parts of Azad Kashmir. Here it is observed at turn No. 87 that Sadia, who wants to tell her friends

about her marriage, resorts to repetition of part of Khudija's prior turn in order to maintain the floor. The claim is further supported by the fact that in turn 88 she uses fillers and a kind of 'expletive' phrase in the sense that these fillers and such phrases which function like regular filler. It signifies two things relevant to our discussion: first, she resorts to repetition to maintain the floor, which she eventually does. However, not fully ready what to say next, though she definitely has something new to say. she uses fillers and expressions like **ye kiyana** and fillers such as **asem** which do not add anything new to the discussion in progress. Also, there are so many brakes in her turn, specially in lines 88-89, which signifies that she is trying to buy time. This further supports our claim that her repetition in line 87 is an attempt to keep the floor.

III. CONCLUSION

From the brief discussion, it is sufficiently proved that, in ordinary Urdu conversation, repetition of prior speaker's turn is used as a strategy to keep the floor where there are more than one possible candidates to take the floor in the next turn. Also, this strategy is used not only to convince other participants that there is something worth saying for which the floor must be given to that person, but also as a time buying strategy. The findings of the study encourage a thorough analysis of repetition in Urdu conversation. Also, as the participants in the analyzed conversations are educated females, it may prove quite interesting if a comparative analysis of conversations by male participants and female participants is done, highlighting the similarities and differences in both, as far as repetition, turn taking, and other closely relevant phenomena are concerned.

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