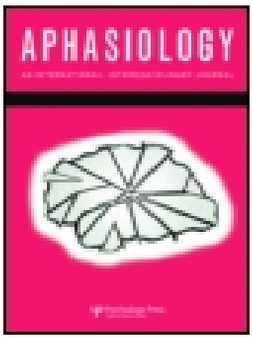

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Spontaneous verbal repetition: a social strategy in aphasic conversation

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Abstract

This study investigated the spontaneous verbal repetition of a person with aphasia during conversation. Research questions were: Does repetition occur as a spontaneous verbal behaviour? How is repetition effectively used? What are the motivations for its use? A person with aphasia and his wife video recorded eight of their naturally occurring conversations which were subsequently transcribed and sequenced into turns-at-talk. Frequency of repetition and the sequential organization of conversation sequences containing repetition were analysed. Repetition was a frequent behaviour, occurring an average of 8% of the time for all conversations. Repetition was effectively used to meet the social needs of the conversation relating to displays of uncertainty, agreement, alignment and acknowledgement. Motivations for repetition related to its use as a compensatory strategy to overcome specific language barriers and to establish perceptions of conversational proficiency.

Introduction

Recently, a number of researchers have attempted to investigate systematically the conversation of persons with aphasia and their conversational partners (Copeland 1989, Ferguson 1992, 1994, 1996, Goodwin 1995, Klippi 1991, Oelschlaeger and Damico 1998, Simmons-Mackie and Damico 1996a,b, 1997). The rationale for this research focus is based on a number of factors. First, it has been observed that the everyday language use of persons with aphasia is often more successful than formal tests of language ability would predict. This necessitates that other research directions more in line with investigation of authentic language use must be explored. Second, it is recognized that, if this difference is to be understood, conversation must be investigated because it is the primary vehicle for human social action. Third, the progressively greater emphasis in clinical aphasiology on the handicapping dimension of aphasia (Hemsley and Code 1996, WHO 1980) additionally obligates the study of conversation. As Kagan and Gailey note, 'conversation is a basic and unique form of communication, essential for maintaining psychosocial well-being' (1993, p. 200).

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In keeping with the need to investigate the conversation of persons with aphasia, the authors have undertaken a long-term investigation of conversation and social functioning between married couples. The aim of this research is to explicate the social actions of persons during conversation when one of the conversationalists has aphasia. Because of the scope of this research effort and the resulting large corpus of data, we have reported findings selectively (Oelschlaeger and Damico 1996a,b, 1998). In this paper, we will again selectively report on a conversational interaction identified from the larger study. Specifically, the spontaneous verbal repetition of a person with aphasia will be discussed in terms of its contribution to the social action and meaning of conversation.

Research perspective

It is well known that traditional experimental paradigms involving rigorous control of contextual variables are limited in applicability to the study of the dynamic, complex behaviour of conversation. As a consequence, research stances have been shifted to other empirical techniques. Most notable are qualitative, interpretive research methodologies that have been used extensively in sociolinguistics (Damico *et al.* 1995) and are incorporated in the recent studies of conversation mentioned above (e.g. ethnography, systematic grammar, conversation analysis). In this study, the ethnomethodology of conversation analysis is primarily employed.

Conversation analysis (CA) has been used extensively in the study of ordinary speakers (e.g. Atkinson and Heritage 1984, Sacks *et al.* 1974, Sacks 1992) and in a few studies of aphasia by others (Ferguson 1994, Goodwin 1995, Laasko 1997, Milroy and Perkins 1992, Oelschlaeger and Damico 1998, Perkins 1995, Wilkinson 1995). Because this research paradigm is discussed extensively in a previous report and in the literature of ordinary speakers, its use is only summarized here.

In this study, conversation is viewed as a socially organized, mutually sustained phenomenon. In conversation, participants engage in highly cooperative activity, monitoring and building on the actions of the other participant(s) as they negotiate the action and meaning of the conversation. The basic analytic tool of CA is descriptive analysis of the organization of conversational sequence(s). That is, by examining conversational interactions—the design of a conversational turn in relation to the previous turn—a greater understanding of how conversation is produced and understood by the participants is achieved. Authenticity and validity of findings is assured through the observation and recognition of the systematicity of interactions across many naturally occurring conversations (Atkinson and Heritage 1984).

With the conversation analysis research perspective, the following questions were asked regarding repetition as a conversational strategy in aphasia:

- Is repetition a naturally occurring behaviour in the conversation of a person with aphasia?
- How is repetition effectively employed by a person with aphasia to enhance conversation?
- What are the motivations for a person with aphasia to use repetition in conversation?

Method

As mentioned in the introduction, the data for this study were collected as part of a larger project studying conversation and aphasia (Oelschlaeger and Damico 1996a,b, 1998). All details of subject selection, and many other methodological aspects, are identical to those described in these previous papers. Subsequently, methods and procedures are only summarized here with additional description as is necessary for the understanding of the specific focus of this study.

Conversational participants

One couple, Ed and M, participated in this study. Ed was 50 years old with a 6 year history of aphasia and right hemiparesis. His aphasia quotient (AQ), derived from administration of the *Western Aphasia Battery* (WAB) was 46.6 with a WAB classification of conduction aphasia (Kertesz 1982). Subtest scores for the WAB are presented in Appendix A. Ed was employed full time as a draftsman and M, his spouse of 31 years, was employed full time as a secretary. Additional conversational participants were MO, the primary investigator and MG, her research assistant.

Data collection

Data for this study were eight naturally occurring conversations obtained over a 2 month period. Five conversations involved two parties in which Ed and M were the conversational participants. The three others were multi-party conversations when one or two other individuals (e.g. MG and MO) were present. All conversations were videotaped at Ed and M's home, either as they sat on their patio or as multi-party participants sat at the kitchen table. No contextual conversational constraints were defined relative to time, place, or topic of any of the eight conversations. As mentioned previously, this large data set covering various time periods, various participants, several locations and numerous spontaneously generated topics was necessary to assure the authenticity of findings.

Data analysis

Following data collection, all videotapes were transcribed and sequenced into 'turns-at-talk' for all participants (Schegloff 1996). Table 1 displays conversation length, turns-at-talk and a comparison of turns-at-talk for all conversational participants.

In the 266 minutes of conversation, the combined total number of turns-at-talk for all participants was 3561. It should be noted that despite his aphasia, Ed was a very active participant in all conversations.

In keeping with the authors' research perspective and the methodology of conversation analysis, repetition was not pre-selected for study. Rather, when the videotaped conversations were cyclically reviewed as part of the larger study of conversation, recurring behaviours of interest were identified. Several of these have been reported elsewhere (Oelschlaeger and Damico 1996a,b, 1998). Relevant to this study was the observation of Ed's repetition of the utterances of others. That is, it was observed that Ed often spontaneously repeated all or part of the

Table 1. Turns-at-talk for conversational participants for each conversation

Conversation		Turns-at-talk			
		Ed	M	MG	MO
A	42 min	211	192	197	0
B	28 min	212	213		
C	31 min	169	195	49	173
D	35 min	186	176		
E	44 min	184	336	56	289
F	19 min	64	55		
G	31 min	122	114		
H	36 min	185	183		
Total	266 min	1333	1464	302	462

previous speaker's utterance. Since this behaviour appeared systematic and pragmatic during the conversations, it was identified as a potential conversational strategy used differentially by Ed to achieve a conversational effect. Consequently, it was selected for specific and detailed analysis and is the topic of this report. Examples 1 and 2 below demonstrate this identified strategy (targeted text is highlighted and the transcription markings used for clarification purposes are presented in Appendix B).

Example 1 (conversation A)

108 MG: Is that a **whole new system?**
109 Ed: **Whole new system.**
110 MG: Wow, that's a major project.

Example 2

268 M: General Dynamics was **folding.**
269 Ed: **Folding.**
270 M: And he had a job out here because he was working for Sandia Labs and it was an automatic job for whatever company hired him.

In both examples, Ed's conversational turn consisted of a spontaneous repetition of a portion of a previous speaker's verbal production. Additionally, Ed partially repeats the utterance of the previous speaker with no other turns intervening.

Data analysis of Ed's spontaneous repetitions during conversations consisted of the following:

(1) All videotapes and transcripts for all of the eight conversations were reviewed and Ed's turns-at-talk that were characterized by repetition were identified.
(2) Following identification, the sequential organization of conversational sequences in which repetition occurred was analysed. Analysis focused on detailing the linguistic and paralinguistic features of each repetition turn and the turns-at-talk preceding and following it.
(3) The sequential organization of analysed conversational sequences were then compared to identify similarities in action and meaning. This resulted in the parsimonious grouping of conversational sequences based on several contextual and functional features.

Reliability

To determine the reliability of identification of Ed's repetition, the first author counted Ed's repetition of the words of others in all conversations. Intra-rater reliability was established by recounting his frequency of repetition in two conversations representing approximately 25% of the total data set. One conversation was randomly selected from the five two-party conversations and the other was randomly selected from the three multi-party conversations. Determination of inter-rater reliability involved the counting of frequency of repetition in the two selected conversations by a second rater well versed in interactional analysis.

Both intra-rater and inter-rater reliability for Ed's repetition were calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the sum of agreements and disagreements and multiplying by 100. With this procedure, intra-rater reliability was determined to be 94% and inter-rater reliability was 84%.

Results

Repetition as a spontaneous verbal behaviour

The first question of this study was whether repetition naturally occurred in the conversation of the person with aphasia. To answer this question, the frequency of Ed's repetition was determined. This result was then used to calculate the percentage of repetition turns for all conversations. These results are presented in table 2.

The results presented in table 2 identify repetition as a naturally occurring behaviour in the conversation of this aphasic person. Ed spontaneously repeated the words of a previous speaker in every conversation with frequency of occurrence varying from a high of 28 in conversation A to a low of 4 in conversation F.

Not only is the question of whether repetition is a spontaneous conversational language behaviour of a person with aphasia answered affirmatively by these data, the number of times Ed repeats relative to his turns-at-talk identifies repetition as a substantial part of Ed's conversational participation. More specifically, 13% of his conversational turns were characterized by repetition in conversation A. To be sure, this is the highest level of all the conversations. However, the average percentage of Ed's repetition per turns-at-talk of 8% for all conversations supports the identification of repetition as a systematically displayed conversational behaviour. In addition, Ed repeated more frequently than the other conversational participants whose repetitions averaged between 0.6% and 4.3% of their turns-at-talk.

Use of repetition in conversation

The second question of this study addressed Ed's effective use of repetition in conversation. To answer this question, the sequential organization of conversational sequences containing repetition were analysed. Comparison of similarities in the action and meaning of each revealed specific conversational sequences associated with four primary uses of repetition:

(1) Uncertainty: repetition was used to display uncertainty in *clarification* sequences.

Table 2. Frequency of repetition in Ed's turns-at-talk for each conversation

Conversation	Frequency of repetition	Repetition as percentage of turns-at-talk
A/group	28	28/211 (13.0%)
B/dyad	16	16/212 (7.5%)
C/group	17	17/169 (10.0%)
D/dyad	8	8/186 (4.0%)
E/group	13	13/184 (7.0%)
F/dyad	4	4/64 (6.0%)
G/dyad	9	9/122 (7.0%)
H/dyad	14	14/185 (7.6%)
Total	109	109/1333 (8.0%)

(2) Agreement: repetition was used to display agreement in *question and answer* and *joint production* sequences.
(3) Alignment: repetition was used to display alignment in *assessment* sequences.
(4) Acknowledgement: repetition was used to display acknowledgement in *continuation* sequences.

Each of these uses of repetition in specific conversational sequences is discussed below.

Repetition to show uncertainty

Analysis of the sequential organization of conversational sequences containing Ed's repetition demonstrated that Ed used repetition to indicate his uncertainty about something that another speaker had said. The systematic conversational context when Ed showed uncertainty was a *clarification* sequence. Important to the major purpose of this study was Ed's use of repetition in these sequences. A prototype of a *clarification* sequence is presented in example 3.

Example 3 (conversation D)
In this example, Ed and M are talking about features of a 'walkie-talkie' that they are considering purchasing from Radio Shack. M is telling Ed about the cost and transmission distance characteristics of walkie-talkies described in a Radio Shack catalogue.

1 M: Saturday afternoon, the, what, the twenty-third, twenty-fourth one
2 of those days. Twenty-fourth. Okay. Radio Shack has adult (price
3 ones). There's two. One is fifty dollars each and the other is
4 seventy for the pair. And they both go about a **quarter of a mile.**
5 E: **Quarter of a mile?**
6 M: Ra-range.

In line 1, M tells Ed about features (cost and range) of two different walkie-talkies. Ed indicates that he is uncertain about what she is saying in line 5 when he asks her a question about it. His question is designed as a repetition of the last three words of M's prior turn. M offers an answer to his question in line 6.

Discussion of repetition to show uncertainty in a clarification sequence. One of the most common ways ordinary speakers indicate a lack of understanding of what someone

said is with wh- questions or queries (i.e. What?, Huh?). Important to the major question of this study is that Ed chose an alternative interactional technique and successfully used repetition to achieve this conversation goal. As described above, his turn in this conversational sequence is a partial repetition of M's previous turn (i.e. 'quarter of a mile'). That repetition succeeded in showing his uncertainty is evidenced in M's interactive response. She paraphrases information she provided in her previous turn.

The effectiveness of repetition to show uncertainty is additionally evidenced in its contribution to the formulation of M's interactive response. More specifically, Ed's repetition of 'a quarter of a mile' *locates* the exact point of uncertainty in M's utterance. M understands that she need not clarify all of her previous talk and designs her next turn accordingly. Evidence of her understanding is seen in line 6, when she includes only information relating to 'a quarter of a mile', paraphrased as the word 'range'. She does not retell any of the previous information relating to cost as she knows through Ed's repetition that it is not an issue. Ed's repetition to define the exact source of trouble within M's talk has immediate benefit to the progression of the conversation. Both Ed and M have to attend only to that which needs to be clarified. Consequently, the conversational digression imposed by the need to stop and clear up Ed's uncertainty before the conversation can proceed is limited. By delimiting their talk, the conversation is more readily back on course.

Repetition to show agreement

Repetition to show agreement was evidenced in two systematic conversational contexts. One was a *question and answer* sequence and another was a *joint production* sequence. A prototype of each of these types of interactional sequences is presented in the following examples.

Question and answer sequence.

Example 4 (conversation A)
In this example, Ed and M are talking about how long it took to get from his home to the base when he was in the military.

372 Ed: Yeah. From here to one there, one mile, one (2.0), no (2.1), can't think of the name of it.
373 M: **Hour**?
374 Ed: **Hour.**
375 MG: Hmmm.

In this example, Ed initiates his turn in line 372. However, he does not complete it. He indicates that he is having word retrieval difficulty by engaging in several attempts to say the desired word, by pausing and by employing metalanguage (i.e. 'can't think of the name of it'). M participates in Ed's word search when she offers a word in line 373 as a question. In his next turn, Ed repeats M's word as an answer to her question.

Discussion of repetition to show agreement in a question and answer sequence. Participating in someone else's word search is a common practice in the conversation of ordinary persons and occurs frequently in conversations involving persons with aphasia

(Ferguson 1992, Oelschlaeger and Damico 1996b). Most relevant to the purpose of this study is not the word search *per se*, but Ed's repetition in this *question and answer* sequence. Specifically, because Ed identifies the source of his difficulty, M knows that she can contribute to the resolution of his search by offering a word. But she does not know exactly what word Ed is trying to say. Because of her uncertainty, she formats her participation as a question. In this way, she seeks confirmation that her offered word is the one he desired. Ed shows his *agreement* with her guess when he subsequently repeats it. The effect of this display of agreement is the termination of the word search evidenced by the fact that no other conversational turns are dedicated to it.

In addition to showing agreement, Ed's repetition influences how M formulates her interactive response. This is most clearly seen when alternative forms of agreement are considered. For example, a question and answer sequence (Q & A) is known to exert a powerful influence on the organization of a conversation (see Sacks 1992: adjacency pairs). The basic notion is that when a question is asked, the turn subsequent to it will be designed as an answer. However, even though a question and answer adjacency pair provides structure to a conversational interaction, it does not define the content. Ed has several choices in how he designs his answer to show his agreement. Most obviously, he could respond with a simple yes/no. However, as Jefferson (1973) notes, 'yes' is a 'general acknowledger' that has many potential meanings in a conversation. But when Ed designs his answer in a repetition format, he provides M with information about how adequately and accurately he auditorily processed her words as well as his agreement or disagreement with her. Repetition therefore serves as an information resource to M about Ed's agreement or disagreement and it is available to her in constructing her interactive response.

The importance of Ed's repetition to M in formulation of her interactive response is seen in the next two examples. In both of these examples, Ed and M are engaged in a word search. Similarly, the conversational goal of agreement is not readily reached. That is, in both examples, Ed *disagrees* with M's offered word. The examples differ in terms of how this disagreement is displayed. In example 5, he uses 'no' as the sole indicator of disagreement. In example 6, he first repeats her offered word and then rejects it with the word 'no'. This difference in how Ed shows *lack of agreement* leads to differences in M's design of her continued participation in the word search.

In example 5, Ed and M are engaged in a word search for a proper name of a person at Ed's place of employment.

Example 5 (conversation B)

263 M: Tchikowski?
264 Ed: No.
265 M: Jack Tchikowski? No?

Following M's offer of a proper name in line 263, Ed shows his lack of agreement with use of a negative token (e.g. no) as an answer. Although 'no' is effective in showing disagreement, what is being disagreed upon is ambiguous. For example, it is possible that Ed rejected M's offer because it is not the word he desired. It is also possible that Ed rejected her guess because he did not auditorily process her words accurately. Certainly, in light of Ed's aphasia, any uncertainty M might have about Ed's auditory comprehension is well warranted. The way she frames her next

contribution to the word search demonstrates her insecurity about whether Ed's 'no' was indicative of his misunderstanding of 'Tchikowski' or an actual rejection of it. After he rejects the proper name she offers, she guesses it again in line 265. Her second guess is *reformulated* to include the gentleman's first name. In addition, she adds the tag question, 'no?' In this way, she has framed her interactive response to resolve her uncertainty about Ed's comprehension of her guess prior to offering another. In this rephrasing of her initial guess, she presents Ed with another opportunity to auditorily process her words. Her inclusion of the tag question 'no?' additionally provides him with an opportunity to reanalyse not only her words but also his own. Ed must re-evaluate both her offered name and his previous rejection of it.

Example 6 shows Ed's use of repetition to display disagreement. In this example, Ed and M are discussing their plans about going to a movie (e.g. *Casper*) or to dinner (e.g. Tomato Cafe).

Example 6 (conversation C)

315 Ed: What else. Oh yeah right we're going to the place. See the whatever.
316 M: *Casper*?
317 Ed: ***Cas–***, no uhm::
318 M: Tomato Cafe?

Like example 5, Ed rejects M's guess related to the 'whatever' he is trying to say at the end of line 315. But included in his rejection is a partial repetition of the proper name '*Casper*' at the beginning of his turn in line 317. Although repetition only shows what is understood and does not confirm accuracy of understanding, it does assist in reducing the possibility that it was based on auditory miscomprehension. Apparently, it was sufficient in this case since M then formulates her next contribution to Ed's word search as a new guess.

Incidentally, it should also be noted that what differs with repetition as an answer in a Q & A word search sequence is not a 'quicker' resolution of a word search *per se*. Rather, repetition potentially limits the amount and type of conversational work that needs to be done as participants collaborate to resolve the word search.

Joint production sequence

Ed also uses repetition to show agreement in conversational sequences that are identified as joint productions (see Oelschlaeger and Damico 1998 for additional discussion of joint productions). Joint productions are conversational interactions where an utterance is initiated by one person but completed by another. Three types of joint production sequences—word searches, turn completion and appendors—are exhibited in Ed's use of repetition to show agreement. As all three types have similar structural features (i.e. one person initiates an utterance and another participates in its final construction), a turn completion sequence is used in the prototypical case presentation of data in example 7.

Example 7 (conversation A)
In this example, Ed is telling MG about where he is from.

168 Ed: Yeah. About uh, Brooklyn, Brooklyn Bridge?
169 MG: Uh huh.
170 Ed: That's me. On the the=

171 M: **=other side.**
172 Ed: **Other side.**
173 MG: You're close.

In line 170, Ed's turn is initiated but incomplete. Without noticeable hesitation, M joins his talk in line 171, completing Ed's turn with 'other side'. Ed then repeats M in line 172 which is followed by a comment by MG.

Discussion of repetition to show agreement in joint production sequence. Here again, repetition is used to show agreement. Ed was in the process of constructing his turn-at-talk. At a specific point in his production, M 'chimed' in, able to project the direction of his talk, and offered a completion of his turn. However, whether her projection was 'correct' or not (i.e. in the direction he intended) is not known until Ed repeats her words and the conversation continues. Very similar to the question and answer sequence previously described, Ed uses repetition to show that he is in agreement with what M said.

Repetition by Ed in this interaction also exerts its influence on the subsequent organization of the conversation. It is recognized that once M completes Ed's turn, he need not say anything. Agreement is required, of course, but M is not overtly seeking it as she did with a question/answer format in the word search sequence described previously. Rather, because she completes his utterance with certainty, using a declarative clause, agreement is *understood* with Ed needing only to respond if he disagrees. M, by completing Ed's turn, has selected herself to be the next speaker and may now continue speaking unless disagreement is displayed. However, Ed's choice to show his agreement with repetition rather than let it be presumed results in a different organizational outcome. First, when Ed repeats her words in line 172, he regains the conversational floor and, as a consequence, pre-empts M's option of continuing to speak. That is, when he repeats to show his agreement, he selects himself to be the next speaker in the conversation. Second, in repeating, he *effectively* completes the turn he initiated. Only then is another turn-taking opportunity presented to M and the other conversational participants. This is seen when MG takes the next turn in line 173.

Repetition to show alignment

The third effective use of repetition by Ed was to show alignment. This use was seen when he exhibited agreement with another conversational participant and he provided the basis for his agreement. In these instances, Ed adopted the agreement *perspective* of the speaker. Another way of stating this social phenomenon is that Ed, through his repetition, showed that he was 'of like mind' or 'in tune' with another person. Characteristically, Ed used repetition to show alignment in *assessment* sequences.

Assessment sequences are typified by an evaluative proposition made by a speaker that is subsequently agreed or disagreed with by another speaker. In situations when agreement is reached, the co-participants are socially affiliated. A prototype of an assessment sequence taken from a multi-party conversation is shown in the next example.

Example 8 (conversation A)
In this discussion, Ed, M and MG are talking about living away from family.

286 M: Well, you don't get tied up in the family messes.
287 MG: Yeah, **that's true.**
288 Ed: **That's true.**
289 MG: That's true, and you can go visit and that's very nice and then you can go home.

Following M's statement about living away from relatives, MG follows with a short comment on its truthfulness. Ed then repeats MG in line 288 and the conversational flow continues with MG's paraphrasing of M's prior talk.

Discussion of repetition to show alignment in assessment sequences. In this example, there are multiple conversational turns dedicated to showing alignment between all three members of the conversation. However, directly related to this study is Ed's repetition of 'That's true' in line 288. Looking back at M's turn in line 286, her utterance is an evaluative one as she talks about a 'good' thing about living away from home. MG shows her agreement, but even more so, aligns herself with M as she verifies M's assessment with 'That's true', meaning 'I think the same thing as you'. Ed does essentially the same thing with his 'That's true'. In repeating, he talks from the same perspective as both M and MG, resulting in his display of alignment with both of them.

Repetition to show acknowledgement

This final data presentation shows Ed's repetition as an acknowledger. In these instances, Ed uses repetition to let the conversational participants know that, at the very least, he is attending to, interested in and following along with what is being said. These sequences were grouped as *continuation* sequences because they were embedded in an extended narrative of another conversational participant. Examples 9 and 10 show this type of conversational context.

In both examples, Ed, M and MO are talking about Ed and M's attendance at a local city festival that occurred the previous Saturday evening in downtown Albuquerque. MO has read about these events but has never attended one herself.

Example 9 (conversation C)

148 M: We parked at a pay parking **lot.**
149 Ed: **lot.**
150 M: That was the only the, a **dollar.**
151 Ed: **A dollar.** That was it.
152 M: You know
153 MO: //OK.

Example 10 (conversation C)

181 M: And they had a couple, probably a professional dance crew or couple that danced the Italian **dances.**
182 Ed: **Dances.**
183 MO:Oh nice.

In both examples, M is engaged in telling the story about attending this city festival. In these sequences, she is describing the costs and content of 'Italian night'. Ed then repeats the last word of her description in his conversational turn.

Discussion of repetition to show acknowledgement in continuation sequences. Ed's use of repetition in these sequences evidence his conversational participation despite the fact that someone else (M) has the conversational floor. He is not just on 'standby' but, rather, is paying attention to what is being said. Repetition to acknowledge his attention and understanding of the narrative in this instance is upgraded from other general acknowledgers. More specifically, 'yeah' or 'mmmm' also serve to *acknowledge* that a listener is *listening*, but exactly what is being heard is not known. Once again, repetition specifies information about what Ed understands.

As noted above, although his repetition serves as an acknowledger, it adds little factual information to M's telling of the story. However, once again, it serves as a resource to M in constructing her conversational turns. Although not unique, this is particularly evident in this multi-party conversation. Here, M is the primary narrator, telling MO about the event. However, even though the direction of talk is between M and MO, Ed is a 'knowing recipient' of M's talk, having shared knowledge with M about the events she is talking about. He has a choice of either letting his spouse do the talking (i.e. withdrawal from the conversation—a not uncommon occurrence in clinical descriptions of conversations with persons with aphasia and their spouses) or continuing to participate. If Ed chose not to say anything, M would be presented with the conversational dilemma of whether to design her turns to include him in the conversation or ignore him, at least until she completes her story (see Goodwin (1987) for an extensive discussion of conversations with knowing and unknowing recipients). Ed's repetition as an acknowledger, as it defines his place within the conversation, precludes M's having to engage in this type of conversational work. She is able to continue her tale without having to design her turn to include Ed as a conversational participant. Another way of saying this is, that although Ed does not carry the 'communicative load' in the narration, through repetition he carries his 'conversation load', freeing M to continue her storytelling without diverting to Ed's participatory needs.

In summary, in examining the question of use, the data presented show that Ed's repetition is effective in accomplishing a number of social actions and meanings in many different conversational contexts. In all instances, his use of repetition showed his understanding of the meaning of the conversation and influenced the construction of the conversational turn of other interactants.

Motivations for repetition

To answer the third question of this study, the above uses of repetition were analysed in relation to Ed's aphasia. The data from sequential analysis and knowledge of aphasia were used to examine 'why' Ed would use repetition in conversation. Results of this analysis led to one major finding: Ed's use of repetition was a compensatory conversational strategy that he used to overcome or *counterbalance* specific language barriers and to position himself socially as conversationally proficient. Data supporting this finding are discussed in terms of each of these accomplishments.

Repetition as a compensatory strategy

In their definition of a compensatory strategy, Simmons-Mackie and Damico propose that 'compensatory behaviors are often pre-existing or "normal" communicative behaviors that are "functionally expanded" relative to premorbid

occurrence' (1997, p. 767). The data of this study clearly fit this definition in a number of ways. First, the ability to repeat is recognized in children's and adult literature to be a 'normal' communicative behaviour (Kirchner and Prutting 1987). Second, the frequency of Ed's repetition was comparatively higher than that of the ordinary (i.e. non-aphasic) speakers in this study. This increased frequency of repetition exemplifies the 'functional expansion' alluded to by Simmons-Mackie and Damico. Third, and perhaps more importantly, he used repetition to accomplish distinct social actions and meanings in many different conversational contexts. Even though alternative language forms could be used to accomplish the social meaning and action described in the data, Ed's repetition suggests that these alternative forms were not always available to him. Certainly, the description of his aphasia as moderately impaired supports this claim.

Repetition to overcome specific language barriers

Given that repetition can be viewed as a compensatory strategy, it is additionally possible to examine how it is used to overcome specific communication barriers such as impairments in the language modalities of auditory comprehension and verbal expression common to aphasia. The following discussion includes consideration of Ed's repetition to compensate for specific language limitations. As repetition as a communicative resource for other conversational participants has been discussed previously, this data description focuses on how Ed uses repetition to his own advantage in formulation of his conversational participation.

Auditory processing deficits

Most obviously, every time Ed repeats, he gives himself an opportunity for re-auditorization. This potentially assists his auditory processing and increases the probability of the accuracy of his communicative intent. This is evident in example 6 and shown again in the question and answer sequence in the following example.

Example 11 (conversation B)
Ed and M are sitting on their patio talking about work that needs to be done on their recreational vehicle (RV).

372 Ed: Yeah, I know. Because the, the uh, the uh, the uh, wheel, no, the
373 M: the **tailpipe**?
374 Ed: **Pipe**. No, no the, you see
375 M: the b–
376 Ed: //it's lower
377 M: **the bumper**?
378 Ed: **the bumper**. No, was a, a
379 M: What was that? Well, one of 'em is the gas can tank.

In each attempt to resolve the word search, Ed repeats M's guess which, as noted in previous examples, typically shows agreement. However, as demonstrated here, following repetition, he rejects her guess in line 374 and line 378. His repetition provides auditory feedback, letting him process again what M said. In both instances, this reprocessing leads to disagreement with her talk. His provision of an answer as a repetition can then be seen as a constructive adaptation to auditory processing deficits associated with his aphasia.

Verbal expression deficits

Repetition is also meaningful with regard to Ed as an encoder of language. In repeating, he is able to accomplish a number of conversational goals while at the same time placing minimal demand on his language system. The words of another have provided him with specific resources relating to the phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax that are necessary to say something. Certainly, in terms of his word-finding difficulty, using someone else's lexical choice is exceedingly beneficial to the construction of his conversation turn. In the context of his limited language ability, his use of the words of others *compensates* for his inability to generate his own unique utterance.

Ed's use of repetition to overcome verbal expression barriers is further substantiated by the fact that rarely, if ever, did he repeat the utterance of another with increased morphologic or syntactic complexity. More often, he reduced his iteration by repeating only part of the previous utterance. Sometimes, his repetition was limited to only one syllable (see example 6) but even these limited repetitions were effective in accomplishing specific conversational goals.

Repetition to establish conversational proficiency

Ed's use of repetition to accomplish many specific conversational goals is evidence of his motivation to position himself socially as a proficient conversationalist. He could not otherwise participate in conversation because of his aphasia, as is often described in clinical literature. However, he used his residual language ability of repetition to establish his social position in the conversation. This is demonstrated in examination of specific conversational goals Ed was able to achieve with the repetition.

Perhaps most basic to issues relating to conversational proficiency is that Ed frequently uses repetition to fulfil a primary social requirement of a conversation, the taking of a turn. His aphasia limits his access to various language forms and thus, by definition, could preclude his conversational participation. In addition, as other conversational participants know he has aphasia, the stage is set for him to be excluded from the conversation by others. That is, other interactants could presume that he is incapable of participating in the conversation. However, as noted in this study, he was an active participant, frequently fulfilling conversational requirements of turn taking with repetition. As he is an active participant in the co-construction of the conversation, he demonstrates to other conversational participants that *despite his aphasia*, he is conversationally proficient. In addition to using repetition to fulfil turn-taking requirements, he further demonstrates his conversational proficiency when he uses it to meet more specific conversational needs. That is, his use of repetition to show uncertainty, agreement, alignment and acknowledgement evidences that he was keenly aware of the need to do so. Other conversational participants are informed, through his use of repetition, that he understands and is capable of producing talk designed to meet the needs of the conversation.

Another way he positions himself as conversationally proficient is that by repeating the words of others, he enhances his verbal fluency. He does this in two ways. First, repetition provides him with a vehicle to avoid presenting himself as linguistically inferior (Goodwin 1995). As he rides on the words of others, he

circumvents potential word-finding difficulty. To be sure, repetition may also be socially devalued over more complex language forms. However, as Simmons-Mackie and Damico (1997) propose, a compensatory strategy will be used when its social advantage is perceived as outweighing its disadvantage. In this case, Ed's use of repetition to enhance fluency is viewed as more supportive of his social position as a competent conversationalist than overt displays of word-finding difficulty.

Finally, repetition of the words of another, particularly when social relationships are defined, implies that more than one speaker could tell the same story. A listener might presuppose on the basis of Ed's social relationship as a 'knowing recipient' that Ed could tell the same story M tells. Ed supports this presupposition by repeating M's words, the implication being that, indeed, she is saying exactly ***word for word*** what he would say. There is the additional implication, with repetition to display alignment, that if M errs in her telling, he would correct her. Whether he really could do this or not is a matter of conjecture given his aphasia. However, the social consequence is that Ed establishes the perception of conversational proficiency.

Conclusion

Data from this study answer the three research questions. First, the question of repetition as a spontaneous verbal behaviour in conversation was answered by evidence of its frequency. Second, the question of how repetition was effectively used was answered by evidence of its active use to show uncertainty, agreement, alignment and acknowledgement in specific conversational contexts. Third, the question of motivation was answered through evidence of its use as a compensatory strategy to overcome specific language barriers and to establish perceptions of conversational proficiency.

Discussion

Verbal repetition is investigated extensively in the study of aphasia. Research has been directed toward applying findings to neuroanatomical and neurophysiological models of language localization (Damasio 1992, Goodglass and Kaplan 1983, Kertesz 1982) and defining the disability of aphasia through specific diagnostic protocols (Perkins *et al.* 1995). Despite its identified importance in these domains (i.e. impairment and disability), little clinical attention has been given to its remediation (Simmons 1990).

Results of this study, as they show the effective use of repetition in conversation by a person with aphasia, suggest that this research and clinical perspective must be revisited. Because of what repetition can accomplish in conversation, it appears to be potentially meaningful as a clinically targeted behaviour for other persons with aphasia particularly as it relates to the 'handicap' of aphasia. Specifically, as Lyon (1992) notes, despite demonstrations of efficacy, there is little evidence that treatment affects the quality of life of persons with aphasia. Repetition appears to affect quality of life directly, in that ***despite its non-propositionality***, it supports Ed's participation in the conversation and his social position as a proficient conversationalist.

The need for a change in clinical perspective regarding repetition as an effective conversational strategy for a person with aphasia is further emphasized in the

design of treatment programmes involving the training of non-aphasic 'conversational' or 'communicative' partners (Kagan and Gailey 1993, Lyon 1992). The success of any conversation is dependent on the collaboration between participants. The data showed this collaboration as repetition supported Ed's participation but also influenced other participants. When he repeated, they learned about his state of understanding and used this information as a resource in designing their own participation. Viewing conversation as collaborative and identifying conversational strategies may be used to 'train' partners about how communicative success may be achieved in specific conversational contexts.

Although only repetition was studied in this investigation, it is probably naïve to conclude that it is the only residual language behaviour in aphasia that may be used effectively in conversation. The results of this study can be seen in this context to have implications for future research. Of specific importance is the demonstration of the ability to study as complex a phenomenon as conversation using qualitative methodologies. Certainly, such a research approach is supported for future study of the ways conversation success is achieved by persons with aphasia.

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Appendix A: *Western Aphasia Battery* scores

Subtest	Subtest score
Spontaneous speech	
Information content	9/10
Fluency	9/10
Total	18/20
Comprehension	
Yes/No questions	60/60
Auditory word recognition	57/60
Sequential commands	50/80
Total	167/200
Repetition naming	58/100
Object naming	54/60
Word fluency	8/20
Sentence completion	10/10
Responsive speech	10/10
Total	82/100
Aphasia quotient	46.6
WAB aphasia classification	Conduction aphasia

Appendix B

Talk is transcribed using a simplified version of the Jefferson transcription system (Sacks *et al.* 1974).

(#) A number in parentheses indicates elapsed time in seconds for pauses 1 second or greater. This device is used between turns-at-talk between speakers, between two separable parts of a single speaker's talk and between parts of a single speaker's turn.

? and . Punctuation markers used for intonation. A question mark indicates rising intonation and a period indicates falling intonation.

: A colon is used as a sound production marker, indicating that the prior syllable is prolonged.

– A dash indicates a 'cut off' of the prior word or sound.

( ) Single pairs of parentheses indicate that transcribers are not sure about the words contained or that the talk was unintelligible.

= The equals sign indicates 'latching'—i.e. no interval between the end of a prior and start of the next piece of talk.