

# Overlap in EFL Learners' Online Casual Conversation: How Men and Women Differ

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## *ABSTRACT*

The COVID-19 pandemic is thought to have changed the way people communicate in society. It has ushered in a new way of living that is fully conducted online. It urges this study to concentrate on examining online communications, particularly men's and women's online casual conversations. The qualitative approach was employed to accomplish this. Three basic processes were carried out in greater depth. The first step was to tape the dialogue, which was transcribed using the theory of Eggins & Slade (1997). To strengthen the data, an unstructured interview was conducted (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Finally, to expose the phenomenon of overlap, the data were evaluated using theories proposed by numerous experts, such as Schegloff (2000), Cogo & Dewey (2012), Yule (1996), and many more. The results were afterward developed into rich verbal descriptions. Analysis shows that men's and women's online casual conversations have different patterns of overlap. This can happen because of the influence of what they have received throughout their lives about how to be a man and a woman. The gender values they get from their environment greatly affect how they communicate and interact with others.

**Keywords:** Overlap, Casual Conversation, Men, Women

## **INTRODUCTION**

Humans require communication or conversation to function. The conversation is the principal place for the enactment of social ideals and connections, which explains its importance in human discourse (Thornbury & Slade, 2006). They are accustomed to utilizing language to communicate with one another, whether it is one individual to another, one individual to a group, or one group to another (Eggins & Slade, 1997). According to Syafryadin et al. (2020), the communication that occurs throughout the discussion must be communicative for the speaker and hearer to comprehend each other. In daily communication, such as

between the client and the clerk, buyer and seller, student and instructor, and other types of conversation fields. There is not a single person on the planet who is not engaged in some form of communication. Communication has an increasingly important function in human life as it becomes more sophisticated. Interacting with others, solving difficulties, and forming positive connections are all directly tied to communication. Additionally, humans are social beings who rely on one another and are intertwined with their surroundings. Communication is the sole way to interact with others in their surroundings, both verbally and nonverbally.

Language is the only way for people to converse with one another in everyday life, whether at home, in institutions, in society, or anywhere else. Someone's aspirations, educational background, customs, and even native regions or nations can be deduced from their language. Language is a culture that each group or nation owns. Someone's principles, attitudes, and memories of schooling are reflected in their language (Apriani, et. al, 2019). Continuous practice is required to utilize language correctly and efficiently since language is an applicable item or something that must be practiced consistently (Apriani, et. al, 2019). The use of language in a conversation is rich in unique phenomena. Things like overlapping phenomena in conversation, the social context that influences language choice, and pragmatic meanings made by speakers make a conversation particularly rich in terms of learning opportunities. These phenomena will differ greatly depending on whether the person speaking is male or female.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic is thought to have altered society's communication patterns. All previous societal habits have been altered as a result of the pandemic's consequences. Many activities have been affected as a result of the pandemic's global expansion, including schools, work, the economy, and business. Many people's habits are also shifted as a result of it. There are no longer any get-togethers, institutions are transitioning to virtual courses, and many businesses are embracing work-from-home programs (Teodorovicz et al., 2021). The pandemic has altered how people work and socialize, especially how events are organized. However, there are other lessons to be learned from this disaster, including the importance of spreading positive information and other useful resources. As a result of this predicament, a remedy has emerged, namely the appearance of a healthy and human form of digital culture (Williyan & Sirniawati, 2020). This pandemic has ushered in a new style of life that takes place entirely online.

The preceding arguments demonstrate that the sphere of online communication is experiencing a favorable trend (Nguyen et al., 2020).

This is enough to entice academics to explore this area further. Furthermore, if the focus is aimed at something more specific, the scenario will become more engaging. As a result, the focus of this research is on the overlapping occurrences in women's and men's communication. However, research in this field is not new. Many prior researchers in this sector have effectively presented their findings. Some of these papers served as a source of inspiration for this study.

In "Using Synchronous Online Discussion to Develop EFL Learners' Productive Skills: A Case Study", a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental approach was used by Nguyen & Pham (2020). The research project involved thirty students from Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy. Between the beginning and the end of the semester, both groups improved significantly in their speaking and writing abilities. Then, according to Lee (2020), in "Why Do We Overlap Each Other?: Collaborative Overlapping Talk in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Communication", the overlap is frequently regarded as a violation of the one-at-a-time principle. Speakers in English as a lingua franca (ELF) interactions use dynamic overlapping conversations to accomplish cooperative and supportive turn-taking. When speakers make backchannel, echoing responses, and utterance completion, they overlap. Williyam (2020) aims to investigate EFL learners' casual communication in "Exploring EFL Learners' Casual Conversation." Spontaneity, interaction, interpersonally, coherence, and assessment are the only aspects of the study that are examined. The data are natural occurrences that are gathered in three steps: recording, transcription, and qualitative analysis. Lastly, Xia, (2013) focused on the variations between men and women in terms of pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, grammar, etiquette, attitudes, and nonverbal distinctions in language use in her paper, "Gender Differences in Using Language."

These studies demonstrate how appealing the area of conversation is. However, there has not been much research done on the phenomena of overlap in women's and men's online conversations. It has received less attention. As a result, the goal of this research is to uncover the disparities between men's and women's online interactions, particularly in terms of overlap. This study is expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of casual conversation research.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Overlap**

Overlap is defined as simultaneous talking (Thornbury & Slade, 2006). In more detail, the term overlap refers to when more than one person is speaking at the same time. Generally, there are four types of overlaps (Schegloff, 2000). The first is what is known as "terminal overlap." In this form of overlap, the second person begins speaking when the first is almost finished with his or her sentence. The second is continuers. They are expressions like "uh-huh, mm-hm" that implies that the interlocutor desires to skip his turn and leave it entirely to the speaker, while also signaling that the speaker has not yet completed speaking. The third is conditional access to the turn, which occurs when a speaker allows the addressee to interrupt his or her conversation. For instance, requesting the speaker to take turns speaking to complete words, terms, or the name of someone whom the speaker does not recognize. The fourth is chordal or choral. This form of overlap is used to entice other participants to make utterances in response to earlier participants' utterances. The laughter that can motivate other participants to join in laughing welcomes and congratulations in reaction to excellent news are examples of this type.

### **Reasons behind an Overlap**

In general, Yule, (1996) splits the overlap function into two types: solidarity overlap and competitive overlap. Most young speakers employ solidarity or closeness overlap as a function of language to communicate solidarity or intimacy when expressing it, or as a highly valuable togetherness value between them. Sometimes the overlapped conversation of younger speakers looks to be a show of solidarity or closeness of view on similar topics (Yule, 1996). Aside from the fact that overlap conveys proximity, the speakers may appear to be conversing, but they are contending for the floor (Yule, 1996). When this happens, the speakers appear to be conversing normally, but they are battling for the right to talk. This is called a "speech cut," and it's frequently followed by a louder reply from the original speaker.

Simultaneous speech can therefore be classified as "cooperative" or "competitive," according to Cogo & Dewey (2012). During another speaker's turn, cooperative overlapping occurs, but it does not attempt to claim the floor. In other words, there is no indication from the discourse that the interlocutor intends to say anything else or contend for the floor. Instead, competitive overlaps consist of talking while the major speaker is speaking, which can result in interruptions. In this scenario, the

principal speaker relinquishes the floor before he or she expected to. Finally, Williyam (2020), in keeping with the prior interpretations, claims that interlocutors willingly overlap. Others are done unintentionally as a result of the interlocutors' misjudgment of an impending shift.

### **Women and Men in the Conversation**

Women and men use language in different ways, but the feminine gender is considered better at it than the male. It is because a female can master the majority of a language. Languages have traditionally been associated with women, so it is no surprise (Fontecha, 2010). Women have superior language skills (Porter, 2005). Women are more powerful than men when it comes to using language, and one of those areas is linguistic ability. It is also backed up by another expert (Hyde & McKinley, 1998), who claims that men have more difficulty with verbal abilities than women. As a result, one of the reasons why language is the one area where women can outperform males is because of this.

When it comes to language, women are likewise particularly concerned with the issue of politeness. Men will communicate concerning conversational norms and straightforward factual communication, but women will communicate regarding etiquette rules, conversational implicature, and interpersonal exploration (Lakoff, 1975). It is no surprise that guys loathe talking so much; they prefer to get right to the point they are trying to make or clarify. In addition, according to Tannen (1994), women are frequently interrupted in discussions by men. On the other hand, men are more likely to interrupt a discussion than women. It is because they want to be perceived as someone who can command a conversation. Meanwhile, women rarely, if ever, interrupt the opponent's speech. It is no wonder that men dominate conversations by interrupting their opponents and delivering their messages more effectively (Sunderland, 2006).

It is impossible to provide a universal explanation of how women and men interact, whether through spoken or written language. The reason for this is that what one civilization considers masculine or feminine may not be the same in another (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Moreover, female and male roles evolve and vary over time, depending on society's perspective (Archer & Lloyd, 2002).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study's data are naturally occurring data, which are described as naturally occurring text-based materials chosen by a researcher to use for

research purposes to answer a research question (Kiyimba et al., 2019). The information was gathered via women's and men's online casual conversations. Zoom was used as the platform for this online casual conversation. The respondents in this present study are EFL learners that are divided into two groups; two males and two females. To evaluate the spoken text in this study, three basic processes are used. The first step is to tape the dialogue. The second process is to transcribe using the theory of Eggins and Slade (1997). To strengthen the data, an unstructured interview was conducted (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Through interviews (Seidman, 2006), researchers can gain an insight into other people's lived experiences and the significance they assign to those experiences. Finally, to expose the phenomenon of overlap, the data are evaluated using theories proposed by numerous experts, such as Thornburry (2005) and Eggins (2005). As this study employs a qualitative approach, the results are afterward developed into rich verbal descriptions (Ary et al., 2012). Besides, qualitative methodology is also used as the data is gathered from the participants' actual statements or actions (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **Overlap in Men's and Women's Online Casual Conversation**

Online conversations for men and women are carried out through the Zoom meeting platform. Two female respondents in this study talked about their campus life, especially their relationships with friends on campus. The conversation was quite interesting, with a relaxed atmosphere. Both seem very supportive of the problems that are being faced by each. On the other hand, the two male respondents in this study discussed a more complicated matter, namely the performance of the Indonesian national football team in tournaments throughout Southeast Asia. Then, they moved on to the topic of the new capital city of Indonesia. Their conversation is quite intense because they defend what they believe. The conversation lasted approximately 10 minutes. In that period, there were 131 turns in female online conversations and 139 turns in male online conversations. Overlaps often occur in their online conversations. The table below shows complete data on the overlap that occurs in the two online conversations.

**Table 1**

<b>Overlap in Men's and Women's Online Conversation</b>				
	<b>Terminal Overlap</b>	<b>Continuers</b>	<b>Conditional access to the turn</b>	<b>Chordal Or Choral</b>
<b>Women's Online Casual Conversation</b>	62%	36%	2%	-
<b>Men's Online Casual Conversation</b>	70%	25%	5%	-

From the table above, the percentage of occurrences of the four types of overlap is presented. All four are types of overlap initiated by Schegloff (2000). The emergence of the four types of overlap has something in common. In both women's and men's online casual conversations, terminal overlap dominates, followed by continuers, conditional access to the turn, and chordal or choral overlap, which do not appear at all in both online conversations.

The female respondents in their online casual conversation did a terminal overlap of 62%. It means the second female respondent started to overlap the conversation when the first female respondent almost completed her utterance. Below is excerpt 1 that shows the example of terminal overlap in women's online casual conversation. The first and second female respondents are coded as F1 and F2. Meanwhile, the overlap is coded with the symbol ==.

F1	Why he left our college... I think... Ummm I caused it, maybe, ==I don't know.
F2	==I think he had another reason.

Based on excerpt 1 above, it is indicated that F2 began saying *I think he had another reason* just as F1 was saying *I don't know*. F2 started to overlap exactly when F1 almost finished her utterance. In addition, the second type of overlap, continuers, occurs 36% in women's online casual conversation. Below is excerpt 2 that shows the example of continuers in women's online casual conversation.

F1	oh yeah, I remember something. So I and this person argued not too long ago ==because of something
F2	==umm hmmm
F1	Actually yeah I think for him it's a small matter but it was kind of big for me and the problem that he makes was kind of... you know... too fatal to do.

Excerpt 2 above shows the moment when F2 did the continues to overlap F1. The expression of *umm hmmm* was stated just as F1 was saying *because of something*. It implies that F2 desires to skip her turn and leave it entirely to F1, while also signaling that F1 has not yet completed speaking. Lastly, the female respondents also did the overlap using conditional access to the turn with only 2%. An example of it can be seen in excerpt 3 below.

F2	Let's call him... what should we call him? ==Ummm...
F1	==Mr.X
F2	just call him "Mr.x", yeah

It can be seen in excerpt 3, that F1 began saying *Mr.X* just as F2 was saying *Ummm*. It occurred because F2 allows F1 to interrupt her conversation. F1 took turns speaking to complete the utterance of F2. Similarly, the overlap done by the male respondents in their online casual conversation was dominated by terminal overlap with 70%. It means that the second male respondent began to overlap the dialogue when the first male respondent had almost finished his remark. The example of terminal overlap in men's online casual conversation is shown in excerpt 4 below. M1 and M2 are the codes for the first and second male respondents, respectively.

M1	I believe we need a world-class coach to be able to help our country ==win something.
M2	==No, I don't think so. The problem is the players and the Indonesian League.

M2 began responding *No, I don't think so* just as M1 was stating *win something*, according to excerpt 4 above. M2 began to overlap just as M1 was about to finish his sentence. Furthermore, in men's online casual conversation, continuers which is the second type of overlap occurs at



25%. The example of continuers in men's online casual conversation is shown in excerpt 5 below.

M1	My favorite goal of the tournament is of course the one scored by Arhan. That was == a super goal.
M2	==umm hmmm
M1	He for me should play somewhere abroad.

M2 did the continuer to overlap M1 shown by Excerpt 5 above. M1 said *super goal* while M2 was expressing *umm hmmm*. It indicates that M2 wants to forgo his turn and leave it totally to M1, as well as the fact that M1 has not finished speaking yet. Finally, just 5% of the total overlap done by male respondents is conditional access to turn. Excerpt 6 is an illustration of this.

M2	We almost won the cup a long time ago when the captain is ... who ==is he...
M1	==Firman Utina
M2	Really? Was it Bambang?

M1 began saying *Firman Utina* at the same time M2 was saying, *is he?* It can be seen in excerpt 6. M2 allowed M1 to interrupt his talk, which caused this to happen. M1 took turns speaking to finish M2's utterance.

### Reasons behind the Overlaps in Men's and Women's Online Casual Conversation

In this study, it was found that the reasons for the overlap in the conversations consist of two things, namely cooperative and competitive reasons. Cooperative reasons dominate the women's online casual conversation, although there are some moments where they bring up competitive reasons. The woman is more likely to overlap with the goal as a show of solidarity or closeness. On the other hand, the overlap that occurs in men's online casual conversation mostly occurs as a result of competitive reasons. The conversation looks normal, but they are fighting for the right to speak and competing for the floor. Below is the table that shows how the respondents overlap.

Table 2

Cooperative and Competitive Overlap in Online Casual Conversation		
	Cooperative Overlap	Competitive Overlap
<b>Women</b>	90%	10%
<b>Men</b>	22%	78%

The table above reveals that the majority of overlap done in the women's online casual conversation was done cooperatively with 90% and competitively with 10%. Meanwhile, the competitive overlap dominated the overlap in the men's online casual conversation with 78%. The remaining 22% of the overlap appeared as the cooperative overlap. Below is excerpt 7 that shows how the female respondents overlapped cooperatively.

F1	He felt mad or something because I and my friends are kinds of... I don't know... ==I did not bully.
F2	==umm hmmm
F1	We didn't bully him, we just gave him words to make him aware that he made a big mistake. But yeah, you know what happens.

F2 overlapped F1 using the continuers, namely the expressions of *umm hmmm*. The goal of it is to show solidarity or closeness between the speakers. Excerpt 7 above is one of the examples of cooperative overlap done by using continuers. The female respondents also overlapped cooperatively with the positive and negative agreement as shown in excerpt 8 below.

F1	I can't tolerate it anymore. So yeah I had to give him some speech. I had to give him some speech honey not gonna lie though, not gonna lie, I had to give him ==some speech.
F2	==I'll say

F2 began expressing the expression of positive agreement, *I'll say*, just as F1 was saying *some speech*. Excerpt 8 below displays another example of negative agreement to overlap cooperatively.

F1	I don't get it ==why this can happen.
F2	==neither do I

It is seen that the expression of negative agreement, *neither do I*, was used by the speakers to cooperatively overlap the turn. Last but not least, the speaker often affirms the previous speaker to cooperatively overlap. It is shown in excerpt 9 below.

F2	I don't know why should I do it? Doesn't make sense. I tell you right now, doesn't make sense, ==right?
F1	==doesn't make sense.

F1 began saying *doesn't make sense obviously*, just as F2 was saying *right*. The cooperative overlaps in men's online casual conversation were done similarly. Some of them are done with affirmations, positive or negative agreement. Meanwhile, competitive overlaps were done by using a disagreement. Both men and women did it in their online casual conversation as shown in excerpt 10 below.

F2	I believe we need a world-class coach to be able to help our country ==win something.
F1	==No, I don't think so. The problem is the players and the Indonesian League.

M1 began expressing the expression of disagreement, *No, I don't think so*, just as F1 was saying *win something*. It is undeniable that these things can happen because they are male and female. The family at home has planted the role of how males and females should be since the beginning of their lives (Ridgeway, 2011). The values of being female and male that are obtained from society every day and which are taught by parents from an early age greatly affect how they behave in interacting, one of which is during online casual conversation.

Since the beginning of their lives, males were given balls, sword toys, and other toys as gifts, and they use those toys in games (Ridgeway, 2011). Meanwhile, the woman is the opposite. Toy domestic appliances and dolls are provided to girls so that they can model themselves after their moms and other women who are still predominantly responsible for household and childcare activities and develop a personal repertoire of caring and domestic behaviors (Burr, 1998). Through the interview, it is revealed that the same experiences were also felt by the respondents of this present study. The purpose of the interview was for the researcher

to learn about the male and female roles of the interviewees. The results of the interview demonstrate that the respondents' families and society still follow the conventional model, with women staying at home to handle chores and males working outside the home. This is what makes the fact that, culturally, it is difficult to shift society's perspective that, regardless of their occupations, women are responsible for the care and well-being of their children, as well as the formation of a home (Ridgeway, 2011). This circumstance has an indirect impact on their language use, as women overlap as a display of solidarity or closeness, whereas men overlap competitively.

The major foundation and cause of the difference between why women overlap and why men overlap in online casual conversation are how the family at home and people in the social design the roles of males and females from the beginning of their lives. The role of females and males is constantly negotiated in family interactions (Tannen, 2003). A boy's mind is ingrained from an early age that a man must be strong, not whiny, and resilient. He will be a leader. This perspective may cause a man to be interested in external matters such as building garages, having battles, and other difficult themes (Lakoff, 1973). In contrast, since they were children, the women have been taught by their parents to be considerate creatures who care for others. They have been shaped to be more interested in the emotive standpoint. Women, on the whole, prefer to talk about their relationship as a topic of communication, spoken or written, but men prefer to talk about their competitiveness as a way of demonstrating their honor (Tannen, 1994). Therefore, it's not surprising that this study discovers that, in general, women overlap in online casual conversation to express solidarity or closeness, whereas men overlap to compete.

A productive dialogue between interlocutors must follow a set of principles or rules (Syafryadin, et. al, 2020). The men communicate in a straightforward, factual manner (Lakoff, 1973). They are reasonable people because they were not created by society to be thoughtful from the beginning of their lives. As a result, they will say exactly what they want to say. No wonder, they frequently compete with one another. They do not seem to mind that their interlocutors have not completed speaking yet. They will speak up if they believe it is beneficial to them. Women, on the other hand, say something respectfully (Lakoff, 1973). They will, in reality, use the most effective phrase, preventing the opponents from reacting badly. Therefore, they tend to overlap cooperatively. They place a premium on the time they spend conversing with their interlocutor. When the opponent's turn is over, they will talk. Even if they do overlap

in conversation, they will not do so to tear the other person down; instead, they will endeavor to keep the dialogue cooperative.

It is human nature to be selfish or act under one's desires. These desires, however, are controlled by agreements and rules because humans are social beings who live with other humans. In a conversation, this is also true. The speaker cannot speak at will, or the speaker and the interlocutor would misunderstand each other. The realities on the ground, on the other hand, frequently demonstrate the opposite, with each speaker following his ego. They desire to demonstrate that they are more capable and knowledgeable than the other person, especially if they are a man. Males want to be in charge of a conversation (Sunderland, 2006). Through the interview process, the male respondents in this study indicated that they had imprinted in their thoughts how to be a competitive man who constantly wants to do their best to attain certain goals in life. By competitively overlapping the topic, this indirectly causes their desire to stand out more in a conversation.

The distinction between male and female duties is not just taught at home. Schools, as the second most important site where students spend the majority of their time, play an important part in teaching children how to be men and females, either directly or indirectly. Schools aid in the formation of sex-role socialization theorists, or those who study how people learn to play male and female roles in society (Bank, 2007). It is no secret that teachers use different approaches for boys and girls. Since elementary school, they have been taught that a woman must be motherly and kind. As for the male students, the teachers always advise them to have a strong image. The man continues to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity through his choice of topics (cars, fights, sports), focus on achievement (in fighting or sports), and development of a tough image through the use of swear words and appeal to violence (Coates, 2004).

## **CONCLUSION**

The overlap analysis in men's and women's online casual conversation has been presented. The analysis shows that the types of overlap that appear in men's and women's online casual conversations are terminal overlap with the most dominant percentage of occurrences, continuers in second, conditional access to the turn in third, and choral or choral with 0% occurrence. Furthermore, female respondents in this study tend to do cooperative overlap by using the expression of positive and negative agreement, as well as affirmation. Meanwhile, the

competitive overlap is more dominantly carried out by male respondents through expressions of disagreement. This can happen because of the influence of what they get throughout their lives, especially about how to be a man and a woman. The gender values they get from their environment, such as home and school, greatly affect them in communicating and interacting with others.

Lastly, this study offers many other issues related to women and men EFL learners' online casual conversations for future research. Researchers can fill the gap by conducting the study to investigate other phenomena in this field. They can conduct research focusing on politeness, conversational implicature, or speech act in EFL learners' online casual conversations. Last but not least, it is also wide open for the researchers to be concerned about how men and women differ in written language. By conducting these studies, the knowledge in this field will be rich.

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