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Using stimulated recall to explore the use of communication strategies in English lingua franca interactions

Utilisation du rappel stimulé pour explorer l'emploi des stratégies de communication dans les interactions en anglais lingua franca

DOI 10.1515/jelf-2017-0004

Abstract: In this study, the communication strategy use of two pairs of English as a lingua franca (ELF) users was explored in relation to two contextual factors, the communicative goal and the ELF users' thoughts and feelings about the interactions. The ELF users were video-recorded engaging in researcher-designed tasks which required sharing information to achieve a joint goal. Subsequent stimulated recall with individual speakers targeted instances of potential or actual difficulties in understanding. Recordings and transcripts of the paired tasks and stimulated recall were used to identify communication strategies used to address difficulties in understanding. Results showed that overall, 11 different strategy types were seen across both pairs of speakers. However, the pair which achieved the shared goal showed a different pattern of strategy use and of interaction than the pair which did not achieve the shared goal. The two pairs also differed in how they attributed responsibility for successful communication. These findings, discussed in the context of previous ELF communication strategy research, highlight benefits of investigating interlocutors' contemporaneous thoughts and feelings and the ways in which communication strategies are used during interactions.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, intelligibility, communication strategies, contextual factors

Résumé: Dans cette recherche, on a enquêté sur les stratégies de communication utilisées par deux paires de locuteurs de langue seconde parlant l'anglais comme lingua franca (ELF). Aussi examiné était le rôle de deux facteurs contextuels:

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le but communicatif et les pensées et les sentiments des locuteurs. Les locuteurs ELF étaient enregistrés sur vidéo pendant qu'ils participaient à des tâches, dessinées par la chercheure, qui exigeaient le partage d'informations pour atteindre un objectif commun. Par après, l'identification des difficultés de compréhension potentielles ou réelles s'est effectuée auprès des locuteurs utilisant la méthodologie du rappel stimulé. Les données des enregistrements et des rappels stimulés ont permis d'identifier les stratégies de communication utilisées pour surmonter les difficultés de compréhension. Les résultats démontrent que sur toutes les paires de locuteurs, un total de 11 types de stratégies étaient utilisées. Toutefois, la paire qui a atteint le but avait recours à un modèle différent d'utilisation de stratégies et d'interaction qu'avait la paire qui n'a pas atteint le but. Les paires différaient aussi dans l'imputation de la responsabilité pour la communication réussie. Ces résultats, examinés dans le contexte de facteurs contextuels et de recherches précédentes sur des stratégies de communication en ELF, mettent en évidence les avantages de prendre en considération les pensées et les sentiments des locateurs pendant des interactions, ainsi que les manières dont ils y utilisent des stratégies de communication.

Mots-clés: anglais comme lingua franca, intelligibilité, stratégies de communication, facteurs contextuels

1 Introduction

Users of English as a lingua franca (ELF) can vary greatly from each other in their experience of learning and using English. They may frequently encounter other interlocutors with different kinds or levels of knowledge of the language, requiring the use of communication strategies in order to promote successful communication. Canagarajah (2007) maintains that ELF users can be considered as both speakers and learners.[1] They are engaging in ELF communication and simultaneously learning which linguistic and strategic resources can help them achieve affective communication in that context (Canagarajah 2007: 927). Previous research has explored how ELF users draw on communication strategies in order to successfully communicate with a range of interlocutors (e. g. Kaur 2010; Pitzl 2005). For example, an ELF user in the current study whose pronunciation of the word *weather* was not understood, successfully communicated a similar meaning by using the synonym *climate*. Numerous ELF researchers have noted

1 In this article, I use the term "ELF users" to refer to any speaker or listener using English as a lingua franca.

that a speaker's use of communication strategies is not simply determined by an ELF context alone (e. g. Pitzl 2005; Seidlhofer 2011; Weyns 2013). Rather, speakers may be influenced by a range of contextual factors, including the interlocutors, goals and genres involved in a given interaction.

The aim in the current study was therefore to explore the use of communication strategies in particular ELF interactions, while responding to the need to consider contextual factors, such as interlocutors and goals. The communication strategies investigated were those used by ELF users when they were faced with potential or actual difficulties in understanding. These difficulties, as well as some important contextual information, were identified using a stimulated recall protocol, an innovative technique in research on ELF interactions.

1.1 Approaches to analysing communication strategies in ELF interaction

Researchers who study communication strategies in ELF interactions have employed a number of approaches to and models of interaction analysis. A number of studies on communication strategies (CSs) in ELF interactions explicitly or implicitly draw on Conversation Analysis to describe and explain the use of CSs (e. g. Firth 1996; Kaur 2010). An essential principle of conversation analytic methodology is social interaction as a *joint* accomplishment, where "action and meaning are co-constructed" by the interlocutors (Jenks 2012: 391). In Conversation Analysis, findings about particular social interactions are derived from the data, which consist of transcripts of interactions, analysed in detail. Moreover, little to no background information about the participants, goals or larger context of the interaction is considered, and no predetermined categories are used. Therefore, CSs are not separately defined or classified. Researchers identify practices and patterns which occur, analysing what is accomplished interactionally through the use of these patterns and practices. For example, Schegloff grouped all "practices for dealing with problems or troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk" as accomplishment of *repair* (Schegloff 2000: 207).

Among other analytical approaches used to explore CSs in ELF interactions are accommodation theory (Cogo and Dewey, 2006), interactional discourse analysis, and analysis of ELF users' pragmatic routines (e. g. Björkman 2011; House 2003). These approaches can incorporate background information about interlocutors, goals, context and other situational features of the interaction. Indeed, researchers have noted differences in CSs observed across different contexts. For example, Mauranen's (2006) data from academic settings show

that difficulties in understanding are almost never ignored (i. e. *let it pass* strategy), as they sometimes were in Firth's (1996) data from business settings.

1.2 Investigating ELF use and context

Mortensen (2013: 38) suggests that the use of ELF is "one out of several different components that constitute a speech event." Therefore, other contextual factors should also be taken into account when explaining how ELF is used. This has been done in multiple ELF studies, including research analysing CSs. For example, Guido (2012) analysed ELF interactions between African asylum seekers and Italian intercultural mediators while incorporating factors such as interlocutors' typologically different first languages (L1s) and different cultural schemata and the marked power imbalance between interlocutors. In another study, Jenks (2012) linked the use of reproof or "reprehension" strategies to the particular "norms, expectations, and interactional and institutional goals of the communicative context" (Jenks 2012: 402), that is, voice-based chat rooms. In these studies, the communicative behaviour is analysed as interaction between ELF users which is shaped by, for example, the particular setting, interlocutors' characteristics, and communicative goals.

1.3 Communication strategies to prevent or repair difficulties in understanding in ELF

Among many possible CSs in ELF interaction, the current study targets solely those used to prevent or repair difficulties in understanding. Although CSs can potentially be defined in many ways, most research cited below has used the interactional approach to identifying CSs (e. g. Firth 1996), namely, CSs occur when interlocutors strategically draw on their available resources to jointly negotiate and implicitly agree upon meaning. In this section, I present previous research on the use of these strategies to prevent or repair difficulties in understanding in ELF interaction.

Early research occurred in the context of the workplace. Firth (1996) analysed English phone conversations between European, Asian and Middle Eastern businesspeople. He found that when part of one interlocutor's utterance seemed not to be understood by another interlocutor but was not crucial to the overall message, the second interlocutor would frequently "let it pass" unless it later became essential to understanding the message. Pitzl (2005) examined business meetings between European and Asian ELF users, targeting instances of non-

understanding, "when the listener realises s/he cannot make sense of an utterance" (Bremer 1996, as cited in Pitzl 2005: 52–53). In these meetings, the few obvious cases of non-understanding were not "let pass" but were typically signalled by repeating problematic words or phrases. The meaning of the words or phrases was then negotiated by rephrasing or elaborating on the words or phrases in question.

Much recent research on difficulties in understanding has taken place in academic settings. For instance, teachers of English from different Asian countries taking a course in Singapore were recorded chatting to each other (Deterding and Kirkpatrick 2006; Kirkpatrick 2007). Few difficulties in understanding were evident, but those which did occur were usually signalled by clarification or repetition requests (*Pardon*?) or inappropriate responses to questions. The interlocutors then negotiated the meaning of the initial utterance through rephrasing or elaboration. When interlocutors did not explicitly signal lack of understanding, remaining silent or providing neutral backchannelling (*Mmm*) after hearing the trigger utterance, difficulties in understanding tended to remain unresolved. Interlocutors also used strategies to prevent difficulties in understanding, such as naming topics or topic changes, thus making them explicit in the interactions.

Kaur (2010, Kaur 2011, Kaur 2012) investigated how international graduate students at an English-medium program in Malaysia worked to pre-empt or repair difficulties in understanding during naturally occurring conversations and discussions. Interlocutors repeated or rephrased their own utterances following both implicit and explicit signs of difficulty in understanding (e. g. prolonged silence or clarification questions, respectively). These strategies led to apparent resolution of the difficulty in understanding (see also Matsumoto 2011).

Several studies have documented both types and distributions of particular strategies used by ELF users during post-secondary classes, lectures, seminars and group-work sessions (Björkman 2011; Smit 2010), particularly when faced with difficulties in understanding. For example, Mauranen (2006) found that difficulties in understanding were explicitly signalled through clarification questions or repetitions of problematic words, but most cases of misunderstanding were not indicated in targeted or focussed ways. Interlocutors responded to these difficulties in various ways. Synonyms were provided, statements were rephrased or sometimes elaborated on. ELF users would also work to prevent potential misunderstanding in various ways, by checking interlocutors' or their own comprehension (e. g. *Yeah?* or *Did I understand right?*) or very frequently by self-repairing their own utterances (e. g. *It will be no questions eh it will be no conflicts*). In a longitudinal study, Smit (2010) explored the occurrence of and reaction to repairables, that is, "what is being repaired" (Smit 2010: 168) in

classroom interactions. Repairables were not identified in isolation, but only within interactions as the target of repair in the course of "negotiating or constructing understanding" (Smit 2010: 169). At the beginning of the program, students and especially teachers did target mishearings (unintelligible speech) for repair by using clarification requests. However, as the program continued, repair related to mishearings greatly decreased, which Smit attributed to teachers and learners becoming more familiar with the academic content and with each other's speech. Like Mauranen, Smit noted that the ELF users consistently demonstrated a commitment to understanding and being understood. When difficulties arose in understanding a message or topic, ELF users typically addressed the difficulties at the moment they appeared.

Findings on CS use for difficulties in understanding in ELF show some similarities as well as some differences. In many cases, ELF users repeated, rephrased or elaborated on utterances when interlocutors signalled difficulties in understanding, although different combinations of CSs were used in different studies. In most studies, ELF users worked to prevent, not simply address, difficulties in understanding. However, in some studies, ELF users addressed every difficulty, while in other studies, occasionally users did not explicitly signal that they had difficulty understanding other interlocutors. Much has been learned about the frequency and kinds of CSs used in particular contexts for ELF interaction. However, the relative use of specific CSs, such as let it pass, may not be as significant as the way that particular CSs are used in a given interaction. One aspect of the interaction which can shape the use of CSs by ELF interlocutors is the communicative context.

1.4 Links between context and communicative behaviour

Reviews of research in ELF contexts (e. g. Jenkins et al. 2011; Murray 2012) tend to emphasize the commonalities in CS use. However, as Mortensen (2013) notes, other contextual factors also contribute to communicative behaviour. For instance, Kirkpatrick (2007) suggests that a cultural notion of "face" shared by the ELF users in his study may have shaped their CS use. Nevertheless, the role of interlocutors as a contextual factor has rarely been investigated in ELF interactions. One way to access interlocutors' knowledge is to examine interlocutors' memories of their cognitions (thoughts and feelings) during interaction. Methodologies which elicit these types of memories rely on stimulated recall as a research tool (Mackey and Gass 2005). House (2003) incorporated stimulated recall to explore CS use in ELF interaction. She audio-recorded international students in Germany, who engaged in discussions based on a

researcher-provided prompt. Several weeks later, House interviewed each student, who listened to excerpts and read transcripts of instances indicating "imminent interactional trouble" (House 2003: 567). In the stimulated recall, students had different explanations for one commonly observed strategy, namely, repetition of the last phrase or word from their interlocutor's previous turn. One student suggested that repetition helped her remember and understand the previous speech and show that she was listening attentively. For another student, repetition helped him respond to the previous turn.

It is clear that, moment by moment, repetition across turns can be used for different communicative functions in ELF interaction. Using detailed interaction analyses, Cogo and Dewey (2006) and Cogo (2009) also found that this type of repetition was used to support other interlocutors. However, by eliciting interlocutors' memories of the interactions, House (2003) was able to identify multiple, *interlocutor-specific* purposes for using that strategy, some of which were related to understanding and some of which had to do with politeness or claiming a turn. Eliciting the interlocutors' cognitions thus allowed House to integrate her interpretation with interlocutors' own accounts of how repetition was used, resulting in a more comprehensive analysis. These findings suggest that ELF users have different reasons for using similar CSs, even in similar contexts; therefore, the communicative effect of CSs should ideally be determined not simply by their frequency, distribution or context, but also by interlocutors' interpretations of how CSs were used in that particular interaction.

1.5 ELF use and naturalistic interaction

In most published studies on ELF interaction, data are taken from conversations or interactions which occur naturally in those contexts, rather than being arranged by the researcher. Seidlhofer's (2011: 7) definition of ELF suggests that when interlocutors of different L1s choose to use English to communicate with each other, English is being used as a lingua franca. The research site for the current study was an English-medium university, where English is the default language for interacting with (an) unfamiliar interlocutor(s), the unspoken assumption being that English, as opposed to another language, is the language in which all potential interlocutors can functionally communicate. It is in this light that the unscripted interactions in English described in the current study, elicited at the English-medium university from researcher-designed communicative tasks, are presented as authentic use of ELF in interaction, though the interactions were not naturalistic.

Questions have been posed about the general applicability of findings from ELF interactions in communication which did not occur naturally (e. g. Cogo and Dewey 2006; Jenkins et al. 2011). Several researchers have explored ELF interaction by creating contexts for ELF users to communicate, whether in targeted discussions or casual conversations (see House 2003; Jenkins 2000; Lesznyák 2002). Although such communication elicited by researchers is not naturalistic, findings from naturalistic ELF interaction are not *inevitably* applicable to the majority of naturalistic ELF interactions either. As mentioned above, Jenks (2012) noted the importance of the communicative context and the accompanying norms, expectations and goals in shaping the appropriateness of interactive behaviour. Results from naturalistic ELF interaction in a particular communicative context may therefore be substantially different from findings from a different communicative context.

One of the benefits of researcher-elicited communication is that the design of the communication task can influence some of the above-mentioned expectations, goals or other cognitions from interlocutors; researchers can then analyse how ELF interaction and interlocutors' expectations and goals for communication might affect each other. An additional benefit to researcher-elicited communication is that ELF interlocutors' norms, expectations and goals for particular interactions can often be explored in a more direct manner than is typical in research on naturalistic interaction. This includes the use of stimulated recall. Researcher-elicited communication thus cannot substitute for naturalistic interaction, but can focus by design on particular aspects of interaction.

2 The current study

ELF users need to be creative and adaptive, drawing on all resources available in order to bring about successful communication. ELF users also have particular reasons for choosing to use specific strategies at particular moments in an interaction. The goal of the current study was therefore to provide a picture of CS use in particular instances of ELF communication by combining a detailed analysis of two interactions with an examination of the interlocutors' perspectives on interaction, with findings showing added benefits of stimulated recall for analysis of ELF interaction.

The targeted data included two pairs of ELF users interacting as part of a researcher-designed communication task. The specific contextual factors explored were the goals of the communication task and the ELF users' cognitions, specifically their interpretations of the interaction. In the communication tasks, the ELF users needed to transmit information that was unknown to their

partner in order to achieve a specific, shared goal. All interlocutors also completed a stimulated recall session in which they were asked to identify all instances of potential or actual difficulties in understanding and to describe their thoughts and feelings. A novel contribution of this study is that it focuses not only on how particular ELF interlocutors use strategies to manage potential or actual problems in communicating but also on how this strategy use is linked to interlocutors' self-reported memories of their thoughts and feelings (cognitions) during the interaction. This focus supports a broader understanding of ELF users' motivations for their communicative choices, and in this instance, allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how (and perhaps why) particular CSs were used. The following research questions were asked:

1. What types of CSs are used to address potential or actual difficulties in understanding in interactions between ELF users exchanging information to reach a specific, shared goal?
2. How do the ELF users use and interpret the use of these CSs when the users have (a) achieved or (b) not achieved the shared goal?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The four participants targeted here were from a group of 40 ELF users who were students at an English-medium university in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The official language of Quebec is French, but at the university and in the multilingual and multicultural city of Montreal, students had opportunities to hear and use various languages, including their L1s. However, English was the language of instruction at the university. Participants were recruited through notices (in English) posted throughout the university campus inviting them to participate in speaking tasks, with compensation. All participants self-reported L1s other than English. Before, during and after the speaking tasks, participants were not directed to use English but used it as the predominant language of communication at the university and as their communicative medium of choice with unfamiliar interlocutors in the university setting. Each participant engaged in different researcher-designed interactive tasks with a previously unknown partner of a different L1. The particular task analysed in this study was a map task (described below). The participants in this study made up two pairs, selected for analysis because transcription of their map task interactions had shown extensive negotiation of meaning. One pair had achieved the shared goal

of the task and the other pair had not fully achieved this goal, which allowed the chance to examine how interlocutors' use of CSs and their perceptions of interaction were related to goal achievement.

One pair consisted of two male doctoral students in engineering: Jun Yi and Hamal (all names are pseudonyms). The second pair was made up of Jing, a female MA student in Business Administration, and Ajit, a male MA student in electrical engineering. Participants had resided in Montreal for a mean of 1.6 years (0.5–3). Their academic programs had different admission requirements for English proficiency scores. However, all four had received at minimum an overall score of 85 for TOEFL iBT or 6.4 for the IELTS proficiency tests, which was deemed sufficient to pursue graduate academic degrees. Prior to completing the task, participants also self-rated their English ability in listening and speaking on a nine-point Likert scale (1 = *low*, 9 = *high*). To summarize, in each pair the interlocutors were at the same level of graduate studies and had had similar proficiency scores and self-ratings for listening and speaking, although Jing's IELTS score for listening was slightly higher than her partner's. Table 1 summarizes participant information.

Table 1: Participants' background data.

	Jun Yi	Hamal	Jing	Ajit
Native language	Mandarin	Arabic	Mandarin	Bengali
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male
Program	PhD, Mechanical Engineering	PhD, Civil Engineering	MA, Business Administration	MA, Electrical Engineering
Age	29	36	22	30
Length of residence in Canada (years)	1.5	3	1.5	0.5
English test scores	TOEFL iBT	TOEFL iBT	IELTS	IELTS
listening	22	23	8.5	7
speaking	19	18	6	6.5
overall	91	85	6.5	7
English self-rating (1–9)				
listening	6	6	8	8
speaking	5	6	8	7

3.2 Procedure

The participants read and completed the consent form and a questionnaire about their biographical information and language learning history and abilities. In the

first phase of data collection, they were paired and completed four interactive speaking tasks, each preceded by written and spoken instructions. The tasks were carried out in a quiet room and were recorded onto a laptop computer using a digital video camera and two lapel-mounted wireless microphones. The first task was an interactive warm-up task to allow participants to become more comfortable and familiar with each other. Participants then engaged in three speaking tasks. The map task (the second of the three tasks) is the focus of this analysis.

The map task was an information-exchange task, where both participants were required to exchange information that was unknown to their partner in order to achieve a specific, shared goal (Ellis 2003). Each participant had one of two versions of a map. One version showed all ten of the landmarks on the map, but did not have a route. The other version showed a route and six of the ten landmarks. The participants faced each other across a table, with a barrier blocking a view of their partner's map. They were told orally and in writing that they each had an incomplete map: one participants' map had the complete route, while the other's map had all the landmarks. They were instructed to describe their maps to each other in order to accurately add the missing information and finish with two similar, complete maps (the goal). They had seven minutes to do the task.

The next phase of data collection began within 15 minutes of completing the map task. This phase elicited participants' recall and perceptions of the interaction during the four tasks. Participants went to separate rooms to do a stimulated recall task, where each participant worked individually with a research assistant (RA) who had been present during the interactive tasks but had not previewed the videos before the stimulated recall. Before replaying the task videos on a computer, the RA explained the main focus of the stimulated recall, which was the participant's memories of instances when at least one of the partners was faced with potential or actual difficulties in understanding or in being understood. The participant was encouraged to use the computer mouse to stop the recording at any point to tell the RA what the participant was thinking. The participant was also encouraged to stop the recording at any time when, during the task, he or she had noted (a) speech that was difficult to understand or (b) an attempt to prevent or repair difficulties in understanding experienced either by the participant or by his or her partner. The participant was encouraged to describe his or her thoughts at that moment in the original task. In order to become familiar with the demands of the stimulated recall task, the participant first viewed the warm-up task. The stimulated recall task then continued, with the video of the map task being shown to the participant. The entire stimulated recall session was audio-recorded. The RAs also took notes about participants' comments and their timing in relation to the original task.

3.2.1 Data analysis

The dataset consisted of the videos of the two pairs during the map task and the audio recordings and notes of each participant's stimulated recall. An initial analysis involved identification of difficulties in understanding, conducted by the two RAs who had participated in the stimulated recalls. They had previously completed graduate-level courses on research methodology and phonology and had received individualized training on the task of reviewing stimulated recall protocols. The RAs transcribed participants' comments and identified reports of potential or actual difficulties in understanding (e. g. *Here, I didn't get it because ... she was using the word, "pass by" but I didn't get it*). By tagging the videos of the map task, the RAs then located all episodes commented on in stimulated recall reports.

In a subsequent data analysis, the four participants' use of CSs was analysed. Two additional RAs were trained in using modified Conversation Analysis conventions to transcribe the map task recordings (Liddicoat 2011). These RAs had completed undergraduate degrees, had previously received training in using the International Phonetic Alphabet, and had taught English as a second or foreign language (L2) for a minimum of one year. The recordings were first transcribed and verified. The RAs then used both the transcripts and the notes from the earlier analysis to identify all instances where one or both participants had shown or reported difficulties in understanding during the map task. The relevant periods in the transcripts and recordings were closely analysed for the types of CSs used or reported by either participant.

For the analysis of CSs, the taxonomy of CSs from Dörnyei and Kormos (1998) was initially consulted, and some categories were added.[2] The resulting scheme featured 11 categories of CSs found in the current dataset in reference to potential or actual difficulties in understanding (see Table 2 for examples). One hundred percent of the coded transcripts were checked by a second coder. Exact agreement was obtained for 94.6 % of the observations, indicating high inter-coder consistency. In instances where the coders disagreed, consensus was achieved through discussion.

2 Similar to Mauranen (2006), I have chosen to use strategies mentioned in L2 acquisition research as tools for describing observable behaviour in ELF interactions. My use of Dörnyei and Kormos' taxonomy in no way endorses notions of interlanguage or development towards a native norm.

Table 2: Examples of communication strategies addressing difficulties in understanding.

Strategy type	Example
Ask for clarification	The what? What is it?
Ask for confirmation	You said it's finished?
Check comprehension	Between the flag and the finish it's a mountain. You know?
Self-repair – language	It's around one distance. One unit.
Self-repair – content	And the direction is hmmm about forty about thirty degree
Self-repeat	Up to flag yeah. Up to flag and the it will go down …
Other-repeat	A: The route is going below the ship. B: The route is going below the ship. OK.
Rephrase	Stop mark, yeah, the stop sign.
Elaborate (provide additional related information)	A: Now you are almost (.) on the corner of the page. B: On the, on the wha? A: The corner. Like (.) you are under the house and under the trees.
Summarize	A: So now it's a we should do it again so start from the start (.) bottom left …
Call attention	So here is one thing that I want you to know …
Gesture/visual aid	((waves hand side to side))

4 Results

4.1 Types of strategies used

The first research question asked what types of CSs were used to address potential or actual difficulties in understanding in interactions between ELF users. Table 3

Table 3: Frequency of strategy use.

Strategy type	Jun Yi	Hamal	Ajit	Jing
Ask for clarification	4	8	5	1
Ask for confirmation	2	19	4	8
Check comprehension	8	0	0	1
Self-repair – language	0	1	1	0
Self-repair – content	4	0	2	1
Other-repeat	5	18	8	2
Rephrase	6	2	1	2
Elaborate	3	3	0	6
Summarize	2	1	0	4
Call attention	2	1	0	2
Gesture/visual aid	35	22	0	2

shows the frequency of strategy use by each interlocutor. Overall, both pairs used similar strategy types. However, their distribution varied greatly within and between pairs. For example, in Hamal and Jun Yi's pair, Hamal would repeat what Jun Yi had just said, and quite frequently asked Jun Yi to clarify meaning or to confirm Hamal's understanding. Jun Yi used these strategies much less frequently, but he would check to make sure Hamal had understood his meaning and would rephrase his utterances.

In Ajit and Jing's pair, Ajit asked Jing to clarify meaning or to confirm Ajit's understanding. However, Jing tended not to ask for clarification but only for confirmation that she had understood correctly. Ajit tended to repeat Jing's utterances more than the converse. Jing was the only one of the pair to elaborate on her utterances, and she also tended to give summaries of her understanding to that point. The one strategy type which was not shared between pairs was the use of gesturing or visual aids. Both pairs had been instructed by the RA not to show their maps or to point. However, Jun Yi and to a lesser extent Hamal frequently made gestures above the barrier in the middle of the table while completing the task. Thus, both pairs used similar types of strategies when addressing potential or actual difficulties in understanding, but differed from each other in the frequency with which they used a given strategy during the task.

4.2 Strategy use when shared goal is not achieved (Jun Yi and Hamal)

The second research question asked how the ELF users who achieved or did not achieve a shared goal used these strategies and how they interpreted this use. The first pair of participants (Jun Yi–Hamal) did not achieve the shared goal of producing two similar, complete maps. The nature of their CS use is demonstrated in the way that Jun Yi began the map task (Excerpt [1]). He had a version of the map with a complete route, but with missing landmarks. He started by using spatial references which required a shared unit of measurement and orientation to an *x* and *y* axis, including a route which he described in terms of degrees from the *x* axis (see the appendix for transcription notations used in the excerpts of interaction).

(1) Beginning map task
JY: Listen for <u>me</u> OK =
H: = OK I'm listening =

→ JY: = do you know how long is one millime- one minimetre ((holds left thumb and forefinger above barrier about three centimetres apart)) just this length ((holds pencil above barrier in right hand and indicates pencil eraser with forefinger)) remember↑ (.) what I mean is I will let you draw some points. The the:: the distance between points is this length (.)
H: OK =
JY: = OK
JY: The first point is start [S].
H: [yes]
JY: Draw a point at S.
JY: And draw another point at sixth length of ↓this ((holds pencil above barrier and indicates eraser)).
H: So I draw a point at S.

From the beginning, Jun Yi took charge of how the task would be conducted. He started to use gestures almost from his first utterance, and introduced and implemented his approach towards spatial references, using them to describe the route to Hamal. When Jun Yi and Hamal separately viewed this part of the interaction in the stimulated recall, they both commented on the use of this system for spatial reference.

(2) Stimulated recall – spatial reference
JY: I want to double-check we have the same length to measure because it's very important to make sure we have same units of length.

(3) Stimulated recall – spatial reference
H: You know, he invent a unit to measure. With a part of the pencil.

The pair continued to use this spatial reference system for another minute and a half, with Jun Yi providing information about the route and Hamal frequently asking for clarification or confirming his understanding. However, Hamal then attempted to provide Jun Yi with some information about a landmark.

(4) Hamal's attempts to describe landmark
JY: OK this point is OK?
H: Yeah.
JY: OK. and from this ↑pond in y direction ((holds pencil upright above barrier))
H: OK.
JY: ((mumbling to himself))

→ H: Do you have landmark here? I have landmark ↑here like ↓trees-
→ JY: Do you have a eraser? ((holds pencil above barrier; puts finger on top of eraser))
H: Yeah.
JY: OK then this is the ↑same ↓length. ((puts thumb behind eraser.))
H: Yeah (.) all this? ((holds pencil above barrier. Puts thumb behind eraser))
JY: Yeah yeah yeah the same ↓ok draw the third point (.) two point five length of this ((holds pencil above barrier and indicates eraser with thumb)) [in y] direction.
H: [two point?] OK two point.
JY: °OK° (3.0) OK?
H: But the uh ↑here-
JY: Two point five
→ H: Hhhere I I found three ↓trees
→ JY: I need you to just finish the road firstly.
H: °OK° =
JY: = OK
H: Two?
JY: (1.7) Our original point is start (1.0) the corner of start.

Three points stand out in this excerpt. First, Jun Yi was determined to complete the task using a particular process, even ignoring Hamal's contributions or demanding that Hamal wait until Jun Yi had finished describing his own map. Second, both interlocutors, especially Jun Yi, used gestures quite frequently. Finally, although Hamal tried twice to describe part of his map, when he was ignored or told to wait, he did not show any negative reaction. He continued, asking for clarification or confirmation in order to accurately reproduce the route Jun Yi was describing. Although both interlocutors viewed this part of the task in the stimulated recall, only Hamal made any comments about it.

(5) Stimulated recall – first attempt describing landmarks
H: Here I'd like to describe him at the same time the landmark. But he didn't accept, he'd like to finish his route and after he finish I start. But in this way we couldn't finish, we couldn't finish the task.

At this point in the stimulated recall, Hamal attributed the lack of task completion to Jun Yi's insistence that the missing route be completed before describing the missing landmarks. However, Hamal did not seem to be upset by this insistence. After this episode in the map task, there was further negotiation

of meaning about the missing route. In the stimulated recall, Hamal commented on two periods, 40 seconds and 60 seconds long, respectively, where much negotiation was occurring about a precise direction.

(6) Stimulated recall – clarifying a direction
H: You know, he waste a lot of time. Waste a lot of time.
H: He talks long long time. He talks all seven minutes.

Jun Yi eventually stated that he was finished describing the route and requested that Hamal describe the missing landmarks, shown in Excerpt (7). At this point, six and a half minutes had passed since the task had started.

(7) Describing landmarks
→ JY: OK tell me your landmark. OK you can just-
→ H: So you have between two and ↑three
JY: Two and three (.) and a half?
H: There is three trees.
JY: Mm?
H: Between point two and three ((points forefinger to his own map near bottom then to a point a bit higher))
JY: Unh.
H: You have three ↓trees.
JY: Three (.) trees?
H: Trees yeah [you have this?]
JY: [Oh OK] eh eh and they are-
H: You have it?
JY: No I don't have ↓tree they are distributed ↓uniformly (1.5)
→ H: Yeah it's three trees ((gently chops hand up and down several times.)) [just-]
JY: [In] the same ↓distance
H: No it's uh close to each other ((shakes outside palm facing JY at barrier level)) it's uh (1.0)
JY: Close to each other in a half in a half (0.9) in a in a point of two and three.
H: Yeah, you start, you start from the middle ((left hand horizontal pointing to Hamal's left))

Jun Yi begins the description of landmarks by starting to give Hamal instructions. However, Hamal interrupts Jun Yi and starts describing a landmark (three trees) in relation to the points on the route that Jun Yi had described. Jun Yi

requests clarification and confirmation to ensure that he has correctly understood what the landmark is. His confusion may be due to Hamal's consistent pronunciation of *three trees* with a flapped r/θri triz/. Jun Yi asks Hamal twice for information and clarification about how the trees are spaced in relation to each other, with Hamal making many gestures while he describes the trees' location. In the stimulated recall, only Jun Yi made any comments about this period.

(8) Stimulated recall – describing tree landmarks
JY: I think my partner didn't describe the distance accurately, so his distance made me a little bit confusing. So that I confirm this distance again and again, waste a lot of time.

In fact, the last utterance by Hamal in Excerpt (7) was the final utterance in the task, since the seven-minute time limit had expired. Jun Yi made a final comment in the stimulated recall about the task overall.

(9) Stimulated recall – map task in general
JY: Maybe we waste too much time on the last – on the landmarks because my partner cannot describe the distance efficiently. He just ... although from his view it's very clear the landmark, it's located here, but as for me, I cannot see the map. He should thinking the position from my perspective.

4.3 Strategy use when shared goal is achieved (Jing and Ajit)

The other pair of speakers (Jing–Ajit) completed the map task within the allotted time. They used similar strategies as the first pair, but their strategy use showed a different pattern of interaction. Like the first pair, Jing and Ajit engaged in much negotiation of meaning. The use of strategies to address difficulties in understanding can be clearly seen in Excerpt (10), when Jing was trying to describe a landmark and its location to Ajit, who had difficulty understanding the nature and position of the landmark. Jing had a version of the map with a missing route, but with a complete set of landmarks.

(10) Describing landmark
J: So here is one thing that I want
you to know. There is a stop mark between the house
→ and the flag (1.2) the stop mark is right above the house but a little bit ↓below.

A: (.) Uh there is a stop mark?
→ J: Stop mark yeah (.) the stop sign. (1.1) you just put the stop there.
→ A: OK stop uh above the house?
→ J: About its right above the house. (1.5) like on the paper:: (1.7)
A: OK =
J: = six or five centimeters (0.2) high.
A: Ahh OK:: [above the house]
J: [so the road now]
→ A: On the right OK.
J: OK.
→ A: On the right or left?
→ J: Right above the (.) house it's just on top of the house.
A: ↓ahhh.
→ J: The stop sign is on the:: (.) left of the flag.
A: (1.8) left OK.
J: OK you awright?
A: Yeah

Jing initially used an unusual choice of words ("stop mark") to describe the landmark. Ajit requested clarification of *stop mark*, and Jing rephrased to use the more standard term *stop sign*. Ajit also had difficulty understanding the phrase of location "right above", which he initially seemed to believe meant "on the right and above". With Ajit requesting confirmation and clarification of the location, Jing repeated and rephrased her utterances and gave additional information about the landmark's position until both speakers were satisfied that the position was understood. Both speakers commented on this period in the stimulated recall.

(11) Stimulated recall – describing stop sign
J: I think here ... I pretty clearly tell him what to do: just put the sign right above – cause I know that he's missing the stop sign. So I said to – I even gave him the length – five or six centimetres right above the house but he seems like a bit confused about where to put the stop sign.
J: It's a bit difficult to tell the left? ... Right? You see, I told him that the stop sign is on the left of the flag. He paused for 2 seconds and then oh, yes!

(12) Stimulated recall – describing stop sign
A: She said right above, actually it was left the house.

The stimulated recalls show, first, that Jing believed that she had clearly communicated the location of the stop sign. However, she realized that, at least

initially, Ajit was not sure where the stop sign was located. In her second utterance describing this period in the stimulated recall, Jing stated that Ajit had difficulty figuring out whether the stop sign was on the left or right. In Ajit's stimulated recall, he repeated verbatim the phrase "right above", but stated that Jing had initially given incorrect information about whether the stop sign was on the right or the left.

Due to space considerations, additional excerpts from Ajit and Jing's map task cannot be shown. However, during the task, Jing used the phrase "right above" or "right below" three more times to refer to landmarks. Each time, Ajit signalled difficulty in understanding and each time, the pair negotiated meaning until they both believed the location of the particular landmark was understood. It is clear from both stimulated recalls that neither speaker realized the source of difficulty in understanding. Jing did not realize that Ajit understood "right above" as "on the right and above," while Ajit did not realize that "right above" meant "immediately above," not "on the right and above." Despite this difficulty, Jing and Ajit completed the task, with Jing accurately recreating the missing route and Ajit accurately placing all but one of the landmarks, the stop sign described in the excerpt, which he placed above and to the right of the house. It is notable, though, that the other three landmarks which Jing described as "right above" or "right below" another landmark, were accurately placed by Ajit.

5 Discussion

The current study provided an in-depth look at CS use by ELF users, as a function of shared goal achievement and interlocutors' thoughts and feelings, by analysing both interaction transcripts and interlocutors' reports from stimulated recall. The types of CSs observed were generally similar across the two interactions, though each person used different sets of strategies. Both pairs were quite persistent in using various strategies to manage potential or actual misunderstandings, corresponding to findings from previous research that ELF users showed persistence to understand and to be understood (e. g. Pitzl 2005; Smit 2010). However, one pair (Jing–Ajit) achieved the shared goal of producing two complete and similar maps in the allotted seven minutes, while the other (Jun Yi–Hamal) achieved only part of the goal, replicating Jun Yi's route on Hamal's map to a high level of accuracy.

5.1 Strategy use and interaction dynamics

The CSs used by both pairs were generally similar in type to those observed in previous research on ELF users, such as repetition or clarification requests to

signal difficulties in understanding, and elaboration and rephrasing to address the difficulties (e. g. Mauranen 2006; Matsumoto 2011). None of the ELF users in the current study drew on the "let it pass" strategy (Firth 1996). This is likely because to achieve the shared goal of two complete, similar maps, the interlocutors needed to accurately exchange information, so difficulties in understanding had to be signalled and addressed. In other words, the design of the communication task encouraged listeners to engage in close listening and accommodation to their interlocutor, by repeating the interlocutors' words or phrases (Cogo and Dewey 2006). Similar to House (2003), the interaction examined in this study was not naturalistic; it was elicited using a researcher-provided communication task with interlocutors unfamiliar with each other. The communication task probably elicited greater use of strategies to address difficulties in understanding than some naturalistic interactions. However, I would argue that in working towards the shared goal, the ELF users in the current study showed an unmistakable focus on meaning, not language, and were using ELF in authentic communication.

In terms of how CSs were used and interpreted by these ELF users, the excerpts and the stimulated recalls show clear differences both within and between the pairs. These differences were likely related to what has been referred to as participant orientation or patterns of pair or dyadic interaction (Kim and McDonough 2008; Storch 2002). Throughout Jun Yi and Hamal's interaction, Jun Yi consistently strove to manage the interaction. For example, when discussing the route, Jun Yi first set a common reference for measurement and spatial orientation, then used that reference to describe the route on the map, sometimes checking Hamal's comprehension. When Hamal did attempt to tell Jun Yi about the location of a landmark, Jun Yi first ignored him, then told him to complete the route first. When the landmarks were being discussed, Jun Yi initially attempted to tell Hamal how to complete that part of the task. In other words, whether Jun Yi possessed or whether he required missing information, he consistently tried to manage the interaction and to shape Hamal's contributions to the interaction. For the most part, Hamal did not challenge this pattern of interaction and usually ceded control of the interaction to his partner. Researchers have termed this pattern of interaction dominant/passive (Storch 2002) or asymmetric (Galaczi 2008).

The distribution of CSs in Jing and Ajit's interaction, shown in Table 3, reflected another pattern. Generally, Jing assumed responsibility for the rhythm of the interaction. She used various CSs to ensure that she and Ajit understood each other, by asking for confirmation of her understanding of an utterance, elaborating on previous information when Ajit signaled difficulty understanding, and summarizing what had been said or what she understood to that point.

However, Excerpt (10) shows that even when she was prepared to go to the next item (*so the road now*), she was attentive to Ajit's move to continue discussing the previous item (*On the right OK*). Jing's openness to Ajit's contributions was apparent throughout the transcript. Though her speech often overlapped with that of Ajit, Jing rarely claimed a turn before Ajit had clearly finished or relinquished his turn. Researchers have called this pattern of interaction collaborative (Galaczi 2008) or expert/novice (Storch 2002), where one interlocutor (expert) has more control over the interaction but both interlocutors show high participation and engagement with each other's contributions.

5.2 Strategy use as a shared responsibility

In research on L2 acquisition, studies on adult learners' patterns of interaction have often explored how paired interaction might be shaped by differences in L2 proficiency and how different interaction patterns might influence potential L2 development. Findings have usually shown that, regardless of proficiency, learners who interact collaboratively show more transfer of knowledge than learners whose interaction is not collaborative (e. g. Storch 2002). However, Kim and McDonough (2008) found that some L2 learners who had been dominant or collaborative when interacting with an intermediate interlocutor became collaborative or passive, respectively, with an advanced interlocutor. This difference may have been due to learners' perception that their interlocutors were of higher language proficiency.

These descriptions of L2 learner interaction patterns are relevant for ELF research because, as Jenks (2012: 403) notes, "ELF research must expand its empirical database in order to understand the varied ways in which ELF interactions are managed." The communication in the current study was not naturalistic, but was authentic in that interlocutors focused on accomplishing the task goal and almost never focused on language form in itself. That is, language proficiency differences and language learning were not made relevant.[3] What was relevant, however, concerned patterns of interaction. The ELF users in this study had to communicate about direction and distance accurately and efficiently to successfully achieve the shared goal of two complete, similar maps. In one pair, one interlocutor's use of CSs seems to have been affected by his

3 ELF is an interactional phenomenon. For any given interaction, a speaker can show greater or lesser expertise in using ELF for his or her communicative purposes. Moreover, the ELF users in these interactions showed almost no attention to language form, as seen by the almost total lack of attempts to repair form.

perception of his proficiency *in the task*; this perception also influenced the pattern of interaction and the explanations made about task success.

In the video recording, an RA gave instructions just before Jun Yi and Hamal's map task. Jun Yi told the RA with a smile, "I think this task is too easy for me. My research is about computer graphics," then addressing Hamal, "Leave this one to me." Given these statements, Jun Yi's subsequent behaviour in managing and generally dominating the interaction during the task is not surprising. Although Jun Yi seemed to believe that he was especially suited to do this task and did communicate his information with a high level of precision, the joint goal was not achieved. Both Jun Yi and Hamal believed that the other's behaviour was the reason for not achieving the goal, and in Jun Yi's case, his behaviour may have been due to his self-perceived high proficiency in doing tasks of this kind.

The second pair, Jing and Ajit, did not make any explicit references to their proficiency in doing the communication task. However, they achieved the shared goal. This was despite the fact that neither was aware that they had different understandings of the phrases *right above* and *right below*. After using "right above" or "right below" with three other landmarks, Jing and Ajit spent a total of 16 turns discussing their locations, and never explicitly showed any frustration either verbally or visually, although in the stimulated recall both stated that for these items, their interlocutor had been either unclear or strangely uncomprehending. Neither explained why they had appeared so composed during these episodes, but Jing's comment from an earlier stimulated recall may be significant.

> I think that's the two reasons I don't understand people, like most of the people from different places. If they speak slower ... if their accent is okay – you may have a British accent. You may have a Bangladesh accent, but ... *as long as you speak slowly, clearly, I can understand*. That's one thing that I find out through the years that I have been studying English. So *that's why I'm trying my best to speak with people like slowly and clearly too* [italics added].

Jing demonstrates her view of communication as a shared responsibility, where all involved interlocutors should feel an obligation to make communication successful (see also Firth's 2009 study on Business ELF users). This view is consistent with a collaborative pattern of interaction where, as Storch (2002: 128) notes, "a pair work[s] together on all parts of the task ... [and] alternative views are offered and discussed, leading to resolutions that seem acceptable to all participants."[4] It seems that the effect of sharing linguistic or non-linguistic resources is enhanced when all interlocutors' contributions are considered potentially helpful.

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4 A reviewer suggests that Jing's behaviour may be partly attributable to her gender. Research on L1 interaction has found more controlling and less supportive behaviour by male as

6 Conclusion

Firth has urged researchers in L2 acquisition to "expand our concept of 'the L2' to incorporate the gamut of resources brought to bear on interaction" (Firth 2009: 150). One such set of resources is the CSs which interlocutors use to address difficulties in understanding. As shown in this and previous studies on ELF interaction, ELF users draw on many strategies when faced with difficulties in understanding. The ways in which these strategies are used can reflect different patterns of interaction which promote or reduce the sharing of linguistic and other resources between interlocutors. Accounting for *why* particular ELF users might have engaged in certain patterns of interaction by using strategies in certain ways has typically been inferred only through analysis of transcripts. The use of stimulated recalls in this study has allowed ELF users themselves to explain their strategic behaviour, thus incorporating expert evidence into the analysis.

Although both ELF pairs used similar types of strategies to address difficulties in understanding, one pair was clearly more successful in achieving the joint goal. This suggests that the types of strategies used are less important than the ways in which strategies are employed interactively. When CSs are used to promote collaborative interaction, effective use of interlocutors' combined resources is supported. Little research has explored the *teaching* or *learning* of CSs or of interactional patterns by L2 or ELF users (see Friedrich [2012] for pedagogical suggestions). Firth (2012: 10) mirrors Canagarajah (2007) in noting that, "[i]n order for meaningful communication to occur, learning must, of necessity, be operationalised within micro-moments of talk and social interaction." The continuing process by which L2/ELF users can become skilful at using CSs effectively in specific interactions and become aware of various interaction patterns is an area which remains to be investigated.

A logical next step from the findings from researcher-elicited communication in the current study is to investigate naturalistic ELF interaction, whether in social or institutional settings, to study possible links between CS use, patterns of interaction, and interlocutors' thoughts and feelings. Greater understanding of the links between these areas and of the ways CSs are learned can help L2 speakers enhance their communicative effectiveness and rapport in ELF interactions.

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compared to female interlocutors (e. g. Edelsky 1993). The influence of gender on communicative behaviour remains to be explicitly addressed in ELF research.

Acknowledgements: This research was funded by grants from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture. Ricole Liu, Michelle Lee, Tara Brockwell and Luke Ptak assisted with data collection and analyses. Nina Padden, Pavel Trofimovich and Randall Halter helped with participant recruitment, proofreading and translation. Thanks also to anonymous JELF reviewers and especially to Barbara Seidlhofer for very helpful comments and feedback on the manuscript.

Appendix: transcription conventions (from Liddicoat 2011)

.	Falling intonation
,	A slightly rising intonation/when the intonation contour is incomplete
?	A rising intonation
A	rise in pitch
**	A fall in pitch
[words]	Overlapping talk
(.)	Short pause in a stream of talk
(tenths of second)	Long pauses lasting for more than two tenths of a second
words	Stressed sound/a rise in intonation
wo:	Lengthened sound
((words))	Transcriber's information
°words°	Quieter speech/whispered
=	One unit of talk follows another with no discernible interval
wor-	Interrupted (incomplete) speech

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Bionote

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