# Using Allo-Repetition Strategy

# To Increase Students' Participation in Conversation

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## Introduction

It is said that success in learning a foreign language is determined by its learners' abilities to communicate effectively in the language. To make the language learners able to communicate in both spoken and written language, they should acquire all language skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Besides, they also should have competences on language components such as: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. It can be said that the aim of language teaching can be obtained if the students are able to express their ideas and thoughts as well as to perform communication well through acquiring those skills and components. Since the focus of language teaching has changed towards communicative skills, the teaching of oral skill has become increasingly important.

Related to this case, it is essential that language teachers pay more attention on teaching speaking with an emphasis on the teaching the language use in real life situations and contextual communication. That is why it is important for teachers to provide a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place. In other words, language activities in the classroom should give students more opportunities to speak in order to improve individual language use.

Dealing with this condition, it is stated in the Curriculum for Senior High School that students are expected to be able to communicate in oral or written language whether in interactional or transactional communication. The students are hoped to be competent to perform their speaking abilities through monolog and dialogue in the context of daily life. To meet this demand, it is true that students' strategic competence is one of the required competences in order to improve their participation in conversation.

Unfortunately, it is an undeniable fact that English, despite being recognized as an international language, is a foreign language studied at Junior and Senior High School that for most of students find it difficult to use in daily life contexts. They face many obstacles in speaking. They feel reluctant to be judged by hearers and at the end they tend to choose to keep silent rather than to speak up. If they are engaged in a conversation, they seem unable to maintain and develop their conversation.

They don't know how to keep their interaction on going and as a result they give up continuing their conversation. They have not yet been able to look for good opportunities to speak English each other, because they prefer to use their mother tongue to interact.

Considering this fact, it requires teachers to consider methodology and students strategies in learning which is not only intended to produce students who can master language, but also to produce school graduates with skills that can be applied in their daily life as well as in an academic field. Since oral communicative skill has been considered as a vital part of humanistic education and democratic citizenship, it is an obligatory to teach students not only to be able to speak accurately and fluently, but also to be able to establish relationships through conversation in their social life. The students' participation in conversation can be improved through employing certain communication strategies. *Allo-repetition*

*strategy* is one of communication strategies that can be applied.

*Allo-repetition strategy* is promoted as a solution because it is presumed to contribute to students' participation in a conversation and to the development, maintenance and coherence of the conversation. It can be a resource that language learners can utilize to enable them to establish coherence and interpersonal involvement in a conversation despite their language constraints (Tannen, 1989: 48). It means that the use of this strategy is expected to overcome difficulties in speaking. Students seem unable to respond their interlocutor's utterances to show their listenership, acceptance, agreement or feeling of surprised in a simple way. By applying allo-repetition strategy, students are expected to be actively participated in taking their turns in order to maintain in conversation though they do not have to add any new information of the topic being discussed. Here, students repeat the

utterances or part of the utterances which have already uttered by the interlocutor to show their listenership, agreement, surprise etc, in order to maintain and develop their conversation.

## B. Discussion

### 1. Allo-Repetition as a Communication Strategy

Learning a foreign language means learning to communicate by using the language. It is natural if a learner faces many problems in conducting the communication. Related to this idea there are several efforts that can be done to avoid the problems. These efforts are referred to communication strategies. It has been argued in second and foreign language acquisition research that the good language learner' uses strategies which could be of benefit to all learners if they were made

accessible to them (Rubin, 1975: 41-51).

Talking about language learning strategies, many experts have classified them based on their contributions to the learning itself. Rubin (1987) has made the distinction between learning strategies, communication strategies, and social strategies. All the three strategies contribute whether directly or indirectly to the learning. Furthermore he proposes two main types of strategies that contribute directly to learning, namely; cognitive learning strategies and metacognitive learning strategies. Communication and social strategies are considered as strategies which have indirect contribution to the learning. Communication strategies are less directly related to language learning because their focus is on the process of participating in

conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intended. In this case, Fearch and Kasper as cited in Bachman (1990: 98) define this communication strategies as 'interactional' definition which characterizes a communication strategy as the mutual attempt by two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared.

Furthermore, the strategies in learning are defined by O'Malley and Chemot (1990:1) as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information." In other ways, Brett (2001:53) divides the strategies into 'learning strategies and 'communication strategies'. Communication strategies are employed in order to repair

breakdowns in spoken communication and to improve the effectiveness of communication (Brett, 2001: 53). So it can be said that learning strategies are used in order to promote learning, whereas communication strategies are used to promote communication. And it is reasonable to say that language learning strategies contribute to the development of communicative competence and communication strategies are one type of language learning strategies.

Although communica tion strategies are not directly related to cognitive learning of language, they provide the learners with the input which is very important for the success of learning. In this case, communication strategies can be employed in conversation in order to allow the learners to maintain in conversation. So, learners get more opportunities to hear as well as to produce the target language. Tarone, Fearch and Kasper in Brett (2001: 54) propose that in order to remain in the conversation learners must: (1) find way to continue producing the target language despite the limitation, (2) recognize when their production has not been properly interpreted, and (3) indicate their reception of the speakers' intentions. Related to this idea, it can be concluded that the most effective strategies are the strategies that allow learners to initiate and maintain conversation. Here, the communication strategies serve an interaction function (Tarone in Brett 2001: 53). She has attempted to place CS into categories including avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeals for assistance and mime.

It is felt to be awkward if the participants of a conversation cannot take their turns to speak

smoothly. Yule (1998: 72) states that transition with a long silence between turns will damage the flow of the conversation. Here, CS can be utilized to overcome the problem. One feature of communication strategies is repetition in conversation. Repetition is a resource by which conversationalists together create a discourse, a relationship, and a world (Tannen, 1989: 47). It is a strategy which is considered important as the central linguistic meaning-making and limitless resource for individual creativity and interpersonal involvement. Its automaticity in conversation contributes to its functions in production, comprehension, connection and interaction.

Forms of repetition and variation in conversation can be identified according to several criteria. First, one may distinguish self-repetition and allo-repetition (repetition of others). Second instance of repetition may be placed along a scale of fixity in form, ranging from exact repetition to paraphrase (Tannen 1989: 54). Repetition with variation, such as questions transformed into statements, statements change into questions, repetition with single word or phrase changed, and repetition with change of person or tense. The repetition of patterned rhythm is also included in which completely different words are uttered in the same syntactic and rhythmic paradigm as a preceding utterance. There is also a temporal scale ranging from immediate to delayed repetition.

Depending on which speaker produces them, there are two forms of repetitions, namely; self-repetition and other-repetition (allo-repetition). Self-repetition is

the repetition that occurs when the speakers repeat themselves. Other-repetition is a joint work between speakers and their interlocutors repetition has been labeled differently: two-party repetition, second-speaker repetition, and allo-repetition (Murata, Schnelby in Sawir) and (Tannen, 1989: 57). In using this allo-repetition strategy both speakers show their cooperation to maintain the flow of conversation. Both parties have an interest in keeping the conversation going and they also cooperate to give contribution to manage the conversation conducting.

Using repetition strategies is a part of the context of conversational behavior. Allo-repetition refers to an interactional function rather than of meaning creation (Sawir, 2003:2). Students often try to find additional thinking time before speaking. One of the tactics they can apply to

sustain the conversation is by repeating part of previous speaker's utterance which refers to this communication strategy.

Goodwin and Goodwin in Tannen (1989: 47) observe repetition in conversation as "format tying", and use this observation to critique a speech act approach to discourse. They remark that reducing conversation to underlying actions, intentions, or moves is like studying what a musician does but ignoring the music played. So, it is clear that the coherence of a participant's move to a preceding one may lie in the particularities of its wording.

### a. The Functions of Allo-Repetition in Conversation

Repetition of words, phrases, and clauses in conversation serves many functions. Tannen (1989: 59) states the functions of allo-repetition as indications of: *participatory listenership, ratifying*

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*listenershi, stalling, participating, surprise, and humor.* Those functions of allo-repetition can be figured out as follows:

1. Repetition as participatory listenership

In these uses of repetition, the previous speaker's utterance is repeated just as a way to participate in the interchange by showing listenership and acceptance of the utterance (Tannen, 1989: 59). The speaker continues to participate in the conversation, even though nothing new to add. This type of repetition is also called 'solidatory repetition' (Murata in Sawir, 2003: 48). This function of repetition can be exemplified as follows:

*A: I'm studying here I'm doing my Dip.Ed my diploma of education.*

*B: Oh **diploma***

*A: Yeah, that's right*

2. Ratifying listenership

This kind of repetition is not quite different from the previous one. They are similar in nature. They both indicate listenership and involvement in conversation, but ratifying repetition is not only the indication of listenership but also the agreement to what has been said. In other way, Tannen (1989: 63) says that this repetition means "yessing" to the previous utterance. This kind of repetition can be figured out as follows:

A. *One thing that makes me uncomfortable to live here is **the weather.***

B. *Yeah, **the weather***

A. *It is too cold for me.*

3. Stalling

If the speaker needs to gain time to think about the next utterances, this kind of repetition can be used to stall. Sawir (2003: 5) states that if the repetition with raising intonation, it means that the speaker is showing confirmation, but if the speaker utters the repetition with falling intonation, it means the speaker need more time before producing the next utterance

or response. It can be said that the speaker repeat the previous utterance just to slow down the conversation. Moreover Sawir adds that repetition with stalling function often preceded or followed by expression such as; '*ah*', '*oh*', and '*mm*' (2003:7). The following example is the repetition with the stalling function.

    A. *Do you have **pets**?*

    B. ***Pets ah**.. in Indonesia I don't have but my host-family have one dog.*

    A. *Oh yeah.*

4. Repetition as participation

Repetition will function as participation if the speaker ratifies what the previous speaker has been uttered with a slightly variation but still in the same syntactic frame (Tannen 1989: 66). It is clear that the speaker shows not only his/her participation but also agreement through repetition. Here are the examples;

    **A.** *I want to tell you something about Maya.*

    **B.** ***I don't want to hear about it.***

    **A.** *You **don't want to hear about it**.*

5. Indication of surprise

Sawir (2003:8) explains that if the utterance is clearly heard by the listener, but he/she still repeats the utterance with raising intonation, it means that the repeater is showing the feeling of surprise. In this case, the speaker may ensure the correctness of the previous utterance or seeking the clarification. Here is the example of the repetition.

    A. *I've got **seven brothers**.*

    B. ***Seven brothers**?*

    A. *Yeah.*

    B. *Ohh*

6. Showing humor

Slight variation of repetition commonly functions as humor. It is

humorious because the use of the same grammatical frame to convert a common construction into the odd one (Tannen, 1989: 63). The following example will give the picture of repetition that function as humor.

A. *My Rover is **being so good**.*

B. *I know, he is **being hungry.***

### b. *Implication for Teaching Allo-Repetition Strategy*

Since repetition is pervasive in conversation, it is considered a fundamental and useful linguistic strategy. More than that, it is also considered important strategy in making effort to maintain and develop conversation. Tannen (1989: 87) argues that learners should be trained to build their automaticity in producing repetition. It is hoped later these repeating strategies will be an automatic language production in ordinary conversation and they can retain the ability to repeat in wide range of varieties spontaneously. In this case,

Wehmeyer (2006:2) suggests that conversational skill can be learned using social skills training and role-play exercises.

Based on the curriculum for Senior High School, the students are demanded to be able to conduct the interpersonal and transactional functions of language in their daily life. Related to this idea, teachers should understand about the kind of speaking skills that will be a focus in the course. They should be able to consider to which types of spoken language they should pay greater attention. Richard (2003: 6) proposes that informal need analysis is the starting point to plan the speaking activities in the classroom. The second issue is to identify teaching strategies to teach each kind of talk. Here, the teachers are demanded to be able to provide opportunities for students to acquire the spoken language.

Since talk as interaction is perhaps the most complex and difficult skill to teach, teaching communication strategies is

hoped to give contribution to students' efforts in improving their speaking skill. The strategies will be embedded in naturalistic dialogues that can be features of language in conducting conversation.

## 2. Participation in Conversation

Before talking about participation in conversation, it is better to understand what conversation is first. Simply speaking, conversation means talking. Gibson (2004: 1) states that "conversation is the informal exchange of ideas by spoken words". Here, conversation means talking which takes place between two people or more. And Richard (2003: 1) defines conversation as an unplanned spoken discourse with involved reciprocity. He clarifies his definition by stating that interactions are jointly constructed. Conversation can be talk as interaction or talk as transaction. Talk as interaction can be found in everyday conversation whether it is in formal or casual situation.

In addition, Tannen (1989: 1) states that ordinary conversation is made up of linguistic strategies which are pervasive, spontaneous, and functional. She calls these strategies as 'involvement strategies' because they reflect and simultaneously create interpersonal involvement (1989:1). So, involvement in a conversation is not merely a matter of understanding the meaning but also participation in the interaction. For this idea, allo-repetition strategy is one of involvement strategies in conversation. Here, the participants of conversation can apply this strategy to show their participation in conversation.

Related to the idea that conversation is the process of negotiating of meaning, Coughlin (2006: 6) states that to participate in conversation requires the speaker to generate speech that is acceptable in both content and form. In more detail Gibson (2004:1) explains that conversation skill dealing with the ability to anticipate, perceive, or experience

difficulties in message comprehensibility. That is why, communication strategies are needed to build conversation skill in order to overcome difficulties in speaking. So, employing the strategy focuses on the skill of how to maintain, develop, and keep the coherence of a conversation. Here, the conversation skill is indicated by the students' ability to apply some techniques to conduct a conversation activity. Levinson (1983: 318) states that to understand a more technical characterization of what a conversation is, the ability to distinguish the unit of a conversation from conversation is needed.

Related to conversation activity, turn-taking system and back-channeling are given more attention because these two activities not only tie part of discourse to another part, but they bond participants to the discourse and to each other (Tannen, 1989: 51). In short, these activities link individual speakers in a conversation and in relationship.

Talking about turn-taking is closely related to talking about adjacency pair as linguistic structure. Levinson states that turn-taking system signals turn completion and incompletion (1983: 365). In accordance to this idea, Yule (1998: 17) explains that normally those who wish to get the floor will wait for possible point at which speakers may change which is called TRP (Transition Relevance Place) before jumping in. So, the skill of how to hold and to return the floor is required by the conversation participants. To do this, McCarthy (1991: 127) suggests that there are specific linguistic devices for getting the turn when one is unable to enter the normal flow of turn-taking. Allo-repetition strategy can be employed as a marker or an utterance to get the floor, for example; as hearing check while returning the floor.

Since the notion of involvement also depends heavily on the notion of a response as an emergent sense of

coherence, the participants of a conversation should also know how return the floor by giving feedback to their partner while speaking. McCarthy (1991: 127) states that there are also linguistic means of not taking the turn when one has the opportunity. These signals referred to back-channel responses. Actually, back-channel realizations vary interestingly from culture to culture, but as EFL learners, students can be provided with specific linguistic realizations to be practiced. Here, in order students are able to show their participation in conversation, building their ability to provide back-channels to their interlocutor is important. Related to this idea, allo-repetition strategy is one of devices they could employ as back-channeling in a conversation.

In accordance to the previous ideas, Coughlin (2006:1) proposes two skills required in conversation; they are motor-perspective skill and interaction adeptness. This pairing calls upon effective understanding of the two in order to implement oral exercises in an effective manner. The motor skills involve perceiving, recalling and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language. On the other hand, interaction skills involve making decisions about communication such as; what to say and how to say it (Coughlin, 2006: 1). Of course the skills to be trained should be matched to the learners' ability. In speaking class, teacher can promote students' language learning through practicing conversation because having good conversation skills are a key to success. Inguva (2007:1) supports this idea by stating that strong conversation skills are pre-requisite for effective communication. He also suggests that there is an urgent need for teachers to strengthen students' conversation skills which will in turn build confidence in students to speak, have better understanding and to be understood. That is why students should

have opportunities to talk about a variety of topic and purposes of conversation.

Since students' speaking skill is important in EFL, the teaching of conversation cannot be neglected by English teachers. Even the success of learning language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. Related to this idea, Richard (1993: 2) proposes several assumptions to be considered to teach conversation. It is assumed that: (1) everyone enjoys talking and participating in class discussion, (2) discussion topics in conversation are usually of great interest to students, (3) students will volunteer to participate in planned activities, (4) students who do well in structured situations will do well in class discussions, (5) in order to communicate, students need to use perfectly correct sentences, (6) memorizing dialogues and sentence patterns enhances communication, (7) error correction should be done immediately, (8) conversation classes are fun and easy to teach, (9) rigorous discipline is appropriate in conversation class, and (10) foreign students will develop speaking skills naturally since they can practice outside the classroom. In brief, conversation skill is a skill that students should improve and the teacher could teach conversation in speaking class by considering several positive assumptions.

3. **Procedures of Teaching Conversation through Allo-repetition**

**Pre-teaching**

a. Prepare lesson plan as a guide for teacher to present the lesson.

b. Prepare media needed in teaching learning process (guided role-play cards). For example:

| A | B |
|---|---|
| Your friend Andy comes late to school. Do the following things to him: | You come late to school. Answer your friends questions as follows: |

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| | |
|---|---|
| • Ask him why he comes late.<br>• Ask him why he had to take his father to the hospital.<br>• Express your surprise by using allo-repetition strategy.<br>• Express your feeling of sympathy. | • You overslept because you had to take your father to hospital last night.<br>• Your father got serious stomachache.<br>• Response your friend's expression.<br>• Response your friend's expression. |

c. Prepare recorded dialogs as models of how to use allo-repetition strategy. For example:

A: How long have you been living here?
B: Quite long, 16 years.
A: So, you've been well adapted to everything around you.
B: One think that makes me uncomfortable to live there is *the weather.*
A: *Yeah, the weather.*
B: It is too cold for me.
A: I think so.

d. The teacher greets the students as she is entering the classroom.

e. The class is started by praying and checking students' attendance.

**While teaching**

f. Presentation of the lesson

Firstly, the teacher activates students' awareness of strategies they have already used to maintain in a conversation. Elicit their answers and write them on the white-board.

"*What kind of strategies do you use in maintaining the continuity of your talk with someone? Do you use any communication strategies if you want to show your participation in a conversation?, for example by saying hmm, uhuh, etc?*"

And then the teacher asks students if they use their own strategies in speaking to show

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their listenership, feeling of surprise, agreement, etc. and recorded their responses on the white-board.

*"What will you say if you want to show that you are listening to your conversation partner? to express your feeling of surprise? and to ratify your partner statement?"*

After that the teacher introduces allo-repetition strategy as one of communication strategies that can be applied by students in a conversation with the purpose to improve their participation in a conversation. The teacher gives the model of how to use the strategy through listening to the recorded dialog such as:

A: I want to tell you something.
B: What is about?
A: About Maya.
B: *I don't want to hear about it*.
A: You *don't want to hear about it.*

The teacher explains the functions of the strategy. Next, the teacher presents speaking material based on the curriculum that is categorized into 'speech function', such as:

| Expressions | Responses |
|---|---|
| • That's very smart suit. <br> • You're looking rather smart. <br> • That is really good. <br> • It is really delicious. <br> • They are excellent. <br> • You look very beautiful with that dress. <br> • You look slimmer. | • Thank you. <br> • It's nice of you to say so. <br> • Oh! It's nothing special, really. <br> • Oh! I've lot to learn yet. <br> • Oh, thanks. <br> • You're kidding me. |

After explaining the speaking material, the teacher integrates the strategy to the

speaking material by presenting the model of using allo-repetition which is combined to speaking material in interactional function of language through samples of dialogue, such as:

Jane : Have you got news that Lucy has been married?
Marry : *Are you joking?*
Jane *: I came to her wedding last week*.
Marry : That's surprising.
Jane : Yeah, that's surprising.

g. To practice the strategy, the teacher has students be in pairs and distribute the role-play cards, such as:

> Make a dialog based on the following situation to practice the expressions of Compliment and Allo-Repetition strategy in the dialog:
>
> You come to your friend's birthday party. You meet your old friend Jessica there. You see her very beautiful at because the dress she is wearing suits her very much.

Students play their role based on the role card provided by the teacher.

h. The teacher shows students how to identify the strategy they use for a recently completed task, and asks them whether the strategy helps them.

**Post-teaching**

i. At the end of the teaching learning process, the students do their self-assessment to evaluate their experiences in using the learnt strategy. In pairs, they fill in the form of self-assessment, such as

| Characteristic of Allo-Repetition Strategy | Function of the Strategy |
|---|---|
| ▪ With falling intonation<br><br>▪ With initial '*yes/yeah*'.<br><br>▪ With '*ah*' ending. | ▪ To show listenership<br><br>▪ To show ratifying listenership<br><br>▪ To stall. |

j.    By assessing the effectiveness of allo-repetition strategy, the teacher shows and asks students how to transfer the use of the strategy to new tasks or context.

**Conclusion**

Using repetition strategies is a part of the context of conversational behavior. Allo-repetition refers to an interactional function rather than of meaning creation (Sawir, 2003:2). Students often try to find additional thinking time before speaking. One of the tactics they can apply to sustain the conversation is by repeating part of previous speaker's utterance which refers to this communication strategy.

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