Why Do We Overlap Each Other?: Collaborative Overlapping Talk in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Communication

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Lee, Kanghee. 2020. Why do we overlap each other? Collaborative overlapping talk in English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 20, 613−641. Overlap is often considered as a breakdown of the one−at−a−time principle in conversational turn−taking and something to be resolved. However, in English as a lingua franca (ELF) interaction, the speakers are found to endeavour to achieve cooperative and supportive turn−taking and turn−management through a dynamic use of overlapping talk. This study aims to explore how the international students in the U.K university employ the interactional dynamics of overlap as a resource for co−constructing meanings and joint accomplishment of turn−taking by analysing naturally occurring ELF interactions with Conversation Analysis (CA). The findings reveal that the participants produced a high frequency of overlapping talk in interaction, and particularly overlaps occurred when the speakers made a backchannel, echoing response, and utterance completion. A delayed response or turn transition may cause a violation of turn−taking in conversation, and consequently the speakers attempt to provide frequent and timely responses, which may lead to the high frequency of overlaps and simultaneous talk. As a turn−switch between speakers is not completely smooth, and overlapping talk is an inevitable outcome of dynamic and collaborative turn−taking practices, classroom teaching needs to encourage English language learners to use more adaptive pragmatic strategies such as repair, accommodation, or clarification request when overlaps cause communicative problems.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, turn−taking, overlaps, involvement, cooperation

1. Introduction

Globalisation has led to more contact and mobility among different nations and cultures and had more opportunities and need for intercultural communication. As English has been used as a common lingua franca in the international context, people are more involved in intercultural communication through English than any other languages. However, linguistic and socio−cultural diversity and complexity are a great challenge that the participants need

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to manage and overcome for more effective and successful communication in English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Cogo 2012, Larsen-Freeman 2017). Given that the predominant views on ELF conversation are consensus-oriented and cooperative in nature (Jenkins 2018, Mauranen 2017, Seidlhofer 2011), collaborative pragmatic strategies are regarded as a way of performing accommodative practices and enhancing social relationships among members in ELF communication. One way of projecting affiliation and co-participation is collaborative turn-taking. As the sequence of turn-taking in the conversation is not always organized in an orderly manner, simultaneous talk frequently occurs in the actual conversations. A number of research findings illustrate that ELF communications show a high frequency of overlapping talk, but in many cases, it is cooperative and supportive rather than intrusive and interruptive (Cogo and Dewey 2012, Konakahara 2015, Wolfartsberger 2015).

Cooperative overlap represents important interactive devices and turn-taking mechanisms in ELF, which is mutually supportive and collaborative (Kalocsai 2011). Overlapping talk often involves complex speech acts that convey the speakers' interactional behaviour, attitudes and beliefs rather than competing and invading the interlocutor's territory in conversation (Schegloff 2000, Szczepek 2000). The supportive management and negotiation of turn-taking can be viewed as an essential element to achieve rapport-building and supportiveness for the effective progress of turns. However, overlap is often considered as "breakdown in the orderliness of conversational turn-taking" (Drew 2009, p. 71), the failure of turn-management or a violation of "the one-at-a-time principle" (Makri-Tsilipakou 2015, p. 2), and something to be resolved (Gervits and Scheutz 2018). Consequently, the incoming speaker in overlapping turns is described as incompetent and inattentive in turn management.

Much research into overlap views overlapping talk as interruption and intrusion of turns (Ayunda, Saleh and Kurnianta 2016, Faizah and Kurniawan 2016, Jaya 2017, Makri-Tsilipakou 2015, Marche and Peterson 1993), and there is still lack of the analysis of overlap in ELF communication as a collaborative turn-taking behaviour. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the way the interactional dynamics of overlap are employed as a resource for co-constructing meanings and joint accomplishment of turn-taking by analysing the naturally occurring ELF conversation among the international students in the UK university. The study will focus on the overlaps used as a cooperative strategy rather than as an intrusive and interrupting action. The collaborative overlap practices in the data will be identified based on the items which are not employed to change a topic, express a negative reaction or disagreement, or take up and continue to hold the floor but used as a

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turn continuation and the supportive and co-constructive action for the original speaker's turn. The paper will begin with a brief literature review of the nature and functions of overlap and present the features of overlapping talk in ELF communication. The analysis of the data will explore the types and functions of cooperative overlapping talk in the ELF conversations based on the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach and discuss the underlying meanings of overlaps in the management of turn-taking in intercultural communication through ELF.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Nature and Functions of Overlap in Conversation

Simultaneous talk refers to the speech situation that two or more speakers talk at the same time for a certain stretch of the interaction (Tannen 1983). In overlapping talk, another speaker starts up a next turn while a prior speaker is still talking. From the conversational analytic perspectives, turn-taking should be orderly distributed for all speakers to participate in the organization of interaction, and therefore simultaneous talk is treated as a violation of the turn-taking rules, under which one speaker should talk at a time. In this respect, simultaneous talk including interruption, overlap and hesitation should be avoided, resolved and repaired (Schegloff and Sacks 1973, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). However, simultaneous talk is a widespread and common interactional practice in turn-taking, and overlapping talk frequently occurs in daily conversations. The nature and functions of overlap can vary according to speakers' intention, the groups of participants, contexts of use and topics of talk. Some may occur as a way of turn-request and holding a floor, whereas others may be used to support the current speaker and jointly produce a conversation through turn-sharing and collaboration.

It is a highly natural linguistic phenomenon that interlocutors coordinate their talk (Jefferson 1986, Schegloff 2000), and overlapping talk is a way of indicating the speakers' cooperative intentions in co-construction of conversations. Hepburn and Bolden (2013) mention that overlap is a crucial strategy because "turn-taking is not a result of speakers simply waiting for one another to finish talking", but rather "speakers project possible completions of turn-constructional units, aiming to start their talk at a transition-relevance place" (p. 59). Speakers do not generally wait for pauses to start their turns, but

they tend to avoid silence and minimize a gap between turns in conversation.

The nature of overlap can be distinguished between "cooperative" and "competitive" (Cogo and Dewey 2012, p. 142). Cooperative overlap is used to express solidarity, interest and agreement to the current speaker as a way of backchannel by providing positive evaluation and supportive reaction. This type of overlap neither aims to take the floor nor leads to a turn-change and turn-competition, but the overlapping speaker tends to briefly finish the turn. The turn is often returned to the prior speaker, and there is no sign of topic change or further talk. Competitive overlap, on the other hand, is used to hold the floor, show disagreement, and interrupt the prior speaker's utterance. In this case, the prior speaker may relinquish and lose the floor though he or she does not intend to. Such overlap may destruct a systematic production of a turn-taking organization since "speakers in overlap can abort production of TCU (turn-construction unit) before possible completion" (Schegloff 2000, p. 17).

However, competitive overlap is not necessarily problematic because "taking over the floor may indicate a desire to engage in the conversation, to contribute something to the exchange or clarify something immediately before it could lead to misunderstanding" (Cogo and Dewey 2012, p. 143). Also, simultaneous talk is often produced as the speakers "work out a topic or a story together as a group" (Tannen 1994, p. 240). Yuan, Liberman and Cieri. (2007) also support that overlaps do not necessarily destruct the turn-taking but construct it, where a speaker joins the interlocutor's talk to express active participation and listenership rather than aiming for interrupting his/her talk. The constructive overlap in turn-taking is a way of high-involvement and support in conversations.

Although one-at-a-time is desirable in turn-taking rules from the perspective of Conversation Analysis, Schegloff (2000) suggests that unproblematic simultaneous talk and overlap exist in turn organization and identifies four cases of such unproblematic overlap: 1) backchannel utterances or continuers, 2) terminal overlaps, where "one speaker appears to be starting up by virtue of a prior speaker's analysably incipient finishing of a turn" (Schegloff 2000, p. 3) choral forms of talk like laughter, collective greetings, or congratulations, and 4) utterances that consist of conditional entering into a turn such as utterance suggestions at a word search moment. In this respect, not all cases of overlap are perceived as a violation of turn-taking rules by the speakers.

2.2 Overlap in ELF Communication

Some ELF research has shown that overlapping talk occurs in a range of interactional

contexts, and it is frequently used as a cooperative and supportive communicative strategy in ELF conversations. For instance, Kalocsai (2011) suggests that all simultaneous talk is not interruptive and problematic, but in many cases of ELF interaction, simultaneous talk occurs at or near a transition relevance place (TRP). Such cooperative overlap contributes to the smooth progress of talk and acts as a way of showing interpersonal involvement and building rapport in an ELF community of practice. In other words, cooperative overlap is concerned not with the concept of interruption, which is related to negative connotations, but with "emotional and affective meanings such as the show of engagement, support, camaraderie, rapport and listenership" (p. 118). Wolfartsberger (2011) also supports the cooperative nature of overlap in ELF interaction and further argues that cooperative overlap is a way of collaborative turn-taking strategy, which is the co-construction of jointly authored turns. Simultaneous speech is the outcome of highly interactive exchange of turns, and the presumption that only one speaker occupies the floor "automatically assigns all other participants the role of passive listeners". While the idea that the listener has a simply passive role has been widely challenged, the role of speakers as the active participants has been emphasised in intercultural communication through ELF. As Tannen (1989) puts it, "conversation is not a matter of two or more people alternatively taking the role of speaker and listener, but [⋯] both speaking and listening include elements and traces of the other" (p. 27).

Konakahara (2015) examined how international students at the British universities used and responded to overlapping questions. The findings revealed that overlapping questions were observed in two cases of turn-transfer: 1) one of the participants self-selects as a next speaker at a transition-relevance place (TRP) and 2) the current speaker allocates a next speaker to talk. The overlapping questions helped express the speakers' understanding of and involvement in the interlocutor's talk, develop explicitness of unclear points in the prior talk, and keep the conversation going. When overlaps seemed to interrupt the flow of conversation, the speakers attempted to resolve a possible understanding problem. In other words, when their talks were overlapped, the speakers continued to repeat, rephrase or demonstrate what they had said in the prior turn, rapidly stopped the ongoing talk, or extended a part of the utterance. Consequently, it can contribute to enhancing clarity and eliciting more active responses from the interlocutors. Konakahara argues that although the speakers might consider overlapping as problematic in some cases, they neither regard it as intrusive nor competitive. Instead, they tend to make a smooth resolution for the overlap and co-participate in the ongoing process of interaction. The overlapping speaker attempts to clarify the overlapped utterance, and the overlapped

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speaker provides an immediate response in the following turn. The result suggests that the speakers use, resolve, and respond to overlapping questions skilfully to achieve mutual understanding and promote interpersonal relationships in communication.

Meanwhile, Wolfartsberger (2015) analysed features and complexities of overlap in multi-party ELF interactions, focusing on the concept of party and turn-taking in group conversations. She paid attention to the conceptual distinction between a party and a speaker for the analysis of turn-taking and simultaneous speech in group conversations, because turn-taking is not made merely between individual speakers but between parties which have multiple speakers. A distinction between a party and a speaker entails that overlap can have two different types: overlap among co-party members and overlap across different-party members. It is argued that in some cases overlap among in-group members is not assumed as competitive or interruptive while overlap among out-group members is.

In Wolfartsberger's (2015) data, which consist of multi-party ELF interactions in workplace meetings, the high frequency of overlap is observed, and the more the number of participants engaged in group interactions increased, the less problematic the type of overlap was. In other words, overlap among in-group members can be treated as unproblematic, because it does not violate one-at-a-time principle in turn-taking rules "if one-at-a-time is perceived as one party at a time, not as one speaker at a time"(p. 269). In other words, in-group members in the same party in a multiparty conversation "often continue, complete or repair each other's turn" and "take a turn on behalf of another member of the team" (Kangasharju 1996, p. 292). Therefore, the adequacy and interpretation of overlap in the turn-taking process needs to be distinguished between overlap within and across parties. In effect, the participants do not seem to perceive overlap as a violation of a turn-taking system, because overlap that the speakers produce is "ordered, consequential and functional, precisely in relation to the projectable linguistic and social unfolding of turns" (Ford, Fox and Thompson 2002, p. 8). In many contexts of interactions, overlap performs collaborative functions, and rather it is less common to identify the case of a single-floor-holding. In more cases, speakers produce frequent simultaneous talk, build a joint turn-construction, and cooperate for developing ideas.

However, when overlapping talk may cause communicative troubles, ELF speakers adeptly signal and prevent understanding problems. For instance, the ELF speakers in Mauranen's (2006) study employed repetition as a request for clarification and explicitness after simultaneous talk. When the participants mishear the first time due to the overlap, they clearly express the potential understanding problems rather than ignoring or letting

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them pass. The speakers in ELF interaction attempt to avoid uncertainty and unclarity from overlapping talk and collaborate to achieve shared understanding through active signalling comprehension check. Even when there is no symptom of misunderstanding caused by overlaps, ELF speakers produce request for clarification or confirmation check by repeating, repairing or rephrasing the overlapped utterances. This form of preventing misunderstanding strategy is "proactive work in talk" and is one of the common features of ELF communication (Mauranen 2006, p. 135). This proactive repair for overlapping talk allows the conversation to proceed and leads to the high degree of mutual understanding. Kaur's (2009) study also supports the proactive self-repair for overlaps in ELF interaction. Kaur stresses the positive effect of turn sharing and cooperative overlaps as a joint production of talk. In Kaur's data, the ELF speakers provided self-repair strategies such as repetition or paraphrase to pre-empt potential intelligibility or comprehension problems. The fact that self-repair occurs immediately after the overlapping talk indicates that the possible impairment of utterances is averted and repaired from the outset, and the speaker is orienting to explicitness and clarity. Although overlapping talk does not necessarily impair intelligibility or comprehensibility, the speakers proactively resolve and repair the potential problems and attempt to explicate the meaning to enhance clarity and mutual understanding.

Although a number of studies have demonstrated the collaborative nature of overlap in ELF interactions, many of them are involved in the speakers' reactions to overlaps focusing on certain pragmatic strategies such as repetition or repair, how interactional problems are resolved after overlapping talk, or the conceptual distinction of overlap between in-group and out-group members. The types of cooperative overlaps have been rarely analysed on the detailed level in the ELF contexts, and therefore this study aims to explore what types of overlapping talk are frequently employed for the collaborative purposes and how they are managed in the ongoing process of interaction. The research questions for the study are as follows:

1. Does cooperative overlap frequently take place in intercultural communication through ELF?
2. Which patterns and features of cooperative overlapping talk are frequently used in ELF interactions?
3. Does cooperative overlapping talk in the data cause any interactional problems?

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3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection & Participants

The data for the present study is based on the naturally occurring conversations among the international students in a UK university. For the recruitment of the participants, the researcher circulated the email to the students registered in the international students' community, and 10 students responded to the email. However, 8 students participated in the data collection on a regular basis. The participants took part in the informal meetings once or twice a week as a social activity that the researcher organised for a 4-week-period of time and had conversations on a wide range of topics they were interested in. Each participants' group consisted of three or four members since the conversations with over five members can cause unintelligible overlaps, and consequently there is a possibility that the researcher cannot recognise and identify the exact overlapping items. Before the data collection, the participants were informed that the research aimed to collect the spoken ELF data, but the specific strategy of the research focus was not mentioned due to the possibility of the participants' intentional reaction to the research focus. The data constitutes 12 hour-long ELF conversations with 10 different speech events, and the data was recorded with an audio-recorder without the presence of the researcher. The participants are 3 undergraduates and 5 postgraduates who were studying management, accounting, finance, computer science, linguistics, and education. The distribution of nationality of the participants comprises South Korea, China, Japan, and Thailand. The profile of the participants is provided below. Since the international students have to gain at least 6.0- 7.5 point in IELTS (International English Language Testing System), which is a test required for the UK university entry, they had an advanced level of English in reading, writing, listening and speaking. This means that the participants had a good proficiency of English enough to communicate in English for both their daily lives and academic purposes for use. As English has become a lingua franca in the international academic contexts, for the last few decades the number of international students has shown a massive increase in the higher education in English-speaking countries. This situation has led to the result that English mother-tongue countries show not only the native speakers' language communities but also act as a prime context for dynamic intercultural communication through English as lingua franca (Jenkins 2013, Ranta 2006).

Table 1. The Profile of the Participants

speaker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
sex	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
age	29	30	27	22	21	22	22	29
L1	South Korean	South Korean	Chinese	Chinese	Japanese	Chinese	Chinese	Thai
Course level	PhD	MA	MA	BA	MA	BA	BA	PhD
Course name	Linguistics	Finance	Computer Science	Management	Management	Finance	Accounting	Management
Length of study in the UK	5 years	3 years	6 months	4 months	1 year	4 months	4 months	3 years
IELTS score	7.5	7.0	6.5	6.0	6.5	6.0	6.5	7

3.2 Analytic Tool

The data was audio-recorded and fully transcribed for the analysis. The analysis of overlap is identified and informed by the procedure of Conversation Analysis (CA), which is an analytic tool commonly used in much empirical ELF research (e.g., Kaur 2017, Konakahara 2017, Pietikäinen 2018, Wolfartsberger 2015). Overlapping utterances are seen as observable instances in the sequential context of turns, where another speaker begins speaking within the current speaker's turn. Therefore, CA, which is involved in identifying and describing turn organisations and interactional sequences of talk-in-interaction, is considered as a practical tool to identify each instance of overlaps in turns. In particular, as CA approach offers the detailed transcription of data including a timed pause, hesitation, prosodic features, latching and cut-offs, it is useful to describe the detailed communicative processes of turn-by-turn transitions and extensions for the talk-in-interaction. CA also provides a useful insight into the interactional context of overlapping talk by "observing the situated verbal behaviour and participants' orientation, which is very suitable for smaller-scale studies at the lease" (Bogetic 2011, p. 320). Therefore, the patterns and contexts of overlapping talk in the data will be identified and described within the CA framework.

4. Findings

4.1 Backchannel Overlap

One of the most frequent forms of overlapping talk in the present ELF data is backchannel overlap, which speakers produce to provide simple backchannel cues or minimal responses such as *ehm, yeah, uh*, and *i see.* Backchannels are mainly employed to support the other speaker's meaning-making process and show listenership, agreement, and understanding, and they are one of the most common pragmatic strategies in ELF communication (Björkman 2011, Bjørge 2010, Mauranen 2012). Backchannel response is not involved in a speaker shift but functions as a turn continuer, where the listeners exhibit to the other speaker that they are listening to and have interests in the other's talk and encourage him/her to keep on the turn by producing constant backchannel responses (Schegloff 1982). Consequently, it can elicit more talk without interrupting the flow of interaction because it neither aims to provide new information and topic change nor claims the floor and a speaker shift. It is commonly recognized that regular and systematic feedback is important for effective turn-taking and can contribute to cooperative and convergent communication in intercultural communication (Cogo and Dewey 2012). As "the active feedback is one of the most common and effective mechanisms of collaborative turn sharing" (Lee 2020, p. 258), backchannel is a way of accomplishing supportive and collaborative communication in ELF contexts. However, backchannel responses occur in the form of overlaps in many cases as in the examples below.

Extract 1. A— Chinese, L— Chinese, K— Korean, M— Japanese
1M   yeah, she's big in japanese, because I also use the korean name in, we talk
2   about, when we talk about korean actor, we use the same pronunciation
3A   uh (:)
4M   we don't use [the special japanese], but to
5A →   [uh, uh (:)]
6K   ah (:)
7A   [in china, we translate]
8M   [another actress], but yeah, in china, every word you translate [to]
9A →   [yeah]

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10M　　 in [chinese], so we can't understand
11K →　　 [chinese]
12A　　it's much easi−, easier to remember their name, so [translate] it
13K →　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 [yeah, yeah, i see]
14M　　yeah
15K　　even the chinese, er even the korean actor (.) or celebrity's name has the so
16　　 chinese character (1). i have the chinese charac−, my name has chinese
17　　 character, maybe you read, you just pronunciate=
18A→　 =[yeah]
19L →　　 [yeah]

The participants in the extract have a conversation about whether the names of foreign entertainment celebrities such as actors and singers are translated into a second language pronunciation in each country. There are frequent overlaps during conversation, but most of overlapping talk is used as a backchannel and feedback as in line 5, 9, 11, 13, 18, and 19. In these overlaps, there is no sign of topic change, holding the floor and speaker shift, but the overlapping speakers simply provide constant feedback to express agreement and understanding and encourage the interlocutor to continue the talk. This kind of overlap acts as a continuer, in which "recipients of another's talk can show precisely that they understand that the speaker is in the course of an extended turn at talk which is not yet complete" (Schegloff 2000, p. 5).

In the data, overlapping talk is found to frequently occur when the other speaker makes pause or hesitation. In this case, the overlapping speaker may intend to help co−construct meanings and maintain the flow of conversation. This shows that the overlapping speaker has paid attention to what the interlocutor is saying and attempts to fill the gap by suggesting the next possible slot of sentences. Consequently, the overlapping talk indicates the speaker's "readiness to cooperate in the development of the talk" (Cogo and Dewey 2012, p. 147). When the speakers recognise that the other speaker has a trouble to make utterance or has word search moments, they attempt to immediately co−build the turn rather than keeping silence as in the following examples.

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Extract 2. A— Chinese, M— Japanese, K— Korean

1 A		because i heard that most of the students study postgraduate is NOT local (1)
2		[people]
3 M →		[yeah], less than one percent @@@ yeah, only one or two=
4 K		=even in your course? ma?
5 M		yeah, yeah, yeah
6 K		only just a few er british?
7 M		yeah

The speakers are talking about what they are studying, and in the earlier part of the interaction Chinese speaker A asked Japanese speaker M whether the majority of students in her academic course was British or international students. In line 1, speaker A mentions the reason why she asked that question, for which she already heard that postgraduate programs in the U.K. universities have more international students than the local students. However, after speaker A's short pause in line 1, speaker M initiates her turn with the agreement token *yeah* and supports the interlocutor's utterance by providing the more precise percentage of the local students in postgraduate courses. Although there is an overlapping talk between speaker A and M, there is no long stretch of interruption because speaker A ends her turn while speaker M's turn is initiated by a backchannel cue *yeah*. Speaker M might think that speaker A's turn was complete due to a short pause in line 1. This kind of overlap is described as "terminal overlaps" where a speaker is beginning a turn because an initial speaker seems to end up the turn (ibid.). As speaker M reacted to the other speakers' utterances with constant backchannels in the following turns (line 5 and 7), the overlap in line 3 does not indicate competition or intrusion for the floor, but shows the initiation of turn with a backchannel. Since frequent feedback and backchannels act as a way of pragmatic cooperativeness in conversation, the overlapping talk in this case shows the speaker's "readiness to cooperate in the development of the talk" (Cogo and Dewey 2012, p. 147).

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Extract 3. K- Korean, J- Chinese, E- Chinese

1K ehm, some of my colleagues in phd have their own family, i mean their baby,

2   BUT they just do their job

3J   it's normal, it's normal yeah

4K yeah, even they do better than just single, just single person

5J   yeah

6E   ehm

7K i mean even the colleague with baby (0.8) [do their] best

8J →   [you think they]

9K do their job better, so i think yeah just=

10J =it's not depend on whether you have family or nor, it depends on how you can

11   [manage] your time

12K→ [yeah]

13J it's normal in china, most of the you know phd students have their you know,

14   already have work, yeah, and already have their frie-, their family, yeah

15K yeah, so this time and this moment, er living in this country is very special to all

16   of us

In the extract, Korean speaker K expresses a great sense of respect to her PhD colleagues who have achieved a balanced accomplishment between academic work and family life. As soon as speaker K made a short pause in line 7, Chinese speaker J opens his turn, but he does not continue to hold the floor and immediately quits his turn as he noticed the prior speaker K did not complete her utterance and wanted to keep talking. The overlapping talk occurs again in line 12, but in this case overlapping speaker K is providing an agreement token *yeah* as a backchannel, and the turn is immediately returned to the original speaker J. This example also shows an overlapping talk as a supportive interactional strategy rather than competing or interrupting the floor in conversation. The speakers support upcoming moves and express self-attention to the interlocutor by providing frequent backchannel cues. One of the main reasons that overlapping talk is considered as problematic in turn-taking is that it can cause communication breakdown and evoke the interlocutor's irritation. However, in most cases of backchannel overlap in the ELF data, communication breakdowns are not observed after overlaps, and the overlapping talk does not hinder the flow of the ongoing process of the turn. The original speaker continues to complete the turn, and there is no

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symptom of anxiety on overlapping response. ELF speakers are found to produce constant feedback to the interlocutors in the forms of minimal responses, agreement tokens, and supporting markers (Cog and Dewey 2012, Kalocsai 2011, Wolfartsberger 2011), and such backchannel feedback functions "more as a speaker—sportive than an interpersonally active element" (Cogo and House 2017, p. 217)

4.2 Echoing Overlap

Another common form of overlap is echoing, where the speakers made a frequent use of other—repetition in overlapping talk. In other words, overlaps occurred when the overlapping speaker echoed the current speaker's utterance, and it can act as a way of feedback, where speakers aim to show involvement, listenership and solidarity (Johnstone 2008, Lichtkoppler 2007, Perrin, Deshaies and Pradis 2003). By repeating others' utterance, speakers indicate that they are listening and understanding what the other speaker is saying, and this interactive strategy in conversation can contribute to rapport—building and exhibit the speaker's "participatory listenership" (Sawir 2004, p. 9). Echoing response is a natural and collaborative reaction to the interlocutors, and the speakers endeavour to avert silence and continue to signal participatory listenership by echoing the other's talk. Whereas the speakers repeat themselves to enhance explicitness and provide a specific prominence in talk, the speakers tend to repeat the others to build coherent and harmonious discourse management (Yun 2013). The following extracts illustrate rapport—oriented overlaps by using echoing the others.

Extract 4. T— Thai, G— Korean, J— Chinese, E— Chinese

1T	it's a bit weird in thai i mean if you mention just like why you you want to
2	raise the issue that someone from china
3G	i think quite a lot of people from east, south—[east asia]
4T	[south—east asia]
5G	including the (1.5) er indonesia? er malaysia [or] even philippines [or] the (1)
6	singapore=
7J →	[malaysia] [philippines]
8J	=singapore
9G	there are many people er
10T	most of them in singapore, yeah, and someone from china

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    In the earlier part of the conversation, Thai speaker T described that although there is a large proportion of the ethnically Chinese-origin population in Thailand, they do not normally want to say they are Chinese-Thai. Throughout the interaction, some cases of overlapping talk occur, most overlaps are not intended to interrupt or take up the floor. In other words, in the overlap in line 4 Thai speaker T provides lexical suggestions to help the prior speaker G complete the turn. Speaker G's self-repair of the expression *east* to *south-east asia* might project the speaker's false word choice and implicitly encourage the others to anticipate the possible lexical items at the word-search moment. The overlap in line 4 shows speaker T's joint turn-construction for the interlocutor's utterance rather than interruption or invasion of turns. Another overlap is found in line 7, where speaker J echoes speaker G's words without the time gap. In this case, there is no sign of rising intonation or phonological stress, which means echoing repetition is not used for request for clarification or confirmation check. Although throughout the interaction the speakers are actively involved in co-construction of meaning and turn-sharing by using frequent echoing responses, all the turns are returned immediately to the original speaker, and echoing feedback acts as a turn continuation. The echoing overlap is also shown in the next extract.

Extract 5. E- Chinese, J- Chinese, K- Korean

1K   i mean when i was in high school and university, there was a lecture, and teachers

2   teach us what we should do and what we study [and something] like that

3E   [yeah], it's much easier teachers

4   to instruct you how to do that

5K   yeah, but this time

6J   FOR PHD

7K   yeah, <u>no one</u>

8E   → <u>**[no one]**</u>

9K   <u>[no one]</u> asks me what to do

10E   yeah

11K   so i should find out what i should do

12E   yeah, and you find out you have a lot of time, but you don't know what to do,

13   [that's really lost]

14K   [that's the problem]

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In this conversation, speaker K are explaining what the differences are between the study in high school and post-graduate school, and interlocutor E expresses agreement and support to speaker K's sentence in the following turn by producing backchannel *yeah*, where overlap happens, and provides additional explanations. In line 8, speaker E also made overlapping talk, but this time she simply echoed what speaker K said in the previous turn. Speaker E, however, does not continue her turn and hold the floor, but the turn is immediately returned to the original speaker K. There is another overlap in line 13 and 14, but the overlapping speaker K in line 14 expresses her strong agreement and supportive reaction to the interlocutor rather than invading or interfering the interlocutor's turn. In all the cases of echoing overlap in the data, there is none of the original speaker's self-repair or symptom of anxiety, which is often observed after the interruptive overlapping talk. This is because echoing response does not provide any new information and invade the current speaker's territory, which influence the process of ongoing talk-in-interaction. It suggests that overlaps for echoing repetition are cooperative and mutually supportive in nature and rapport-oriented for building involvement and harmony. Echoing repetition also displays the confirmation of understanding and emphasis on the information (Björkman 2011). Repeating exactly the others' utterance is a way of explicitly expressing acceptance, agreement, and acknowledgement to the other and providing prominence on the item.

As seen in overlapping talk in the extracts above, the overlapping speakers reiterate what the prior speaker has said immediately after the preceding turn, and this kind of echoing others, which is described as "solidarity repetition" (Murata 1994), functions as a feedback, because neither further information is added nor topic change happens in the turn. Since active feedback can make conversation "a two-way or interactive process" (Jandt 1995, p. 25), convergence to the interlocutors through echoing response may encourage the speaker to express dynamic support and listenership. Echoing response is also described as a way of accommodation, for which speakers repeat exactly the other's utterance to signal alignment to the interlocutor and "to ensure that the synchronic delivery of [her] speech keeps up with the rhythm of the encounter" (Cogo 2009, p. 263). Speakers tend to have more positive attitude and rapport when the interlocutors show a similar speech style and patterns and mirroring responses to them (Giles and Ogay 2007). By converging to the others, the speaker is showing affiliation and attentiveness to the interlocutor's earlier contribution.

Echoing responses in the examples are not a sign of non-understanding or request for the confirmation, since rising intonation or loud volume, which is often used for a request for clarification or confirmation check, is not observed. The speakers do not continue to

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hold the turns after overlapping talk but simply repeat what the interlocutor has said as a kind of backchannel. Overlap for echoing responses can project that the speaker is paying attention to and has understood what the prior speaker said, and expressing attention in conversation is "an important aspect of communicative ability that contributes to rapport management" (Bjørge 2010, p. 201). Rather than simply producing short backchannel cues such as *yeah, yes,* or *ehm*, by echoing and mirroring the interlocutor's utterance, the speakers can avoid silence and continue to signal participatory listenership, and the overlapping talk for echoing responses is one of the most significant patterns frequently observed in the present data.

4.3 Utterance Completion Overlap

The participants in the present data are also found to produce overlapping talk for utterance completion, where speakers jointly construct incomplete sentences of the other speakers by anticipating the upcoming slot of utterance (Sacks 2000). Completion overlap occurs when the other interlocutor attempts to complete the current speaker's utterance with "the use of a syntactic continuation of the previous utterance" (Cogo and Dewey 2012, p. 150). In other words, one speaker initiates the turn and another finishes that turn by inserting a possible and relevant component. By providing a syntactically and semantically relevant component to complete the sentence, the overlapping speaker jointly constructs the rest of syntactic structure of the prior speaker's utterance, and such action requires ongoing attention to and monitoring the current speaker's turn. Completion overlap shows a great degree of cooperativeness among speakers and builds ensemble and harmony in interaction.

When the speakers provide utterance completion, there is no sign of false starts, mistakes, pause or hesitation by a current speaker, which require the linguistic repair or correction. The examples of overlapping talk for utterance completion in the data occur without these erroneous symptoms in the preceding turns, and therefore such utterance completion in overlaps is not provided as a repair strategy. Utterance completion essentially demonstrates the understanding of the prior speaker's turn, and a completing speaker dynamically interprets the progression of what has been said and predicts incomplete turn-constructional units based on the projectability (Schegloff 2000). Utterance completion shows a high level of listenership and convergence as the speaker can provide relevant lexical items only by monitoring what the interlocutor is saying and producing a syntactically and semantically coherent and relevant sequence in the ongoing

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process of the turn. Utterance completion is perceived as one of the highly supportive and cooperative pragmatic strategies in interaction, and it is frequently observed in ELF communication (e.g. Cogo and Dewey 2012, Kaur 2010, Kirkpatrick 2010, Lee 2016). Although both speakers' utterances overlap for a temporary moment, the overlapping speaker does not invade the prior speaker's turn for a long segment of talk but ends the lexical support immediately. The turn is instantly sent back to the prior speaker as in the following extracts.

Extract 6. K— Korean, M— Japanese, A— Chinese

1K		it's shorter than only er only twice, only, how can i say, those one which is
2		broadcasted twice a week
3A		ehm
4K		but that series is broadcasted <u>[everyday]</u>
5A	→	<u>**[everyday]**</u>
6M		ehm
7K		i see

The speakers are talking about the popular TV dramas broadcasted in China, and in the preceding part of the interaction, Chinese speaker A elucidated that many Chinese drama series were broadcasted for a very long period of time. In line 1, Korean speaker K shows her understanding why TV series are so long and broadcasted every day. Speakers K is describing the difference between Chinese drama series and the others by comparing the series broadcasted every day and twice a week. Before speaker K completes her sentence, speaker A joins the co—construction of turns by providing the candidate word *every day* in line 5, which can be easily anticipated based on the previously given information. Such utterance completion is only possible when the speaker is paying attention to the prior speaker and monitoring the process of turn construction. In line 5, the lexical suggestion with overlaps is coincided with the original speaker's intended meaning and implicitly accepted by the original speaker as there is no further comment after the overlap. Although speaker K's turn is interrupted temporarily by speaker A's overlapping talk, any repetition or repair is not followed after the overlap because the overlapping talk does not lead to communication breakdown or intelligibility problems, but the original speaker's utterance is successfully completed with the interlocutor's ensemble, which shows a high degree of collaborative co—construction of meanings.

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The overlapping speaker builds on the other's comments and expresses active involvement by cooperatively completing the interlocutor's turn, which contributes to creating togetherness in the turn-construction. Rather than disrupting the flow of interaction, this kind of completion overlap primarily serves to indicate understanding and listenership on what is being said by the current speaker, signals convergence and projection to the current speech and expresses interest and attention to the topic. The speakers jointly construct turns and negotiate meanings, and collaborative overlap is used "for their joint production of understanding and orient to the overlap-generating devices as being collaborative and non-interruptive" (Gramkow-Anderson 2011, p. 157). The form of lexical suggestion for utterance completion is also found in the next extract.

Extract 7. K- Korean, E- Chinese

```
1K       if you get the visa from swiss embassy, that means you can travel any any
2        european country
3E       yeah
4K       without any further visa?
5E       yeah, but you don't need to apply for the visa to travel around [europe]
6K   →                                                         [europe], yeah.
7        i think so
```

Speaker K provides a lexical unit that is contextually fitted into her interlocutor's turn-in-progress and that can help complete the interlocutor's sentence. This joint turn construction is based on shared knowledge, which allows the speaker to anticipate the interlocutor's speech that is to follow. In other words, the content of the participants' conversation in the prior turn is related to the situation Chinese nationals need to get the visa for travelling European countries. This type of overlap embeds the turn unit that is not syntactically complete and allows active listenership and involvement. This completion overlap occurs at a point where the prior turn is not yet complete, but the overlapping speaker has received enough information that she can predict the next lexical unit and express agreement through the agreement tokens *yeah*, and *i think so*. The conversational context of the shared knowledge allows the overlapping speaker to project possible endings of the current utterance.

Shared knowledge in conversation can facilitate projectability and lead to the greater degree of prediction in the upcoming turn-in-progress, allowing the listener to anticipate

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what is coming next and to suggest a possible slot of utterance. As Bogetic (2011, p. 327) puts it, "given that both speakers share the same knowledge about the experience, they often have no need to wait for any new incoming information; having projected what is to follow, they can promptly add their own contributions to the narrative". As Coates (1994) describes, the floor is collaborative, and participants in interaction have an equal right to manage the floor at any moment of conversation, because they share the floor in essence while constructing and developing turns. Therefore, utterance completion "requires simultaneous attention to both form and meaning" (Kaur 2010, p. 65), and collaborative co-construction of meaning, which shows cooperation and supportiveness in communication, is in fact one of the common practices of ELF (Cogo and House 2017, Mauranen 2012). The overlap talk for co-construction of turns through utterance completion is also shown in the next extract.

Extract 8. K— Korean, E— Chinese, J— Chinese

```
1K      we sa—, i said 'ah, i regret i spent my erm (:)=
2E      =whole time to study here
3K      no, the twenty the age of twenty is very special for everyone
4J      yeah
5K      i mean it's young and we can do everything we want, or we have much more
6       freedom, it's a very, yeah
7J      i see
8K      the twenty's is most [valuable]
9E →                         [valuable] time
10J     do not depends on
```

In the prior stretch of the conversation, Korean speaker K was speaking to the other speakers that she had a dinner with her friend last night, and she expressed her regret that her 20's had passed. As speaker K emphasises the value of freedom and youth that people can enjoy in their 20's, speaker J shows agreement and support in the following turns by agreement tokens such as *yeah* in line 4 and *i see* in line 7. Although overlap occurs in line 9, the overlapping talk in this case is the joint construction of turns in the incomplete sentence by providing relevant words that speaker E anticipates. Speaker E co-participates the completion of utterance of the other speaker but does not continue to hold the floor.

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In the conversations above, there is a rare instance of interruptive or competing overlap but most of overlapping talk occurs for support and cooperation to indicate interest, listenership and rapport on what the current speaker is saying. As seen in the fact that the overlapping turns immediately return to the prior speaker, there is no signal that the overlapping speakers take up the floor but contribute to joint turn-construction and collaborative meaning-making in the course of interaction. Such kind of overlapping talk, which is described as "lexical suggestion" or "lexical anticipation" (Kirkpatrick 2010, p. 127), is only possible when a speaker monitors and completely understands the prior turn (Lee 2006, Iwasaki 2011). This kind of collaborative turn-taking is also described as "conversational duets", where two or more speakers co-construct interactional properties of turn-taking by incorporating individual contributions to collaborative management of turn-taking (Falk 1980). The joint construction of turns through lexical suggestion or utterance completion can help a smooth flow of interaction and build ensemble among participants in conversations, and consequently it is regarded as a cooperative participation rather than interruption. As collaborative overlap does not aim at claiming the floor but provide the interlocutors with support and interest, the prior speaker can continue talking immediately after the completion overlap.

The examples presented above exhibit the significant and various communicative roles of overlap in ELF conversations and show the use of overlap as a signal of collaborative management of interaction and mutually supportive involvement. There is no evidence that the presented examples of collaborative overlapping talk cause any interactional conflict or floor competition. Instead, in many cases overlapping talk serves the speaker's intention for interpersonal rapport-building, active participation, listenership, and involvement. Also, the overlapped speaker continues his/her turn, and the overlapping units create the ensemble for collaborative turn-construction. The overlapped speakers also showed notable tolerance of overlap rather than expressing overt irritation or anxiety.

5. Discussion

This study has focused on the cooperative aspect of overlap in interaction, and the data show that in many cases, overlap acted as a backchannel and echoing response to signal listenership and rapport. Even when there is no sign of hesitation or pause by the interlocutor, the speakers frequently helped complete the other speaker's turn and jointly

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construct the utterance by overlapping. The speakers avoided silence and filled gaps in interaction and consequently joined the process of turn-construction. However, when overlap happened, in most cases the overlapping speaker immediately withdrew their utterance and made the original speaker continue the turn. Such patterns of overlap resonate to when overlaps are used as a backchannel and utterance completion. One main reason why cooperative overlaps are frequently observed in ELF interaction may be that "a timely response makes clear its link to another speaker's prior utterance", and therefore "turn transitions occur with minimal delay" (Stivers, Enfield, Brown, Englert, Hayashi, Heinemann, Hoymann, Rossano, De Ruiter, Yoon and Levinson 2009, p. 10587).

The participants in ELF conversations produced overlapping talk by providing constant feedback and suggesting relevant lexical items. This result indicates that the nature of overlap is highly supportive and cooperative, which is a main feature of ELF communication. Therefore, this type of overlaps needs to be distinguished from interruption, which is often considered as a violation of the turn-taking system and should be avoided for smooth turn transition. Interruption often takes place in order to take up and compete the floor for topic change or disagreement with the current speaker at a non-transition relevance place (Farley 2008). Interruption is related to dominance and control causing the current speaker to relinquish and stop talking. Therefore, interruption is treated as something to be avoided for collaborative and smooth interaction. One of the evident distinctions between collaborative overlap and interruption is that the overlapping speaker does not continue to hold the floor even after the overlap, but the turn returns to the prior speaker (Szczepek 2000). In collaborative overlap, there is no indication of high pitch or rapid and loud volume, which are typical prosodic features of interfering and competitive interruption to achieve dominance and control in interaction, but the collaborative overlapping talk is usually initiated at a low or medium level of pitch because of its non-disruptive intention.

A delayed response or turn transition often signals non-understanding, inattention, and lack of listenership to interlocutors, and consequently ELF speakers attempt to achieve more supportive and collaborative interaction by frequent and timely responses (Bjørge 2010, Kordon 2006), which may lead to the high frequency of overlaps and simultaneous talk. A number of studies corroborate a cooperative and supportive nature of turn-taking and turn-management in ELF interactions (Andersen 2001, Cogo and Dewey 2012, Konakahara, 2015, Wolfartsberger 2011, 2015). ELF speakers, who are involved in intercultural communication with speakers from difference linguistic and cultural backgrounds, tend to jointly construct and negotiate meanings through a variety of communicative strategies. They attempt to achieve shared affiliation and rapport by

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producing constant feedback, responses, and agreement tokens, which are the main types of overlap in the data. Such overlaps are unproblematic because they are the form of joint construction of floor, and consequently they are "collaborative and non-interruptive" (Andersen 2001, p. 157). The participants in ELF communication are found to consider that the rapid exchange of turns and timely responses are a way of expressing high involvement, collaboration and participation in interaction. This may lead to the patterns of turn-taking in ELF that the gap between turns should be short, and delayed turn-transition needs to be avoided by producing active responses and joint production of turns.

6. Conclusion

As the examples of overlap in the present study demonstrate, overlap frequently occurs during the ELF conversation, and a large proportion of overlap is drawn for the speakers' cooperative intentions rather than interruption. Also, there was no clear difference in the use of cooperative overlap in terms of frequency and patterns according to the participants' nationalities and mother tongues. In other words, the collaborative and supportive use of overlap is found to be a common feature in the present ELF data regardless of the speakers' different L1 backgrounds.

In addition, there is neither a sign of significant anxiety and conflicting reaction nor communication breakdown followed by overlapping talk, but the overlapped speakers seemed to treat it as non-problematic. The present data has revealed the diverse situations and types of overlapping talk that commonly occurred in shared turn-constructions in ELF communications such as overlaps as a backchannel, for echoing others and as an utterance completion. Although overlaps can be used to express disagreement, dominate a floor, or disrupt the other speaker's utterance as in interruption, the data analysis has confirmed the role of overlap as a collaborative and supportive pragmatic strategy in ELF conversation. Overlapping talk features "as an inherent part of the turn-taking mechanism", contributing to co-construction of the meanings and "allowing immediate orientation to relevant aspects of the telling-in-progress" (Bogetic 2011, p. 326). In the fast-paced conversations, the participants smoothly and adeptly incorporate overlapping talk into the jointly constructed turn-management.

There is a limitation to provide determinant and universal results of the use and patterns of overlap in ELF with such a small scale of corpus data. The future research needs an

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analysis of overlapping talk in more diverse and wider contexts of ELF use with speakers from different lingua-cultural backgrounds to better understand overlapping talk in ELF and uncover any differences between overlaps in ELF and in other interactional contexts and modes. From the prescriptive perspectives of a teaching approach, overlap may be viewed as a violation or intrusion of the current speaker's right to talk and consequently a communicative error or flaw that needs to be avoided in conversations in the classroom. However, the shift in turns between speakers is not completely smooth, and overlapping talk is an inevitable outcome of dynamic and collaborative turn-taking practices. Therefore, communicative language teaching in the classroom needs to encourage English language learners to be involved in using more adaptive pragmatic strategies such as repair, accommodation, or clarification request when overlaps lead to communication breakdown or intelligibility problems. In other words, rather than viewing overlap simply as a breakdown and interruption of turns, it is more desirable to raise awareness on how to deal with the communicative problems caused by overlapping talk.

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Transcription Conventions

[ ]	overlapped speech
=	latching
(0.0)	extended pause in seconds
(.)	brief pause
(:)	stretched preceding sounds or letters
?	a rising intonation
@	one syllable of laughter
CAPITALS	stressed words

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Tertiary

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