

Orthography for Interaction in English as a Lingua Franca: Temporarily Attenuating the Importance of Phonology

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study of the orthographic repair strategy that Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca utilize to reestablish intelligibility after a miscommunication. There are many repair strategies that Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca use to maintain mutual intelligibility: repetition, paraphrasing, simplification, enhanced explicitness through redundancy, and “let it pass” (Firth 1996; Kuar 2009; Pitzl 2010). Phonetic repair, which consists of a Speaker of English as a Lingua Franca adding, changing, or deleting phonemes to restore intelligibility, is another (Matsumoto 2011; O’Neal 2013a, 2013b). However, there is one more repair strategy that has not been extensively examined, one that is specifically designed to temporarily weaken the importance of phonology in the maintenance of intelligibility: orthographic repair. Orthographic repair refers to the practice of articulating the spelling of a word to reestablish mutual intelligibility. Although orthographic skills are usually associated with writing proficiency, this paper concludes that orthographic abilities are not limited to writing skills; indeed, orthographic abilities are a component of both productive skills—writing and speaking. Examining repair sequences collected from Skype conversations between Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca, this paper concludes that orthographic repair is an efficacious secondary repair strategy that can be used during interactions to reestablish intelligibility after a communication breakdown has occurred.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, English as a Lingua Franca, Orthography, Intelligibility, Repair

1. Introduction

Spelling is incredibly important for *speaking*. In this qualitative study of repair sequences between Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca, the relationship between orthographic abilities—the ability to spell a word—and communicative abilities—the ability to speak

and be understood—is examined. One may assume that orthography and oral communication would be unrelated. After all, illiterate people can converse just as well as literate people. But in fact orthography is an extremely important resource that can be utilized during repair sequences to allow Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca to reestablish intelligibility after a miscommunication has occurred.

This study opts for the term “Speaker of English as a Lingua Franca” rather than “Non-native Speaker of English” because the former term actually describes the object of study while the latter term only designates what the object of study is not. The decision to use “Speaker of English as a Lingua Franca” rather than “Non-native Speaker” is both practical and ideological: 1) the term “non-native speaker” is laden with connotations of either language deficiency or an assumption that native speaker competency is the superlative linguistic norm or goal for all non-native speakers, whether they desire that or not; 2) “Speaker of English as a Lingua Franca” is both an accurate description of the speakers in the corpus used in this study and it lacks the connotations of inadequacy.

Studies that examine practices through which Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca manage and negotiate intelligibility in interactions are worthwhile because most speakers of English as are Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca. That is, most speakers of English in the world, by a factor of magnitude, are not native speakers of English (Promodou 1997; Canagarajah 2006; Ostler 2010). Furthermore, most speakers of English as a Lingua Franca use English with other Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer 2011). Most people who use English are not native speakers, and most people who use English use it with other speakers who are also not native speakers (Jenkins 2007; Firth 2009a, 2009b). Accordingly, analyzing the mechanisms through which Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca maintain mutual intelligibility is important because interactions between Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca are now the quotidian norm, rather than the quixotic exception. Moreover, the vicissitudes and variability of English as a Lingua Franca make repair inevitable. A Lingua Franca is, by definition, a communication system that has to be negotiated as it is used; of course, this applies to all languages, but especially to Lingua Francas. Accordingly, repair is not a manifestation of language deficiency; it is a normal practice through which Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca maintain understanding. Repair is at the core of interactive competence, not the periphery (Hall 2009).

2. Previous Studies

The aim of this section is to introduce the background knowledge required to understand the significance of a repair strategy like orthographic repair in English as a Lingua Franca interactions. As such, this section will do the following: 1) it will review previous literature on English as a Lingua Franca, and then define English as a Lingua Franca; 2) it will review the literature on pronunciation intelligibility and then define intelligibility as well as offer a tentative definition for both “good pronunciation” and “bad pronunciation”; 3) it will review some of the common repair strategies identified in the conversation analytic literature.

1.1. English as a Lingua Franca

English as a Lingua Franca as an object of linguistic study is a recent phenomenon. For almost the entire history of second language acquisition as a discipline separate from linguistics, variation away from native speaker models was designated “interlanguage” (Selinker 1972). Deviance away from native speaker practice was ascribed to nebulous and nefarious influences like “linguistic interference” (Scovel 1988). It was not until recently that anyone bothered to check whether “interlanguage” was any less communicatively capable than “native language” or whether the goal of approximation to native speaker models warranted pedagogy (Kirkpatrick 2012; Dewey 2012). But once those studies began, the answer was clear: difference did not attenuate communication (Munro & Derwing 1995a, 1995b, 1999; Jenkins 2000; Dewey 2009). “Interlanguages” were just Lingua Francas, a phenomenon that has occurred throughout human history, and did not even have a connotation of deficiency until fairly recently (Ostler 2010).

English as a Lingua Franca is defined as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium” (Seidlhofer 2011). Under this definition, even native speakers of English can engage in Lingua Franca communication, and this tenet makes this definition different from many other definitions of English as a Lingua Franca that only focus on communication between people who are not native speakers of English (Firth 1996; House 1999, 2002). As such, this study treats all usage of English not between native speakers as instances of English as a Lingua Franca. In short, English as a Lingua Franca is a contact language, not a native language. All of the participants in the corpus utilized in this study use English as a contact language.

1.2. Intelligibility

Intelligibility is a term which refers to how much an interlocutor actually understands about what the other person said (Munro & Derwing 2011; Nelson 2011; Jordan 2011). If a speaker speaks, and an interlocutor understands the speech, then the speaker's intelligibility is high; if a speaker speaks, and an interlocutor does not understand the speech, then the speaker's intelligibility is low. Intelligibility is very different from, but often confused with, Comprehensibility, which refers to something completely different: how well liked the speech of the speaker is (Munro & Derwing 1995a, 1995b, 1999; Derwing & Munro 1997; Isaacs & Trofimovich 2012). A speaker could potentially be either intelligible but incomprehensible (I understand what you are saying, but your speech sounds strange or odd to me.), or unintelligible but comprehensible (I have no idea what you said, but I love your accent! It's so cute!). Of course, everyone would like to be both intelligible and comprehensible, but in a world with millions of accents and standards of aural beauty, this may not always be possible. The key aspect of communication, however, that is actually important is intelligibility, and as such, this study focuses on intelligibility.

These definitions of intelligibility and comprehensibility raise important questions: What is "good" pronunciation? What is "bad" pronunciation? Although there are serious scholars that equate the efficacy of pronunciation to comprehensibility for native speakers (Hahn 2004; Isaacs & Trofimovich 2012), and other scholars that equate pronunciation "goodness" to approximation to a set of phonological features claimed to make speakers more intelligible (Jenkins 2000, 2002; Walker 2010), this study claims the following about the efficacy of pronunciation: *pronunciation is good when the interlocutor understands; pronunciation is bad when the interlocutor does not understand*. This definition mandates the ability to adjust pronunciation as the situation requires because good and bad pronunciation can change according to the participants. The efficacy of pronunciation is not determined by phonological proximity to an arbitrary set of standards; rather, the efficacy of pronunciation is determined by the speaker's ability and willingness to adapt (Matsumoto 2011). Because this study examines instances of miscommunication, there will be a lot of "bad pronunciation," but that does not mean that the pronunciation is "bad" because it deviated from native speaker norms. Indeed, in some examples, like example one, four, and eleven below, one speaker utilizes the native speaker pronunciation, but the interlocutor does not orient to the pronunciation as intelligible. Accordingly, even the native speaker models of pronunciation can be

unintelligible pronunciations under the definition offered here.

1.3. Repair Strategies to Reestablish Mutual Intelligibility

The practice through which Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca deal with the vicissitudes of contact language reality is repair. Although “repair strategies” are usually called “communication strategies,” the term “communication strategies” does not accurately reflect what the participants are doing. All of the strategies enumerated in this section are deployed only after a communication breakdown occurs and are designed to overcome a miscommunication, so a term that better reflects that communicative teleology is warranted. Because Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca are repairing a communication problem, this study opts for the term “repair strategy.” But what exactly is being “repaired”? In Conversation Analysis, “intersubjectivity,” which refers to the state of subjective mutual understanding, is being repaired (Schegloff 1992, 1997, 2000, 2007). In the English as a Lingua Franca school of thought, “mutual intelligibility” is being repaired (Jenkins 2000; Walker 2010). In more metaphorical terms, the fabric of mutual understanding between two speakers is being repaired.

Repair, however, is a multifaceted practice, and one hypernym alone cannot gloss its entire complexity. Although all attempts at repair are designed to reestablish mutual intelligibility, there are many ways in which Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca can go about doing that, and therefore there are many types of repair. Repair has been extensively studied from the founding of Conversation Analysis, and many different types of repair have been identified (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks 1977; Stivers 2005; Matsumoto 2011). We examine instances of commonly researched repair sequences from this study’s corpus below.

The first example of repair is easily the most common type of repair in the corpus collected for this study: repair through enhanced explicitness and redundancy (Kuar 2009). In this type of repair, one Speaker of English as a Lingua Franca will be more explicit with her lexical choices in order to reestablish mutual intelligibility. In this example, Tomomi, a Japanese college student, and Yan, a Chinese exchange student, are talking about part-time jobs, which leads to the following exchange in which a repair sequence begins in line 2.

Example 1:

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------|
| 1 | Tomomi: uhm:: I had worked at tailor’s shop. it’s= | |
| 2 | Yan: | =tay- tailor shop? |
| 3 | Tomomi: tailor shop. it is is:: <u>clothes</u> . | |

- 4 (0.5)
- 5 Yan: clothes?
- 6 Tomomi: clothes. yeah. clothes.
- 7 Yan: clothes. <what is clothes?>
- 8 Tomomi: clothes. sel- sell clothes. (0.2) clothes.
- 9 (0.2)
- 10 Yan: °clothes.°
- 11 Tomomi: °clothes.°
- 12 (1.2)
- 13 Tomomi: uh::
- 14 (2.0)
- 15 Tomomi: dress is clothes. (.) clothes.
- 16 Yan: what is clothes?
- 17 (0.5)
- 18 Tomomi: uhm: put on your clothes clothes.
- 19 Yan: ah clothes.
- 20 Tomomi: yeah clothes. (laughs)
- 21 Yan: yeah. oh. it's good. (0.1) uh (.) so:: uh: (.) sell womens or mans clothes in your store?
- 22 Tomomi: ladies.

In line 1, Tomomi articulates “clothes” with pronunciation very closely approximate to native speaker norms, but in line 2, Yan orients to “clothes” as unintelligible: Yan specifically subjects “clothes” to repair, which initiates a repair sequence. This is interesting because Tomomi does not orient to Yan as communicatively deficient because Yan did not understand her native-like pronunciation of “clothes.” Rather, Tomomi takes it upon herself to explain herself and reestablish mutual intelligibility. In order to restore mutual intelligibility, through lines 3~18, Tomomi states “clothes” again in a redundant manner to make the semantics signified by “clothes” much more explicit. In line 19, Yan claims that she has understood, which is manifest by her deployment of the discourse marker “ah,” and this in turn demonstrates that Yan claims that mutual intelligibility has been reestablished (Heritage 1984). Of course, a claim that intelligibility has been reestablished does not necessarily mean that intelligibility has actually been reestablished (Wong 2000). However, because Yan uses “clothes” in her own subsequent question, it can be surmised that Yan really did understand “clothes” and that mutual

intelligibility really was reestablished.

Not all Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca resort to multiple rounds of repair in the effort to reestablish mutual intelligibility, however. Another repair strategy is to “let-it-pass,” in which one Speaker of English as a Lingua Franca will notify the interlocutor that repair is not even necessary (Firth 1996). In the following extract, Xuan, a Chinese exchange student, and Kyohei, a Japanese student, are talking about where they want to live after they graduate from university, which leads to the following exchange in which Kyohei’s statement that he is unable to hear Xuan is oriented to as a request for repair, but Xuan “lets-it-pass,” and declines the request to repair.

Example 2:

- 1 Xuan: do Japanese students always want to go to Tokyo?
 2 (0.3)
 3 Kyohei: sorry (.) I can’t hear.
 4 Xuan: it’s okay:: It’s no matter.

In line 1, Xuan asks Kyohei a question, but Kyohei claims that he could not hear Xuan in line 3. Rather than initiate a repair sequence, Xuan elects to “drop the subject” and notifies Kyohei that he is no longer obligated to produce a requisite answer to his question. That is, Xuan “lets-it-pass” and Kyohei is no longer responsible for completing a sequence. In other words, “let it pass” is a repair strategy that obviates the necessity to repair.

Yet another common repair strategy is to repeat oneself more slowly than before. In the third example, Huang, a Taiwanese exchange student, and Yuki, a Japanese student, are discussing who should send the homework email to the teacher, which leads to the following exchange. Slower speech is indicated in the transcription with outward pointing carets.

Example 3:

- 1 Huang: should I send email to teacher?
 2 (1.0)
 3 Yuki: pardon?
 4 Huang: <should I send email to teacher?>
 5 Yuki: oh:: sorry sorry. yes (.) yes.

In line 1, Huang asks Yuki a question, but after one second of silence, Yuki indicates a problem has occurred in line 3. Yuki’s lack of an apposite riposte in line 3 indicates that mutual intelligibility has broken down. Understanding that mutual intelligibility has

faltered, Huang asks her question again at a slower rate of speech, to which Yuki orients as intelligible: Yuki first deploys the discourse marker “oh,” which manifests a claim that intelligibility has been reestablished, then expresses contrition twice, and then produces the answer to the question initially produced in line 1, which completes the sequence. This example demonstrates that slower speech can be used to reestablish intelligibility.

The last of the relatively common repair strategies is circumlocution and paraphrasing. Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca will use synonyms and paraphrases to reestablish mutual intelligibility. In example four, Bai, a Chinese exchange student, and Shuhei, a Japanese student, are discussing the Dionysian aspects of the Chinese New Year, which leads to the following exchange in which a miscommunication occurs in line 6.

Example 4:

- | | | |
|----|---------|---|
| 1 | Bai: | we'll we'll we'll <u>drink</u> some wine. |
| 2 | Shuhei: | ah: wine. |
| 3 | Bai: | wine. |
| 4 | Shuhei: | yes. |
| 5 | Bai: | ande keep talking I think. (laughs) |
| 6 | | (0.3) |
| 7 | Shuhei: | talking? |
| 8 | Bai: | talkn. |
| 9 | Shuhei: | °talking.° |
| 10 | Bai: | conversation. |
| 11 | Shuhei: | ah:: hm. hm. hm. okay:: |
| 12 | Bai: | yes. <u>convers</u> ation with each other:: |
| 13 | Shuhei: | hm. |
| 14 | Bai: | hm so hm: (.) in china >new years party< |

In lines 1 ~ 5, Bai mentions some Bacchanal activities that occur during Chinese New Years parties, but in line 7, Shuhei says “talking” with rising intonation, to which Bai orients as an indication that mutual intelligibility has ceased, and then attempts to repair “talking” through the repair strategy of repetition. In line 9, Shuhei states “talking” in very low volume, which is indicated in the transcripts through the ° marks. In line 10, Bai orients to Shuhei’s low volume utterance as an indication that he does not understand, and proffers a synonym of talking: conversation. In line 11, Shuhei deploys

the discourse marker “ah,” which manifests a claim that mutual intelligibility has been reestablished, and then three subvocal grunts of affirmation, followed by the discourse marker “okay,” which makes a claim of accepting the previous contribution. After line 11, both Bai and Shuhei move on to other matters, which indicates that both speakers believed the issue had been resolved.

There is one more repair strategy to which Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca often appeal: phonetic repair (Matsumoto 2011; O’Neal 2013a, 2013b, in submission). In phonetic repair, Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca re-articulate pronunciation, often changing phonemes, in order to reestablish mutual intelligibility. In the following example, Mitsu, a Japanese student, and Yu, a Chinese exchange student, are talking about how many final examinations they have at the end of the term, which leads to the following exchange with a repair sequence that begins in line 3. In order to reestablish intelligibility, Mitsu actually changes his pronunciation of the problematic word. The phonemic transcription brackets [] have been changed to { [] } to differentiate them from the conversation analytic transcription brackets [], which indicate simultaneous utterances.

Example 5:

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 1 | Mitsu: | uh: (0.5) how many { [↑ tɛs:] } do you have? |
| 2 | | (0.3) |
| 3 | Yu: | hm (.) what? |
| 4 | Mitsu: | how many { [tɛst] } { ([]) } |
| 5 | Yu: | { [↑ tɛst] } uh (0.3) fou::r abou::te:: eh |
| 6 | | (1.0) |
| 7 | Yu: | <u>five</u> . |
| 8 | Mitsu: | oh. |
| 9 | Yan: | five hm maybe five uhm seven. maybe seven. |
| 10 | Mitsu: | <u>seven</u> . |
| 11 | Yan: | yeah. |

In line 1, Mitsu asks Yu a question, but Yu orients to the entire utterance as unintelligible in line 3. In line 4, Mitsu begins to articulate the same question, but changes his pronunciation of the word “tests” from [tɛs:] to [tɛst], appending the /t/ phoneme to the end of the word. In other words, in the first articulation of “tests,” Mitsu elided the second /t/ phoneme, which is common practice in native speaker speech. Many native speakers will elide consonants in casual speech and not be aware of it

(Roach 2009). Although Mitsu uses pronunciation that is in keeping with native speaker norms, Yu does not understand it, but when Mitsu inserts the /t/ phoneme back into the word in line 4, Yu orients to the word as intelligible in line 5 and produces the requisite response in lines 7 and 9. This example demonstrates that a willingness to change pronunciation can lead help restore mutual intelligibility.

There are many types of repair, as the above examples demonstrate. But it is certainly not an exhaustive list. Indeed, this study will now turn to an examination of yet another manner of repair: orthographic repair. In orthographic repair, Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca will make use of spelling conventions in an effort to reestablish mutual intelligibility, and this strategy has the added side-benefit of temporarily attenuating the importance of phonology in interaction.

3. Methodology & Data

This study adopts conversation analysis as a methodology for determining both intelligibility and unintelligibility. As such, the evidence is completely qualitative in nature. Intelligibility and unintelligibility are determined in an emic manner in which the interlocutors' orientations to previous utterances are used to ascertain whether a previous contribution was intelligible or not (Schegloff 2007; Canagarajah 2013). That is, all determinations of intelligibility are based on the reaction of interlocutor to the previous speaker's utterances.

The transcription system adopted by this study follows the standard Jeffersonian system for Conversation Analytic transcripts. However, because phonology is an aspect of the interaction to which the participants did orient as significant, and because conversation analysis transcription cannot handle phonetic detail accurately, this study amends the conversation analytic transcription system to account for phonological details that the participants themselves make relevant: all words that are subject to repair are transcribed into the international phonetic alphabet (IPA). This will allow a much more detailed phonological analysis of the vicissitudes of the phonetic environment within the interactions.

The corpus of data is a collection of Skype conversation homework assignments between Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca. The Skype conversations were produced as one component of mandatory homework for an oral communication class at a large public Japanese university, which was a graded homework assignment. As such,

not understand the entire utterance in line 1. Indeed, Mayumi's reaction indicates that she believes that Zhan oriented to just ['kas.tum] as problematic and unintelligible: Mayumi just repeats ['kas.tum] again in line 4. This is Mayumi's first attempt at repair—repair through repetition—and it is not successful: after less than a second of silence (line 5), Zhan articulates the first syllable of ['kas.tum] with low volume (line 6), to which Mayumi orients as an indication that Zhan still does not understand ['kas.tum]. In line 7, Mayumi again attempts repair through repetition, articulating [kas.tum] without a word stress syllable. Zhan parrots ['kas.tum] once in line 8, slightly changing the vowel in the second syllable, but Mayumi orients to this as another indication that Zhan finds ['kas.tum] unintelligible. This demonstrates that a series of attempts at repair have failed.

In line 9, Mayumi, attempting to salvage the situation, deploys a new, second type of repair: orthographic repair. Mayumi articulates the spelling of the word “costume,” enunciating each letter in the spelling of the word. Orthographic repair is instantly successful. In line 10, Zhan claims that intelligibility has been reestablished. She deploys five discourse markers, each of which indicates either sudden realization or acceptance: “ah” indicates that Zhan orients to the previous contribution as leading to a realization of some sort; “oh” indicates that the previous contribution is new information in some sense; “yeah” indicates that Zhan believes that the contribution of “costume” to the interaction is apposite (Heritage 1984). In a word, Zhan's response in line 10 manifests a claim of understanding; that is, Zhan demonstrates that intelligibility has been reestablished and that ['kas.tum] referred to “costume.” In lines 12~15, both Mayumi and Zhan move on to other interactional matters, and treat the repair sequence as successfully complete.

Orthographic repair is successful for these two Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca, but why is this so? One likely reason is that orthographic repair temporarily attenuates the importance of the phonological signal in communication. Rather than being dependent on only phonology to convey their meanings, these Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca deployed a means of repair that increases the importance of a skill with which they have more familiarity: spelling. That is, orthographic repair is one method to make an oral interaction more like a written interaction. Through orthographic repair, it is possible to lessen the importance of a skill set with which the students have less confidence (pronunciation) and increase the importance of a skill set with which the students have greater confidence (spelling).

Some would claim that counterfactual questions are warranted at this point: Would Zhan have understood Mayumi if Mayumi had articulated “costume” as [ˈkas.tjum] or [ˈkas.tʃjum] or [ˈkas.tʃum] rather than as [ˈkas.tum]? Would Zhan have understood Mayumi if Mayumi had said “uniform” or “school uniform” rather than “costume”? Unfortunately, it is impossible to know the answer to either question with conversation analysis. This is because there are no counterfactual arguments in conversation analysis. All we can gather from the example is that Zhan accepts “costume” as a sufficient answer to complete the sequence after orthographic repair. But this is not an isolated incident. Other examples of orthographic repair abound in the corpus.

In the next example, Aku, a Chinese exchange student, and Mami, a Japanese student, are discussing the drinks Aku had to serve as a waitress in a Japanese restaurant, which leads to the following exchange in which a repair sequence begins in line 2. Although Aku attempts to repair a word oriented to as unintelligible with an explanation, it is unsuccessful. Aku then deploys a successful secondary repair strategy: orthographic repair.

Example 7:

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1 | Aku: | yes. ande fill the- the buck tea. buck tea. do you know? |
| 2 | Mami: | buck tea? |
| 3 | | (0.3) |
| 4 | Aku: | yes its like uh wheat. buck- buck teas. and uh (.) uh (.) uh food
likuh wheat. |
| 5 | | wheat. wheat. |
| 6 | Mami: | °wheat.° |
| 7 | | (2.0) |
| 8 | Mami: | wheat. |
| 9 | Aku: | wheat. |
| 10 | | (2.3) |
| 11 | Mami: | hm::::? |
| 12 | Aku: | wheat. W. H. E. A. T. wheat. |
| 13 | Mami: | W- W? |
| 14 | Aku: | W. H.= |
| 15 | Mami: | =W. H. |
| 16 | Aku: | E. A. T. |
| 17 | Mami: | E. A. T. ((taps in sync with the enunciation of the alphabet |

- letters))
- 18 Aku: E. (.) E. A. T.
- 19 Mami: °E. A. T.° ↑ oh::
- 20 Aku: yes.
- 21 Mami: wheat. [oh.
- 22 Aku: [yeah.

Mami orients to “buck tea” as unintelligible in line 2, and Aku attempts repair through repetition and paraphrasing in lines 4~9. However, Mami never indicates that intelligibility has been reestablished. Indeed, in line 11, Mami manifests that mutual intelligibility is still lacking. Between lines 12~18, Aku attempts a series of orthographic repairs, to which Mami orients as successfully reestablishing mutual intelligibility in line 19: Mami deploys the discourse “oh” with high upstep intonation and an elongated vowel, which displays a claim that she has understood Aku, and that intelligibility has been reestablished. Although the initial repair through repetition and paraphrasing ends in failure, the orthographic repair is a successful secondary repair strategy. It is again worth mentioning that orthographic repair attenuates the importance of pronunciation in the interaction, and increases the importance of skills the students might be more familiar with, at least for the duration of the repair sequence; that is, orthographic repair as a strategy makes oral interaction more like written interaction. And this strategy is fairly ubiquitous in English as a Lingua Franca speech, as the next example also shows.

The in the following example, Lili, a Chinese exchange student, and Hiro, a Japanese student, are discussing their hobbies. Hiro likes to play golf, which leads to the following exchange in which repair begins in line 2. However, this example is unique because the first repair strategy attempted is orthographic repair but that is only because one of the Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca specifically requests it as the primary repair strategy.

Example 8:

- 1 Hiro: gol- golf
- 2 Lili: (laughs) sorry >how to- how to-< how to spell:: the word?
- 3 Hiro: oh (0.2) G. O. L. F.
- 4 Lili: G. O. A.
- 5 Hiro: L. L.
- 6 Lili: ah G. O. (.) G. O. L. F?
- 7 Hiro: yes. golf.

- 8 Lili: ah. (laughs)
 9 Hiro: yeah (laughs)
 10 Lili: I got it. sorry=
 11 Hiro: =sorry sorry.

In line 2, Lili requests the spelling of “golf,” which manifests that Lili finds “golf” unintelligible. In line 3, Hiro responds to the request and spells the word out orally for Lili. After a confirmation sequence, Lili deploys the discourse marker “ah,” which manifests a claim that she has understood “golf,” which in turn demonstrates that intelligibility has been reestablished. Furthermore, in line 10, Lili again claims that she has understood. But what is significant about this example is that orthographic repair as a primary repair strategy is the exception to the rule: orthographic repair as a primary repair strategy, as the first repair strategy attempted, has to be specifically requested. Usually orthographic repair is a secondary repair strategy that is employed after the failure of primary repair strategies. And this fact is demonstrated through the next example.

In the following example, Kirsten, a German exchange student, and Lan, a Chinese exchange student, discuss how Christmas is celebrated in each country. Christmas is not an important holiday in China, but there are some customs that occur on that day, at least according to Lan. The discussion turns to the topic of presents, which leads to the following exchange that instantly runs into trouble and catalyzes a series of repair sequences. This example is especially interesting because the Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca deploy two repair strategies concurrently for ultimate success: orthographic repair and phonetic repair.

Example 9:

- 1 Kristen: uh:: do. you. get. present.
 2 (0.4)
 3 Lan: uhn {[kɾɛs.ənt]}?
 4 (0.2)
 5 Kristen: do. you. get. something? [to:: your,]
 6 Lan: [oh oh oh] >I know I know.< uhm:: we::
 we:: don'te:: (.)
 7 we don'te:: give some gifte to uh our other- others. but in uh
 <christmas> eveh we will
 8 give uh {[æm.pəl]} to:: to:: our frenz.

- 9 (0.2)
- 10 Kristen: {[æm.pəl]}?
- 11 Lan: uh yeah. uh[::
- 12 Kristen: [what's this?
- 13 Lan: {[æm.pəl]}. {[æm.pəl]} we call {[æm.pəl]} pinggwo (0.2) in chinese. so uh
- 14 {[æm.pəl]} stand for uh {[↑ sɛlf]}
- 15 (0.3)
- 16 Kristen: I don't understand the word {[æm.p]}.
 17 Lan: oh. in chinese (.) uh we call {[æm.pəl]} (.) uhm pingwo. [uh:
 18 Kristen: [but (.) what
 is it?
- 19 is it something to eat?
- 20 (0.7)
- 21 Lan: uhn yes. {[æm.pəl]} to eat. bute {[æm.pəl]} stand for: stand for:: uh
 {[sɛlf]}. {[sɛlf]}.
- 22 (0.3)
- 23 Kristen: {[sɪ.ɪ.əs]}?
- 24 Lan: {[sɛlf]}. {[seif]}.
- 25 Kristen: {[↑ sɛl]}.
- 26 Lan: uhn::
- 27 (2.0)
- 28 Kristen: uhm:: it stands for something.
- 29 Lan: oh yeah yeah yeah.
- 30 Kristen: and so can you explain (.) the word {[↑ sɛl]}?
- 31 Lan: uh {[sɛl.fə]}. uhm:: (.) {[sɛlf]}. S. A. F. E.
- 32 (0.2)
- 33 Kristen: S?
- 34 (0.2)
- 35 Lan: S. A. F. E. (0.3) {[seif]}.
- 36 Kristen: {[seif]}?
- 37 Lan: {[seif]}. {[seif]}.
- 38 Kristen: oh it's it's (.) for safety?
- 39 Lan: ah oh safety. safety. yeah yeah.
- 40 Kristen: oh okay:::

41 Lan: (laughs) {[æm.pəl]} is for safety so we gave uh gave uh our our
frenz the {[æm.pəl]}.

42 Kristen: oh::: okay:::

In lines 1~8, Lan orients to “present” as unintelligible, and both Kristen and Lan quickly repair it, but Kristen orients to [æm.pəl] as unintelligible in line 10, and then explicitly requests repair of [æm.pəl] in line 12. In lines 13~14, Lan attempts to repair [æm.pəl] with an explanation of its cultural significance, but in line 16, Kristen indicates that she still does not understand, and thus manifests that [æm.pəl] is still unintelligible. In line 17, Lan attempts repair of [æm.pəl] again with the same strategy, but Kristen again indicates that [æm.pəl] is still unintelligible in line 18. Repair has failed twice now. In line 21, Lan again attempts to repair [æm.pəl] with an explanation of what it stands for: [sɛlf].

In line 23, Kristen orients to [sɛlf] as unintelligible as well, and this sets off another series of repairs, even though [æm.pəl] has not been repaired yet: Kristen has never indicated that she understood [æm.pəl]. First, in line 23, Kristen proffers a possible repair candidate, [sɪr.əs], but Lan rejects it in line 24, instead proffering first [sɛlf], and then repairing her own pronunciation to [seɪf]. In the second pronunciation, Lan conducts phonetic repair on her own pronunciation, changing the monophthong vowel to a diphthong vowel and deleting the /l/ phoneme. However, in line 25, Kristen proffers her own repair candidate again with considerable upstep intonation: [↑ sɛl]. In line 30, Kristen explicitly asks for repair of [↑ sɛl].

In line 31, after proffering [sɛlf] again, Lan attempts orthographic repair: she enunciates the letters in the word “safe” one time each. Kristen’s monosyllabic sibilant hiss in line 33 demonstrates that orthographic repair has failed and that intelligibility has not been reestablished, and in line 35, Lan again attempts orthographic repair, articulating the spelling of “safe” one more time, and then stating [seɪf] one more time. In lines 36~37, Kristen states [seɪf] once, and Lan confirms it twice. In line 38, Kristen deploys the discourse marker “oh,” which manifests a claim that she has understood, which in turn demonstrates that intelligibility has been reestablished, and then proffers a semantic repair candidate: “it’s for safety?” In lines 39~41, both Lan and Kristen confirm that [æm.pəl] is for safety, bringing this repair sequence to a somewhat successful conclusion.

Although Kristen never manifests that she understands what an [æm.pəl] is, she does manifest that she understands [æm.pəl] is a symbolic representation of “safety” in

China. It is likely that Kristen believes that [æm.pəl] is some type of comestible food, rather than an apple (the Mandarin Chinese word “pingguo” means “apple”), and that [æm.pəl] are symbols of safety. Although intelligibility was never explicitly reestablished for [æm.pəl], the cultural significance of it was repaired, and both participants oriented to the safety aspect of [æm.pəl] as intelligible. In other words, intelligibility had been reestablished, at least to the point that both Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca can move on to other matters, which is exactly what they do. This example demonstrates that intelligibility does not have to be fully repaired for communication to progress. Indeed, the next example will demonstrate that orthographic repair does not even have to be spelled in standard orthography to successfully reestablish intelligibility.

The last example in this section is exceptional for two reasons: 1) there is an explicit appeal for orthographic repair; 2) the orthographic repair does not match the standard spelling of the word subject to repair, but that does not prevent the orthographic repair from being successful. In the following example, Takuya, a Japanese university student, is talking to Zhao, a Chinese exchange student, about Takuya’s decision to study abroad, and Takuya attempts to tell Zhao his major, which is mechanical engineering, which in turn leads to the following exchange for which repair is requested in line 12.

Example 10:

- 1 Takuya: uh my major is (.) [mech]anical engineering.
 2 Zhao: [ye:s?]
 3 (0.2)
 4 Zhao: engineering [yes?
 5 Takuya: [yeah so::: (1.0) eh in America (.) [the:::
 6 Zhao: [yes.
 7 (0.2)
 8 Takuya: the engineering (.) [is:: hm:::
 9 Zhao: [yes.
 10 (0.3)
 11 Takuya: stronger than::=
 12 Zhao: =can can you spell it? {[æn.dʒɪ.nə.ɪ.ɪŋ]}.
 13 Takuya: ah yeah (laughs)
 14 (0.1)
 15 Zhao: yes A. N?
 16 (.)

- 17 Takuya: E:
 18 Zhao: A. N. E:?
 19 Takuya: no. hm (0.3) E. N (.) G.
 20 Zhao: N. E (.) A. N. E. G. E {[ɛn.dʒə. ↑ nə.rɪŋ]} [oh:.
 21 Takuya: [yeah.
 22 (1.0)
 23 Zhao: yeah I know it.
 24 Takuya: yeah.

In line 1, Takuya states his major. The small amount of silence in line 3 indicates that Takuya believed his contribution was both complete and apposite. Indeed, in line 4, Zhao repeats “engineering” and then says “yes” with rising intonation, to which Takuya orients as a continuer, an indication that Zhao cedes her right to speak to Takuya. In lines 5~11, Takuya continues his story, explaining why a mechanical engineer wants to study abroad to America, but in line 12, Zhao explicitly requests orthographic repair. Again orthographic repair seems to be a secondary repair strategy utilized only after another strategy has failed unless it is explicitly requested.

After an affirmation of his willingness to conduct orthographic repair in line 13, Zhao initiates orthographic repair herself, enunciating the letters A and N. In line 17, Takuya enunciates the letter E, to which Zhao orients as additive rather than reparative: Zhao articulates the letters A, N, and E in succession. Takuya, in line 19, orients to A-N-E as wrong, stating “no” once, and then conducts repair. Takuya states E-N-G instead, offering a candidate repair for A-N-E. In line 20, after a series of letters, Zhao states “engineering” and “oh,” which displays a claim of understanding and is in overlap with Takuya’s confirmation in line 21. After a second of silence (line 22), Zhao again claims to understand, and Takuya affirms that stance in line 24.

This example demonstrates that orthographic repair can be successful without actually using standard orthographic forms. Just a sufficient amount of the letters can be enough to lead to realization of intent and the reestablishment of intelligibility. But not all orthographic repairs lead to the reestablishment of mutual intelligibility. Indeed, some fail, as the examples in the next section will demonstrate.

1.2 Orthographic Repair Failures

No form of repair is categorically successful. Successful communication is premised on the ability to switch strategies as the interaction requires. In the following examples, we will examine orthographic repair sequences that are not successful; that is, one of

the interlocutors does not react to the orthographic repair like mutual intelligibility has been reestablished. But the reason why the orthographic repairs fail are easily recognizable, and these reasons are indicative of certain criteria orthographic repair must meet in order to be successful.

In the following example, Safiya, a Malaysian exchange student, is talking to Takumi, a Japanese student about the architecture in Singapore, a city that both students lived in contemporaneously before meeting for the first time in an English class in Japan. The conversation turns to a discussion of the features of Singapore that allow it to construct such high buildings, which leads to a miscommunication concerning the word “earthquake” that catalyzes an extremely long and somewhat humorous repair sequence. Although orthographic repair is attempted multiple times, orthographic repair is not the repair strategy that leads to the restoration of mutual intelligibility.

Example 11:

- 1 Safiya: plus they don't have {[of.kweik]},
2 (4.0)
3 Takumi: [what?]
4 Safiya: {[of.kweik]}.
5 (0.7)
6 Safiya: shaking ground. >you know< ground? >you know< underground?
7 Takumi: <underground train::?=>
8 Safiya: = no no no no. uhm. listen to me:: like::
hou::se,
9 Takumi: house,
10 Safiya: yeah. shaking.
11 (0.2)
12 Takumi: shaking. what is what means shaking? what [is
13 Safiya: [shaking like uhm
the house the wall.
14 you know wall?
15 Takumi: wa::r.
16 Safiya: yes. like uh shaking. how to say shake uh shaking like::
17 (0.1)
18 Takumi: ah chicken rice?
19 (0.1)

- 20 Safiya: sorry, hello?
- 21 Takumi: uh °so::rry.°
- 22 (2.0)
- 23 Safiya: shaking. S. H. A. (.) K. I. N. G. <shaking.>
- 24 (0.4)
- 25 Takumi: sh:: (0.5) one more spell.
- 26 Safiya: S. H. A,
- 27 Takumi: yes, (1.0) S:- S::, S?
- 28 Safiya: H.
- 29 Takumi: H.
- 30 Safiya: A.
- 31 Takumi: A.
- 32 Safiya: K::
- 33 Takumi: K,
- 34 Safiya: I::,
- 35 Takumi: I,
- 36 Safiya: N.
- 37 Takumi: N.
- 38 Safiya: G.
- 39 Takumi: G.
- 40 Safiya: shaking.
- 41 Takumi: <°shaking.°>
- 42 Safiya: yes. like when you dance, (.) you move your body::
- 43 (0.2)
- 44 Takumi: [ah
- 45 Safiya: [and you shake.
- 46 Takumi: shake your hands [mean::s
- 47 Safiya: [yeah like yeah shaking. yeah but the house is
shaking.
- 48 (0.3)
- 49 Safiya: [the house]
- 50 Takumi: [house:::]. house shaking?
- 51 Safiya: yes groun. I mean the groun. the groun. do you know groun?
- 52 Takumi: °groun°

- 53 Safiya: G. R. O. [U. N. D.]
- 54 Takumi: [G. R. O.]
- 55 (0.9)
- 56 Takumi: grun.
- 57 Safiya: yeah groun. groun is shaking.
- 58 (0.1)
- 59 Takumi: grou::nd shaking?
- 60 Safiya: ye:s like {[uf.kweik]}. de you know {[uf.kweik]}? do you want me to spell it for you?
- 61 Takumi: oh okay plea::se.
- 62 Safiya: E:: [A:
- 63 Takumi: [E. E.: A:,
- 64 Safiya: R:
- 65 Takumi: R:,
- 66 Safiya: E:
- 67 (0.2)
- 68 Takumi: uh? next.
- 69 Safiya: T. T.
- 70 Takumi: T::,
- 71 Safiya: E.
- 72 Takumi: E::
- 73 Safiya: no no no. T.
- 74 Takumi: T, [next.
- 75 Safiya: [yes. E. A. R. T. H. {[ε.ɪf]}]
- 76 (0.3)
- 77 Takumi: °T. H.°
- 78 (2.3) ((the sound of writing))
- 79 Takumi: {[ε::skwei]}
- 80 Safiya: yeah. {[uf.kwei]}. do you know that? it's uh nature disaster. you happen:: uh
- 81 we- we have it all the time in Japan.
- 82 (1.0)
- 83 Takumi: uh::m=
- 84 Safiya: =remember the march uh march eleven:: (0.7) remember::

- three one one?
- 85 (1.0)
- 86 Takumi: [thr:
- 87 Safiya: [je- uh in year two sousand an: (.) eleven?
- 88 Takumi: yes:.
- 89 Safiya: you remember that in sinden. (0.8) in:: fukushhima.
- 90 (1.0)
- 91 Takumi: ah: {[ɜ.ɪθ. ↑ kwei]}.
- 92 Safiya: yes {[ɜ.ɪs.kwei]}.
- 93 Takumi: ah ah {[ɜ.ɪs.kwei]}. ah.
- 94 Safiya: you- you- yeah the real pronunciation. the correct pronunciation will be {[↑ ɜ.ɪθ.kwei]}.
- 95 Takumi: {[↑ ɜ.ɪs. ↓ kwei]}.
- 96 Safiya: uhn.
- 97 Takumi: just now I can understand.
- 98 Safiya: >plus now you can understand okay.< so because they don't have earthquake in (.) I
- 99 I mean in singapore:: so: (.) they can build very tall: building.

Although Safiya attempts orthographic repair on both “shaking” (lines 22~39) and “ground” (line 53), neither is successful, and Safiya switches to another repair strategy to complete the repair sequences. This is likely because Takumi does not indicate that he understands the concepts behind the words, so orthographic repair cannot succeed. Furthermore, Safiya also attempts orthographic repair on “earthquake” between lines 60~79, but fails. This is likely because Safiya only completed the spelling of the first half of the word. These two failures suggest that for orthographic repair to be successful, the speaker needs to fully complete the spelling of a word and the interlocutor has to have access to the lexical semantics of the word. Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca might get by if one of these two criteria are met, as example 10 demonstrates, but a lack of both is catastrophic for the prospect of intelligibility repair. The next example will demonstrate something similar: orthographic repair is only successful if the interlocutor knows the word being spelled.

In the next example, Kristen, a German exchange student, and Qulin, a Chinese exchange student, were discussing the fare at the university cafeteria, which led into the following exchange about European food. Of course, what constitutes European food is

very different in Germany and China, and this aspect of culinary difference catalyzes a repair sequence in line 9.

Example 12:

- 1 Kristen: do you like european food?
 2 Qulin: ehn?
 3 (.)
 4 Kristen: do you like european food?
 5 Qulin: european foods=
 6 Kristen: =like Italian? or French? or German?
 7 Qulin: en I juste li:ke hm the (.) uh oa (.) oat- oatmeal.
 8 (0.2)
 9 Kristen: [wha
 10 Qulin: [it is. oatmeal?
 11 (0.7)
 12 Kristen: oatmee?
 13 Qulin: oat. O. A. T. (.) M. E. A. L.
 14 (0.2)
 15 Kristen: oatmeal,
 16 Qulin: oatmeal. hmt justuh withe milk.
 17 (0.1)
 18 Kristen: eh:: ()
 19 Qulin: ih uh it's sold. it was it's sold in China.
 20 Kristen: ah:: this is not.
 21 Qulin: hn hm [no::
 22 Kristen: [uh which. which taste is it? is it sweet or salty?
 23 Qulin: uh sweet. na- na sweet. uh uhn little sweet.
 24 Kristen: [(laughs)]
 25 Qulin: [(laughs)] I think. ((smiley voice)) not that sweet.
 24 Kristen: oh[::
 25 Qulin: [it's it's very different hm for chinese. for ↑ asian. (0.5) it's
 different.
 26 Kristen: I'm not sure I know it. (laughs)

Although Aku attempts orthographic repair, Kristen does not have the lexical knowledge to profit from the orthographic repair. Kristen does not know what oatmeal

is. This example seems to fail more because one of the students does not have the requisite lexical knowledge to understand oatmeal, and therefore no amount of orthographic repair is going to help. But the fact that one of the participants attempted to use orthographic repair manifests an orientation to the practice of orthographic repair as potentially efficacious. Besides, is oatmeal actually European food? The world may never know.

4. Discussion

Orthographic repair is a secondary repair strategy that Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca use after the failure of another repair strategy. That is, Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca orient to the lack of intelligibility in different ways. First, for those Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca of who are oriented to as unintelligible, orthographic repair is a secondary repair strategy: these speakers first deploy other repair strategies, and only after the failure of these repair strategies do they begin to entertain the usage of orthographic repair (examples 6, 7, & 9). Although conversation analysis offers no evidence for why this is the case, potential answers are easy to surmise: 1) because many other repair strategies are often monosyllabic, orthographic repair is potentially a much more intensive than other types of repair, and therefore necessitates a greater amount of interactive work; 2) orthographic repair is potentially a greater admission of a lack of communicative ability in a world that conceptualizes the phenomenon of repair as a manifestation of linguistic deficiency rather than a critical component of interactional competence. Second, for those Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca who orient to others as unintelligible, orthographic repair is a primary repair strategy: these speakers often explicitly request orthographic repair rather than other repair strategies (examples 8 & 10). This phenomenon is also easy to explain: orthographic repair is extremely effective, and allows Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca who are not used to the pronunciation of their partners to change the dimensions of the interaction into one in which phonology temporarily ceases to be as critical. After all, orthographic repair is a manifestation that some Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca are not very good at phonetic repair, and therefore resort to a medium with which many Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca have a greater degree of familiarity and control: spelling.

Of course, no repair strategy is infallible. There are certain conditions that have to

be met for orthographic repair to be successful: 1) the interlocutor must already have access to the semantic content of the idea that is being referred to, and if the interlocutor does not have access to this, then no amount of orthographic repair is going to matter (example 12); 2) the interlocutor must fully spell out the word as well, and half-spellings are not sufficient to restore intelligibility (example 11); 3) it helps if orthographic repair is conducted proximate to the trouble source (example 11). If an orthographic repair sequence between two Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca fails to meet some of these criteria, then the possibility of a successful reestablishment of intelligibility is concomitantly attenuated.

As with all forms of communication, successfully negotiating intelligibility during a miscommunication hinges more on an eclectic series of strategies rather than the deployment of any one single form of repair. Orthographic repair is a powerful form of repair, likely because it makes the phonology that is so usually critical for oral communicative success temporarily less important, but it is not the only repair strategy Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca should contain in their repertoire. Mastery of a medium like English as a Lingua Franca necessitates a greater span of repair skills than that.

5. Conclusion

Most English used in the world today is of the Lingua Franca variety. However, because of the protean nature of any Lingua Franca, repair is an inevitable phenomenon. How could it be any other way? And therein lies the central issue as regards repair and English as a Lingua Franca: is repair a manifestation of interactional competence or interactional incompetence? Of course, the presence of repair is evidence that one party lacks something, but the practice of repair, the completion of a repair sequence, is the highest exhibition of the ability to adapt. If interactive competence is defined as the ability to convey meaning, then repair is interactive competence. In a world with untold diversity, adaption to circumstances is a critical ability. Approximating a standard is not. Many examples in the corpus demonstrate that pronunciation approximate to a native speaker standard is not a guarantee of success. The willingness to adapt and repair, however, increases the chances of communicative success.

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