The Role of Conversation Analysis-Informed Instruction to Enhance EFL Learners' Conversational Skills: Repair Strategies in Focus: Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the role of conversation analysis (CA)-informed instruction to enhance learners' use of repair strategies in various oral interaction situations. A CA design, which emerged from ethnomethodology, was employed where it was also used as a data collection procedure and data analyses technique. The participants of the study were first-year English language students at Bahir Dar University chosen through comprehensive sampling technique. Two phases of data collection were carried out: pre-intervention and post-intervention conversation analyses. Audio/video devices were used to record the oral productions of the participants. The purpose of the pre-intervention analyses of the recorded audio/video data was to identify the gaps in the oral interactions of the learners whereas the post-intervention conversation analyses were employed to see the qualitative changes exhibited as a result of the CA-informed instruction. The CA-informed instruction was conducted for four months to promote learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies. The results revealed that the CA-informed

instruction improved learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies in oral interactions. Learners demonstrated better performances after they had received the CA-based treatment. Thus, based on the findings, CA-informed instruction is recommended for EFL teachers to enhance their learners' use of repair strategies in oral interactions.

Keywords: conversation, conversation analysis, repair strategies, oral interaction

1. Introduction

Despite spending years developing their language competence, foreign language learners have experienced the frustrating feeling of not being able to participate effectively in second language oral interaction. They often lack the very resources needed to communicate their intended meaning (Ervin, 1979). However, learners as interlocutors have to engage in communicative language activities in which they alternate their roles as producers and receivers, often with several turns (Seedhouse, 2004). During their interaction, interlocutors do not always find it possible to obtain what they have expected due to occasional communication breakdowns. To prevent potential incidents that may occur in conversations, interlocutors tend to make use of an interaction strategy called repair strategies (Shegloff, 2007).

Repair strategies are alternatively termed conversational strategies in second language teaching, and categorized based on their functions (Markee, 2000). These strategies are conventionally divided in the second language acquisition (SLA) literature into functional categories such as comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks, verifications of meaning, definition requests, and expressions of lexical uncertainty (Porter, 1986). In Markee's (2000) argument, the acquisitional function of these conversational adjustments is to make a complex language accessible to learners. Repair strategy is thus seen as the engine that drives language development forward (Pica, 1987). Similarly, Gardner (2004) explains that

repairs can occur as adjacency pairs, and they then constitute a very particular kind of pair, one that is used to deal with troubles of hearing, production, or understanding in talk. Gardner further argues that most repairs do not occur as sequences, but are achieved by a speaker dealing with a problem himself during the production of a turn. These self-repairs take the form of a replacement or insertion or deletion of a piece of talk. Other repairs are achieved more collaboratively to facilitate meaning negotiation and ensure conversation flow.

Since repair strategy is the treatment of trouble occurring in interactive language use or a mechanism that operates in conversation to deal with problems in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk in conversation, it is necessary to provide English learners with a good knowledge of repair strategies so that they can improve their spoken interactional skill in case of communication breakdowns (Wong & Waring, 2010). Repair strategies enable learners to successfully deal with trouble sources from their own utterances as well as from the other participants in their conversations. However, learners in the context of the present study lacked these interactional machineries. The tool which helps to intervene with such problems was CA-informed instruction which vividly indicates where the real problem of learners lies. The CA analytic tool helps to identify learners' difficulties in the use of repair strategies (Barraja-Rohan, 2011). Thus, the present study is based on this theoretical background to enhance the English language learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies in oral interactions through CA-informed instruction.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Repair strategies in conversations are an invaluable means of dealing with communication troubles, such as not knowing a particular word, or misunderstanding the other speaker. They can also enhance fluency and add to the efficiency of communication. According to Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994), being aware of such strategies is especially useful for language learners, who frequently experience such difficulties in conversation, since they

provide them with a sense of security in the language by allowing extra time to think about what interactants intend to say.

Studies indicated that the teaching of English is suffering in Ethiopia. Teachers are unaware of and unfamiliar with appropriate English language teaching (ELT) methods, and the absence of effective methods was observed in their teaching (Kumar Jha, 2013). Though teachers claim that they know and practice appropriate methods, this claim was called in question by a study conducted by Kumar Jha. This author also asserts the absence of a learner-centered approach; the teachers do not encourage the learners in a quest for self-learning activities, nor do the course components favor cooperative learning. Thus, English is learned, not mastered in Ethiopia as confirmed by Kumar Jha's study. Despite Ethiopia's need for English language increasing in the era of globalization, the discouraging picture of English language teaching has not improved (Eshetie, 2010). English is a foreign language to nearly all and is known and used only by a minority of educated, economic, and/or political elites in Ethiopia (Bogale, 2009). Bachore (2015) explains that despite acquiring linguistic competence, English learners in Ethiopia find it hard to make their competence functional in real-life situations because they have not mastered the language.

Similarly, a preliminary study revealed that the learners reportedly lacked the necessary skills of conversation. Their use of repair strategies showed their difficulties in being engaged in conversation. People involved in conversations are expected to know and use repairs when problems of hearing, speech production, and understanding arise (Thornbuy, 2006). However, the participants in the present context lacked knowledge of repair strategies and failed to use them in oral interactions which called for the present study to be conducted using a CA intervention tool.

To communicate effectively, people engaged in a conversation need to understand and respond to each other's words. In addition, interlocutors are expected to use repair strategies when they face problems of misunderstanding and save their communication from failure. Nonetheless, students appeared to be lacking knowledge and use of repair strategies in English. Most learners in the present context were unable to

interact effectively in English in their spoken English classes because conversational features especially repair strategies were less focused in their oral courses. Hence, the present study attempted to use CA-informed instruction to enhance the learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies.

2. Conceptual framework

Repair strategy is one of the pillars of oral interactions. It is also important in language teaching contexts. Markee (2000) argues that learners learn a new language as a result of the repair work in which they engage focusing on a sequential rather than a functional analysis of repair. However, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994) have focused on the functional classification. According to these authors, the first function of repair strategy is message adjustment or avoidance which involves tailoring our message to our competence. The second is paraphrasing or description. The third repair strategy is an approximation: using an alternative term that expresses the meaning of the target word as closely as possible. Appeal for help is the fourth repair strategy which involves eliciting the word we are looking for from our conversation partner by asking them questions. The fifth strategy is asking for repetition when we have not heard or understood something. Asking for clarification is one of the strategies used in oral interaction when something is not clear. An interpretive summary is also another helpful strategy for reformulating the speaker's message to check that we understood correctly. Checking whether the other person has understood what we have said is still another repair strategy. The use of fillers/hesitation devices is the most common strategy to fill pauses, stall, and gain time to think when in difficulty. However, excessive and inappropriate use of fillers can be considered 'bad' for native speakers and language learners alike, but in times of need, hesitation devices can be an invaluable aid to communication (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994). Learners' use of these devices is of vital importance during oral interactions to bridge communication gaps as they help learners to gain time to think when in a difficulty of linguistic resources (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980).

According to Markee (2000), the conversational repair is what ultimately enables speakers to maintain their social relationships; but the accomplishment of this intersubjectivity is an extremely delicate matter, which may have complicated consequences for language learning. From a CA perspective, all repairs are likely to be signaled by various markers of incipient repair (pauses, silences, sound stretches, cut-offs, and phrases such as "you know" and "I mean"). Repair is also dependent on members orienting to the turn-taking procedures that constitute a given speech exchange system. However, the repair is also an independent form of conversational organization, whose accomplishment can be analyzed in terms of highly distinctive sequential and functional trajectories. It is in this way that the CA-based treatment is used to help learners develop their use of repair strategies using the following conceptual framework to identify the problem, teach and re-teach based on the gaps identified via CA, and finally use repair strategies in oral interaction in a variety of situations as shown in the following figure.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework for the Enhancement of Learners' Use of Repair Strategies
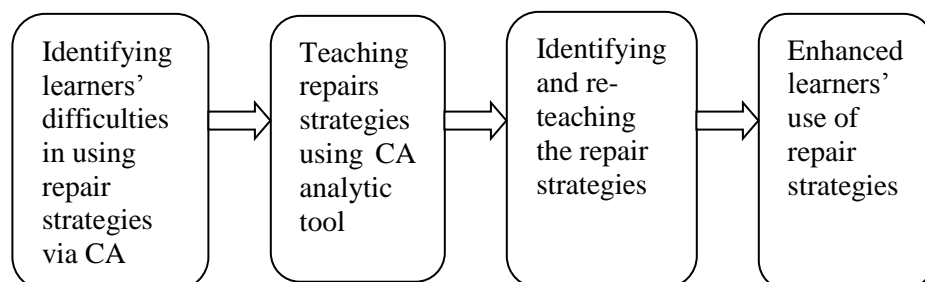
Markee (2000) speculates about the necessity of repair as a resource for SLA. There is evidence that repair is necessary for SLA. Repair strategies are important for language learning and teaching purposes because they facilitate oral communication. Markee (2000) focuses on the sequential aspects (repairs used in turn-taking sequence) whereas Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994)

emphasize the functions of repair strategies in conversation. However, having realized the significance of both, the present study employed the blended forms of these conceptual frameworks because the holistic approach to repair strategies in CA enables us to understand the whole picture of learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies (Seedhouse, 2004; Wong & Waring, 2010). Since the kernel of the present study is to explore the role of CA-informed instruction to enhance learner's knowledge and use of repair strategies in conversation, the holistic approach to repair strategies is important. This study attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. How does CA-informed instruction promote learners' appropriate use of repair strategies?
2. To what extent does CA-informed instruction improve learners' use of repair strategies in oral interactions?
3. Does CA-informed instruction enable learners to use repair strategies to hold a conversation comfortably?

3. The Research Methodology
3.1 Design of the study

A qualitative CA approach was employed for the study in which a case study was used. CA, in the study, was used as a methodology, data collection tool, and method of data analysis. This design enabled the researcher to obtain baseline information, identify the kind of teaching materials necessary to tackle learners' difficulties and carry out a pertinent intervention to bridge gaps informed by CA. CA as a qualitative approach helps to unearth problems of oral interactions as confirmed by a body of research (Sidnell, 2010).

3.2 The participants

The study was conducted at Bahir Dar University which trains English language students. The study was conducted for consecutive four months with four hours of contact a week.

Comprehensive sampling was used to select participants. The total number of participants was 25, of which 18 were willing to complete the training. Five participants infrequently attended the training. Although five

other participants seriously attended the training, they were participating in the English language improvement center (ELIC). Since these ELIC trainees received English language training to improve their English language communicative abilities, the inclusion of the data collected from these students might affect the result of the intervention in the present study. Thus, in order to avoid extraneous variables or data contamination from the ELIC training, the data collected from these participants were not included in the analyses. The data was taken from those who seriously attended the CA-based treatment and did not have any contamination with either ELIC or any other similar training. Six female and two male students from similar age groups were the participants of the study and audio/video recorded data were collected from these 8 participants. While the participants were holding conversations between and among themselves, 24 audio/video recordings were made and 8 recordings were selected for use in the study. For illustration purposes, 6 samples are used in the analyses. The data analyses included both the first pair part and the second pair part of the students' conversations.

3.3 Tools of data collection

Audio/video devices were used as data gathering tools in which the oral production of the participants were recorded both in the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases of the study.

3.4 The intervention procedures

The procedures developed by Barraja-Rohan (2011) were used to meet the objectives of the study. First, the study participants were provided with oral tasks and their oral performances were recorded. Second, the data obtained through the tape and video recordings were analyzed qualitatively using the CA analytic tool at the pre-instruction phase of the study. Third, having identified the gaps, the CA-informed instructions were carried out for four months. Materials adapted from Hoskins and Noel (2011), Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994), and Wong and Waring (2010) were used to

teach the study participants about repair strategies. The strategies learned by the students were message, adjustment/avoidance paraphrasing/description approximation, appeal for help, asking for repetition, asking for clarification, interpretive summary, comprehension checks, and use of fillers/hesitation devices. Analyses were also done during the intervention to see the progress of the participants. The recordings and analyses of conversations during the intervention were used to aid the intervention. Finally, analyses of post-intervention data were made to see the effect of the CA-informed instruction.

3.5 Data transcriptions conventions

The data were transcribed using CA conventions developed by various scholars such as Ten Have (2007). However, for the present study, only those transcription notations which are considered to be useful for the present study were used. Abbreviations were used instead of names of the participants to keep the anonymity of the study participants, in line with research ethics. According to Ten Have (2007), the list of transcript symbols given below is meant to make clear the major conventions for rendering details of the vocal production of utterances in talk-in-interaction as these are used in most current CA publications.

Table 1

CA audio/video data transcription conventions

Type	Symbol	Name	Use/function
Sequencing	[	A *single left bracket*	Indicates the point of overlap onset.
	]	A *single right bracket*	Indicates the point at which an utterance or utterance part terminates vis-à-vis another one.
	=	*Equals sign*	One at the end of one line and one at the beginning of the next indicate no 'gap' between the two lines. This is often called latching.

Type	Symbol	Name	Use/function
Timed intervals	**(0)**	*Numbers in parentheses*	Indicates elapsed time in silence, so (8) is a pause of 8 seconds.
	(.)	*A dot in parentheses*	Indicates a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances.
	(( ))	*Double parentheses*	Indicates doubts, transcriber's comment and inaudible parts of utterances and non-verbal language used.
Characteristics of speech production	**::**	*Colons/multiple colons*	Indicates prolongation or length of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound
	-	A *dash*	Indicates a cut-off.
	?	*Punctuation marks*	Are used to indicate characteristics of speech production, especially intonation; it is not referring to grammatical units; an alternative is an italicized question mark:*?*
	.	A *period*	Indicates a stopping fall in tone.

4. Results

This part of the study deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the audio/video recorded data. The audio/video data were analyzed based on conversational structure i.e. repair strategies in conversations (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994). In addition, Wong and Waring's (2010, p.8) CA framework has been employed to see the students' enhanced use of repair strategies because the CA framework has been used for it helps to uncover the gaps in repair strategies in conversation (Hoskins & Noel, 2011).

4.1 The pre-intervention conversation analyses

Before the intervention, activities were given to students, and the oral productions of the participants were recorded. This was done to make the intervention evidence-based, and identify the gaps that the participants had. Thus, the presentation and analyses of the pre-intervention results are presented with the transcripts of audio/video recordings. The following sample excerpts were taken from conversations about telephoning, shopping, and talking about the weather. The participants held

their conversations based on their choice of the different scenarios as shown below.

Excerpt I: Telephoning

This scenario was used to look into the participants' use of repair strategies in telephone conversations. The telephone conversation held between Um and TGA was analyzed and presented in the excerpt I below.

1. *Ringing*
2. *Um: Listening*
3. *TGA: How are you? This is TGA.*
4. *Um: (12s) ((bending her face with a sign of shyness and*
5. *   signaling her partner to restart the call)). Hello TgA.*
6. *   This is Um.*
7. *TGA: How are you this is TGA.*
8. *Um: How are you:*
9. *TGA: I'm fine:*
10. *Um: A'm-I-I forget you-I forget you I-forget you-I forget*
11. *   you:r- you-you: homework:: tell me to 10. page.*
12. *TGA: Yes: it is page on ((lege)) ((general))*
13. *Um: Thank you:*
14. *TGA: No matter. Goodbye.*
15. *Um: Goodbye ((quieter than the surrounding))*

This conversation was opened by a telephone ringing (summons) followed by the response given by Um using the expression '*listening*' which is unusual in English. Then came the '*How are you*' greeting and the self-identification: *I'm TGA'* turn constructional unit. Pausing for 12 seconds and bending her face as a sign of shyness, Um signaled her partner to restart the conversation and said 'Hello TGA this is Um'. Taking 12 seconds and bending her face as a sign of shyness indicates her inability to use repair strategies. At the identification and recognition stage, TGA greeted Um with '*How are you this is TGA*' repeating what she said before they restarted the conversation (line 7). As part of the opening, the '*How are you- I'm fine*' continued.

Um asked a question awkwardly using a repetition of utterances as indicated in (line 10) of the conversation. Excessive and inappropriate use of fillers can be considered 'bad' for native speakers and language learners alike, but in times of need, hesitation devices can be an invaluable aid to communication (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994). Although the adjacency pair seems to be appropriate to the question asked, it lacks clarity for it was not stated using appropriate language. Here, Um lacked the necessary conversational resources such as repair strategies which made her contribution to the conversation minimal.

Finally, *'thank-no matter'* adjacency pair parts were used as pre-closing expressions followed by terminal closing adjacency pair parts of *'Goodbye-Goodbye'* which was quieter than the surrounding utterances. The production of this quieter utterance was caused by the lack of confidence of the interlocutors. Their failure to manage their conversation successfully was also another indication for conducting intervention aiming at promoting the use of repair strategies among the participants to make them capable in conversations.

Excerpt II: Shopping

The topic of the conversation between Kf and Jm was shopping. Their conversation was analyzed and presented in excerpt II below.

1. *Kf: How are you ((shaking hands))*
2. *Jm: I'm fine.*
3. *Kf: I want to buy something firom you eh (( ))*
4. *Jm: eh have you travel have you care of travels?*
5. *Kf: Yes I have: (( ))*
6. *Jm: Please estimati the white one the black one?*
7. *Kf: Yes (( ))*
8. *Jm: Oh: it is big extenses ((to mean expensive)) do you*
9. *think it counts price?*
10. *Kf: It's ss four hundredi birr it is four hundredi n birr*
11. *Jm: Sorry could I bar you: four hundred birr:*
12. *Kf: Yes: take iti.*
13. *Jm: ek: thank you very much:.*

14. *Kf: No matter Jm: Goodbye.*
15. *Kf: Goodbye.*

Jm and Kf opened their greeting with a *'How are you-I'm fine'* sequence of utterances as people. The kind of conversation involved was transactional; it was shopping for clothing. Kf developed the conversation by telling the shopkeeper (Jm) that he wanted to buy something from Jm. In doing so he used an expression that has both an inaudible portion and a pronunciation influenced by his mother tongue: a one-syllable word 'from' pronounced by Jm as a two-syllable word "*firom'* (line 3) which of course was followed by unclear utterance (line 4). Kf has also produced inaudible utterances in (lines 5 & 7) which are marked by double parentheses.

Both Jm and Kf were influenced by their mother tongues, for example, words like take and hundred were pronounced as '*taki'* and '*hundredi'*. Some of the words in their turns were also pronounced oddly. For instance, words like '*expensive'* were pronounced as '*extenses'* (line 8). Here, Kf could have used different repair strategies such as message adjustment or approximation if he failed to pronounce the word '*expensive'.* Moreover, Kf produced inaudible utterances in (lines 3, 5, & 7) which emanated from his hesitation in producing utterances. To cope up with such difficulties, he did not attempt to use fillers or other repair strategies.

Excerpt III: Talking about the weather

The purpose of this scenario was to see whether or not the participants could hold a conversation about the weather condition and the conversation held between LsA and Edf was analyzed and presented below.

1. *LSA: Hi where are you go? – ((shaking hands))*
2. *Edf: I'm going to Peda. Are you going there?*
3. *LSA: Yes. I 'm lots of (( )): this university.*
4. *Edf: Oh I saw (( ))*
5. *LSA: is good. How is whither wither condition?*
6. *Edf: is very boring which is very bad anda I adapted colds*

7.   *whether condition.*
8.   *LSA: Whats time did you did you (( ))?*
9.   *Edf: Well around for example around one o'clock at the*
10.   *evening at the morning and one*
11.   *o'clock this afternoon in the afternoon it can be (( ))*
12.   *coldness extremely warming.*
13. *LSA: Has ((giggling, a sign of shyness)) as you see effectivi*
14.   *for la:rning.*
15. *Edf: Yes I think has (( )) for example when we have a sixth*
16.   *period, we lost our interest*
17.   *because at this time the weather condition the*
18.   *weather*
19.   *condition is very warms.*
20. *LSA: Any much goodbye.*
21. *Edf: OK goodbye ((Iddo)) why we go no together ((tesis))*
22.   *coming.*

LSA and Edf opened their talk with LSA's greeting expression '*Hi*' followed by '*where are go*' accompanied by handshaking. Edf did not respond to the greeting. She directly responded to the '*where are you go*' question. The expressions used by the two interlocutors in (lines 3 & 4) do not seem to be appropriate. In addition, there are inaudible parts of utterances in these lines. Having an assessment of the preceding turn or expression, LSA brought the topic of weather forefront. Edf complained about the weather. LSA's question in (line 8) was inaudible and she also repeated the auxiliary subject sequence used for asking a question. This line has also got a problem in tense in that past tense is used instead of present when they were talking about the current weather condition. Another reason is that its next or second adjacency pair part was responded with present tense. Although Edf's use of the discourse marker '*well*' at the beginning of the utterance in (line 9) indicates her attempt to hold talks in English, part of this utterance is inaudible.

As LSA continued asking Edf (13) about the weather, she started her question and giggled in the middle of her utterance, and tried to ask her question in which her utterance: '*as you see effectivi for la:rning*' was influenced by the accent of her mother

tongue and the first syllable of the last word: *'la:rning'* was stretched. This question of LSA was responded with somehow ungrammatical structures, repetitions, and incompatible tense markers (line 13). These aspects of her utterance depicted the existence of gaps that would require an intervention.

The closing seems to be abrupt because as soon as Edf finished answering LSA's question, LSA used the expression *'any much thank you'* accompanied by Edf's *'Ok goodbye'* followed by a question of going together. Both the expressions have grammatical problems in addition to failing to use pre-closing and closing expressions. Hence, all the pedagogical information gained from the analyses of excerpts above pushed for further interventions to help them develop their conversational skills through the employment of conversational repairs.

4.2 The Post-intervention Analyses

After the intervention was conducted the study, participants were asked to hold conversations. The post-intervention conversations were used to show the qualitative changes if there were any achieved through the intervention. While this kind of task was chosen and performed by the study participants themselves, it allowed the researcher to see how repair strategies were used to withstand difficulties in conversations. Below are the analyses of sample excerpts of their conversations.

Excerpt IV: Invitation to a birthday party

In excerpt IV, TGA and Um conducted a telephone conversation. The transcription and the analysis of their conversation are presented below.

1. *Ringing*
2. *TGA: Hello*
3. *Um: Hello*
4. *TGA: How are you*
5. *Um: I'm fine thank you*
6. *TGA: I'm fine. By the way: would you come: my birthday*
7. *party?*

8. *Um: When? ((with rising intonation))*
9. *TGA: On on sun Sunday at 10 o'clock.*
10. *Um: Oh: I'm sorry: oh I'm sorry I have approximate: with*
11. *   my brother.*
12. *TGA: (3s) ok:: no problem: after after: a: other time.*
13. *   Goodbye.*
14. *Um: Good:*

The opening of this conversation was made by the '*Hello-Hello*' adjacency pair parts following the ringing of the telephone. They continued to greet each other using '*How are you-I'm fine thank you-I'm fine*' sequenced utterances. This has the greeting patterns used by native English speakers. Although *TGA*'s utterance has stretched words: *way:* and *come:* (line 6), she used a topic shift device or discourse marker: '*By the way*' (line 6) which is an indication of the improvement of her conversational skills in English through the use of conversational repair strategies. The utterance she used is also polite since it begins with '*would you...*'

Being surprised, Um asked her the date of TGA's birthday party with a rising intonation. Since she used '*when*' here, she further extended the conversation. TGA repeated words in (line 9) to take time to think about the right word which may be considered to be a conversational structure that prevents the conversation from being discontinued. This seems to be common among foreign language speakers who use repetition as a conversational repair strategy. Um also used repetition and stretched words: '*oh:*' and '*sorry:*' as a repair strategy (line 10) although she mispronounced the word 'appointment' as '*approximate*'. In her attempt to respond to Um's rejection of her invitation, TGA kept silent for three seconds and uttered stretched words: '*ok:, no problem: after: and a:*' and '*another time*' to use it as a pre-closing signal. The use of these gap fillers by TGA shows her use of repair strategies to maintain their conversation. And the conversation was closed by '*Goodbye-Good:* adjacency pair parts. As can be seen above regardless of minor problems, Um's conversational skills have improved and her

employment of conversational resources (repair strategies) is better than her performance in the pre-intervention conversation.

Generally, Um and TGA showed developments in their use of repair strategies. They used topic shift device, topic expansion and conversation fillers or continuers as repair strategies which helped them to succeed in their conversations.

Excerpt V: Hotel English

The conversation held between Jm, Kf and a waiter at a hotel was transcribed and presented below to illustrate their use of conversational strategies.

1. *Jm:*   *Kf long time no see you. very happy been.*
2. *Kf:*   *I have been in Awasa.*
3. *Jm:*   *Awasa?*
4. *Kf:*   *Ihe:*
5. *Jm:*   *How about family?*
6. *Kf:*   *They are very well.*
7. *Waiter:* *Hello. I will be your t-I will be your: waiter today.*
8.   *Are you ready to order or: need a few minute?*
9. *Jm:*   *Yes. We are ready. I will have pizza ((with peanut))*
10. *Waiter:* *What about (( ))?*
11. *Kf:*   *Yes, I illi have: chicken come please.*
12. *Waiter:* *Do you want some somethingi:?*
13. *Jm:*   *Yes I yes I will have soft drinki*
14. *Waiter:* *Which soft drink do you want?*
15. *Jm:*   *(.) I want-can I have seven up please?*
16. *Kf:*   *I illi have a beera please. ((with falling tone))*
17. *Waiter:* *Take:*

Jm and Kf started their conversation with a kind of greeting in which the two conversants did not see each other for a long time. Kf directly provided his reason for not seeing his friend for a long time in that he was in Awasa. Kf did not respond to the greeting rather he focused on the reason for not appearing for a long time. Jm asked him a confirmation question by repeating the word '*Awasa*?' thereby extending the conversation; he used repetition as a repair strategy. Kf used '*The:*' instead of '*yea*' to

express his agreement which is the result of mother tongue influence which can be considered as conversational continuer (repair strategy). Jm continued his question about Kf's family which was followed by Kf's appropriate response about the well-being of his family.

Then the waiter came and asked what they wanted to order with '*hello*' greeting utterance, repetition of phrases, long or stretched words (lines 7 & 8). Following the waiter's utterance, Jm agreed and expressed their readiness to order, and then he ordered although the last portion of his utterance was inaudible. In expressing his agreement to order, Kf produced an utterance that is influenced by his mother tongue and a stretched word '*have:*' (line11). He used the stretched word here as a conversational repair strategy to get time till he brought the next words in to play. Of course, the repair device could also help him to organize his thoughts.

The waiter went on asking Jm whether he would order something else although the waiter's English should have been somehow modified because it may seem to be less polite (line 13). By using repeated turns of phrases, Jm expressed that he would have a soft drink. The waiter extended the conversation by asking which soft drink they wanted. Regardless of almost a two seconds' silence, Jm responded with appropriate language paraphrasing his expression and making his utterance more polite (line 15). Kf also expressed his order using appropriate language. The conversation was brought to an end with the waiter's stretched expression '*Take*:' instead of 'here you are'.

Here, in their attempt to hold their conversation, Jm, Kf and the waiter used confirmation checks, repetition, word stretching, and conversation expansion as strategies or conversational repair strategies. Their use of the repair strategies in their conversations helped them to continue their oral interactions.

Excerpt VI: Likes and dislikes

LSA and Edf talked about the music they like. As shown below, their conversation is transcribed and analyzed from a CA perspective.

1. *LsA:*   *Hi (.)*
2. *Edf:*   *I'm fine thanks to God. What are you doing?*
3. *LSA:*   *I'm listening to Jiregna Shiferw's music.*
4. *Edf:*   *Oh: my goodness! I'm trying to (( )) you*
5. *LSA:*   *You love him*
6. *Edf:*   *What: k I'm crazy about him*
7. *LSA:*   *What about other?*
8. *Edf:*   *Well I don hate any (( )) especially I appreciate Ali*
9.   *Birra, Nuhoo Gobena anda Abebie   9. Kefenie.*
10. *LSA:*   *Abie Kefene? Who is he? Is he fama:s?*
11. *Edf:*   *Yes. He made his new music last year with Jirenya*
12.   *Shiferaw.*
13. *LSA:*   *You remember that music?*
14. *Edf:*   *Ok you have heard "jinina"*
15. *LSA:*   *Oh" jinina" I remember it.*
16. *Edf:*   *Ok what about you? you appreciate?*
17. *LSA:*   *Immm Hacalu, Ebisa Adugna epecially Ali Birra.*
18. *Edf:*   *No way he is our top artist long live for him and im: I*
19.   *like also all our singers.*
20. *LSA:*   *((Nodded her head as a sign of confirmation and*
21.   *back channel))*
22. *Edf:*   *Thank you. See you some other time.*
23. *LSA:*   *Bye*
24. *Edf:*   *Bye*

The opening of this conversation began with the '*Hi-Fine thank you'* adjacency pairs. Edf developed the topic of the conversation by asking what LSA was doing. However, her utterance was not fully heard following LSA's response to her question. But Edf's expression of '*Oh: my goodness'* is an indication of the development of authentic conversation. Her use of the filler '*Oh:* is an indicator for her improvement in employing repair strategies. LSA's question also showed similar development because she used spoken grammar to ask her question: '*you love him?'* instead of 'Do you love him' which has the features of written grammar. Edf responded here again using spoken grammar (line 6): '*what: k I'm crazy about him'* with the word '*what:*' stretched maybe she was searching for words that could help her express her admiration of the artist.

Edf produced an utterance that is appropriate except that a part of her utterance (line 8) is not audible. LSA's question expanded the conversation. In her third question in the same utterance, she pronounced the word 'famous' as '*fama:s*' with the second syllable stretched. Edf gave an appropriate response to the preceding question followed by LSA's other question (line 11) which led their conversation to extend. Their utterances (lines 12—24) of the conversation are encouraging for they indicated development in conversational skills. To respond to Edf's utterance (line 20), LSA used a non-verbal sign or she nodded her head as a sign of confirmation and a backchannel which is a feature of conversational repair strategies.

The '*thank you*' and '*see you some other time*' were used as pre-closing signals followed by the closing adjacency pairs of '*bye-bye*'.

In general, LSA and Edf used conversational fillers/continuers, repetitions, word stretching, and non-verbal language as conversational repair strategies to maintain the flow of their conversation.

From the analyses of the post-intervention phase of the study, the CA-based intervention improved the learners' engagements in conversations. CA indicated the gaps the learners had in their oral interactions and helped the researcher to identify the materials (the conversational repair strategies) needed to teach the learners to alleviate their difficulties in oral interactions. Table 2 below summarizes the repair strategies used by learners in the post-intervention.

Table 2

The Repair Strategies Used by Learners in Their Post-intervention Conversations

The post-intervention	Repair strategy	Repair strategy type
	By the way,	*conversation filler*
	On on sun,	*repetition*
Excerpt I	*Oh: I'm sorry: oh I'm sorry,*	*repetition*
	ok:: no problem:	*paraphrasing*

The post-intervention	Repair strategy	Repair strategy type
	after after:	*repetition*
	a:	*conversation filler*
Excerpt II	*Awasa?*	*asking for repetition*
	Ihe:, I will be your t-I will be your: waiter today,	*repetition*
	or:	*paraphrasing*
	Yes I yes,	*repetition*
	I want-can I have seven	*paraphrasing*
Excerpt III	*Oh:: my goodness,*	*conversation filler*
	What: k, other,	*paraphrasing*
	Made	*approximation*
	Immm,	*conversation filler*
	Nodding of the head as a sign of confirmation and back channel	*non-verbal language*

Table 2 above presents the repair strategies taken from the sample excerpts of learners' conversations in the post-intervention phase of the study. These repair strategies helped them to maintain conversations between themselves.

5. Discussions and Conclusion

The reason for the occurrence of conversational repair strategies in conversation is to make communication successful through compensating its breakdowns. Learners' use of communication strategies during oral interactions is to bridge communication gaps as they help learners to gain time to think when in difficulty or lacking linguistic resources (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980). Scholars such as Seedhouse (2005), Sidnell (2010) and Barraja-Rohan, (2011) argue that CA-informed pedagogy has a significant contribution in second or foreign language acquisition. Following these authors, the present study was intended to answer three basic questions. The first research question was about how CA-informed instruction promotes learners' appropriate use of repair strategies. Regarding this research question, it was sought to answer the processes and ways CA-informed instruction can be applied to promote learners' use of repair strategy. To this end,

learners' oral interaction problems were identified by CA analysis. CA is used to understand the nature and the type of difficulties encountered in conversations by detailed transcriptions of oral interactions (Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Seedhouse, 2004). Therefore, in the present study, CA was used to identify the problems, inform the kind of intervention required, and indicate the kind of conversational features to be focused on. It also suggested the kind of materials to be used and taught. Moreover, it was employed to refine the materials for the intervention and guided the way feedback was provided to the learners. Finally, it was used to depict the changes achieved as a result of the CA-based instruction. Through these procedures, the CA-informed instruction was used to promote the knowledge and use of repair strategies among learners. The CA-informed instruction in the present study has promoted learners' conversational skills through the development of learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies. Hence, the CA-informed instruction is of vital importance for foreign language students since it helps identify the difficulties they face in their attempt to use English in conversations or oral communication in a variety of situations (Wong & Waring, 2010).

The second research question focused on the extent to which CA-informed instruction improves learners' use of repair strategies. As can be observed in the post-intervention conversation analyses, the study participants have shown a significant improvement in their knowledge and use of repair strategies in the oral tasks they performed. They used awkward pauses and repetitions which affected the fluency of their conversation in the pre-intervention phase of the study. However, these problems were minimized in the post-intervention phase, for the participants could use repair strategies and held their conversations without much difficulty. For instance, *Um* took 12 seconds to produce an utterance in the pre-intervention phase of the study, but she could use repetitions as a repair strategy in the post-intervention phase of the study and continued her contribution to the conversation in her turn. She could also use a variety of conversation repair strategies to continue her contribution to the conversation without awkward pauses

between her utterances. The use of repair strategies could help them participate in the oral interactions they were involved in. Another illustration is LSA's nodding of her head as a sign of confirmation and backchannel. The use of such non-verbal signs as a sign of confirmation and backchannel is a strategy in conversations for it compensates verbal language. This repair strategy is of vital importance for LSA to continue the conversation without much difficulty. This shows that CA-informed instruction can enhance the knowledge and use of repair strategies which implies second/foreign language teaching. This is congruent with Dörnyei and Thurrell's (1994) argument in that repetition and fillers are important to facilitate oral interactions of learners. Similarly, Thornbury (2006) asserts the importance of repair strategies in the development of conversation partners' confidence for participating in oral interactions. Seedhouse (2004) also argues that the use of repair strategies in conversations implies the development of oral skills.

The third research question was whether or not the CA-informed instruction enables learners to use repair strategies to be engaged in conversations comfortably. In relation to this, the present study tried to explore the role of CA-informed instruction in enhancing learners' use of repair strategies for effectively participating in oral interactions. And the participants of the study could perform oral tasks more comfortably than in the pre-intervention phase of the study after they had received the CA-based treatment. They came to know how to use repair strategies in oral interactions and applied them in their post-intervention oral performances. Similarly, Hoskins and Noel (2011) found that learners could manage conversational difficulties arose successfully by using repair strategies when conversation troubles arise. Thus, it can be argued that the CA-informed instruction developed learners' confidence to engage themselves in oral interactions through the employment of repair strategies. Hoskins and Noel (2011) maintain that promoting learners' knowledge and use of repair strategies minimizes their anxiety and develop their confidence to be involved in oral interaction; learners feel comfortable because they get time to think, ask clarification questions or ask for repetition, etc. (Pica, 1987). As

the video recordings in the pre-intervention phase showed, the participants felt nervous, produced inaudible utterances, and showed undesired non-verbal signs which marked their difficulties of producing continuous and successive utterances. Nonetheless, in the post-intervention phase of the study, the development of their knowledge and use of repair strategies through CA-informed instruction helped them engaged in conversations comfortably. This study also concurs with Rabab'ah's (2013) study on conversational repair strategy among German and Jordanian non-native speakers of English. Rabab'ah's study revealed that the participants resort to strategies of repair to compensate for their lack of linguistic items to gain time to retrieve linguistic resources and maintain conversation; they used strategies of repair more frequently.

Thus, it can be concluded that the study participants have shown an improvement in their use of conversational repair strategies which in turn contributes to the development of their conversational skills. Since repair strategies assist English learners to meet challenges in conversations, effective use of them contributes to the successful accomplishment of oral interactions (Wong & Waring, 2010). Similarly, the participants used conversational repair strategies to overcome language difficulties in a better way in the post-intervention phase of the study than in the pre-intervention phase due to the CA-informed treatment. This is congruent with the study conducted by Barraja-Rohan (2011) on the contribution of CA-informed instruction in enhancing learners' conversational skills. CA plays a significant role in the teaching and learning of oral skills in ESL/EFL contexts. CA-informed instruction helps to promote the teaching and learning of oral skills through the development of learners' knowledge and the use of repair strategies which can make them effective communicators. Participants who were lacking the confidence to produce utterances in conversations before the intervention could develop their confidence in employing repair strategies in oral interactions that would make them successful communicators of messages of various types. Therefore, the use of CA in language pedagogy has a greater implication for foreign

language learning and acquisition if EFL teachers use it in their teaching of oral skills.

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