

## Repetitions in Turkish: Talk among Friends

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**Key words:**  
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**Abstract:** Repetitions are resources for maintaining intersubjectivity and collaborative meaning-making in talk. The aim of this study was to investigate repetitions in more detail in terms of types of repetitions (self–other) to determine the functions of repetitions in conversations involving friends speaking in Turkish. After a comparison with another collection of conversations among family members, it was proposed that the use and functions of repetitions in conversations were influenced and modified by the quality and type of relationship among the participants.

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## 1. Introduction

Participants in a conversation take turns while producing their utterance. A turn is a linguistic device involved when speakers change in a conversation, based on turn-taking organization (SACKS, SCHEGLOFF & JEFFERSON, 1974).

Repetitions in a conversation are partial or exact repeats of prior turns.

Participants may reproduce their own turn constructional units (TCUs), which are linguistic units as well as others', as displayed below. The excerpt below begins with a repair initiation on the first line. Repair is a mechanism by which participants deal with problems in speaking, listening, or understanding in their or others' turns (SCHEGLOFF, JEFFERSON & SACKS, 1977). [1]

In the excerpt below, E2 launches a repair initiation by using "şey," a filler in Turkish, which indicates that the trouble for E2 in this case is to come up with the correct word for the tribe. E2's repair initiation, which is the search for a name of the tribe, is completed in the same turn. The repair solution is repeated by E1 in the next turn as a display of acknowledgment. In the third turn, repetition of the name of the tribe in the prior turn is produced again to achieve emphasis.

1. E2: şey (.) kavmi neydi: lut kavmi  
ehm(.) what was the tribe Lut tribe
2. E1: lut ←  
Lut
3. E2: lut ←  
Lut

Excerpt 1 [V3] [2]

As presented in the excerpt above, repetitions are used by the participants as interactional tools for maintaining mutual understandings (SCHEGLOFF, 1996), collaborative meaning-making in talk, and displaying interpersonal involvement (TANNEN, 1989). What has been just said in an ongoing conversation might get repeated by the same speaker who has just spoken or by the recipient of that turn to achieve different interactional purposes (SCHEGLOFF, 1996 ). [3]

Types and functions of repetitions in conversational interactions have been evaluated in several languages (NORRICK, 1987; RIEGER, 2003; SVENNEVIG, 2004; FUJIMURA-WILSON, 2007; HUANG, 2010). [4]

This study focuses on types and functions of immediate repetitions in Turkish conversations, which are repeats made as sequentially relevant moves (TANNEN, 1989), with the aim of contributing to previous research on the use of repetitions in daily talk. [5]

### 1.1 Previous studies on types and functions of repetitions in conversations

Repetitions are carried out by the same speaker (same turn and/or third position) or by the recipient in the next turn (SCHEGLOFF, 1996). There are two types of repetitions depending on who makes the repeat (JOHNSTONE, 1994): self-repetition and other-repetition. [6]

Self-repetitions are involved in self-repair organization (SCHEGLOFF et al., 1977; FOX, HAYASHI & JASPERSON, 1996; RIEGER, 2003; CURL, 2005; FOX, MASCHLER & UHMANN, 2010) and they function as interactional tools for gaining time to plan an utterance, holding or regaining the floor, emphasizing an utterance, or displaying an understanding of the prior sequence (NORRICK, 1987; TANNEN, 1989; CURL, LOCAL & WALKER, 2006; BADA, 2010). [7]

Other-repetitions are also involved in repair organizations to display what is taken to be problematic in the previous turn and to request further explanation or confirmation (SCHEGLOFF et al., 1977; CURL, 2005; ROBINSON & KEVOE-FELDMAN, 2010). These types of repetitions are also used to display listenership, acknowledgment, agreement/disagreement, appreciation, surprise, and humor (JEFFERSON, 1972, 1985; POMERANTZ, 2006 [1984]; TANNEN, 1989; SCHEGLOFF, 1996; PERRIN, DESHAIES & PARADIS, 2003; SVENNEVIG, 2004). [8]

In both self- and other-repetitions, a previous turn might be repeated word for word as exact repetitions (TANNEN, 1989) or partially as transformations (SCHEGLOFF, 1996) and paraphrases (TANNEN, 1989). In this study, regardless of the extent of what was repeated, all of these types of repeats have been included in analysis to explicate possible variations of use. [9]

Several functions of exact and non-exact repetitions have been reported, such as displaying acknowledgment of listenership and authorship, agreement/disagreement, launching repair, information receipt and humor (JEFFERSON, 1972, 1985; POMERANTZ, 2006 [1984]; TANNEN, 1989; SCHEGLOFF, 1996). [10]

RIEGER (2003) compares repetitions in German and English as self-repair operations. She claims that structural differences in these languages are related to differences in the use of repetitions in self-repair organizations. Self-repair with repeats in this study were aimed to allow "the speaker to gain time without losing the floor while searching for a word or construction" (p.66). [11]

FUJIMURA-WILSON's (2007) study focuses on exact repetitions, and demonstrates variability between languages regarding repetitions. Speakers of different languages (Japanese and English in this case) differ in their preferences with respect to producing self- versus other-repetitions, and produce these repetitions to achieve different interactional purposes. FUJIMURA-WILSON indicates that self-repetitions are more frequent in English, whereas in Japanese other-repetitions are more frequent. Japanese other-exact repetitions are more frequent than self-repetitions. FUJIMURA-WILSON concludes that Japanese exact repetitions are mostly "... used for collaborative purposes such as showing agreement, empathy and providing confirmation" (p.326). English exact repetitions are made mostly by the same speaker "... for making a point in conversation but also for hesitation and to create time to think" (p.330). [12]

TEKDEMIR (2007) reported that the use of repetitions in daily conversations were more frequent among friends compared to conversations among family members, colleagues, and strangers. Conversations among family members and friends are based on past conversations. The two contexts are similar in terms of sharing a history of previous conversations; however, the relationships in these contexts differ in terms of durability and proneness to change. Talk among family members reflects particular roles and bonds, which determine opportunities for turn-taking and thereby whose turn gets recognized by whom and when (PONTECORVO & FASULO, 1999). The attempts to gain the floor are acknowledged and allowed by participants who have roles which position them in the higher ranks in the hierarchy of the family structure (TEKDEMIR, 2007). For example, in the institution of the family, the father and mother are privileged in terms of right to talk. [13]

GUROGLU, VAN LIESHOUT, HASELAGER and SCHOLTE (2007) define friendship as "... a relationship based on reciprocity of attraction, companionship, support, and involving compatible behavior or interaction profiles" (p.357).

Friendship requires a sensitivity regarding expression of involvement in talk through monitoring relevance of subsequent actions in sequential instances. [14]

In order to determine whether the nature of the relationship among participants is relevant for use of repetitions, in this study a comparison of cases of repeats was carried out in two contexts: friends' and family members' daily conversations. Family conversations were chosen for comparison based on the rationale that the relationships among family members is similar, though not identical, to friendships in terms of sharing a common past of conversations and familiarity. [15]

## 2. Methods

The data consist of ten recorded conversations among friends; 262 cases of repetitions were included in the collection for analysis. For comparison, 287 cases of repetitions out of nine conversations among family members were selected from a previous study (TEKDEMİR, 2007). All of the conversations included in this analysis were recorded by undergraduate students while they were with their friends or at home with their families, for extra credit in a course taught by the author. The cases consisted of a number of sequences which included repetition. For the self-repetitions, the cases consisted of repetitions which were used to modify the construction of the turn in terms of the action component it aimed to achieve. [16]

The conversation analysis method (HUTCHBY & WOOFFITT, 2008) was adopted to examine the data in terms of interactional characteristics, relevance and position in turn-taking, and sequential organization of conversations. Conversation analysis focuses on naturally occurring conversations to explicate the orderliness in talk-in-interaction (DREW, 1995). The aim in this type of analysis is to reveal participants' interactional use of social and linguistic resources to demonstrate particular actions (SCHEGLOFF, KOSHIK, JACOBY & OLSHER, 2002). [17]

The recordings of friends' conversations were made by undergraduate students for extra credit for a course, and the data for family conversations were recorded and transcribed in a previous study. The participants in the friends' conversations were all university students. The students' made the recordings in dormitory rooms (3), in students' apartments (3) and in a café (1). For the last three recordings, the place was not specified. The recordings of family conversations were made by a family member who was an undergraduate student at the time for extra credit in a course. All recordings were made in the families' apartments. All conversations consisted of mother, father, and children, except for three of nine conversations in which the participants were a grandmother and granddaughter in one of the conversations, a husband and a wife in another, and brothers in another. None of the recordings were selected according to a prior hypothesis or particular criteria in relation to conversation analytic research; however, the small number of recordings included in this study were due to time limitations. The recorded data were transcribed according to JEFFERSON's (2004) transcription system (see [Appendix](#)). The recordings were made explicitly,

after the aim of the study was explained and signed consents of the participants were collected. Pseudonyms were used in the excerpts, and translations in English were provided for each turn in the excerpts below. [18]

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Comparison of repeats in both contexts

When occurrences of repetitions are compared in friend and family contexts in terms of self-repetitions, friends show a tendency to repeat their own words more frequently to fix a problem in their turn and initiate repair (see Table 2). [19]

Family members, however, tend to use self-repetitions more frequently for emphasizing some piece of their turn. Within family units, taking turns is quite structured according to the roles defined by family organization (PONTECORVO & FASULO, 1999; TEKDEMİR, 2007). Using emphasis as a modification to increase one's words salience in such a structure by repetition might be imposed by this somewhat predetermined system of turn-allocations (see Excerpt 1). Family members attempt to emphasize their words by repeating; thereby marking what it is that the next speaker must attend to. However, this claim necessitates an evaluation in another study by focusing on the sequential properties of repeats of emphasis. [20]

The excerpt below is taken from a conversation among family members while they were watching television. After a lapse of eight seconds, a sequence begins with a question in which the daughter queries whether the insurance covers costs of eye glasses. The father responds to his daughter with an expanded turn in which he utilizes repeats to emphasize that the insurance does cover the cost, I since it is her right.

1. Daughter: *Alabilir miyim?*

Can I get it?

2. Father: ***Tabi** alırsın kızım? (1.6) şimdiye kadar geç kaldın bile,*

Of course you can my daughter (1.6) you have waited too long

*A::lırsın ta:bi(.) Senin hakkın ya:: iki senede bir,*

You can of course(.) It's your right yeah once in two years,

Excerpt 2 [G1] [21]

Another strategy used more frequently in family settings to ensure one's place in the turn-taking organization is to use repeats to regain the conversational floor as in Excerpt 3. This is taken from a conversation among a father, mother, and their daughter. In this instance, the father was accusing some people (probably the Western media in this case) of overreacting to the murder of a priest in Turkey while comparing it to what was happening in Iraq. In Line 3, the mother attempts

to provide some information which would support the criticism; however, the father interrupts her to offer a completion of the mother's turn. In order to regain the floor due to interruption by the father and gain the right to complete her turn, the mother repeats her previous turn almost completely.

1. *Father:* *bi tane (.) papaz öldü de aya:: kaktılar Ğ*  
one priest died, it was then they reacted
2. *Daughter:* *E:vet,*  
Yes
3. *Mother:* *>ONU DA ONU DA< belki [diyolar*  
> *>Him also him also<maybe they say*
4. *Father:* *[be::iki onlar öldürdü; =*  
[maybe they killed (him)]
5. *Daughter:* *=PROVOKASYON CANIM O za:ten*  
= It is a provocation for sure
6. *Mother:* *>ONU DA ONU DA< belki kendileri yaptı diyolar Ğ*  
>him also him also< maybe it was them who did it they say

#### Excerpt 3 [E] [22]

In terms of other repeats (Table 3), friends frequently tended to use repeats to display listenership by acknowledging and giving the information that they heard and received what was said, as exemplified in Excerpt 4 below. Friends prefer to position themselves as listeners actively by repetitions, thereby acknowledging others' authorship (JEFFERSON, 1972). By doing so, they reinstate the harmony of the interaction. [23]

Excerpt 4 is taken from a sequence in which Nihal and Aylin have been talking about school work, and they collaborate in producing a sort of list of what to do in several turns. In this excerpt, Nihal attempted several repair initiations via partial repetitions in order to remember what the homework was. Finally, she ended up asking Aylin; however, Aylin's response in Line 2 was not an answer to that. Yet, Nihal preferred to express that she heard and accepted that information by repeating partially, while dispensing with "benim" (I) which semantically rendered the previous answer irrelevant (SCHEGLOFF, 2004).

1. *Nihal:* *hm ÖDevden va::zgeçtik (.) <şim- bizim>(.) beğji::im yapmağım =*  
 Hm we left this homework aside (.)<no(w)- our>(.) I must  
  
 = *ge:reken bi öde::v (1.6) .hh yapmam gereken bi öde::v (.) NE VA::RH ?*  
 do another homework (1.6) .hh Another homework I must do (.) WHAT IS IT?
2. *Aylin:* *benim kriminal var o::uv ü::fuf =*  
 I have one for criminal (Name of the course) o::uv ü::fuf
3. *Nihal:* *= hah kriminal va::rhh başka bizim bişey yok*  
 = yeah there is one for criminal else we have none

#### Excerpt 4 [NK] [24]

In this study joke sequences were more frequently initiated and carried out through repetitions by multiple speakers and through multiple turns with accompanying laughter among friends compared to those among family members. Friends in this data mostly launched joke sequences by repeating other people's words or phrases. By repeating particular pieces of the turn with accompanying laughter, they specifically reveal what they find odd and/or funny within the previous turn and share that with the other people present. In excerpt 5 below, Mine has been describing the tasks given to her boyfriend as a job applicant, one of which was milking a cow. Tülin and Ceyda start a joke sequence on that. JEFFERSON (1987) calls such episodes "laughter token repeats" (p.299) which demonstrate "... appreciation and enjoyment ..." (p.300).

1. *Mine:* *İNEK sa::ğmak,*  
 [milking a cow,
2. *Tülin:* *İNE(h)K SA::(h)Ğ-*  
 Mi(h)lk- a Co(h)w
3. *Ceyda:* *İNE(h)Ğİ [ne::(h)rde(h)n bul- hahaha*  
 Whe(h)re will you fin- a CO(h)W ha ha ha
4. *Tülin:* *[ne::(h)rden bu(h)İcan (.) ŞEHrin [qöbeğinde::*  
 [Whe::(h)re will you find (it) In the[ middle of the City
5. *Mine:* *[dur işte*  
 [hold it

#### Excerpt 5 [SÖ-R31] [25]

Jokes have been defined as "a very common feature of social relations ..." by PERINBANAYAGAM (1991, p.128). According to PERINBANAYAGAM , "it



appears that, either by joking or avoiding joking between two sets of others, an articulator is defining differences between relationships—one of affeference, the other of deference ..." (p.129). The cases where repeats were accompanied by laughter among friends were co-produced over several turns by multiple speakers signaling deference toward the other, as PERINBANAYAGAM suggests. [26]

As NORRICK (1987) indicates, "repeats in answers show close attention to what others are saying, and so signal interest or deference" (p.250). In most of the question-answer pairs in the family conversations in this study, the answers consisted of words, phrases, and even sentences presented in the questions. Also, family members tended to use repeats while responding to a question to show their attentiveness. The repeats in answers were both used in responding to tag questions demanding a confirmation and questions of informative feedback.

- 1- Mother: *şu domatesleri yer misin, =←*  
Will you eat those tomatoes
- 2- Father: *=sen pasaportu mu soruyodun?*  
You were asking about the passports
- 3- Daughter: *evet. (.) [domatesleri yerim biraz sonra, ←*  
Yes.(.) [I will eat the tomatoes in a little while,
- 4- Father: *[öğrendin mi pata-pasaportu ?*  
[have you found out about the passports ?

Excerpt 6 [GŞ1] [27]

In Excerpt 6, the daughter's response includes repeated parts from her mother's question in Line 1. Although a first pair part of an adjacency pair, which was a question in this case, requires and makes a second pair part relevant (SCHEGLOFF, 2007), the father does not leave enough time for the answer to be provided. His turn is another first pair part, which leads to almost two parallel sequences which position the daughter as the addressee. It appears that this variation in terms of assuming rights within the turn-taking organization as a participant might be related to the definitions of rights and responsibilities defined by positions in the family structure.

- 1- Gül: *niye siz süreklili mevlit yapıyorsunuz? =*  
Why do you keep holding prayer meetings? =
- 2- Bahar: *=biz sü::rekli mevlit yapmıyoruz? ( ) ←*  
We don't keep holding prayer meetings

Excerpt 7 [M5] [28]

Excerpt 7 is taken from a conversation among a mother and her two daughters, Gül and Bahar. Bahar treats Gül's question as negative criticism and in order to display her disagreement, she produces a refusal with repeats. Bahar's response



aims to achieve more than just an answer, and in this case she utilizes repeating as a way to do that. [29]

Expressing agreement and disagreement/rejection via repeats did not differ with respect to frequencies in friends and family contexts (see Table 3). However, in both settings, the participants showed a tendency to produce repeats to express affirmation and agreement more than disagreement and rejection in line with previous studies (POMERANTZ, 2006 [1984]; SACKS, 2006).

Excerpt 8 [AG] (download this excerpt [here](#)) [30]

This sequence in the excerpt is launched when Dilek starts a discussion about the cartoons in fanzines with a question regarding whether it is read or interpreted. In Lines 4 and 5, Dilek and Selin respectively challenge Melek's claim by formulating their disagreements by partially repeating Melek's claim. Dilek's use of "ama" (but) signals that a counter claim will be produced next. Selin's use of "de" after the repeat serves the same interactional goal. These grammatical units render the upcoming challenge less confrontational and less face threatening for the challenged speaker, Melek in this case. HUTCHBY (2001, p.128) calls this fact a "you say x but what about y" device. He suggests that this device "... enable[s] speakers to be hearably argumentative, not by attempting a general definition of argument sequences ..." (p.128). In this excerpt, however, the disagreement as to whether the cartoons are read ("okunuyo mu") continues, and is expressed by Selin in Line 8 and by Dilek's agreeing repeat in Line 9. In these turns, both speakers tend to soften their disagreements by using "bence" (I think), rendering their claims as personal suggestions rather than as open refutation. [31]

### 3.2 Functions of repetitions in friends' and family talk

The results revealed that repeats were mostly partial, and participants in both contexts of family talk and friends' talk tended to repeat the previous speaker's utterances (Table 1). In both contexts, participants utilized repetitions to enhance and maintain involvement as recipients, rather than as speakers, mostly working on their own words.

|                          | Friends | Family Members |
|--------------------------|---------|----------------|
| <b>Self-Repetitions</b>  | 101     | 101            |
| <b>Other-Repetitions</b> | 161     | 186            |

Table 1: Frequency of types of repeats in conversations among friends versus family members [32]

Self-repetitions, however, are produced in both contexts, yet with some variations (Table 2). Speakers recycled their own words to initiate repair, to achieve

emphasizing, to regain the right to speak, and less frequently to correct their own words and to indicate what's odd and/or humorous in their turns.

| <b>Functions of Self-Repetitions</b> | <b>Friends</b> | <b>Family Members</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Repair initiations                   | 47 (46%)       | 38 (38%)              |
| Emphasis                             | 38 (38%)       | 46 (45%)              |
| Conversational floor management      | 10 (10%)       | 14 (14%)              |
| Jokes/humor                          | 4 (4%)         | 2 (2%)                |
| Correction                           | 2 (2%)         | 1 (1%)                |
| Total                                | 101 (100%)     | 101 (100%)            |

Table 2: Functions of self-repetitions in conversations among friends versus family members [33]

The interactional aims presented by the speakers in both contexts through using other-repetitions were attacking what was problematic in the previous turn, which is launching repair, displaying listenership, agreement/disagreement, and rejection and initiating and/or contributing to joke sequences. Another frequent use of repeats was in terms of question/answer sequences, which have been called adjacency pairs (SACKS et al., 1974). Participants preferred to answer by reproducing some or all parts of question(s) (Table 3).

| <b>Functions of Other-Repetitions</b> | <b>Friends</b> | <b>Family Members</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Repair initiations                    | 16 (10%)       | 27 (15%)              |
| Displaying receptiveness              | 28 (17%)       | 12 (6%)               |
| Agreement                             | 37 (23%)       | 44 (24%)              |
| Disagreement/rejection                | 30 (19%)       | 36 (19%)              |
| Joke sequences                        | 19 (12%)       | 8 (4%)                |
| Question-answer pairs                 | 31 (19%)       | 59 (32%)              |
| Total                                 | 161 (100%)     | 186 (100%)            |

Table 3: Functions of other repetitions in conversations among friends versus family members [34]

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study it was observed that for friends repeats are utilized to display other-orientedness and to protect intersubjectivity through displaying acknowledgment, agreement, and attentiveness towards other people's utterances. According to TANNEN (1989), repeating others' turns: 1. accomplishes a conversation, 2. shows one's response to another's utterance, 3. shows acceptance of others' utterances, their participation, and them, and 4. gives evidence of one's own participation (p.52). [35]

The tendency of friends to use other-repetitions in conversations is in line with CINGOZ's (2003) findings regarding conflict in friendships. CINGOZ reports lower levels of conflict among Turkish university students in her comparison of friendships with romantic relationships. She indicates that this could be due to friendships having "more potential for mortality and less structure supporting it" as previous studies revealed (p.99). The present study reveals that friends actively orient toward sustaining a structure in an ongoing interaction by making their role as supporting and accepting recipients evident. [36]

In conversations among family members, turn-allocations are prone to be influenced by the institutional and cultural definitions of inherent roles. Thus,

repeats are predominantly used to enhance one's own stance and involvement in the turn-taking organization through strategies of emphasis and floor management. Another way of displaying one's stance among family members is answering questions with repeats of parts of the prior turn designed as a question. [37]

KEEVALLIK (2010) suggests that using particle or verb repeats in answers to yes/no questions in Estonian achieves different sequential and social purposes. According to KEEVALLIK, the repeats display sequential understanding, perception of need for confirmation, and commitment to the answer. In this study, however, question/answer sequences are not analyzed in detail; future studies might be carried out in order to explore context-specific variations. [38]

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a closer look at the use of repeats in two interactional settings to maintain different types of relationships. It demonstrates that repeats in Turkish are utilized to achieve similar goals in interactions as in other languages. [39]

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## **Appendix: Jeffersonian Transcription System**

1. . , ¿ ? falling and rising in intonation contours
2. [ ] overlapping talk
3. = latching talk
4. (.) micro pause , (0.3) silence in tenths of a second
5. .hh inbreath, hh outbreath, (h) within word laughter
6. ( ) intranscribable talk
7. : stretching of the sound preceding the colon
8. \_\_\_\_\_ underlining that indicate stress or emphasis
9. Capitalized letters in talk indicate raised pitch or volume
10. ° softer talk within degree signs
11. talk between more than or less than symbols indicate compressed or rushed talk

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