

Functional Categories of Delayed Echolalia

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Delayed echolalia is the repetition of verbal messages that were previously heard and which are repeated after a time delay of a few minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, or years. It is sometimes more difficult to recognize delayed echolalia since the listener (the one to whom an interactive delayed echolalic message is directed) may not have been present when the original utterance or model message was uttered or, if present, the person may have forgotten. Unless the echoed message is significantly different in vocabulary, syntax, and message sophistication than the echolalic speaker's creative spontaneous speech, the naive listener may not recognize an utterance as echolalic. This may be particularly true of situations when the echoed message is dialogue that seems to fit a current moment or situation. The dialogue, however, may reflect experienced or overheard conversations or may represent dialogue heard from TV shows, videos, or read books. Not all repetitions fit a situation. Many utterances are clearly recognized as possible echolalia since the comment or phrase would never be uttered by a person familiar with that social/language culture. Other more clearly marked examples of delayed echolalia include the use of commercials and song lyrics within what may initially appear to be bizarre usage.

The most comprehensive descriptive article on delayed echolalia is the 1984 publication, "Analysis of Functions of Delayed Echolalia in Autistic Children" by Barry Prizant and Patrick Rydell. This article appeared in the *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research* (Vol. 27, pp. 183–192). The following is a simplified version of their description, with examples generated by the author and reviewed by Dr. Prizant. This publication is a companion to one titled "Functional Categories of Immediate Echolalia." The goal of this article is to provide information regarding various purposeful and nonpurposeful uses of delayed echolalia. It is not intended to serve as a guide for clinical evaluation or classification of data. The original article and other more recent articles and book chapters on echolalia should be consulted when information is needed to guide evaluation practices.

For purposes of clarity and brevity, the term "echolalic speaker" is used in the examples instead of the phrase "the person who uses echolalic speech." No disrespect is intended by the use of non-people-first language.

Note. From "Functional Categories of Delayed Echolalia," by B. Vicker, 1999, *Reporter*, 4(2), pp. 7–10. Copyright 1999 by the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Indiana University. Reprinted with permission. Available online at: www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/

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Interactive Scenarios (i.e., communication directed to another person)

Category	Description	Example
Turn taking/ interactive	Utterances used as turn fillers in an alternating verbal exchange.	<i>Adult speaker:</i> “What did you do this weekend?” <i>Echolalic speaker:</i> “Don’t take your trunks off in the swimming pool.” <i>Adult speaker:</i> “Oh, you went swimming?” <i>Echolalic speaker:</i> “Put your goggles on. Then you won’t get chlorine in your eyes.”
Verbal completion/ interactive	Utterances which complete familiar verbal routines initiated by others.	<i>Adult speaker:</i> “Wash your hands.” <i>Echolalic speaker:</i> As he washes his hands, he says, “Good boy.” His teacher typically says that to reinforce completion of an act.
Providing information/ interactive	Utterances offering new information not apparent from situational context (may be initiated or respondent).	A parent is about to begin preparation for lunch. She says, “What would you like for lunch?” The echolalic speaker begins singing a song about a brand name luncheon meat as a way of communicating that he would like a sandwich for lunch. <i>No luncheon meat was mentioned nor was anything visible that would have triggered the idea of a specific luncheon meat sandwich.</i>
Labeling/ interactive	Utterances labeling objects or actions in environment.	An adult and child are sorting through videotapes. The echolalic speaker picks up a Sesame Street video and sings a specific song as he makes a quick look at the adult. Adult acknowledges, “Yes, that’s one of your favorite songs from that tape.” <i>The child goes on looking through the pile; he doesn’t indicate that he had wanted to see the tape; thus, it was a comment of identification or recognition of the tape and a song associated with it.</i>
Protest/ interactive	Utterances protesting actions of others. May be used to prohibit others’ actions and reflect prohibitions expressed by others.	Echolalic speaker sees another child throwing paper on the floor. He says, “How many times have I told you not to do that? I’ve told you a 1,000 times. Go to time out. I’ll count to three; 1–2–3.”
Request/ interactive	Utterances used to request objects.	The echolalic speaker goes to an adult and says, “Do you want juice?” as his means of saying he’s thirsty.
Calling/ interactive	Utterances used to call attention to self or to establish/maintain interaction.	An echolalic child named Jordan walks over to an adult and says, “Jordan is an interesting name” as a means of initiating an interaction.
Affirmation/ interactive	Utterances used to indicate affirmation of previous utterance.	The adult asks the child, “What would you like for a snack? Juice? Crackers? Banana?” Echolalic speaker says, “Do you want juice?” to indicate that he wants juice.
Directive/ interactive	Utterances (often imperatives) used to direct another’s actions.	The echolalic speaker walks over to an adult standing by the TV/VCR. He says, “You. Ready; let’s exercise. Touch your toes, 1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8. Now to the left...” By using some dialogue from a videotape, he is indicating that he wants the adult to play that videotape (an action) so he can exercise.

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Noninteractive scenarios (i.e., messages for personal use)

Category	Description	Example
Nonfocused/ personal	Utterances with no apparent communicative intent or relevance to the situational context; may be self-stimulatory.	The child walks around the classroom repeating portions of a sports broadcast heard sometime in the past.
Situation association/ personal	Utterances with no apparent communicative intent which appear to be triggered by an object, person, situation, or activity.	The child sees the Indiana University logo in a store window and begins to sing the Indiana fight song in Japanese. He has learned the song in Japanese from a commercial which aired during televised university basketball games.
Self- directive/ personal	Utterances which serve to regulate one's own actions. Produced in synchrony with motor activity.	The child begins jumping on the bed. He loudly says to himself, in an angry tone, "How many times have I told you not to jump on that bed? The rule is 'No jumping on the bed.' I'll count to 3; 1-2-3." The child then gets down off the bed.
Rehearsal/ personal	Utterances produced with low volume followed by louder interactive production. Appears to be practice for subsequent production.	The adult asks, "What do you want to eat?" Echolalic child softly says to himself several times, "I want cracker, please." He then looks toward the adult and says, "I want cracker, please" at normal voice volume.
Label/ personal	Utterances labeling objects or actions in environment with no apparent communicative intent. May be a form of practice for learning language.	The echolalic speaker notes an open window. He walks in big circles repeating, "Window. Close the window. It's cold in here. (<i>It's 80 degrees outside.</i>) Close the window." He makes no attempt to close it or to get someone else to do it.

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