

ALLO-REPETITION IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS. COOPERATION, UNDERSTANDING CO-CONSTRUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE NEGOTIATION IN THE MEDICAL SECTION OF THE ELFA CORPUS

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Abstract

In recent years, spoken academic ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) has been an object of increasing interest in linguistic and communication studies thanks to the position of academia as “one of the domains which have most eagerly adopted English as their common language in international communication” (Mauranen 2006a: 146)¹. In a context where different linguistic and cultural backgrounds come together, clarity and explicitness play a prominent role. In this respect, ELF research has paid much attention to the importance of communicative strategies, the most prominent of which is repetition. ELF studies on repetition have been carried out in several domains, including academia. Within this, however, medical discourse, and more specifically, spoken medical discourse, to date has been neglected. This is quite surprising given the ever-growing medical research output in the English language, which has resulted in an increasing number of literacy programs within EMP (English for Medical Purposes), thus in turn intensifying the use of English as an instrument of international higher medical education. Moreover, academia makes use of several forms of speech, traditionally lectures, seminars, conferences, panel discussions, etc., but spoken discourse still remains less investigated as compared to written contexts. This paper is intended to be a continuation and development of a previous study on self-repetition (Cappuzzo forthcoming), and focuses on the role of allo-repetition in the 63,029-word subcorpus of nine polylogic speech events belonging to the 100,135-word section of spoken academic medical interactions included in the one million-word ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings) corpus. More specifically, following Kaur’s (2009) analysis of interactional devices in co-constructing understanding in English as a lingua franca, this paper concentrates on the communicative functions served by allo-repetition in the meaning-making process and understanding co-construction in a medical academic ELF context involving speakers of several different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The paper first reports relevant literature on repetition and allo-repetition strategy. It subsequently shows the findings of the research and examines the functions displayed by allo-repetition in the data, with extracts illustrating the different functions. Occurrences of such cohesive devices falling into the category of repetition as superordinates, hyponyms, and synonymic expressions will also be taken into consideration as useful strategies enhancing

¹ Double inverted commas will be used throughout the work for quotations or to show my own expressions. Italics will be used in the extracts and corresponding analysis to highlight repetitions, synonyms, hyponyms and superordinates. Single inverted commas will be used in the analysis when referring to words included in the extracts but which are not repetitions, and in the work in general to refer to functions of allo-repetition and/or to highlight medical terms.

clarity and giving discourse coherence. Finally, the paper discusses some didactic implications from the results obtained and offers suggestions on how allo-repetition can be deployed in EMP syllabuses. The main purpose of the work is to highlight how allo-repetition as an interactive process between speakers contributes to increasing understanding, constructing an atmosphere of cooperation, establishing and/or re-establishing shared understanding in knowledge negotiation at an international spoken academic level in the medical field.

1. Previous ELF research on repetition

Repetition has been a fruitful area of research so far because of the multiplicity of functions it serves in conversation. Much of the research carried out on allo-repetition as well as on repetition in general has focused on its use in the everyday conversation of NS (Native Speakers) (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Norrick 1987; Tannen 1987, 1989; Johnstone 1987; Johnstone *et al.* 1994). Murata (1995) conducts a cross-cultural study of repetitions comparing strategies used in NSE/NSE (Native Speakers of English), NSJ/NSJ (Native Speakers of Japanese), and NSE/NSJ conversation. Sawir (2004) explores the role of repetition in conversations between English as a foreign language (EFL) learners and native speakers of English.

In recent years, the growing importance of English as the lingua franca of international communication has shifted linguists' attention to the importance of the use of repetition in an ELF context, that is, a context where English is used as a "contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication" (Firth 1996: 240). ELF research on repetition has offered insights encompassing different areas and perspectives, with studies including conversational, professional and business settings (Kangasharju 2002; Cogo 2009, 2010; Cogo and Dewey 2006; Kaur 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015; Kirkpatrick 2011; Lammi 2010; Lichtkoppler 2007; Matsumoto 2011; Watterson 2008). Lichtkoppler (2007: 43-44) identifies three types of repetition, according to the scale of fixity, in the investigation of conversations recorded at the office of a student exchange organization: exact repetition, repetition with variation, and paraphrasing. Five functions have been detected, i.e. repetition for utterance developing, repetition for prominence, repetition for time-gaining, repetition for accuracy, and repetition signalling listenership and establishing cohesion. These five types of repetitions were, in turn, grouped according to three main functions, namely allowing the participants to show attitudes and opinions, supporting mutual understanding, and helping the participants with language production (Lichtkoppler 2007: 59). Cogo (2009: 260-261) distinguishes several functions served by repetition in ELF exchange, two of which are maintaining rhythmic synchrony and showing alignment and solidarity with the speaker of the original utterance. Kaur (2012: 593) states that ELF speakers employ repetition as one of the several strategies resulting in "added prominence or the foregrounding of segments of talk that are oriented to as crucial in the meaning-making process."

In the last decade, ELF research on repetition has focused increasing attention on

its use in academia (Björkman 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2014; Mauranen 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2010, 2012; Suviniitty 2012). Mauranen (2010: 7) observes that academia is

a typical ELF domain: it is international, mobile and its dependence on English has skyrocketed in the last few decades. Academia is thoroughly dependent on cooperation across national borders and internationally negotiated standards, especially in science, where cutting edge research teams operate in several countries and recruit from anywhere in the world.

Björkman (2010, 2013) distinguishes three subcategories of repetition, i.e. repetition for emphasis, repetition caused by disfluencies (but not considered a strategy because unintentional), and repetition of others' utterances. Mauranen (2012: 220) raises the question of whether repetition is a phenomenon of spoken interaction in general, or whether it is a communicative strategy used to enhance understanding between different lingua-cultural speakers. She maintains that

much self repetition and paraphrasing is occasioned by normal contingencies of spoken interaction, in which ELF is no different from any other kind of speaking [...]. But in addition to making themselves clear and their points comprehensible to their interlocutors, speakers also actively engage with each other and use repetition as a resource for achieving this.

1.1. *Previous research on allo-repetition*

Repetition, which has been classified in different ways according to the formal and functional criteria adopted (cf. Tannen 1989), is divided into self-repetition and allo-repetition. Self-repetition, or same-speaker repetition (Schnelby 1994), occurs when speakers repeat themselves. Other-repetition, which has also been labelled as "second-speaker repetition" (Norrick 1987; Schnelby 1994; Simpson 1994), "two-party repetition" (Murata 1995), and "allo-repetition" (Tannen 1989) is "a joint work between speakers and their interlocutors" (Sawir 2004: 4), and refers to "a repeat of all or part of the speaker's prior turn by the recipient" (Kaur 2009: 111)². Norrick (1987: 72) gives allo-repetition an equally important role as same speaker's in the negotiation of knowledge and mutual understanding, and states that it "acts as a device to signal agreement, rapport and even surprise or disbelief."

Tannen (1989) identifies six categories of allo-repetition: to indicate participatory listenership, to justify listenership, to request confirmation of understanding, to request clarification, to stall, and to indicate surprise (see also Schegloff 1987; Merrit 1994; Perrin *et al.* 2003). Sawir (2004: 2) adds an additional form of allo-repetition, namely to ensure correctness, which "appears to take a more important role in cross-cultural conversations in which one party is a conscious learner of English." Sawir (*ibid.*) also highlights some fundamental qualities of allo-repetition when she states that it "contributes to development, maintenance and coherence of a conversation; and is a principal strategy under the control of non-native speakers that enables them to communicate their positive involvement and interest in conversation where language skills are unequal." Kaur (2009: 111) emphasizes the role of allo-repetition in the

² In this study the denomination "allo-repetition" was chosen.

construction of mutual understanding in ELF talk, while Neil (1996) and Mauranen (2010) give prominence to the cooperative aspect of allo-repetition in ELF interactions, in that it “helps construct a cooperative atmosphere with participants indicating that they are contributing to the same topic, making sense of it together” (Mauranen 2010: 17).

2. Description of the corpus and methodology

The corpus used for the investigation of allo-repetition in an ELF context is the 63,029-word subcorpus of spoken academic medical interactions contained in the ELFA corpus.

The ELFA corpus is represented by approximately 131 hours of recorded speech and the recordings were made at the University of Tampere, the University of Helsinki, the Tampere University of Technology, and the Helsinki University of Technology. ELFA includes monologic events, mainly lectures and presentations, accounting for 33% of data, and dialogic/polylogic events such as seminars and conference discussions (67%). The corpus consists of data from seven university domains, namely social sciences (29%), technology (19%), humanities (17%), natural sciences (13%), medicine (10%), behavioural sciences (7%), and economics and administration (5%). ELFA includes 650 speakers and 51 different first languages, thus ensuring a wide range of native languages. Each speech event is marked by information about academic discipline, type of speech event, speakers' academic role, age and native languages. The percentage of speech by Finnish native speakers accounts for 28.5% of tokens, followed by speech by German (8.2%), Russian (6.6%), Swedish (6.4%), and Dutch (5.6%) native speakers. The percentage of speech by native speakers of English is 5%.

The corpus used for this study is made up of nine dialogic/polylogic speech events, namely four seminar discussions, one doctoral defence discussion, one post-graduate seminar discussion, and three lecture discussions. There are 59 speakers who speak 15 different first languages from 15 countries on three continents. As the identity of one speaker was unknown, this was not included in the investigation. The geo-linguistic distribution of the speakers is shown in Table 1 below.

Listening to the recordings of the spoken data was carried out as well as intensive reading of their transcripts. Supported by means of *WordSmith* (5.0 version) concordancing software, the corpus was searched for occurrences of allo-repetitions, and corresponding functions were located and described, accompanied by exemplifying extracts.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative analysis

The search for allo-repetition in the data showed 10 different functions: to request confirmation of understanding; to request clarification; to give discourse coherence; to show participatory listenership; to show a) alignment, b) engagement in listenership (continuer), and c) agreement, by means of the response tokens ‘yeah’ / ‘yes’; to give the opportunity to understand an item, after the recipient's partial repeat of a prior turn + *wh*-question word; to confirm correctness of information (didactic repetition + didactic elicitation). The above-mentioned types of allo-repetition were previously discussed by other scholars (Norrick 1987; Schegloff 1987; Tannen 1987, 1989; Merrit 1994; Perrin

	Countries	No. speakers	%
Europe	Czech Republic	1	1.7
	Denmark	1	1.7
	Finland	36	61
	Holland	1	1.7
	Italy	2	3.4
	Lithuania	3	5.1
	Romania	1	1.7
	Spain	3	5.1
	Sweden	1	1.7
Asia	China	1	1.7
	Nepal	1	1.7
	Russia	4	6.8
Africa	Ghana	2	3.4
	Nigeria	1	1.7
	Tanzania	1	1.7
	Total	59	100

Table 1. Geo-linguistic distribution of speakers in ELFA medical data of nine polylogic speech events

et al. 2003; Kaur 2009, 2010, 2012; Mauranen 2010). The examination of the data yielded an additional type of allo-repetition which appears to play a prominent role in cross-cultural communication, that is to say, repetition to repair the form of an item, when it is perceived to be incorrect or inappropriate. Table 2 below reports quantitative data on all the kinds of repetition identified in the corpus, followed by qualitative analysis, where some extracts will illustrate how allo-repetition is used for all the identified functions.

As can be seen in Table 2, the most frequent function performed by allo-repetition in the corpus was ‘participatory listenership’, followed by ‘agreement’ by means of the use of the response tokens ‘yeah’-‘yes’, ‘didactic repetition+didactic elicitation’, and ‘discourse coherence’. The latter proved to be concentrated more in USEMD160, whereas ‘didactic repetition’ occurred only in USEMD30B, which turned out to be the speech event with the highest level of pedagogical interactions. Moreover, the speech event showing almost all types of functions (8/10) identified in the corpus was USEMD160, which also contained the highest number of allo-repetitions (39%) compared with those in the other speech events.

3.2. Qualitative analysis

The following subsection illustrates some extracts from the corpus and shows the identified functions performed by allo-repetition in the data.

3.2.1. To request confirmation of understanding

The first function examined is requesting confirmation of understanding. The procedures employed to request confirmation of understanding were questions, either displayed in the form of partial or verbatim repetition of a word (or expression) uttered by another speaker in the preceding turn, or in the form of a sentence including an issue

	UDEFD130 Doctoral defence discussion	ULECD080 Lecture discussion	ULECD110 Lecture discussion	ULECD160 Lecture discussion	USEMD070 Seminar discussion	USEMD080 Seminar discussion	USEMD30B Seminar discussion	USEMD160 Seminar discussion	USEMD310 Post- graduate seminar discussion	Total
Understanding confirmation request								2		2 (1%)
Clarification request			1		5	4		1		11 (7%)
Discourse coherence (use of synonyms, hyponyms, superordinates) ¹		4		8	2	1	1	15		31 (18%)
Participatory listenership	1				9	6		14	4	34 (20%)
Alignment (yeah/yes)	2		1	1		4	1	10	2	21 (13%)
Participation and listenership (continuer)	1				1			2		4 (2%)
Agreement (yeah/yes)	2	1			4	2		22	1	32 (19%)
To give the opportunity to understand an item (partial repeat of a prior turn + <i>u/h-</i> question word)								1		1 (1%)
Confirmation of correctness of information (didactic repetition + didactic elicitation)							31			31 (18%)
Repair the form of an item (when it is perceived to be incorrect or inappropriate)						1	2			3 (1%)
Total	6 (4%)	5 (3%)	2 (1%)	9 (5%)	21 (12%)	18 (11%)	35 (21%)	67 (39%)	7 (4%)	170 (100%)

Table 2. Distribution of allo-repetition with corresponding functions in ELFA medical section 63,029-word polylogic speech events data

which had been discussed in a previous segment of talk and taken up again after overlapping and alternate debated topics, thus giving rise to confusion and lack of understanding.

Extract 1 below is drawn from a seminar discussion involving 10 speakers from eight different cultural backgrounds who are discussing a paper mill they visited a few days before:

(1) [after examining some aspects related to the institute of occupational health, one of the speakers involved in the speech loses the thread of the talk] [S2: Swedish; S5: Ghanaian; S9: Tanzanian (SS: Simultaneous Speakers)]³

1 <S5> erm i'm you know i'm getting a bit confused</S5>
 2 <S9> yeah there's a </S9 >
 3 <S5> are we talking about the paper mill </S5>
 4 <S9> yeah *paper mill*</S9 >
 5 <SS> yes mhm-hm</SS>
 6 <S2> *pa- paper mill* we are talking about the *paper mill* now first </S2>
 USEMD160

As can be seen, after S5's display of having missed the topic of the ongoing exchange in line 1 ('i'm getting a bit confused') and his request for confirmation of understanding in line 3, S9 and S2 take part in giving a response in lines 4 and 6 by repeating the noun phrase *paper mill* uttered by S5, thus confirming the correctness of his understanding. What emerges as an interesting aspect in extract 1 is that allo-repetition is the result of cooperative work to solve a problem-marked understanding situation.

A longer and more complex extract, from the same seminar discussion as that of extract 1, offers another example of ELF speakers' request for confirmation of understanding and use of allo-repetition to secure recipient understanding:

(2) [six speakers are discussing how workers in the paper mill communicate with each other] [S2: Swedish; S4: Lithuanian; S7: Nigerian; S8: Finnish; S9: Tanzanian; S10: Ghanaian; (SS: Simultaneous Speakers)]

1 <S10> but i do not understand why the human relationship should be there </S10>
 2 <S2> er you don't understand </S2>
 3 <S10> yeah or are you talking about coordination how they <S2> [yeah yeah] </S2>
 coordinate
 4 in the workplace, well definitely they *coordi-* </S10>
 5 <S7> [(xx) (fully)] functioning work community <S2> [yeah] </S2> [there] should be er
 kind of a *coordination* (xx)
 6 <S2> yes </S2> (xx) *interaction* </S7>
 7 <S10> but i think there is </S10>
 8 <BS7> that [depends] </BS7>
 9 <S2> [ho-] </S2>

³ Symbols in extracts: <S(number)> = utterance begins; </S(number)> = utterance ends; @@ = laughter; @text@ = spoken laughing; (xx) = unintelligible speech; [text] = overlapping speech. The round brackets will be used for speakers who have already been referred to in previous extracts and/or for speakers included in the extracts but whose utterances are not discussed in the analysis.

10 <S8> [(xx)] </S8>
 11 <S9> this <S2> [ho-] </S2> [is] hard to assess because we are referring to these operators
 only but <S2> [yeah]
 12 </S2> [we] don't know the situation the communication between these operators and
 the outside workers <S2> mhm
 13 </S2> yeah </S9>
 14 <S10> because i know <S9> [so] </S9> [definitely] there is a link between let's say the
 B and B one and then the
 15 finishing point you know there may be a li- there should be a link <S2> [yeah] </S2> [in
 such] a big industry </S10>
 16 <S7> no they are talking about human relationships of the workers how they [in-] </S7>
 17 <S10> [just] go there and have fun or what i don't @understand@</S10>
 18 <SS> [@@] </SS>
 19 <S7> [no no no no] </S7>
 20 <S2> you shouldn't *have fun* on [on your job@] </S2>
 21 <SS> [@@] </SS>
 22 <S10> er yeah </S10>
 23 <S8> should *enjoy* work </S8>
 24 <S10> yeah but well it's serious unless there is a problem that that there should be a
 link this is what i see </S10>
 25 <S2> yeah but but i think i understand what you mean that they are working quite
 alone and can't discuss with their
 26 colleagues and that's that's another thing then if you have to tell let's say somebody that
 it's something wrong in the
 27 beginning of the machine <S10> yes </S10> or in the end of the machine and have
 contact with the other people
 28 then and that may be they don't er they don't shout or <S10> [no no no] </S10> [i think
 they do] another they i don't
 29 know how they do it </S2>
 USEMD160

S10 seems to be unsure what the other speakers are talking about, as evidenced in line 3 by his question 'are you talking about coordination...', which is given a response by S7 and S2 (lines 5-6). S7 first gives S10 a general concise description of the topic of the discussion by providing S10 with the phrase 'functioning work community', thus later repeating the word *coordination* in line 5, and then uttering the word *interaction* in line 6. This is an example of what Kaur (2012: 604) refers to as "combined repetition", that is, the practice of combining verbatim repetition with repetition with variation in order to enhance clarity of expression. In the segment of conversation examined in extract 2, S7 combines the repetition of *coordination*, which is the key word in the chunk of talk taken into consideration, with what he somehow considers a synonym, i.e. the word *interaction*. The result seems to be a move to clarify the discourse and enhance S10's understanding. A similar situation occurs later in the extract as conversation turns to focus attention on the means of communication used by workers in the paper mill when something goes wrong that needs to be communicated between employees. More specifically, the issue being discussed is how communication takes place between workers inside the factory and the outside workers, as S9's utterance seems to suggest in line 12. S10 displays misunderstanding of the issue in question (lines 14-15), and his lack of correct understanding is further reinforced by S7's turn 'they are talking about

human relationships of the workers' in line 16. Thus, S10 intervenes (line 17) interrupting S7's previous turn where S7 was probably attempting to better illustrate the topic of the talk (line 16), and S10 even thinks the conversation is centred on the way workers *have fun* when working, in line 17. This elicits correction by S2 of what seems to sound like an improper expression, *have fun*. Thus S2 repeats *have fun* in the utterance 'you shouldn't *have fun* on your job' in line 20. After S8 corrects *have fun* substituting it with a sort of synonym which sounds more appropriate, i.e. *enjoy*, line 23, resulting in a "cautious rectification" as if S8 were trying to avoid S10 taking offence in misunderstanding what the exact topic of the talk is, it is S2 who lastly clarifies the point, that is, the way workers may communicate with each other in case trouble with machinery occurs during work.

3.2.2. To request clarification

Procedures employed to seek clarification were displayed as verbatim repetition of a word (or expression) uttered by another speaker in the preceding turn, whose aim was the search for additional information.

Extract 3 below is an example of questioning repeats seeking for clarification. It illustrates a speaker's request for clarification of a medical term which seems not to be understood due to the way it is pronounced by other speakers. The extract is from a seminar discussion involving ten participants who are discussing an internal medicine-related issue, i.e. abdominal complaints:

(3) [four speakers are talking about excessive urinary calcium excretion, referred to as hypercalciuria in medical terms] [S1: Finnish; S2: Italian; S9: Finnish; S10: Finnish]

1 <S9> do the these people have metabolic changes </S9>
 2 <S10> well in the cystine cystine stones there's an inherited metabolic disorder but s- it's only one per cent of all
 3 stones </S10>
 4 <P:12>
 5 <S9> and apparently there are conditions when, there is <FINNISH PRONUNCIATION> hypercalciuria </FINNISH PRONUNCIATION>, and </S9>
 6 PRONUNCIATION>, and </S9>
 7 <S1> do you understand </S1>
 8 <S2> mhm no @@ </S2>
 9 <S1> please explain in english </S1>
 10 <S10> *hypercalciuria* </S10>
 11 <S2> *calciuria* i don't understand </S2>
 12 <S1> okay *hyper* </S1>
 13 <S10> [*hyper*] </S10>
 14 <S2> [*hyper*] *hypercalciuria* </S2>
 15 <S10> yeah well in in finnish <FINNISH PRONUNCIATION> hypercalciuria </FINNISH PRONUNCIATION>
 16 </S10>
 17 <SS> [@@] </SS>
 18 <S2> [in italy italy it's <ITALIAN PRONUNCIATION> *hypercalciuria* </ITALIAN PRONUNCIATION> it's the
 19 same] international word <P:05> and then there could be mhm hyperparathyroidism if that is an english word

20 that er cause hypercalciuria </S2>
USEMD070

In the above extract, S9 utters the term *hypercalciuria* using the Finnish pronunciation, line 5. This causes S2 not to recognize the term (line 8), which S1 prompts S9 to articulate with an English pronunciation (line 9). It is S10 who repeats the term which, however, continues not to be understood by S2, as line 11 shows. After S1 has repeated the prefix *hyper* (line 12) S2, whose repetition of *hyper* overlaps with S10's, finally understands the problem-marked term and displays a questioning repeat of confirmation of understanding by uttering the whole word *hypercalciuria* (line 14). S10 gives validation of S1's understanding and repeats the term with the Finnish pronunciation once again, prompting S2 to show the Italian sound of the term (line 18), the confirmation of understanding of which allows S2 to link up with the subject of the speech. This allows S2 to contribute to the talk by providing information about what the possible causes of hypercalciuria could be in her opinion (lines 19-20). Besides being another example of request for confirmation of understanding, extract 3 is first and foremost an interesting illustration of how cooperation in an international setting can be a valid means to overcome comprehension problems hindering the effectiveness of communication.

3.2.3. Giving discourse coherence

Request for confirmation of understanding and request for clarification proved to be situations where speakers cooperated in establishing or re-establishing shared understanding, thus showing involvement and cooperativeness in mutual exchange. Allo-repetition ultimately resulting in involvement and cooperativeness was also displayed through the combination of different types of repetition, namely the use of synonymic expressions (two examples of which have already been illustrated when examining extracts 2 and 3), hyponyms and hyperonyms. Unlike the previous two examples, in the following extract neither request for confirmation of understanding nor request for clarification is displayed, but basically co-participation in sense making: Extract 4 from USEMD060 (the seminar discussion about public health discussed earlier), serves as an example:

(4) [six speakers are examining what kinds of work-related diseases can be found in a workplace] [S2: Swedish; S4: Lithuanian; S5: Ghanaian (Dangme); S7: Nigerian; S9: Tanzanian; S10: Ghanaian (Twi)]

1 <S2> yeah but er yeah , so so you didn't er learn anything about what kind of er diseases
or
2 *occupational work-related diseases* they may have there or what kind of disorders [you
didn't mention] </S2>
3 <BS7> [they didn't have they don't have (xx)] </BS7>
4 <S9> [we yeah they (xx)] </S9>
5 <S10> [they said they have zero no they have zero] </S10>
6 <S8> yeah zero but they have some burns <S4> [@so@] </S4> [and] heats accidents and
er
7 [that's all] </S8>
8 <S2> [sorry] @now it's your turn yeah <NAME S4> @ </S2>

9 <S4> well they don't have any *occupational diseases* now but <S2> no </S2> they said that er before that they had
 10 problems with b- because of noise </S4>
 11 <S2> yeah, but not anything er [special then] </S2>
 12 <S4> [yeah nothing] [special] </S4>
 13 <S9> [yeah] </S9>
 14 <S2> *muscular skeletal disorders* [or] </S2>
 15 <S9> [mhm] <S1> no </S1> they [said] </S9>
 16 <S2> [okay] so it's just the normal <S9> yeah </S9> ones [okay] </S2>
 17 <S9> [they] said there are no *occupational disease* <S1> mhm </S1> this occupational <S2> [no] </S2> [health]
 18 manager </S9>
 19 <S2> but of course they have *occupational related disorders* and so on <S10> [dis- mhm] yeah
 20 </S10> i mean a *occupational diseases* in finland er you have to prove it very <S5> [mhm]
 21 </S5> [carefully] so it's it's not so easy to 20 get (xx) as one <S10> yeah </S10> [but that's very
 22 good that they don't have] </S2>
 23 <BS7> [well i asked the managers] <S10> mhm </S10> what they have is mainly injuries
 24 </BS7>
 25 <S2> *injuries* [yeah] </S2>
 26 <S10> [which] is *accident* (xx) <S2> yeah </S2> *accident* but from the manager <S2> yeah
 27 </S2> he said no *occupational health disease* <S2> no </S2> but for occupational health
 28 *accidents* <S2> yeah 30 </S2> they have [some] </S10>
 29 <S2> [yeah] okay good so yeah </S2>
 USEMD160

What is interesting in extract 4 above is the display of a more complex pattern of allo-repetition in comparison with those illustrated up to now. More precisely, extract 4 shows a combination of verbatim repetition, use of synonyms, superordinates and subcategories, all of which allow speakers to provide conversation with clarity and explicitness. *Occupational disease(s)*, first uttered by S4 in line 9, is repeated by three different speakers, verbatim by S9 and S2 respectively in lines 17 and 20, and with the variation *occupational health disease* (by S10 in line 27) which in turn connects with its synonym *occupational work-related diseases*, uttered by S2 in line 2. The synonym *occupational related disorders* in line 19, the hyponyms *injuries*, first spoken by S7 in line 23 and repeated by S2 in line 25, and *muscular skeletal disorders* (line 14), together with *accident(s)* (lines 26-28) being in turn a synonym of *injuries*, all contribute not only to enhancing clarity and favouring mutual understanding but also providing the speech with discourse coherence (see also Mauranen 2010: 16-18).

3.2.4. Indicating participatory listenership

Another form of allo-repetition displaying cooperation between speakers in the data is that indicating participatory listenership. The typical kind of participatory repetition is referred to by Murata (1995) as “solidarity repetition”, i.e. a type of repetition indicating listenership and participation where verbatim repetition of items occurs without adding any new information to the development of a topic. The analysis of the

data in this study revealed several instances of solidarity repetition, of which extracts 5, 6 and 7 are some examples:

(5) [two speakers are talking about physical risk factors for workers in laboratories] [S2: Swedish; S5: Ghanaian]

1 <S5> and in the laboratory in <S2> [mhm *laboratories*] </S2> [*laboratories*] so much
</S5>
USEMD160

As can be seen, S2 repeats, although in a plural non-verbatim form, S5's *laboratory*, and his repetition overlaps with S5's self-repetition immediately after. The rapidity with which S2's repetition overlaps with S5's suggests involvement and cooperation in conversation, two qualities more manifestly displayed in the following extract from the same speech event and involving three speakers:

(6) [speakers are starting talking about exposure to radiation from computers in some laboratories] [(S2: Swedish); S6: Nepalese; S9: Tanzanian]

1 <S9> yeah but the [radiation] </S9>
2 <S6> [radiation] from the computer </S6>
3 <S9> yeah </S9>
4 <S2> *radiation* </S2>
USEMD160

S2's repetition of *radiation* in line 4 is uttered after its simultaneously occurring overlapping by S9 and S6 in line 1 and 2.

(7) [five speakers are talking about the kind of personnel met in a factory] [S1: Finnish; (S2: Swedish); S7: Nigerian; S8: Finnish; S10: Ghanaian]

1 <S8> yes most of [them] </S8>
2 <BS7> [yeah] [(xx)] </BS7>
3 <S2> most of them </S2>
4 <S10> most of them are engineering </S10>
5 <S1> i i i think that </S1>
6 <S8> well technical personnel they would be called </S8>
7 <S1> maybe not maybe just *technicals* </S1>
8 <S2> mhm yeah </S2>
9 <BS7> *yeah technicals* perhaps *yeah* </BS7>
USEMD160

In extract 7, speakers seem to be unsure as to how exactly to define some of the employees met in a factory. After S8 has named them 'technical personnel' in line 6 as a response to S10 who believes they are engineers (line 4), S1 suggests a single term, *technicals*, line 7, which repeats the previous concept but in a more concise form. The choice of this term is approved by S7, who repeats it in line 9. Moreover, extract 7 illustrates a slightly different type of solidarity repetition in comparison with the two previous excerpts, in that repetition displays not only listenership but also agreement,

as highlighted by the repetition of the response token by S7 in line 9 *yeah*, the use of which will be discussed in more detail in the following subsection.

3.2.5. Repetition of response tokens *yeah/yes*

Another form of repetition contributing to cooperation and/or listenership in the corpus was displayed by the use of such response tokens as ‘*yeah*’ and ‘*yes*’, also called “backchannels” (Yngve 1970). Lambertz (2011) identifies three different functions served by ‘*yeah*’ in her analysis of interactional data in the Corpus of Australian Spoken English, namely its use as an alignment token, when a speaker signals agreement but also adds more talk in the same turn; as a continuer, with its occurrence taking place when the speaker who takes the floor has not yet completed an utterance but shows participation and listenership; finally, as an agreement token, when the speaker displays agreement with what was said in a previous utterance, but only signals the speaker to go on with the talk. The examination of ELFA medical data yielded several cases of repetition of ‘*yeah*’/‘*yes*’ as performing continuer and alignment functions, while few cases of allo-repetition serving the agreement function were identified in the data. Extracts 8, 9 and 10 are examples of repetition of ‘*yeah*’ performing the three above-mentioned functions.

3.2.5.1. Showing alignment

(8) [two speakers are examining CDT (Carbohydrate-Deficient Transferrin), a laboratory test used to help detect heavy alcohol consumption] [S5: Italian; S6: Finnish]

1 <S6> what was the problem with that was it expensive or why don't they use it, [so often]
</S6>
2 <S5> [i think] somewhere they use also for alcohol test something like that <S6> [mhm]
</S6> [but], er </S5>
3 <S6> yeah it's very specific </S6>
4 <S5> *yeah* it is specific and more erm there are other ways to control the alcohol <S6>
mhm </S6>
5 addication </S5>
USEMD080

In line 4, S5 repeats *yeah* to signal he shares S6's thought about the specificity of the test they are talking about, but S5 also continues with more talk in the same turn where *yeah* occurs, thus giving evidence not only of listenership but first and foremost of active contribution to the conversation.

3.2.5.2. Showing engagement in listenership (continuer)

(9) [three speakers are involved in a talk about dimensions of viruses, expressed in angstroms] [S3: Russian; S4: Czech; S5: Lithuanian]

1 <S4> the bam-35 DNA came with bam-35 P8 protein and still was recognised by PRD1 that's [the case] <S5>
2 [yes] yes </S5> <S3> yes </S3> that's quite remarkable because the 3 other way around it doesn't work </S4>
USEMD310

Despite being quite short, extract 9 shows a significant example of allo-repetition of *yes* occurring before the speaker who takes the floor has completed his utterance. S3's repetition of *yes* in line 2 occurs immediately after its first occurrence by S5 and before S4 has concluded his thought. Unlike the case displayed in the previous extract, here repetition does not serve any contribution function but is undoubtedly an expression of listenership in talk.

3.2.5.3. *Agreement*

(10) [Three speakers are talking about abnormal accumulation of iron in organs, referred to as 'hemochromatosis' in medical terms] [S3: Finnish; S6: Finnish; S7: Finnish; SS: Simultaneous Speakers]

1 <S7> it drops of course, that's like donadi- donating blood the haemoglobin goes down a bit, i'm very
 2 interested, which are more often diseased men or women concerning hemochromatichromathosis </S7>
 3 <S3> i think men </S3>
 4 <S6> yeah, yeah but maybe because women lose more [iron] </S6>
 5 <S7> [yes] </S7>
 6 <SS> yeah </SS>
 7 <S6> they have this disease and then we had also these other metabolic liver diseases like wilson's disease and
 8 alpha-antitrypsin i don't know anything about those, they can they can cause liver disease, liver malfunction
 9 </S6>
 USEMD080

S6 is giving an explanation of the possible reason why men are more prone to iron accumulation in comparison with women (line 4). In the following turn, S7 utters *yes* as an agreement token, and the same occurs in the immediately next turn, where Simultaneous Speakers repeat the token. Neither S7 nor SS take the floor, thus signalling S6 to progress with the talk.

3.2.6. *Giving the opportunity to understand an item after recipient partial repeat of a prior turn + wh-question word*

The examination of the data revealed another form of repetition resulting in cooperation and involvement, i.e. repeat elicitation. This form of repetition occurs when the recipient who fails to understand or hear an item contained in the speaker's prior utterance elicits a repetition through the use of a *wh*-question word. This form of repair initiation prompts a repetition of the problematic item in the next turn (Kaur 2009: 85). Unlike what Kaur (2009) identified in her work, the examination of the data in this study revealed an interesting form of repeat-elicitation which is a mixture of same-speaker repetition and allo-repetition, and is also a further example of display of cooperation work and group involvement. Extract 11 below may serve as an illustration:

(11) [five speakers are talking about some possible biological risk factors related to the presence of birds in a particular industry] [S1: Finnish; S2: Swedish; S7: Nigerian; S8: Finnish; S10: Ghanaian]

1 <S1> [but] how about the birds because there were warnings about the birds </S1>
 2 <S8> yes </S8>
 3 <BS7> *the* what </BS7>
 4 <S10> oh the *birds* </S10>
 5 <S1> *birds* </S1>
 6 <S2> *bi- birds* <S1> [yes] </S1> [th-] inside <S1> yes </S1> okay yeah </S2>
 7 <S10> *there were warnings* </S10>
 USEMD160

In line 3, S7 signals his failure to understand the word ‘birds’ by repeating the item immediately preceding it, i.e. *the*, and replacing the element not understood with the question word ‘what’. The repetition of *birds* is displayed by S10 in line 4 and is repeated again in the next turn (line 5) by S1, the speaker who uttered the word first (line 1). *Birds* is further repeated in line 6 by another speaker, S2, who adds ‘inside’, presumably prompted by the desire to allow S7 to take the thread of the speech again. S2’s intervention is supported in line 7 by S10, who also repeats the sentence *there were warnings*, first uttered by S1 in line 1, thus providing S7 with the other key information of the topic being discussed in this specific segment of speech.

3.2.7. Didactic repetition

Another form of repetition identified in the data was didactic repetition, that is, lecturers’ repetition of students’ responses. This kind of repetition was present in a seminar discussion, USEMD30B, from which extract 7 below was drawn.

(12) [four speakers are talking about haematological malignancies after having analysed some specific cases of individuals with tumours] [S1: Finnish; S2: Spanish; S3: Spanish; S4: Spanish]

1 <S1> [...] 76-year-old man <S2> mhm-hm </S2> so 76 <S2> yeah </S2> indicates what </S1>
 2 <S2> mhm the age erm yeah, malignancies [(due to) age] </S2>
 3 <S1> mhm-hm and that could yes and that could maybe it’s important what type of <S4> [(xx)] </S4>
 4 *malignancies* what type of *malignancies* </S1>
 5 <S2> mhm gastrointestinal [(xx)] </S2>
 6 <S1> [mhm-hm so] solitary *tumours*, if you think about the haematological *malignancies* <S2>mhm</S2> can
 7 you think </S1>
 8 <S2> anaemia well it is not a *malignancy* <S1> mhm-hm </S1> myeloma </S2>
 9 <S1> *myeloma* what else </S1>
 10 <S2> maybe lymphoma </S2>
 11 <S1> *lymphoma* yes what else </S1>
 12 <S2> mhm leukaemia </S2>
 13 <S1>mhm-hm and *leukaemias* yeah how about the sex does it interfere with the *haematological malignancies*
 14 </S2> yeah some of them maybe are more more frequent in men than in women </S2>
 USEMD30B

The lecturer's repetition of *myeloma*, line 9, *lymphoma*, line 11, and *leukaemias* (in a non-verbatim form), line 13, serves the function of confirming the correctness of the student's responses. This function is also reinforced by the display of didactic elicitation (lines 9-11), that is, the use of items used to encourage the student's participation. The repetition of *myeloma* (line 9) and *lymphoma* (line 11), together with the use of the phrase *what else*, uttered immediately after, connect confirmation of correct response with elicitation to give additional information about the topic being discussed. Thus, with the student being prompted and stimulated to speak after the lecturer's repetition of her responses, didactic repetition/elicitation results in a form of collaborative exchange.

Besides being an illustration of didactic repetition/elicitation in lecturer/student academic interaction, extract 12 is also another example of use of terms giving discourse coherence with speakers collaborating in sense making. As was previously shown with regard to extract 4 earlier in this study, also in extract 12 speakers make use of synonyms, *malignancy-ies/tumours* (respectively, in lines 2, 4, 6, 8, and 13), as well as of hyponyms, i.e. *myeloma* (lines 8-9), *lymphoma* (lines 10-11) and *leukaemia/s* (12-13), with the last three terms having in *haematological malignancies* their exact superordinate (lines 6 and 13).

3.2.8. *Repairing the form of an item when it is perceived as incorrect or inappropriate*

The functions illustrated up to now confirm various types of allo-repetition identified by Tannen (1989) and others (Kaur 2009; Mauranen 2010). The additional type of allo-repetition located in the data is that of performing a repair function, when an item uttered previously by the interlocutor is perceived as incorrect. The examination of the data displayed three cases of this kind of repetition, which appeared to be of a certain importance in a cross-cultural interaction where the language used is lingua franca English. Extracts 13 and 14 (a and b) below illustrate, respectively, the cases of repair function found in the data:

(13) [two speakers are talking about 'haemochromatosis'] [S5: Italian; S6: Finnish]

1 <S5> it can cause er (xx) arthritis and hypogona er <S6> *hypogonadi* </S6> dotrophic

2 *hypogonadotrophic* <S6> yes </S6> *hypogonadi* </S5>

3 <S6> yeah yeah er it affects the hypothalamus <S5> yeah </S5> hypophysis </S6>

USEMD080

In describing what diseases haemochromatosis may cause, S5 says 'arthritis' and then utters the word *hypogona* (line 1). After perceiving S5's difficulty in producing the ongoing word (also in virtue of the pause generated by the hesitation marker 'er' uttered immediately afterwards), S6 recognizes in *hypogona* an incorrect term. Thus, S6 repeats the word in a slightly different form, i.e. *hypogonadi*, which, in turn, is followed by the adjective *dotrophic*, uttered by S5, and which is probably intended to be the continuation of *hypogona*, as S5's *hypogonadotrophic* following immediately afterwards confirms (line 2). Even though it remains uncertain whether S6 utters *hypogonadi* (line 1) with the intention of correcting the non-existent term *hypogona* (S6 probably does not immediately understand that S5 is starting to utter the complex and long term *hypogonadotrophic*) or whether his intention was to produce the term 'hypogonadism', which should have been used as the exact medical term instead of *hypogonadi*,

undoubtedly S6's displays willingness to help his interlocutor create sense-making. S6 succeeds in his intention, as the repetition of *hypogonadi* by S5 shows (line 2).

The last extract below shows two other cases of allo-repair, where correction overlaps with didactic repetition.

(14a) [two speakers (three in 14b) are talking about haematological diseases] [S1: Finnish; S3: Spanish; S4: Spanish]

1 <S1> mhm-hm so what happens with the lympho- lymphocytes when they activate they become </S1>
 2 <S4> plasmatic cells </S4>
 3 <S1> *plasma cells* yes and the plasma cells produce </S1>
 4 <S4> immunoglobulins </S4>
 [...]
 USEMD30B

As can be seen, S1, who is a senior staff member, asks S4, an undergraduate, what lymphocytes become when they activate (line 1), followed by S4's reply 'plasmatic cells' (line 2). S1 promptly confirms S4's correct understanding, as the display of 'yes' (line 3) also shows, but S1 performs the confirmation by repeating S4's utterance while correcting, at the same time, the wrong form 'plasmatic cells' into the right one (*plasma cells*).

[14b]
 20 <S1> so if you palpate abdomen what </S1>
 21 <S3> you can find masses abdominal <S1> mhm </S1> masses in the [abdomen] </S3>
 22 <S1> [oh yes] abnormal masses what else you pay attention to </S1>
 23 <S4> pain tenderness </S4>
 24 <S1> tenderness if the abdomen is tender what else </S1>
 25 <S3> hepatomegalia hepatomegalia </S3>
 26 <S1> *hepatomegaly*, so if liver is enlarged or spleen is enlarged so they should be written er in details so they shou- er
 27 they should be mentioned separately so the liver is normal because that's important information if they change in
 28 size 9 that could indicate something, okay so er how do you interpret the finding of the back </S1>
 [...]
 USEMD30B

S1 wants to prompt S3, another undergraduate, to make a possible diagnosis following the identification of precise signs of clinical palpation of the abdomen of a subject with haematological problems. S1 focuses S3's attention on what the latter should pay attention to during the exam, and this stimulates S4 to answer 'tenderness' first (line 23), and S3 the Spanish term 'hepatomegalia' afterwards (line 25). In the following turn (line 26), S1 displays the repetition of 'hepatomegalia' in the English version *hepatomegaly*. In S1's *hepatomegaly*, allo-repetition serves a twofold function, namely didactic repetition confirming S3's correct response and, at the same time, a sort of linguistic repair of S3's decision to use a Spanish term to refer to the "enlargement of

the liver” (*Merriam-Webster’s Medical Dictionary* 2012. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/medlineplus>).

4. Discussion

The investigation of allo-repetition identified in the data suggests that allo-repetition is an effective device in achieving mutual understanding in an ELF academic setting. All types of allo-repetition performed in the data showed interpersonal involvement in talk, and contributed to maintaining and/or enhancing sense-making. Particularly interesting were those cases of allo-repetition displayed to solve understanding difficulties when utterances were perceived as problem-marked. In this respect, close attention must be paid, in particular, to occurrences of allo-repetition performed with regard to terms of classical origin, Greek and Latin, as in the cases of *hypercalciuria* and *hypogonadotropic hypogonadi(sm)* analysed in the previous section. The former was manifestly perceived as a stumbling block to correct understanding as it was uttered according to one of the speaker’s native pronunciation; the latter was perceived as difficult to utter, most likely because of its nature as a compound term with long constituents. In both cases, the difficulties caused by the above-mentioned terms triggered the allo-repetition strategy, which successfully achieved the interactional goal of shared understanding. Another term of classical origin prompting immediate allo-repetition, but this time with correction/repair of the superficial form, was *plasma* (in the expression *plasma cells*), immediately allo-adjusted into *plasmatic*. The cooperative/supportive/corrective functions performed by allo-repetition for terms of classical origin thus proved to be crucial in the ELF interactions of the corpus, since academic medical English is rich in complex compound terms (as in other academic discourse types), many constituents of which are Greek and Latinate words (see Wulff 2004; Maglie 2009).

As for the implications of this study at the didactic level, knowledge of the positive effects of allo-repetition in ELF academic medical interactions may offer useful suggestions to teachers within English for medical purposes (EMP) syllabuses. Given the growing number of students who are non-native speakers of English and the status of English as the language of worldwide scientific communication, EMP courses held in English in European universities have increased significantly in recent years. As this study intended to show, the use of allo-repetition is a major communicative strategy in creating cooperation in teacher/learner - learner/learner sense-making and understanding enhancement, two crucial factors for effective communication in a non-native English context. Consequently, allo-repetition should be given more space in EMP teaching praxis and be used on both the teacher’s part and the learners’. Teachers should encourage learners to use allo-repetition as an effective means enabling them to communicate in a language other than their own on topics related to their disciplinary field. For instance, when discussing a medical topic or commenting on the results of a recent research, the EMP teacher should encourage his/her learners to repeat utterances previously said by the interlocutors, show agreement or disagreement, express participation in listenership, ask for clarification if needed, etc. In this way, learners are actively involved in conversation and feel more confident in their speaking skills, the development of which has perhaps been given little attention so far in classroom activities (see Cappuzzo 2011). Most importantly, allo-repetition

strategy acquires particular relevance in the light of the fact that EMP courses held in English fall into the category of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) didactic approaches, and courses “focus on themes and topics specific to the medical field” (Maher 1986: 112) despite the fact that teachers are not generally medical experts. In this respect, if allo-repetition is constantly adopted as an integral part of EMP classroom activities, its didactic effectiveness acts on three fronts at the same time, namely on learners’ development of their medical English communicative skills, on reinforcement of their L2 English command, and on acquisition of greater familiarity with contents of medical knowledge that learners have already assimilated in the specific (medical) subjects.

5. Conclusions

This paper confirms previous studies (Kaur 2009, 2010, 2012; Mauranen 2010, 2012; Merrit 1994; Norrick 1987; Perrin *et al.* 2003; Sawir 2004; Schegloff 1987) about the positive role that allo-repetition plays in a non-native context where speakers’ language skills are unequal. The allo-repetition practices identified in the data developed a framework of participation in sense-making which allowed shared understanding to be preserved and knowledge negotiation to progress. The functions of allo-repetition found in the data displayed involvement of interactants in conversation with speakers cooperating not only when understanding was problem-marked or needed to be confirmed but also in the normal development of ongoing discourse. Of major importance was the role of such linguistic strategies as the use of synonyms, hyponyms and superordinates in enhancing clarity and providing conversation with explicitness and discourse coherence, thus contributing to effective communication. Moreover, though only three cases were located, it is worth highlighting the importance of the new additional function found in the data, ‘repair the form of an item, when it is perceived to be incorrect or inappropriate’, as it proved to be effective to the achievement of shared understanding.

Hopefully, this paper will contribute to giving cross-cultural studies a general overview of how allo-repetition is used in a spoken academic setting in medical discourse, a domain of language which deserves closer investigation in ELF linguistic studies, due to its increasing pervasiveness in modern society. Indeed, the relevance of medical language, the international status of academia and the position of English as the language of worldwide communication make scrutiny of English as a lingua franca essential to a thorough understanding of how English is used by the international academic medical community.

Finally, much remains to be done in ELF linguistic studies of academic medical interactions. As for repetition, future research may focus on and develop the quantitative analysis of allo-repetition in the ELFA medical section. It could be hypothesized that due to the need for cooperation in constructing meanings, in an ELF medical context allo-repetition is more frequent than in a context where native English speakers interact. To confirm (or refute) this, a further study should be carried out comparing the incidence of allo-repetition as identified in this study with the possible incidence of the phenomenon in a reference corpus of spoken academic medical interactions in a native speaker (NS) setting.

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