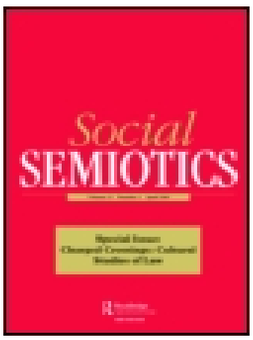

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# Reconsidering repetition in language education: an edusemiotic approach

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# Reconsidering repetition in language education: an edusemiotic approach

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**ABSTRACT**

Since behaviorism fell out of favor as one of the prominent learning theories, language education has done away with using repetition of linguistic forms as one of the important strategies used in second-language classrooms. As a new direction in educational philosophy and theory, edusemiotics can offer a new perspective about the use of repetition in learning a new language. When language forms are treated as signs and not as substances, as in edusemiotics, linguistic particles can never be truly repeated, but each instance of a repetition of a language particle and structure disambiguates the meaning of a form in a different context. This paper argues that the repetition of language forms at the lexical, syntactical, phonetic, and discursive levels aids language learners to intuit meaning and function in the new language. Further, it is discussed that repetition of language forms prompts language learners to look for similarity in patterns between linguistic structures rather than surface-level similarity of forms of language. Finally, the use of linguistic repetition is examined for its affective and poetic bearing, as an important aspect of the acquisition of language.

**KEYWORDS**

Edusemiotics; second-language acquisition; Deleuze; repetition; Peirce

## Introduction

One of the most misunderstood aspects of language education is about the use of repetition of language forms. Many language educators generally assume that linguistic repetition only functions as a reinforcement between a stimulus, e.g. a word, and a response, e.g. memorization of meaning and functions of new words and grammatical structures. From a purely pragmatic perspective, some language educators also assume that occasional use of repetition in language classrooms might be helpful since many aspects of spontaneous speech are formulaic and pre-packaged for use. The underlying assumptions for all these pedagogical practices are that language particles and structures carry fixed meanings and functions. The role of the language learner in the interpretation and construction of meaning is totally ignored.

As a new direction in educational philosophy and a branch of theoretical semiotics, edusemiotics (Semetsky and Stables 2014; Stables and Semetsky 2015), challenges direct representation as assumed in analytic philosophy of language (Semetsky 2015a). The term *edusemiotics* was first coined by Marcel Danesi (2010) to address an essential

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gap between semiotics and learning theories. When signs, as relations, become the unit of learning, as in edusemiotics, education becomes the apprenticeship of interpreting signs and not passing on the presumed immutable facts from teachers to students. A pedagogy based on interpretation and subjective experiences emphasizes the process of learning rather than its products, such as standard tests and evaluations. It follows that from an edusemiotic perspective, learning cannot be reduced to only intelligence and memorization of facts; it must also involve intuition and insight (Semetsky 2015b).

In the context of language education, edusemiotics breaks apart from traditional linguistics that views language particles and structures with fixed meanings and functions. In semiotics, words are signs, and language learners extract the meaning of new words through an interpretative process, involving the teachers, teaching contents, the classroom, other leaners, etc. (Atoofi 2015). As assumed by mainstream language education theories, new language learners are not challenged with learning new words and grammatical structures one step at a time; rather, from the very beginning, they have to adapt to a new sign system. Learning is not confined to correct or wrong responses but involves recalibrating from one prior semiotic system to another (van Lier 2004). Such a transition is full of ambiguity and uncertainties. Logical inductive and deductive reasoning are not sufficient to aid the language learner in this process. She must gradually learn and fine-tune into the meanings and functions of the new words and language structures.

In mainstream linguistic circles, it is generally assumed that there is an absolute diagrammatical relationship between the form and meaning of language particles (Crocco Galèas 1998). Thus, language teachers expect that by repeating linguistic forms, they merely reproduce or reinforce the same meaning. Edusemiotics challenges a mutually exclusive relationship between the form and meaning. In semiotics, words as signs are always on a continuum and never as isolated linguistic items (Stjernfelt 2007). Even at face value, every instance of a repetition of a language particle and structure disambiguates the meaning of a form in a different context (Dressler 1995). As detailed below, at least in an educational context, the perspective that words are linguistic particles with fixed meaning is very much influenced by the behavioristic theory of learning.

## Repetition and behaviorism in language education

Similar to the field of education, initially language instruction became heavily vested in the methodological aspects of behaviorism pioneered by Ivan Pavlov, B.F. Skinner, and John Watson. Language learners were prompted to repeat language forms as a means to memorize features of the new language. With its initial success in using methodological aspects of behaviorism, especially among American servicemen stationed in overseas installations, the *audio-lingual* approach was introduced to language classes as a preferred method of learning a new language. Language learners were continuously and systematically directed to repeat the "correct" forms in language labs, without particular instruction, with the hope that they would be able to produce similar instances spontaneously.

From an epistemological standpoint, behaviorism is heavily influenced by substantialism, the notion that all phenomena, including animal behavior, are rooted in substances and their physical properties. It follows that from a behavioristic viewpoint, repetitions of contents can only create similar events. For Peirce, the founder of modern semiotics, however, the world is perfused with signs. The repetition of signs allows for growth in

meaning through the process of interpretation. The semiotic notion of repetition is in sharp contrast with fundamental aspects of behaviorism that perceives repetition as a mere reinforcement between a stimulus and response.

In the late 1950s, behaviorism came in direct conflict with the principle of modern linguistics. Following on the behavioristic model, Skinner (1957) published a new book to claim that language, too, was acquired through habit formation. This claim was refuted by Noam Chomsky, who had just revolutionized the field of linguistics by his proposal of Universal Grammar, or UG (Chomsky 1972). Contrary to the behavioristic model, in UG it is assumed that humans are born with an innate predisposition to talk. This radical change in linguistic theory was followed by the introduction of *Cognitivism* that emphasized thinking and attention as a method of learning new contents. While UG in principle was only related to the acquisition of the first language, educational models wholeheartedly abandoned the behavioristic model and followed a Chomskyan and cognitivistic approach to Second-Language Acquisition. Language learners were assumed to have been naturally born with the abstract and essential properties of any language, and input could only induce certain adjustments on the new language they intended to learn (White 2003). Repetition of language forms lost its importance as a method of learning a second language.

The appeal in both behaviorism and cognitivism was that these models, instead of relying on introspection and the subconscious mind, as previously assumed in educational models, advanced the field on observable behavior and cognitive processes such as attention and perception. However, at their cores, both behaviorism and cognitivism were based on Cartesian philosophy that viewed bodily responses and behaviors as different from mental states. When behavior is perceived as using signs, as in semiotics, then there is no separation between bodies and minds, between attention and action. To know and recognize something as a sign, a supposedly mental state, is equal to the ability of using the sign.

## Throwing out the baby with the bathwater

Classroom strategies and methods, such as using repetition, are grounded in particular learning theories. When a theory goes out of style, the strategies and methods associated with the theory are consequently abandoned. Seldom are the strategies scrutinized for usefulness when a theory is dismissed. And this is exactly what happened to the use of repetition. At least in language education, all forms of repetition of linguistic forms were, consequently, discouraged in language classrooms. And pedagogical approaches did not make a clear distinction between different types of repetition. For instance, while linguistic reduplication concerns only repetition in morphology, linguistic repetition may cover a broader use of language that also includes syntax and discourse (Gil 2005).

Edusemiotics brings a very different philosophical dimension to the discourse of education, previously limited to psychological theories of learning. For Peirce, learning is the dynamic process of signification, the subjective activity of interpreting the world around us. Hence, a semiotic perspective does not preclude using any method or strategy in the classroom, since the usefulness of the method cannot exist entirely in the method itself, but how it is used as a vehicle of sign transfer. Edusemiotics perceives education as

transforming individuals through practices and experiences (Olteanu 2017; Stables 2012). When "signs" become the unit of learning, as in edusemiotics, knowing becomes growing through exploration (Semetsky 2010). Learners do not acquire immutable facts; they are interpreting the world around them and gain competence to act on it (Pikkarainen 2014).

As extensively discussed by Semetsky (2007, 2009, 2014), the semiotic dimension of methods as transactional vehicles in learning can also be found in the many shared works by the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze compares learning a second language with learning to swim (Deleuze 1994a). There is no separation between the body of the swimmer, the water, and the act of learning to swim. Rather than the aggregation of parts or events, a semiotic learning system is comprised of *assemblages* (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), the interaction between many systems, each with different functions, meanings, and properties. Similarly, for the language learner, the words and the methods she is utilizing to learn are all systems and not individual parts or events. Viewed as a system, rather than a strategy with a fixed utility, repetition can function very differently when interacting with other systems.

## Repetition without repetition

In the early 1920s, the Russian neurophysiologist Nikolai Aleksandrovitsch Bernstein came to disagree with his contemporary countryman, Ivan Pavlov. Bernstein had done extensive research in motor control and learning in the central nervous system (CNS). He observed that it is rather impossible to account for motor learning, such as dancing, driving, swimming, or even simple actions, such as grabbing a pen, by training the muscles through repetitive movements. He argued that although the tasks may seem very similar, our muscles are always in a different physical position with regard to an impeding action. There are never identical and stereotypical movements. Hence, it is apparently impossible for our CNS to acquire a movement only through repetition. Additionally, Bernstein showed that even acquired motor skills still change over time. A good piano player keeps improving in her skill. If repetition only acted to reinforce the relationship between a stimulus and response, there would never be any change in the action itself. It would always be the same action. Coining the term "repetition without repetition," Bernstein claimed that a reproduction is never an exact repetition, and that every repetition is a transformation of movements through practice (Ito 2015).

It can be argued, then, that repetition of language forms cannot be assumed to only act as a reinforcement, such as a mnemonic device for memorization. Rather, every repetition expands on the relationship between a word and its meaning. For instance, every time a toddler hears the word "cat," she expands on the meaning of what it is to be a "cat" and what it is to not be a "cat," for instance, from any furry animal, to any furry animal that walks on four legs and to any furry animal that walks on four legs and makes the "meow" sound, etc. In effect, by repetition of the word "cat," the hypothetical toddler not only acquires a better sense about cats in general, but she also understands that "dogs," "raccoons," and "squirrels," for instance, are not cats. Repetition adds to conceptual interpretation. A second-language learner, similarly, goes through the same process, not only at the semantic level, but also at the phonetic and syntactic level.

## Repetition in first language acquisition

There is a great body of research about the importance of repetition in the acquisition of the first language (Clark 2009; Edwards, Beckman, and Munson 2004; Gordon 2007; Greenfield and Savage-Rumbaugh 1993; Johnstone 1987; Veneziano, Sinclair, and Berthoud 1990). In fact, as Keenan (1977) has observed, most of the early psycho-linguistic research in young children came directly from the observation of the use of repetition. It is usually assumed that parents repeat phrases to their post-verbal toddlers. Studies, however, have shown that in many cultures, parents use repetitive forms of speech even with their preverbal newborn babies (Demuth 1986; Schieffelin 1979). Moreover, it is not only the parents who repeat words for their children. In what Tannen (2007) calls *allo-repetition*, parents, in fact, often repeat back what a child has said as a way of either engaging the child for more conversation, or to show them the correct way of pronouncing words or phrases (Johnstone 1994).

Contrary to many psychological studies, linguistic repetition between adults and children is not limited to verbatim repetition but frequently also involves syntactical and prosodic repetition. For instance, Clark (2009) has shown that there is a particular syntactical repetition between an adult and child that is constructed by a combination of a small sentence frame with a noun phrase or a nominal, such as, "where's Daddy," "here's the kitty," "that's the ball," etc. In fact, children's responses are often constructed to respond to such short sentence structures. That is, they may not necessarily repeat the words, but they learn how certain syntactical structures are more easily acquired and used for present and future interactions.

In interactions between adults and children, repetitive linguistic forms and structures also have functions that go beyond immediate formal language acquisition (McTear 1978). In many mainstream linguistic circles, language is perceived as a formal abstract system. Hence, language acquisition, whether as a first or second, is also perceived as transferring this abstract system from one person to another. From an edusemiotic perspective, however, signs are evaluated for their functions. Hence, in contrast to much psychological research that views linguistic repetition in children as a mere imitation, studies focused on functionality of language suggest that children's repetition appears to have pragmatic function rather than for pure mimicry (Martini and Kirkpatrick 1981). For instance, Ervin-Tripp and Mitchell-Kernan (1977, 19) have argued that the reason children utilize more repetition than adults is because "it requires the minimum operation on the partner's speech." Similarly, Clark (2009, 296) has shown that adult–child repetition has multiple and at times simultaneous functions, such as to "help speaker and addressee establish common ground; … allow the current speaker to ratify what the previous speaker proposed; and … mark uptake of information about words (or relations among words) offered by the previous speaker."

## Repetition in second-language education

Within the current trend, most language teachers frown upon the use of linguistic repetition in language classrooms. Repetition is, for the most part, associated with Pavlovian conditioning and considered an outdated method. However, there is a general tendency to think about repetition only in terms of verbatim repetition of words and phrases, as in

the audio-lingual approach. While rote memorization through repetition has been abandoned in language classrooms, many language learners still use this method in self-learning. For instance, in a Second-Language Acquisition study, a diverse group of language learners, such as Japanese, Finish, and Brazilian, reported the use of repetition as a main method to learn a second language (Menezes 2013). This type of repetition is, of course, a very limited scope of what technically can be considered a linguistic repetition, both in terms of what is being repeated and how something is repeated.

Despite the common assumption, observational studies have shown that language teachers routinely employ many types of repetition in their classes. Of course, language teachers may not acknowledge or recognize such practice while instructing a class. In part, this lack of acknowledgement is related to an understanding of what constitutes a repetition. In contrast to a layperson's assumption, any pattern in talk and text can be considered a linguistic repetition (Johnstone 1994). Hence, other than the repetition of words, phrases, and complex language structures, repetition can also happen at the phonetic level, such as in the use of homonyms, prosody, rhymes, and prominence. In fact, most language programs include an intensive course intended to teach the pronunciation of the target language based on similarities and differences between phonemes and phonetic stress, rather than the meaning of the language contents. Additionally, the similarity in structure and discourse, such as the use of paraphrasing, parallelism, reiteration, and syntactical repetition, are highly emphasized in writing classes intended for second-language learners (DiCamilla and Anton 1997). Moreover, language teachers frequently employ a task repetition and recycling routine, such as matching tasks, picture stories, and card-based games, in their pedagogy that both structurally and internally adopts the use of repetition (Bygate 2005; Lynch and Maclean 2000). Table 1 shows a summary of types of linguistic repetition.

## Repetition as a rhizome

Words as signs are never isolated from other words, a concept Bakhtin (1984) referred to as *intertextuality*. Words as signs evoke other signs, concepts, and relationships, even more so

**Table 1.** Type of linguistic repetition with examples.

| Type of repetition | Definition | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Verbatim | The repetition of exact words | A: "Say open the door."<br>B: "Open the door." |
| Homonyms | Words with similar spelling but with different meanings | Kind (caring) vs. Kind (type) |
| Homophones | Words with similar pronunciation but with different meanings | Too vs. Two |
| Synonyms | Words with exact or similar meanings | Happy vs. Glad |
| Parallelism | Repetition of parts of speech that have similar grammatical functions | "To study, you need books, notebooks, and pens." |
| Rhyming | Composition of phrases or sentences that end with similar sounds | "He dislikes a mouse, especially that in the house." |
| Alliterations | The repetition of initial consonants in closely connected words | "Thomas took tons of tours." |
| Syntactical | Structural repetition among adjacent sentences or clauses | "Sarah read a book while John watched television." |
| Repeating others | Repeating parts or entire words of an interlocutor | A: "Why don't you work?"<br>B: "Why do you make me work?" |

in today's connected world. Whatever we say is always in the context of entering a previous dialogue. Repetition of language forms functions to create newer links, as nodes in a vast and interconnected network of symbolic meaning-making. Words as signs and concepts are our collective effort to abstract naming things in the world from particular cases to general cases. And since concepts by definition cannot stand for only one thing, every repetition of a form generates a bit of difference (Semetsky 2004), a notion first articulated by Gilles Deleuze (1994a) in his book titled *Difference and Repetition*.

Traditionally, it is assumed that concepts grow in an arboreal manner, branching out from multiple and overlapping items to a general case. Such expansion is expected to be hierarchical. From an edusemiotics perspective, however, forms are signs that expand rhizomatically (Deleuze 1994a; Deleuze and Guattari 1988). A rhizome is a metaphorical type of growth in multidirectional routes and planes that cannot be reduced to a single point of reference or root. In contrast to arboreal growth, a rhizome progresses non-linearly and non-additively. In rhizomatic growth, newer words are not solely created through *hybridization*, or a mix of two different forms, but more often through *multiplicity*, a term Deleuze and Guattari (1983) used to refer to a new structure that does not refer to a previous unity. In multiplicity, contents generate new forms that are different qualitatively and quantitatively, objectively and subjectively, and in kind and degree.

Mainstream linguistics perceives language forms as "parts of speech," or "language particles," shaped in additive forms, with parts connected syntactically in an arboreal manner that are attached or move together. From a semiotic perspective, language forms are signs pointing to concepts and ideas. The rhizomatic growth is not dependent on the multiplicity of things but on the number of connections. Relationships are fundamental to progression. Language forms as concepts can only grow rhizomatically, neither additively nor arboreally, since words as signs do not carry fixed meaning; they carry concepts and functions through their relationship with other words and the way they are interpreted.

## Repetition as a precursor to language intuition

Words as signs and rhizomes are related through iconic likeness, a form of abductive reasoning. In linguistic terms, iconicity can be represented by both linguistic repetition and reduplication. For instance, language learners can speculate about the meaning of words and the functions of the grammatical structures, not only through similarity in likeness of the form but also similarity in sounds or meaning. In learning a new language, every repetition opens up a new connection to new concepts and structures. The progression is not only divergent but frequently convergent. An English language learner may soon realize that many words such as "start," "begin," "initiate," "commence," "launch," etc., may converge into very similar meaning. In contrast, she may notice that the single form of the verb "to take" can have different meanings and functions, such as "to choose," "to eat," "to write down," "to need," "to accept," etc.

For language learners, the expansion in understanding the meaning of language forms does not necessarily come through deductive or inductive reasoning, but for the most part through guessing. Edusemiotic philosophy expands beyond the deductive/inductive divide. Peirce firmly believed that the only way one can generate new ideas is through forming hypotheses, a non-inductive, non-deductive reasoning he termed *abduction* (Peirce CP 5.172). New language learners are confronted with a vast degree of uncertainty

in regard to the meaning of the new words, the function of the grammatical structures, the correct spelling of the words, and the sound system of the new language. It is quite impossible to begin using a new language only through deductive or inductive reasoning. One must constantly form hypotheses based on a very small sample of language input and be willing to learn through making occasional overgeneralizations. In fact, one of the qualities of a successful language learner is termed as having a *tolerance for ambiguity* (Brown 2007).

Repetition is instrumental in aiding language learners to expand on their abductive reasoning. Through repetition, learners take language from abstraction to performance, from what language *is* to what language can *become*. Using Deleuze and Guattari's terminology (1988), repetition adds to the *intermezzo*. Every time a language particle or structure is repeated, it also acts as a connector to preexisting forms and concepts. Repetition of forms is always generative because new meanings come from the act of interpretation and not from the form itself. In effect, as children, native speakers never have formal grammar lessons, but in hearing different sentences, they start seeing patterns in the ways words can be or cannot be connected together. As Bateson and Bateson (1987, 28) point out:

> Most of us were taught in school that a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing, but what we should have been taught is that a noun can stand in various kinds of relationship to other parts of the sentence, so that the whole of grammar could be defined as relationship and not in terms of things.

Repetition, as a mode of language-use, can create what Sébastien Pesce (2014) calls a "transduction," a creative process through which a single sign can be interpreted as having different meanings in different modalities. Conversely, different signs can also converge to produce a single meaning. For instance, Sukyadi, Hermawan, and Ruswan (2016) have shown that English language teachers in a high school in Indonesia used different modalities, e.g. written, verbal, or gestural, to explain the single concept of *underlining* to their students. In contrast, the same students understood that a single modality, e.g. being handed a marker pen, was a "move" by the teachers that required certain actions.

Pragmatically, many speech productions in a second language can be considered repetitions through analogy. For instance, a new language learner must frequently switch places and speak by mimicking native speakers of the target language. She must constantly think in an analogical way, "What would a native speaker say in this case?" She has to speak in their voices and express their experiences through abduction by what Tannen (2010) calls *ventriloquizing*. But every instance of ventriloquizing is, of course, never the same as the original. It is not the same, not only because it is a bit different in form or how it has been said; it is different because the same form is always used in a different context, hence resulting in different shades of meaning, expressions, and, therefore, experiences. In fact, repetition creates differences and not sameness, and it is through that "difference that make a difference" (Bateson 1972) that a language learner intuits new meanings and concepts.

## Repetition has a heart

Another misunderstood aspect of linguistic repetition is in its relation to affect. Borrowed from mainstream learning theories, it is generally assumed that linguistic repetition only facilitates memorization through reinforcement. Psychological theories of learning in

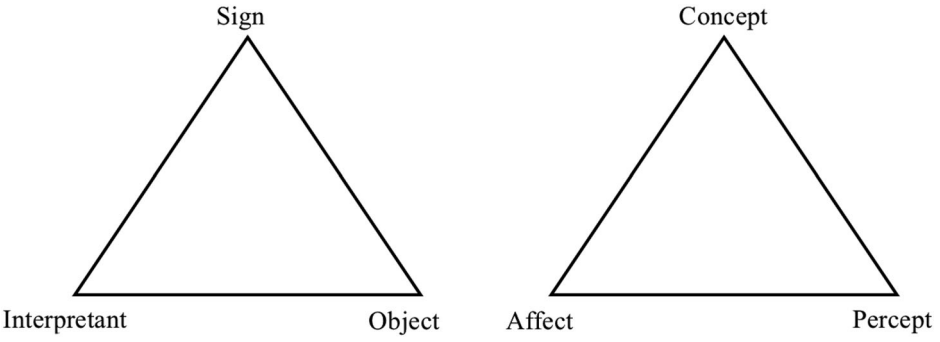


**Figure 1.** A comparison between the Peircean and Deleuzian triadic relationships (Semetsky 2004; 2014).

general, and cognitivistic theory in particular, view the human brain as a big cognitive machine similar to a computer. The affective and emotional aspect of learning is only considered as a side product to motivate the learner. As discussed by Semetsky (2004, 2014), similar to the Peircean triadic relation of object, sign, and interpretant, in Deleuzian epistemology, there is a triadic relationship between percepts, concepts, and affects in the acquisition of knowledge (Deleuze and Guattari 1993) (Figure 1). For Deleuze, repetition of any action is a transformation of habits that he terms *becoming*. Unlike computers and robots, we do not learn or memorize random information through habituation. When we learn, we become and change into different kind of beings, through "new percepts and new affects" (Deleuze 1995).

In contrast to the mainstream linguistics that aims for a prescriptive language, one with a clear set of rules for speaking grammatically and communicating concretely, Deleuze (1994b) is interested in "making language stutter." The metaphoric use of *stuttering* underscores the types of syntax found in ordinary talk that does not consider repetitions as redundancy or tautology, but as a "poetic modulation" (Semetsky 2004) to influence the audience. Using Deleuze's neologism, repetition *deterritorializes* language, as it allows for a word to be used in many intended or unintended places (territories) other than the one assumed by the prescriptive grammar. Repetition is not about cutting down the content of speech to what is the more precise or concise use of language. Good speakers do not repeat because they are hesitant or superfluous; rather, often they seek to infuse the audience with an emotional reaction.

Additionally, by appealing to all of our senses, rather than only our logical mind, repetitive forms and sounds can create rhythms and harmonic forms and tones to aid in reconciliation of information. With the repetition of words, as in rhymes in poetry, we do not intend to repeat the meaning, but to influence the listener by different effects, such as similarity in tone and intonational contour. In fact, many cultures utilize linguistic repetition as an affective and aesthetic device to pass cultural tradition through language-use, as in children's play (Heath 1983), entertainment (Erickson 1984), and personal narratives (Martin 1994). Of course, the use of linguistic repetition for its affective and aesthetic bearing is very much evident in lullabies, nursery songs, and religious chants and hymns. Linguistic repetition is so abundant in Native American narratives that ethnographers typically categorize them as poetry (Tedlock 1977; Webster 2008).

In the educational context, repetition for its affective and aesthetic quality is related to Peirce's concept of firstness, a "pre-interpretive auroral aspect of perception, the emergence of sensory qualities before they have been associated with any object or subject-perceiving" (Campbell 2018). While many adult language learners may have varying long-term motivations to pursue a new language (Dörnyei 2005; Gardner 1985), in the day-to-day learning style and method, what a language learner remembers and how she remembers cannot be separated into clean categories of "mind-things" and "heart-things," of cognition and affects. Affect is not glossing over cognition; both belong to the same semiotic and relational system. And affective devices, such as linguistic repetition, are relational to such function, to make language learning relevant, immediate, and pertinent to one's life.

Frequently language teachers employ repetition for its musical effect, and many find learning a second language easier through popular songs of the target language (Engh 2013; Fonseca 2000). Similarly, in many language classrooms, words and sentences are categorized and taught based on their orthographical and structural similarities as students perceive them as songs. In language classes intended for younger learners, teachers often break down words into syllables accompanied by claps to the same effect (Kern 2018). In fact, in some language classes even spontaneous conversation involves the utilization of many forms of linguistic repetition for its affective bearing. For instance, Persian heritage language teachers use lexical, temporal, and grammatical repetition, as well as synonyms and similar-sounding words, as a poetic and aesthetic device in their language teaching routines (Atoofi 2013; 2011).

## Conclusion

> The nightingale learned chattering from seeing the grace of the flower
> Otherwise, there was no sonnet or song contained in its beak
>
> Hafiz-e Shirazi (1315–1390 A.D.) Divan: Sonnet 277

Psychological theories subscribe to a dualistic perspective that views learning either as a product of the changes in the physical body, per behavioristic theory, or of the mind, per cognitivist theory. Learning is assumed to be processed either consciously or unconsciously. It is expected that learning either comes to us naturally or nurtured by our environment. A dualistic approach to learning always runs into the famous Meno's paradox, the idea that it is rather impossible to learn something new without knowing anything about it. As adequately explicated by Winfried Nöth (2014), this paradox is even more pronounced in the case of second-language learners. In fact, how is it possible for someone to learn a new word without knowing what it means or what it represents?

Edusemiotics parts ways with a dualistic approach to learning and adheres to a triadic relationship. In edusemiotics, learning is the process of semiosis, the action of signification, when an object or idea is connected to a reference through an interpretive process. Hence, the meaning of words is neither in the words nor in the objects they represent, but in the way they are related. Repetition of forms is not necessarily a duplication of the same interpretive event. Repeated signs can have distinguishing effects. Every use of a repetition prompts a new understanding, a new interpretation, and a new connection. In fact, while the words of a teacher may seem to be repeated to as many as the number of her students in the class, every single student may understand or take away something

different than another student. If the meaning was in the words and sentences, all students would understand the same thing, but this is seldom the case. It is in the same way that repetition creates different effects even for the same individual learner. Hence, rather than emphasizing what has been repeated, as language educators, we should pay attention to how language learners may interpret contents.

In edusemiotics, there are no divisions between thoughts and feelings, cognition and emotion. All we do is mediation through the senses afforded to us. We do not perceive repeated words and actions as "redundant" or "less intelligent," and those uttered or performed for the first time as "novel" or "cognitively demanding." Not all novel thinking leads to the right conclusion, and not all repetition bores the mind. Repetition can awaken our senses to look for similarity in patterns rather than similarity in appearances, an abductive form of reasoning that promotes deeper understanding of underlying relationships rather than superficial resemblances. Such understanding is as much logical as it is emotional, and to some degree, even artistic and spiritual.

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## Notes on contributor

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