



ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA CONVERSATION WHILE WATCHING TV: OTHERING THROUGH EXPERTISE

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Abstract: English as a lingua franca studies (ELF) from a socio-interactional perspective have illustrated the subtle actions of interlocutors that highlight their “situated identities” (Zimmerman, 1998) in talk-in-interaction. Many of these studies have focused on speakers’ identities associated with ethnicity, nationality, or their first or second language. Nevertheless, little research exists regarding the numerous other identities people may adopt during ELF conversations, and how those identities may affect the interaction. Furthermore, the influence of an ongoing media (television) reception on such identities has not been investigated. Therefore, utilizing conversation analysis and membership categorization as a method of inquiry, this single case analysis investigates ELF interactions at a women’s dormitory for university students while five women were watching television. Through the analysis, participants were found to be orienting to expert-novice identities regarding not only their linguistic knowledge but also their knowledge of the topic shown on television, baseball. Furthermore, contrary to previous research, it was found that ELF conversations are not always cooperative and supportive. The television affected not only the conversation topic but also the positioning of the participants in the group, resulting in the “othering” (Spivak, 1998) of a particular participant through the interaction.

Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca, membership categorization, conversation analysis, television-accompanying talk

Özet: Sosyo-etkileşimsel açıdan yapılan Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce çalışmaları konuşmacıların etkileşimdeki konuşmalarında yer alan “yerleşik kimliklerini” (Zimmerman, 1998) aydınlatan ince hareketlerini açıklamıştır. Bu çalışmaların çoğu konuşmacıların etnik kökenleriyle, milliyetleriyle ya da birinci veya ikinci dilleriyle ilişkili kimlikleri üzerinde odaklanmıştır. Yine de, Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce konuşmalarında insanların edinebilecekleri diğer çeşitli kimlikler hakkında ve bu kimliklerin etkileşimi nasıl etkileyebileceği hakkında az miktarda araştırma bulunmaktadır. Araştırma metodu olarak konuşma çözümlemesinden ve üyelik sınıflandırmasından yararlanarak, bu tek durum analizi bir üniversite yurdunda beş kadının televizyon izlerken yaşadıkları Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce etkileşimlerini incelemektedir. Çözümlemede, katılımcıların sadece dilbilimsel bilgileriyle ilgili değil aynı zamanda da televizyonda gösterilen konu (beysbol) hakkındaki bilgileriyle ilgili olan uzman-acemi kimlikler edindikleri bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, önceki araştırmaların aksine, Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce konuşmalarının her zaman işbirlikçi ve destekleyici olmadığı bulunmuştur. Televizyon sadece konuşma konusunu değil aynı zamanda da gruptaki katılımcıların konumlanmasını etkilemiştir ki bu da etkileşim boyunca bir katılımcının ‘başkalaştırılması’ (Spivak, 1998) ile sonuçlanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce, üyelik sınıflandırması, konuşma çözümlemesi, televizyona eşlik eden konuşma

1. Introduction

English as a lingua franca (ELF) conversation has attracted growing attention as a topic for sociolinguistic research. According to Firth (1996), ELF is defined as a “‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication” (p. 240). In the field of ELF interactional studies, foci have been on (a) the participants’ identities and (b) their cooperative orientation in talk.

Several studies on ELF interactions have investigated the identities of the participants in the talk. From a microanalytic perspective, identities are closely situated in interaction

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(Zimmerman, 1998), and some identities, such as gender or ethnicity, become more relevant than others during talk. For instance, Mori (2003) looked at conversations between native and non-native speakers of Japanese, finding participants using “category-activity questions” (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984) marking their native or non-native cultures through discourse. These situated identities are not fixed but are in flux and negotiable. Cashman (2005) studied bilingual conversations in the US Latino community and found participants categorizing themselves differently according to the conversation, shifting from identities of facilitator, to competent Spanish speaker, then to Chicano. Participants were not always ‘doing’ the social categories such as ethnicity through the interaction. Similarly, Park’s (2007) study revealed the non-native speaker refuting the non-native identity created by the native speaker in a word search sequence. However, many of these studies have focused their attention on categories such as ethnicity, nationality, native- and non-native speakership, or occupation. We know relatively little about the multiplicity of the identities speakers may make relevant in ELF interactions.

Moreover, researchers have argued that “ELF interactions often are consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive” (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 143), where participants in the talk use various affordances to facilitate the progress of communication. Kaur (2011) found instances where L2 users support each other through repair sequences to reach mutual understandings in academic learning situations. Supportive talk can also be found in ELF business conversations where interlocutors would *not* repair the interlocutor and ignore any linguistic mistakes, which makes “the other’s ‘abnormal’ talk appear ‘normal’” (Firth, 1996, p. 245). In particular, if these “let-it-pass” (Firth, 1996) actions are taken for non-critical points in talk, they could be seen as acts of cooperation and support to progress the conversation, rather than highlighting the interlocutor’s linguistic deficiencies. Nevertheless, ELF interactional research has typically limited its scope to institutional settings, such as university or business, and little is known about what occurs in mundane ELF talk from an empirical point of view.

In this study, I therefore investigate the “situated identities” (Zimmerman, 1998) within an intercultural group in a mundane ELF conversation. The conversation occurred among a group of female students while they were watching television (TV). This study observes what actually goes on in ELF interactions in non-institutional settings during everyday conversations.

The article begins by explaining the approach taken in analyzing the conversation, followed by the procedure, analyses, and discussion. Throughout the analysis, blanket categories such as ethnicity, nationality, and native-speaker were not present in the talk. Instead, expert-novice or knower and non-knower positioning of the members through topics of language and baseball were creating more specific sub-categories within the group conversation, resulting in “othering” (Spivak, 1998) the novice or non-knowing member of the group from the conversation.

2. Theoretical Framework

2. 1. Interactional Sociolinguistics

In order to understand what is happening in the ELF conversation of this study, I approached the data from an interactional sociolinguistics (IS) perspective. The IS approach “allows researchers to examine more closely how particular linguistic cues used by participants affect their interpretations of what is happening as a communicative event unfolds” (Hall, 2002, p. 146). IS focuses particularly on the aspects such as interactions where participants with

different cultural “presuppositions” about seemingly familiar events attempt to interact with each other, and highlights when miscommunication occurs (Hall, 2002).

Hall (2002) explains Gumperz’s (1982) work in IS as studying “contextualization cues” as ways to understand how participants in a conversation interpret or misinterpret utterances. The cues include turn-taking, politeness, and non-verbal communication. In addition, Cameron (2001) summarizes the IS approach as not only looking at by whom and how language is used, but more at how language is used differently depending on the context and depending on the “kinds of speakers” (2001, p. 106). Thus, IS analysis recognizes the widespread social cultural context impacting on human interactions (Stubbe et al., 2003). As Cameron (2001) notes:

“In communicative encounters between members of different groups, the smaller and subtler the differences are, the greater their potential to cause problems. If someone addresses me in a foreign language that I don’t speak, I know immediately that I don’t understand them, and it is obvious why” (p. 107).

In other words, using an IS approach to ELF conversation will allow us to unveil the subtle actions in talk which may lead to greater differences, including identity, among the participants.

2. 2. Categorization and Identity Construction in Interactional Sociolinguistics

Identity from an IS perspective is a social category that participants co-construct and use in conversation in order to express who they and others are, and to make sense of the interaction (Zimmerman, 1998). Furthermore, from an IS perspective, it is understood that “identity is multiple and varied” (Hall, 2002, p. 42).

These categories are not only the topics of the conversation but are also used to make utterances more legitimate or to achieve certain social goals through the conversation. Identities are therefore co-constructed through, and within, everyday interaction and involvement in the society. Moreover, individuals align themselves with various categories such as, expert-novice, gender, or ethnicity, and take on multiple identities by associating their membership to these categories (Hall, 2002).

Sacks’ (1972, 1989) work on membership categorization, i.e., Membership Categorization Analyses (MCA), has provided the foundation for examinations of social categories as a means of showing how participants orient to their various identities in talk. Membership categorization is the process of organizing and reorganizing people into categories or groups and is the “central machinery of social organization” (Sacks, 1989, p. 89). From an MCA approach, group memberships or membership categories refer to “the social process through which the participants themselves make a certain social category visibly relevant in their talk” (Mori, 2003, p. 147). In other words, in conversations, participants construct and use categories to express who they are and who others are. These categories are a part of the topical talk of conversation, and participants utilize them in local and temporal ways to accomplish social and interpersonal goals.

In addition, some categories become more apparent than others by observing certain activities are bound to certain categories called “category-bound activities” (Sacks, 1972, 1986, 1992), such as ‘crying’ is bound to a ‘baby’ (a stage in life). Furthermore, “[c]ategories may be accomplished by an explicit, direct reference to a particular category in talk, or by an

inference drawn from a reference to a social relationship or activity bound to a particular category” (Mori, 2003, p. 147), such as asking “category-activity questions” (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984). These “category-activity questions” show the speaker’s assumptions about the recipient’s knowledge or even social categories, and as a result, position the recipient into a category.

In relation to this, Mori (2003) states, “[s]ome recipients may be treated as ‘knowing recipients’ who are assumed to share the knowledge of the event being described in the current talk, whereas others may be treated as ‘unknowing recipients,’ who are assumed not to have any prior knowledge of the event” (2003, p. 148). Thus, membership categorization can also be related to how people manage knowledge and achieve new shared knowledge in interaction.

Although in his lectures Sacks projects the researcher’s category on to the interlocutors, Stokoe (2012) argues, and I align with her, that social categories do not need to be pre-set by the researcher. Instead, interlocutors are labeled or positioned through the talk by themselves or their conversational counterparts.

By utilizing this framework IS and the methodological approach of MCA, we can see how members of the society engage in events and how social control devices are utilized in social activities. Therefore, identity construction in the group conversation of this study and their language use will be analyzed within the perspective and approach discussed above.

3. The Study

3. 1. Data Collection

The audio recording took place at a dinning hall in a women’s dormitory during dinnertime. The residents of the dormitory were all female graduate students. Nine out of eleven of the dormitory residents were from Asian countries, either Korea or Japan. Two out of the eleven residents were Caucasians, from the United States and Germany, respectively. It was common for all the residents to turn on the TV while cooking and eating in the dinning hall. Therefore, this location was selected to collect naturally occurring mundane ELF conversations. At the time of the recording, the author was also a resident of this dormitory, and had lived there for about a year.

An audio recorder was used to collect the data. The recorder was placed in the middle of the dining table where the five participants of this study were sitting. The recorder was left there for approximately 90 minutes. Oral consent by all participants was obtained prior to the recording. It was explained that the recording would be used for research purposes only, and that participant names would be anonymous, and they could withdraw from the research at any time.

During the time of recording, an international baseball game, the World Baseball Classic (WBC), was on TV. In this event, national baseball teams from 16 different countries compete for a trophy. On the day of recording, a semi-final game between Japan and Korea was on TV.

3. 2. Participants

The participants of the conversation were five females: two Japanese (including myself), two Koreans, and one German. All were fluent in English, and would talk to those who share the same native language (L1) in English if there were other people who do not share the same

L1 around. The German participant had no previous knowledge about baseball or either of the national teams on TV. However, she was interested in learning more about baseball. The rest of the participants had knowledge of baseball to some extent, and knew about their own national teams. Participants were sitting around a table facing the TV as shown in Appendix 1. All the names in this study are pseudonyms except for the researcher, Aki.

3. 3. Transcribing

The transcription notation in Appendix 2 was adapted from Atkinson and Heritage (1984) and the transcription of laughter was adapted from Jefferson (2004). Jefferson's method of transcribing laughter was used due to the large amount of laughter that was taking place in the recording and to capture the various aspects of laughter in more detail. Non-English utterances are transcribed in bold italics with the English translation directly below each line when necessary.

3. 4. Analysis

The transcription of the conversation in this study begins 30 minutes into the recording and 15 minutes after Sue and Lin were teaching Nicole the rules of baseball. Through the analysis of the transcription, it became apparent that the baseball game on TV affected the conversation of the group.

3. 4. 1. Baseball Novice

The exchange in Excerpt 1 starts after Sue and Lin have explained to Nicole about the rules of baseball, and Lin is confirming if Nicole has understood the rules.

Excerpt 1

1 → Lin: yeah. (0.2)you got it so far?
 2 Nicole: °no°
 3 → Aki: just remember Ichiro.
 4 Lin: ah=
 5 → Nicole: =Icchiro.
 6 Lin: hum
 7 Aki: and Uehara
 8 (1.0)
 9 → Nicole: †Huh?
 10 Aki: a ha ha ha ha [ha ha
 11 Lin: [no, no.=
 12 May: =nn:nn:
 13 Lin: [he's really, he's always [()
 14→ Nicole: [Ichiro is [he masculine?
 15 May: [he's ic†ky::
 16→ Nicole: Ichiro is he masculine?=
 17→ May: =do you remember the word for good looking?
 18 (0.1)
 19 Lin: good looking?=
 20 Nicole: =kakko
 21 Lin: do you mean-
 22→ Aki: [hahaha
 23 Nicole: [hahaha
 24 May: [hahaha

Lin's question in line 1 of "You got it so far?" is a "category-activity question" positioning Nicole as a novice of baseball and Lin as an expert of the topic of baseball. Similarly, Aki positions Nicole as a novice of the baseball topic when Nicole answers Lin's questions with a weak "no" (line 2) that she does not understand, and Aki tells Nicole to just remember a famous Japanese player, Ichiro (line 3). Nicole then repeats the name Ichiro, as learners would do with new vocabulary or names. However, when another baseball player's name is suggested (line 7), Nicole replies with an "open class repair initiator" (Drew, 1997) "Huh" with a rising intonation (line 9). Aki laughs after Nicole's response but does not try to explain who Uehara is (line 10).

Glenn (2003) distinguishes between "laughing with" and "laughing at" in interaction, and argues that laughter displays social structure of affiliation and disaffiliation. He claims that if someone other than the producer of the laughable does the first laugh, it likely indicates "laughing at," and subsequent talk on the topic further suggests that it is a "laughing at" action rather than a "laughing with" (Glenn, 2003). In this case, Nicole's "Huh?" after a one second silence could be observed as a "laughable" which is then followed by a "first laugh" by Aki. This laughter is then *not* followed by Nicole's laughter or other members, but leads to a subsequent talk on the topic. Therefore, Aki in line 10 is likely to be "laughing at" Nicole's response in line 9. Glenn (2003) further discusses that the action of "laughing at" displays people's disaffiliation and distancing from others. Therefore, Aki's action of "laughing at" Nicole's response could be interpreted as Aki is distancing herself from Nicole in terms of knowledge of baseball players, or displaying her disaffiliate position towards the incongruent response by Nicole. In contrast, May and Lin are stating their opinion on the player, Uehara (lines 11, 13, 15), which shows their positioning as a "knowing recipient," marking Nicole as the only "unknowing recipient" among the three.

Here, Nicole is positioned as a non-knower or a novice in the interaction through the questioning and laughter, but also through the lack of turn-taking after her utterances. In line 14, Nicole asks a question to request more information about the Japanese baseball player, Ichiro. Since this overlaps with Lin and May, Nicole repeats her question again in line 16 without any overlap. However, none of the members in the group respond to her question. Moreover, May changes the topic from baseball to language in line 17, and Nicole's question is not taken up by other participants.

The reason for the lack of uptake of Nicole's utterances can be interpreted in two ways. The first one is Nicole's lack of background knowledge of baseball. The topic of the group conversation has switched from the player Ichiro to Uehara, another Japanese baseball player. Since Nicole does not know either baseball player, she is not able to participate in the new topic and does not notice the topic shift (line 14). Another interpretation is the power dynamics within the group conversation. Despite Nicole's attempt to join the group conversation by asking a question, she is unsuccessful in gaining a position as a main speaker in the group. Nicole lacks the power in controlling the topic as Aki and May have succeeded. Furthermore, Nicole is deprived of her attempt to change the topic, and is unsuccessful in attaining the knowledge of the baseball players. Nicole lacks the knowledge about baseball and about the team members in order for her to be accepted as a legitimate speaker, and thus the group position Nicole as a novice in the conversation.

3. 4. 2. Language Novice

In addition to Nicole's positioning as a novice in the baseball conversation, Nicole is also positioned as a novice in another topic, language. In the above Excerpt 1 immediately after

Nicole asks a question about Ichiro in line 16, May asks Nicole if she remembers the Japanese word for “good looking” (line 17). This question can be interpreted as a “category-activity question” of May as the expert or a “knowing recipient” and as a result positioning Nicole as a novice or a possible “unknowing recipient” of the Japanese language.

Excerpt 2 below also shows a similar situation where Nicole tries to change the topic of the conversation or join the conversation, but fails to do so due to a lack of knowledge of a non-English word. Lin asks if the others remembered the meaning of *mokkori*.

Excerpt 2

81 → Lin: do you remember *mokkori*?
 82 Aki: yeah.
 83 Lin: yeah
 84 May: *e nani?*
Huh? What?
 85 Lin: the same thing
 86 May: [*nani? mokkori?*
What? Mokkori?
 87 Lin: [yeah a:: I just remember.
 88 Aki: [()
 89 → Nicole: what was the guy's name?
 90 → Lin: *mokkori mokkori*.
 91 → May: *mokkori*.
 92 Aki: ahahaha
 93 → Nicole: Ichiro (.) right?
 94 Sue: >I forgot the name again<
 95 May: uh?
 96 Sue: the (.) good looking
 97 May: [*kakkoii*
 98 Nicole [*kakkoii*

Similar to May’s questioning in Excerpt 1 line 17, the way Lin phrases the question positions her as the “knower” and the expert of the topic to which she is trying to move on. The word “remember” (line 81) also implies a shared past experience on the same topic among at least some of the members. Aki reacts to Lin’s question right away (line 82), displaying herself as a “knowing recipient”. May does not seem to be familiar with the topic, but notices that the topic has shifted and jumps in to the conversation by asking for clarification in Japanese (lines 84, 86). Since this recording was only done in audio, it is not clear to whom May is addressing the questions. However, from May’s question formation in Japanese, we can interpret that (a) May has the knowledge of Japanese, (b) there are members in the group who know Japanese, and (c) possibly the word *mokkori* is related to Japanese.

In line 89, Nicole attempts to go back to the previous topic about Ichiro, and asks what the player’s name was. However, again her question is not answered. What is more, Nicole’s question is responded to with a joke by Lin and May in line 90 and 91. Aki laughs and shows understanding of the joke, *mokkori* - meaning necklace in Korean and erection in Japanese - and calling the player’s name *mokkori* (line 92). However, Nicole does not understand this language bound humor, and ends up answering her own question that she raised in line 89 (line 93). This is ended with a tag question with rising intonation, showing her confidence or knowing status of her statement while requesting for confirmation (Heritage, 2012). However, other members of the group do not explain to Nicole about the joke nor do they

respond to the tag question. Nicole asking the question to which she knows the answer could also be interpreted as her attempt to join the conversation by changing the topic to one that she is relatively familiar with. However, despite her effort, Nicole is again “othered” from this interaction where she could not share the language-bound identity with the other members. In contrast, Sue’s pre-request for the translation of “good looking” in line 94 and 96 is responded to by May in line 97, demonstrating the differences in uptake by the members of the group towards Nicole and others.

Nicole finally takes the floor of the conversation when she shares her unique experience with a particular Japanese word and is positioned as an expert when the topic moved to German language as shown below in Excerpt 3. The segment begins when she tells her story about the time when she asked May how to say “good looking” in Japanese.

Excerpt 3

45 → Nicole: =I got a paper like this <big> to write down but
46 Lin: humm
47 Nicole: and then she was like (.) that would be *kakkoi*
48 Sue: hum
49 Nicole: and like=
50 May: =and you’re like [what?
51 Nicole: [() and like oh
52 I can remember this
53 Aki: ha ha ha
54 → Nicole: because it means (.) like (.) e: (.) <disgusting>
55 (.) <talk> in Germany=
56 Aki: =aha [ha ha
57 Sue: [ha ha ha

Nicole explains the actions she took after asking the question to May (lines 45, 47). Nicole’s explanation is responded to by backchannelling from Lin and Sue (lines 46, 48) after the completion of a turn-construction unit. This action could be viewed as Lin and Sue attending to Nicole’s story telling and showing interest. However, May, as the person who knows the story, interrupts Nicole’s next turn (line 49) and completes it by quoting Nicole’s reaction “what?” (line 50). This could be analyzed as a compound turn-construction unit (Lerner, 1991) where the hearers anticipate the speakers’ turn ending, and shows the attention that Nicole is receiving from May. Nicole continues her story, saying that the word *kakkoi* has a different meaning in her L1, German (lines 51, 54-55). May, although knowing the story, does not interrupt Nicole here. This utterance is then responded to by Aki and Sue’s laughter (line 53, 56, 57) only after the turn is completed. Nicole is treated in this segment as the main speaker and story teller, receiving full attention from other participants. As Toolan (2001) notes, in story telling, “narrators are typically trusted by their addressees” (p. 3) and they “assert their authority to tell, to take up the role of knower, or entertainer, or producer, in relation to the addressees’ adopted role of learner or consumer” (p. 3). This role of the narrator can also be seen here with Nicole adopting the knower role of the particular incident and what *kakkoi* means in German, and the group attending to her story.

From Excerpts 2 and 3, we see how topics about one’s own native language or knowledge of a certain word can position individuals in the expert or knower position within the group and speakers who can take and hold the conversational floor. However, based on the transcript, and especially in Excerpt 4, Nicole was observed to be “othered” the majority of the time through lack of uptake by the other participants.

3. 4. 3. Struggle to Join

In Excerpt 1 and 2, Nicole was positioned in the group as a novice of the topics of baseball and Japanese (Korean) language. However, Nicole attempts to become a legitimate speaker in the group through showing her interest in the baseball game. In Excerpt 4, Nicole confirms her understanding of a rule with May.

Excerpt 4

108 Nicole: but if the first (.) pitcher runs to
 109 the first place=
 110 May: =yabe.=
Oh no
 111 Nicole: =some body else has to hit from the same team? (.)
 112 and then so he can run further?
 113 May: un.
yeah
 114 (1.0)
 115 → Nicole: Ichiro
 116 May: so you can have maximum four people in the field.
 117 Nicole: right.
 118 May: hitter and um (.) three runners on each base.
 119 → Nicole: come on ↑guys
 120 → (0.3)
 121 Aki: [hahaha
 122 Lin: [hahaha
 123 May: [hahaha
 124 Sue: [hahaha
 125 → Nicole: I can do this, huh.
 126 → (2.0)
 127 → Nicole: Ichiro
 128 (1.0)
 129 Sue: oh
 130 → Nicole: strike. I wouldn't have do that
 131 → (3.0)
 132 → Sue: ah you never saw women's softball? (.)
 133 here in the middle junior high school
 134 they play the softball (.) in the field?
 135 Aki: yeah
 136 Nicole: no

After Nicole displays her understanding of some of the baseball rules (line 108-109, 111-112), she receives a positive response from May (line 113). Nicole then, in line 115 (as well as in line 127), repeats the previously learned name “Ichiro” to herself, as if she is trying to reinforce her memory. In the following turn, May presents a conclusion of the rule discussed in the prior turns (line 116), which is confirmed by Nicole (line 117), and supplemented with more information by May (line 118). Following this sequence, Nicole starts to make comments on the baseball game on TV (lines 119, 125, 130), which had not occurred in the previous recording. She cheers, “come on guys” (line 119), reacts to the game “I can do this” (line 125) or “I wouldn't have do that” (line 130), and uses a baseball jargon “strike” (line 130). Through these lines, Nicole displays that she is now comfortable and knows something about baseball, and that she is interested in the game.

However, other members of the group still elect not to respond to Nicole's utterances, and instead, respond with elongated silences (line 120, 126, 131). Ayaß (2012) discusses that in "television-accompanying conversations" (p. 24), there is no strict necessity to engage in a conversation and periods of speech and periods of silence or watching TV occur in alternation (p. 27). Nevertheless, in lines 132-134, Sue questions the reason for the lack of knowledge of baseball by asking if Nicole actually had never even seen a softball game that occasionally takes place at the middle school baseball field near the dormitory. Aki then shows alignment with Sue with a "yeah" (line 135). These statements still show Nicole's position as a relative novice in terms of baseball within the group. Therefore, despite Nicole's effort in being involved in conversation about the game and showing her knowledge of the rules, the lack of uptake to Nicole's utterances and questioning the reason for the lack of exposure to baseball could be seen as a rejection of Nicole's expertise in baseball, and displays the group's non-supportive alignment with her statements. As a result, Nicole is positioned as an illegitimized member, without the right to make comments on the baseball teams on TV. Furthermore, although Nicole displays her understanding of baseball rules, she repeats the previously learned "Ichiro" (lines 115 and 127). This act of trying to memorize can be interpreted as "doing being a (foreign) language learner" (Mori & Hasegawa, 2009) which as a result emphasizes her novice position.

4. Discussion

The analysis in this investigation attempted to examine how participants are positioned in an ELF conversation among international students while they are watching an international baseball game on TV. From the analysis, it was found that the baseball game on TV and the multi-cultural dynamics greatly affected the topic and turn-taking structures of conversation. The topic constantly shifted from baseball to language. The language topics were almost always about Japanese or Korean, which were also the teams competing in the baseball game and the majority of the group population. Notably, the control over the topic (Fairclough, 1992, p. 155) was mostly by the Asians in the group since the baseball game was between the Japanese and Korean national teams. Nicole attempts to change the topic from language that she cannot join, to baseball that she still has the possibility to join. If the international baseball game was not on TV, the topic of the conversation may have been completely different.

It was also observed that, despite of Nicole's effort to take turns to get the information she wanted, she was only able to take the floor when explaining about her story and the German language, which most members of the group did not have the knowledge about. Additionally, as seen in Extract 4 lines 119 to 131, the turns after Nicole's utterances were not taken up, and thus Nicole was treated with silence, showing a possible difference in the power over the turn-taking system (Fairclough, 1992, p. 153). This non-supportive action may simply be bound to the topic or the participant involved in this interaction, and language expertise or the ELF nature of the talk may have no direct connection. However, unlike what previous ELF research has shown, participants in ELF talk are not always consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive.

In terms of identity construction, two main categories were observed through the conversation, the expert-novice role of (a) baseball and (b) language. The language expertise was not necessarily related to their L1s, but more to knowing about a certain word that can have different meanings depending on the language. Kang (2004) summarizes the perspective of "self-categorization" as members identifying themselves in terms of categories as race and gender in order to support their opinions and making their opinions "accountable" (p. 222).

Members of the group would state opinions about baseball players and laugh about language related jokes. This was possible because of their “self-categorization” as a knower or expert of a particular word or baseball team, and thus they were able to legitimize their opinions in the conversation. On the contrary, Nicole was often positioned as a non-knower or the novice in both baseball-related topics and language-related topics, except for when she was talking about her personal experience and the German language.

As a final note on the implications of this study, I believe this interaction highlighted how social categories such as ethnicity and nationality are not always apparent through conversations. In contrast to Cashman (2005) and Mori’s (2003) studies, categories such as ethnicity and nationality were not explicitly seen in the conversation despite their conversation topics related to languages and the international baseball game.

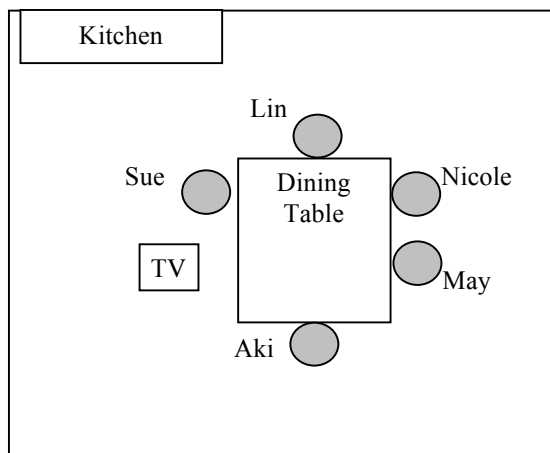
Moreover, the analysis of this study revealed how topic choice is a crucial aspect of engagement in conversations, regardless of their level over the control of language. Those with the knowledge or familiarity with the topic take the role of the expert or control the floor, while those lacking with the knowledge of the topic take the role of the novice or become “othered” despite their effort in joining the conversation. Nevertheless, we must consider the limitations of the very short length of the conversation transcribed and analyzed in this study, and more investigations are necessary to better understand ELF interactions.

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Appendix 1 Seating Arrangement



Appendix 2 Transcription Conventions

(.)	Short untimed pause.
(0.3), (2.6)	Duration of silence in seconds.
↑word, ↓word	Pitch rise or fall in the next phrase.
word.	Stopping fall in tone
word,	Continuing intonation
A: word [word	Overlapping talk.
B: [word	
Ha ha, huh,	Laughter, depending on the sounds produced.
heh, hnh	
.hhh	A dot-prefixed row indicates inbreath.
wo:::rd	Colons show extension of the sound before it.
<u>word</u>	Underscoring indicates some form of stress
WORD	Capital letters indicate louder voice than the surrounding talk
A: word=	Latching speech
B: =word	
°word°	Utterance that is quieter than the surrounding talk.
>word word<	Inwards arrows show faster speech, outward slower.
<word word>	
?	Question mark indicates rising intonation
→	Feature of interest to the analyst.