



The Use of Self-repair as a Pre-empting Strategy in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Interaction

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ABSTRACT

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The present paper aims to investigate the use of self-repair as a pre-empting action in ELF, and the focus of the study is to identify turn-organisational factors that trigger self-repair and how speakers perform their repair to resolve potential trouble source. The data are based on naturally occurring ELF conversations among international students in the UK university, and the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach provides the framework for the transcription and analysis of the data. The findings reveal that the participants employ self-repair practices when interlocutors produce overlapping talk or minimal responses. Although there is no explicit sign of non-comprehension or communicative breakdown, the speakers continue to monitor, detect, and respond to interlocutors' reaction and adapt their speech patterns to communicative situations through self-repair actions. The ELF speakers engage in diverse clarification and self-repair practices by repeating, modifying, and expanding what they have said, and self-repair in the data is not confined to a narrow scope of lexical replacement at the word or phrase levels but used to introduce commentary, background knowledge, and justification of claim at the clausal level of modification. Self-repair practice in ELF shows a cooperative and proactive nature in ELF, which allows the discourse to proceed and secure the degree of shared understanding.

KEYWORDS

self-repair, English as a lingua franca (ELF), mutual understanding, explicitness, pre-empting strategy, overlap, minimal response, announced self-rephrase marker

1. Introduction

It is commonly assumed that misunderstanding frequently occurs in intercultural communication such as English as lingua franca (ELF) due to participants' disfluencies, variability in language use, or a dearth of shared socio-cultural knowledge. However, much empirical research into ELF pragmatics has suggested that non- or misunderstanding tends to be less frequent than anticipated due to "a strong orientation towards securing mutual understanding" (Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey 2011: 293). As it is key to minimise ambiguity and raise explicitness and clarity for shared understanding in intercultural communication, ELF speakers engage in a strategic use of signalling and resolving comprehension difficulties and avoid the triggers of ambiguity, which has been identified as a main source of misunderstanding in ELF (Kaur 2017). Mauranen (2007) argues that "gaps in shared knowledge can be bridged by strategies of enhanced clarity and explicitness", and explicitness should be foregrounded as "strategies of social interaction" in ELF, where linguistic and cultural hybridity is prevalent (p. 246). Although speakers may provide interlocutors with insufficient information or unclear messages, which give rise on ambiguity and misinterpret meaning, they attempt to convey their intended meaning and secure mutual understanding by using diverse explicitness strategies.

Repair is one of the most common and effective ways to enhance explicitness and achieve shared understanding in interaction. Repair refers to "practices for dealing with problems or troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk in conversation" (Schegloff 2000: 207). Whether the troubles attribute to syntactic, phonological, lexical, or semantic problems in language production and understanding, repair practices provide "a locally managed, interactionally organised, procedural architecture through which participants preserve intersubjectivity understanding" (Fox, Benjamin, and Mazeland 2013: 1). Repair action is differentiated from correction, whose target is limited to an error or mistake of prior talk. Instead, repair is concerned with "any instance in which an emerging utterance is stopped in some, and is then aborted, recast, or redone" (Fox and Jaspersen 1995: 80) and therefore involves a range of linguistic practices where all sorts of troubles are managed, such as word-search, requesting repetition, lexical suggestion or replacement, and reaffirmation. Repair can occur both by a speaker of a problematic talk and by anyone else, and it can be also initiated in the same turn of the trouble source or in the next turn following the troublesome turn. This study focuses on the self-repair following the trouble-source turn since the elaboration of the speaker's own utterance is the first step and prerequisite for successful interaction, and empirical research exhibits that self-repair is preferred over other-repair in conversation, and "opportunities for self-initiation come before opportunities for other-initiation" of repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977: 376).

Although numerous studies on self-repair have been undertaken, much research is involved in self-repair action as a way of resolving understanding troubles signalled by interlocutors, i.e., direct clarification questions, repetition of the trouble-source items, or request for further information, where the speaker can recognise that hearable misunderstanding has occurred (Mauranen 2006, Rieger 2003). However, more recently ELF research has paid attention to self-repair as a pre-empting strategy, where speakers anticipate and resolve potential understanding troubles ahead (Cogo and Pitzl 2016, Franceschi 2019, Pietikäinen 2018). Jenkins et al. (2011) underscore that "mutual understanding in ELF is not taken for granted, but [that] speakers engage in a joint effort to monitor understanding at every stage of communication, even before non-understanding has taken place" (p. 293). Kaur (2009) also suggests that "it is likely that the participants' anticipation of difficulty in understanding, arising from the lingua franca context, gives rise to increased efforts at maintaining shared understanding" (p. 120). However, despite its pragmatic significance there is still dearth of empirical data for pre-empting self-repair in ELF, and most studies are limited to identifying specific self-repair strategies such as repetition or rephrase. The present paper aims to investigate the use of self-repair as a pre-empting action in ELF, and the focus of the study is to identify turn-organisational factors that trigger self-repair and how speakers perform their repair to resolve potential trouble source.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-repair in ELF Research

ELF research has shown that self-repair frequently occurs in ELF communication, and it is commonly used to resolve non-understanding. For instance, Watterson (2008) showed the component steps of how to resolve non-understanding routines of ELF, which have the sequence of trigger, indicator, and response. The non-understanding was mainly triggered by intelligibility problems at the level of a single word or word groups. Comprehensibility problems, where listeners have a trouble to understand a meaning of a partial utterance or whole sentence, were also the cause of non-understanding. In terms of indicator, interlocutors signaled their non-understanding by directly asking questions of problematic items or repeating them. As a response to the indication of the listeners' understanding problems, the ELF speakers used self-repair strategies such as repetition, where the speakers provided redundant information to enhance comprehension, and reformulation of the utterance in the prior turn, where the speakers changed the problematic items to more explicit and specified expressions. The findings show that non-understanding was signaled and successfully resolved by the process of trigger, indicator, and response in ELF interaction, and the collaborative repair process contributed to facilitating comprehension and promoting explicitness.

Cogo and Pitzl (2016) show similar findings that non-understanding in ELF is overtly signaled and resolved with listeners' direct request for clarification. For example, when the listeners did not clearly understand the speaker's talk, they repeated it with interrogatory intonation or produced minimal query tokens such as *again?* to indicate non-understanding. After the signal of non-understanding, the speaker immediately repaired their words by repeating or paraphrasing to clarify the meaning and explicitly convey the message. The speakers elaborated the formulation of utterances by replacing the expressions to a synonym or providing additional comment. Pietikäinen's (2018) data also corroborates that signaling and repairing non-understanding actively occur in ELF. The ELF speakers signaled insufficient understanding by using direct clarification questions and confirmation checks or repeated problematic items with rising intonations. The interlocutors also switched non-understandable words or expressions to their own L1 or the speaker's L1 to signal non-understanding and clarify the meaning of the utterance. Once misunderstanding was signaled, the speakers rapidly detected and repaired it by drawing a wide array of self-repair strategies such as repetition, paraphrase, or simplification. The speakers replaced the prior utterance into more detail and specific expressions, inserted additional information, and reiterated the utterance with synonymous items to approximate and negotiate the meaning. As seen in many studies, repetition and paraphrase are used as the most common self-repair strategy in ELF communication.

However, apart from repeating and paraphrasing the existing words, ELF speakers can also employ a more creative and adaptive strategy to repair their speech and enhance clarity. For instance, Franceschi (2019) demonstrates that word-coinage, which is "creating a non-existing L2 word by applying a supposed L2 rule to an existing L2 words" (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997: 189), is the most common self-repair strategy in her ELF data. To repair their own speech, ELF speakers created alternative forms of an existing expression or produced novel words, which are similar in meaning but non-normative and non-standardised in form. The processes of word-coinage are typically involved in back-formation (e.g., *increasement* for increase, *decreasement* for decrease), affixation (e.g., *priorly* for previously, *comparance* for comparison), redundancy (e.g., *executional costs* for execution costs), semantic extension (e.g., *Luxembourgish* for Luxembourg), and analogy (e.g., *inbelievable* for unbelievable, *easilier* for more easily). Although word-coinage in ELF repair is engaged in non-normative forms, it can be effective and functional to clarify the meaning because the coined form does not impair the key meaning of a word to convey the intended message. Word-coinage is a common multilingual practice, where ELF speakers employ linguistic repertoires which are more easily accessible rather than conforming native speaker norms, to resolve the ambiguity.

Self-repair practices can also occur at different linguistic levels. For instance, Kaur's (2011) study, where self-repair most occurred in her ELF data in an academic setting to rectify the wrong items, shows that when self-correction occurred at the phonological level, the speakers replaced the mispronounced segments of utterance with the alternative version, and in the self-correction at the lexical level the speakers modified an inaccurate word choice with a more proper lexical unit. In addition, they inserted lexical units omitted in the preceding segment of an utterance and produced lexical replacements immediately after the occurrence of the incorrect element "with little or no disruption to the syntactic structure of the sentence: (Kaur 2011: 2708). At the morphological level, the speakers self-repaired to modify the word-inflection, revise the incorrect tense, and change the word form from singular to plural. When the speakers recognized the incorrect use of grammatical forms, they immediately self-corrected it although the type of morphological errors rarely led to intelligibility or comprehension problems. Self-repair for grammatical forms suggests that speakers adapt to the potential troubles with the linguistic forms deviated from the native speaker norms and consequently attempt to orient to linguistic accuracy. Lastly, at the syntactic level, speakers self-corrected to discontinue the emerging syntactic formulation, alter the word order or modify the clause form. The speakers closely monitored the emerging syntactic structures and moved to reformulate an erroneous or incorrect syntactic construction.

2.2 Self-Repair as a Pre-empting Strategy

Previous ELF research into self-repair is mainly involved in the repair strategies either self-initiated by symptomatic cues such as prosodic cut-offs, sound stretches, pauses or negations or self-initiated after signaling with the listener's confirmation checks and request for clarification. However, self-repair is not necessarily used to resolve the speaker's existing error or overt mistake. Instead, in many cases, speakers anticipate and pre-empt potential troubles to make the meaning clearer and achieve mutual understanding when the other's message is unclear, or ambiguity can cause misinterpretation. To avert understanding troubles, ELF speakers are found to employ diverse pragmatic strategies. Mauranen (2006) shows that preventing misunderstanding is one of the remarkable features in her academic ELF data, where speakers use frequent request for clarification and confirmation checks as well as rephrasing their utterances or offering further explanations. The ELF speakers attempt to elaborate their utterances to make more explicit by rephrasing not only for the content, wording, or grammar but also for "the appropriateness of a speech act function within the context" (p. 139). In addition, when the utterance is not entirely satisfactory or not explicit enough to secure mutual understanding, speakers provide additional information or explanations to prevent incomprehension, and this repair action is described as the speakers' self-regulatory discourse strategies. The findings suggest that ELF speakers "are willing to regulate and modify their discourse, seeking and offering alternative expressions as well as assurances of continued comprehension" (p. 144).

Self-repetition or paraphrase is the most common pre-empting strategy. Kaur's (2012) data show that self-repetition is a widely used multifunctional strategy and plays an important role in pre-empting and resolving comprehension troubles in ELF interaction. Kaur identifies four main pre-empting strategies of self-repetition: parallel phrasing, key word repetition, combined repetition, and repaired repetition. Parallel phrasing is a type of self-repetition that speakers specify a list of items to explicate a point. Parallel phrases are syntactically identical but different in one item, and the use of synonym is one case of parallel phrasing, where the semantic relationships are almost equal between items. Whereas parallel phrasing engages with congruency in meaning with a shift in forms, in key word repetition speakers recycle lexical items to direct an interlocutor back to the item in a prior utterance and to get the message across. By reiterating the selected items, key word repetition makes interlocutors pay attention them again and "allows the speaker to foreground and give prominence to those items considered central in understanding his or her message" (Kaur 2012: 603). Combined repetition refers to the form of repetition that is the mixture of exact repetition and reformulation. In the first place, speakers may repeat the same key words

as in the preceding segment but substitute other parts with some variation. When key word repetition does not provide enough understanding, alternative formulation of talk can help secure the intended meaning and facilitate clarity. Repaired repetition is involved in lexical replacement, insertion, or expansion to provide more details and resolve speech perturbations due to impaired hearing, understanding, or speaking. Speakers make adjustment or modification of the utterance in the ongoing process of turns not to correct errors or mistakes but to improve explicitness and shared understanding.

As seen in much ELF research, ELF speakers attempt to minimize ambiguity, which has been identified as a main source of misunderstanding in ELF (Kaur 2017) and enhance clarity in communication by using diverse self-repair strategies. However, previous research still tends to view self-repair as a means of remedying something wrong, and the data of self-repair as a pre-empting strategy are still lack in ELF studies. Moreover, most self-repair studies in ELF have been focused on identifying a limited range of self-repair strategies rather than interactive conditions that cause self-repair practices. Therefore, the present study aims to explore how ELF speakers adapt to different interactional mechanisms with the use of self-repair strategies, which serve to enhance explicitness and achieve mutual understanding, by focusing on self-repair practices as a pre-empting strategy rather than as a remedial strategy. The research questions are as follows:

1. Does self-repair frequently occur in ELF communication among international students in the UK university?
2. Is self-repair in ELF frequently used as a pre-empting strategy?
3. In what kinds of interactive conditions are self-repair strategies mainly used for pre-empting purposes?

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Participants

The data consist of 12-hour-long naturally occurring ELF conversations among international students at a UK university. Eight students participated in data collection over a period of four weeks. The participants were recruited by circulating an email to international students who were involved in a social club at the university, and the researcher audio-recorded each event of the conversations among the students who were interested in the research and permitted the recording of their interactions. Each event of the interactions constitutes three or four participants, who gathered for socialising, and they exchanged free-flowing conversations. The lingua-cultural backgrounds of the participants are Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Thai, and the courses they have enrolled involve business, management, finance, linguistics, and computer science. Three of them are undergraduates, and the others are postgraduates. Although the lingua-cultural backgrounds of the participants are predominantly Asian, they use English daily both for formal and informal purposes. The number of international students at UK universities has increased for the last few years, and particularly the students from Asian countries comprise the highest figure (Mok, Xiong, Ke and Cheung 2021). They have established emerging communities of practice and engaged in dynamic ELF exchanges. The situation manifests that the international students' communities of practice in academic settings can provide relevant and useful ELF data (Jenkins 2011, Kaur 2020, Mauranen 2012).

As for the participants' levels of proficiency in English, it is common that speakers possess the wide range of levels of proficiency in ELF settings (Björkman 2011). As Kaur (2017) puts it, "speakers who use English in international encounters are invariably of different linguacultural backgrounds and are likely to display varying levels of competence in the variety of English spoken" (p. 26). Given various levels of proficiency as well as the diverse use of linguistic resources and sociocultural backgrounds, variability is typically described as "one of ELF defining characteristics" (Jenkins et al. 2011: 297). However, as the international students in the academic settings of English-speaking countries have to meet a minimum requirement of international English tests such as IELTS

or TOEFL for the course registration, all the participants in the data possess a certain level of English proficiency. The entry requirements into the undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the setting are minimum IELTS scores of 6.0 and 6.5, respectively, and the distribution of IELTS scores the participants gained ranges from 6.0 to 7.5. This indicates that the participants have over upper-intermediate or advanced levels of proficiency in English and can make an effective use of the available linguistic resources to engage in meaningful interactions.

Table 1. The Profile of Participants

Speaker	Sex	Age	L1	Course level	Course name	Length of study in the UK	IELTS score
1	Female	29	Korean	PhD	Linguistics	5 years	7.5
2	Male	30	Korean	BA	Finance	3 years	7.0
3	Male	27	Chinese	MA	Computer Science	6 months	6.5
4	Female	22	Chinese	BA	Management	4 months	6.0
5	Female	22	Chinese	BA	Finance	4 months	6.0
6	Female	22	Chinese	BA	Accounting	4 months	6.5
7	Female	25	Japanese	MA	Management	1 year	6.5
8	Male	29	Thai	PhD	Management	3 years	7.0

3.2 Analytic Tool

For the analysis of the data, the present paper employed Conversation Analysis (CA), which is one of the most common analytic approaches in analysing and describing naturally occurring spoken interactions. CA provides the sequential analysis of talk-in-interaction and fine details on the delivery of the turn taking and communicative exchanges (Seedhouse 2005). By identifying and describing a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic components in turn-taking system, a CA framework contributes to understanding turn transitions and turn management in spoken interactions and helps understand how speakers “design their turns as various unit-types such as lexical, phrasal, clausal, or sentential constructions” (Wolfartsberger 2015: 259). Therefore, CA provides useful frameworks for identifying, describing, and analysing sequential organisations and linguistic features of self-repair in ELF and has been used in numerous ELF repair studies (Kaur 2012, Önen and İnal 2019, Pietikäinen 2018). Given that the focus of the study is to examine the organisation and pragmatic features of self-repair in spoken turn exchange, discourse features such as overlap, pauses, hesitation, sound stretches, and vocalisations were transcribed to “represent non-lexical speech perturbations that may accompany a segment of self-initiated repair” (Kaur 2011: 2707). For the detailed description and in-depth analysis, the audio-recorded data were fully transcribed, and instances of self-repair strategies in each turn were identified.

4. Findings

4.1 After Simultaneous Talk

The present data show several instances where ELF speakers displayed self-repair strategies when simultaneous talk occurred. Overlap is commonly considered as breakdown of a turn-taking system in conversation, where one speaker should talk at a time. Overlaps often occur when a speaker intends to interrupt and take up a floor or compete and invade the other’s conversational territory (Schegloff 2000). However, the role of overlap is not necessarily restricted to intrusive action, but speakers frequently employ overlapping talk as a way of collaborative action to support the other speaker and to provide a joint turn-construction and collaboration. For instance, overlap can occur when speakers provide backchannel or supportive feedback to express agreement, repeat others to show participation and listenership, or offer lexical suggestion and anticipation for co-construction of meaning (Cogo

and Dewey 2012, Lee 2020). Although ELF research has revealed that simultaneous talk commonly occurs in ELF interaction, a conspicuous feature of overlapping talk in ELF is cooperative in nature rather than competitive and intrusive (Kalocsai 2011, Konakahara 2015, Wolfartsberger 2015). However, when overlapping talk is considered to impede the flow of interaction or cause comprehensible troubles, a speaker tends to immediately resolve and repair it (Mauranen 2006). The analysis of the present data suggests that when turns were overlapped among speakers, an original speaker repaired his/ her own utterance by immediately repeating it although there was no symptom of the actual communication breakdown or interlocutors' request for clarification as in the following extracts.

Extract 1. M- Japanese, G- Korean, E, A- Chinese

- 1 M we don't vote for the prime minister, we just vote for the you know local politician, we vote for the local
 2 politician to choose our representative, and at the same way elected party and and finally before that we
 3 choose the, we have any party and we choose er which party's policy is better, elected party [more poli-]
 4 G [more seats]
 5 M→ more politicians and then within this party
 6 G the leader is elected and
 7 M yeah, yeah
 8 A you mean there are many governments in japan, and you vote for one of them
 9 M yeah yeah

In the first turn, M provides a longish explanation on the way a prime minister is elected in Japan. In her last part of turn, G initiates her talk before M finishes the utterance. Although both speakers' turns are overlapped, G immediately withdraws her talk, and overlapping talk is neither maintained for the prolonged duration nor repeated. After M's turn is interrupted with the occurrence of overlapping talk, M instantly repeats her preceding segment of talk and continues to complete the sentence. This pattern of repetition can create inherent coherence because "repetition of the same lexical unit creates a relation" to the prior segment of talk and contributes to discourse comprehensibility (Tyler 1994: 682). Even though there is no sign of conspicuous communicative breakdown or comprehension problems, M self-repairs her impaired turn caused by overlapping talk, and this self-repairing practice is a pre-empting strategy, which can affect the clarity of utterance. By using a pre-empting self-repair, which reflects speakers' "self-regulatory discourse strategies", speakers prevent incomprehension or potential intelligibility problems (Mauranen 2006:140).

Extract 2. A- Chinese, G- Korean, M- Japanese

- 1 A and in the public school, you have A LOT OF students in class, but if you are in private school, they are only
 2 ten, [ten people], yah
 3 G [ten]
 4 A but in privat-, public school, it will be sixty
 5 M sixty, ah too many @@
 6 G that's why in korea er private language school, private language school=
 7 M→ private means cram school, like a cram school? [after] after finish the class
 8 G [outside]
 9 M some students go to the private=
 10 G = english language school

The extract above shows another example of self-repair with the form of repetition in the ongoing turn. In the initial turns, A are describing the difference of the educational quality between a public and private school in China.

The private school that speaker A is talking about is in fact the private education sectors, which offer supportive academic lessons for students. M attempts to clarify its meaning in line 7 by rephrasing and clarification check, which may signal a turn-transition-place and make the interlocutor judge the turn is finished. However, M continues her utterance, and the turn is overlapped with G's turn. Although M's turn is temporarily interrupted by G's talk, G does not attempt to hold the floor, but M keeps holding the turn, repeating her word disrupted by overlap. Repetition is one of the most common self-repair strategies in ELF (Kaur 2011, 2012). When overlap occurs, a speaker recycles utterances to restore impaired lexical items. For repetitions as a self-repair strategy, "the repaired segment and repairing segment are lexically identical", and "a speaker may repeat a lexical item for emphasis to intensify its meaning or the meaning of another word" (Rieger 2003: 51). This kind of repetition is also called comprehension-oriented repetition, which can help enhance mutual understanding and explicitness (Lichtkoppler 2007).

Extract 3. M- Japanese, A- Chinese, G- Korean

- 1 M but green bean, yeah, we normally green bean with, like a salty one (.), but
- 2 A salty?
- 3 M not salty, like not sugar, **[not put er sugar]**
- 4 G **[not put sugar].** uh
- 5 A uh (:)
- 6 M→ **we don't put sugar**
- 7 G but you made a soup, you you make a=
- 8 M =green-, no-, we normally use a red bean as a sweet one.
- 9 A uh (:)

The participants in the conversation are talking about the food that people eat on the New Year's Day in their own countries. In the earlier segment of conversation, Chinese speaker A asked M how to cook green bean soup in Japan, and M is explaining the ingredients and the recipe for cooking the green bean soup. In line 3, M explicates that they do not add sugar in Japanese-style green bean soup, and she reiterates the phrase '*like not sugar*' by replacing the expression to '*not put er sugar*'. The speaker may self-repair a formulation because she is not happy with it, but at the moment of the lexical replacement interlocutor G provides utterance completion, which contributes to co-construction of meaning. G's lexical suggestion is identical to M's utterance, but after overlapping talk, M repairs the speech in the following turn by repeating it. This kind of repetition can help ensure accuracy of understanding, which is to make certain that the interlocutor has understood what the speaker has said by repeating the words in a fully or partially exact form. Through self-repair strategies, ELF speakers prevent, avoid and remove potential threats of ambiguity and unclarity from the outset such as overlapping talk (Kaur 2017). Speakers can also provide prominence with repetition, which can facilitate "the production of value-laden, emphasised utterance" (Lichtkoppler 2007: 55). By rephrasing '*not sugar*' to '*not put er sugar*' and '*we don't put sugar*', M repeats her comments, and this repetition can emphasise the meaning and make the point clear.

4.2 After Interlocutors' Minimal Responses

The speakers were found to self-repair their utterances when interlocutors displayed minimal responses such as *ah*, *mhm*, and *uh*, which often signal non-understanding implicitly. Lack of uptake and minimal responses can be a symptom of lack of understanding or uncertainty of meanings (Cogo and Pitzl 2016). ELF speakers continue to monitor whether interlocutors fully understand and accept what they have said by paying attention to interlocutors' reaction in the course of interaction. When interlocutors do not provide active feedback or elaborate contribution to a speaker's turn, the speaker may perceive that the meaning or message of the utterance has not been understood.

Consequently, ELF speakers attempt to disambiguate an uncertain message with a range of self-repair strategies. In other words, when the participants consider the words they used as a potential threat for listeners' understanding, they immediately clear up ambiguous element and provide synonyms, additional comments, and lexical replacement to elaborate meanings as in the following extracts.

Extract 4. G- Korean, M- Japanese

- 1 G so people vote for the party not for the person
- 2 M two two, for the party and politicians as well
- 3 G **ah**
- 4 M→ **for the politician as a local representative, and also we vote for the party**
- 5 G so you vote, you [choose]
- 6 M [one name] for the, one name and party so two

In the conversation above, the speakers are talking about a political system and election process of each country. In the earlier part of interaction, speaker G asked speaker M about how a prime minister is elected in Japan, and speaker M explicated that Japanese people do not vote for the prime minister but cast a ballot for local politicians and a party. As line 1 shows that speaker G misunderstood what speaker M explained, speaker M reiterates her comments in the next turn. However, after speaker G's short response to M's utterance, speaker M makes self-repair again in line 4 by repeating a preceding utterance, but this time she inserts some extra information and additional comment. In other words, speaker M adds the phrase '*as a local representative*' to the word '*politicians*' and replaces the word '*the party*' to the more complete form of syntactic structure '*we vote for the party*'. Rather than changing a whole structure of utterances or replacing a preceding lexical item with a new expression, speaker M self-rephrases her sentence by inserting additional lexical items to an original one. Although interlocutor G does not express non-understanding in an explicit way, M may assume that G's short response is a symptom of uncertain understanding and consequently repairs a formulation she is not happy with. M attempts to pre-empt and resolve a potential misunderstanding by repetition and rephrase in the following turns, and this move to a more detailed and extended formulation of utterance can contribute to enhance clarity and explicitness of a sentence.

Extract 5. K- Korean, T- Thai, J- Chinese

- 1 K what i wonder is even another kind of word, vocabulary in thai language ha-, has this kind of very long long
- 2 syllable, or only the name is long?
- 3 T you mean=
- 4 K =er i mean normally the name in thai language is very long
- 5 T above four, i think three, four syllables
- 6 K **uh**
- 7 T→ **three, four words join together**=
- 8 K =even over four syllables
- 9 T four yeah, four is quite normal, but more than four is a bit abnormal, for me a bit abnormal
- 10 K **uh**
- 11 T→ **but un-, unusual**, but for family name four, five, six is quite
- 12 K =quite normal?
- 13 T i think four or five is quite normal, six can't be
- 14 K uh
- 15 T but one is kind of not normal, quite odd
- 16 J uh

Extract 5 also shows a dynamic use of self-repair strategies in ELF conversation. In the preceding talk, speaker T demonstrated a distinctive feature of family name in Thai, which is idiosyncratically long in the syllable count. In line 1, speaker K asks whether other lexical words in Thai language also have long syllables in common or family names are the only part of having lengthy syllables. Speaker T continues to reiterate his utterance in the subsequent turns, but his frequent self-repair is specifically found after the interlocutor's minimal responses. Speaker T modifies the phrase 'three, four syllables' to the sentence 'three, four words join together', which defines the word syllable into a more simplified and general term. Although the word *syllable* does not seem to cause any understanding problems as speaker K already used the term in the preceding turn, speaker T self-rephrases the word to a more eased expression after the interlocutor's minimal responses, and similar patterns are also observed in the next turn. After speaker K's backchannel *uh* in line 10, speaker T replaces the original word *abnormal* to *unusual* in the next turn. To emphasise that family names with over-six-syllable are not even common in Thai, speaker T repeats his utterance in line 15, where the preceding word is again replaced with synonymous expressions 'not normal' and 'odd'. As the examples show, speaker T continues to self-repair his utterance specifically after the interlocutor's short response, which does not necessarily express lack of understanding and uncertainty of meanings.

Extract 6. K- Korean, E- Chinese

- 1 E if you want to find a job in hong kong, some company will require that you can speak cantonese
- 2 K **ah (:)**
- 3 E→ **if you can't speak cantonese, they won't hire you**
- 4 K in hong kong?
- 5 E yeah, because it's hard to communicate
- 6 K is it different form mandarin, cantonese?
- 7 E yeah
- 8 K completely different?
- 9 E yeah

In the conversation above, the speakers discuss the political and social change in Hong Kong after the handover to China. In the preceding turns, speaker K asked whether Chinese government had started a linguistic policy that forces Hong Kong people to use and speak Putonghua, which is the official language in mainland China. However, in line 1 speaker E describes that Chinese people from the mainland also need to speak Cantonese, which is the official language in Hong Kong and has a different phonetic and semantic rule from Mandarin, to get a job in Hong Kong. Speaker E reiterates her utterance in line 3, but this time she reformulates the original sentence to the negative statement '*if you can't speak cantonese, they won't hire you*', which typically has a stronger meaning or expresses emphasis. Although interlocutor K does not provide a request for clarification and express non-understanding, speaker E produces self-repair after K's short response. E's self-repair acts as a pre-empting strategy to raise clarity and added prominence since in the following turns speaker E stresses the reason why Chinese speakers need to speak Cantonese. E further highlights the difficulties of communication between Hong Kong and Chinese speakers because both languages are completely different. Though the original utterance does not show any error or mistake, the speaker modifies the expression to render intended meanings more explicit and clearer.

4.3 With the Announced Self-Rephrase Marker *I Mean*

One of the remarkable features of self-repair in the data is that the speakers initiated the repairing turns with *I mean*, which is a self-rephrase marker frequently used in communication. *I mean* typically indicates "the

introduction of modifications or adjustments in discourse” to revise a prior turn and give explanations (Fernández-Polo 2014: 58). Though *I mean* can be used both as a repair marker to replace a given expression and as a gap-filler for “planning what to say, selecting words, or restarting a false-started utterance” (Tree and Schrock 2002: 729), the primary function of *I mean* is to indicate an upcoming adjustment to the preceding utterance. In this data, a self-rephrases marker *I mean* initiated self-repair practice mainly to render meanings more explicit and elaborate a prior talk rather than as a marker to fix mistakes, false start, or hesitation. Although *I mean* is used as a turn-initial, turn-medial, or turn-final, turn-initial *I mean* suggests that a speaker will contribute an adjustment to the preceding statement and signals that a speaker continues to monitor interlocutors’ comprehension. Such announced self-repair has been found highly common in ELF, and *I mean* is most frequently used than any other markers in ELF communication (Fernández-Polo 2014, Franceschi 2019, Kaur 2011, Mauranen 2012). The following examples show the great frequency of self-repair with the announced self-rephrase marker *I mean*.

Extract 7. T- Thai, J, E- Chinese, K- Korean

- 1 T =it’s legal, but the gender, er abortion is illegal
 2 J abortion is illegal
 3 E so you cannot abort
 4 T no, we cannot
 5 E uh, ok
 6 J ok
 7 T but in china, that’s allowed?
 8 J ehm, in china=
 9 E =not allowed legally, but you can do it sneakily
 10 K uh
 11 E→ i mean you can do it in the black market or something
 12 K yeah, yeah, the situation is the same
 13 E yeah, some hidden fact, we don’t know, but people are doing this

In the prior segment of the conversation, speaker J described that a gender test before giving a birth was illegal in China due to the issue of abortion since China used to have a strong tradition of preferring sons to daughters. In line 1, speaker T explains that a gender test is legal in Thailand whereas abortion is illegal. In the later turn, he asks whether abortion is legal in China, and speaker E answers that people do it in a sneak way although it is illegal. After speaker K’s minimal response in line 10, speaker E immediately reformulates her prior utterance with a turn-initiator *I mean*. Speaker E replaces the word ‘*sneakily*’ with the expression ‘*in the black market*’, which can exemplify the meaning of *sneakily* in a concrete way. Such repair practice can enhance explicitness and facilitate understanding by replacing the word to a synonymous expression which is more common and familiar to interlocutors. This type of self-repair is also described as approximation, where speakers use “a single alternative lexical item, such as a superordinate or a related item, which shares semantic features with the target word or structure” (Dörnyei and Scott 1997, p. 187). In parallel phrasing, where a speaker replaces previous phrases to syntactically identical and synonymous expressions (Cogo and Pitzl 2016), speakers modify their expressions to more common vocabulary to adapt to the interlocutor’s linguistic repertoire and clarify their intended meaning. The interlocutor’s minimal response may make speaker E assume that the original utterance is not transparent enough to understand the meaning and therefore potentially risky for comprehension. The following turn provides the evidence, where speaker E stops repairing her utterance and moves on the interaction after speaker K’s active response in line 12. As the examples show in the data, the rephrase marker *I mean* is used “more deliberately and with a clearer set of functions than merely being necessitated by lack of linguistic resources or the contingencies

of online speaking”, which is a typical repair occasion to fill pauses or hesitation and remedy false starts (Mauranen 2012: 191). The next extract illustrates another example of self-repair with the initiator *I mean*.

Extract 8. A- Chinese, G- Korean, M- Japanese

- 1 A i think hong kong is very different from mainland, you know, when hong kong come back to [china], yeah we
2 have different policy between one country
3 G [china]
4 G **ah (:)**
5 A→ **i mean the policy in hong kong is very different from mainland, maybe like the visa,** hong kong people
6 they if they travel in european country, they don't need to apply for it, but if you come from mainland, you
7 have to apply for it, and it's maybe a policy it's it's also
8 very different, maybe they can set (?) a lot in a tax
9 M ehm
10 A yeah, so the price in hong kong is er very cheap

In the initial part of conversation, speaker A demonstrates that there are differences in diplomatic policies between China and Hong Kong. After speaker G's minimal response, speaker A repeats her sentence in the next turn with the initiator *I mean*. In this self-repair practice, the speaker provides a more detailed and specific explication with the example of a visa system to help interlocutors understand the meaning of her message. However, rather than simply giving an example word of the notion, *different policy*, speaker A describes how different the visa systems are between China and Hong Kong when they apply for the visa to travel to European countries. Speaker A adds further information that the cost of visa application is cheaper in Hong Kong than in China. In this self-repair practice, *I mean* acts as a turn-initiator which “takes the forward-looking role of introducing the new segment” (Tree and Schrock 2002, p. 736) to provide more specific examples and explication and move away from generalisation. After interlocutors' minimal responses, the speaker immediately attempts to clear up ambiguous elements or concepts by additional comments or elaborate formulation. The examples show that self-repair practices are not restricted to a narrow notion of linguistic modification such as lexical replacement or syntactic reformulation but extended to a more complicated and advanced level of specification and conceptualisation. Although the speaker's self-repair occurs “in the absence of an observable or displayed error in the ongoing or prior turn”, it shows “a clear shift in language use from general to specific and from vague to explicit” (Kaur 2017, p. 37). Self-repair with the rephrase marker *I mean* often tends to be used after a speaker's longish turn as in the following extract.

Extract 9. T- Thai, K- Korean, E, J- Chinese

- 1 T but actu-, actually thai system, i mean about about a hundred years ago, there was a prince and princess
2 of er most prince in thailand er who studied in france, germany and (.) britian, and they think more or less
3 they they learn this kind of thing from europe before
4 K ehm
5 E ehm
6 T and they know they follow french system, er i mean they can't keep the monarchy system, for germany
7 they
8 also failed to keep the monarchy system, so hard to make things, so they have to do in british way or
9 something like that, so the system a kind of replicate british way
9 J uh
10 T not not completely but [more or less] the same line
11 J [xxxx]

- 12 T yeah
 13 K [uh (:)]
 14 J [ah]
 15 T→ i mean otherwise, they can't keep it, because er all of the thai neighbour we don't have any country
 16 got the monarchy anymore, so only thailand have=

Speaker T elucidates why Thailand, which still has a monarchical political system today, replicated and followed the British monarchy in the 19th century. During the turn-taking in the conversation, speaker T keeps holding a lengthy floor, and the other interlocutors are listening to T's speech and providing only a minimal feedback. In the first and second sets of turn, speaker T explains that the failure of the monarchy in France and German led Thailand to adopting the British system, and in the following turn self-repair occurs with the rephrase marker *I mean* after interlocutors' minimal responses in line 13 and 14. In the repairing turn, the speaker provides further information on the political situation, where other monarchy regimes in South-East Asia collapsed. As Tree and Schrock (2002) reveal, *I mean* is used "to focus addressees' attention, but without explicitly requesting addressee feedback, although speakers may monitor understanding in addressee replies" (p. 735). The speaker expands his idea and gives explanation of the intentions by initiating self-repair with the self-rephrase marker *I mean*. The speaker keeps monitoring whether interlocutors understand the meaning of message, and he readily resolves potential ambiguity based on interlocutors' reaction. Also, *I mean* is used after a longish turn to show continuation and clarification of ideas by exemplifying or elaborating sequences. Whereas *I mean* can be used as a hesitation marker or gap filler before moving to the next utterance in on-going turns, speakers reformulate what they have just said in the preceding turn after the phrase *I mean*, which signals interlocutors that they intend to elaborate an original utterance. As Mauranen (2012) puts it, "speakers can try to amend their blenders by making additions and elaborations", and "this repair work is presumably to make up for some potential ambiguity, lack of clarity, or risk of misunderstanding that they feel their first formulation might cause" (p. 186).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the data show the high frequency of self-repair in ELF communication. The participants do not necessarily repair their own talk to correct a linguistic error and mistake, but self-repair is frequently used to make utterances more explicit and clearer. ELF speakers engage in diverse clarification and self-repair practices by repeating, modifying, and expanding what they have said, and these various self-repair strategies can help elaborate and clarify the meaning of a message. Self-repair in the data is not confined to a narrow scope of lexical replacement at the word or phrase levels but used to introduce commentary, background knowledge, and justification of claim at the clausal level of modification. The remarkable feature in the data is that self-repair occurs even without an overt symptom of understanding problems. The speakers continue to monitor, detect, and respond to interlocutors' reaction and adapt their speech patterns to communicative situations through self-repair actions. Self-repair is commonly considered as a remedy strategy, which is used with a means of signalling non-understanding such as requests for clarification, a direct question, or confirmation checks (Franceschi 2019, Pietikäinen 2018). However, the participants employ self-repair practices when interlocutors produce overlapping talk or minimal responses. Although there is no explicit sign of non-comprehension or communicative breakdown, speakers manage and elaborate their sentences in a mutually acceptable and comprehensible way to express their intended meaning. Consequently, self-repair in the data is frequently used as a pre-empting strategy, where speakers anticipate, prevent, and resolve potential perturbation of comprehension problems.

The nature of self-repair as a pre-empting strategy can be described with the notion of proactive repairs (Mauranen 2006). Whereas 'retroactive' repairs are used for backward-looking, where speakers respond to and

resolve the troubles which have been already signalled, 'proactive' repairs occur as a prospecting action, where speaker predict and recognise the not-yet-happened problems. Proactive repairs reflect the speakers' self-regulatory discourse strategies because speakers have awareness on the lack of their choice of utterance and repair the items which they are not entirely satisfied with. Proactive repairs allow the discourse to proceed and secure the degree of shared understanding. Self-repair in ELF is exceptionally proactive since it occurs in many cases without a symptom of comprehension turbulence (Cogo and Pitzl 2016, Kaur 2017). ELF speakers tend to adeptly cope with misunderstanding and strategically prevent it through a range of proactive self-repair practices. As Mauranen (2006) puts it, "the participants seem concerned that shared meanings are achieved to a degree that they can accept" and "they are willing to regulate and modify their discourse, seeking and offering alternative expressions as well as assurances of continued comprehension" (p. 144).

Another prominent feature in the data is the frequent use of self-repair with the announced self-rephrase marker *I mean*. *I mean* explicitly manifests a speaker's effort for clarification to introduce new information and forward-looking adjustment. Although the phrase *I mean* is also commonly used in English as a native language (ENL) speech, it has been found as the overwhelmingly preferred marker in ELF (Franceschi 2019, Mauranen 2012). Announced self-rephrasing far more frequently occurs in ELF interaction than in ENL contexts, and this suggests that ELF speakers attempt to maintain greater clarification for mutual understanding by explicitly manifesting reformulation of preceding expressions. ELF speakers tend to signal a negotiation of meaning in an overt and explicit way with the use of announced rephrasing markers and keep monitoring interlocutors' reaction to their utterance. Along with the greater frequency of announced self-rephrasing markers, there are differences of the favoured expressions of self-rephrasing between ELF and ENL speech. Almost 90 percent of self-rephrasing markers are limited to *I mean* in ELF corpora whereas the phrase *in other words*, which occupies approximately 50 percent among other markers, is most favoured in MICASE, which is one of the representative ENL corpora (Marx and Swales 2005). Though *I mean* is the second most favoured expression in ENL data (50 cases among 385 occurrences of rephrasing markers in total), the frequency of *I mean* is conspicuous in ELF data. From the SLA perspectives, it has been suggested that L2 speakers tend to use a more limited range of synonymous expressions or functional equivalents than L1 speakers. However, Mauranen (2012) argues that the greater tendency of using favoured expressions is "an economical strategy", which shows intended effectiveness and exploits availability from speakers' linguistic resources (p. 184).

Mutual understanding in ELF can be achieved through speakers' pre-empting repair action and negotiation of meaning, and the present study suggests the proactive feature of self-repair in ELF. However, as this study focuses on the use of self-repair in multiparty dialogic ELF, it would be interesting to compare and describe how self-repair operates in monologic events such as presentations, lectures, or thesis defences to better understand and characterise the patterns and features of proactive self-repair in ELF. As achieving shared understanding is key for successful communication in ELF, ELF speakers make use of diverse pragmatic strategies such as a pre-empting repair action to achieve mutual understanding. ELF speakers continue to monitor the others' understanding and negotiate meaning when they recognize a lack of understanding or an uncertainty in meaning before interlocutors indicate their non-understanding. As Cogo and Pitzl (2016) point out, understanding is not a merely receptive skill that a listener should accomplish, but "achieving shared understanding is a joint, dynamic, and interactive process that participants continuously engage in and work towards" (p. 339). In other words, both speaker and listener have an equal responsibility for successful interaction and therefore need to collaboratively work towards mutual understanding. The speakers' constant effort for repairing their speech patterns and lexical items according to interlocutors' reaction is a way of 'other-orientedness', where speakers adapt and converge towards interlocutors. This paper has attempted to investigate self-repair strategies for mutual understanding in ELF contexts, but a great deal of work still needs to be done in diverse contexts with ELF speakers from different sociocultural backgrounds to better understand the process of self-repair practice in ELF communication. The future research needs to explore a wider scope of self-repair practice such as the linguistic forms, motivations, and functions of self-repair and

compare the features of self-repair strategies used in different contexts, e.g., business ELF or academic ELF. It is also salient to examine different speech patterns of self-repair in communicative phases and elaborate key factors which trigger specific patterns.

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Transcription Conventions

[]	overlapping 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
XXX	unintelligible words

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