

Echo answers in native/non-native interaction

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Abstract

An echo answer is an answer that repeats elements of the question. This response form occurs after yes/no-questions and “statements about B-events”. The current study is based on data from native/non-native institutional interaction, and echo answers are shown to play an important role in certain types of repair that are characteristic of such interaction. Echo answers have two main usages. The first is to appropriate a candidate formulation and integrate it into one’s own turn in progress. This often happens when native speakers attempt to assist non-native interlocutors in expressing themselves. The other is to claim a strengthened commitment to the answer. This is especially salient in cases where a minimal agreement might project a potential dispreferred response. Echo answers may occur alone or with an initial or final response word, and these different response formats are shown to index the relative epistemic authority of the interlocutors.

Introduction

After certain questions conversationalists have the structural possibilities of producing either a minimal or an expanded response, this choice leading to functionally distinct actions (Hakulinen 2001, Stivers & Heritage 2001). This paper explores one such type of expanded response, the “echo answer”, where the speaker repeats elements of the question in the answer.¹

(1) (IFF 1)

S: ’leser du- -

kan du ^lese no ’særlig?

A: ja_

jeg ’leser ja. ((*nikker svakt*))

S: do you ’read- -

can you ^read anything ’much?

A: yeah_

I read yeah. ((*nods slightly*))

¹ Transcription conventions are presented in the appendix.

S: ... hva er det du 'leser på ^norsk a? S: ... what do you 'read in ^Norwegian then?

However insignificant this expansion may seem, and however equivalent it may seem to a minimal response, it turns out that it is deployed in specific interactional contexts and has determinate communicative functions. I will argue that the repetition marks a strengthened affective commitment by the speaker and may thus be considered an upgrader or intensifier. The need for a strengthened commitment to an answer is made relevant in two types of cases. The first is after repair initiations that display a candidate construal of the interlocutor's prior contribution. Here, echo answers display acceptance and appropriation of the proposed formulation. The second type is after first pair parts that require more than a minimal answer to be properly answered, such as assessments and certain requests. Here, a minimal answer would indicate an incipient dispreferred response, and the echo answer thus serves to strengthen the commitment to the answer.

But before engaging in the description of the echo answer, it might be in place to scrutinize the concept of "repetition" a bit more closely.

What is repetition?

A repeat is never an exact replication of the original utterance. It differs from the original in systematic ways:

- 1 Speakers who repeat something someone else has said consequently adapt the utterance to their own pitch range.²
- 2 Disfluencies, such as false starts, filled pauses and self-repairs, are omitted, and linguistic "errors" are corrected.
- 3 Deictic expressions are adjusted to the deictic center of the new speaker (e.g. pronoun shift from "I" to "you")
- 4 Constituents may be pronominalized in the repeat (so-called "pro-repeats", cf. Heritage 1984).³

² The only form of repetition which does not include these adaptations are mimicry, but even this form of repetition adds something which sets the utterance apart from the original, for instance an exaggeration of certain prosodic features (Couper-Kuhlen 1996).

³ There may be systematic functional differences between exact and pronominalized repeats, but that is not under discussion here (cf. Schegloff 1996).

- 5 Intonation may change from falling to rising or vice versa (cf. "question repeats", Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977)
- 6 The word order may change in systematic ways. In Norwegian (as in English), declarative sentences may be repeated with interrogative syntax, as in (2), and interrogative sentences may be repeated with subordinate clause word order, as in (3):

(2) (AETAT 3)

<p>K: jeg har 'navnet= <X i industri= X> ^Lamberseter,</p> <p>S: har du 'det ja. (<i>have you that yes</i>)</p>	<p>K: I have the 'name= <X of Industry= X> Lambertseter,</p> <p>S: 'do you.</p>
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(3) (IFF 5, abbreviated from (11) below)

<p>E: hva 'betyder den ^der a?</p> <p>S: hva det 'betyr?</p>	<p>E: what does ^that one 'mean?</p> <p>S: what it 'means?</p>
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In pronominalized repeats, such as (2), the word order may be either declarative or interrogative ("do you?" vs. "you do?"), possibly conveying different propositional attitudes (cf. Heritage 1984). In repeated questions, such as (3), it is in fact the changed word order (to that of a subordinate clause) which constitutes the conventional repeat form in Norwegian.

Repetition is thus not just an automatic replication of the form of an utterance, but a reproduction of the same *content* after a process of interpretation. In example (2), for instance, the only form similarity between the two utterances is the word "har". The first person singular pronoun "jeg" (I) is changed to second person "du" (you) due to the deixis shift, and the verb complement "navnet i industri Lamberseter" (the name of Industry Lamberseter) is pronominalized as "det" (that/it). In addition there is the change in word order. However, all these processes are conventional in repeats, and the crucial point is the similarity of meaning. As we see, the second utterance neither adds to nor reduces the propositional content of the original utterance, and thus it constitutes a repeat.

What is involved in repetition is rather an explicit display of a speaker's *construal* of a prior utterance (cf. Clark 1996:191f). This means that the speaker, rather than trying to reproduce a sound form, presents an as exact as possible rendering of the *interpretation* of a prior utterance (cf. Noh 2000). This interpretation involves identifying a phonological form – a linguistically structured set of speech sounds. However, phonological form is not

identifiable without matching expression and content, that is, relating the sounds to a potential semantic-pragmatic form. This is especially clear when speakers shift deictic pronouns, omit disfluencies and correct errors. In those cases, they obviously render their imputation of speaker meaning rather than the sound pattern of the utterance. So an other-repetition is a subsequent rendering of an utterance, as interpreted by another speaker.

On the one hand repetition cannot be identified by form similarity alone. But on the other, it needs to be delimited from qualitatively different ways of representing the other speaker's meaning in a subsequent turn, such as reformulations:

(4)

A: How long are you going to be in town?

B: Till Wednesday.

A: Oh you'll just be here a week.

(Sacks 1992, vol. 2:8)

Here the reformulation involves saying more or less the same thing, but viewing the events from a different perspective (from focusing on the day of departure to focusing on the time span) and therefore using other words. This operation by the speaker involves adding an individual way of describing the matters rather than just displaying an identification of what the other has said. The point of saying the same thing in other words, seems to be to check a specific interpretation of the utterance (rather than reproducing it). Thus the difference between repetition and reformulation is that repetition primarily displays *hearing* – the identification of a linguistic signal – whereas reformulation displays *understanding* – a situated interpretation formulated from the other speaker's perspective (cf. Sacks 1992, vol. 2:142).

In distinguishing different forms of other-repetition, the essential criterion is the sequential position of the repeat and the action it performs in those surroundings. This can be illustrated by contrasting two repetitions that occur within a single example. Preceding this excerpt from a job qualifying center, the client (A) has just told the social worker (S) about two friends who have just got a job in a nursing home:

(5) (IFF 1)

1 S: så 'de har 'fortalt deg 'hva de

S: so 'they have 'told you 'what they

2	['gjø=r] på [[^jobben]]?	['do=] at [[^work]]?
3	A: [ja_] [[ja/]]	A: [yeah] [[yeah]]
4	@ <@ 'fortalt ^alt. @>	@ <@ 'told ^everything. @>
5	S: ja\	S: yeah
6	A: @@@ jeg 'sjørre,	A: @@@ I 'ask,
7	S: ja/	S: yeah
8	A: @@ <@ de 'fortelle meg. @> @@	A: @@ <@ they 'tell me. @> @@
9	S: ja 'fint.	S: yeah 'good.
10	A: <@ ja\ @> @@	A: <@ yeah @> @@
11	S: ja det 'er e= ^slitsom ^jobb?	S: yeah it 'is a= ^tough ^job?
12	A: ja/ (TS) [men ehm]	A: yeah (TS) [but uhm]
13	S: [^ganske] ^tungt?	S: [^pretty] ^heavy?
14	A: ja 'ganske ^tungt,	A: yeah 'pretty ^heavy,
15	men 'det går ^bra.	but 'it works ^fine.
16	@[@@@]@	@[@@@]@
17	S: [det går 'bra ja.]	S: [it works 'fine yeah.]
18	ja/	yeah

This example is analyzed more in detail below, so for now it will only be noted that A's repeat in line 14 ("yeah pretty heavy") occurs as a response to a question, as a second pair part of an adjacency pair. S's repeat in line 17 ("it works 'fine yeah ") follows the answer as a post-expansion, occurring in the third position of the sequence (Schegloff 1990). Although these two repetitions have many features in common – such as being other-repeats, being produced with falling intonation, both repeating the immediately prior utterance in a word-by-word fashion, etc. – they are yet quite distinct *actions*. The primary difference is that the first repeat constitutes a claim about the world, committing the speaker to certain beliefs and attitudes (in this case that working in a nursing home is "pretty heavy"). As such it answers the clerk's question (although the client subsequently expands the answer with a modification: "but it works fine").

The second repeat, however, does not commit the speaker to the claim that "it works fine". The client's original claim is a statement about her friends – that they manage well despite the fact that the work is hard – and clearly the caseworker has no background for assessing whether this is true or not. Rather, this repeat is a meta-communicative usage, displaying hearing or understanding of the previous utterance rather than taking a position on

it (cf. Sorjonen 1996, Svennevig, in prep.). The second repeat is thus just a registration of prior talk, whereas the first takes a position on it. And these functional differences are due to the position of the repeat, as a second pair part or a third position expansion of an adjacency pair. It is the first of these types of repetition, that is, second position repeats after questioning turns, that is the focus of this article.

Data and previous studies

The data for this study come from video recordings of consultations at various public offices, namely an unemployment office, a job qualifying center for immigrants and a municipal office assisting immigrants and refugees during their two first years of residence. The corpus consists of 12 consultations with a total recording time of 5 h 6 min.⁴ In all cases the clients are non-native speakers of Norwegian and the clerks are native speakers. Most of the clients are from Pakistan, but there are also informants from Iraq, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Ghana and Vietnam.

An electronic database was created of all other-repetitions in the corpus, totaling a number of 328 instances. The repeats were classified according to the following variables:

Linguistics material: single word – phrase – clause

Speaker: native – non-native

Intonation: rising – falling – level

Response word: initial – final – no response word

Iconicity: part – whole – pronominalized – expanded – lexically/grammatically modified

Repeated utterance: question – statement about B-event – answer – informing – assessment – other

Response: no response – minimal answer – topical expansion – repair initiation

The database facilitated an initial identification of certain co-occurrence patterns in the data.

73 instances were identified as the special type of repeat studied here, namely echo answers.

The other forms of repeats are described in Svennevig (forthc.). The main part of the analytic

⁴ The codes and duration of each consultation is indicated in the following list:

Job qualifying center	Duration	Unemployment office	Duration
IFF1	12.42	AETAT 1	28.22
IFF2	07.55	AETAT 2	17.30
IFF3	14.49	AETAT 3	14.27
IFF4	10.44	Municipal office	
IFF5	26.04	FINN 1	56.17
IFF6	16.47	FINN 2	24.08
IFF7	17.09	FINN 3	59.08

work is not quantitatively oriented, however, but rather consists in conversation analytic close reading and comparison of the repetitions as they occur in their phenomenological context.

Other researchers have reported on phenomena that come close to what I have called "echo answers", however giving different accounts of them. Ferrara (1994) has identified a repetition practice in psychotherapy that she calls "echoing" and which she defines in the following manner: "If B repeats (with downward intonation) a statement A has made about a B-event, then the repetition is heard as emphatic agreement" (Ferrara 1994:73).⁵ This clearly resembles echo answers. However, Ferrara does not specify in any detail what sort of statements about B-events are echoed or what she means by "emphatic agreement". If agreement is considered as concurring in a belief or a point of view, this description does not seem to fit all the cases in my data. Many of the examples presented in the current article (and in hers as well) are factual descriptions rather than statements of opinion (such as (7) below), and in such cases it seems unsatisfactory to talk about "agreement". As I will argue here, such cases are better described as cases where speakers accept a formulation proposed on their behalf. It is furthermore expectable that "echoing" has different functions in psychotherapy and in bureaucratic interviews with non-native clients. As I argue below, many of the usages identified here seem related to linguistic asymmetry between the parties.

Fornel & Léon (1997) describe a response type they call "réponses-échos". This is a repeat with falling intonation used by clerks in service encounters to grant requests for some item. This form of repetition has many traits in common with the current practice, but it constitutes a different action in that it involves granting a request rather than answering a question. There are also formal differences in that the echoes in these service encounters are usually produced with a "chanting tone" (p. 112f).

⁵ "Statements about B-events" refer to a distinction made by Labov (1972) between 'A- and B-events': "Given two parties in a conversation, A and B, we can distinguish as 'A-events' the things that A knows about but B does not; as 'B-events' the things which B knows but A does not; and as 'AB-events' knowledge which is shared equally by A and B" (Labov 1972:301). Statements about B-events are of special interest, since they are claimed to have question-like properties: "if A makes a statement about a B-event, it is heard as a request for confirmation" (ibid.). Labov gives the following examples:

A: She told you what we are interested in.

B: Yes.

A: You live on 115th St.

B: No. I live on 116th.

The structure of echo answers

The echo answer is a repeat with falling intonation, occurring after a question or a "statement about a B-event" (Labov 1972). As such, it constitutes a second pair part of an adjacency pair. In these cases, the first speaker utters a proposition of which the hearer presumably has the authority of knowledge or judgment. By repeating, the second speaker confirms the proposition expressed and thereby commits him or her self to it. The repeat is produced in a preferred format, and displays speaker alignment or agreement with the previous speaker.

Echo answers occur after questions of various types, such as polar interrogatives, declaratives with rising intonation, phrasal constructions with rising intonation, and statements about B-events. In the following example, the question is realized by an interrogative sentence.

(6) (IFF 7)

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | S: når du sier 'tospråklig ^skole, | S: when you say 'bilingual ^school |
| 2 | 'tenker du da= e= .. 'full ^jobb
eller? | are you 'thinking e= .. 'full ^job? |
| | (<i>think you then e= full job or</i>) | |
| 3 | G: ja 'full ^jobb. | G: yeah 'full ^job. |
| 4 | S: ja\ | S: yeah |
| 5 | G: <X sikkert X> | G: <X sure X> |
| 6 | S: mhm\ | S: mhm |

Polar interrogatives, such as this one,⁶ project a confirmation or a disconfirmation of the proposition expressed in the question, typically realized by the response words "yes" or "no". It is after such questions that an expansion repeating the proposition will be considered an "echo answer". These answers occur in preferred formats. Yes/no-questions do not necessarily display a strong bias for either a negative or a positive answer, but as long as they are in the positive form (non-negated) a positive response is the preferred response (and correspondingly a negative response for a negated question).

Another type of question is realized as a declarative or a phrasal construction with rising intonation.

(7) (IFF 7)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | G: siste 'tre fire 'prøve var e= <X helt X> | G: the last 'three four 'exam were e= |
| 2 | 'nitti ^prosent. | <X completely X> 'ninety per ^cent. |
| 3 | S: ja 'nettopp/ | S: yeah 'right/ |
| 4 | G: ja_ | G: yeah |
| 5 | S: der oppe på 'Slavika ja?
(<i>there up at Slavika yes</i>) | S: up there at 'Slavika? |
| 6 | G: ja ['Sla]vika [ja.] | G: yeah ['Sla]vika [yeah.] |
| 7 | S: [ja/] [ja/] | S: [yeah] [yeah] |
| 8 | ... neida 'språket ditt er 'bra nok til | ... your 'language is 'good enough for |
| 9 | ^mye det, | ^many things, |

The question here is realized by a phrasal construction with rising intonation. An example of a declarative with rising intonation is found in (9) below. As questions, declaratives and phrasal constructions involve a greater bias towards a certain response than do polar interrogatives. In the example above, the question (“up there at ‘Slavika?’”) seeks confirmation of a specific assumption. The echo answer constitutes a preferred response in these cases as well.

Echo answers also occur after statements about B-events, that is, statements with falling intonation concerning some state of affairs of which the interlocutor has the authority of knowledge. Here is an example, taken from a client’s account of what he has done since he came to Norway:

(8) (IFF 5)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | E: jeg har vært på den 'privat ^skole. | E: I have been to that 'private ^school |
| 2 | S: ja/ | S: yes/ |
| 3 | E: og <X jeg ha= -- X> | E: and <X I ha= -- X> |
| 4 | S: hatt førti 'åtte timer eller XX -- | S: had forty 'eight hours or XX -- |
| 5 | E: fø- førti 'seks ^timer, | E: fo- forty 'six ^hours, |
| 6 | jeg ha 'to ^timer i= -- | I have 'two ^hours in= -- |
| 7 | jeg bli 'dårlig no, | I get 'ill now, |

⁶ The final word *eller* is here an interrogative particle conventionally used in Norwegian polar questions and not a conjunction introducing the second part of a disjunctive question (cf. Lindström 1999, Svennevig, in press).

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 8 | S: ja/ | S: yeah/ |
| 9 | det var 'norsk. | that was 'Norwegian. |
| 10 | E: det var 'norsk ikke [sant.]
(<i>that was Norwegian not true</i>) | E: that was 'Norwegian [right.] |
| 11 | S: [ja/] | S: [yeah/] |
| 12 | E: 'etterpå jeg har vært på ^Varhov, | E: 'afterwards I've been to ^Varhov, |

Here the caseworker makes two statements about B-events, the first in line 4 and the second in line 10. Such statements are shown by Labov (1972) to constitute requests for confirmation. In the extract, the first statement (l. 4) is disconfirmed (corrected from 48 to 46 hours) whereas the second (l. 10) is confirmed, and this is done by a repeat.

Echo answers may be either full sentences, as in (8) ("det var norsk"), phrasal constructions, as in (6) ("full jobb"), or single words, as in (7) ("Slavika"). They are sometimes preceded and/or followed by a response word, as in (7) ("ja Slavika ja"). I will return to the use of response words in a separate section below. Another characteristic feature of these answers is that they are short. Often they repeat only a constituent of the preceding utterance, as in (6). In those cases, the part of the question or the statement that is repeated is the constituent being most informationally and prosodically prominent (carrying focal stress, representing the main focus of the question or the statement).

Echo answers occurring after both questions and statements about B-events have certain sequential characteristics in common. As we have seen, they occur after first pair parts of adjacency pairs, and constitute sufficient and appropriate second pair parts. They constitute preferred responses, both in that they take up and fulfill the communicative project proposed in the first pair part, and in that they are produced in an unmarked format, without initial delay (pauses, particles, prefaces etc.), mitigation (hedges, qualifications etc.) or subsequent accounts (explanations etc.) (cf. Pomerantz 1984).

In the data, echo answers very often occur in repair sequences. However, they also occur in main sequences. These two sequential environments will be investigated in turn.

Echo answers in repair sequences

One of the main environments where echo answers occur is after repair initiations that propose a candidate wording or understanding of the prior turn. These may be of various

types, such as understanding checks, candidate answers etc. Such repair initiations are typical of situations where native speakers try to help non-native speakers who display some problem of expressing themselves. The repair initiations do not usually constitute interrogative sentences, but are most frequently phrasal constructions or declarative sentences with rising intonation.

Candidate formulations

Many of the repair initiations in the data are triggered by the non-native speaker having some linguistic problem. In the following example, the speaker displays a problem of finding a word:

(9) (AETAT 3)

- | | | | | |
|---|----|--|----|--|
| 1 | M: | for det hu- hun 'er= -- | M: | cause sh- she 'is= -- |
| 2 | | ... (TS) jeg 'vet ikke hva hun -- | | ... (TS) I don't 'know what she-- |
| 3 | | men hun 'er= -- | | but she 'is= -- |
| 4 | | ... (H=) [e=] | | ... (H=) [e=] |
| 5 | S: | [hun er] 'kontaktperson? | S: | [she's a] 'contact person? |
| 6 | M: | ja 'kontaktperson. ((nikker)) | M: | yeah 'contact person. ((nods)) |
| 7 | | e- 'personal i <X industri X> ^Eklund. | | e- 'personell in <X industry X> ^Eklund. |
| 8 | S: | okei. | S: | okay. |

Here the client is engaged in a word search, as displayed by the two aborted utterances ("she is a--"), accompanied by pauses and hesitations, and what seems to be the beginning of an overt admission that he does not know the expression (I don't ^know what she --) (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin 1986). The clerk proposes a candidate, "contact person", and does so in a full sentence that repeats the form of the client's aborted utterances ("she is a ..."). This is accepted by a positive response token and a repeat. By repeating the client appropriates the expression and presents it as something he can "say for himself" and not just something he can accept being attributed to him by others. The repetition thus seems to construe the suggestion as not just *an* acceptable candidate, but *the* word he was looking for.

Another environment for echo answers is when the non-native speakers display problems producing an answer and the native speakers propose a candidate answer for them.

In the next example the parties are talking about a course that the client has agreed to take in order to qualify for a job. However, the clerk cannot promise her a place in the first course that starts in April, so she might have to wait until the next one, which starts in August.

(10) (IFF 1)

- | | | | | |
|----|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | S: | .. 'men jeg kan 'love deg 'plass | S: | .. 'but I can 'promise you a 'place ^later. |
| 2 | | ^senere. | | |
| 3 | A: | ja\ .. 'jeg vil ha litt 'senere. | A: | yeah\ .. 'I want a bit 'later. |
| 4 | S: | ... (KREMT) .. du vil !helst ha litt | S: | ... (THROAT) .. you !prefer a bit ^later? |
| 5 | | ^senere? | | |
| 6 | A: | ja=\ | A: | ye=s\ |
| 7 | S: | .. du 'vil ikke 'begynne i 'april | S: | .. you <u>don't wanna</u> 'start in 'April |
| 8 | | hvis du 'får ^plass? | | if you 'get a ^place? |
| 9 | | ((<i>rister svakt på hodet</i>)) | | ((<i>shakes head slightly</i>)) |
| 10 | A: | <u>e= ja 'det</u> eh [XX --] ((<i>nikker svakt</i>)) | A: | <u>e= yes 'that</u> eh [XX --] ((<i>nods slightly</i>)) |
| 11 | S: | [det er 'okei det ^og?] | S: | [that's 'okay ^too?] |
| | | (<i>that is okay that too</i>) | | |
| 12 | A: | det æ 'okei ja. | A: | that's 'okay yeah. |
| 13 | S: | ja\ | S: | yeah\ |
| 14 | A: | .. 'ikke 'vente til ^august. | A: | .. 'not 'wait till ^August. |

Here we have a potential misunderstanding about whether or not the client wants to start in April if she is admitted. When the client says that she "wants a bit later", the clerk first makes one request for confirmation (l. 4-5). When the client confirms he produces another request for confirmation, this time inverting the question so that it excludes the other alternative (l. 7-8). This time she initiates a different answer, stating that she does want to start in April. But as she hesitates in formulating the answer the clerk proposes a candidate answer with rising intonation (l. 11). This is confirmed by the client by means of an echo answer.

In cases such as this one, it is the client who has the primary responsibility of supplying an answer, and also the privileged authority of knowledge. When the caseworker proposes a candidate answer, he reduces both the client's freedom of action and her responsibility for the actual answer. In this situation, the client may use a repetition to mark an independent commitment to the content and the form of the answer. She does not just accept the caseworker's proposal, but *appropriates* it by "speaking for herself".

What we have seen in these examples then, is that echo answers are used after first pair parts that propose a phrasing (a word, an answer) on behalf of the interlocutor. This phenomenon of "speaking for another" (Schiffrin 1993) can be described as one person acting as animator for another person who is in a principal role (Goffman 1981).

In the corpus, repeats are used to turn a formulation proposed on behalf of the interlocutor into a formulation for which one takes independent responsibility. Speaking for another may be a risky and sensitive undertaking, since one runs the risk of misrepresenting what the interlocutor wants to say. Addressees thus have ways of committing to various degrees to the proposed formulation, from just accepting the ascribed proposition to claiming individual responsibility for it. A minimal response will in general accept the candidate formulation, but will not display a strong commitment to it, and may on occasions even project an upcoming rejection component, such as a modification or a reformulation of the utterance. By producing a repeat, however, the speaker seems to claim individual responsibility for the utterance. He thereby changes status from an "implied author" of the interlocutor's utterance to the role of "principal", that is, the character who attaches his or her social position to the utterance (Goffman 1981).

Understanding checks

Another environment for echo answers is in understanding checks, also a conversational sequence type frequently associated with native/non-native interaction. Understanding checks are repair initiations that repeat or paraphrase the prior utterance and thereby request confirmation of the construal by the interlocutor. Repeats are generally used for checking hearing (construal of linguistic form), whereas paraphrases are used for checking understanding (construal of meaning) (cf. Svennevig, *forthc.*).

Let us first consider an example of a questioning repeat. Prior to the extract, the parties have been talking about the results of a language test that the client has just passed, with very poor results. On the table in front of them there is a sheet of paper with the acronym of the institution on it, "IFF".

(11) (IFF 5)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | E: [men jeg] 'kan lese <u>også den</u> – | E: [but I] 'can read <u>too that</u> -- |
| 2 | ((<i>skriver i luften</i>)) | ((<i>writes in the air</i>)) |
| 3 | .. du kan 'ta med den, | .. you can 'add that, |
| 4 | .. <L uffa, L> | .. <L uffa, L> |
| 5 | ((<i>peker på ark på bordet</i>)) | ((<i>points to sheet on the desk</i>)) |
| 6 | .. jeg 'skjønner ikke sant? | .. I 'understand right? |

7	/ˈai double ˈeff/, ((<i>staver på engelsk</i>))	/ˈai double ˈeff/, ((<i>spells in English</i>))
8	uffe,	uffe,
9	hva ˈbetyder den ˈder a?	what does ˈthat one ˈmean?
10	S: .. IF’F? (/i eff eff/)	S: .. IF’F? (/i eff eff/)
11	E: F’F , (/eff ˈeff/)	E: F’F , (/eff ˈeff/)
12	uffa,	uffa
13	S: hva det ˈbetyr?	S: what it ˈmeans?
14	E: ja/	E: yeah
15	S: ... (H) det betyr ˈintroduksjonsplan for	S: ... (H) it means ˈintroduction plan for
16	ˈfremmedspråklige.	non-native ˈspeakers.

Pointing to the sheet of paper on the table in front of him the client first spells out the letters (in English) and then produces a pronunciation of it as "uffe" (l. 7–8). His rendering of the acronym is devious in several respects, both in that he spells it in English, that he then pronounces an acronym as a word, and that, in doing so, he changes the vocalism (from /i/ to /u/) and adds a final syllable ("e"). The caseworker produces a questioning repeat, not of the actual utterances of the client, but of the presumed target of his utterances, the acronym IFF. After this, the client repeats the last part of the acronym (FF), this time in Norwegian.

This is a quite typical case of repair due to lack of proficiency in the language. The repair initiation is itself a form of repetition and contains a potential correction of the non-native speaker's utterance. However, the correction is backgrounded in that it is embedded in a sequentially relevant action, namely a "confirmation check", which is a routinized side sequence frequently used to check hearing (cf. Kurhila 2001).⁷ After such a request for confirmation the interlocutor has the opportunity of simply confirming with a minimal response token. When instead he responds with a repeat, he displays awareness of the implicit correction embedded in the interlocutor's utterance and takes it as an occasion for performing explicit self-correction. In other words, he treats the corrective repeat as a candidate formulation that he may (but need not) adopt.

Other repair initiations that check understanding are "formulations". When conversationalists paraphrase something that has been said earlier in the conversation in order to establish a "candidate reading" of it they perform a "formulation of gist" (Heritage & Watson 1979:138). When formulations concern something the interlocutor has said, they have

⁷ The fact that the correction is embedded in another form of action makes it a repeat in spite of the formal differences.

the form of statements about B-events and thus become instances of "speaking for another". And these formulations are frequently responded to by repeats. In the following extract, the caseworker is helping the client fill in a form and they come to a blank entitled "solitary supporter":

(12) (FINN 1)

- | | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | S: | enslig 'forsørger? | S: | solitary 'supporter? |
| 2 | .. | 'vet du hva 'enslig ^forsørger [er?] | .. | do you 'know what a 'solitary |
| 3 | | | | ^supporter [is?] |
| 4 | H: | [nei\] | H: | [no\] |
| 5 | S: | nei\ | S: | no\ |
| 6 | | hvis 'du og 'Tidas var ^skilt, | | if 'you and 'Tidas were ^divorced, |
| 7 | H: | [mhm/] | H: | [mhm/] |
| 8 | S: | [og 'du] hadde= 'henne= .. e= ^alene, | S: | [and 'you] had= 'her= .. e= ^alone, |
| 9 | H: | (0) alenemor? | H: | (0) single 'mother? |
| 10 | S: | mh- alenemor, | S: | mh- single mother, |
| 11 | | [riktig] riktig, | | [right] right, |
| 12 | H: | [mhm/] | H: | [mhm/] |
| 13 | S: | ^det er ikke 'situasjonen, | S: | ^that's not the 'situation, |

Here the caseworker is in the process of explaining the expression "solitary supporter" and the client proposes "single mother" as a summarizing term. This can be considered a formulation of gist in that it is a reproduction of what the other has said in a shorter format. It presents a candidate construal of the prior turn for the previous speaker to confirm or disconfirm and thus constitutes an understanding check. Repeating the formulation constitutes a confirmation of the proposed construal. In addition, it seems to serve the same function as in the word search sequence above, namely to indicate that the proposal "hit the nail on the head" (in addition to the emphatic confirmation "right right").

Understanding checks also take the form of requests for clarification. Here is an instance (repeated from (7) above):

(13) (IFF 7)

- 1 G: siste 'tre fire 'prøve var e= <X helt X> G: the last 'three four 'exam were e=

2	'nitti ^prosent.	<X completely X> 'ninety per ^cent.
3	S: ja 'nettopp/	S: yeah 'right/
4	G: ja_	G: yeah
5	S: der oppe på 'Slavika ja? (there up at Slavika yes)	S: up there at 'Slavika?
6	G: ja ['Sla]vika [ja.]	G: yeah ['Sla]vika [yeah.]
7	S: [ja/] [ja/]	S: [yeah] [yeah]
8	... neida 'språket ditt er 'bra nok til	... anyway your 'language is 'good enough
9	^mye det,	for ^many things,

Here the caseworker displays his understanding of which tests the client (G) is referring to by proposing an identification of the location ("Slavika"). This request for confirmation is presented as a rather confident guess in that it has the positive response token "ja" (yes) in tag position (cf. Fretheim 1983). Furthermore, the speaker produces it after having already produced a receipt of the client's informing by an acknowledgement token ("ja nettopp" – "yeah right"). This sort of clarification is done not by asking a question, but by either making an independent statement, or, as in this case, by adding a specification to the interlocutor's previous utterance. Especially this latter format underlines the character of speaking for another, since it links on to and extends a sentence that was begun by the other.

Repeating the understanding check can be considered taking on the responsibility of providing that information. The client's repetition of the locational expression in the extract above thus implicitly admits a failure of supplying it at the outset.

Formulations may also spell out implications, or the "upshot", of prior utterances, such as here:

(14) (IFF 4)

1	S: men e= =m ... 'hvis du nå !ikke får	S: but e= =m ... now 'if you !don't get a 'taxi
2	'tæksikurs av 'arbeidskontoret,	course from the 'unemployment office,
3	... (1.0) 'har du noe ^alternativer?	... (1.0) do you 'have any ^alternatives?
4	D: [(H) nei/]	D: [(H) no/]
5	S: ['tenker du å gå på] noe	S: [do you 'plan on taking] any ^Norwegian
6	^norskopplæ=ring,	trai=ning,
7	D: [[<X nei da X>]]	D: [[<X no X>]]

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>8 S: [[eller 'tenker du]] på å 'søke noen
 9 ^andre jobber eller?
 10 D: ... ne=i .. 'egentlig så=
 11 ... for å få 'jobb på ^butikken,
 12 'det er ikke noe ^vanskelig.</p> | <p>S: [[or do you 'plan to]] 'apply for any
 ^other jobs or?
 D: ... no= .. 'actually=
 ... cause getting a 'job at the ^store,
 'that isn't ^hard.</p> |
| <p>13 S: (0) nei så 'det kan du greie ^sjøl.
 <i>(no so that can you manage self)</i></p> | <p>S: (0) no so 'that you can manage ^yourself.</p> |
| <p>14 D: .. 'det kan jeg [greie ^sjøl.]
 <i>(that can I manage self)</i></p> | <p>D: .. 'that I can [manage ^myself.]</p> |
| <p>15 S: [<P ja/ .. ja/ P >]</p> | <p>S: [<P yeah .. yeah P >]</p> |
| <p>16 D: og= men 'jeg skal ha ^forandring,
 17 og 'da skal jeg 'gå på --
 18 og hvis jeg 'kommer ikke ^denne gang,
 19 så 'kjemper jeg på ^nytt.</p> | <p>D: and= but 'I have to have a ^change,
 and 'then I shall 'attend --
 and if I'm not 'accepted ^this time,
 I will 'struggle once ^more.</p> |

The official's statement about the client in line 13 ("so 'that you can manage ^yourself.") is based on what the client has reported in the previous turn ("cause getting a 'job at the ^store, 'that isn't hard."). Here the official draws an inference from what the client has said (as displayed by the inference marker *så* (so)), and the client confirms this inference by repeating it.

The initial question by the caseworker is whether the client has any alternatives to taking the taxi course. The alternatives he goes on to suggest are things that the institution can help him with. The client dismisses these alternatives by saying that it isn't hard to get a job at the store where he worked before. The institutional relevance of this is that in that case, he will not need help from the office, but this is not stated explicitly. The formulation by the caseworker thus spells out the institutional implications of the answer, and the repetition then serves to confirm that this was indeed what he was implying.

The repeat is an instance of what Schegloff (1996) calls "confirming allusions". This is a practice that is initiated by a speaker formulating explicitly something that was implicit in the interlocutor's prior utterance(s). The interlocutor then repeats the formulation as a confirmation of having made that allusion. Again we see the pattern that the repetition constitutes an appropriation of a proposition attributed to the speaker by the interlocutor. The speaker thereby takes on an independent responsibility for this way of describing the matters, and accepts it as a formulation he or she could have – or perhaps even *should* have – used.

Echo answers as upgraders

In a number of cases, echo answers occur outside of repair sequences. What is common to these instances is that the repeat seems to strengthen the speaker's commitment to the position expressed in the answer. This is especially salient in cases where the first pair part projects more than a minimal response. A case in point is questions containing an assessment. As Pomerantz (1984) has shown, such questions are regularly answered by "second assessments". One way of producing a second assessment is by repeating the assessment in the question. Let us consider again example (5), partly repeated here:

(15) (IFF 1)

- | | | | | |
|---|----|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 1 | S: | ja det 'er e= ^slitsom ^jobb? | S: | yeah it 'is a= ^tough ^job? |
| 2 | A: | ja/ (TS) [men ehm] | A: | yeah (TS) [but uhm] |
| 3 | S: | [^ganske] ^tungt? | S: | [^pretty] ^heavy huh? |
| 4 | A: | ja 'ganske ^tungt, | A: | yeah 'pretty ^heavy, |
| 5 | | men 'det går ^bra. | | but 'it's all ^right. |
| 6 | | @[@@@]@ | | @[@@@]@ |
| 7 | S: | [det går 'bra ja.] | S: | [it's all 'right yeah.] |
| 8 | | ja/ | | yeah |

Here the caseworker first produces an assessment in a question format (declarative sentence with rising intonation): "it 'is a= 'tough ^job?" This is answered by a minimal response and a sigh (TS), which seems to carry some evaluative load. However, this response is not treated as sufficiently agreeing, and the question is repeated in slightly altered form: "^pretty ^heavy huh?" (l. 14). That a not fully complying response was indeed under way, transpires from the overlapped "but uhm" in line 2. The next response is upgraded in comparison to the prior, and this upgrading is done by repeating the assessment "pretty heavy". But still this is only a rather weak agreement, and it prefaces also here a declination component: "but it works fine". This is in line with Pomerantz's (op. cit.) observation, that "same evaluations" are often used as prefaces to disagreements. The example thus shows that repetitions of evaluations are weak forms of second assessments, but yet are stronger than minimal agreement.

There are contexts, however, where same evaluations are not necessarily weak, such as in the next example. The extract starts by the caseworker announcing the score of the clients' written test:

(16) (IFF 7)

- | | | | | |
|---|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | S: | 'da har du fått e= 'hundre og ^to. | S: | 'then you've got e= 'hundred and ^two. |
| 2 | G: | <F (H) F> | G: | <F (H) F> |
| 3 | S: | ... det ække så 'verst ['det?]
(<i>that is-not so worst that</i>) | S: | ... not too bad ['is it?] |
| 4 | G: | [ikke] så 'verst.
(<i>not so worst</i>) | G: | [not] too 'bad. |
| 5 | | @[@@]@ | | @[@@]@ |
| 6 | S: | [no] | S: | [no] |
| 7 | G: | .. yeah/= | G: | .. yeah/= |
| 8 | S: | da har du blitt mye bedre i språk. | S: | then you've become much better in the language. |

Immediately after the announcement of the test result, the client produces a strong inbreath, displaying overt surprise. The caseworker continues to produce an assessment which is recognizably an understatement ("not too bad"), given its occurrence after the client's emphatic expression of surprise in the previous turn. The client repeats this assessment and begins to laugh. It is obvious that she finds the test result better than "not too bad", but since an evaluation of the test result is at the same time an evaluation of her own achievement, she is not in a position to upgrade it without appearing as praising her self. What we see here, then, is that repetition of an assessment may be a way of agreeing in cases where upgrading would be socially inappropriate.

In the cases above, the first pair part of the adjacency pair was designed to elicit as the preferred second pair part more than a minimal response. The echo answer then serves to fulfill this requirement for a stronger commitment. But echo answers also occur after questions where there is no such preference, but where there might be other reasons for displaying a strengthened commitment to the answer. There is an example of this in (6), repeated here:

(17) (IFF 7)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 S: når du sier 'tospråklig ^skole, | S: when you say 'bilingual ^school |
| 2 'tenker du da= e= .. 'full ^jobb eller? | are you 'thinking e= .. 'full ^job or? |
| 3 G: ja 'full ^jobb. | G: yeah 'full ^job. |
| 4 S: ja\ | S: yeah |
| 5 G: <X sikkert X> | G: <X sure X> |
| 6 S: mhm\ | S: mhm |

At an unemployment office the question about a client's willingness and determination to get a job is a potentially sensitive question. The clients are required to declare themselves ready to accept a job offer in order to be eligible for unemployment benefit. In this context it might be important for the client to mark her answer as not just a display of willingness, but as an independent personal commitment. This strengthened commitment is expressed by the repetition of "full job" and furthermore reinforced by the addition of the modal expression "sikkert" ("sure") in the next turn (l. 5).

Response words in echo answers

Echo answers either occur alone or with an added response item ("ja", "nei", "mhm" etc.). The response item may be either initial or final. The distribution of response words seems to be related to the role of the echo answer.

Initial response words are used in answers to genuine information seeking questions, such as in (6), partly repeated here:

(18) (IFF 7)

- | | |
|--|--|
| S: 'tenker du da= e= .. 'full ^jobb eller? | S: are you 'thinking e= .. 'full ^job? |
| G: ja 'full ^jobb. | G: yeah 'full ^job. |

The question is formulated as an interrogative, and the speaker does not present himself as having knowledge of the client's choice. That the question is biased towards a specific alternative ("full job") does not change this. The positioning of the response word orients to the uncertainty displayed by the question. Most interrogative sentences are genuine information seeking questions, and thus get an initial response word in echo answers.

Also many questioning repeats and understanding checks that display epistemic uncertainty about what the interlocutor said or meant are responded to by initial response words. This was the case in (9) above (repeated here):

(19) (AETAT 3)

S: [hun er] 'kontaktperson?	S: [she's a] 'contact person?
M: <u>ja</u> 'kontaktperson. ((nikker))	M: <u>yeah</u> 'contact person. ((nods))
e- 'personal i <X industri X> ^Eklund.	e- 'personell in <X industry X> ^Eklund.

The clerk's suggestion in the word search sequence is clearly a guess, and this is oriented to by the fact that the client first confirms the correctness of the suggestion, and only then repeats it, thereby appropriating the word and integrating it into his own utterance.

Initial response words also occur after questions that claim some degree of knowledge, but where the addressee does not have privileged access to the state of affairs. This was the case in (5) above:

(20) (IFF 1)

S: [^ganske] ^tungt?	S: [^pretty] ^heavy huh?
A: ja 'ganske ^tungt,	A: yeah 'pretty ^heavy,

Here the clerk's assessment is done in a questioning format, thus displaying a reduced epistemic commitment and inviting the interlocutor to display her opinion. In this case, they both have only secondary access to knowledge about the actual state of affairs. The initial positioning of the response word marks the opinion as agreeing with the first speaker, but not claiming epistemic authority on the matter.

Echo answers with no response word occur after questions that display some degree of epistemic commitment to the proposition expressed. Many of these are statements about B-events, such as (8) and (14) above (repeated here):

(21) (IFF 5)

S: det var 'norsk.	S: that was 'Norwegian.
E: det var 'norsk ikke [sant.]	E: that was 'Norwegian [right.]
(<i>that was Norwegian not true</i>)	

(22) (IFF 4)

S: (0) nei så 'det kan du greie ^sjøl.

S: (0) no so 'that you can manage ^yourself.

D: .. 'det kan jeg [greie ^sjøl.]

D: .. 'that I can [manage ^myself.]

The first pair parts here represent the speaker's inference about what the interlocutor is talking about. The falling intonation is an indication that he has some confidence in the validity of the inference. The answerer confirms the statement by appropriating it rather than by explicitly agreeing or disagreeing with it. In this way the speaker seems to orient to the statement as linking on to his own prior talk rather than being an independent claim by the interlocutor.

Echo answers with final response words seem to occur mainly after candidate answers and formulations that are expressed rather tentatively by the interlocutor, such as in the following repeated samples:

(23) (IFF 1)

S: [det er 'okei det ^og?]

S: [that's 'okay ^too?]

A: det æ 'okei ja.

A: that's 'okay yeah.

(24) (IFF 5)

S: hvilket ^arbeidskontor 'bruker du,

S: which ^job center do you 'use,

'Lau[ner?]

'Lau[ner?]

E: [eh] Launer ja.

E: [eh] Launer yeah.

The repetition appropriates the suggested formulation by the interlocutor. The final response word seems to claim authority of knowledge by explicitly evaluating the appropriateness of the suggestion.⁸ This pattern can also be seen in other echo answers, where there is no final response word in a strict sense, but other types of expressions evaluating the correctness or appropriateness of a suggested formulation. This was the case in (12) above (repeated here):

(25) (FINN 2)

H: (0) alenemor?

H: (0) single 'mother?

S: mh- alenemor,
[riktig] riktig,

S: mh- single mother,
[right] right,

A similar practice that also testifies to the evaluative function of final response words is found in the following extract. The client has been telling about the school system in his country of origin, and the clerk then sums up with a formulation of gist:

(26) (FINN 3)

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | S: ja\ | S: yeah |
| 2 | ska vi 'se, | let's see, |
| 3 | ['seks] 'år g- e= bb- ^barne[[skole,]] | ['six] 'years g- e= e-e- ^elementary |
| 4 | | [[school,]] |
| 5 | J: [bar-] [[barne]]skole, | J: [el-] [[elementary]] school, |
| 6 | S: 'tre år ^ungdoms[skole=,] | S: 'three years ^high [school=,] |
| 7 | J: [skole] ja. | J: [school] yeah. |
| 8 | S: og 'tre år ^videre[gående] | S: and 'three years ^secon[dary] |
| 9 | J: [videregående] ja. | J: [secondary] yeah. |
| 10 | S: og så 'eventuelt ^universitet. | S: and then 'possibly ^university. |
| 11 | J: (0) universitet. | J: (0) university. |
| 12 | S: det er e= | S: that is e= |
| 13 | det er akkurat likt som i Norge faktisk. | that's exactly like in Norway actually. |

The client confirms the clerk's statements (about a B-event) by repeating the final constituent of each installment in a complex turn. Two of these repeats are followed by response items, which confirm the correctness of the rendering. This form of repeat deviates somewhat from the echo answers under consideration here, since the repeats come in the course of an extended turn by the interlocutor. The client rather engages in what has been called "shadowing", that is, repeating constituents of the interlocutor's talk with minimal delay, even in overlap (Tannen 1989). However, the point is that the final placement of the final response words in all these cases seems to evaluate the correctness or appropriateness of the suggested statement and thereby claim authority of knowledge.

Echo answers and non-nativeness

⁸ This is in line with the claim by Heritage & Raymond (2002) that "second assessments" followed by an agreement token constitute a claim to privileged access to the assessable.

In this article I claim that echo answers play a special role in native/non-native conversation since they frequently enter into repair practices characteristic of such interaction. However, none of the uses described above seem restricted to this environment. They are all idiomatic response forms in Norwegian and may be used in native conversation as well. In this section, I discuss in more detail to what extent the use of echo answers may be seen as related to the linguistic asymmetry between the parties.

Repetition in native/non-native interaction has been studied by many researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). For instance, Long (1981) found that repetition is more frequent in native/non-native interaction than in native/native interaction. The present study may contribute to explaining this finding. As has been pointed out, the specific sort of repetition studied here occurs vastly in repair sequences that are characteristic of native/non-native interaction.

The interest in repetition in studies of second language acquisition has been founded on an assumption that it is used as a learning strategy. Non-native speakers are considered to copy patterns of correct, idiomatic speech produced by the native speaker. This may be reminiscent of a didactic practice whereby learners repeat the teacher's formulation in order to display mastery of the correct form. The problem with this type of account is that it is difficult to prove that repetition is a learning strategy if one does not simultaneously consider the other potential communicative functions a repeat can have.

A critique of studies of conversation in the SLA tradition has been that it has not adopted analytic tools permitting to describe the fine-grained interactional mechanisms involved (Wagner 1996). This critique is especially pertinent to the topic of repetition, which, as noted, may embody many different types of communicative actions. Recently, however, studies have appeared that employ a conversation analytic approach to native/non-native interaction (e.g. Firth 1996, Wagner & Firth 1997, Wong 2001, Kurhila 2001).

The study by Kurhila (2001) is especially relevant to the topic of this article in that she analyses answers that repeat parts of the question. When non-native speakers ask a question that includes non-standard forms, native speakers are observed to not just give the information asked for, but construct a full sentence that "repeats the problematic part of the question in a modified (standard) form" (Kurhila 2001:1089). In addition to correcting the prior utterance, the repetition also displays the clerk's understanding of the customer's question and thus contributes to establishing mutual understanding. The difference between Kurhila's study and my own is that the questions in my study are not deviant. If there is a problematic utterance it is the one prior to the question. However, both studies describe ways in which a native

speaker may embed corrections in otherwise sequentially relevant actions and thus assist the non-native speaker linguistically without performing an overt correction.

Returning to the question of repeats in a language acquisition perspective, it must be pointed out that all the repetition practices described in this paper seem to have functions that are more inherent to the actual communicative activity at hand than memorizing or practicing linguistic forms. However, there is one type of case that may be seen to fit with the description of a learning strategy, and that is the case of repeating part of a question containing an embedded correction of a prior utterance by the non-native speaker, as in (11) above. Here the questioning repeat primarily serves as a hearing check, and such checks are normally responded to by just a minimal response when they are confirmed. However, when clients on several occasions repeat the wording of a hearing check, they seem to orient to the embedded correction involved, and take the occasion to do an overt self-correction. In doing this, they clearly present themselves as "learners", making an extra effort not to be understood, but to speak correctly (cf. Svennevig, *forthc.*).

Echo answers get their "rhetorical effect" from the opposition with minimal responses using a response word. However, in many languages of the world, such as Russian, Finnish and Urdu, yes/no-questions are conventionally confirmed by repeating the focused part of the question rather than by producing a response word (cf. Sadock & Zwicky 1985, Hakulinen 2001). In these languages "echo answers" are simply the standard response form for polar interrogatives and are consequently not expected to have the communicative functions described here. And in fact, some of the echo answers in the corpus may also be considered as resulting from interference from the native language of the speaker. Some of the Urdu-speaking informants produce echo answers that are not idiomatic in Norwegian. Here is an example:

(27) (IFF 5)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>S: 'kona di jobber ^hun?
 E: .. 'før hun kan ^jobbe,
 .. men <X 'nå X> hun kan ^ikke.
 men 'dattern min er ^syk nå,
 den= .. den er 'operert i ^mandler.
 S: jaha/
 ...<u>(1.5)</u> 'kona di er ^hjemme. (<i>S skriver</i>)</p> | <p>S: 'your wife does ^she work?
 E: .. 'before she can ^work,
 .. but <X 'now X> she can ^not.
 but my 'daughter is ^ill now,
 it= .. it has had 'surgery in ^tonsils.
 S: okay,
 ...<u>(1.5)</u> your 'wife's at ^home. (<i>S writes</i>)</p> |
|--|---|

E: **hjemme.**

E: **at 'home.**

S: ...(3.0) når-e 'gjelder 'din ^økonomi,

S: ...(3.0) as for 'your ^finances,

It is the form of the echo answer that is unidiomatic here, as one would rather expect a full sentence repeat (something like "hun er hjemme, ja" – "she is at home, yes").⁹ This may well be a transfer from the Urdu confirmation system.

This sort of transfer from one's native language is common in non-native speakers' interlanguage, and is especially expectable for types of phenomena that traditionally are not taught in textbooks. Learning to respond idiomatically is above all a matter of adopting practices encountered in actual interaction with native speakers. This does not mean, however, that it cannot be taught. Learning the difference in meaning between using a simple response word and an echo answer may sensitize the second language learner to the different response systems involved in different languages. For researchers of language and interaction it is important to note that the communicative functions of such things as repetition are culturally variable and cannot be given universalistic interpretations.

From a different perspective it is also worth noting how many idiomatic and successful echo answers there are after all in these samples of non-native speech. And remembering the fact that such communicative routines are hardly taught in textbooks, it might suggest that repetition also may have some core functions that are easily adapted or transferred from one language to another – least from Urdu to Norwegian.

Conclusion

The echo answers described in this article constitute an alternative to a minimal response following polar questions or statements about B-events. Relative to a minimal response it conveys a strengthened commitment to the answer. In cases where a formulation in the question or statement can be considered as proposed on behalf of the interlocutor, the repeat is heard as accepting and appropriating this formulation, thus achieving the effect of "speaking for oneself".

I argued at the outset that the relevance of repetition had to be demonstrated rather than taken for granted. What this study shows is that echo answers constitute a functionally

⁹ This begs the question what exactly are the conditions for repeating just a fragment of the preceding utterance rather than the whole. However, this question goes beyond the scope of the current paper.

distinct action category and that repetition plays a crucial role in achieving the communicative effect these answers have. The identity of form is specifically relevant to the appropriation of a formulation, since a rephrasing would imply less than full acceptance of the proposed formulation. As for the function of upgrading the speaker's commitment, repetition is probably not equally essential. There are other ways of marking an increased commitment as well, so repetition seems to be just one of a range of intensifiers.

Appendix

Transcription system

The extracts are transcribed according to the system developed by Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Paolino & Cumming (1991, 1993). The transcriptions are presented in two columns: On the left, the Norwegian original; on the right, an English idiomatic translation. The lines that constitute the focus of analysis are set in bold face. When the translation of these lines deviates from a literal one, a word-by-word gloss is presented in the line underneath the Norwegian transcription.

UNITS

Intonation unit	{ <i>carriage return</i> }
Intonation unit continued	{ <i>indentation</i> }
Truncated intonation unit	--
Truncated word	-
Speech overlap	[], [[]] { <i>vertically aligned brackets</i> }

TRANSITIONAL CONTINUITY

Final	.
Continuing	,
Appeal	?

TERMINAL PITCH CONTOUR (Only indicated for one syllable utterances)

Falling	\
Rising	/
Level	—

ACCENT AND LENGTHENING

Primary stress	^
Secondary stress	'
Booster	!
Lengthening	=

PAUSE

Long (>0,7)	...(N)
Medium (0,3-0,7)	...
Short (<0,3)	..
Latching	(0)

VOCAL NOISES

Vocal noises	(COUGH), (THROAT), etc.
Inhalation	(H)

Exhalation	(Hx)
Laughter	@ (one per spurt)
QUALITY	
Piano (soft)	<P P>
Forte (loud)	<F F>
Allegro (rapid)	<A A>
Lento (slow)	<L L>
High pitch	<HI HI>
Laugh quality	<@ @>
Produced on in-breath	<H H>
PHONETICS	
Phonetic transcription	(/ /)
TRANSCRIBER'S PERSPECTIVE	
Researcher's comment	((COMMENT))
Uncertain hearing	<X X>
Indecipherable syllable	X
Focus of analysis	bold face
Non-verbal events	(<i>italics</i>) (time range indicated by underlining)
Word by word translation	(<i>italics</i>) (underneath the Norwegian original)

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