HOW DO NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH PROCESS SELF REPAIR AND IMPROVE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND EXPLICITNESS IN F2F CONVERSATION: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the evidence of self-repair and analyses the practices of self-repair in naturally occurring conversations in an institution of higher learning between eight students whose mother tongues were not English. The aim of this study is to increase non-native English speakers’ attention to both language and the medium’s comprehensibility. This study utilized a qualitative method (Creswell, 2014), and content analysis was used to analyse the data. Audio-recorded face-to-face conversations were obtained from eight postgraduate students from one of the public universities in Kuala Lumpur. The data were transcribed using Jefferson’s (2004) transcription notation symbols. The data were analysed based on self-repair strategies, which were the lexical, morphological, syntactic, pragmatic, and explicitness strategies (Mauranen, 2006). The findings show the occurrence of self-repair participants applied in enhancing their language fluency to improve their language proficiency and increase the level of explicitness of their language production. The findings further reveal the ways that non-native speakers of English use to improve proficiency and explicitness so that they become more understandable and able to communicate with others in daily life.

Keywords: language proficiency, non-native speakers of English, self-repair, explicitness strategies

INTRODUCTION

English language is used internationally, and at least a quarter of the population can speak English well (Crystal, 2003). The beauty of using English language widely is that this encourages non-natives to speak English (Crystal, 2003). In terms of sociolinguistic studies in relation to the conversational, self-repair strategies focusing mainly on repetitions.

Repetitions of one or several lexical items are considered part of self-repair organisation when their function is to gain linguistic and/or cognitive planning time for the speaker. In conversations, English-German bilinguals use repetitions as self-repair strategies differently depending on the language they speak. They repeat more pronoun-verb combinations, more personal pronouns, and more prepositions in English than in German, and they recycle more demonstrative pronouns in German than in English. These differences are explained by structural differences in English and German, demonstrating that the structure of a particular
language shapes the repair strategies of language users because it creates opportunities for recycling, and thus, that repetition as a self-repair strategy is an orderly phenomenon.

Therefore, the present study has mainly focused on how ESL and EFL postgraduate students employ self-repair to help them arrive at better clarity and proficiency and be explicit in face-to-face conversations. The study explores how self-repair facilitates English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign Language (EFL) learners to improve their language proficiency and be more explicit in enhancing comprehension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were more than 11,000 postgraduate students in the public institution involved in this study, and 3,500 were international students who came from various countries. Some of the international students are from countries such as Nigeria where people have already acquired English as a nativised second language (Meierkord, 2009) and are able to use the language in quite a number of domains, while there are some students from other countries such as China where English is spoken as a foreign language and can’t be practiced except in exclusive events such as at international conferences. These ESL and EFL students came from various backgrounds of nationality, culture, and mother tongue and had different English language proficiency (hereafter, proficiency). Proficiency, based on the study by MacSwan and Pray (2005), is embodied in the following five facets: (a) the pronunciation (phonology), (b) the meanings of words (semantics), (c) the form and structure of words (morphology), (d) the arrangement of words grammatically (syntax), and (e) how language is used in a particular context (pragmatics (Watterson, 2008).

Generally, in Malaysia, English is used when students want to interact with each other in order to achieve their goals in a conversation. This may also lead to some other issues in these conversations when the non-native students want to interact with each other to achieve some goals in conversations which may lead to some problems in the conversations. In line with that, there are findings which show that speakers have recourse to repair which may help speakers and auditors who are from different language and cultural backgrounds. Among the four varieties of repair sequences (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008), self-repair is a predominant one compared to other-repair (Schegloff, Emanuel, Jefferson, Gail, Sacks, & Harvey, 1990) in helping speakers with their language proficiency and improvement in the level of explicitness.

Self-repair as an effective strategy is commonly used. (Mauranen, 2006). It is a “self-righting mechanism” which deals with “problems in speaking, hearing and understanding” (Schegloff et al., 1990, p.24) which occur repetitively. When linguistic or cultural differences influence the understanding involved in a conversation (Mauranen, 2006; Wong, 2000), the participants want to repair or correct in order to achieve mutual understanding (Kurhila, 2003; Wagner, Johannes, Gardner, and Rod, 2004). It was found that, when non-native speakers have problems producing or the auditors have problems hearing and/or perceive with difficulty (Sacks, 1987), the occurrence of repair initiated by the speaker can be observed. The research done by Mauranen (2006) and Kaur (2009) found that even if the speakers do not make any mistake in their speech, they will repair to pre-empt a problem (Kaur, 2009). Repairing can help achieve clarification and conciseness.
Conversation analysis as a sociolinguistic approach to studying conversation (Cameron, 2001; Chatwin, 2004; Li, 2002) is used in this study to measure conversation production in an attempt at finding ways to raise explicitness and express clarity (Kaur, 2009). When looking at conversation, conversation analysis is utilized to describe the details of participants’ speech production. From their study, it was found that the awareness of and attitudes toward what the participants have repaired in the conversation by themselves (Hellermann, 2009).

The practices of self-repair can be divided into two categories based on the purposes of analysis (Kaur, 2009). The first category of correction can be identified as a result of the language errors or mistakes which usually happen immediately after the source of trouble is noticed by the speaker. Correction involves the replacement of an error or mistake with a correction. This correcting was found to be included in repair occurring regularly in people’s conversations in research conducted by Schegloff et al. (1990). Self-correction, compared with other-correction, happens more frequently (Kaur, 2009). This analysis targeted five linguistic aspects, as mentioned above in the introduction (pronunciation, meaning, structure and grammatical arrangement of words, and the sensible usage of the language). There are several self-repair methods which have been used in various research to address the patterns of conversational behaviour in interaction involving non-native English speakers.

Interestingly, Mauranen (2007) conducted a study on how EFL speakers avoid misinterpretation in situations and establish self-repair. This is commonly done effectively as self-repair consisting of numerous practices. Mauranen’s study focused on the speaker’s performance in rearticulating the content in relation to word choice and grammar of the preceding conversation. While retelling is a communal practice and can be described as an effort on the narrator’s part to make conversation more comprehensible, Mauranen admits that such observations of self-repairs are not often greatly unambiguous in their efforts to sheltered their comprehension. Therefore, less attention is given to using these five strategies in daily conversations. From this study, we would be able see how one repairs the conversation in different settings.

METHODOLOGY

Participants
Eight voluntary students participated in this study. They agreed to participate in this study with a few terms and conditions which were names should not be mentioned and the conversations based on tasks should not be of more than five minutes’ duration as they had limited time. As this time constraint could impose limits on data collection, a task was set for the present study that could at least partially contribute in a significant manner.

The eight sample subjects consisted of seven international postgraduate students and one local student. Among the eight participants, two were Chinese females who had taught oral English for more than one year and able to speak Mandarin as Mandarin is their first language, another was a Chinese female whose native language was Cantonese and had accepted undergraduate schooling in English in Malaysia, one was a Nigerian male who had been to countries where English was used as the first language several times and spoke fluent English though his mother tongue was Fula. The rest included one Iranian male who stayed in Canada for three years when he was a teenager and also had adequate knowledge on how to communicate in English to make himself understood, one Sudanese male who had lived in
different countries in which English was the only medium for him to communicate for 10 years and was also good at using English as a communication tool, one female from Thailand who had an English language training course for two months before she started pursuing her master’s degree which focused more on meaning than form in her speech. And lastly, the only local (Malay) female who did not have many chances to speak in English was shy to communicate with others in English. Except the Nigerian man and Malay female who used English as a second language, the rest were EFL learners. Since the majority of the participants were from Asian countries, the profile table gives a clear identification of their English proficiency levels based on IELTS and MUET. Based on Table 1 (see appendix A), four out of eight of the subjects had above average English proficiency, and the rest had below average. The benefit of having a mixture of levels in English proficiency gives the case study wider coverage on self-repair in different adults with different proficiencies (e.g., beginner, intermediate and advanced). Table 1 provides background information of the participants. Appendix B provides the band description for MUET (Malaysian University English Test) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System). MUET and IELTS bands determine their language proficiency and provide a basic understanding of their language proficiency in relation to this study.

Instruments
Recorded conversations were used to for the study. A total of eight students’ conversations were audio-taped and transcribed based on transcription notation symbols which was developed by Jefferson (2004), see appendix C.

Data Collection Procedure
This study was conducted in one of the higher learning institutions in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The eight participants were chosen randomly based on volunteerism from the campus at different times, and consent was obtained from the participants even though they had volunteered themselves. They were paired first, and each of the four pairs were invited in turns to a closed room in the main library where a short conversation was conducted for four to five minutes. They were taught how to use the recorder and were left alone in the room so that they would not be influenced, or feel nervous in front of the researcher. This was done to ensure the reliability of the data as based on face-to-face (F2F) instructions by Li (2002). A digital recorder was used to record the conversation as it was easy to be controlled by the participants themselves. The conversation was between five and seven minutes for each pair. Li (2002) further noted that for task-based research role play and impromptu conversation, the conversation excerpts should be extracted accurately according to the theoretical framework, even one excerpt could be accurate for analysis. Therefore, for the present study, only selected experts from the conversations were chosen based on the five strategies. For each strategy, one example excerpt was used for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure
This study used a qualitative methodology and content analysis (Creswell, 2014). Coding was done on the transcribed data to identify the five self-repair strategies (lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects, and explicitness strategies) (Mauranen, 2006).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses presented based on the five self-repair strategies encompass the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects, explicitness strategies (Mauranen, 2006).

Lexical Aspect
Excerpt 1:

W: the girls are always...hmm. The mount of girls...the quantitative girls a higher surfaced boys. So it will happen ...it will result in one condition...

L: what is the biggest problem you think you are taking (0.2) the linguistic course as you...you are learning English before? Have you had background knowledge about the linguist linguistic course< in during your degree?

W: wow>

The above two examples were drawn from the conversation between W and L. W talked about the number of college girls and boys and was trying to tell L that the number of girls surpassed the number of boys. She used the wrong word “surfaced” without realising that. She changed the word “happen” to “result in” once she perceived the logical relation between the things she mentioned before and the statement she was going to make. W was talking about the things that happened before while she did not pay much attention to that. This was not the only instance of something like this, though. The second one was found in L’s talk. She changed the word “in” to the more precise and appropriate word ‘during’ so that the other interlocutor could understand her better. These lexical replacements often happened during a little disruption or even no pause. It could also have resulted from a slip of the tongue. Lexical items omitted in a former utterance may be inserted into the speech the moment the speaker realises a source of trouble (Kaur, 2009).

A: because of I take the course ... English course at the um said before the university admit me to st...to be student here.

An inserted “be” into the phrase “admit somebody to do something” as soon as she started to produce the noun “student.” This could also have been an unconscious mistake which could be corrected. Improper lexical items were replaced by the speaker with more suitable ones.

Morphological aspect

Morphological correction comes up in a conversation in which the participants concentrated more on meaning rather than the language itself. The inflection of words is likely to be obscured, the verb tenses are easily misused, the singular or plural forms of nouns could be neglected.

Except 2:

D: so you are a teaching... You are teacher... You are a teacher?

D: people have one kids, two kid...ah. Kid and two kids and that’s all.

On one hand, there were many grammatical mistakes in the form or structure of words being taught. I observed in student’s conversation practitioners’ interaction. The words rarely trigger problems for comprehending others (Wagner, Johannes, Gardner, & Rod, 2004), hence it is understandable that the majority of them are ignored or left uncorrected. On the other hand, speakers attempt to correct those inaccurate forms whenever and wherever they become conscious of them. Undoubtedly, accuracy increases when these types of mistake are avoided, while the level of fluency will possibly be decreased. As we can see from the above excerpts, the utterances were broken because of corrections. Therefore, how to balance the two criteria in daily conversation needs to be further discussed.

From syntactic aspect

The words being modified, the arrangement of words being revised and the clause types being reorganized are all included in the correction of syntax, according to research conducted by Kaur (2011). Nevertheless, the example I have extracted from my data is only about arranging the words. The example is as follows:

Except 3:

Y: you think he...do you think he is naughty?

From pragmatic aspect

Corrections determined by changes in meaning can also be observed in face-to-face conversation between two people. This may be marked by some words of negation like “no” or “not.”

Except 4:


This example was extracted from C and A’s conversation about C’s three-year-old son. A wanted to visit C and look after his son. She might have realised that eating too much sugar is harmful to kids and then she made another suggestion. She said that too fast, so it might have just been a slip of tongue as usually people use candy to show kindness to a kid.

Explicitness strategies

Repair occurs when there is a mistake or an error in the speech, and it also has an effect on speakers’ language production in which there is no error (Kurhila, 2003). Kaur’s (2009) study agrees with the present study in that this type of repair could help students with their explicitness and clarity. Speakers may express themselves more clearly, and it turns out that they could be more easily understood by others. Based on the research done by Kaur (2009), there were three out of five strategies: (a) the replacement of a general term with a specific term (Kurhila, 2003), (b) the insertion of a qualified word or words regardless of when and where it occurs, and (c) the change of a pronoun to the specific words or objects. The aim of this part is to explore the three strategies in sample data taken from this research and to determine whether language proficiency has a significant influence on the preference of strategies the participants use or not. The findings of this present research are as follows:
Except 6:

L: after that. This cou... Ah. This major accepted me.

Y: does the trip help?

C: um. Pardon?

Y: does the trip help? Help. Does the field trip help (3) in like uh hum getting a better idea idea about you know major programs?

Among the four examples, the first is about the change of words. L used “major” after she tried to use “course,” which might have been for precision so that her partner W would understand her better about what happened when she applied for TESOL while being enrolled as a MESL student. This is because postgraduate students in the institution often use the word “major” to refer to the particular field they study. “Course” is more about a series of lessons or lectures is a particular field. Therefore, “course” is more suitable and explicit here. The second sample shows the additional word inserted before the key word “help.” Y was inquiring on the advantages of a field trip which she and her partner C had already talked about. C did not get the word “help” because of Y’s strong accent. Therefore, Y added “field” to clarify her question. Furthermore, she explained her view of the question and finally made C understand what she was trying to say.

Except 7:

L: you you can... girls can speak English good. As I see.

W: I don’t like it. Really. I don’t like linguistics.

Pronouns here were exchanged with the particular pronoun. To be specific, L said “you” to refer to W herself, but she replaced this pronoun with “girls.” It is quite common in China that there are more female English language learners than males and it is usually the case that female Chinese learners reach higher levels of language proficiency than male ones (Kaur, 2009). Thus, she wanted to make this conclusion of the phenomenon, which was confirmed by L herself after the conversation. The last one was from W, who did not like linguistics. L asked her about her schooling in college. She said, “I don’t like it,” and emphasised this statement with the adverb “really.” She expressed her opinion on linguistics clearly by replacing the pronoun with the noun “linguistics” and said once more, “I don’t like linguistics.” There are two more strategies identified in Kaur’s (2009) study which were not explored in this study, owing to limitations.

Apart from the five self-repair strategies mentioned above, one strategy could be added that emerged from the data, which is in relation to the phonological aspect of language proficiency. As can be seen in Excerpt 8, below, the participants replaced a mispronounced word with the correct version:
Excerpt 8:

(1) L: what is the biggest problem you think you are taking (0.2) the linguistic course as you…you are learning English before? Have you had background knowledge about the linguist linguistic course< in …during your degree?

W: wow>

(2) L: also a place for you to cialcial… Social communication?

In the first example, L wanted to ask W about whether W had taken a course in her undergraduate education or not. She immediately replaced “linguistic” with “linguist” when she was aware of the source of trouble. After that, L continued her talk. In the second example, the mispronounced word “cialcial” was replaced with the correct one. Phonological mistakes can happen because of a slip of the tongue or when a speaker suddenly forgets a word. In this case with L, it could have been due to the influence of accuracy in oral production once she tried to use long and complex sentences to express herself. This type of mistake might affect the understanding of the auditor as it is usually concerned with meaning.

Therefore, language proficiency in relation to phonological aspects could be added to the significance of the study. This study may also offer a contribution to repair strategies research by examining the use of repair strategies in non-native English speakers. As per the study findings of this study, the study raises the need for elementary ESL researchers in the field. More attention should be given to the ESL curriculum, which would assist non-native English speakers in developing more repair strategies in managing communication breakdown. Apart from that, this study also supports the need to re-examine ESL materials and lessons, which would assist non-native English speakers to develop their repair strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed the conversation of adult non-native speakers of English in order to improve proficiency and explicitness so that they become more understandable and are able to understand others in daily life. Also, the study examined the repair strategies that these non-native English speakers used to deal with communication breakdown in their daily conversations. Specific repair strategies such as lexical, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects, and explicitness strategies were covered.

As mention above, this study attempted to explore the ways that non-native speakers of English improve proficiency and explicitness so that they become more understandable and are able to understand others in daily life. On the basis of the findings of this study, it is suggested that EFL or ESL students’ own awareness of the self-repair happening to them unconsciously helps them with their language learning and mutual communication.

Using conversation analysis as a method to analyse the fine-detailed information of English output produced naturally between speakers whose mother tongues are not English, this study tried to “uncover the participants’ own interpretations” (Hellermann, 2009). In other words, we tried to reveal the participants underlying understanding. According to the results of this study, methods of achieving language proficiency could be classified into five categories. These are self-repair of pronunciation, the meaning of words, the form of terms,
the morphological structure of words, and the practical uses of the language. Further, the explicitness strategies that the participants of this study used in their conversation were limited. They were the replacement of specific words with narrowed-down meanings of general words, the adding of a word or words which could influence the meaning and qualify the language production to strengthen mutual understanding between the interlocutors and abandoning the pronoun by replacing it with a specific noun in an utterance to enable the listeners to grasp the speakers’ points.

Fastidious speakers are more likely to have endless chances for correction (Brouwer et al., 2004). The present study can be further conducted on speakers who are fastidious, so that there might be more data found about correction and the ways to address problems in language learning and communication can be probed.

REFERENCES


## Appendix A-Table 1-Background Information of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Language proficiency</th>
<th>Role of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>MUET 4</td>
<td>EFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>IELTS band 6</td>
<td>EFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Fula</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>IELTS band 7</td>
<td>EFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>IELTS band 6.5</td>
<td>EFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>IELTS band 7</td>
<td>EFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>EFL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B-Band Descriptions for MUET and IELTS

Band Descriptions for MUET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGGREGATED SCORE</th>
<th>BAND</th>
<th>USER</th>
<th>COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY</th>
<th>COMPREHENSION</th>
<th>TASK PERFORMANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>260 – 300</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Highly proficient user</td>
<td>Very fluent; highly appropriate use of language; hardly any grammatical error</td>
<td>Very good understanding of language and context</td>
<td>Very high ability to function in the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220 – 259</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Proficient user</td>
<td>Fluent; appropriate use of language; few grammatical errors</td>
<td>Good understanding of language and context</td>
<td>High ability to function in the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 – 219</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Satisfactory user</td>
<td>Generally fluent; generally appropriate use of language; some grammatical errors</td>
<td>Satisfactory understanding of language and context</td>
<td>Satisfactory ability to function in the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140 – 179</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Modest user</td>
<td>Fairly fluent; fairly appropriate use of language; many grammatical errors</td>
<td>Fair understanding of language and context</td>
<td>Fair ability to function in the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 139</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Limited user</td>
<td>Not fluent; inappropriate use of language; very frequent grammatical errors</td>
<td>Limited understanding of language and context</td>
<td>Limited ability to function in the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very limited user</td>
<td>Hardly able to use the language</td>
<td>Very limited understanding of language and context</td>
<td>Very limited ability to function in the language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Band Description for IELTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bandscore</th>
<th>Skill level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band 9</td>
<td>Expert user</td>
<td>You have a full operational command of the language. Your use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and you show complete understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 8</td>
<td>Very good user</td>
<td>You have a fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. You may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. You handle complex detailed argumentation well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 7</td>
<td>Good user</td>
<td>You have an operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally you handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 6</td>
<td>Competent user</td>
<td>Generally you have an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. You can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 5</td>
<td>Modest user</td>
<td>You have a partial command of the language, and cope with overall meaning in most situations, although you are likely to make many mistakes. You should be able to handle basic communication in your own field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>Limited user</td>
<td>Your basic competence is limited to familiar situations. You frequently show problems in understanding and expression. You are not able to use complex language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 3</td>
<td>Extremely limited user</td>
<td>You convey and understand only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 2</td>
<td>Intermittent user</td>
<td>You have great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 1</td>
<td>Non-user</td>
<td>You have no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 0</td>
<td>Did not attempt the test</td>
<td>You did not answer the questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Transcription Notation Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ text ]</td>
<td>Brackets</td>
<td>Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech. e.g. A : Hey what is it / yes see there B : Hey what is it / I got to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Equal Sign</td>
<td>Indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single interrupted utterance. e.g. : A : If you wish to work here, you must work hard B: = must work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(# of seconds)</td>
<td>Timed Pause</td>
<td>A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Longer Pause</td>
<td>Indicates a longer pause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>Micropause</td>
<td>A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. or ↓</td>
<td>Period or Down Arrow</td>
<td>Indicates falling pitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? or ↑</td>
<td>Question Mark or Up Arrow</td>
<td>Indicates rising pitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Comma</td>
<td>Indicates a temporary rise or fall in intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Hyphen</td>
<td>Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underline</td>
<td>Underlined text</td>
<td>Indicates the speaker is emphasising or stressing the speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>::::</td>
<td>Colon(s)</td>
<td>Indicates prolongation of an utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ? )</td>
<td>Question Mark</td>
<td>Indicates unintelligible speech, difficult to understand, poorly articulated and enunciated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Bracket</td>
<td>Indicates a description of the context. e.g.: (laughs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jefferson (2004). Transcription Notation Symbols