

Use of Repetition in the ELF Context of Japanese Primary School English Lessons

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This study investigates how repetition is effectively utilized among homeroom teachers (HRTs), assistant language teachers (ALTs), and pupils in English lessons in the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context of a primary school classroom to achieve clear understanding. In the study, conversations among the HRTs, the ALTs and the pupils in English classes were audio-recorded for about 50 hours in total and analyzed based on existing research on analytic approaches to classroom discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Walsh, 2013), conversation (Schegloff, et al., 1977), and classroom-based conversation (Seedhouse, 2004). The results of the current study revealed that repetitions with various functions such as securing the pupils' understanding, encouraging the pupils to answer a question in English, and confirming what the pupils and the ALTs said, are frequently and effectively used in primary English lessons not only by the HRTs and the ALTs but also by the pupils.

本研究は、互いの明白な理解を達成する為に、共通語としての英語（本研究は、互いの明白な理解を達成する為に、英語が共通語（ELF: English as a lingua franca）として使われている小学校の英語の授業の中で、学級担任（HRTs）、外国語指導助手（ALTs）、そして児童の間でいかに繰り返し（repetition）が使用されているかということについて調査している。研究では、学級担任、ALT、児童の英語授業中の会話を合計で約50時間録音し、得られたデータを、教室談話分析（Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Walsh, 2013）、会話分析（Schegloff, et al., 1977）、教室会話分析（Seedhouse, 2004）のアプローチを用い分析した。その結果、繰り返しは学級担任やALTだけでなく児童によっても頻繁に且つ効果的に使用され、児童の理解を深め、英語での回答を促進し、そして児童やALTが言ったこと（あるいはALTの発話）の確認等、様々な機能を持つことが明らかになった。

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The year 2020 marked a significant milestone for primary English education in Japan as English became a formal subject for fifth and sixth graders, and English activities also became compulsory for third and fourth graders in all Japanese public primary schools (MEXT, 2018). As a result, there are now more opportunities for homeroom teachers (HRTs), assistant language teachers (ALTs), and pupils to interact with each other using English; consequently, further investigation on primary English education in Japan will be needed more than ever. Through the observation of English lessons in a Japanese primary school, this study found that repetition was frequently and effectively utilized as a prominent learning tool by HRTs, ALTs, and pupils. Thus, the research question of this study is: what functions of repetition are observed in English lessons in a Japanese primary school where the three parties use English as a lingua franca?

Repetition in Language Classroom Contexts

Repetition, “the act of doing or saying something again” (Cambridge University Press, 2021), is often utilized both by teachers and learners for various purposes in language classrooms. Between teachers and learners in language classrooms, the former utilizes repetition for evaluating learners' answers and modifying learners' speeches; however, the latter uses it for both signaling a lack of competence, showing competence, showing active participation, and negotiating meaning (Duff, 2000; Tsui, 2001). On the other hand, teachers in a team-taught language classroom use repetition to show their mutual involvement, ability as a co-teacher, acknowledgement, and confirmation (Lee, 2016).

For example, Duff (2000) described how repetition was used by teachers in high school EFL immersion classes in Hungary and university foreign language classes (German and Hebrew) in America. In their evaluation of students' comprehension, teachers used repetition in initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) exchange patterns. Duff pointed out repetition is also beneficial for learners to realize a problematic term and acquire new knowledge of the foreign language together with peers; Duff stated that repetition in classrooms is utilized not only for teachers' evaluation of pupils' answers but also for learners' acquiring new knowledge (p. 135).

Similar to Duff (2000), Tsui (2001) examined classroom interaction between native English teachers (NSs) and non-native English students (NNSs). The study showed that teachers use repetition to make their speech comprehensible to students (p. 131), whereas when NNS students cannot understand what NS teachers say, the students try to negotiate meaning by repetition. In Tsui's study, both teachers and students used repetition in classrooms as a way to build mutual understanding.

In addition to the studies by Duff (2000) and Tsui (2001), Lee (2016) also investigated interactions in a team-taught language classroom at a Korean primary school, with a focus on the use of repetition between teachers. Lee found that repetition was used by both the lead teacher who was the English-speaking teacher (ET) and the co-teacher who was the Korean-speaking teacher (KT). This allows

the KT to show his/her involvement and ability as a co-expert who “shares immediate access to the correct response” (p. 3-11) with the lead teacher, for the ET to show his/her acknowledgement, and for both KTs and ETs to indicate confirmation.

In all the studies, repetition was investigated in an EFL/ESL classroom context. However, repetition has also been investigated in the English as a lingua franca (ELF) context. In the current study, ELF interactions among the three parties both inside and outside of the classroom are examined. Therefore, the next section will examine repetition in academic ELF contexts.

Repetition in Academic ELF Contexts

Compared with repetition in EFL/ESL classrooms, repetition in academic ELF interactions is utilized to show explicitness (Björkman, 2014; Kaur, 2012), confirm understanding (Björkman, 2011; 2014; Kaur, 2012), achieve mutual understanding to avoid communication breakdowns (Kaur, 2009; 2012), and adjust to linguistic diversity among speakers (Cogo, 2007). Although these studies occurred in different educational contexts, they demonstrate that ELF academic interactions place more importance on maintaining participants' shared understanding regardless of their positions to one another as teachers or students.

In the present study, English is utilized by all the participants, the ALTs, the HRTs, and the primary school pupils. Interactions occur in an ELF context where both speakers of various backgrounds and English proficiency communicate with each other using ELF as well as Japanese as a lingua franca (JLF). Therefore, I will utilize the concept and understanding of repetition found in ELF contexts as well as those found in EFL/ESL classroom contexts in the data analysis of this study. Because English is used as a lingua franca (ELF) among the three types of participants, the study will also investigate the primary English classroom contexts from an ELF perspective.

Methods and Data

This study is a part of a large-scale longitudinal research project (Shino, 2020) on interaction between HRTs, ALTs, and pupils at a primary school in Japan. I observed English classes from 2009 to 2013 in a primary school in Eastern Japan. I was allowed by the Board of Education to observe and record English lessons in S Primary School under condition of participant anonymity. I was both a participant observer and a teaching assistant who taught English with the ALTs and HRTs for grades 1 through 6. All speech by the HRTs, ALTs, and pupils in the English classes was

audio-recorded, and transcribed.

The recorded data were analyzed for prominent interactional features with a particular focus on how repetition was used among the HRTs, the ALTs, and the pupils. For this analysis, analytic approaches to classroom discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Walsh, 2013), conversation (Schegloff, et al., 1977), and classroom-based conversation (Seedhouse, 2004) were utilized. Classroom discourse analysis is helpful to explore language functions and communication systems in classrooms. Conversation analysis is useful to investigate what and how speakers respond to what has been said by interlocutors in natural conversation. Using these analytic approaches, the next section will present the repetition observed in the data.

Results and Discussion

In the present study, repetition was often used and found to play an important role in classroom interaction serving several functions such as securing the pupils' understanding, encouraging the pupils to answer questions, and confirming what the pupils said. Each function will be discussed in order below.

Repetition for Securing Understanding by the ALTs

Repetition is frequently utilized during English lessons in the primary school class to secure the pupils' clear understanding by the ALTs, as seen in Extract 1. Here, the ALT (A1) conducts a direction activity and asks the pupils in the sixth grade class to guide Ken - one of the characters in a textbook - to the park using English. In this study, two different ALTs (A1 and A3) and three different HRTs (H3, H7, and H8) will appear in each extract hereafter. In addition, all names used are pseudonyms.

[Extract 1] Repetition for securing understanding by the ALT

- 1 →A1: Now, I don't know I don't know. Help me help me. Umm, I am Ken. I am
 2 → Ken. Where is the park? Where is the park? With Ken. Everyone look in a
 3 → book. So Ken goes to the park. Please tell me tell me.
 4 H8: 教えてって。ダニエル先生がKenだと思って教えてあげて
 (*Daniel asks you [the way to the park]. Assume that Daniel-sensei is Ken, and tell him the way.*)

(Extract from Interaction 6)

In this extract, the ALT uses repetition to achieve the pupils' clear understanding (Kaur, 2012; Tsui, 2001) by repeating 'I don't know', 'help me', 'I am Ken' in line 1, 'Where is the park?' in line 2, and 'tell me' in line 3. The use of repetition by the ALT tries to ensure the HRT's clear understanding which would also enhance the pupils' understanding. In response to the ALT's repetition, in line 4, the HRT also explains to the pupils in simple Japanese what the ALT has said in English.

According to Kaur (2012), self-repetition plays a significant role in ELF conversations to "enhance the clarity of expression" (p. 593) and achieve recipients' understanding. In this way, its use could pre-empt "understanding problems from the outset" (p. 598). Kaur points out that self-repetition in academic ELF interactions leads to "clearer, more explicit talk in ELF and, in so doing, may facilitate the recipient's understanding of it" (Kaur, 2012, p. 600, see also Kaur, 2009), which could be applicable to the use of repetition by the ALT in Extract 1.

Repetition for Encouraging the Pupils to Answer by the ALT and the HRT

Repetition for encouragement is also used when the teachers encourage the same sixth grade pupils to speak out in English in class. Extract 2 is a situation where the ALT (A1) asks the pupils where the school is.

[Extract 2] Repetition for Encouragement by the ALT and the HRT

- 1 A1: Where is the school?
 - 2 →H7: 英語で英語で、行けるぜ (*In English in English. You can do it.*)
 - 3 →A1: Come on! Come on!
- (Extract from Interaction 10)

Here, the HRT in line 2 first repeats the phrase in Japanese '英語で (in English)' twice to encourage the pupils to answer in English. The ALT then also encourages them to answer the question in English, stating 'Come on! Come on!' in line 3. Thus, both the HRT and the ALT collaborate in encouraging the pupils to answer in English, using both Japanese and English respectively.

Repetition for encouragement is also conducted by way of praising pupils in order to increase their motivation. Extracts 3 is a situation where the ALT (A1) praises the sixth-grade pupils because they can do the activity of direction-giving correctly using English during the same class as shown in Extract 1.

[Extract 3] Repetition for Encouragement by the ALT's Praising

- 1 A1: What is it?
- 2 Ps: School.
- 3 →A1: Very good. You guys you guys are perfect. You got it! You got it!
- 4 → Very nice very good cool.
- 5 ((The ALT claps his hands while saying 'Very nice very good cool' and starts another direction activity.))

(Extract from Interaction 6)

In Extract 3, the ALT repetitively praises pupils to encourage them to try another direction activity. Here, the effectiveness of the encouragement is increased by the repetition of the praise words 'very good!' and 'You got it!' twice in lines 3 and 4. The ALT also repeats 'you guys' twice in line 3 to emphasize who are perfect (see Björkman, 2011 for the use of repetition for the sake of emphasis).

Oxford and Shearin (1994) regard praising as "teacher-provided rewards" (p. 20) to raise learners' motivation and further point out that teachers use praising as a strategy to decrease language learner anxiety, which could be applicable to the situation in Extract 3. By listening to words of praise, pupils may be encouraged and motivated. As a result, their anxiety level might decrease.

Repetition for Confirmation

In this section, I will explain the use of repetition for confirmation, which is used when the ALT (A3) confirms what a pupil said. Extract 4 depicts a situation where the ALT asks the pupils in the second grade how many points they got in a game activity. There are three pupils from the second grade (P2-3, P2-4, and P2-6) taking part in the dialogue.

[Extract 4]

((The ALT, A3, asks how many points each group got in a game activity in order from Groups 1 to 4))

- 1 A3: はいNo. 5 (*[How many points did you get,] Group No.5?*)
- 2 P2-3: Eighteen
- 3 →A3: Eighteen
- 4 Ps: えー! (*What!*)
((Other pupils seem to be surprised with the high score of Group No. 5))
- 5 A3: はいNo. 6 (*How about you, Group No. 6?*)
- 6 P2-6: Fourteen

- 7 →A3: Fourteen. はいChampion No. 5! (Fourteen. Well, Group No. 5 is a champion!)
- 8 H3: 拍手! (Let's clap your hands!)
- 9 ((Everyone in the classroom claps his/her hands.))
- 10 A3: Very good
- 11 P2-3: え?(Huh?)
- 12 P2-4: え?五班ってこと?(Huh? Does it mean that Group No. 5 is a winner?)
- 13 →H3: そう五班だよ (Yes, Group No. 5 won.)
- 14 A3: うんgood (Group No. 5 got) eighteen yes. (Yes, good. Group No. 5 got eighteen points, yes)
- 15 A3: Yes はい, 机をお願いします (Now, please put your desks back where they were.)
- 16 →Some Ps: 机をお願いします (Please put your desks back where they were.)
- (Extract from Interaction 32)

Here in line 1, the ALT asks the Group 5 members how many points they got in the game activity by stating only 'はい No. 5 (Group No.5?)', but omitting stating explicitly 'How many points did you get' to make his request simple for the 2nd graders, who are not used to listening and answering English yet. P2-3 in line 2 answers by saying 'Eighteen', which is repeated by the ALT in line 3 'Eighteen' as a confirmation (Lee, 2016). Other pupils are surprised with the high score of Group No. 5, stating 'えー! (What!)' in line 4. The ALT in line 5 continues asking the Group 6 members how many points they got by saying 'はいNo. 6 (How about you, Group No. 6?)'. One of the pupils (P2-6) in the group answers 'Fourteen' in line 6, which is also repeated by the ALT to confirm what P2-6 said, stating 'Fourteen', followed by 'はいChampion No. 5! (Well, Group No. 5 is a champion!)' in line 7. The HRT in line 8 tells the pupils to clap their hands to admire Group 5. Everyone in the classroom claps his/her hands in line 9, however, P2-3 and P2-4 did not understand which group has won the game activity, saying 'え?(Huh?)' in line 11 and 'え?五班ってこと?(Huh? Does it mean that Group No. 5 is a winner?)' in line 12.

In response to these questions, the HRT in line 13 confirms what they said by stating 'そう五班だよ (Yes, Group No. 5 won.)' in Japanese by partially repeating the word '五班 (Group No. 5)', which was uttered by P2-3 and P2-4. The ALT in line 14 also confirms what P2-3 and P2-4 said, stating 'うんgood (group No. 5 got) eighteen yes. (Yes, good. Group No. 5 got eighteen points, yes)', partially using a Japanese casual confirmation 'うん (Yes)' at the beginning of the

utterance, which seems to show his solidarity to the pupils (Cogo, 2007). After that, the ALT in line 15 asks the pupils in Japanese to put their desks back, which is repeated by some pupils in line 16 '机をお願いします (Please put your desks back where they were.)' to confirm what the ALT said and tell other pupils. Repetition for confirmation as operationalized by Lee (2016) of what interlocutors said by the ALT in lines 3 and 7, the HRT in line 13, and the pupils in line 16 has been observed both in English and Japanese.

This type of repetition is especially important for Japanese children in second grade and below because they are not yet accustomed to using English; they have English lessons only once or twice a month. Additionally, learners need to listen to and understand what the ALT said as well as speak English during lessons (Izumi, 2017). Therefore, confirmation of what the pupils said by the ALT and the HRT gives the pupils a sense of security and accomplishment on learning and using English because they feel they are able to answer the question in English and understand what the ALT said (Mitsugi, 2018; Walqui & van Lier, 2010). Thus, repetition in the study is utilized by the ALT to secure the pupils' and the HRT's understanding, by the ALT and the HRT to encourage pupils to answer, and by other parties to confirm what the pupils or ALT said.

Conclusion

This study has found that repetition is frequently and effectively used for various functions in primary school English classes in the ELF educational contexts, such as securing the pupils' understanding, encouraging the pupils to answer, and confirming what the pupils and the ALTs said, not only by the ALTs and the HRTs but also by the pupils. The use of these types of repetition is important in English lessons because it leads to the pupils' clear understanding and positive attitude toward using English (Kaur, 2012; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). Also, the ALTs in the study were observed to use not only repetition in English, but also in Japanese to confirm what the pupils said and to ask a favor from them, showing their solidarity with the pupils (Carless, 2006; Cogo, 2007). On the other hand, the HRT in this study also used repetition in Japanese to encourage the pupils to speak English and confirm what the pupils said (Björkman, 2011). That is, the ALTs and the HRTs collaboratively try to conduct smooth team teaching with the use of repetition, utilizing the linguistic resources available (Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 2003) of Japanese and English as well as non-linguistic resources such as clapping hands in order to promote the interlocutors' clear understanding and maintain good relationships among them in an ELF

context. These efforts by all three parties seem to have led to effective language teaching and learning in English lessons at the primary level. That is, utilizing techniques such as using repetition and both languages could allow the participants with diverse linguistic backgrounds and repertoires to form a successful language learning community. As one of the limitations, it is difficult to generalize the findings of the current study to other contexts since the data were collected from one primary school. However, the results might be helpful in that HRTs and ALTs in Japan can learn more about what teachers in a similar context do to conduct more effective team-taught English lessons in primary schools.

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