

Linguistic expertise in extended other-initiated repair sequences in ELF interactions

ELF相互行為の他者開始修復拡張連鎖にみられる言語専門性

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ABSTRACT

Other-initiated repair (OIR) sequences have received a lot of interest in the field of ELF; nevertheless, there has not been much in-depth examination of OIR sequences from the perspective of the communication strategies employed by participants to overcome communication difficulties. This study attempts to broaden our understanding of the participants' strategies, namely, the repair initiation and operation methods used for fixing the broken surface of interactions in ELF, particularly in the case of extended repair sequences with multiple OIRs. By using conversation analysis as a research framework,

this study investigated the first encounters of 20 dyadic exchanges in an ELF setting performed via Zoom between Japanese students and non-Japanese interlocutors. Our preliminary findings reveal that when a repair is launched by an interlocutor on basic vocabulary without identifying the type of trouble, the recipient of the repair initiator makes a judgment on it. Furthermore, the repair initiating party also demonstrate their assessment of a repair method offered to them. By doing so, both parties take on being a novice or a more knowledgeable expert in terms of linguistic and communicative knowledge in relation to their conversation partner, while also weaving interculturality. Such findings imply that explicit instruction on communication strategies for reducing interactional barriers would assist learners in resolving such issues.

KEYWORDS: Communication strategies; Conversation analysis; English as a lingua franca; Other-initiated repair (OIR); Interculturality

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of other-initiated repair (OIR, henceforth) sequences (Schegloff, et al., 1977) has attracted much attention in the field of ELF as communication strategies (Aleksius & Saukah, 2018; Björkman, 2014; Kaur 2010; Matsumoto & Canagarajah, 2020; Mauranen, 2012). Preliminary observations of our conversational data have demonstrated that OIR sequences tend to be extended with more than one repair initiating turn. Such extensions of repair sequences are a rare phenomenon in interactions among native speakers as they are normally completed with one repair initiator (Haakana et al., 2021 in Finnish; Schegloff, 2000 in English). Therefore, the higher frequency of OIR in ELF interactions suggests that the participants may employ OIR in a manner specific to the setting (i.e., OIR practices for ELF interactions). However, an in-depth sequential analysis and account of extended OIR practices to resolve the communication problems in ELF interactions have been significantly lacking in the literature. By analyzing individual cases of extended OIR sequences, we are not only able to provide a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon, but also to offer practical recommendations for language teaching practitioners.

2. BACKGROUND

Studies focusing on communication strategies in ELF interactions have identified and classified various practices of OIRs (e.g., Aleksius & Saukah, 2018; Kuroshima et al., 2022a). For instance, a repeat of the previous speaker's utterance is utilized to help the present speaker's comprehension and production process, to create coherence (Mauranen, 2012), to signal confirmation or to simply signal to the speaker that the turn is his/hers (Björkman, 2014), and to formulate a direct request from the recipient (e.g., a request for repetition, clarification) or other expressed needs by the recipient (e.g., expressing non-understanding, appeal for help, etc.) (Deterding, 2013; Kaur, 2009). Confirmation requests can also be used to elicit clarification (i.e., request) (Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Kaur,

2009) and to confirm whether one has heard or understood something correctly (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Furthermore, overt questions about the previous utterance can serve as confirmation checks (Björkman, 2014).

As mentioned, expanded OIR sequences are rare in interactions involving native speakers. According to Schegloff (2000), an OIR sequence expansion with more than three-repair initiating turns in English interactions among native speakers is extremely rare in his collections. While extended OIR sequences with more than two repair initiators have been observed in Finnish conversations, their frequency is less than 10% and typically occurs when used for specific purposes such as disagreement implicative action or establishing the common ground among participants (e.g., the referent) (Haakana et al., 2021).

Conversation analytic studies involving speakers with different linguistic backgrounds (i.e., ELF interactions) have collectively demonstrated that ‘interculturality’ is achieved via participants’ orientation for various conversational practices (Arano, 2019; Bolden, 2012, 2014; Hosoda, 2006; Kurhila, 2006; Kuroshima et al., 2022b; Mori, 2003; Nishizaka, 1999; Wong & Olsher, 2000). Participants’ orientation to an asymmetry in linguistic/cultural knowledge is displayed depending on the activity. In fact, Hosoda (2006) examined casual conversations between L1 and L2 speakers of Japanese and demonstrated that the other-initiation of a repair (i.e., word search, understanding problems) is a locus for the participants to display their orientation toward either a linguistic expertise or a noviceness. By adopting Hosoda’s (2006) distinction between a linguistic expertise and novice, the current study’s analysis of extended OIR sequences within ELF interactions will also demonstrate that interculturality is indeed observable through the participants’ displayed orientation to such categories.

3. METHOD

We identified and collected extended OIR sequences from the researchers’ written corpus. Then, we transcribed each segment by adopting Jefferson’s (2004) transcript system. We then analyzed each sequence by adopting conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2000) as a research framework and described the participants’ orientation to linguistic expertise and noviceness emerging within an extended OIR sequence.

In what will follow, we will describe how an extended OIR sequence is organized and what kind of normative orientation of participants is observable when engaged in a multiple repairing work.

4. DATA

The video-recording of twenty dyadic naturally-occurring conversations in ELF settings (each approximately 20 minutes in length) totaling 6.5 hours was collected as part of a four-year JSPS research project (Dimoski et al., 2019). Japanese college/graduate school students (JS) and their foreign interlocutors (FS) were asked to converse casually via Zoom. The recruitment was done on the basis of snowball sampling, and they were paired up solely based on their availability. Each interaction was first-encounter, and participants

conversed on various topics on culture, everyday life, and hobbies (Kuroshima et al., 2022a, 2022b).

5. ANALYSIS

Before the analyses are presented, the target phenomenon of this paper needs to be explicated. An other-initiated repair (OIR) sequence is one in which the recipient of a trouble source initiates a repair and leaves the repair work for the judgment by the producer of the problem (Schegloff, et al., 1977). The basic three-turn OIR sequence consists of one repair initiator and its implementation, while the expanded OIR sequence contains more than one repair initiator. Overwhelmingly, the repair is succeeded with one attempt; however, in ELF interactions, such basic three-turn sequences are often expanded. Our focus is on the practice of repair initiation and repair operation for an extended OIR sequence to demonstrate how they reflexively display the speaker's orientation to relevant identities (i.e., novice and expert in the target language). Below, representations of a basic three-turn and expanded OIR sequence are provided.

Basic three-turn OIR sequence

T1 A: Trouble source (i.e., repairable)

T2 B: Repair initiator (e.g., What?)

T3 A: Repair operation (e.g., the repetition of T1)

((Resuming the halted talk))

Expanded OIR sequence

T1 A: Trouble source

T2 B: Repair initiator 1

T3 A: Repair operation

T4 B: Repair initiator 2 (on the same trouble source)

T5 A: Repair operation 2

((Resuming the halted talk))

(adopted and modified from Haakana et al., 2021)

A quick overview of the frequency of extended OIR sequences, initiated either by the Japanese speaker (JS) or the foreign speaker (FS), from our data is presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the sequence with two repair initiators is the most frequent; nevertheless, sequences of more than three repair initiators are not at all uncommon. It is also important to note that in one of the cases, a total of eight repair initiators were observed.

Table 1*Frequency of extended other-initiated repair (OIR) sequences*

No. of Repair Initiators	JS-initiated	FS-initiated	Total
2	11	12	23
3	6	5	11
4	2	2	4
5	0	1	1
Total	19	20	39

5.1. Repair initiation and operation to ascribe the problem to one's communicative capabilities (i.e., to produce an intelligible turn)

When a repair is initiated by the recipient, the speaker of the trouble source needs to analyze and make judgement on what kind of problem the recipient could raise at that point. The way they initiate a repair can indicate to some extent what their problem is; however, sometimes such a clue is not provided effectively in their repair initiation. In such a case, the recipient's practical reasoning for the repairable is revealed in the way they self-repair their prior utterance (Schegloff et al., 1977).

In excerpt 1, FS (a Brazilian speaker) is asking about the city in which the Japanese student currently resides. The question is indicated in line 1, and JS answers after displaying publicly and considering the question by saying "meal" in line 2.

Excerpt 1 [Pair 8 meal] [7:54]

01 FS: What are the good things to do:, to spend your ti::me?
02 JS: ↑hmm::: (0.2) <mealǀ>
03 (1.5) ((FS smiles and moves closer to the camera))
04 FS: -> I'm sorry?
05 (0.2)
06 JS: ->> uh:m, <a mealǀ>(.)uh:: take >y'know,< eat somethi::ngǀ
07 (1.8)
08 FS: -> mee: ? (0.8) \$I'm sorry, didn't understand it.\$ what.
09 JS: ->> ah:: (0.5) e- eatingǀ
10 (0.8)
11 JS: ->> [eat food
12 FS: [ah: eating!
13 JS: Yes, yes.=
14 FS: =a:lright, eating. (0.8) \$alri::ght, gre::at.\$ °Great.°
15 so, you like- what's your favorite kind of food?
16 Is it Japanese food?

This part of his turn is retrospectively figured as a trouble source in the following manner. First, FS initiates a repair with an open-class format in line 4 without specifying the nature of her trouble yet (Drew, 1997). Then, JS self-repairs his utterance, first, by repeating the word “meal” slowly and clearly and then expanding on this by offering circumlocution of the phrase immediately following in line 6. However, this did not resolve the problem. In line 8, FS attempts but fails to repeat the repairable and then accounts for initiating another repair by claiming her lack of understanding with an apology (Robinson, 2003), thus, again in an open format by which she displays that she is desperate for a clue. Following this, JS revises his own response to the question by paraphrasing “meal” into a more activity-oriented description of “eating” in line 9, a turn design which is more appropriate for the purpose than “meal.”

Two repair operation practices employed by the Japanese student are noted in this example: (1) enunciation of the trouble source, in which the speaker treats the issue as one of hearing (or intelligibility) caused by a pronunciation unfamiliar to the interlocutor; and (2) elaboration/paraphrase of the trouble source, in which the speaker treats the problem with understanding as a result of an ambiguous turn design with “meal” as an answer to this question. As a result of these repair operations, the speaker of the trouble source attributes the trouble to the production of his response to the interlocutor’s question (i.e., pronunciation and turn design as an answer to a question).

A slightly different orientation of the participants is seen in Excerpt 2. JS and FS (a Mexican participant) are talking about a pet. When FS informs the recipient that she has a cat in line 1, JS initiates a repair in line 3 by partially repeating line 1 with some variation in the pronunciation of the word “cat,” indicating that she has an understanding problem with the pronounced word (i.e., unintelligible for her).

Excerpt 2 [Pair 13 cat] [23:48]

01 FS: no::w, I have a cat.
 02 (0.5)
 03 JS: -> I have a <katto>?
 04 FS: ->> no, I: have a cat. ((tapping her chest to signal "I" = "me"))
 05 (2.0) ((JS rolls up eyes to think))
 06 JS: -> <what kat>?
 07 (0.8)
 08 FS: ->> a cat. meow::. ((using gesture for "meow" fingers moving up & down like a mouth))
 09 JS: a <ca:t,> oh::[: ((nodding & smiling))
 10 FS: [yeah::. meow.

Since the lexicon “cat” is expected to be known by many speakers of different languages, FS self-repairs her turn with an emphasis on “I” through prosody and gesture without correcting her original pronunciation of “cat.” In this way, she treats JS’s problem

as comprehension of the presented claim that she has a cat. Then, JS initiates a repair by targeting the repairable this time in line 6, claiming that the understanding problem is caused by the lexicon pronounced in a particular way. FS then repeats the trouble source without repairing the pronunciation and offers circumlocution with onomatopoeia of the animal's typical sound and gesture in line 8, treating the problem as possibly mishearing the word.

Unlike in Excerpt 1, no correction of pronunciation is made where the problem is suggested to be caused by a pronunciation of a basic lexicon, which reveals that the repairing party judges the recipient's problem is one of understanding of the claim, rather than judging that the trouble source is a pronunciation of the basic vocabulary. When this does not resolve the problem, the speaker of the trouble source attributes the trouble to JS's hearing problem and does not attribute it to her own pronunciation, even though the repairable is a basic lexicon in English which is presumed to be known by almost all members. Thereby, her orientation to differential epistemic status between her and her interlocutor regarding linguistic knowledge on vocabulary is made observable.

The next excerpt contains eight repair initiators on the same trouble source. In this segment, FS (a Taiwanese speaker) and JS are talking about the Japanese cartoon, *One Piece*, and their favorite characters. JS says that he likes Sanji as he kicks the opposing party up to line 11. Then, FS initiates a repair in line 13 by partially repeating JS's prior utterance.

Excerpt 3 [Pair 2 enemy] [3:48]

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01 JS:      I like Sanji.
02          (0.5)
03 JS:      y' know Sanji?
04 FS:      oh: I know.
05 JS:      ya.
06          (0.8)
07 JS:      He sometimes, [(.) ah yeah: (.) [kick-
08 FS:      [( ) [( )
09 FS:      yeah: (he). you said?
10 JS:      uh:: he trie:: ah no, .hh he some:- n? he usually::
11          with his(.) le:g an' (0.8)kick the (0.2)enemy::¿you know?
12          (0.2)
13 FS: ->  enmi? ((looking up))
14 JS: ->> en'my.
15          (.)
16 FS: ->  e::n'mi? I'm not sure. enmi? (0.8) [enmi:-
17 JS: ->>                                     [enemy.
18 FS: ->  ah, Na- Nami?
19 JS: ->> <e::nemy::> ((turning to researchers))
20 FS: ->  enemi.
21 JS: ->> enemy. (.) enemy:.
22 FS:      I don't know that wor::ds. huh huh huh huh
23 JS:      uh:: OK. uh::m (0.8) uh::: (0.8)
24 FS: ->  you mean:- you mean the army?
25          (0.5)
26 FS: ->  anmi[:
27 JS: ->> [no, no[:: ((shaking head))
28 FS: ->  [ah::! anmi, again, again.
29 FS: ->  [you say, Sanji:: anmi?
30 JS:      [okay.
31 JS: ->> enemy.
32          (0.8)
33 JS: ->> [enemy.
34 FS: ->  [(enemy is uh::) It's like uh:: bad gu:y?
35 JS: ->> Yeah(h) yeah(h) yeah hhh ((nodding his head and
          laughing))
36          (1.8)
37 JS:      He kick, kick them, ((moving his body to mimic
          kicking))
38 FS:      ah:::

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By repeating the trouble source to confirm in line 14, the JS treats FS's problem as understanding caused by his foreign accent. However, FS does not acknowledge it. Instead, he fully repeats the prior turn and accounts for another installment of repair with non-understanding. JS still treats the trouble as being caused by his own pronunciation by repeating the trouble source again in line 17. Then, FS initiates a repair again in line 18 with his candidate understanding of a similar name of the cartoon character, Nami. At this point, JS not only repeats the same word (lines 17, 19, and 21) but also enunciates the word to disconfirm the Taiwanese speaker's understanding (line 19) and further indicates that the problem is one of his own pronunciation, which is taken to be possibly foreign to the interlocutor. After that, despite the FS's repeated attempts to rectify the situation by initiating a repair, the matter remains unresolved since JS continues to repair the problem with his pronunciation with nothing else except for disconfirmation of the interlocutor's candidate understanding in lines 24 and 26. Finally, in the eighth attempt to resolve the problem, FS gives an updated candidate understanding in line 34, which is accepted by JS in line 35.

In this case, by repeating the trouble source with enunciation, JS treats FS's problem as one of understanding (i.e., intelligibility) caused by his own pronunciation foreign to the recipient. Through JS's repair operations, which are based on his analysis of FS's repair initiation practices, JS attributes the trouble to FS's perception of his answer, which is caused by his pronunciation.

To summarize the observations so far, when a basic vocabulary is identified as a trouble source based on the other-initiation of repair method, the repair operation reveals the repairing speaker's judgment of the nature of communication trouble in the following. The elaboration (such as circumlocution/paraphrase) approaches the problem as the recipient's understanding problem caused by ambiguous turn design, or a lack of lexical knowledge, through which the participants differently attribute the linguistic novice category to the recipient or speaker oneself of the trouble source by making the other party the linguistic expert. In addition, a repeat with enunciation addresses the problem of unintelligibility of a turn caused by the speaker's pronunciation (i.e., production problem) unfamiliar to the recipient, thereby, treating themselves as a linguistic novice whose pronunciation is unconventional. In this way, the combination of a repair initiator and a repair operation on a basic vocabulary (e.g., meal, cat, and enemy) can show the participants' attribution practice of social identity as a linguistic expert and novice to whoever is having or causing a trouble of producing or perceiving an intelligible turn.

5.2. Multiple repair initiations as a means to ascribe the trouble to one's communicative capabilities (i.e., fixing the problem)

We saw in the previous section that the many repair initiators and repair operations can be a good indicator of the speaker's interpretation of the difficulty source and nature of the trouble, which participants ascribe to themselves when they attribute linguistic asymmetrical skill. In this section, we will examine a comparable but slightly different practice to demonstrate such orientation to the linguistic categories of participants; namely, several other-repair initiations within the same turn.

Excerpt 4 shows JS and FS (a Macedonian participant) discussing their everyday

routine. In line 5, JS inquires FS about the starting time of his classes. The critical element of his question, however, becomes a trouble source when FS launches a repair with a question word “what” first and then a partial repeat with modified pronunciation of “class” as “cross” as candidate hearing in line 7.

Excerpt 4 [Pair 16 class] [15:58]

01 FS: what time do I wake up?<uh: (.) <a:t,> seven o'clock.
02 [in the morning,<seven.
03 JS: [oh
04 FS: ya, seven.
05 JS: What time star::t (0.8) uh:: class:?
06 (1.8)
07 FS: -> the:: what? the cross?
08 (0.5)
09 JS: ->> a, class.
10 (0.8)
11 FS: -> uh- I don't know what that is. the:- the school?
12 -> the school you mean?
13 (0.5)
14 JS: uh::[:n,
15 FS: -> [What time does the university start? Or:-
16 (0.8)
17 JS: ->> [ye::s
18 FS: -> [the school?
19 (.)
20 JS: ->> [school ((nodding))
21 FS: [the universit-
22 FS: It starts in at seven and a half, like seven-thirty.
23 (.)
24 JS: [oh!
25 FS: [I wake up at 7 and go to school right away. (0.2) ya.

JS then self-repairs his turn by repeating line 9. FS initiates a repair once more by accounting for it as non-understanding and adding two candidates for understanding the JS's question in lines 11 through 18 in the form of a confirmation request, which was confirmed by the JS in line 17. By utilizing multiple repair initiations within one turn, such as partial repeat and candidate understanding, the speaker indicates that he had a fair grasp of the trouble source turn. Thus, he is treating the speaker of the trouble source as a novice who requires additional assistance rather than leaving it up to the recipient's analysis as to how to resolve a problem.

In summary, when a repair is initiated on one word via multiple repair initiators, the speaker of the repair initiation is trying to display that the trouble is caused by the turn's incomprehensibility due to the unintelligibility of the trouble source lexicon rather than presuming that the speaker himself does not know the vocabulary. Before asking the recipient to fix the problem on their own, the speaker might assist the recipient by providing several candidate understandings to show how much the speaker understands. By locating the nature of the problem in this way, the repair initiators ascribe the social identities of linguistic novice to the recipient of the repair, who needs extra help in resolving a problem, and that of linguistic expert to the speaker themselves, in terms of who can provide linguistic assistance in many ways.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by examining extended OIR sequences, we have demonstrated several important features. First, by initiating another repair after the first repair operation, it conveys that the provided solution was not successful and requires another means to resolve the persisting problem. In such a context, the repair operation itself can show the speaker's further analysis of the problem's nature and their assessment of each of their communicative capabilities to fix the problem. Second, when the basic lexicon (i.e., normatively expected to be known by both parties) is identified as a trouble source, both the repair initiator and the repair operation suggest that the problem is one of its production or perception of the word (i.e., intelligibility, turn design for a specific action, or lack of lexical knowledge), thereby differently attributing the trouble responsibilities (Robinson, 2006) and differentiating the participant's epistemic status as a linguistic novice and a linguistic expert, who needs or can provide assistance in resolving the communication troubles. Even though they have met for the first time, the participants measure each other's linguistic knowledge and expertise through their ongoing talk, which is used as a resource for analyzing and understanding the 'another' repair initiator one after another and orienting to adequately assessing the nature of the trouble in their interaction.

In this way, one implication that arises from this study is the potential benefit of explicit instruction of communication strategies (CSs) for repairing communication problems that arise in ELF interactions, especially when they are asymmetric in terms of participants' language proficiency. While a detailed account of ways in which teachers could implement CSs training in their teaching is beyond the scope of the current study, it is worth noting that such practices have been reported in the literature in addition to their effectiveness (e.g., see Dimoski, 2016; Dimoski et al., 2016; Milliner & Dimoski, 2022).

As the speakers of each language have a variety of methods to initiate a repair to the recipients and self-repair their own trouble when it is requested (Dingemanse et al., 2015), teachers should remind students of the method they already have in their first language and of applying the knowledge to their conversations in ELF—largely through the composition of a turn.

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APPENDIX A

Transcript conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004)

.	pitch fall
?	pitch rise
,	level pitch
↑ ↓ _	marked pitch movement underlining emphasis
-	truncation
[]	overlap
=	latching of turns
(0.5)	pause (length in tenths of a second)
(.)	micropause
:	lengthening of a sound
hhh	audible out-breath
.hhh	audible in-breath
(h)	within-speech aspiration, usually indicating laughter
#	creaky voice quality
¥	smiley voice quality
<word>	slow speech rate
>word<	fast speech rate