

Repeating speech at age six is most likely a developmental matter. let me suggest some ways of looking at this.

Children only start to become aware of themselves and their behavior at that age. Until this point, you could imagine your daughter as living inside her behavior as something that happens To her. at around six kids start to be able to see their behavior as belonging to themselves, being a part of them. Think of it this way: first I am part of my behavior, then my behavior becomes part of me.

So you could look at the repeating as a way of self-shadowing. The first spontaneous speech just happens, then she repeats on the second level -this one belongs to her. If this is the case, the behavior itself will come and go and finally go in a few weeks to months.

Another way to look at self-shadowing would be from the point of view of relationships. Kids at this age are moving out of a “Garden of Eden” in which they had confidence that their whole inner life is known to mother. They are beginning to recognize that all things that they experience and feel and think during a day are known to them alone. This creates a temporary anxiety and loneliness. Your daughter” shadowing may be a way of being her own inner mother. If this is the case, you can talk with her about some descriptions of what she goes through during the day. You can recognize how strange it may feel to imagine that she knows feelings that you do not. You can reassure her of your continuing interest in understanding some of what she can tell you. The behavior may go away on its own, but you can take it as a sign for developing along with her.

A third way may be connected with imaginary life. For reasons connected to the aloneness I just mentioned, kids around this age – usually a tad earlier but this is quite flexible –often develop imaginary friends. Maybe your daughter has a “shadow” type of imaginary friend who repeats what she says. You can ask her who is doing the repeating. Imaginary friends are quite normal and can be fun – if a bit frustrating at time- to understand. Such an explanation could be behind a behavior that may last a while longer.

I have assumed here that your daughter's behavior is unremarkable except for the repetitions. If that is not the case, and the repetitions are part of a general change in behavior, your best first stop is your pediatrician to make sure there is no medical illness.