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**Learning to repeat to interact: Learner's repetitions in the language acquisition process of adults**

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## INTRODUCTION

Language users regularly take up each other's words. Compare sequence (1) in which three native speakers of English discuss eating customs in Nepal (cf. Schegloff 1987).

(1)  D:    ... ya never have liquor without (1.0) fried meat er
     W:    Fri:ed meat?
     H:    ( hh hh)
     D:    Uh huh.  [F r i e d ]
     W:              [Y'mean j'st gen]eric fried [:d meat?
                                                 [(hh hh)
     D:    (mmhm) usually buff.
     H:    (Oh y') [buff
     W:            [B(h)u:ff? (hh hh) .hh Buff as in 'alow:'?=
     H: ·  =Buff burgers.
     D:    Mmyeh, (.) 's in 'a-low:'.
     W:    ^Really? They eat buffalo? ...

*(Schegloff 1987)*

As can be seen in sequence (1) repetition of the others' words is a procedure used by speakers in order to help the interaction progress and to achieve better understanding (or not; e.g., 'buffalo burgers'). It is at the same time an indicator of problems and a problemsolving device. The use of repetition is considered as a dynamic element in the construction of interaction. In most types of spoken interaction repetition is a procedure frequently used by both interlocutors. As a result there is a great similarity between their contributions to the interaction. A repetition is an efficient and powerful interactional device (cf. Keller-Cohen 1979):

- a repetition is a socially co-operative act in that it signals the interlocutor that the person in question is still participating in the exchange;
- a repetition is informationally relevant: it acknowledges that attention has been paid to the product of the interlocutor;

• finally, a repetition creates the **opportunity for further conversation.**

A repetition is an interactional device by which, at least on the surface, the interlocutors can maintain a smooth consensus. Not surprisingly, repetition behaviour is a powerful instrument for a language learner in the attempt of appropriating the target language. By means of a repetition of utterances used by the native speaker (the NS) the learner can express basic communicative functions. Even with limited linguistic means of the target language at his disposal, he can 'take part' in an interaction. By doing so even in the early stages of the acquisition process, opportunities to learn are created. The learner gets the opportunity to process and to make sense of the input. In order to understand the NS, the learner picks up, repeats relevant parts of the NS utterance and interprets the interactional context. By repeating units, parts of units or blocks of units, the learner also memorises and integrates elements of the other's language, which provides the learner with the means to produce in the target language.

Studies on first language acquisition (cf. Keenan 1977) conducted in the 1960s and 1970s reflected the view that a language does not develop only through repetition. Why children repeat utterances with such frequency is still an open question. Keenan (1977) is of the opinion that repetitive behaviour (used several times with the same meaning as imitative behaviour) is one of the most misunderstood phenomena in psycholinguistics. As Snow (1981) points out, there is a great variety in the definitions of repetition and she also demonstrates that the operationalization of the term may affect the empirical data.

Learner's repetitions have also been studied in second language acquisition processes. Both Keller-Cohen (1979) and Perdue (1985) reported on the important place that repetitions seem to have in the second language acquisition process of both children and adults.

The present study will go into developmental aspects of repetitions in the second language acquisition process of adult immigrants: learners of Dutch. Given their experience with another language, these learners are certainly acquainted with the basic features of communication. The central aim of the present study is to explore the interactional characteristics of repetitions. The question is how adult second language-learners use part of what their NS-interlocutor has said as efficient means to interact. It will concentrate upon how the repetitive procedures are related to the process of learning a new language.

## METHOD

### Informants

The subjects in this study are two Turkish (Ergün and Mahmut) and two Moroccan-Arabic adults (Fatima and Mohamed) who are in the process of acquiring Dutch spontaneously. Data were gathered in the context of an international project of the European Science Foundation, based in Strasbourg. The project was carried out from 1982 to 1987 in Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Sweden. It was directed towards processes of spontaneous, i.e., non-tutored, second language acquisition by adult immigrants in Western Europe, and it had both a cross-linguistic

and longitudinal dimension. The cross-linguistic dimension was expressed in the study of five different target languages (L2) learnt by speakers of six different source languages (L1). The corresponding L1/L2 pairs were combined in the following way:

L2:            Swedish   French   Dutch   German   English
               ∧         ∧        ∧       ∧        ∧
L1:       Finnish   Spanish   Arabic   Turkish   Italian   Punjabi

With respect to the longitudinal dimension, for two-and-a-half years audio/video recordings of two kernel informants per L1/L2 pair were made monthly, leading to a total number of twenty kernel informants. A detailed description of the aims and design of the project is given in Perdue (1984).

When the Turkish and the Moroccan-Arabic learners of Dutch started to participate in our study, they had been living in the Netherlands for about 10 months. Their ages ranged from 17 to 25. None had a Dutch speaking spouse or children of school age. They had received little education in Turkey or Morocco. At the start of the project, their language proficiency in Dutch was very low. During their participation in the project they learnt Dutch as a second language without formal tuition. Basic sociobiographical characteristics of the informants are given in Table 1 (see Broeder 1991: 14-17 for their detailed profiles).

## Language Activity

The language activity is a semi-authentic roleplay with the personnel manager of a bakery. The role of the manager in all three sessions was played by a member of the research group. The informants were asked to take the role of job applicant. They were instructed in their first language to ask about the kind of work, starting time, wages, holidays, transportation to work, health insurance, clothing, etc. The roleplay was videorecorded in a studio. The length of the roleplays ($N$total≈12) varied from 15 to 30 minutes. It was repeated three times; approximately 1, 2, and 3 years after their arrival in the Netherlands.

## Procedure

As a starting point utterances produced by the learners were identified on the basis of structural similarity with the preceding utterance of the TLS, an utterance being defined as an oral verbal act of communication uninterrupted by a silence filled by the interlocutor. Developing the work done by Vion & Mittner (1986) on the use of repetitions by Arabic and Spanish learners of French, the following three types of learner repetitions were distinguished:

### Simple repetitions:

part(s) of the preceding NS utterance is (are) re-used without any structural additions (prosodic changes might occur). An example of a simple repetition is given in sequence (2):

(2)   NS    nee u krijgt vierentwintig dagen vakantie   no you get twenty four
                                                        holidays
      MO    vierentwintig                              twenty four
      NS    ja                                         yes
      MO    een maand kan niet?                        one month is not
                                                        possible?
      NS    uh v/ bijna vijf weken                     er f/ almost five weeks
      MO    vijf weken                                 five weeks
      NS    vijf weken en u kan vier dagen             five weeks and you can
                                                        get four days
      MO    vier dagen        .                        four days
      NS    erbij krijgen. dus totaal bijna zes weken  extra. so a total of
                                                        almost six weeks
                              .
      MO    zes weken                                  six weeks
      NS    als u naar Turkije gaat                    when you go to Turkey
      MO    zes weken?                                 six weeks?
      (session 1)

## Modalised repetitions:

part(s) of the preceding NS utterance is (are) re-used and a modalising particles/ad-
verbs (*ja*, 'yes', *nee*, 'no', *niet*, 'not') are added. An example of a modalised repetition
is given in sequence (3):

(3)   NS    't begin uh 't begint om half acht        it begin er it begins at
                                                        half past seven
      ED    half acht ja                               half past seven yes
      (session 1)

## Elaborated repetitions:

part(s) of the preceding NS utterance is (are) re-used and the learner introduces some
change, be it reference shift or some kind of incorporation of the relevant parts into
a new structure. An example of an elaborated repetition is given in sequence (4):

(4)   NS    in Marokko heeft u daar ook al gewerkt?    in Morocco did you work
                                                        there too?
      FC    ja van Marokko ik werk van Nederland       yes of Morocco I work of
            nee                                         the Netherlands no
      (session 3)

It should be kept in mind that these three structural types of repetition do not
correspond to specific fixed functions. Previous studies (e.g., Broeder & Vasseur
1988) suggest that a classification of repetitions strictly based on formal charac-
teristics provides too little insight into what the learner does with repetition. How-
ever, a functional classification is also complicated by the inherent multifunctionality
of repetition. One type of repetition can be used with several functions and vice versa,

acting at one or more levels of the interaction (i.e., the local or discourse level). The function of a repetition may be deduced from the interactional context; e.g., from the propositional content, from prosodic features (i.e., rising intonation for a question), or from the response of the NS. We can only assume that, in the latter case, the NS has made a correct interpretation of the learner's intention, or that the learner's intention will gradually become clear to the NS.

In the present study an analysis was made of the use and development of repetitions in the process of acquiring the target language for each of the four informants. The 'repetition-profile' for each informant will be based on both formal/structural and functional characteristics of the repetitions. First, we present a global picture of the use of repetitions, i.e., the absolute number of repetitions used and the relative number of repetitions consisting of the number of repetitions expressed as a percentage of those NS-utterances which when repeated have a lexical semantic load (all 'aha', 'uhm', 'yes', 'no', etc. produced by the NS are discounted). Next, it will be shown to what effect each informant used the repetitions and how the varied uses of the procedures progress over time.

## THE MOROCCAN-ARABIC LEARNERS OF DUTCH

### Fatima

The absolute and relative numbers of repetitions used by Fatima in each session are given in Table 2. [An increase over time in the relative use of repetition can be observed.]

Table 2
*Number of Repetitions used by Fatima*

| FATIMA | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| N of NS-turns | 175 | 82 | 130 |
| N of repetitions | 18 | 11 | 23 |
| % of repetitions | 10% | 13% | 18% |

Fatima used **simple repetitions** in all sessions to pick up and check those part(s) of the NS-utterance which are crucial to understanding. In session 1, this is mainly time reference information. In sessions 2 and 3, other information is focused upon as well. The changes of contextual features are also interesting. Initially, in session 1, the repeated part was clearly marked as an implicit question by means of rising intonation. From session 2 onwards, however, the intonation had a flat, concluding contour. Moreover, the simple repetitions are now well considered, i.e., they were preceded by a question asked by Fatima. This use can be seen in sequence (5).

| (5) | FC | wanneer tijd van werk? | when time of work? |
|---|---|---|---|
| | NS | uh om half acht beginnen | eh start at half past seven |
| | FC | half acht | half past seven |
| | (session 2) | | |

Some developmental trends can also be observed in the modalised and elaborated repetitions. In sessions 1 and 2 in which Fatima used relatively few elaborated repetitions. She mainly used modalised repetitions which are intended to express the basic communicative function of accepting/rejecting the propositional content of the preceding utterance. However, some of the modal particles in these repetitions clearly function as turn allocating devices. These instances have the construction 'ja ("yes") + repeated part + ja ("yes")'. The first ja ('yes') is pronounced neutrally, meaning 'I understand', whereas the second ja ('yes'), with a prosodic change, urges the interlocutor to continue. An example is given in sequence (6):

(6)   NS   eh + we hebben/ 't is 'n broodfabriek        eh + we have/ it is a bread
                                                                       factory
      FC   ja + ja broodfabriek ja?                          yes + yes bread factory yes?
      NS   ja en die broden moeten in dozen              yes and the loaves have
            worden gestopt                                     to be put in boxes
      (session 1)

The modalised repetitions lighten the conversational burden for Fatima in several ways. They highlight the core of the preceding utterance, and appear to function as a memory processing device. At the same time it is meant to have more input and contributes to a smooth continuation of the interaction. In session 3 Fatima used relatively fewer modalised repetitions. Those repetitions composed of modal particles directly allocating the turn to the interlocutor have disappeared. Instead, Fatima used elaborated repetitions. 'Imitative' features of the repetitions were dropped and the repeated part was incorporated in 'creative' utterances. Besides accepting and rejecting, the elaborated repetitions fulfil additional functions such as specifying, modifying the propositional content of the preceding model utterance. Consider, for example, the use in sequence (7):

(7)   NS   in Marokko heeft u daar ook al gewerkt?   in Morocco, did you work
                                                                       there too?
      FC   ja van Marokko ik werk                          yes of Morocco I work
            van Nederland nee                                of the Netherlands no
            (session 3)

## Mohamed

An overview of the number of repetitions used by Mohamed is given in Table 3.

Table 3
*Number of Repetitions used by Mohamed*

| MOHAMED | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| N of NS-turns | 181 | 82 | 130 |
| N of repetitions | 26 | 11 | 23 |
| % of repetitions | 14% | 13% | 18% |

Mohamed uses repetitions to a lesser extent than the other informants, especially the Turkish learners. These repetitions used by Mohamed serve two functions.

Firstly, Mohamed repeats to check his interpretation of the NS-utterance. He already has some understanding, but he just repeats in order to receive confirmation, which the NS does in fact provide by means of a minimal positive feedback item.

Secondly, Mohamed uses repetitions to signal the NS that he has understood the message and that further clarifications are not necessary. Consider sequence (8).

| (8) | NS | heel goed ja de baan is uh inpakken | very good yes the job is eh pack |
| | MK | wat? | what? |
| | NS | inpakken dat is uh wij [hebben hier] | pack that is uh we [have here] |
| | MK | [ja ja ja] ik weet inpak de taart pakken | [yes yes yes] I know pack the cake pack |
| | NS | ja | yes |
| | MK | ja | yes |
| | NS | en in dozen + en in grote dozen | and in boxes + and in big boxes |
| | MK | ja ja ja ja moet in grote doos en dan/ dan zo | yes yes yes yes must be put in big boxes and then/ then like |
| | NS | ja? | yes? |
| | MK | ja ik weet | yes I know |
| | NS | en dan ongeveer uh nou\ | and then about eh well\ |
| | MK | \ik bijna hier uh + zes maand ik kan heel goed verstaan maar kan niet zeggen | \I almost here uh + six month I can understand very well but cannot say |
| (session 1) | | | |

In session 1, some repetitions are used 'to let the NS fill in'. Mohamed is searching for a word which he does not have directly at his disposal. He does not complete his utterance, uses a hesitation marker or a pause, gets the NS to fill in the word, and continues by repeating that word/phrase. This can for example seen in sequence (9).

| (9) | MK | alleen uh cen uh + niet uh/ niet uh | only er cen er + not er/ not er |
| | | goed diploma alleen uh/ alleen zo + [niet] | good diploma only ur/ only like + [not] |
| | NS | [xx] | [xx] |
| | MK | machine maken alleen uh ik probeer alleen lezen/ lezen uh | make machine only er I am only trying read/ read eh |
| | NS | ja theorie | yes theory |
| | MK | ja theorie | yes theory |
| (session 1) | | | |

Several repetitions occur in sequences where Mohamed indicates that he has understanding problems. The repetitions are used together with minimal indicators, such as *wat* ('what') or *hm*. The NS clarifies, mostly by repeating his prior utterance, after which Mohamed shows by a repetition that he now understands.

In session 2 Mohamed's proficiency in Dutch has clearly improved. The number of repetitions has decreased. All instances that can be observed show understanding, either because they concern answers to questions, or because the simple repetitions highlight part(s) of the NS-utterance and Mohamed continues by basing a question on them. One elaborated repetition is a request for confirmation. There is also one repetition which is part of Mohamed's filling procedure like in session 1.

In session 3, Mohamed's proficiency of Dutch has again improved. With respect to his repetitive behaviour sessions 2 and 3 are quite similar. His participation in the interaction consists of Wh-questions and minimal reactions. Repetitions are again infrequent. The few elaborated repetitions are answers to questions. Some repetitions indicated the use of the keyword strategy in that the essential part of speech of the preceding NS-utterance is picked up. Mohamed requests confirmation of the correctness of the keyword and after the NS's reaction, he evaluates its propositional content, i.e., he rejects or accepts it.

## THE TURKISH LEARNERS OF DUTCH

### Mahmut

Mahmut frequently repeats parts of his interlocutor's contribution. An overview is given in Table 4.

Table 4
*Number of repetitions used by Mahmut*

| MAHMUT | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| N of NS-turns | 140 | 133 | 109 |
| N of repetitions | 59 | 32 | 30 |
| % of repetitions | 42% | 24% | 28% |

He seems to focus on the essential information in the model utterance and highlights this through a simple repetition.

In sessions 1 and 2, several passages occur in which Mahmut seems to have lost track of the discourse. He obviously does not understand what the NS is after. However, he continues repeating the key parts of the NS utterance. By doing so he manages to let the interaction progress, without dismantling it with metalinguistic side-sequences. The essential parts are highlighted and finally, with the help of the NS, a simple repetition is the 'key' to sufficient understanding. Consider, for example, sequence (10).

(10)  NS   uh hoe wist u + dat hier uh werk was?       er how did you know +
                                                       that

            van wie heeft u dat gehoord?               there was work here? who
                                                       told you?

      MO   + hier werken?                              + work here?
      NS   ja                                          yes
      MO   +                                           +
      NS   heeft u het in de krant gelezen?            did you read it in the
                                                       newspaper
      MO   krant                                       newspaper
      NS   ja                                          yes
      MO   +                                           +
      NS   of uh werkt uh 'n vriend van u hier?        or ur does ur a friend of
                                                       yours work here?
      MO   vriend oh + ja vriend/ die andere           friend oh + yes friend/
                                                       that other
            vriend maar broodfabriek                   friend but breadfactory
      NS   ja                                          yes
      MO   werk uh/ mensen werken 'kom                 work ur/ people work
            hier kom dan'                              'come here often then'
      (session 1)

In session 3, passages in which Mahmut seems to have lost track of the discourse can no longer be observed. Understanding problems appear to be solved much sooner. One clarification of the NS after the repetition is usually enough for a smooth continuation of the interaction. A remarkable trend can be noticed here if we take into account what is repeated. In session 1, the repetitions seem to be intended as reconstructions of the preceding utterance; the repeated parts have been understood. However, in session 3 a reverse strategy can be observed. Mahmut now has some understanding of the whole NS-utterance and repeats the non-understood part as an implicit clarification question (i.e., with rising intonation). Compare sequence (10) taken from session 1, with sequence (11) taken from session 3.

(11)  NS   uh nou u moet nog gekeurd worden            ur well you have to have
                                                       a medical
      MO   gekeurd?                                    medical?
      NS   ja                                          yes
      MO   wat is dat die?                             what is that?
      NS   gekeurd u moet naar arts/                   medical you have to go to
            naar dokter                                a doctor/ to a doctor
      MO   ja keuring                                  yes medical
      (session 3)

The keyword strategy is an effective means for Mahmut to interact with the NS. He creates a context in which the NS has the opportunity to ascertain whether Mahmut has picked up the most important parts. If a misunderstanding is noticed by

a cooperative NS, corrections and additional information are provided. Consider the keyword strategy in sequence (12).

(12)  NS    uh u komt voor 'n baan als inpakker        ur you've come for a job
                                                                          as a packer
        MO   oh alles inpakken                                   oh pack everything
        NS    inpakker <met nadruk>                          packer <with emphasis>
        (session 1)

With respect to the scope of the repetitions, a development can be observed from repetitions acting at a local level (i.e., dealing with adjacent pairs) to repetitions acting at a more global, episodic level. When compared with session 2, and even more when compared with session 3, the repetitions in session 1 can be assigned functions at a local level: Mahmut repeats in order to achieve complete understanding of the model or to check before responding. In sessions 2 and 3, on the other hand, the repeated part itself implies that the preceding NS-utterance has been dealt with and it enables both interlocutors to continue constructively. And indeed, if in sessions 2 and 3 we look at those instances where Mahmut continues, we can observe that the repeated part constitutes the basis for a new contribution. In the repetition, Mahmut specifies the repeated part, asks a question, or comments on it. In session 1, these continuations are rare. The broadening of the scope of the repetitions over time can be observed in another way as well. Whereas in session 1 the repetitions are mainly used separately, from session 2 on they are used in combination with other utterances by Mahmut. Sequences (13) and (14) are typical examples derived from session 1 and session 2 respectively.

(13)  NS    uh bijna vijf weken                              er almost five weeks
        MO   vijf weken                                          five weeks
        NS    vijf weken en u kan vier dagen           five weeks and you can
                                                                          have four days
        MO   vier dagen                                         four days
        NS    erbij krijgen dus totaal bijna zes weken    extra so, in all almost
                                                                          six weeks
        MO   zes weken                                          six weeks
        (session 1)

(14)  MO   ja hoe laat werken?                            yes at what time work?
        NS    't begin uh 't begint om half acht        it begins er it start at
                                                                          half past seven
        MO   half acht ja                                        half past seven yes
        NS    tot kwart voor vier                             until a quarter to four
        MO   kwart over vier ja                              a quarter past four yes
        NS    voor vier                                            to four
        (session 2)

Whereas in session 1 Mahmut just repeats the essential information (i.e., that information which is important to understanding), in sessions 2 and 3 these repeti-

tions are introduced by a question. The general conclusion is that for Mahmut repetitions are important part-taking devices an opportunities to learn. This is confirmed by Mahmut's reflections in his first language (Turkish) during one of the self-confrontation activities:

| (15) | N | Sen bir kimseyi iyi analamadıysan | What do you do when you do not understand someone? |
| | MO | Tekrarlatırdım | I let him repeat it |
| | N | Peki, o aynı kelimeyi kulla nırsa | And if he then uses the same word, then what? |
| | MO | O zaman 'bilmiyom,' diyecegim (session 2) | Then I say I do not know |

## Ergün

Like Mahmut, Ergün seems to have a decided preference for using repetitions. An overview for the repetitions used by Ergün is given in Table 5.

Table 5
*Number of repetitions used by Ergün*

| ERGÜN | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| N of NS-turns | 175 | 82 | 130 |
| N of repetitions | 18 | 11 | 23 |
| % of repetitions | 10% | 13% | 18% |

Ergün frequently uses repetitions to manage understanding problems. The example in sequence (15) shows how Ergün makes use of repetitive procedures in an exchange in which he does not completely understand the NS:

| (16) | NS | en wat deed je dan? | and what did you do then? |
| | ED | wat? | what? |
| | NS | wat/ wat deed je bij de krant? | what/ what did you do at the newspaper? |
| | ED | + | + |
| | NS | wat voor werk? | what kind of work? |
| | ED | wat voor? + [die] | what kind of? + [that] |
| | NS | [wat] voor werk? | [what] kind of work? |
| | ED | uh werk [wat] | er work [what] |
| | NS | [wat] moest je doen? | [what] did you have to do? |
| | ED | + | + |
| | NS | wat doe je? | what do you do? |
| | ED | wat doen? | what do? |

| NS | wat doe je? | what do you do? |
| ED | wat doe je? | what do you do? |
| NS | bij de krant | at the newspaper |
| ED | + ik/ ik niet verstaan | + I/ I not understand |
| (session 1) | | |

In this passage, Ergün keeps repeating the NS because he does not know what the NS is after and finally he explicitly states that he does not understand. Here again we observe Ergün's reconstruction strategy. If he does not completely understand his NS-interlocutor, he tries to reconstruct the problematic utterance partly or even exactly. He leaves the structure/order and prosodic features of the model utterances intact in his repetition. Ergün uses this type of 'reconstruction' procedure in all three sessions. The reconstructions can mainly be assigned self-informing functions. Nevertheless, *no matter whether they are intended* by Ergün *as such or not*, these repetitions can be interpreted by the NS as requests for clarification.

Over time, a development can be observed from simple and modalised repetitions in the early sessions to elaborated repetitions in the later sessions. In session 1, the relative amount of simple and modalised repetitions predominate. It is remarkable that the modalised repetitions often have the form '*ja* ("yes") + repeated part' as an answer to yes/no questions or as confirmation. In sessions 2 and 3, modalised repetitions are less frequent. The repeated parts in session 3, and to a lesser extent in session 2, are elaborate, i.e., his 'own' part(s) of speech are added or incorporated. The elaborated repetitions also express more interactive functions, such as specifying the repeated part or adding a new informational content. Compare the examples in sequences (17), (18) and (19) taken from sessions 1, 2 and 3 respectively:

| (17) | NS | en wat heb je allemaal gedaan? | tell me all you've done? |
| | ED | allemaal die familie? | all that family? |
| | (session 1) | | |

| (18) | NS | heeft u andere vragen? | have you got any other questions? |
| | ED | andere vragen wat/ wat vragen? | other questions what/ what ask |
| | | niet anders niet anders | no other no other |
| | (session 2) | | |

| (19) | NS | heeft u al eens eerder dat gedaan? | have you done that before? |
| | ED | ja ik heb nooit gedaan | yes I have never done |
| | | maar ik weet ik wel | but I do I know |
| | (session 3) | | |

In session 1, there is clear evidence that Ergün pays special attention to the Wh-words. He repeats the Wh-word of a Wh-question by the NS. This can be seen, for example, in sequences (19) and (20).

.

| (20) | NS | heb je/ hoe lang heb je in 't | have you/ how long were you |
|      |    | ziekenhuis gelegen? | in the hospital? |
|      | ED | hoe? | how? |
|      | NS | hoelang [+] | how long [+] |
|      | ED | [ja] | [yes] |
|      | NS | was je in het ziekenhuis? | were you in the hospital? |
|      | (session 1) | | |

| (21) | NS | en waar was dat in Turkije? | and where was that in Turkey? |
|      | ED | wat? | what? |
|      | NS | waar? [waar] | where? [where] |
|      | ED | [waar] | [where] |
|      | NS | was de garage? | was the garage |
|      | NS | die in yalçın yalçın garage de naam | that in yalçın yalçın garage the name |
|      | (session 1) | | |

By a simple repetition of the Wh-words, Ergün tries to identify the preceding Wh-question or at least to check his previous interpretation. Thus he decides whether the information wanted is locative (*waar?* 'where?'), causal (*waarom?* 'why?'), modal (*hoe?*, 'how?'), or temporal (*wanneer?* 'when?', *hoelang?* 'how long?') etc. However, the use of Wh-words is not restricted to repetitions. Some Wh-words, *wat?*, *welk?*, are central to Ergün's feedback system. These Wh-words are used as separate turns, functioning as intended elicitors of an additional delivery by the NS. In sessions 2 and 3 Ergün also uses the Wh-words as feedback items. Surprisingly, however, repetitions consisting of separate Wh-words whose function presumably is to clear up the NS' preceding Wh-questions cannot be observed in the later sessions. It might be hypothesized that Ergün does not need the identification anymore, or opts for other type of repetitions (e.g., elaborated reconstructions). Like Fatima, Ergün also uses simple repetition to check information (e.g., salary, time reference), a precise understanding of which is important. However, in the sessions with Ergün this use of repetitions is not so frequent. There is no clear developmental pattern either, although in session 3 a tendency seems to emerge for the simple repetitions to be accompanied by a Wh-question. In the first session, Ergün repeats the understood parts relatively more often than the non-understood parts. The same, albeit to a lesser extent, goes for session 2 compared with session 3. Finally, in session 3 relatively more non-understood parts are repeated. Sequences (21) and (22) are taken from session 3:

| (22) | NS | 't is/ u krijgt 't minimumloon | it is/ you get the minimum wages |
|      | ED | welk? | what? |
|      | NS | u krijgt 't minimumloon | you get the minimum wages |

| ED | minimumloon? | minimum wages? |
|----|--------------|----------------|
| NS | minimum | minimum |
| ED | ja loon weet ik | yes wages I know |
| NS | loon + en 't is veertienhonderdgulden | wages + and it is fourteen hundred guilders |

(session 3)

| (23) | NS | is dat ver? | is that far away? |
|------|----|-------------|-------------------|
|      | ED | ver? wat is dat? | far away? what is that? |

(session 3)

The first example shows how Ergün, by using a simple repetition as an implicit question, asks for a clarification. The NS in turn has a hunch about what might have caused the understanding problem and finally Ergün explicitly states what he has understood. In the second example Ergün indicates by a metalinguistic question what part he has not understood.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented in this paper shows that repetitions are used frequently by language learners to participate in discourse. Repetitions seem to be frequent in all stages of the language acquisition process and can be considered to be the earliest and most efficient means of using the TLS as a resource. There seems to be a tendency for the number of learner's repetitions of NS-utterances to decrease over time with growing target language proficiency. It should be borne in mind that in very early stages, from zero level to limited proficiency in the target language, there may first be an increase in the number of the repetitions (cf. Fatima).

The developmental trends in the observed repetitive behaviour of the informants have both structural and functional aspects.

With respect to the structural characteristics, development is from simple to elaborated repetitions. The latter are used by some informants (i.e., Fatima and Ergün) and consist initially of modal particles before really being elaborated. If one draws conclusions from this developmental trend with respect to the structure of repetitions, one should bear in mind that also with limited L2-proficiency in the early stages the learner is probably only capable of (re-)producing simple repetitions.

With respect to the functional development of the repetitions it can be observed that in the early stages repetitions are mainly used to highlight important information. The repetitions concern not only 'keywords' which are essential to the learner's understanding, but also 'keywords' in interactional respect. The repetitions are requests for clarification on the remaining part(s) of the NS-utterance or requests for confirmation. In the first stages repetitions also play a role because by using them the learner succeeds in keeping the interaction going. That is to say, the learner either succeeds in managing sequences in which difficulties with understanding occur or allows the NS to continue. At later stages of the acquisition process, when proficiency in the target language has improved, repetitions also fulfil more sophisticated

communicative functions (i.e., to specify, to base a question upon, to counterclaim, etc.). Because of the higher level of understanding at this stage, the repetitions are now directed to non-understood part(s) of the NS-utterance. Repetitive behaviour at the later stages is not only used less frequently, but also often occurs in hidden form: repetitions are more native-like in that they are more integrated in the interaction.

It is not easy to be specific about the effect of learner's repetitions on the second language acquisition process. Nevertheless, one might hypothesize that as efficient and easy-to-use means, repetitions enable language learners to participate in an interaction and at least on the surface to maintain a smooth consensus.

In the interaction itself repetitions also provide learning opportunities. Either the learner repeats to understand more of the non-repeated parts of the NS-utterance (as during the early stages), or he obtains more input in order to clarify the repeated part (as in later stages).

The observations that in the early stages repetitions are mainly partial, simple and deal with understood parts of the NS-utterance, whereas in later stages the repetitions have an elaborated structure, are well-considered and more incorporated in 'own' utterances, point at the learning effect of repetitions. In the early stages repetitions have a stronger effect on the learner's lexicon, whereas in later stages the repetitions contribute more to the learner's 'syntactic' abilities.

The value of this study is limited in that only one type of learners' procedure has been focused upon, namely, those instances which are similar in structure to the preceding TLS-utterance. This implies that we have no insight into other procedures (e.g., the 'wait-and-see' strategy) used by the learners in the interactions, i.e., what other procedures relate to repetitive procedures, and how. The analysis of Ergün's sessions, for example, clearly shows the limitations of the analytical perspective of this study. We saw how Ergün focuses on the Wh-words to identify the type of Wh-question. These procedures are certainly instances of repetitions. However, the Wh-questions are also used frequently as minimal feedback items. Allwood (1988) considers the learners' feedback items (feedback givers as well as feedback elicitors) to be part of a rule-governed, 'grammatical' feedback system. If we follow Allwood's (1988) intruiging line, a direction for further research on learners' repetitive feedback procedures in second language acquisition processes would be to relate these procedures to the structure and function of the learners' feedback system as a whole. Especially for Ergün we might see how Wh-words as essential parts in his feedback system are also used in repetitive procedures and consequently effect the develop-ment of the language acquisition process itself (see Broeder & Roberts 1988).

Finally, we will go into the difference that seems to exist between the Turkish and Moroccan-Arabic learners in the present study; repetitions might be more favoured procedures for Turkish than for Moroccan-Arabic learners of Dutch. An intriguing question is to what extent 'rules of communication' in the source and/or target languages in question will cause a certain type and degree of repetitive behaviour.

Similar studies have been carried out within the framework of the ESF project, with informants with socio-biographical profiles comparable to those of the inform-ants in the present study. Vion & Mittner (1986) and Broeder & Vasseur (1988)

concluded that Spanish adult learners of French repeat more than Moroccan-Arabic learners of French. Allwood & Ahlsen's study (1986) dealt with adult learners of Swedish. This study pointed out that the Spanish learners of Swedish show a stronger tendency to repeat their TLS-interlocutor than the Finnish learners. Additional studies on other languages as target or source languages might result in an 'implicational' order, which states, for example, that if language X is involved as source or target language, the learners inclination to repeat relatively more/less will have relatively more (dis)advantages for the order and the speed of the target language acquisition process.

## IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of the results in the present study it is anticipated that second language learners with a specific typological source language, e.g., Turkish, Spanish, prefer to use repetitions as interactional means. It is also anticipated that communication in specific typological target languages, e.g., Dutch, requires a large number of repetitions. Compared with the five target languages in the ESF project, Dutch turns out to have conversational rules to the effect that both interlocutors contribute substantially and explicitly to the interaction. Expressing listening behavior is important in Dutch conversations, almost at a turn level. And in this sense it is very different from, for example, conversations in Finnish. Or as a Finnish native speaker pointed out 'when I say nothing I agree and I am with you as a listener'. A Dutch native speaker, however, expects an explicit indication that the interlocutor is 'still there'. Repetitions are effective means for fulfilling this function. Dutch rules for communication can also be traced in another way. It is expected that in Dutch utterance concluding feedback elicitors such as *he*?('eh?'), *hm*('uhm'), *ja*?('yes?') are relatively frequent compared with other target languages in the ESF project. A Dutch native speaker (in its literal meaning) puts pressure on the listener to take part explicitly.

Cross-linguistic findings like the ones represented in this study could be applied to international situations where native and non-native speakers are learning to communicate together (see also Bremer *et al.* 1988). One might think of promoting language learning in classrooms, but also of applications in training and support for native speakers for whom interethnic communication is part of their daily routines.

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## Note

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