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Other-Initiated Repair Strategies in Solving Understanding Problems in EFL Learners Conversations

Madar Aleksius[1]*, Ali Saukah[2]

[1] English Study Program of UNIKA Widya Mandira Kupang, Doctoral Student at English Language Teaching of Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.
[2] Faculty of Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.

Article Info

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were to investigate the employment of Other-Initiated Repair Strategies (OIR Strategies) in solving understanding problem in EFL learners' conversation and to examine the kinds of trouble sources that prompt the employment of OIR Strategies. The participants were nine EFL learners participating in a speaking class in small university in Indonesia. To elicit the learners' conversations two communicative tasks, Spot the Difference and Desert Island were used. The learners' conversations during task performance were video-recorded, then, transcribed using the conventions proposed by Markee (2000) and analyzed qualitatively using Conversation Analysis method. The results showed that EFL learners managed to employ eight types of OIR Strategies comprising of 62 instances in total. The strategies are unspecified repair, interrogative repair, partial repeat plus a question word repair, partial repeat repair, understanding check repair, request for repetition, request for definition, and correction repair. Three different types of trouble sources triggered the use of OIR Strategies, namely linguistic-related problem, interactional-related problem, and meaning-related problem. The study demonstrated that by employing different OIR Strategies, even EFL learners with limited proficiency in English managed to take initiatives to overcome the understanding problem in conversations as part of their learning process. Therefore, the EFL teachers need to consider incorporating the teaching of OIR Strategies as part of their speaking class to improve the students' fluency.

Corresponding Author:

Madar Aleksius,
English Study Program of UNIKA Widya Mandira Kupang,
Doctoral student at English Language Teaching of Universitas Negeri Malang,
Jl. Terusan Surabaya No. 4 Malang, Indonesia.
Email: alex_madar2000@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Studying a conversation between language learners in general, and between learners of English as a foreign language in particular will provide us an opportunity to understand how people with deficient language proficiency pool their distinctive abilities as they try to overcome the problems of understanding during the course of conversation. It is a common phenomenon that the conversation between EFL learners cease due their inability to deploy necessary conversational strategies to avoid communication breakdown. Ability to use strategies to avoid breakdown of communication is called strategic competence [1] which has been extensively researched in SLA studies, especially in the interaction between native and non-native speakers of English. According to Canale & Swain [1], strategic competence is made up of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence.

One of the approaches used in studying different kinds of strategies employed by EFL learners in their attempt to overcome understanding problem in their conversation is Conversation Analysis. Interest in the application of Conversation Analysis in the fields of language learning and language teaching has grown considerably over the last two decades. Hutchby & Wooffitt [02] explicate that Conversation Analysis is the analysis of talk, specifically a systematic analysis of talk produced in everyday situation on human interaction (talk-in-interaction). The principal aim is to discover how the participants understand and respond to each other, with the central focus being on how sequences of actions are generated. Its relevance in EFL interaction is also asserted by He & Young [3] saying that CA provides a powerful tool for understanding and analyzing problem in communication with its description of repair organization. When trouble in conversation occurs, it is noticed and then corrected, either by the party whose turn contains the source of trouble or by another party. In addition, CA can be adapted in SLA studies as a tool to analyze the conversational data that allow the researchers to understand the sequence of events in the conversation among learners and their relevance to the construction of turn-taking and repair organization [4] and could benefit the teachers and the methodologists in revealing the format and interactional design of language learning tasks in the classroom, as well the teachers' interactional practices [5].

There are four basic interaction practices to combine to form conversation as a system (Wong & Waring [6], namely turn-taking practices (ways of constructing a turn and allocating a turn), sequencing practices (ways of initiating and responding to talk while performing actions such as requesting, inviting, story-telling, or topic initiation), overall structuring practices (ways of organizing a conversation as a whole as in openings and closings), and repair practices (ways of addressing problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding of the talk). This study focuses on conversational repair which is defined as action taken by conversants to treat trouble sources in the accomplishment of talk. Trouble is anything which the participants judge is impeding their communication and a repairable item is one which constitutes trouble for the participants [7]. Furthermore, Liddicoat [8] adds that repair refers to the processes available to speakers through which they can deal with the problems which arise in talk. Repair is relevant to all levels of talk from the turn-taking system to sequence organization and preference. Repair is a mechanism of conversation: a set of practices designed for dealing with the sorts of difficulties which emerge in talk. Conversational repair can take different forms and only limited to the modification of linguistic errors, but also includes confirmation checks, comprehension checks, or requests for clarification or repetition, and deals with the problems in interactants' understanding, speaking, or hearing [7].

The basic sequence of repair practice is trouble source in the first position, followed by repair initiation in the second position, and repair outcome in the third position [9]. Trouble source is a word, phrase, or utterance treated as problematic by the participants. Repair initiation refers to the practice or strategies of signaling or targeting a trouble-source. Repair outcome refers to the solution to the trouble-source or abandonment of the problem. I will use this technique in analyzing the data on other-initiated repair strategies in the EFL learners' conversation.

Studies on Conversation Analysis and repair have been done in several different settings. Some researchers focus on studying the conversation between nonnative speakers of different language backgrounds (For examples: Wang & Wu [10]; Khodadady & Alifathabady [11]; Fotovatnia & Dorri, [12]; Liebscher & Dailey-O Cain. [13]: and Buckwalter, [14]). Fotovatnia & Dorri [12] investigated the repair strategies used by EFL learners whose native language is Persian. The study found that the participants used more strategies in single-gender class than mixed-gender class and there is no relationship between the gender of students and the use of repair strategies. It was also found that there were no significant differences observed when the students and the teacher were of the same or different gender. In this study, Fotovatnia & Dorri [12] incorporated nine different types of other-initiated repair strategies. They are unspecified repair, interrogative repair, partial repeat plus a question word repair, partial repeat repair, understanding check repair, request for repetition, request for definition, nonverbal resources repair, and correction repair. The EFL learners with Persian language background were also the participants in Khodadady & Alifathabady [11] study. The study focused on the difference in the frequency of other- repair used by the high group and low group. It was found that the high group used more repair strategies in their conversation than the low group. The other-initiated repair strategies included in the study were partial repeat, understanding check, and correction.

In the studies by Wang & Wu [10] and Buckwalter [14], the participants are nonnative speakers of the target language. Wang & Wu's study used nonnative speakers of Chinese coming from different nationalities and language background who learn Chinese as a foreign language, while Buckwalter used English speaker learners who learn Spanish as a second language in America. Both studies focused on the occurrence of both self-repair and other-repair (self and other) and the interactional devices to initiate repair actions. Results show that both self-repair and other-repair are ubiquitous in the interaction of the leaners regardless of their levels of proficiency. It was also demonstrated that the two types of repair are dominant in

lexicon and mosphosyntactic level. Some other-initiated repair strategies identified in the studies include repetition of trouble source, correction repair, and interrogative repair.

The next study on NNS-NNS conversation was conducted by Liebscher & Dailey-O Cain [13]. The participants of their study were native speakers of English who learned German as a Foreign Language in Alberta, Canada. The study investigated the ways in which students and teachers in a content-based German as a foreign language class used repair in order to negotiate meaning and form in their classroom. The main finding of the study indicate that repair initiation in the classroom is clearly different from repair initiation in mundane conversation, both in terms of types of repair initiation and in ways how those types are used.

Another line of study analyzed the conversation between Native Speaker and Nonnatives Speakers (e.g. Tudini, [15]; Lilja,[16]; Yasui, [17]). Lilja [16] analyzed other-initiated repair sequences in the conversation between first and second language speakers of Finish. Specifically, the study focused on the employment of partial repetition as repair strategies. It is found that partial repetition is used frequently as strategy to overcome specific language-related understanding problem. Tudini [15] focused her study on the use of codeswitching as repair strategy in the conversation between Italian speaker and English speakers, either as L1 or as L2. A study on the conversation between Japanese native speaker and nonnative speakers by Yasui [17] investigated the conversational repair as a corrective activity of troubles in conversation in an informal language learning setting. The analysis reveals that the non-native speakers orient toward their language proficiency or deficiency through their repair processes. While the advanced learner's language proficiency is displayed through his preference for self-repair, the beginning learner exhibits his limitation in language competence through his preference for other-repair.

A group of repair studies investigate conversations between nonnative speakers in mundane non-institutional settings. The studies by Galina B. Bolden (Bolden, [18]; Bolden [19]) examined a way in which the presence of more than two interlocutors matters for the organization of repair. The participants of the study were native speakers of Russian and nonnative speakers of Russian whose L1 was English. This case study used corpora of previously recorded conversation as data source. The analysis shows that, "other"-selection in other-initiation of repair is a systematically deployed practice [18]. Bolden's study in [19] shows that the interactional construction of language (in)competence and the organization of repair are two communicative practice to solve understanding problems.

Two articles by Dingamanse & Enfield [20] and Dingemanse, Roberts, Baranova, et.al.,[21] reported the same topics, namely about the typology of other-initiated repairsin several languages. Dingamanse & Enfield [20] reports on studies on other-initiated repair in 10 different languages.The data consist of corpora of naturally occurring conversations, collected in field sites around the world.Methodologically, they combine qualitative analysis with a comparative-typological perspective and formulate principles for the cross-linguistic comparison of conversational structures. It is presented that formats for repair initiation form paradigm-like systems that are ultimately language-specific, and that comparison is best done at the level of the constitutive properties of these formats. Dingemanse, et al.[21] conducted a systematic comparison of conversation in 12 languages of 8 language families to find out the universal system for the real-time resolution of breakdowns in communication. Data for their study were taken from a corpora of conversations recorded from informal interaction in 12 languages in a spontaneous, naturally occurring conversations between families and friends. They found that a system of 'other-initiated repair', where the recipient of an unclear message can signal trouble and the sender can repair the original message, is frequently used in all the languages being studied.

Studies on other-initiated repair in conversation that have been done in different settings reveal an insight that the employment of OIR Strategies in spoken discourse as a valid and normative communicative practice. It is to say that the interactional phenomenon of doing repair is normal practice that takes place in mundane conversation, institutional setting, education setting, even in language learning setting. The studies also show that in order to achieve mutual understanding in conversation, interactants need to employ certain strategies so that communication breakdown could be avoided. The studies presented here used Conversation Analysis approach, both as theoretical foundation and as methodology. Since Conversation Analysis is one type of qualitative approach, most of the studies employed qualitative research design.

One of particular interest of the studies is repair acts performed in a setting where the interlocutors are nonnative speakers of the language used in conversation.Specific case is for the ELT setting, where the participants are non-native speakers of English.Given the fact that non-native speakers are limited proficient users of English, other-initiated repair is usually rich in occurrence in the EFL leaners' conversations. Studying conversational other-initiated repairs of EFL learners will shed light of the strategies employed by the EFL learners in overcoming understanding problems, as well as how the learning process is evidenced in the learners' conversations.

The current study investigated how EFL nonnative-speaker interlocutors employ OIR Strategies to resolve communicative difficulties and misunderstandings in conversation. More specifically, the study

focuses on the other-initiated repairs used by nonnative speakers of English, situated in classroom-setting when they perform communicative language tasks. The studies specifically answer the following research questions:

a. What are the types of Other-Initiated Repair Strategies employed by the EFL learners in resolving understanding problems in their conversation?

b. What are the types of trouble sources that trigger the use of Other-Initiated Repair Strategies in the EFL learners' conversations?

This study is expected to shed light on how language learners with limited proficiency of English use different repair strategies in resolving communication problem. Hopefully, the findings will inform teachers to incorporate repair initiation strategies in their speaking classes in order to improve EFL learners' proficiency.

2.   METHOD
2.1. Participants

The participants involved in this study were 9 EFL university students who join the "English for Everyday Conversation" speaking class at an English Education Study Program in small university in Indonesia.These students were in the early stage of their study at the second semester of the English Education Study Program.Except for Intensive Course Subject, all the other subjects that they took in semester one were taught in Indonesian.The Intensive Course focuses on consolidating the students' mastery of English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.It means that the students almost have no experience in speaking class.These participants were conveniently chosen for the present study and their English proficiency was rated as low by the lecturers who taught them in the previous semester.Thus, the rate of their language proficiency was just based on the lecturer's judgment in the Intensive Course. There were four female (f) and five male (m) participants of the study, and they were pseudo-named as Haru (m), Fran (m), Init (f), Rada (f), Indi (f), Amin (m), Anch (f), Alga (m), and Efan (m).

2.2. Data Collection

The main source of data for the present study was obtained from the participants' dyad conversations when they participated in task-based communicative activity. The use of language tasks was aimed at providing the participants an arena for real communication, during which time they may have the opportunity for language practice, meaning and form negotiation in a real communicative exchanges. In doing the tasks, the students were given ample opportunity to express themselves in talking about the topic of the tasks. The tasks are not made rigid to follow strictly pre-specified procedures.I only provided general instructions on how to carry out the tasks. In fact, I have been trying to make the group work as free as possible, in the sense that my involvement was very limited to only facilitating and managing the group work.

Two communicative tasks developed and used for the study were *Spot the Differences* and *Desert Island*.In *Sport the Differences* task [22], the participants worked in pair and each was assigned as Student 1 and Student 2.They were given a set of pictures which are almost the same, but actually small number of details was different. The task of each of the participant was to describe the picture he/she was holding to his/her interlocutor to find the differences between their pictures.They were asked not to show the picture to their partner but solely rely in their oral description to find the differences.

The second task called *Desert Island* [23] is a kind of discussion and decision-making task.The participants worked in pairs to do the task. The following is the instruction for the *Desert Island* Task.

"You are stranded on a desert island in the Pacific.All you have is the swim-suit and sandals you are wearing. There is food and water on the island but nothing else.Here is a list of thing you may find useful.Choose the eight most useful items and rank them in order of usefulness". [23]

Before doing the task, the student worked individually to be familiar with the task and the items to be discussed and chosen, but not knowing who their interlocutor to work with were.

2.3. Data Recording and Transcription

The students' conversations were video-recorded using Sony HDR-CX405 Handycam every time for each pair the tasks. Each pair was recorded separately, and the conversation and recording started after I pushed the record button on the video camera.When the students proceeded with the conversation, I left the conversation area and returned only to push the pause button.In this way, the students may have ample opportunity to explore that tasks and express themselves without being threatened by my presence in their proximity. The video recorder was positioned in such a way that it could capture the speech of every

participant in each conversation. The recorded data were transcribed in detail using convention convention adapted from Markee [04]. The transcription conventions are presented in the end of this article.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis in the present study focused on the discursive practices of the EFL learners engaging in conversation in order to get a better understanding of how understanding problems were resolved using different OIR Strategies. Using CA approach, data analysis was focused on the instances in the conversations where OIR Strategies occurred by examining sequences of conversational turns. This microanalysis of the learners' turn sequences allowed the researcher to examine how the resolving of understanding problem was accomplished in moment by moment of conversation course.

CA was selected as method of data analysis because of its characteristic that considers talk production and meaning as something accomplished by members of conversation participants through mutual orientation and collaboration to achieve orderly and meaningful communication [2]. In this study, I focused on instances in the conversations that reflect the sequence of other-initiated repair which consist of trouble source in the first position, followed by repair initiation in the second position, and repair outcome in the third position [2]. This was achieved by reading the data transcripts repeatedly in conjunction with the video-recorded data. As a guideline to determine the types of other-initiated repair strategies, the researcher used the list of OIR Strategies found in the study of Fotonania & Dorri (2013). The strategies are unspecified repair, interrogative repair, partial repeat plus a question word repair, partial repeat repair, understanding check repair, request for repetition, request for definition, nonverbal resources repair, and correction repair.

To establish the credibility of the findings, the procedure of peer debriefing or investigator triangulation [24] was employed. This procedure was done by asking a doctoral candidate from Nangyang Technology University in Singapore to verify the findings, especially the identification and classification of other-initiated repair strategies based on their types. This person was conducting a study on membership categorization analysis using Conversation Analysis as both the method and the theoretical basis, which is also employed in the present study. Out of the 62 transcribed conversational excerpts, fifteen percent were emailed for investigator triangulation. The result of triangulation shows that there is total agreement in the identification and classification of OIR types between the researcher and the triangulator.

3.   RESULTS

This section presents the result of data analysis in terms of types of OIR strategies and types of trouble sources that trigger the employment of OIR Strategy in the conversation. From a cyclical review of the data transcript and repeated listening of the recorded conversation, it is revealed that the EFL learners employed eight different OIR strategies in resolving understanding problems in their conversation. The eight strategies occur in all the ten conversations produced by each conversational dyad. The analysis will start from the presentation of the types of OIR Strategies across the ten conversations, followed by the presentation of different kinds of trouble sources being resolved by the OIR strategies.

3.1. Types of OIR Strategies in EFL Learners' Conversation

There are eight different OIR Strategies used by the leaners in solving understanding problems in their conversation. The strategies are presented in Table 2 below, together with their frequency and percentage of occurrence in the conversation.

The most frequently employed strategy is interrogative repair with the total number of 18 (29.03%) out of 62 total strategies used. The second in order of frequency is partial repeat strategy, with the total number of 14 (22.58%), followed by 10 (16.12%) understanding check repair strategies. The Other-Initiated Repair Strategies with lowest number of occurrence is Request for Definition (1 or 1.61%). Further data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of OIR Strategies across Conversations

No	OIR strategy types	Task 1: Spot the difference					Task 2: Desert Island					Total	
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	f	%
1	Unspecified Repair	3	2	1			1			1	2	10	16.12
2	Interrogative Repair			1	1	2	2	4		5	3	18	29.03
3	Partial Repeat plus Question Word	2						1				3	4.83
4	Partial Repeat Repair			1	3	2	2	3		1	2	14	22.58
5	Understanding Check Repair	3		1			2				2	8	12.90
6	Request for Repetition			1	2	1		1				5	8.08
7	Request for Definition			1								1	1.61
8	Correction Repair CR						1	1	1			3	4.83
	Total	8	2	6	6	5	8	10	1	7	9	62	100
	Percentage	12.58	3.22	9.67	9.97	8.08	12.58	16.12	1.61	11.29	14.51		

In terms of the occurrence of strategies across the ten conversations, Conversation 2 of the *Desert Island* task occupies the highest (ten times or 16.12%) in number, followed by Conversation 5 of the *Desert Island* task with 9 (14.51%) strategies. Conversation 1 of the *Spot the Different* task and Conversation 1 of the *Desert Island* task rank 3 in number of occurrence, both comprise 8 (12.58%) strategies. The conversations with low number of OIR strategies happen in Conversation 3 of the *Desert Island* task (only 1 or1.61%) and Conversation 2 of the *Spot the Difference* task (2 or 3.22% strategies). When these two conversations are reviewed, it is revealed that in fact there are many trouble sources in their conversations but these are not repaired by the interlocutors.

Conversation instances based on OIR strategies

In order to provide clear understanding of how OIR Strategies are enacted in the learners' conversation, I will take one conversational excerpt of each type as an illustration. The conversational excerpt will be followed by brief explanatory account of how the process of repair is unfolded.

1) Unspecified Repair Strategy. This strategy is usually used with no specification of trouble source in the turn prior to the OIR strategy (e.g. *huh? Pardon? I'm sorry?* etc.). There are 10 unspecified repair strategies that occur in the conversations, one of which is shown in the following excerpt.
   Example:
   Conversation 1/Spot the difference/Anit and Fran
   Excerpt 4: 00:03:35–00:04:25
   1. Anit   and what about (++) the second (+) picture.
   2. Frans   and the second picture there is a man a::nd (2) here it shows five books
   3. Anit→   sorry?
   4. Frans   five- five books
   5. Anit   okay mine is four books=
   6. Fran   oh four books only okay. and then uh:: mm there is a laptop? =
   7. Anit   =a hum.
   8. Fran   there is uh:: there is a television and (+) there is a mm telephone there.
   9. Anit   Is there uh:: small:: uh::::::: ((unintelligible) in the: table?=
   10. Fran→   =I am sorry? I am sorry?
   11. Anit   Its look like a bag of something (2) a paper bag (3) in //the//table
   12. Fran   //yeah//

   The repair initiation takes place at line 10 when Frans says 'I am sorry? I am sorry?'. The repair is done to show that Frans is having problem in understanding Anit's turn at line 9 without indicating specific part of it that might have caused the understanding problem.

2) Interrogative Repair: This strategy involves the use of a single question word such as *who, where, when* as repair initiation that specifies trouble source of prior turn. There are 18 interrogative repair strategies appearing in the learners' conversation. The following is an example of one of them.

Example:
Conversation Two/Desert Island/Haru and Efan
Excerpt 23: 00:01:45–00:02:12
1. Haru   and::: how about next?
2. Efan   I think the next after nylon tent? We need mm twenty meters of nylon
3.   rope (1) do you agree with me?
4. Haru→   what we are gonna do with this.
5.   (2)
6. Efan→   What? what do you say? I::
7. Haru   What are we going to do with it? ((with slower speech delivery))
8. Efan   Uh:: we can do:: (2) by the (++) twenty meters of nylon rope. We can
9.   tie our nylon tent ....

In this instance, Haru asks a question 'what we are gonna do with this' at line 4 because he is having problem in understanding of Efan's utterance at line 2 when Efan offers to choose twenty meters of nylon rope as one of the items to choose in their decision. Haru seems to have a problem of Efan's reason in choosing the item. However, in his next turn (line 6) Efan does not provide the reason. Instead, he produces an utterance showing his problem of understanding Haru's question at line 4. This sequence of other-initiated repair shows that occasionally the repair process does not yield in a successful outcome because of the learners' deficient knowledge of the topic of conversation or due to their limited proficiency in English.

3) Partial Repetition plus a question word. In this strategy, a question word is used together with the repetition of the trouble source turn. Three (3) instances of partial repetition with question word strategies appear in conversations.

Example:
Conversation Four/Desert Island/Amin and Indi
Excerpt 33: 00:04:46–00:05:03
1. Indi   what do you think about uh: pencil and paper and paper
2. Amin→   why you choose uh pencil and paper.
3. Indi   maybe we have to (++) write help or (+) something=
4. Amin   =I think it's uh: its important

At line 2 Amin repeats the phrase 'pencil and paper' from Indi's utterance at line 1, and asks her the reason of choosing those items by using the question word 'why'. Indi provides the answer at line 3 saying that pencil and paper can be used to write the word 'help'.

4) Partial Repeat Repair: In this strategy, some parts of the trouble source turn are used again in repair initiation. There are fourteen (14) instances of partial repeat repair occurring in the leaners' conversations.

Example:
Conversation three/Spot the Difference/Anch and Haru
Excerpt 9: 0:03:04–00:03: 39
1. Anch   in four picture I find (1) in my picture there is uh::: (5) (telpon) telephone
2.   some snake
3. Haru →   snake?
4. Anch   yes
5. Haru   I don't see some snake here
6. Anch   (looking down to her picture) newspaper (2) television

In this instance, Haru at line 3 initiates a repair by repeating the word 'snake' that appears in Anch's utterance at line 2. The repair is done because Haru is not sure about Anch's use of 'snake' because he does not have it in his picture.

5) Understanding Check Repair. In this strategy, the repair initiator provides a different understanding of the trouble source by targeting more specifically the trouble in the previous speaker's turn. There are eight (8) instances of this type in learners' conversation, as shown in the following example.

Example:

Conversation one/Spot the Difference/Anit and Fran

Excerpt 4: 00:03:35–00:04:25

1.	Anit	Its look like a bag of something (2) a paper bag (3) in //the//table
2.	Fran	//yeah//
3.		(0.2)
4.	Anit	do you have that in your picture?
5.	Fran→	on the table?
6.	Anit	yeah
7.	Fran	no I don't have
8.	Anit	okay so that's another difference.

At line 5, Fran tries to offer his candidate understanding of Anit's turn at line 4 'do you have that in your picture' to mean the item specified at line 3 ('a paper bag') as the one put on the table. This offer of candidate understanding is acknowledged by Anit at line 6 by saying 'yeah'.

6) Request for Repetition. In this strategy, the interlocutor who initiates the repair explicitly asks the previous speaker to repeat his/her utterance that might cause problem in understanding. Five (5) instances of repetition request appear in learners' conversation.

Example:

Conversation 5/Spot the difference/Indi and Efan

Excerpt 17: 0:02:10–00: 01:32

1.	Indi	in the second pictures (2) I can see a man (2) uh: reading something
2.	Efan→	excuse me I I don't I don't listen well what you did say maybe you
3.		you can tell me (2) //or repeat it to me//
4.	Indi	//in the second pic//tures I saw a man reading
5.		something and:: on the table (2) is a telephone, television (3) and
6.		maybe ((unintelligible)

Efan (at line 2) explicitly asks Indi to repeat her turn by saying 'can you tell me or repeat it to me'. This is responded by Indi at line 4 by repeating her utterance and providing more information to help Efan understand her utterance.

7) Request for Definition. In this type, the speaker initiates a repair of word, phrase, or even the whole utterance that needs to be de defined or explained its meaning by the previous speaker. In the leaners' conversation, there is only one example of this type of repair.

Example:

Conversation eight/Spot the difference/Anch and Haru

Excerpt 8: 0:02:29–00:02: 52

1.	Anch	in three picture (2) I find (3) four books (3) and:::: (5) one flower (2) in:::
2.		(4)
3.		excuse me what you mean?
4.	Haru →	four books
5.	Anch	four books. in MY pictures five books
6.	Haru	

Haru initiates a repair at line 4 by saying 'excuse me what you mean' because he might not know what Anch is meant at line 1. Haru might have a problem of understanding of the whole utterance produced by Anch at line 1, so she demands a further explanation from Anch.

8) Correction Repair. Correction is made for trouble sources related to linguistic errors in the previous turn. There are three (3) instances of correction repair occurring in the leaners' conversation, one of which is shown in the following example.

Example:
Conversation Two/Desert Island/Haru and Efan
Excerpt 26: 00:04:43–00:05:21

1. Efan   and what- what's the next?next um:: (6) we need a sauce pan sauce
2. Haru   pan? (2) is this necessary?
3. Efan→   sauce pan.
4. Haru   sauce pan.
5. Efan →   yes
6. Haru   I don't think so:: because (3) I think we need also a [towel] a [towel]
7.   a [taʊəl]
8. Efan →   a [taʊəl] ya maybe one day (++) you want to take a ba::th so you need
9. Haru   a towel to (+) dry your body. I think lke tha::t. do you agree with me?
                yes (1) of course

At line 6 Efan mispronounces the word 'towel' two times with [towel] a [towel]. Haru corrects the mispronounced word by providing the correct pronunciation a [taʊəl] at line 7. This correction is accepted by Efan at line 8 by producing the correct pronunciation of the word 'towel'. The other two correction repair strategies are all done for the mispronounced words.

3.2. Types of Trouble Sources
        In the trajectory of other-initiated repair sequence, trouble source is a word, phrase, or utterance that the interlocutors treated as problematic in the conversation [6]. Trouble source usually appear in the turn prior to the repair initiation turn. After a close look into the learners' conversation it is noticed that the trouble sources produced by the interlocutors in this study comprise three types, namely linguistic-related problem, interactional-related problem, and meaning or message related problem. Linguistic problem means, among others, poor grammatical construction that can cause understanding problem, wrong pronunciation, wrong choice of word, etc. Interactional problem relates to speech delivery, in terms of long pause, sound stretches. Meaning related problem means overall unclarity of meaning of the utterance that makes the next speaker difficult to understand it. The following conversation excerpts illustrate those trouble sources in the learners' conversation.

Linguistic-related trouble source
        From all the conversations analyzed, there are three OIR Strategies produced because of linguistic trouble source in the previous turn and all of them deal with wrong pronunciation of lexical item. The following examples will illustrate the case.
Example 1:
Conversation One/Desert Island/Alga and Anit
Excerpt 20: 00:04: 09– 00:04:57

1. Anit   I guess for me (2) I uh::
2. Alga   an atlas
3. Anit   I need a box of matches
4. Alga   yeah
5. Anit   uh: a blanket
6. Alga→   A BLANKET yeah a blanket (++) that's true
7. Anit   And uh::: a [nilon] tent? We do need tent
8. Alga→   [nailen] tent uh:: why why
9. Anit   because at night there probably a lot of animals around and we do need
10.   (1) some tent to sleep in

At line 8 Alga produced a correction OIR Strategy for the mispronounced word by Anit at line 7.Anit mispronounced the word 'nylon' with [nilon], and Alga provided a correct pronunciation [nailen]. It is interesting to observe that the correction is provided by Alga who is rated as having low proficiency in English for the pronunciation error made by Anit, a high-proficient learner.

Example 2:
Conversation Three/Desert Island/Rada and Fran
Excerpt 27: 00:04:14–00:04:33

    1. Fran   and what else that you want to
    2. Rada   mm:: I want uh:: I want [knif] and a fork and a fork
    3. Fran →   a knife and a fork
    4. Rada   (nodding) a knife and a fork
    5. Fran   okay I uh::=
    6. Rada   =so what do you think about a// knife// and a fork
    7. Fran   //ya//
    8.   I am agree about a knife and fork ....

        The mispronunciation took place at line 2 when Rada pronounced the word 'knife' with [knif] and repair is made by Fran at line 3 by giving the correct pronunciation of the word 'knife'. The correction repair was accepted by Rada at line 4 with a nonverbal sign of nodding and repeating the correct pronunciation of the word 'knife'.

Interactional-related trouble source
The next type of trouble source that triggers other-initiated repair relates to the way the turn is delivered by the speaker whose turn contains trouble source. The following excerpts illustrate some of this interactional-related problem.
Example 3:
Conversation One/Desert Island/Anit and Alga
Excerpt 19: 00:03:10–00:03:48

    1. Anit   so how about a bottle of whisky?
    2. Alga   a bottle of whisky. well it's uh:: it's uh:: ((unintelligible)) things uh::: I
    3.   need it (2) but (3)
    4. Anit→   not a priority
    5. Alga   yeah not a prioritas *priority* so (3) what a bottle of whisky?
    6. Anit   no

        At line 4 Anit, the high-proficient speaker, initiates an understanding check repair because she noticed that Alga, a low-proficient speaker, was having problem in presenting his idea as indicated by the use of several sound lengthening such as 'uh::" at line 2 and pauses within and between turn at line 3. Anit's repair initiation helps Alga to continue his turn and it is successfully done as seen by Alga's repetition of Anit offer at line 5, although it is given in Indonesian.
Example 4:
Conversation Two/Desert Island/Haru and Efan
Excerpt 25: 00:03:53–00:04:41

    1. Efan   and after? after that? what do you think?
    2. Haru   after we have our (unintelligible)
    3. Efan→   what? what do you say? I I::
    4. Haru   after we have our (   ) and how about the transistor radio with batteries
    5.   (1) we need it?

        At line 3 Efan is having a problem in understanding Haru's utterance at line 2 because he cannot hear well what is said by Haru. Haru's utterance contain unclear speech delivery that triggers Efan to initiate repair by saying 'what? what do you say? I I:'.
The similar case of unclear speech delivery also happens in the following example.

Example 5:
Conversation One/Spot the Difference/Anit and Fran
Excerpt 4: 00:03:35–00:04:25

1.	Fran	oh four books only okay. and then uh:: mm there is a laptop? =
2.	Anit	=a hum.
3.	Fran	there is uh:: there is a television and (+) there is a mm telephone there.
4.	Anit	Is there uh:: small:: uh:::::: ((unintelligible) in the: table?=
5.	Fran→	=I am sorry? I am sorry?
6.	Anit	Its look like a bag of something (2) a paper bag (3) in //the//table
7.	Fran	//yeah//
8.		(0.2)

At line 4 Anit produced an unintelligible word that causes problem for Fran to understand her. Therefore, Fran initiated a repair at line 5 by saying 'I am sorry? I am sorry?' In responding to Fran's repair initiation, Anit elaborates her sentence at line 6 by providing more information about what she wanted to say in her previous turn.

Example 6:
Conversation Five/Desert Island/Alga and Anch
Excerpt 36: 00:05:03–00:05:46

1.	Alga	... what about uh::::: nylon tent.
2.	Anch	yes we need
3.	Alga	okay?
4.	Anch	because (2) we::: (5) uh:: (4) uh:: (4)
5.	Alga→	why you- you choose nylon tent! uh:: why maybe you have a reason
6.		about uh::
7.		(3)
8.	Anch	we use- we use uh nylon tent for uh::: (3)

This excerpt illustrates how repair initiation is done because of poor speech delivery in the form of intra-turn pauses produced by the interlocutors. At line 4, Anch's turn contains several long pauses and sound lengthening indicating that she is having trouble in speaking. This problem is noticed by Alga at line 5, so he initiates a repair to help Anch producing what she wants to say. In this case, other-initiated repair functions as way of collaborative learning between the interlocutors in conversation.

Meaning-related trouble source

Other-Initiated Repair Strategy is also employed because the speaker just does not catch the meaning of what is being said by his/her interlocutor in the conversation. The illustration is provided in the following excerpt.

Example 7:
Conversation Two/Spot the Difference/Efan and Alga
Excerpt 6: 0:04:22–00:05:37

1.	Alga	okay uh::: under the table (++) there is a (+) magazine or maybe there
2.		is a::: NEWspaper. and there are some books. (2) and near the books
3.		uh: there is uh:: mm decorate flower, like that
4.		and there two::: people (++) woman and man. they are discussing
5.		about something (2) because uh:: they are they are seeing (1) uh:: a
6.		letter ya exactly they are discussing about something. and in front of
7.		them =
8.	Efan→	= excuse me excuse me I don't understand what did you say before.
9.		may you tell me what did you say.
10.	Alga	oh:: about the man and woman?
11.		(3)

At line 8, Efan seems to have no understanding at all of what is said by Alga at lines 1 to 7.His repair initiation "excuse me excuse me I don't understand what did you say before. may you tell me what did you say" clearly shows that Alga's long utterances do not make sense to him.A close observation of Alga's utterance proves that it contains several ungrammatical clauses and wrong choice of word ('decorate flower').In addition, it is marked by the presence of unsmooth speech delivery (pauses and sound lengthening).All these create misunderstanding for the next speaker, Efan.

4. DISCUSSION

This study was intended to analyze the occurrence of other-initiated repair strategies in solving understanding problems in the conversations of EFL learners when they perform two communicative tasks. It shows that other-initiated repair strategies occur in all the conversations with different number. In addition, the study was also aimed at scrutinizing the trouble sources that trigger the employment of other-initiated repair strategies in the conversations. There are three types of trouble sources that trigger repair initiation, namely linguistic-related problem, interactional-related problem, and overall meaning-related problem.

There are eight types of OIR strategies used by the EFL learners in their conversations, namely unspecified repair, interrogative repair, partial repeat plus a question word repair, partial repeat repair, understanding check repair, request for repetition, request for definition, and correction repair. This finding is different from the study of Fotovatnia & Dorri [12], where nine strategies are found, including the nonverbal resources repair strategy. In the current study nonverbal resource is not used as repair strategy but more as sources of trouble that trigger the repair strategy. The prevalence of OIR Strategies in EFL learners' conversation endorses the proposition of Huth [5], Markee [4] and He and Young [3] hat analyzing repair organization in learners' conversation provides us a better knowledge of how learners overcome understanding problem in order to maintain the flow of conversation.

The current study found that the EFL learners with low level of English proficiency managed to produce OIR Strategies. Principally, producing OIR Strategies is prompted by the fact that the previous turn of the repair initiation turn contains some kind of troubles that impede the understanding of repair initiator. The problematic turn may result from the learners' low-level proficiency of English, for example in grammar or speaking fluency, hence requires corrective act from the supposedly more proficient speaker as shown in the study by Khodadady & Alifathabady [11] that show learners from high group produced more OIR Strategies than the learners from low group. It is also different from the study in mundane conversation by Bolden [19] where repairing understanding problem relies on other speaker who has better knowledge of language and topic under discussion. This interaction phenomenon requires deeper examination in order to get better insight on why this has happened.

Regarding the trouble sources that trigger OIR strategies, the current study found that the EFL leaners produced three types of problem, i.e. linguistic, interactional, and meaning-related problem. A closer observation into the utterances in the conversations reveals that actually the learners' conversations are characterized by the existence of many ungrammatical language constructions. Many of the sentences are not grammatically well-formed, such as incorrect use of third person singular pronouns (*he* for *she* or vice versa), omission of verbs as predicate, incorrect subject-verb agreement, etc. Normally, the troubles should be noticed and repaired by conversational interlocutors, but in the current study they seemed not to be treated by the participants. However, given the fact that these conversants are language learners and that they are still in a learning process to become better speakers of English, these language-deficient phenomena can be seen as an enactment of their L2 learner identity or as Carroll [25] puts it as their "doing being a NNS". In this analysis, the focus is more on their initiatives to try to solve understanding problem in conversation as a part of a language learning process. Here learning is seen as cooperating enterprise where they assist each other in building up a common understanding though the employment of different strategies when there is a problem in the conversation.

5. CONCLUSION

The first main finding of this study is that the EFL learners with limited proficiency in English manage to take initiatives to use other-initiated repair strategies to overcome the understanding problems in conversation. In the ten conversations that the learners are engaged in, they employ eight different types OIR strategies to deal with sixty two conversational episodes that might trigger the occurrence of communication breakdown. This finding shows that the EFL learners have the ability to notice, and then repair, the trouble sources in the conversations, although they have not been explicitly taught about these strategies.

Secondly, it was also revealed in this study that the EFL learners' conversations are characterized by the presence of many trouble sources in the form of various linguistic and interactional deficiencies. However, the trouble sources do not constrain the learners to continue their conversations by using the other-initiated repair strategies. Whether, the understanding problem is evidently resolved, it entails another issue that needs to be investigated further. Therefore, better-designed studies in this area are needed to better enhance our understanding on how learners with limited proficiency deal with understanding problem in conversation.

Finally, the result from this study may be useful for the EFL teachers in designing materials in their lesson. They need to take into consideration the incorporation of explicit teaching of OIR Strategies as part of

their speaking class to improve the students' fluency. This is particularly crucial in EFL setting since the learners' exposure to English is mostly very much dependent on classroom encounter.

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