UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

THE MANY FACES OF OVERLAP

NON-COMPETITIVE OVERLAP IN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FINNISH AND BRITISH SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

A Pro Gradu Thesis in English

by

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Dedicated to my parents

Tämä työ on omistettu vanhemmilleni

HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA
KIELTEN LAITOS

Minna Stolt
THE MANY FACES OF OVERLAP:
NON-COMPETITIVE OVERLAP IN A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FINNISH AND BRITISH SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää päällekkäin puhumisen yleisyyttä ja tyyppejä suomalaisten ja brittien välisessä englanninkielisessä vuorovaikutuksessa. Tutkimuksessa keskitytään tarkastelemaan ei-kilpailevia päällekkäisyyksiä, jotka ovat jääneet vähälle huomiolle aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa. Ei-kilpailevilla päällekkäisyyksillä viitataan tässä tutkimuksessa päällekkäin puhuntaan, jonka kuulija aloittaa ilman halua keskeyttää tai kilpailla vuorosta äänessä olijan kanssa. Tutkimuksessa halutaan selvittää, 1) miten yleisiä ei-kilpailevat päällekkäisyydet ovat ja 2) minkä tyyppisiä ne ovat, sekä 3) vertailla suomalaisten ja brittien tapaa puhua päällekkäin ilman kilpailua vuorosta.

Tutkimusaineistona käytettiin yhtä kasvokkain käytyä keskustelua kahden suomalaisen ja kahden Britanniasta kotoisin olevan yliopisto-opiskelijan välillä. Keskustelutilanne oli järjestetty, ja se videoitiin sekä äänitettiin tutkimusta varten. Keskustelu kesti noin 45 minuuttia, ja sen aikana keskustelijat puhuivat annetusta kulttuurien välisiin konflikteihin liittyvästä aihepiiristä sekä omavalintaisista asioista. Keskustelu litteroitiin jälkeenpäin analyysiä varten.

Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin keskustelunanalyysin ja pragmatiikan tutkimusmenetelmiä sekä aikaisempia tutkimustuloksia. Tutkimus osoitti, että ei-kilpailevat päällekkäisyydet olivat keskustelussa huomattavasti yleisempiä kuin kilpailevat päällekkäisyydet, joiden tarkoituksena on viedä vuoro ennenaikaisesti äänessä olijalta.

Ei-kilpailevien päällekkäisyyksien osalta havaittiin, että ne edustivat yhdeksää eri alatyyppiä, joista suurin oli niin sanotut kuulijan minimipalautteet. Minimipalautteiden kuten sanojen *yeah*, *mm*, *okay* ja *great* tarkoitus oli mitä ilmeisimmin ilmaista, että kuulija tyytyi kuulijan rooliinsa ja seurasi tarkasti, mitä äänessä olijalla oli sanottavana. Tutkimuksessa havaittiin myös, että suuri osa ei-kilpailevista päällekkäisyyksistä oli tahattomia ja että niitä syntyi usein myös vuoronvaihdon yhteydessä. Edellä mainitut tulokset tukevat aikaisempaa tutkimusta ja viittaavat siihen, että ei-kilpailevilla päällekkäisyyksillä voidaan luoda positiivista vuorovaikutussuhdetta sekä mahdollistaa sujuva ja nopeatempoinen keskustelu.

Tutkimuksessa ei löydetty suuria eroja suomalaisten ja brittien tavassa tuottaa ei-kilpailevia päällekkäisyyksiä. Pieniä eroja, jotka liittyivät tiettyjen ei-kilpailevien päällekkäisyystyyppien yleisyyteen, oli kuitenkin havaittavissa. Erot selittynevät ainakin osittain keskustelijoiden idiosynkraattisilla tavoilla käyttää kieltä ja heidän kielitaitoeroillaan. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että vuorottelujärjestelmä, johon päällekkäispuhunta keskeisesti liittyy, on samankaltainen Suomessa ja Britanniassa.

Asiasanat: overlap, non-competitive overlap, turn-taking, intercultural conversations, face-to-face conversations, conversation analysis, pragmatics

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1 INTRODUCTION

In normal everyday conversations, there seems to be an unwritten rule that one person is to talk at a time and that the others should wait until the first speaker has finished his/her turn. The purpose of this rule is obvious: to prevent two or even multiple interlocutors from talking at the same time, which might turn into a conversational chaos. Avoiding overlapping talk appears to be, therefore, very important in conversations – even to the extent that waiting for one's turn when talking is one of the first things that small children are taught at home.

Mey (2001: 138) has aptly compared turn-taking conventions to traffic rules: the main purpose of conversational structure is to keep the flow of conversation going and to avoid conversational "accidents" and "traffic jams". We all know from real life that without any kind of traffic rules accidents and traffic jams would be constant and we would not be able to move from point A to point B in an easy way. However, we also know that road users quite often adjust traffic rules to situational demands and this does not necessarily have negative outcomes. Why should one, for instance, stubbornly keep to one's right of way at an intersection when one sees that another vehicle is entering the intersection already and a crash would be inevitable? Situational adjustments appear to occur quite frequently in conversational turn-taking, too: simultaneous talk is not always avoided and, when occurring, it does not necessarily cause any conversational accidents or traffic jams. In some cases, overlapping talk may even have positive outcomes.

The aim of the present study is to look into non-competitive overlaps − the kind of overlaps that do not lead to conversational accidents or traffic jams − in one intercultural conversation between Finnish and British speakers of English. More specifically, the purpose of the study is, firstly, to find out what kind of non-competitive overlaps occurred in the conversation; secondly, to look into how frequently instances of the different types of non-competitive overlap were produced and, finally, to compare the overlap production of the Finnish and the British participants. The conversation being examined is a simulated face-to-face conversation between two Finnish and two British university students which lasted

approximately 45 minutes. The conversation was both video and audio recorded and later transcribed for the purposes of the study.

In the present thesis, the terms *overlap*, *overlapping talk/speech* or *simultaneous talk/speech* are used interchangeably to refer to talk taking place at the same time by two or more interlocutors. Furthermore, overlap is considered to be of two types: either competitive or non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. Competitive overlaps are produced in overlap with the current speaker's still unfinished turn to take the floor prematurely. Non-competitive overlaps, in turn, refer to overlapping talk whose purpose is not to compete for speakership with the current speaker (see section 2.1 for a more detailed definition and for examples).

The present study falls within the field of conversation analysis which investigates sequential organisation of talk, for instance, how turns are taken, kept and yielded in normal conversations (see e.g. Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998 and Tainio 1997). In addition, the present study is closely related to pragmatics, too, within which a lot of research has been conducted on comparing the linguistic and sociopragmatic performance of native and non-native speakers of a language in different conversational contexts (see e.g. Piirainen-Marsh 1995 and Nikula 1996).

Within conversation analysis, previous studies have approached overlapping talk mainly by examining where overlaps start, how they are resolved and what happens after the overlaps have been resolved (see e.g. Jefferson 1983, 1986, 2004; French and Local 1983 and Schegloff 2000). The focus has thus not been on finding different types of overlap but, as a by-product of other conversation analytic interests, the existence of quite a few types of overlap has been acknowledged. When looking into overlap onset, Jefferson (1983, 1986), for instance, introduced three major types of overlap – transitional, recognitional and progressional overlap – that could be divided into further subtypes (see section 2.2). French and Local (1983) and Schegloff (2000), in turn, have outlined a way to divide overlaps into competitive and non-competitive instances, the latter of which have four subtypes.

Apart from Jefferson (1983, 1986), French and Local (1983) and Schegloff (2000), no major efforts have been given so far within conversation analysis to divide

instances of overlapping talk into different types. Interruptions which refer to one kind of simultaneous talk (see section 2.1) have been, however, looked into and categorised to some extent (see e.g. Hutchby 1996: 76–93) but the focus and aims of these studies have been different from those of the present one. Some conversation analytically orientated papers have, nonetheless, paid attention to the fact that certain utterance types, for instance brief utterances such as *mm*, *yeah*, *okay*, *great* and laughter, often occur in overlap (see e.g. Goodwin 1986, Goodwin and Goodwin 1987, Glenn 1989, 2003 and Ford and Thompson 1996: 159–164). All in all, despite numerous scholarly papers dealing with overlapping talk, studies which would systematically analyse all instances of overlapping talk in a piece of conversation and, by doing so, tell about the whole range of functions that overlaps have in normal conversations are still missing.

In the field of pragmatics and related disciplines, in turn, comparing the linguistic behaviour of native and non-native speakers of a language has been given, in general, a lot of time and effort. However, comparative studies looking into conversations between Finnish and native (not to mention British) speakers of English have been scarce. As far as I know, only two noteworthy studies have been conducted on face-to-face conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English: the Discourse Analysis Project of the University of Oulu which looked into the discourse competence of advanced Finnish learners of English (e.g. Kärkkäinen 1991) and the dissertation study of Nikula (1996) which examined the way in which advanced Finnish learners of English mastered the use of pragmatic force modifiers, utterances such as *I suppose*, *sort of* and *certainly*, in intercultural conversations. These studies revealed that there were some clear differences in the ways the Finnish and the native participants communicated but, unfortunately, these studies did not tell much about the use overlapping talk.

The comparative studies of Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993) that analysed telephone conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English provided, however, information on the sequential progression of intercultural conversations and paid some attention to overlapping talk, too. Both Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993) looked into the frequency of overlaps but they came to different conclusion as to which group overlapped more frequently, the Finnish or the native speakers of

English. Halmari (1993: 424–426) also introduced some types of overlap on the basis of the sites where the overlaps came into being and found out that the Finns and the native speakers of English favoured different sites when initiating overlapping talk. Nevertheless, the studies by Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993) did not specifically focus on overlapping talk and did not, therefore, provide a comprehensive view of the frequency and functions of overlaps in the telephone conversations they looked into.

To sum up, previous research on overlapping talk and on intercultural conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English has made interesting observations concerning both the nature of overlapping talk and the characteristics of intercultural conversations. However, non-competitive overlaps have been given only little attention in earlier studies as compared to competitive overlaps. Furthermore, overlaps, not to mention non-competitive overlaps, have not been studied at all in face-to-face conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English. Consequently, there seems to be a need for research in this area that would concentrate on non-competitive overlaps in particular. The present study gives an attempt to do so. Hopefully, the study will also give information on turn-taking in intercultural encounters and show whether the results of previous studies that have pointed to clear differences in the conversational behaviour of Finnish and native speakers of English apply to overlaps, too.

Finally, let us end this chapter by looking at how the present thesis is structured. The thesis consists of two major parts: of the theoretical and empirical part, the former of which will follow the introductory chapter. The theoretical part introduces the theoretical framework within which the present study is situated. First, Chapter 2 outlines what overlap is, how it is related to turn-taking and what kinds of overlaps have been detected in previous research. Next, Chapter 3 provides an overview of previous studies that have looked into intercultural conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English.

The remaining chapters, Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, belong to the empirical part of the thesis. In Chapter 4, the specific research questions will be outlined and, after this, the data and its collecting process will be described. Chapter 4 ends with the

description of the method that was used in analysing the data. In Chapter 5, the findings of the present study are introduced first from a quantitative and, then, from a qualitative point of view. The major results of the study will also be summarised at the end of this chapter. In the following Chapter 6, the findings are discussed on a more general level in relation to earlier research; some advantages and limitations of the present study will be brought up and, last, a few implications raised by the study will also be discussed. In Chapter 7, which brings the thesis to an end, final conclusions will be drawn.

2 WHAT IS OVERLAP?

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce overlap as an interactional phenomenon. The chapter is divided into three sections, the first of which deals with how overlap is related to turn-taking and how it can be defined. In addition, some transcription conventions concerning overlapping speech will be introduced. The second section is devoted to examining different types of overlap that some scholars (e.g. French and Local 1983, Schegloff 2000 and Jefferson 1983) have discovered. In the final section of this chapter, some utterance types that every now and then come into being in overlap will be introduced.

2.1 Overlap as a feature of turn-taking

In order to understand what overlap actually is and in what kind of interactional contexts it occurs, overlap has to be examined as a feature of turn-taking. The purpose of this section is to shed some light on this issue. First, the main characteristics of turn-taking and its relation to overlap will be outlined and, after this, the definition of overlap will be discussed.

The main account offered on turn-taking in *talk-in-interaction,* a term used in conversation analysis to refer to everyday human interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 13), is no doubt that of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (see also Schegloff 2000: 2; Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 47). In their influential article "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation" which was

published in 1974, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson outline a model that describes how speakers manage turn-taking in talk-in-interaction (see Sacks et al. 1974). With the help of examples from authentic conversations, they show that turn-taking even in everyday interaction is rule-governed and that people display a very strong orientation to following these rules.

At the nucleus of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's model is the observation that one speaker talks at a time (see Sacks et al. 1974: 699). To put it differently, speakers tend to avoid talking simultaneously with their interlocutors. Sacks et al. (1974: 700–701) also provide a list of other "apparent facts" concerning turn-taking, the most important of which are listed below:

(1) Speaker change occurs.
(2) Instances of overlap are common but brief.
(3) Transitions from one turn to a next with no pause and overlap are common and, together with transitions with a slight pause or overlap, they constitute the majority of transitions.
(4) Turn order or size is not fixed.
(5) What speakers say cannot be specified in advance.

As to overlap, points (2) and (3) indicate that overlapping speech is not rare and that it comes into being at places where speaker change occurs. Sacks et al. (1974: 703) call these places *transition-relevance places*, or TRPs in short. A transition-relevance place is a possible completion point of the ongoing *turn-constructional unit* (TCU). Turn-constructional units, in turn, are units with which a speaker may construct a turn. In the English language, these unit-types include sentential, clausal, phrasal and lexical constructions. What happens in talk-in-interaction is that participants of a conversation are able to project when a TCU is about to end and, consequently, when a transition-relevance place, where speaker transition is possible, comes into being. (Sacks et al.1974: 702–703.)

Sacks et al.'s model seems to rely on the assumption that people are able to project the possible completion point of a turn with the help of syntactic information (see Ford and Thompson 1996: 136). More recent papers by Ford and Thompson (1996) and Schegloff (2007: 3–4), for instance, have indicated, however, that not only syntactic but also intonational and pragmatic cues help conversationalists to project

when a turn is to end. Consequently, Ford and Thompson (1996: 154) introduce the term "Complex Transition Relevance Place" (CTRP) as an upgraded version of Sacks et al.'s transition-relevance place. Even though Ford and Thompson do not provide a clear definition for CTRPs, they appear to be located at places where a syntactic, pragmatic and an intonational completion is reached at the same time. Ford and Thompson (1996: 155, 157) suggest that most speaker transitions occur at CTRPs and that syntactic completions alone, which Sacks et al. obviously considered the main indicators of possible speaker transition, are actually the least reliable indicators of turn-completion.

Other scholars have also touched upon non-syntactic factors that seem to indicate a possible turn-completion. Local and Walker (2004), for instance, suggest that clusters of phonetic parameters – such as pitch, loudness, tempo and some articulatory characteristics – mark points where a turn may be complete and that these parameters may also be used to pre-empt possible syntactic-pragmatic TRPs.

Furthermore, it has been found out that gestures are involved in the management of turn-taking. Goodwin and Goodwin (1986: 72), for instance, point out that non-vocal behaviour, such as gazing towards an interlocutor, can give detailed information about the organisation of the current activity. Schegloff (1984: 271), too, has paid attention to the connection of gestures and turn-taking with a special focus on hand gestures. He states that hand gestures can be used, for example, when a current non-speaker wants to indicate that s/he is willing take the next turn. According to him, they may also be utilised when a speaker who has been interrupted wants to show that s/he has not yet finished his/her turn and intends to continue after the interruption. This is achieved by holding the hand gesture that was in progress when the interruption started. As the previous examples indicate, gestures can be used, among other things, to project change of speakership.

To sum up, conversational participants are able to project with the help of syntactic, prosodic, pragmatic and gestural information when the current speaker is to finish his/her turn. This information provides them with the possibility to start their own

turn at or near[1] the projected completion point of the ongoing turn. If the current speaker does not, however, stop talking at the projected completion point, overlap may occur, as Example 1 indicates. In Example 1, as in any example presented in this thesis, a left-hand bracket indicates the overlap onset – the beginning of overlapping speech – and a right-hand bracket, in turn, the end of overlap. Overlapping expressions by different participants are positioned vertically on the same level so that the incoming utterance is on the line underneath the ongoing utterance. The location of overlaps being examined is marked with an arrow in the examples. More detailed information on transcription conventions used in this thesis can be found in Appendix 1.

In Example 1, John's *isn't it* on line 2 and Kelly's *it's* on line 3 are spoken simultaneously. Brackets indicating overlapping speech can also be found on lines 1 and 5 but these instances of overlap will not be given more attention here since the utterances produced simultaneously with these ones cannot be seen in Example 1.

Example 1: (C2: 748−752)
John and Kelly are talking about the use of drama in education in the UK:

```
1      John:             [this is not] sort of specifically sort of part of the curriculum
2                        but it's used quite well at schools [isn't it]
3 →    Kelly:                                               [  it's  ] yeah i- it is in
4                        the curriculum but it comes onto English and
5                        tha[t's pretty much] it as role play
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What happens in Example 1 is that Kelly starts talking before John has finished his turn. The obvious reason for this is that Kelly expects John to stop talking after the first possible transition-relevance place after having said *it's used quite well at schools*. John decides, however, to add the tag question *isn't it* – a new turn-constructional unit – to his turn and, not having projected this, Kelly ends up beginning her turn before John has finished his. At this point, it is worth noting that Kelly obviously does not want to initiate overlap or take the floor from John prematurely and that simultaneous talk occurs because John does not stop talking where Kelly expects him to finish his turn. Example 1 exemplifies, therefore, what

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[1] According to Sacks et al. (1974), speaker change occurs *at* transition-relevance places. Lerner (1989: 168), however, suggests that interlocutors actually treat the space *around* TRPs as a locus for possible speaker change. In the present thesis, both locations are considered to be potential places of speaker transition.

will be called non-competitive overlap in this thesis. In addition, Example 1 demonstrates clearly some central assumptions of turn-taking: speaker transition occurs near transition-relevance places, the beginning of a next turn is subject to overlap and that overlapping talk tends to be brief (Lerner 1989: 168; Sacks et al. 1974: 700, 719).

The turn-taking model of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson also describes theoretically the way in which speaker change takes place and how the next speaker is selected. For that purpose, Sacks et al. (1974: 704) provide two rules, the first of which is divided into points (a), (b) and (c):

(1) At the initial transition-relevance place of any turn:
(a) If the current speaker has selected the next speaker, the selected speaker has the right and must take the next turn.
(b) If the current speaker has not selected the next speaker, any potential next speaker may self-select but does not have to. The first speaker to start acquires the right to the turn.
(c) If the current speaker has not selected the next speaker, s/he may continue if s/he wishes unless another speaker self-selects.

(2) If speaker change has not taken place in a situation where rule c has operated and the current speaker has continued, the rule set a-c applies again for each next transition-relevance place until speaker change occurs.

The rule-set, and rule 1b in particular, has some obvious consequences for the occurrence of overlapping talk. As Sacks et al. (1974: 706) put it, the fact that rule 1b allocates the turn to the fastest self-selector encourages the participants of a conversation to self-select as soon as possible to get the turn. The consequence of this is that competing self-selectors may start their turns simultaneously and overlap may come into being. On a more general level, change of speakership seems to be the ultimate outcome of the whole rule-set: a new speaker will enter the floor – sooner or later. If Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's turn-taking model really captures the essence of talk-in-interaction, and I believe it does, speaker change is persistently striven for in talk-in-interaction. This suggests that overlap, as it is normally related to the local management of turn-taking, is a natural and even an inevitable part of human conversations.

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, overlap should be seen as a phenomenon that is closely connected to the dynamics of turn-taking. The very definition of overlap should, therefore, also be able to capture this connection. Let us end this section by discussing the definition of overlap and how overlap has been distinguished in previous research from a related term 'interruption'.

Many scholarly papers dealing with overlapping talk have actually failed to provide a clear definition for overlap (see e.g. Sacks et al. 1974, Lerner 1989 and Jefferson 1983 and 2004). This may result, firstly, from the view that the definition of overlap is too obvious or, secondly, from the fact that an adequate definition is actually difficult to provide. One of the scholars who actually defines overlap is Sacks. In his early work, Sacks (2004: 40)[2] divides instances of simultaneous talk into two categories: into overlaps and interruptions. According to him, overlap occurs when an incoming speaker starts talking at the possible completion point of the current turn while trying to avoid a gap or silence between the two turns. In Sacks' (2004: 40–41) view, interruption, in turn, comes into being when a new speaker starts intentionally talking within the current speaker's turn. In other words, to interrupt is to start speaking at a place which is not a transition-relevance place. To Sacks, the crucial distinction between overlap and interruption seems to lie, therefore, in the place where simultaneous talk occurs.

Schegloff (2000: 3, 7), too, has outlined a way to define overlap. According to him, overlap and simultaneous talk are equivalent terms that refer to talk by more than one speaker at a time. Schegloff (ibid.) refuses, however, to use the term interruption since, in his view, the use of this term as an analytic resource includes serious problems. Unfortunately, he does not specify what these problems are. Hutchby (1996), in turn, does quite the opposite and favours the term interruption when referring to simultaneous talk. He does not provide a clear cut definition for interruptions but discusses, however, some of their main characteristics. Hutchby (1996: 77–78) states, for instance, that interrupting denies or at least challenges the right of the current speaker to take his/her turn to completion and that interruptions

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[2] This paper is the original manuscript of what later became the influential article "The Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation" by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson in 1974 (see Lerner 2004b: 4). Due to Sack's tragic death in 1975, the original manuscript was not published until in 2004.

are violative on the level of turn-taking conventions as well as on the level of interpersonal relations. He remarks, nevertheless, that not all utterances that are interruptions on a sequential level are intended or interpreted to be interruptive on an interpersonal level. All in all, previous research has provided various definitions and characterisations for overlap and interruption but there seems to be no clear consensus among the scholars concerning the distinction of these two concepts.

In the present thesis, overlap is seen as a superordinate concept referring simply to simultaneous talk. Here, overlap is considered to be of two kinds: either competitive or non-competitive with respect to turn-taking (see Schegloff 2000: 4–6). In my opinion, this division is important to be made when defining overlap in order to capture the essence of the turn-taking system and to account for all cases of simultaneous talk. In the present study, competitive overlap refers to instances of simultaneous talk which come into being before the current speaker has reached a possible completion in his/her turn and whose purpose is to take or at least challenge the turn of the current speaker. Clear instances of competitive overlap can be seen in Example 2:

Example 2: (C2: 1179−1184)
John and Satu are talking about how the cartoon scandal of 2005 was treated in the media:

```
1       John:              [     it's   ] really (x) because like like I said
2                          [       where's the state media it's like        ]
3 →     Satu:              [OH it's it was a shock for me because it's so] it's it's in the
4                          news every day for
5       John:              I don't read the news I [I hate the news]
6 →     Satu:                                      [   for many ma]ny weeks
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In Example 2, there are two instances of competitive overlap, both of which are initiated by the Finnish female Satu. On line 3, Satu starts talking simultaneously with John who is still in the middle of producing a turn-constructional unit beginning with the words *because like like I said*. In addition, she starts her turn with an increased volume and high pitch which indicate that she clearly wants to challenge John's turn. The overlap on line 6 is competitive, as well, even though it is not as striking as the previous one. Satu enters the floor at a point where John has just initiated a new TCU after having said *I don't read the news*. In doing so, she finishes

the sentence which she had started on line 3 already but which was cut off by John: *it's in the news every day for for many many weeks*.

Non-competitive overlap, in turn, refers in this thesis to instances of overlap that are not aimed at taking the floor from the current speaker prematurely even though they may come into being in the middle of turn-constructional units. In Example 3 below, there are two instances of this kind of simultaneous speech:

Example 3: (C2: 101−107)
The participants are talking about the difficulty of learning Finnish:

```
1       John:           but it's really hard to speak it
2                       it's [ just ] no offence but just $a really awful language for an=
3 →     Pekka:              [yeah]
4       John:           =[ English speaker$]
5 →     Satu:            [   mm hm mm    ]
6       John:           I think er  for certain European >obviously< certain European
7                       languages [it's] not so bad
```

In Example 3, both Pekka and Satu enter the floor for a brief moment before John, the current speaker, finishes his explanation. Pekka's overlapping *yeah* occurs at the beginning John's TCU *it's just no offence but just a really awful language for an English speaker* and Satu's *mm hm mm*, in turn, comes into being at the end of it just before the TCU reaches a possible completion. What makes these instances of simultaneous talk different from those in Example 2 is that they are rather short and that they do not imply a willingness to challenge John to give up his turn prematurely. In other words, they are non-competitive in terms of turn-taking.

As for the term interruption, it will not be utilised further in this thesis since it seems rather problematic in describing instances of simultaneous talk that occur within turn-constructional units but are not aimed at taking the floor from the current speaker. To exemplify, the overlaps in Example 3 fit Sacks' (2004: 40–41) definition of interruption because they are positioned within TCUs but they do not have, however, the turn-violative or interpersonally violative character that Hutchby (1996: 77) relates to most interruptions. With competitive overlaps, such as those in Example 2, the term interruption would be more adequate since, at least in my opinion, interruptions can be regarded as one kind of competitive overlap. The focus of the present study being on non-competitive overlaps – which the term interruption

does not describe adequately – the term will be used very sparingly in this thesis. The terms competitive and non-competitive overlap will be used instead.

In the following section, the significant distinction between competitive and non-competitive overlap will be discussed in more detail. Furthermore, an overview will be provided on more specific types of overlap that previous research has introduced, most of which can be considered subtypes of either competitive or non-competitive overlap.

2.2 Different types of overlapping talk

In the preceding section, it was pointed out that instances of simultaneous talk can be divided into different types for example on the basis of the place where they come into being (near or at a transition-relevance place or within a TCU), or by looking at whether they are competitive or non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. In this section, the way in which French and Local (1983), Schegloff (2000) and Jefferson (1983) have categorised instances of overlapping will be introduced. For the time being, the types of overlap that they have discovered seem to be the most comprehensive ones.

Let us begin this section by shedding more light on competitive and non-competitive overlaps. The division of simultaneous talk into competitive and non-competitive instances was first touched upon by French and Local (1983). It was described, however, in a more evident way by Schegloff (2000) nearly two decades later in connection with his "overlap resolution device". When discussing the relationship between overlap and turn-taking and what kind of overlapping speech needed to be resolved, Schegloff (2000: 4–6) divided instances of overlapping talk into those that were "problematic" or competitive with respect to turn-taking and to those that were "unproblematic" or non-competitive with respect to it. When drawing a line between these two categories, he unfortunately did not specify what exactly he meant by "problematic" or competitive overlap. For all that, it can be interpreted from his paper that "problematic" or competitive instances of overlap challenge the turn of the current speaker and have to be, therefore, resolved in some way.

French and Local (1983), however, characterise competitive overlaps, which they actually call "turn-competitive incomings", in a more thorough way. According to them, neither the positioning of the incomer's speech at a non-completion point in the ongoing turn nor its lexical content in relation to the content of speech in progress (agreement or disagreement) make this incoming speech competitive or non-competitive. What makes an incoming speech hearable as competitive, is, in their view, a combination of two prosodic features: high pitch and increased loudness. French and Local also point out that when an incomer's speech is marked by these two features, the turn-occupant makes prosodic changes to his/her speech too, for instance increases loudness and decreases pace. (French and Local 1983: 21–28.) This practically means that by looking at not only the prosodic features of the incomer's speech but also those of the current turn-occupant's in-overlap talk, it can be decided whether the incomer's speech is competitive. This can be seen in Example 2 which is reproduced below:

Example 2: (C2: 1179−1184)
John and Satu are talking about how the cartoon scandal of 2005 was treated in the media:

```
1       John:           [      it's     ]  really (x) because like like I said
2                       [       where's the state media it's like         ]
3 →     Satu:           [OH it's it was a shock for me because it's so] it's it's in the
4                       news every day for
5       John:           I don't read the news I [I hate the news]
6 →     Satu:                                   [   for many ma]ny weeks
```

In this example, Satu enters the floor on line 3 with the word OH which is clearly marked by high pitch and increased loudness. The rest of her turn till the end of line 6 is also marked by slightly higher pitch than normal and slightly increased loudness even though this is not marked specifically in the transcript. As for prosodic modifications in the turn-occupant's speech, they are practically impossible to spot on line 2 due the Satu's loud overlapping speech. In John's turn on line 5, on the other hand, some prosodic modifications can be detected: John decreases slightly the volume of his talk after Satu has started talking. French and Local (1983: 28) state that this is one possible way for turn-occupants to react to an incomer's competitive speech and which indicates that the turn-occupant actually yields to the incomer's competition.

As for the second main type of simultaneous talk – non-competitive overlap – Schegloff (2000: 4) simply states that it refers to episodes of overlapping talk in which the speakers do not, in his view, contest for turn space. In other words, the incoming speaker shows no willingness to take the floor from the current speaker or to compete for it. Instances of this kind of overlap were discussed when looking at Examples 1 and 3 in the previous section. Using French and Local's (1983) criteria for distinguishing turn-competitive incomings from those that are not, the absence of the prosodic combination 'high pitch and increased loudness' seems to be a central characteristic of non-competitive overlaps. French and Local (1983: 24, 26) point out, in addition, that if this combination is not present in the incomer's speech, the current speaker does not modify his/her speech either but carries on speaking the way as s/he was speaking before the overlap onset. This can be seen, for instance, in Example 3 where John does not modify the prosody of his speech in any way even though Pekka and Satu momentarily talk at the same time with him.

Example 3: (C2: 101−107)
The participants are talking about the difficulty of learning Finnish:

```
1       John:                but it's really hard to speak it
2                            it's [ just ] no offence but just $a really awful language for an=
3 →     Pekka:                   [yeah]
4       John:                =[ English speaker$]
5 →     Satu:                  [   mm hm mm    ]
6       John:                I think er  for certain European >obviously< certain European
7                            languages [it's] not so bad
```

In Schegloff's (2000: 4–6) view, there are four types of overlapping talk that are non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. The first of the four types is what he calls "terminal overlaps". According to Schegloff (2000: 5), terminal overlaps come into being in situations where the incoming speaker predicts that the current speaker is to finish his/her turn soon and starts, therefore, talking simultaneously with him/her. In Schegloff's (ibid.) view, this kind of overlap self-liquidates, however, almost immediately as the primary speaker finishes the ongoing turn. He suggests that since terminal overlaps are very short, they do not have to be managed in any way and are, therefore, non-competitive with respect to turn-taking.

The second type of non-competitive simultaneous talk that Schegloff (2000: 5) introduces are "continuers". He considers, for instance, interpolations such as *uh huh*

and *mm hm* and context-fitted assessment terms, e.g. *Oh wow* or *Great,* to be part of this category (cf. Goodwin 1986). According to him, a recipient of another's talk can, by using continuers, indicate that s/he understands that the current speaker holds the floor and has not completed his/her turn yet[3]. To put it differently, by using continuers, the incoming speaker does not cause a threat to the current speaker's turn and this kind of overlapping talk cannot be considered, therefore, problematic or competitive.

Schegloff's third type of non-competitive overlap consists actually of various kinds of overlap that go under the heading "conditional access to the turn". These are cases in which the current speaker gives his/her not completed turn to another so that the new speaker could further the initial speaker's undertaking. Familiar cases of this kind of overlap are, firstly, word searches (see e.g. Goodwin and Goodwin 1986), in which a recipient may be invited to help the current speaker to find a word that s/he cannot retrieve, and, secondly, collaborative utterance constructions (see e.g. Lerner 2004a), where the current speaker initiates an utterance and provides it for a recipient for completion. (Schegloff 2000: 5–6.) According to Schegloff (ibid.), in both cases, the current speaker and the recipient end up talking simultaneously but the overlap is not treated by them as problematic or competitive. This is obviously due to the fact that they both are aware of the conditional nature of the recipient's entry to the turn space: after the recipient has, for instance, provided a completion to the current speaker's turn, s/he is expected to withdraw.

The last type of non-competitive overlapping talk introduced by Schegloff (2000: 6) is referred to as "chordal" or "choral" in character. Schegloff (ibid.) specifies that instances of this kind of overlapping talk and activity are treated by interactional participants to be done at the same time – not serially one after the other. According to him, laughter is an example of this kind of activity, as are collective greetings, leave-takings and congratulations in response to announcements of personal good news. Schegloff (ibid.) adds that when producing "chordal" or "choral" utterances,

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[3] Schegloff (2000: 5) excludes shift-implicative tokens, such us *yeah* and *yes* (see Jefferson 1984a) from continuers since their deployment can indicate that the speaker wants to move from recipiency to speakership, that is, to take the floor. This kind of tokens will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

the overlapping participants appear to be properly simultaneous occupants of the floor and competition for turn space does, therefore, arise.

Schegloff (2000: 6) notes, however, that in some cases the division between competitive and non-competitive overlapping speech is not clear-cut. He points out that in talk-in-interaction one or more participants may treat a potentially non-competitive overlap, such as a terminal overlap, as competitive and employ overlap-resolution practices. As Schegloff (ibid.) puts it, "on a given occasion it MAY BE problematic – for those parties, at that moment, given what they are doing and have been doing". This is a very important observation to be made since analysing overlapping talk or any other phenomenon in talk-in-interaction cannot be restricted to making sophisticated guesses only. A proper analysis always requires a close examination of the specific interactional context in which the phenomenon being examined occurs and of the reactions of the interlocutors, for instances through prosody and gestures.

As was suggested at the beginning of this section, French and Local (1983) and Schegloff (2000) are not the only ones who have characterised instances of overlapping talk. Jefferson (1983), too, has made quite a few interesting observations concerning different types of simultaneous talk. The remaining pages of this section are devoted to introducing some of her findings. To begin with, whereas French and Local (1983) and Schegloff (2000) approach overlap from the viewpoint of turn-competitiveness, Jefferson (1983) focuses on overlap onset, that is, on looking at where and under which conditions instances of overlapping speech come into being. She identifies three major overlap onset types – transitional onset, recognitional onset and progressional onset[4] – on the basis of which many instances of overlap can be categorised.

According to Jefferson (1983: 2), transitional overlap is a by-product of two activities: a next speaker starts talking at a possible completion of the ongoing turn while the current speaker decides to continue his/her turn (see also Jefferson 1986). Transitional overlap occurs, therefore, in Jefferson's (1983: 2–3) view, at a possible

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[4] Jefferson (1983) divides these categories further into various subtypes but they will not be discussed in this context.

transition *place* of the ongoing turn by which she refers to the surroundings of a possible completion point rather than to a completion point as such. What this means in practice is that transitional overlap may come into being when the incoming speaker starts talking at or near a predicted transition-relevance place and when the current speaker decides to continue beyond it. Example 1 discussed in the previous section is an obvious example of transitional overlap. As to the competitiveness and non-competitiveness of this kind of overlap, most cases of transitional overlap seem to be non-competitive with respect to turn-taking.

Recognitional overlap, in turn, refers to instances of overlapping talk in which a next speaker recognises how the current speaker is to finish his/her turn and starts talking before the current speaker has had a chance to finish his/her undertaking. In other words, the next speaker may respond to the current speaker's turn before it has reached an adequate transition-relevance place. The next speaker may, for instance, recognise a word or phrase that will finish the turn of the current speaker, such as "ha" for "happy New Year", and respond to the turn accordingly before the ongoing turn has reached a possible TRP. (Jefferson 1983: 2, 18–21.) Jefferson (ibid.) suggests, in addition, that recognitional overlaps tend to have a turn-incursive or interruptive character. To put it differently, she considers them to be turn-competitive.

At this point, it is worth noting that what Schegloff (2000: 5) calls terminal overlaps are very similar to Jefferson's (1983) transitional and recognitional overlaps. All these overlap types have in common that the incoming speaker starts talking simultaneously with the current speaker because s/he is able to predict how the current speaker possibly finishes his/her turn. When defining his terminal overlap, Schegloff (ibid.) does not indicate where it normally begins – near or at transition-relevance places or possibly even earlier when a turn-completive word or phrase has been recognised. As a matter of fact, his definition seems to contain both transitional and recognitional overlaps. Schegloff (ibid.) expresses, however, very clearly that terminal overlap is non-competitive with respect to turn-taking, which would locate his category perhaps closer to transitional than to recognitional overlaps.

Jefferson's last overlap onset type, progressional overlap, occurs when there is some disfluency, such as silence, "silence fillers" (e.g. *uh*) or stuttering, in the ongoing turn. When a next speaker realises that there is a problem in the progression of the ongoing utterance, s/he may start talking in order to move the conversation forward. In other words, the next speaker may consider disfluency in the ongoing turn as a sign that speaker transition may/can/should take place. Consequently, overlap may come into being when the prior speaker completes his/her utterance despite the preceding disfluency. Jefferson has found out that progressional overlaps can occur practically anywhere within utterances and that they can be very different in character. (Jefferson 1983: 2, 21–24, 27.) For these reasons, it is difficult to make any generalisations concerning the competitiveness or non-competitiveness of progressional overlaps. Whether an instance of progressional overlap is competitive or non-competitive with respect to turn-taking has to be decided, therefore, case by case by looking at the interactional context where it occurs.

To conclude, the studies of Jefferson (1983), French and Local (1983) and Schegloff (2000) have shown that various kinds of overlapping talk may occur in authentic talk-in-interaction and that it is possible to divide instances of overlapping talk into different groups on the basis of many criteria. Previous research has proved, however, that in addition to more or less established categories of overlap, such as those introduced in this section, there are some utterance types that every now and then – but not always – come into being in overlap. Some of these utterance types will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 Utterance types that may occur in overlap

The types of overlap presented in this section have not been traditionally treated as distinct categories of overlap (cf. Goodwin 1986) but rather as utterance types that may occur in overlap. The types concerned here are (mostly) short listener responses, such as *mm hm*, *uh huh*, *mm*, *oh*, *yeah* and *okay*, which in earlier studies have been called, for example, "back-channels", "minimal responses", "hearer signals" or "response tokens" (see e.g. Gardner 2001: 3, 13). Previous research has indicated that, in the service of interactional needs, the turn-taking rules may be used in alternative ways with utterances of this kind (see e.g. Ford and Thompson 1996:

159–164). To put it differently, overlapping production of listener responses may be legitimate for interactional reasons. Hakulinen (1998: 50) has even suggested that brief overlapping listener responses should not be regarded as overlap at all.

The purpose of this section is to introduce those listener response types that previous research has indicated to occur most commonly in overlap: *acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers, change-of-activity tokens, assessments* and *laughter*. It is worth noting, of course, that there are also some other types of brief listener responses that may come into being in overlap, for example brief questions (e.g. *Who?* or *Huh?*) which seek for clarification (see e.g. Gardner 2001: 2–3). They will not be, however, discussed here further since the focus of the present thesis is on the most commonly occurring listener response types. Let us begin by briefly looking at how acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers and change-of-activity tokens are related and, then, discuss acknowledgement tokens in more detail.

2.3.1 Acknowledgement tokens

Acknowledgement tokens, together with continuers, newsmarkers and change-of-activity tokens, which will be discussed in the following parts of this section, form the class "response tokens" (Gardner 2001: 3). According to Gardner (2001: 13), response tokens are a class of "conversational objects that indicate that a piece of talk has been registered by the recipient of that talk". To be more specific, they indicate that what another speaker has just said has been heard, acknowledged, possibly understood or agreed with or treated as new information. In talk-in-interaction, response tokens most often occur during extended or multi-unit turns by another speaker, for example during a storytelling or during an extended explanation. Normally, they are positioned near points of possible grammatical, intonational and pragmatic completion. (Gardner 2001: 6, 13.) Since response tokens tend to be very short and they seem to be treated as unproblematic when occurring in overlap with the current speaker's turn (see e.g. Goodwin 1996 and Gardner 2001), it can be suggested that response tokens are, in most cases, non-competitive in terms of turn-taking.

As to the first response token type, acknowledgement tokens, they are brief listener responses that claim agreement or understanding of the preceding turn (Gardner 2001: 2, 34). The most typical acknowledgement tokens discussed in previous research are *yeah* (or *yes*), *mm* and *mm hm* (see e.g. Jefferson 1984a and Gardner 2001) which are prototypically characterised by a falling intonation contour (Gardner 2001: 22, 29, 34). Each of these acknowledgement tokens will be discussed briefly in this section.

Yeah is the most frequently used acknowledgement token – and response token as well – in ordinary English conversations. It functions retrospectively claiming among other things understanding, agreement or merely hearing. (Gardner 2001: 16, 34.) According to Jefferson (1984a: 199–200), there are two characteristics that make *yeah* and a related acknowledgement token *yes* special: Firstly, they are associated with a topical shift which means that after having produced *yeah* or *yes* as a response to the prior turn, the speaker may shift the topic of the conversation. Secondly, they may indicate a preparedness to move from recipiency to speakership, that is, to take the floor. What this means with respect to overlap is that if *yeah* or *yes* occur in overlap, which they often do (see e.g. Jefferson 1984a and Gardner 2001), they may be interpreted as being turn-competitive unlike other response tokens in that position.

In addition to *yeah*, *mm* accomplishes acknowledging work, too. What differentiates *mm* from *yeah* is that it is a weaker and less involved acknowledgement token than *yeah*. (Gardner 2001: 39.) Unlike *yeah*, *mm* does not indicate a willingness to compete for the speakership but, together with *mm hm*, exhibits what Jefferson (1984a: 200) calls "passive recipiency". In her view, passive recipiency means that its user acknowledges that the current speaker is still in the middle of his/her turn and will go on talking[5]. As for *mm hm*, it is normally used as a continuer (cf. Jefferson 1984a), as will be pointed out in the following section, but it can also be used as an acknowledgement token with an acknowledging intonation contour. *Mm hm* is,

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[5] Jefferson (1984a: 204–206) remarks that not all speakers use *yeah* or *yes* for claiming speakership and *mm* or *mm hm*, in turn, for exhibiting passive recipiency. According to her, some speakers stay with the acknowledgement tokens *yeah* and *yes* only but do not use them for claiming speakership. If speakers, however, make regular use of all above mentioned acknowledgement tokens, they seem to make a systematic distinction between the speakership claiming and the passive recipiency function.

however, much less common in this function than *yeah* and *mm* are. (Gardner 2001: 39–40.)

2.3.2 Continuers

Continuers are short listener responses, most typically *mm hm* and *uh huh*, which normally occur as only utterances in a turn and which do not have an apparent semantic meaning (Gardner 2001: 25–26). Initially, it is worth noting that the term continuer is understood here in a slightly different way from that of Schegloff (2000: 5) whose "continuers" were discussed in section 2.2. To Schegloff (ibid.), continuers seem to be an umbrella term containing several types of listener responses, for instance assessments and what we here call continuers. In this thesis, however, the term is used in a more narrow meaning referring to one specific type of listener responses only following the definitions of Goodwin (1986) and Gardner (2001).

In addition to *mm hm* and *uh huh*, *yeah* and *mm* that usually function as acknowledgement tokens may also be used in some environments as continuers (Gardner 2001: 26, 29). Consequently, drawing a clear line between acknowledgement tokens and continuers is sometimes far from easy. The main difference between continuers and acknowledgement tokens is, however, that whereas acknowledgement tokens indicate that the prior turn has been adequately received continuers simply hand the floor back to the prior speaker (Gardner 2001: 34).

As for *mm hm*, *yeah* and *mm*, which may function either as acknowledgement tokens or as continuers, looking at their sequential position (e.g. what they are responding to) and their intonation contour helps in determining what their function is in a specific context. If *yeah*, *mm* and *mm hm* have, for instance, a falling intonation contour, they are most evidently used as acknowledgement tokens. If *yeah*, *mm* and *mm hm*, in turn, carry a rising intonation, they may be treated as continuers by conversationalists since a fall-rise or sometimes only a rise are intonation contours typical of continuers only[6]. (Gardner 2001: 16, 22, 29, 34, 40.)

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[6] See section 5.2.2 for more differences between acknowledgement tokens and continuers.

Since continuers do not have a clear semantic content, they do not comment on the specifics of what has been said in the ongoing turn. They deal, however, with the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction and treat units of talk being part of larger series of units. (Goodwin 1986: 210, 213.) The main purpose of continuers seems to be to indicate that the recipient understands that the current speaker is performing an extended turn which is not yet complete and that the current speaker should continue his/her extended turn. In other words, by producing a continuer, the recipient declines to start a fuller turn in that position, which, in turn, is a sign to the current speaker that s/he may continue talking. (Schegloff 1981: 81; Goodwin 1986: 208.)

Previous research has indicated that the location of continuers in talk-in-interaction is not haphazard. According to Goodwin (1986: 207–208), they most often occur at the boundaries of turn-constructional units beginning in one TCU and ending in another and, because of this location, they are able to indicate that one TCU has been received and another one is awaited. He calls continuers, thus, "bridges between units". Examples provided by Gardner (2001) and Schegloff (1981) demonstrate, however, that continuers may come into being in the middle of TCUs and also in the clear.

2.3.3 Newsmarkers

As the name of this response token type suggests, newsmarkers are produced to indicate that what has been received is somehow newsworthy to the recipient. In other words, the turn to which the recipient is responding has provided new information to him/her (Gardner 2001: 2, 40.) According to Gardner (ibid.), words such as *oh, right* and *really* and minimal questions (e.g. *Did they?*) are at the core of this category. In this section, some characteristics of the newsmarker *oh*, which has received most attention in scholarly papers (see e.g. Heritage 1984, Local 1996 and Gardner 2001), will be introduced.

The response token *oh* is, according to Heritage (1984: 299), a particle which "is used to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her

locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness." When a recipient produces *oh*, s/he confirms, in Heritage's (1984: 304) view, that even though s/he was earlier uninformed on the matter at hand, s/he is presently informed. He calls *oh*, therefore, a "change-of-state token". Heritage (1984: 336–337) suggests that *oh* can be found in many kinds of conversational environments even though its main function is still the same. It can participate, for example, in noticing or remembering something; in being reminded, informed or corrected; or in arriving at different kinds of discoveries and realisations. He points out, however, that *oh* can be found probably most often in the environment of questions and their answers. As to the specific location of *ohs* in conversations, Heritage (1984: 301) has discovered that they are normally produced in response to complete informing sequences and occur, therefore, at points where the informing sequences are possibly complete.

Several studies have shown that *oh* usually does not stand alone but is accompanied by further talk by its producer (see e.g. Heritage 1984: 303; Local 1996: 186; Gardner 2001: 41). According to Local (1996: 186), the further talk is typically of two kinds: either some kind of assessment which evaluates the particulars of the preceding turn (e.g. *Oh wow* or *Oh good*)[7] or some kind of next-utterance-soliciting component, for instance a partial repeat of the verbal element of the preceding utterance (e.g. *Oh have you* or *Oh you did, didn't you*). He also points out that the newsmarker *oh* has specific prosodic characters. Local (1996: 182, 206–207) suggests that when *oh* stands alone in a turn, it is normally produced with a falling pitch contour. When *oh*, in turn, is accompanied by additional components (assessments or next-utterance-soliciting components), the pitch contour may be either rising or falling.

According to Local (1996: 184), newsmarker *ohs* are normally produced in the clear, that is, without overlap. Looking at the examples that Heritage (1984), Local (1996) and Gardner (2001) provide reveals, however, that *ohs* may occur in overlap and when they do so, they appear to be in the majority of cases non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. This observation applies both to freestanding *ohs* and to *ohs*

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[7] See section 2.3.5 for a more detailed description of assessments.

with additional turn components. As to competitiveness or non-competitiveness of overlapping instances, newsmarkers seem to function, therefore, like other response tokens.

2.3.4 Change-of-activity tokens

The purpose of the last response token type, change-of-activity tokens, is to indicate a transition to a new activity or topic in the conversation. Most typical examples of change-of-activity tokens are *okay* and *alright* which do not have an apparent semantic meaning. Normally, change-of-activity tokens are produced with a flat or falling intonation contour, which is a characteristic shared by acknowledgement tokens and newsmarkers, too. (Gardner 2001: 2, 22, 57.)

The change-of-activity token *okay* is most often used by recipients to prefigure or negotiate changes in what is being talked about or done in the conversation. In other words, when a recipient produces an *okay*, s/he may be implying that the participants should move on to something new in the conversation. This may be, for example, a new conversational topic, a new question in the interview agenda or even good-byes which would bring the whole conversation to an end. (Gardner 2001: 16, 54–55.)

Gardner (2001: 54) suggests, in addition, that by using an *okay*, a recipient may imply that s/he should be the one to introduce a new topic or activity and that s/he wants, accordingly, to move from recipiency to speakership. The examples provided by Gardner (2001) show, however, that this is not always the case and if the recipient wants to take the floor, s/he may not take it immediately after having produced *okay* but later on in the course of the conversation. As to overlapping *okays*, Gardner's (ibid.) examples indicate that they are, like other response tokens, non-competitive with respect to turn-taking, at least on a local level.

On a sequential level, the response token *okay* may occur in a variety of places within conversations: after opening sequences, before closings and also in transitional environments in the middle phrases of talk (Gardner 2001: 52–55). On a topical level, the placement of *okay* seems to be, however, more restricted. Turner (cited in Gardner 2001: 56–57) suggests that *okay* usually occurs at minor topic

boundaries. In her view, the response token *alright*, in turn, normally comes into being at major topic boundaries. As Gardner (2001: 53, 57–58) puts it, *alright* operates at a more macro-level than *okay* does and it is a stronger pre-figurer of changes in topic or activity. According to him, this is, however, the only major difference between *okay* and *alright* which are otherwise used in nearly identical ways as change-of-activity tokens.

2.3.5 Assessments

The term "assessment" can be used to refer to many kinds of events on analytically separate levels of talk-in-interaction. It can be used, for example, to describe specific structural units in the stream of speech, such as the adjective *beautiful*, or particular kind of speech acts whose purpose is to do evaluative work. (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987: 6–9.)[8] In the present thesis, the term assessment is utilised when referring to relatively brief listener responses, for instance *Oh wow*, *Great*, *How interesting* and *That's awful*, which may come into being in the midst of another speaker's turn (see e.g. Goodwin 1986).

To begin with, it is worth noting that assessments do not belong to response tokens like acknowledgment tokens, continuers, newsmarkers and change-of-activity tokens do. Response tokens and assessments share, however, some crucial characteristics: they provide information to the conversationalists, firstly, on how some preceding talk has been received and, secondly, on how the assessment/response token producer anticipates further activities in the conversation (Gardner 2001: 3). There are, nevertheless, also some significant differences between response tokens and assessments: whereas response tokens contribute to the management of turn-taking or give information on how some topical talk is being received (e.g. acknowledged as news), assessments comment on and evaluate what another speaker has said without treating it preliminary to some further action or talk (Gardner 2001: 6).

As was suggested above, by using assessments, recipients provide an analysis of the particulars of what has been talked about (Goodwin 1986: 210). They can, however,

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[8] See also Pomerantz (1984) for different kind of assessments.

be very different in terms of content and also have a strong interpersonal function. As Goodwin and Goodwin (1987: 25) point out,

[a]ssessments by recipient can range from fully referential and predicational ones down to relatively desemanticized displays of empathy, etc., that lack an explicit referent and evaluation, but do display affective involvement in principal speaker's statement.

When assessments occur in overlap, they normally come into being in the middle of extended turns and come to completion before a new turn-constructional unit has been initiated. Conversationalists show an active orientation towards this placement of assessments since current speakers may even delay their entry into a next TCU (e.g. by producing an inbreath) when they realise that the assessment of the recipient is still in progress. (Goodwin 1986: 209–212.)

Assessments that recipients produce in overlap with the current speaker's turn do not always have to be brief lexical responses. According to Goodwin (1986: 214–215), they can be, for instance, extended sentences, sounds such as *Ah::* whose purpose is to carry an appropriate intonation contour, or physical gestures like nods. On the basis of examples provided by Goodwin (1986), all these types seem to have in common that interlocutors treat them as unproblematic or non-competitive with respect to turn-taking, at least when assessments consisting of one TCU are concerned. Goodwin and Goodwin (1987: 25–26) are of the opinion that even extended overlapping speech shares this character and suggest, therefore, that for assessments, sequential constraints of talk, for instance the one-at-a-time orientation, can be relaxed. It should be noted, however, that the decision of whether an overlapping assessment is competitive or not should be made case by case by looking at the context where it occurs and by taking into account gestures and gazes of both the current and the incoming speaker as well as prosodic features of their talk.

2.3.6 Laughter

Previous research has indicated that not only predominantly lexical listener responses, for instance acknowledgment tokens or assessments, but also some other vocal utterances – laughter in particular – may come into being in overlap (see e.g. Jefferson 1979: 89–90 and Ford and Thompson 1996: 159–164). In this section,

some central characteristics of laughter and its relation to overlap will be discussed briefly.

People often consider laughter to be related to humour or joy. Previous research has revealed, however, that laughter is a complex phenomenon that does not always result from something being funny or amusing. It has been discovered that laughter serves the needs of interactional situations and can be used to convey, among other things, intimacy, affiliation, delicateness or difficulty of the topic being discussed, mockery and contempt in addition to humour (Jefferson 1984b, 1985; Jefferson et al. 1987; Haakana 1999, Glenn 2003). The meaning or purpose of laughter in conversations can be detected, therefore, only by looking at case by case the specific interactional context in which it occurs.

In talk-in-interaction, laughter is always considered to result from something (Haakana 1999: 18), whether it be something funny that somebody said of did or the mere fact that some else is laughing already. In addition, earlier studies have indicated that laughter is not always a matter of flooding out, that is, something that a speaker cannot control him-/herself. Laughter can be started, sustained and terminated consciously and it can be used, consequently, as an interactional resource. (Jefferson 1985: 33–34; Haakana 1999: 23; Glenn 2003: 2.)

Laughter can be divided into at least two main types: invited and volunteered laughter. Invited laughter comes into being when one speaker invites another speaker to laugh by laughing him-/herself and the recipient, thereupon, accepts this invitation by starting to laugh. (Jefferson 1979: 80.) This may lead to a situation where the initial speaker and the recipient(s) end up laughing at the same time. Invited laughter of this kind has also been called shared or choral laughter and its duration has been pointed out to vary from very minimal overlaps to prolonged overlapping sequences of laughter (Glenn 1989: 127, 130; Schegloff 2000: 6). The second main type of laughter – volunteered laughter – occurs, in turn, without an invitation from the prior speaker. In other words, laughter is produced on a volunteer basis by the recipient. (Jefferson 1979: 80–82.) The reason for the occurrence of volunteered laughter lies, therefore, somewhere else than in the prior speaker's invitation.

As to the specific location of laughter in talk-in-interaction, it has been suggested that laughter may occur roughly in three kinds of positions: at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of one's turn (Haakana 1999: 47–48). In relation to turns of other speakers, laughter may be placed either in overlap with the object to which it is referring or immediately after it. In general, the sequential placement of the first laugh particle has been found to provide information on where the laughter refers to and what kind of meaning it has in that particular context. (Glenn 1989: 128.)

Some previous studies have indicated that when occurring in overlap, laughter produced even by several speakers at the same time is not necessarily problematic to the participants of that situation since laughter is primarily co-operative. Even though initiated at a non-completion point of the current speaker's turn, laughter appears to be produced as *audience* behaviour, like applause, that responds to the ongoing turn and displays appreciation or joining in with the current speaker's undertaking. (Ford and Thompson 1996: 160–161; Glenn 1989: 146.) To put it differently, by laughing in overlap with somebody else's turn, people seem to consider themselves not as turn-holders but as recipients and competition for turn-space does not, therefore, occur. In this respect, laughter resembles response tokens and assessments a great deal.

In this section, as well as in other sections of this chapter, it has been demonstrated that overlap is a complex interactional phenomenon. The present chapter has shown, firstly, that the occurrence of overlapping talk is closely related to the systematics of turn-taking. Secondly, it has pointed out that previous research (e.g. French and Local 1983, Schegloff 2000 and Jefferson 1983) has looked into instances of simultaneous talk from different point of views and, as a result, various types of overlapping talk have been discovered. Finally, the present chapter has also indicated that certain utterance types, for instance acknowledgement tokens and laughter, occur every now and then in overlap even though they do not necessarily have to do so.

The following chapter continues discussing previous research on overlapping talk and related issues in talk-in-interaction. The focus of Chapter 3 is, however, on

studies which have looked into intercultural conversations – and conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English in particular.

3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN FINNISH AND NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

Previous research on spoken interaction between Finnish and native speakers of English is not vast but it has, however, revealed quite a few interesting characteristics of conversations of this kind, some of which deal with overlap as well. Unfortunately, conversations between Finnish and British speakers of English exclusively have not been studied so far from a conversation analytic or pragmatic point of view. Some studies have, nevertheless, focused on comparing the linguistic performance of Finns speaking English to each other to the performance of British speakers of English in a similar situation (see e.g. Nikula 1992, 1997). Studies using separate sets of native and non-native data do not provide, however, the best possible point of comparison to the present study since previous research has indicated that in intercultural conversations, mutual adaptation to the interlocutor's communicative behaviour takes place (see e.g. Sneck 1987 and Ulijn and Li 1995). For this reason, only studies that have been conducted with the help of data from conversations *between* Finnish and native speakers of English will be introduced in this thesis.

In the present chapter, four individual studies in the branch of linguistics that have looked into conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English will be discussed. For the sake of clarity, the studies have been divided into two groups on the basis of the type of spoken interaction that they represent. Firstly, section 3.1 introduces two studies that examined simulated face-to-face conversations: the Contrastive Discourse Analysis Project (e.g. Kärkkäinen 1991) and the dissertation study of Nikula (1995, 1996). Then, the studies by Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993) that looked into telephone conversations will be discussed in section 3.2.

3.1 Face-to-face conversations

Let us begin this section by discussing the Contrastive Discourse Analysis Project that was carried out at the University of Oulu under the guidance of Professor Heikki Nyyssönen. This research project, which was also called the Oulu Project, looked into the conversational skills of advanced Finnish learners of English, and, in particular, their level of social competence, which refers to their ability to use certain discourse strategies and/or politeness strategies. For the purposes of the project, 48 dyadic conversations were organised. In these conversations, Finnish university students of English were conversing with native speakers of English who came from Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In each conversation, the two participants were given a problem that had to be solved in the course of the interaction. The simulated conversations were audio recorded and a number of Finnish-Finnish and English-English conversations were also recorded for comparison. (Nyyssönen 1990: 7; Kärkkäinen 1991: 45–49.)

It was discovered that the Finns were generally rather proficient and fluent speakers of English and did not make many grammatical mistakes. A closer analysis of the conversations revealed, however, that there were several occasions in which the Finns made social blunders causing temporary discomfort to their native interlocutors. The main problem seemed to be that the Finns failed in doing enough supportive work and in showing involvement and positive affect in the conversations. Expressions of cooperativeness or supportiveness, for instance, were often either totally absent in the talk of the Finns or their tone was rather unemphatic. Consequently, outside native informants who were also involved in evaluating the performance of the Finns reported having perceived a general lack of reassurance and a lack of interest towards the other person. (Kärkkäinen 1991: 48–50, 54; Nyyssönen 1990: 11.)

Even though overlapping talk was not paid attention to in this research project, some of the findings are interesting from the viewpoint of the present study. Firstly, the study provided information on turn-taking in conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English. The results indicated that the native speakers normally spoke more than the Finns did and ended up, therefore, controlling the conversation

(Kärkkäinen 1991: 52). Despite the fact that the Finns spoke less than the native speakers did, they were found to be actually quite good at using gambits (e.g. *well*, *I was thinking* and *you see*) that lubricate conversations and are essential in taking, keeping and giving turns. However, the Finns used gambits often monotonically and not quite idiomatically. (Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski 1988: 116–117.)

Secondly, an interesting observation was made concerning the use of back-channels[9] (e.g. *yeah* and *mm)* in the conversations. The analysis revealed that the Finns were generally rather competent in proving some kind of back-channel feedback to their interlocutors and that they actually used more back-channels than the native speakers. The Finnish students did so, however, instead of taking turns at talk. To put it differently, the Finns used plenty of back-channel items in order to avoid active participation in the conversation. Furthermore, it was suggested that the linguistically less competent students in particular resorted to this strategy as a kind of compensatory strategy. (Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski 1988: 113–114.) All in all, the results of the Oulu Project indicate that the conversational behaviour of Finns speaking English in an intercultural setting differs in many respects from that of native speakers, for instance with respect to turn-taking.

Another influential study in which face-to-face conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English were looked into is that of Nikula (1995, 1996). In her pragmatically orientated study, Nikula examined how advanced Finnish learners of English mastered the use of pragmatic force modifiers, utterances such as *I suppose, sort of* and *you know*, in simulated multi-party conversations with native speakers of English. The participants of the conversations were university student roughly at the same age and most of the native speakers of English came from the UK. The main body of the data consisted of four audio recorded conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English. Similarly to the Oulu Project, Nikula gathered some Finnish-Finnish and English-English data, too, in order to be able to compare the participants' use of pragmatic force modifiers in NS-NS and NNS-NS interaction. In the conversations, the participants were given a discussion topic with which to get

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[9] Back-channels refer same kind of linguistic items as response tokens do. The term back-channel covers, however, more listener response behaviour than response tokens do, for instance clarification questions and non-verbal responses (Gardner 2001: 3, 13).

started but they were otherwise able to control the flow and the contents of the conversation themselves. (Nikula 1995: 146; Nikula 1996: 59, 61, 253–254.)

The study revealed that when speaking English, the Finns used pragmatic force modifiers less than the native speakers did. When speaking Finnish, in turn, the Finns were found to use them far more frequently. Furthermore, not only quantitative but also qualitative differences were detected in the use of pragmatic force modifiers: in NS-NNS conversations, the Finnish participants preferred explicit modifiers whereas the natives favoured implicit modifiers. When speaking Finnish, on the other hand, the Finns, as well, preferred implicit modifiers. (Nikula 1995: 135, 139, 143–144; Nikula 1996: 256.)

In addition, it was found out that the Finnish students were rather inconsistent in their use of pragmatic force modifiers, for instance in expressing opinions, when they spoke English. To put it differently, they seemed less able than the native speakers to regulate the use of modifying expressions according to situational demands. All in all, the results of Nikula's study suggest that Finns as learners of English use modifying expressions quite differently than native speakers of English do and that the differences do not seem to result from the learners' mother tongue or cultural background. (Nikula 1995: 137; Nikula 1996: 256–258.)

As for the present thesis, the dissertation study of Nikula (1995, 1996) provides a good point of comparison from a methodological point of view since Nikula's subjects and the data collection method are very similar to those of the present study: both involve simulated face-to-face conversations between at least three university students from Finland and English-speaking countries (see section 4.2.1). Despite the methodological similarities, Nikula's (ibid.) study, does not, however, reveal much about overlap in conversations of this kind since she did not pay special attention to the sequential placement of pragmatic force modifiers, that is, whether they occurred in the clear or in overlap with the ongoing turn.

3.2 Telephone conversations

As we learned earlier in this chapter, another type of spoken interaction which has already been examined in conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English are telephone conversations. Even though telephone conversations are not the focus of the present study, previous research on this type of spoken interaction is very interesting from the viewpoint of the present study, perhaps even more interesting than previous studies on face-to-face conversations, since overlap has been paid attention to in some of these papers. Two such studies – those of Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993) – will be discussed in this section, the former of which will be introduced first.

In his study, Sneck assessed conversational chronography, which refers to the temporal structure of conversations, in dyadic telephone conversations between Finns and Americans. He aimed at finding possible chronographical differences between these two culturally different groups. In order to do so, Sneck organised twenty telephone conversations in a small studio. The conversations were conducted by four Finns and four Americans who were homogenous in terms of sociodemographic variables and each conversation involved a problem to be solved during the interaction. Eight intercultural conversations where the interlocutors spoke English with one another and twelve intracultural conversations where the native tongue of the participants (Finnish or English) was used were audio recorded for the purposes of the study. The conversations were analysed afterwards with the help of a computer-based Automatic Conversation Timing System (ACTS) which involved no semantic analysis. In the computerised analysis, five parameters were measured: vocalization, pause, turn, switching pause and simultaneous speech. (Sneck 1987: 7–11, 29–32, 71.)

On a general level, Sneck found out that there were clear differences in the patterning of communicative behaviour between the Finns and the Americans. For example, it was discovered that the Finns spoke clearly less in intracultural conversations than the Americans did. In intercultural conversations, however, the Finns talked more than usual and the Americans, in turn, spoke less than when talking to their countrymen. Consequently, mutual adaptation to the communicative behaviour of the

interlocutors was apparently taking place in the intercultural conversations. Furthermore, Sneck found out that both in inter- and intracultural conversations, the Finns vocalized (uttered something orally) percentagewise less than they had pauses in their talk. With the Americans, the situation was, however, the opposite. (Sneck 1987: 57, 60, 69.)

As for overlapping talk, the study of Sneck provided many interesting results. Firstly, Sneck noticed that simultaneous talk was not very common in the telephone conversations. The number of overlaps produced differed, however, clearly in intercultural and intracultural settings and the Finns and the Americans also seemed to have differing patterns to overlap: simultaneous talk was most common in the talk of the Finns when they were conversing with the Americans and rarest when the Finns were talking to each other. Secondly, the analysis revealed that in each conversation type, interruptive overlapping talk[10] was less common than non-interruptive overlapping talk. However, it was found out that a relatively larger proportion of interruptive overlaps occurred in intercultural conversations. Sneck provides two explanations for the somewhat surprising findings concerning intercultural conversations: either the turn-taking system malfunctioned in intercultural conversations or the Finns produced mistimed overlapping back-channel more than in intracultural conversations. (Sneck 1987: 47, 64–71.)

Even though Sneck's (1987) study revealed that instances of overlapping talk can be either interruptive or non-interruptive on the basis of their location and provided information on their frequency, it did not outline what kind of overlaps in practice belonged to these categories or what kind of interpersonal functions they had in conversations. The study of Halmari (1993), in turn, which will be introduced next in this section, approaches simultaneous talk from a more interactional and pragmatic point of view and also provides further categories for instances of overlapping talk. Similarly to the study of Sneck (1987), overlaps are not, however, the only research object in Halmari's (1993) study.

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[10] According to Sneck (1987: 24), *interruptive* overlapping talk is "a speech segment that begins while the speaker who has the floor is talking and ends after he has stopped". *Non-interruptive* overlap, in turn, "begins and ends while the speaker who has the floor is talking". Despite the casual character of the definitions, the interruptive/non-interruptive division that Sneck makes is quite similar to the division between competitive and non-competitive overlap that was made earlier in this thesis (see sections 2.1 and 2.2).

In her study, Halmari looked into intercultural business telephone conversations between Finns and Anglo-Americans. Her aim was to find intercultural differences between speakers of Finnish and American English and, in particular, to look at the organisation of discourse in intercultural conversations. The data of the study consisted of twelve authentic business telephone conversations of a Finnish businessman living in the United States. The conversations were recorded by the businessman himself with a later consent of his interlocutors. The twelve conversations were dyadic and represented three kinds of conversations: Finnish conversations between the businessman and other native speakers of Finnish (5), English conversations between the businessman and native speakers of American English (6) and English conversations between the businessman and another non-native speaker of English (1). (Halmari 1993: 408–411.)

Halmari focused on looking at two separate organisation patterns in the telephone conversations: *episode structure* which refers to the different phases in which conversations normally proceed (e.g. opening, topical element and close) and *interrupting overlaps* which are, in her view, stretches of speech that are initiated by a non-floorholder at a place where the context (e.g. intonation or syntax) clearly indicates that the current speaker is not finished. As for the episode structure, Halmari discovered that the main episode structure was the same both in Finnish and English conversations: it consisted of opening, optional non-topical part (e.g. small-talk), business part and close. She detected, however, a clear intercultural difference in the importance of these parts. Whereas the Finnish-speakers emphasised the non-topical part, the English-speakers considered the business episode to be the most important part. (Halmari 1993: 408–410, 415, 423–424.)

Halmari also made quite a few discoveries concerning overlaps. First of all, she counted all instances of overlap and analysed them in terms of the speaker's cultural background, that is, whether they were produced by a Finn or by an American. Then, she analysed the site where the overlaps came into being. In doing so, Halmari listed six sites of overlap - *over a back-channel*, *over the last phonemes of utterance*, *over the last word of utterance*, *turn internally at clause boundary*, *over hesitation* and *in the middle of utterance* – at which the overlaps were interruptive, excluding overlaps

over a back-channel. (Halmari 1993: 424–426.) At this point, it is worth noting that the overlap sites or types of overlap that Halmari lists seem rather similar to those of Jefferson (1983, 1986) (see also sections 2.2 and 5.2.8) and that the characterisation of some of them as being truly 'interruptive' can be called into question (see e.g. Schegloff 2000: 4–6 and section 5.2.8).

The analysis revealed that there were several differences in the ways the Finns and the Americans overlapped. Probably the most striking difference was that the Americans overlapped with the Finnish businessman more than three times as often as the Finns did (Halmari 1993: 425). This result conflicts clearly with Sneck's (1987: 65) finding that, in intercultural conversations, the Finns were keener on overlapping than the Americans. It was also found out that the most common site for overlaps in Halmari's data was over the interlocutor's back-channel utterance and this finding applied to both the Finnish and the American participants. As for the other sites of overlap that Halmari regarded as interruptive, clear differences occurred, however, between the Finns and the Americans: The Finns normally initiated overlapping talk over the last phonemes or over the last word of the interlocutor's utterance. For the English-speakers, in turn, the most common initiation sites of overlap were in the middle of the ongoing turn at a clause boundary and in the middle of the interlocutor's utterance. (Halmari 1993: 408, 425–426.)

Halmari draws the conclusion that there is a connection between the results concerning the episode structure and interrupting overlaps: the fact that the Finns emphasised the importance of the non-topical episode and the Americans, in turn, the following business part may have led the Americans to initiate overlapping talk more frequently in order to get to the core of the conversation from the non-topical part which the Finns tended to elongate (Halmari 1993: 427).

All in all, out of the four studies introduced in this chapter, the results of Halmari's study provide probably the best point of comparison to the present study. It is worth noting, however, that Halmari's (1993: 424) analysis of overlaps included Finnish language data, too, which hinders the comparability of her study to the present one. Furthermore, Halmari's (1993) study as well as that of Sneck (1987) represent telephone conversations which in many respects differ from face-to-face

conversations. Nevertheless, the results of studies conducted on telephone conversations can be assumed to apply to face-to-face conversations at least to some extent since both face-to-face and telephone conversations represent spoken interaction which is regulated by the turn-taking system (see also Sneck 1987: 27).

To summarise, the studies discussed in this chapter have concentrated on the social competence of Finns as learners of English, on their use pragmatic force modifiers, on the temporal structure of conversations and on the organisation of discourse in conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English. They have revealed that the conversational behaviour of Finns speaking English differs in some respects clearly not only from that of native speakers of English but also from that of native speakers of Finnish.

So far, no explicit studies have been conducted on overlapping speech in face-to-face conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English. Overlap has been paid some attention to, however, in telephone conversations in the studies of Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993) that were introduced in this chapter. These studies have provided information on the quality and quantity of overlaps in intercultural telephone conversations and they have shown that there are differences in the ways in which Finnish and native speakers of English speak simultaneously. Nevertheless, these studies have not been able to provide a comprehensive account of overlaps which would take into account their relation to turn-taking as well as their interpersonal function. A more thorough analysis on overlaps in intercultural conversations is, therefore, needed.

Previous studies that have analysed conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English have also had at least one significant methodological limitation: they have relied on audio recordings only. When looking into face-to-face conversations, in particular, non-verbal behaviour is crucial in interpreting the interlocutors' linguistic output. The use of video recordings instead of mere audio recordings would give the researcher, therefore, more information on the research object, for instance on the function of overlaps, and contribute to more reliable research results. In the present study, the advantages provided by video recordings are utilised. In the following chapter, which casts light upon the specific research

questions, methodological choices and the data of the present study, the use of video recordings will also be described in a more detailed way.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the empirical part of the present study was conducted. In the first section of this chapter, research questions that function as the foundation of the study will be outlined. In the second section, the data and the way in which it was collected will be introduced. Some strengths and weaknesses of the data collection method will be discussed in this section as well. In addition, the content and the flow of the conversation that constitutes the data will be described. In the final section of this chapter, the method used for analysing the data will be presented.

4.1 Research questions

The aim of the present study is to look into what kind of non-competitive overlaps occurred in a conversation between Finnish and British speakers of English and, by doing so, provide more information on overlapping speech in intercultural conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English that only a few studies have touched upon so far (see Sneck 1987 and Halmari 1993). In order to shed some light on the topic, the following research questions have been posed, the first of which is the main research question and the following ones are minor research questions. The three minor research questions are related to the main research question by covering different aspects of it:

How was non-competitive overlap used in a conversation between Finnish and British speakers of English?

    I.   *What kind of non-competitive overlaps occurred in the conversation?*

    II.   *How often did the different types of non-competitive overlap occur in the conversation?*

III. *Were there any differences or similarities in the ways in which the Finnish and the British speakers of English overlapped non-competitively? If there were, how could these be characterised?*

As the research questions suggest, the focus of the present study is not on all instances of overlap but on non-competitive overlaps only. As we have learned in earlier chapters, non-competitive overlap refers to simultaneous talk that is unproblematic with respect to turn-taking, that is, it does not imply that the current speaker should give the floor prematurely to the incoming speaker. Overlapping utterances such as *uh huh*, *mm*, *oh, great* and laughter are considered to represent simultaneous talk of this kind. The other main type of simultaneous talk, competitive overlap, will not be given special attention in this study since it has already received a considerable amount of attention in previous studies (see e.g. French and Local 1983 and Schegloff 2000). It is worth noting, nevertheless, that looking into instances of non-competitive overlap in actual conversations requires, to some extent, the analysis of competitive overlaps, too. For this reason, some general observations concerning the distribution of both non-competitive and competitive overlaps in the data will be made in this thesis.

In the present study, the linguistic performance or language skills of the participants will not be evaluated as such. Looking into the ways in which the participants overlapped provides, however, some information on their social and pragmatic competence and, particularly, on how the Finns as learners of English have acquired the Anglo-American conversational style. In addition, analysing instances of simultaneous talk in an intercultural conversation like the present one hopefully reveals something general about the character of overlapping talk and about the characteristics of intercultural face-to-face conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English.

4.2 Data

The data of the present study consists of one recorded conversation in which Finnish speakers of English were talking in an informal setting with native speakers of English from the UK. Two conversations with different participants were originally

recorded for the purposes of the study but only one of them is looked into in this study. The reason for this is that the chosen conversation included 625 instances of overlap which is enough data for a small-scale study like the present one. Of the two recorded conversations, the chosen one included clearly more instances of overlap and, in this conversation, the Finnish participants were active conversationalists, which was not quite the case in the other conversation. For these reasons, the chosen conversation proved to be more fruitful for the purposes of the present study.

The chosen conversation was conducted by four participants, two of whom were British and two Finnish speakers of English. The conversation took place in a small classroom at the main campus of the University of Jyväskylä at the beginning of March 2006 and it was both video and audio recorded. The conversation lasted approximately 45 minutes and it was transcribed afterwards for the purposes of the study. In the transcribing process, special attention was paid to marking the onset and end of overlaps and indicating prosodic features and non-verbal behaviour related to overlapping talk. The transcription conventions used can be found in Appendix 1.

4.2.1 Participants and practical arrangements

The participants of the study were all university students not majoring or minoring in any language subjects. Both sexes were equally represented among the participants and they were 20–33 years old. The Finnish participants were studying at the University of Jyväskylä as degree students. The female British participant was an exchange student studying at the University of Jyväskylä and the male British participant, in turn, was a degree student of the University of Jyväskylä. The British knew each other to some extent and the Finns knew each other, too, but the Finns were not acquainted with the British and vice versa. More information on the participants is provided in Appendix 2.

University students who were roughly of the same age were chosen for participants to make sure that the educational background or age of the participants would not cause further variation in their linguistic behaviour. Students majoring or minoring in language subjects and Finnish students that had been living or studying abroad for long periods of time were excluded from the study, too, since their pragmatic skills,

for instance their command of the Anglo-American conversational style, would probably have been better than those of an average university student. The participants were not told beforehand what the specific focus of the study was. They only knew that interaction between Finnish and native speakers of English was being examined and that their language skills were not going to be evaluated as such.

The conversation took place in a rather small classroom where nobody else except the four participants, not even the researcher herself, was present during the recording. In order to capture both the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participants, a digital video camera and a mini-disc recorder with a separate microphone positioned in front of the participants were utilised. In the conversation, the participants were given a conversation task (see Appendix 3) that consisted of two parts: getting to know one another first and, then, discussing a specific topic dealing with clashes between Christianity and Islam which was a particularly prevailing topic at the time of the recording. The participants were also informed that they could change the topic and talk about anything that they found of interest at any point of the conversation. This opportunity was given to make sure that the discussion would be as natural as possible and that the given topic would not control the flow of the conversation more than necessary.

The given conversation task had certain aims. The purpose of the initial introductions was to make the participants feel relaxed. The actual discussion topic, in turn, was designed to encourage the participants to take actively part in the conversation: to express their own views and to comment on what the others had said. It was also a deliberate choice to give the participants a topic dealing with religion, politics and culture since these themes tend to divide people's opinions and, thus, often lead to heated conversations in which overlapping speech is likely to occur. Furthermore, that fact that more than two people participated in the conversation made simultaneous speech even more likely to occur since there is, generally, more overlapping talk or vocalisations in multi-party conversations than in two-party conversations (see e.g. Glenn 1989: 146; Hakulinen 1998: 53 and Londen 1998).

The data collection method, that is, the use of a prearranged or simulated conversation, was chosen mainly for practical reasons. Firstly, it would have been

rather difficult to find authentic situations in which there were both native and Finnish speakers of English who were, in addition, roughly of the same age and who had a same kind of educational background. Secondly, it would have been difficult to audio and video record this kind of conversations in a natural environment where background noise is usually present and where the interlocutors may move around.

Authentic conversations would provide, of course, the most reliable and fruitful data for studying various phenomena in talk-in-interaction, such as the occurrence overlapping speech. As Nikula (1996: 229) reflects on her own study in which data was gathered in a similar way to the present one, a recording situation can be rather artificial and the participants can be more conscious of their language use than they would be in authentic encounters. However, a major advantage in the use of a prearranged conversation was that plenty of data that fulfilled the requirements of the study could be gathered in an efficient way and the participants could still express themselves in a rather free way.

When collecting data for the present study, at least one further difficulty dealing with the data collection method was discovered: the participants reported that the discussion topic was rather difficult or at least challenging for them. The difficulty of the topic might have affected the language use of the participants and possibly prevented them from talking in the most natural way. This assumption is supported by Kasper and Dahl (cited in Nikula 1996: 229) who are of the opinion that different tasks restrict language use in various ways and, for this reason, there is always a link between research results and the type of data collected. In the present study, the use of a prearranged conversation with a specific conversation task seemed to be, nevertheless, the most reasonable and practical choice for collecting the data.

4.2.2 Description of the conversation

As was pointed out in the preceding section, the data consists of one recorded conversation the flow and characteristics of which will be described here briefly. In the recording situation, the participants were first explained what they were supposed to do (see section 4.2.1 and Appendix 3). After this, they were left alone in the classroom with the recording equipment. At the beginning of the conversation, the

participants spent about 25 minutes on introducing themselves and getting to know one another. After that, the given discussion topic and issues more or less related to it, such as the Finnish and British educational systems, the role of the media, people's reactions to terrorism and racism and the participants' personal experiences, were talked about.

All participants, both the Finnish and the British speakers of English, took actively part in the conversation. The British male, however, dominated the conversation slightly at some points. The overall tone of the conversation was rather relaxed and the participants were joking and laughing quite a lot. They were also rather active in expressing their opinions but also in commenting on what the others had said. No major confrontations, such as overt disputes, occurred during the 45-minute conversation even though the participants every now and then disagreed on some issues. All in all, the conversationalists were co-operative and fairly like-minded. Hardly any lengthy pauses occurred during the interaction and the pace of the conversation was reasonably fast. As for overlaps, they were very common in the conversation and all participants initiated them. Occasionally, even all four participants ended talking at the same time.

4.3 Method of analysis

Let us end this chapter by looking at how the analysis of the data was carried out in the present study: what kind of analytic phases it involved, which issues were paid special attention to and what kind of problems arouse in doing the analysis. To begin with, it is worth noting that the analysis of the data relied mostly on the conventions and practices of conversation analysis and pragmatics that previous research has outlined (see e.g. Sacks et al. 1974; Jefferson 1979, 1983, 1986; French and Local 1983; Goodwin 1986; Halmari 1993; Nikula 1996; Schegloff 2000 and Lerner 2004a). In addition, a great deal of intuitive knowledge on what happens in human interaction and how conversationalists interpret each other's conversational moves was utilised in doing the analysis.

In analysing the data, all instances of overlapping talk were taken into account but, after an initial analysis, some instances were excluded from the study due to

pragmatic reasons. First of all, overlaps that were impossible to analyse due to the momentarily poor quality of the recording were excluded. In some cases, neither the video nor the audio recording revealed what an overlapping participant was saying or what kind of prosodic features his/her utterance had, which made it impossible to say whether the overlap in question was competitive or non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. Secondly, a few unintentional vocal productions that came into being in overlap, such as uncontrollable coughing and sniffing, were not included in the study.

Thirdly, some overlaps that came into being in situations where the conversation had temporarily divided into two separate conversations were excluded from a closer analysis. Even though all four participants were sitting around the same table, the number of the participants enabled them to start minor dyadic conversations within the main conversation. Simultaneous talk that came into being in situations of this kind was no real overlap – at least in the core meaning of the concept – since the participants did not overlap within the same conversation (see also Schegloff 2000: 4–5). All in all, 23 overlaps, most of which were coughs, were excluded from a more detailed analysis for the three reasons mentioned above.

The first step of the actual analysis of the data was to divide all instances of overlap into two types, into competitive or non-competitive overlaps, following the division described by Schegloff (2000: 4–6). This was achieved by looking at the interactional context where each overlap occurred, prosodic features of both the incomer's and the turn-holder's speech (see French and Local 1983: 21–28), the semantic content of the overlaps and also non-verbal behaviour, such as hand gestures and gazes, related to the overlaps. After this, non-competitive overlaps, which were the main research object of the present study, were taken into a closer analysis.

The non-competitive overlaps were divided into separate types on the basis of their characteristics. In doing so, the results provided by previous research were utilised (see e.g. Jefferson 1979, 1983, 1984a, 1986; Goodwin 1986; Halmari 1993; Schegloff 2000; Gardner 2001 and Lerner 2004a). Similarly to the preceding step of analysis, the location of overlaps within turn-sequences and within individual turns

(e.g. at the boundaries of TCUs or within them), prosodic features of talk related to their occurrence (e.g. pitch and volume), their content and various kinds of non-verbal behaviour (e.g. smiling and nodding) were looked into when analysing the instances. Altogether, the data gave evidence to nine types of non-competitive overlap. With many overlaps, it would have been possible to place them into more than one group since they had characteristics of several types of non-competitive overlap. Overlaps of this kind were placed, however, only into one group that seemed to capture their occurrence in the most adequate way. Finally, the instances belonging to each type of non-competitive overlap were divided further into subtypes with the help of various criteria.

In addition to analysing the instances of non-competitive overlap qualitatively, the different phases of which were described above, they were also analysed quantitatively. To put it differently, it was counted how many instances belonged to each of the nine types. Furthermore, instances produced by the Finnish and the British participants were compared to each other both qualitatively and quantitatively in order to find differences and similarities in the ways in which the Finnish and the British participants overlapped non-competitively. In the following chapter, the results of this comparison as well as the nine types of non-competitive overlap that were found in the data will be discussed in detail.

5 FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the major findings gained from analysing the conversation and to provide answers to the research questions that were posed in the previous chapter. Section 5.1 is devoted to introducing quantitative differences between the different types of overlapping talk that were found in the data. Firstly, some attention will be paid to the distribution of competitive and non-competitive overlap in the conversation. Secondly, the distribution of the different types of non-competitive overlapping talk will be discussed. In addition, the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation will be compared to each other as to how often they produced overlaps of the different types.

Section 5.2, in turn, introduces the different types of non-competitive simultaneous talk in a more detailed way with the help of authentic examples from the data. Some qualitative differences within the distinct types of overlap will also be brought up and the ways in which the Finnish and the British participants used the different types of non-competitive overlap will be compared. Furthermore, some comparisons will be made between the results of the present study and those of previous research. Finally, section 5.3 summarises the major results presented in this chapter.

5.1 Frequency of different types of non-competitive overlap

The analysis of the data revealed that overlapping talk produced by the participants was in most cases anything but haphazard. It seemed that the participants monitored very closely what the others were saying or were to say next and chose their conversational moves accordingly. Overlap seemed to provide them with a tool with which they could move from recipiency to speakership but also perform a variety of other things, for example show involvement and co-operation by giving the current speaker minimal feedback on his/her turn. In the light of the present data, it seems that people most often overlap to do something else than to challenge the floor from the current speaker. The numbers in Table 1, which reveals the distribution of competitive and non-competitive overlaps in the data, show this clearly:

Table 1. Distribution of instances of competitive and non-competitive overlap

	Finnish speakers	British speakers	Total
Competitive overlaps	88	87	175
Non-competitive overlaps	242	208	450
Total	330	295	625

During the conversation, the participants overlapped 625 times altogether and 450 of these overlaps which equals 72 % were non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. The purpose of the remaining 175 instances was, in turn, to compete for speakership. As to the Finnish and British participants, both groups clearly preferred non-competitive overlaps: 73 % of the overlaps produced by the Finns and 71 % of the British overlaps were non-competitive. The distribution of competitive and non-

competitive overlaps among the Finnish and British instances was, therefore, practically identical. The findings above are in line with the results of Sneck (1987: 47, 65) who found out that non-interruptive simultaneous talk, which is nearly the same thing as non-competitive overlap in this thesis, was more common in his intercultural data than interruptive simultaneous talk.

In general, the Finns overlapped, however, slightly more often than the British did. The slight difference in numbers seems to result from non-competitive overlaps in particular since the Finnish participants overlapped non-competitively 242 times and the British participants, in turn, only 208 times. A closer analysis of the non-competitive overlaps revealed, however, that the small difference in numbers between the Finns and the British may have resulted at least partly from idiosyncratic differences in producing certain kind of overlaps. One of the participants, the Finnish female who has the pseudonym Satu in our transcripts, was found to produce non-competitive overlaps that could be characterised as listener response overlaps more often than the others, as we will see in the sections to come. The finding concerning the Finnish tendency to overlap more often than the British should be treated, therefore, with some caution.

As for earlier research, the previous finding supports Sneck's (1987: 65) results which revealed that, in intercultural conversation, Finns overlapped more often than native speakers of English did. However, the finding contrasts clearly with the results of Halmari (1993: 425) who discovered that native speakers of English overlapped more than three times as often as Finns did.

All in all, the numbers presented in Table 1 suggest that Finnish and British speakers of English overlap principally in similar ways and that the occurrence of overlap cannot be seen merely as a matter of people trying to take the floor from one another prematurely but rather as a phenomenon whose main function or functions is/are something else. A close analysis of all non-competitive overlaps in the data revealed nine different types of overlap that shed light on the various functions of non-competitive overlap. The existence of all these types has been acknowledged more or less directly in previous research. In Table 2, the nine types of non-competitive overlap found and their frequencies are summarised:

Table 2. Different types of non-competitive overlapping talk

	Finnish speakers	British speakers	Total
Acknowlegement tokens	104	76	180
Continuers	14	1	15
Newsmarkers	8	3	11
Change-of-activity tokens	2	1	3
Assessments	11	9	20
Laughter	15	15	30
Conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps	7	10	17
Transitional overlaps	21	33	54
Accidental overlaps	60	60	120
Total	242	208	450

In Table 2, the different types of overlap are not listed by their frequencies but thematically in the way that types that are somehow similar to one another are introduced successively. This is also the same order in which the nine types of overlap will be discussed in more detail in section 5.2. The first six types of overlap found in Table 2 – acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers, change-of-activity tokens, assessments and laughter – were similar in that they served to acknowledge the current speaker's right to his/her turn and most of them provided some kind of understanding or evaluation of the contents of current speaker's turn, too.

After these six types that one might call *listener response overlaps,* the numbers related to the three remaining types of non-competitive overlap are presented. Unlike the first six types, *conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps*, *transitional overlaps* and *accidental overlaps* are not very closely related to each other and they should be considered, therefore, truly distinct types of non-competitive overlap. *Conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps* came into being in situations where a recipient was invited or s/he invited him-/herself to complete an utterance or turn in progress. *Transitional overlaps*, in turn, occurred in contexts where change of speakership was

taking place. *Accidental overlaps*, on the other hand, were produced more or less accidentally in places in which overlaps were neither intended nor expected to occur.

As Table 2 indicates, the nine types of overlap found in the data differ significantly from each other as to how many instances belong to them: the most common type of non-competitive overlap, acknowledgement tokens, consisted of 180 instances whereas change-of-activity token overlaps occurred only three times in the data. The other seven types of overlap fell in the middle, most of them having 11–30 instances. In addition to overlapping acknowledgement tokens, accidental overlaps occurred very often in the conversation. 120 instances of accidental overlaps were discovered in the data and together with acknowledgment token overlaps they formed two thirds of all non-competitive overlaps. Transitional overlaps also stood out slightly from the data with 54 instances.

Furthermore, Table 2 reveals that both the Finnish and the British participants produced instances of each type of overlap. In two of these types, in laughter and accidental overlaps, the number of instances produced by the Finnish and the British speakers of English was actually the same. With accidental overlaps, the distribution of instances between the Finns and the British should not be paid, however, much attention since the given distribution is only suggestive. In many accidental overlaps, it was difficult if not impossible to say who initiated them (see section 5.2.9).

In several types of non-competitive overlap, the distribution of the Finnish and British instances was, however, rather uneven: The Finns produced practically all overlapping continuers and the British, in turn, a great majority of transitional overlaps. The Finnish participants were also found to produce both acknowledgement token and newsmarker overlaps significantly more often than the British participants. The difference related to acknowledgment tokens, newsmarkers and continuers can be explained, however, as least partly with idiosyncratic differences, as was suggested earlier in this section.

To sum up, the analysis of the overlaps found in the conversation revealed that both the Finnish and the British participants overlapped clearly more often non-competitively than competitively. In addition, nine separate types of non-competitive

overlap that consisted of varying numbers of instances were found in the data. Two of these types, acknowledgement token overlaps and accidental overlaps, formed a vast majority of all instances. Finally, when comparing the Finns and the British to one another as to what kind of non-competitive overlaps they produced and how often, it was discovered that both the Finnish and the British speakers of English produced instances of all nine types of overlap but in most of these types either the Finns or the British provided a clearly larger number of instances than the other group.

5.2 Different types of non-competitive overlap in the conversation

In this section, the nine types of non-competitive overlapping talk that were discovered in the data will be examined from a mainly qualitative point of view. As was pointed out in section 5.1, the types of overlap found will be discussed here in a thematic order which was introduced in Table 2. First, the six related types of non-competitive overlap that could be characterised as *listener response overlaps* will be discussed individually. Then, the three remaining unrelated types of overlap – *conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps*, *transitional overlaps* and *accidental overlaps* – will be introduced in more detail.

In each sub-section, one type of non-competitive overlap will be dealt with. Initially, a description of the type in question will be given and, after that, authentic examples provided by both the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation will be presented and discussed. Differences found within each type of overlap will also be brought up and the Finns and the British will be compared to each other as to how they utilised each type of overlap. When possible, the findings of the present study will also be compared to those of previous research.

5.2.1 Acknowledgement tokens

The analysis of the data revealed that acknowledgement tokens formed clearly the most common type of non-competitive overlap in the data with 180 instances, which is actually 40 % of all non-competitive overlaps found. As was suggested in section 2.3.1, acknowledgement tokens are short listener responses that occur most often

during extended turns and claim understanding or agreement of the preceding turn (Gardner 2001: 2, 6, 34). Previous research has indicated that *yeah* (or *yes*), *mm* and *mm hm* are the most common acknowledgment tokens, the first of these being the most widely used in ordinary conversations and the last, in turn, the rarest (Jefferson 1984a and Gardner 2001). In addition, it has been suggested that *yeah* is a stronger and more involved acknowledgement token than *mm* and *mm hm* are and that all these tokens normally carry a falling intonation contour (Gardner 2001: 22, 29, 34, 39).

The observations that were made when analysing the data were very similar to those of Jefferson (1984a) and Gardner (2001): Acknowledgment tokens occurred very often during lengthy stretches of talk by the same speaker and their primary purpose was evidently to acknowledge what the current speaker had said and to show varying degrees of agreement towards it. Furthermore, acknowledgement tokens seemed to indicate that the current speaker was allowed to continue his/her turn. It was also noticed that overlapping acknowledgement tokens were sometimes accompanied by nodding, which contributed to the reading that acknowledgement tokens showed understanding and even agreement towards what that current speaker had said. As to prosodic features of acknowledgement tokens, they were produced predominantly with a flat or slightly falling intonation contour. Only in four cases the intonation contour was rising.

Examples 4 and 5 below illustrate prototypical uses of overlapping acknowledgement tokens found in the data. In Example 4, Satu says *mm* on line 6 in the middle of Kelly's extended turn. Her *mm* is produced with a flat intonation contour and it is accompanied by nodding. By uttering *mm* in this context, she obviously wants to express that she understands what Kelly has just told about her studies and that Kelly may tell more about it. In Example 5, in turn, Kelly and John respectively appear to show some kind of agreement towards what has just been said by saying *yeah* in overlap with the ongoing turn. As in Example 4, Kelly's *yeah* on line 6 and John's *yeah* on line 9 are produced with a flat or slightly falling intonation and they seem to convey that the current speaker may keep the floor and continue his/her turn.

Example 4: (C2: 520−526)
Kelly is telling about her studies:

```
1       Kelly:          [I really]=
2       John:           [  mm  ]
3       Kelly:          =enjoyed that and then I came to I went to a university to study
4                       primary education and (1.0) er I wanted to do creativity of the
5                       arts as my specialist [subject]=
6 →     Satu:                               [  mm  ] ((nods))
7       Kelly:          =of art but then they didn't run a course
```

Example 5: (C2: 1149−1158)
John and Kelly are telling about racist attitudes in Britain:

```
1       John:                             [   yeah it's the irony isn't it     ]
2                       it's no it's almost like the the the en- the (omer) they're more
3                       probably racist than
4       Satu:           yeah=
5       John:           =most [white] people are but (0.7) they hide behind the shield=
6 →     Kelly:                [ yeah]
7       John:           =of the fact that of course all whites are racist so
8       Kelly:          yeah they would never be classed as being [racist]
9 →     John:                                                     [ yeah]
10      Kelly:          towards eh- like white people
```

It was discovered that there were at least two factors that made most overlapping acknowledgement tokens non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. Firstly, acknowledgement tokens and the resulting overlaps were brief and, therefore, they did not have to be managed or resolved in any way. Secondly, they were produced in a way that did not handicap the current speaker's undertaking, for instance restrict the audibility of his/her speech. The absence of the prosodic combination "high pitch and increased loudness" that French and Local (1983: 21–28) consider to be a distinctive feature of turn-competitive incoming seemed to contribute to this outcome. All in all, the interlocutors seemed to treat acknowledgement tokens that came into being in overlap as if they had been produced in the clear.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that not only acknowledgement tokens but also the other three response tokens types – continuers, newsmarkers and change-of-activity tokens that have very much in common with acknowledgement tokens (see section 2.3.1) – were found to operate similarly in overlap. To put it differently, since all response tokens that occurred in overlap were rather short and did not complicate the current speaker's undertaking, they could be considered non-competitive with respect to turn-taking.

The analysis revealed that the Finnish participants uttered acknowledgment tokens in overlap clearly more often than the British participants did, as Table 2 indicated. This difference appears to be, however, a result of idiosyncratic differences in using acknowledgement tokens since the Finnish female Satu uttered acknowledgement tokens in overlap far more often than the other participants did. She alone produced actually 81 acknowledgement token overlaps, which is slightly more than the number of instances that the British participants produced altogether.

It was also found out that *mm* and *yeah* were clearly the most commonly occurring overlapping acknowledgment tokens: they both were produced 74 times. There were, however, marked differences in the distribution of these two acknowledgement tokens between the Finnish and British speakers of English: the Finns favoured *mm* whereas the British preferred *yeah*. The difference seemed to result, however, again from the Finnish female's idiosyncratic use of acknowledgement tokens since she produced nearly all of the Finnish *mms*. If the instances provided by the Finnish female are not taken into account, *yeah* is more commonly used in the data than *mm* is. As to Gardner's (2001: 34) suggestion that *yeah* occurs more commonly in everyday conversations than *mm* does, the findings of the present study support his suggestion with some caution.

In addition to *mm* and *yeah*, some other acknowledgment tokens, for instance *yes* and *yep* that are related to *yeah*, occurred in overlap in the conversation. The occurrence of these acknowledgement tokens was, however, only occasional. Furthermore, it was discovered that different acknowledgement tokens were sometimes produced together in overlap (e.g. *mm yeah*) and that every now and then an acknowledgement token was repeated, as in Example 6 where John produces *yeah* two times in a row on line 6. These combinations did not appear to differ, however, much from individual acknowledgement tokens in a similar context. In most cases, they did no show more involvement or agreement than individual acknowledgement tokens would have shown.

Example 6: (C2: 748−754)
Satu has just asked how drama is used at schools in England:

```
1      John:              [this is not] sort of specifically sort of part of the curriculum
2                         but it's used quite well at schools [isn't it]
3      Kelly:                                              [  it's  ] yeah i- it is in
4                         the curriculum but it comes onto English and
5                         tha[t's pretty much] it as role play
6 →    John:                 [  yeah yeah    ]
7      Kelly:             [but they're trying] get you to use it where everywhere now
```

Acknowledgement tokens were found to occur in overlap in some other kinds of combinations, too. They were once combined with the change-of-activity token *okay*, as can be seen in Example 7 on line 4, and half a dozen times with some kind of assessment. A combination of an assessment and acknowledgment tokens can be seen, for instance, at the end of Example 8 where Satu says *yes that's true mm* simultaneously with John's ongoing turn. Satu's utterance is initiated with the acknowledgement token *yes* that indicates a high level of agreement towards the ongoing turn and ended with another acknowledgement token *mm* that is more neural in tone. What seems to result is, therefore, an utterance that shows acknowledgement and agreement towards the ongoing and provides an evaluation on it as well.

Example 7: (C2: 1242−1249)
The participants are talking about the fear of terrorism:

```
1      John:              I just hate that ever since September the eleventh
2      Satu:              mm
3      John:              it's this fear of another terrorist [attack [constantly]
4 →    Satu:                                                 [     yes okay    ]
5      Pekka:                                                       [  yeah  ]
6      Kelly:             mm
7      John:              there were terrorist attack before this I mean for god's sake
8                         in England we've been living with IRA for how long now
```

Example 8: (C2: 1548−1555)
John is comparing the Finnish and British school systems:

```
1      John:              of (0.4) like last: [but in] Finland you've concentrated more=
2      Pekka:                                 [ yeah ]
3      Satu:                                  [ mm ] ((nods))
4      John:              =on [ edu]cating
5      Satu:                  [yeah]
6      John:              everybo[dy so you have a better standard so]
7 →    Satu:                     [        yes that's true mm        ] ((nods))
8                         (1.0)
```

Furthermore, acknowledgement tokens were combined a couple of times with laughter, which can be seen, for example, in Example 9 on line 7. In this example, Kelly begins her utterance with the acknowledgement token *yeah*, laughs then for a brief moment and finishes her utterance with a *yeah* which is produced laughingly. Here, it is worth noting that Kelly has produced *yeah* already once on line 5, which indicates that she is doing acknowledging work repeatedly in this interactional context. The purpose of Kelly's utterance on line 7 seems to be, therefore, to continue the acknowledging work and, in addition, to provide an understanding or assessment of John's extended turn − to indicate that Kelly has appreciated John's undertaking and has found it humorous and entertaining.

Example 9: (C2: 131−141)
John has been telling about his language skills:

```
1       John:           if it's one of the things that I I we've been talking about
2                       languages is the fact that you can tell a na- a person who's a
3                       native English speaker when they're speaking another language
4                       'cos [all of] have books that teach languages always have
5       Kelly:              [yeah]
6       John:           please and thank you [as the] first thing you learn      ]
7 →     Kelly:                               [yeah ] he he he he he he $yeah$]
8       Satu:                                [mm? ]
9       John:           and so [we still say] kiitos
10      Pekka:              [    (x)    ]
11      John:           and all this [ole  ] hyvä for everything it's really funny
```

All in all, the fact that acknowledgment tokens were repeated or combined in overlap with various kinds of constructions some of which consisted of several words did not seem to make these constructions competitive with respect to turn-taking. The absence of the prosodic combination "high pitch and increased loudness" is, no doubt, one factor contributing to this outcome, as was mentioned earlier with individual acknowledgement tokens.

As for the location of acknowledgement tokens in overlap, a clear pattern was detected in the data: overlapping acknowledgement tokens occurred predominantly within turn-constructional units and not between them, as continuers normally do (see section 2.3.2). This can be seen clearly, for instance, in Example 5 which was introduced earlier in this section. In this example, Kelly first utters her *yeah* simultaneously with the word *white* of John's TCU *they're more probably racist*

than most white people are. A few lines below this, John, in turn, produces his *yeah* in overlap with Kelly's *racist* which might be the last item of her TCU *they would never be classed as being racist towards eh- like white people*. In both cases, the overlapping *yeah* is produced before a new TCU may be projected to begin.

The positioning of acknowledgment tokens within TCUs was probably most striking in cases where several participants produced their acknowledgment tokens simultaneously. A good example of this can be seen in Example 10 where all three recipients utter their acknowledgement tokens at the same time in overlap with the word *fare* that brings John's TCU *there was the big salmonella stir fare* to completion. One possible explanation for the TCU-internal positioning of acknowledgement tokens might be that the reference between the acknowledgement token and its antecedent, that is, what the acknowledgement token acknowledges, is clearer when they occur within the same TCU.

Example 10: (C2: 1319−1324)
The participants have been talking about things that scare people:

```
1      John:              but in the eighties there was a big thing about food scares
2                         and stuff like that there was the big salmonella (0.4) stir [fare ]
3 →    Kelly:                                                                        [mm ]
4 →    Satu:                                                                         [mm ]
5 →    Pekka:                                                                        [yeah]
6      John:              and eggs are dangerous [poisoning] and stuff
```

The data provided, however, some instances of overlap where an acknowledgement token was placed at the boundary of two TCUs, one of which can be found in Example 11. In this example, Satu's *mm* on line 3 overlaps with the first syllable of John's new TCU *because e- according to er Muslim faith*. Instances of this kind were, however, in minority in the data.

Example 11: (C2: 877−882)
John is telling about a female friend of his who is a Muslim:

```
1      John:              [but] she doesn't necessarily wanna date someone (0.4) who:
2                         er: is himself a Muslim [be  ]cause e- according to: er Muslim=
3 →    Satu:                                      [mm] ((nods))
4      John:              =faith (0.8) er man can marry a non-Muslim woman
5      Satu:              [mm]
6      John:              [but ] a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Mus[lim   ] man
```

The analysis of the data also revealed that there were some differences between acknowledgement tokens in the ways they showed involvement and agreement, as has been hinted earlier in this section (see e.g. the discussion of Example 8). Generally, *yes* showed most involvement and agreement of the different acknowledgement tokens found. *Yeah*, in turn, normally displayed a little bit less involvement and agreement than *yes* did and *mm*, on the other hand, the least of these three acknowledgment tokens (compare e.g. Examples 8, 5 and 4). This finding supports Gardner's (2001: 39) suggestion that *mm* is a weaker and less involved acknowledgment token than *yeah* is.

Some caution is needed, however, when comparing the levels of involvement and agreement that different acknowledgement tokens convey, since considerable differences were found to occur between the ways in which even one acknowledgement token could be uttered. This can be noticed, for instance, by comparing Examples 12 and 13 where Satu produces the acknowledgement token *yeah* in overlap with John's ongoing turn. In Example 12, she utters her *yeah* almost inaudibly and in a tone of voice that does not show much involvement. In Example 13, on the other hand, Satu produces her *yeah* with a high pitch and in a clearly more supportive tone of voice. In addition, the acknowledgment token is accompanied by nodding, which makes it even more obvious that the purpose of *yeah* in this context is to express a high level of involvement and agreement.

Example 12: (C2: 1716−1720)
The participants have just been talking about racial issues:

```
1       John:           that's the problem if we live in so- such a er society of fear and
2                       a in well England anyway (0.6) er: most of the world lives in
3                       such a society of [fear ]
4 →     Satu:                             [yeah] ((almost inaudible))
5       John:           and I think Finland is starting to cut onto that unfortunately
```

Example 13: (C2: 1257−1262)
The participants have been talking about the fear of terrorism:

```
1       John:           that (0.6) but ever since September the eleventh now it's like if
2                       you say anything that could be interpreted [as     ]
3 →     Satu:                                                      [yeah] ((nods))
4       John:           as some kind of like religious blaspheme all of a sudden there's
5                       gonna be a Jihad and you know
6                       [on your] head and something like that
```

It is worth pointing out, therefore, that when analysing the level of involvement and agreement that an acknowledgement token conveys in a specific context, its lexical form does not always appear to provide enough information for drawing any conclusions. Prosodic features of the acknowledgement token as well as non-verbal behaviour related to its production should also be taken into account.

To sum up, the analysis of the conversation revealed that acknowledgement tokens occurred in overlap either alone or in various kinds of combinations. In both cases, they were non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. Overlapping acknowledgement tokens most often came into being within TCUs and carried a flat or slightly falling intonation contour. Furthermore, it was discovered that they were able to show different levels of involvement and agreement. Generally, the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation produced acknowledgements tokens in a similar way in overlap even though great differences were found to occur between individual speakers as to how often and which acknowledgement tokens they produced.

5.2.2 Continuers

Continuers were another type of response tokens that came into being in overlap in the conversation even though the number of continuers found was only a fraction of that of acknowledgement tokens. As we learned in section 2.3.2, continuers are short listener responses, most typically *mm hm* and *uh huh* and sometimes *yeah* and *mm*, which do not have a clear semantic meaning but function rather as "bridges between units" (Gardner 2001: 25–26; Goodwin 1986: 207). Their main function is to indicate that the recipient understands that the current speaker is producing an extended turn which is not complete and that the current speaker should continue talking (Schegloff 1981: 81). It was also pointed out that continuers most often occur at the boundaries of turn-constructional units and normally carry a rising intonation contour (Goodwin 1986: 208; Gardner 2001: 22).

In the data, continuers were uttered 15 times in overlap with the ongoing turn. The analysis revealed that *mm* was clearly the most commonly used overlapping

continuer with 11 instances. It was also discovered that 14 of the 15 instances of continuer overlap were produced by the same speaker, the Finnish female Satu. Comparing the Finnish uses of continuers to those of the British speakers is, therefore, rather impossible. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the results and observations presented in this section are practically based on talk by one person only. As a result, they do not necessarily give a valid picture on how Finnish not to mention British speakers of English produce overlapping continuers in general.

To begin with, looking at the data revealed that the difference between overlapping continuers and acknowledgement tokens was not very big. The use of both of them indicated, firstly, that the recipients realised that the current speaker was holding the floor and was probably not going to finish his/her turn right away. Secondly, by producing acknowledgement tokens or continuers in overlap, the recipients also conveyed that they were listening to what the current speaker was saying even though they did not provide a fuller evaluation on the contents of the current turn. Some minor differences were, however, discovered between overlapping acknowledgement tokens and continuers. It was noticed that whereas acknowledgement tokens were able to indicate some kind of agreement towards the contents of the current turn, continuers did not do so but simply handed the floor back to the primary speaker. This is an observation that has been made by Gardner (2001: 34–35), too.

When analysing the data, it was also discovered that the level of involvement that recipients showed when uttering their response tokens in overlap (e.g. tone of voice and bodily gestures) was a factor that differentiated continuers from acknowledgement tokens. It seemed that acknowledgement tokens were normally produced with more involvement, for instance with a clearer articulation and accompanied by nodding or smiling, than continuers were. In the majority of cases, continuers were uttered rather quietly with a monotonic intonation and no gestures were related to them. In some cases it was, however, nearly impossible to say whether a word functioned as an acknowledgement token or as a continuer since the two response token types seem to be, despite some differences, very similar.

Let us now have a look at a few concrete examples of overlapping continuers. In Example 14, Kelly has just been telling the others about her educational background. John realises that Kelly is in the middle of an extended turn and produces *mm* on line 3 in a place where he obviously expects Kelly to finish her current TCU and to go on to a new one. Johns utters his *mm* in a rather monotonous way and in a low voice keeping a straight face. To put it differently, he does not show much involvement. One gets the impression that John's *mm* does nothing else but indicates that he is listening to Kelly and wants her to continue.

Example 14: (C2: 519−524)
Kelly has been telling about her training in drama:

```
1       Kelly:              erm and they should prob- I think the best years in my life
2                           [I really]=
3 →     John:               [  mm  ]
4       Kelly:              =enjoyed that and then I came to I went to a university to study
5                           primary education and (1.0) er I wanted to do creativity of the
6                           arts as my specialist [subject]=
```

Similar conclusions can be drawn when looking at Examples 15, 16 and 17 where Satu produces *uh huh*, *yeah* and *uh* (a mere sound) in overlap with the ongoing turn. In these examples, Satu, who is in the role of a listener as least momentarily, utters *uh huh*, *yeah* and *uh* in a way that does not provide interactional cues, for instance with her tone of voice or with gestures, on how she has found the current speaker's undertaking. She simply hands the floor back to the current speaker who is evidently not finished with his turn. In the examples below, utterances *uh huh*, *yeah* and *uh* seem to function, therefore, as continuers.

Example 15: (C2: 255−264)
The participants are talking about a local night club:

```
1       Satu:                        [  I  ] I have been once there er when it changed the
2                                     name to Khar[ma  ]
3       John:                                     [yeah]
4       Satu:               and I don't think nothing [has is different]
5       John:                                         [ eh: yeah well ] it's just the
6                           atmosphere it's just like when I was going to Elohuvi [I had  ]=
7 →     Satu:                                                                     [uh huh]
8       John:               =a bad time every single time
9       Satu:               mm↑
10      John:               and it was it felt like you were going to a meat market
```

Example 16: (C2: 1662−1667)
The participants are talking about whether or not the Finnish school system discriminates Muslims:

1	Pekka:	[er according to the] law
2	Satu:	[it's it's in]
3	Pekka:	[it's not]
4 →	Satu:	[yeah?]
5	Pekka:	suppose to be that [like that anymore]
6	John:	[no it's not even not even] about [anything]

Example 17: (C2: 333−336)
The participants are talking about the Oscars:

1	John:	I'm a media student and I don't even (xx) bother to watch
2		the Os[cars] I didn't even think they were on
3 →	Satu:	[uh?]
4		(1.4)

As for the location of overlapping continuers in the conversation, they occurred predominantly at the boundaries of TCUs, as Goodwin (1986: 208) has suggested. In Examples 14 and 15, for instance, continuers overlap with the beginning of a new TCU or a sentence. In Example 16, the situation is practically the same even though the preceding TCU is not a complete sentence but a separate preface *according to the law*. In the final example, on the other hand, the continuer *uh* overlaps with the last sounds of the TCU *I don't even bother to watch the Oscars*. Consequently, in all these examples, overlapping continuers were produced very close to the boundaries of turn-constructional units.

Finally, looking at the prosodic features of overlapping continuers revealed that, for a clear majority of continuers, the intonation contour was flat, like in Examples 14 and 15. Only a handful of overlapping continuers, for instance those in Examples 16 and 17, carried a rising intonation contour. Gardner's (2001: 22) claim that a rising intonation contour is a characteristic of continuers does not find, therefore, support in the data of the present study.

5.2.3 Newsmarkers

The analysis revealed that a further response token type, newsmarkers, came into being 11 times in overlap during the conversation. As was suggested in section 2.3.3,

newsmarkers are produced by recipients to indicate that the turn they are responding to has provided newsworthy information to them. Words such as *oh, right* and *really* and minimal questions, for instance *Did they?*, are considered to be part of this category. (Gardner 2001: 2, 40.) It was also noted that the particle *oh* conveys some kind of change in the recipient's state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness and that it occurs normally as a response to complete informing sequences (Heritage's 1984: 209, 301). Furthermore, previous research (see e.g. Heritage 1984, Local 1996 and Gardner 2001) has indicated that the newsmarker *oh* normally comes into being not alone but is accompanied by additional structures, for example followed by an assessment (e.g. *Oh good*).

It was discovered that the words *oh* and *really* could function as overlapping newsmarkers in the conversation. As previous studies have suggested, the use of these words seemed to indicate that the ongoing turn had provided new and perhaps surprising information to the recipient. *Oh* proved to be, however, much more common than *really* in the data. It was also found out that both *oh* and *really* could occur in either alone or combined with additional structures. Following Examples 18, 19 and 20 exemplify a few additional structures. In Example 18, *oh* is combined with the adjective *great* that functions as an assessment. The resulting utterance *oh great* on line 4 expresses, therefore, that Pekka's turn has offered new information to Kelly and that she finds this information 'great'.

Example 18: (C2: 337−344)
Pekka is telling the others about his hobbies:

1	Pekka:	[and but I listen to lot of] music and I play in two bans I
2	Kelly:	[e heh didn't bother (x)]
3	Pekka:	[sing]
4 →	Kelly:	[oh great]
5	Pekka:	and I
6	John:	cool
7	Pekka:	sing heh I also play clarinet and base guitar
8		and um and I have an acoustic guitar

In Example 19, in turn, overlapping *oh* is followed by another response token, the change-of-activity token *okay*. The two response tokens seem to fit together nicely since they are both prototypically placed after possibly complete informing sequences. By saying *oh okay*, Kelly obviously wants to indicate that the preceding

facts concerning the cartoon scandal of 2005 that were presented by Satu and Pekka are new to her and that she expects the current topic of the conversation to reach a completion and a new topic or subtopic to be taken up. What happens is that a new sub-topic related to the cartoon scandal is actually taken up on line 7.

Example 19: (C2: 1204−1212)
The participants are talking about the cartoon scandal of 2005:

```
1       Satu:               and the Islamic people were like OH OH NO and everyone
2                           ((waves her hands dramatically))
3       Pekka:              it was last Monday
4       Satu:               yeah
5       Pekka:              in [the compu-]
6 →     Kelly:                  [   oh    ] okay
7       Satu:               and really horrible things ha- has happened because of these
8       Pekka:              yeah
9       Satu:               pictures
```

The last combination to be discussed here is that of two newsmarkers, *oh* and *really*, that can be seen in Example 20 on line 5. In this example, the combination of these two tokens seems to have the same function as *oh* or *really* would have individually: to indicate that John is surprised and perhaps even impressed about the fact that Kelly organises gigs and charity events. This interpretation is supported by his non-verbal behaviour as well since he raises his eyebrows when producing the two newsmarkers.

Example 20: (C2: 670−675)
Kelly is telling about her hobbies dealing with music:

```
1       Kelly:              and I organise a lot of gigs in Leech back home like
2                           Halloween charity event that I did la[st year]=
3       Satu:                                            [ ¤oh: ¤] ((looks fascinated))
4       Kelly:              =was (0.9) fantastic e he he [it was great] we did it
5 →     John:                   ((raises his eyebrows)) [   oh really ]
6       Kelly:              it's a erm a local charity back home for cystic fibrosis and
```

As for overlapping newsmarkers that occurred without additional structures, the data revealed that they carried very different intonation contours that had an effect on their interpretation. It was found out, for instance, that by producing the newsmarker *oh* with varying intonation contours, the participants, or at least the Finnish female, were able to show to which degree the preceding information was new or surprising to them. This can be seen by looking at Examples 21, 22 and 23:

Example 21: (C2: 706−712)
Kelly has just told about a problem she has faced in organising charity events:

```
1       Kelly:          oh it was a bit (x) but
2       Satu:           yeah
3       Kelly:          but hey (1.3) so I think that's (0.7) pretty much it
4       Satu:           o[kay] ((almost inaudible)
5       Kelly:           [OH] the thing gave (x) to the drama thing as well I have a
6       Kelly:          job at home I teach drama [at a] college on Saturday
7 →     Satu:              ((sighing production)) [oh  ] ((smiles a bit))
```

Example 22: (C2: 91−96)
John has been telling why he decided to stay in Finland:

```
1       John:            I decided to stay and I've been working for a while so
2                        [     I thought      ]
3       Satu:           [where do you work]
4       John:           erm: Ammattiopisto the [erm    ]
5 →     Satu                                   [ oh↑↓] ((smiles))
6       John            I used to work for Communicon Mediapaja
```

Example 23: (C2: 1167−1174)
Satu is asking the others what they think about the cartoon scandal of 2005:

```
1       Satu:            the how about the recent cartoon scandal ((looks at the paper))
2       John:           I have no idea what that [is ]
3       Kelly:                                   [no] I don't know [what that is        ]
4       Satu:                                                      [NO YOU DON'T]
5                        WHAT ((looks astonished))
6       John:            no id[ea what that]
7 →     Satu:                 [   OH:.   ] ((puts her hand dramatically to her forehead))
8       John:           I don't watch the news I'm I'm [this is really but    ]
```

In Example 21, Satu's *oh* on line 7 is like a sigh which is nearly inaudible and followed by moderate smiling. The impression one gets is that the information Kelly has provided on her job is only somewhat surprising to Satu. In Example 22, in turn, Satu's *oh* on line 5 which is produced with a rising-falling intonation and is followed by wide smiling shows clearly a greater degree of surprise than its counterpart in Example 21 does. The final example, on the other hand, shows the most extreme overlapping use of *oh* indicating surprise that was found in the data. The fact that John and Kelly have not even heard about the cartoon scandal seems to be so striking to Satu that she can hardly believe it. This can be seen by looking at how she produces her *OH:* on line 7: with increased volume, high pitch and extension.

Furthermore, the fact that she even puts her hand dramatically to her forehead when saying *OH:* does not leave much space for speculation.

When the Finnish and British uses of overlapping newsmarkers were compared, it was discovered that the Finns produced overlaps of this kind clearly more often than the British did, as was indicated in section 5.1 already (see Table 2). In addition, at least one clear qualitative difference was detected: The British participants produced newsmarkers only in combination with other structures, as can be seen in Examples 18, 19 and 20. The Finnish uses, in turn, consisted of both freestanding newsmarkers and newsmakers with additional structures. Newsmarkers standing alone formed, however, a slight majority of the Finnish instances. The British way to produce newsmarkers in overlap seems to support previous research results which have indicated that newsmarkers most often occur with additional structures (see e.g. Heritage 1984, Local 1996 and Gardner 2001). The Finnish distribution of freestanding and non-freestanding newsmarkers, on the other hand, is not quite in line with these results.

At this point, it is worth pointing out that the Finnish female Satu produced all Finnish instances of overlapping newsmarkers. It is, therefore, quite probable that the unusual distribution of freestanding and non-freestanding newsmarkers is a result of her idiosyncratic way of producing newsmarkers. Finally, it should be reminded that overlapping newsmarkers were not very common in the data: they occurred only 11 times during the entire conversation. Much caution is needed, therefore, when making any generalisations on the basis of these scarce tokens.

5.2.4 Change-of-activity tokens

Three instances of non-competitive overlap were found in the data that were related to the response token type "change-of-activity tokens". As we learned in section 2.3.4, change-of-activity tokens are brief listener responses, most typically *okay* or *alright*, which lack a clear semantic content but seem to have, however, a specific function in conversations: to imply that the participants should move on to a new topic or action in the conversation (Gardner 2001: 2, 16, 54). In addition, it was suggested that *okay* and *alright* operate in similar ways in this function with the

exception that *okay* marks minor shifts in topic or activity and *alright*, in turn, major shifts (Gardner 2001: 53, 57–58).

Two overlapping *okays* and one *alright* were found in the data. They all seemed to indicate that a shift in the current topic of the conversation should take place after they had been produced. In Example 24, there are actually two overlapping change-of-activity tokens, *okay* on line 3 and *alright* on line 14, that are used for the same purpose in this interactional context:

Example 24: (C2: 202−223)
John is introducing himself and telling about his hobbies:

```
1        John:          yeah I I like to read my comics
2                       I'm [ not one] of these people who=
3 →      Pekka:           [  okay  ]
4        John:          =[      like to (x) them all      ] no
5        Pekka:          [          oh that               ]
6        Pekka:         you're not [so geek] then ((almost inaudible))
7        Kelly:                    [  heh  ]
8        John:          erm: but since I moved here I can't get them of course
9                       it's really [hard [ (x)]
10       Pekka:                    [   yeah  ]
11       Satu:                       [mm] ((almost inaudible))
12       John:          I actually get these new e-comics since it's the same thing
13                      but people scan them and put them [into a format] agree
14 →     Kelly:                                            [   alright   ]
15       Satu:          [mm ]
16       John:          [and ] I have like twenty thousand now
17                      [all ] all e-comic      ]
18       Kelly:         [EH] HA HA HAH hh]=
19       Satu:          [oh:]
20       Kelly:         =oh my [   god:  ]
21       John:                  [it's crazy] then ((looks at the table))
22       Satu:          what about future are going to [be here] or
```

Before the extract starts, John has been telling quite a few things about his hobby to collect and read comics. Pekka's *okay* on line 3 which overlaps with John's still unfinished turn seems to imply that Pekka would like John to move on in the conversation and talk about something else. What happens is that John actually shifts the focus of his talk from the reading experience of comics to their availability. The shift takes place on line 8 where he says *erm: but since I moved here I can't get them of course*. The minor shift in topic is apparently not enough for the others since a few lines below, on line 14 to be specific, Kelly utters *alright,* which is normally

considered to mark major topical shifts, in the middle of John's turn. John as well as Satu seem to interpret *alright* as a request for a major topical shift since John finishes his turn soon after Kelly's *alright* and Satu, in turn, takes up a brand new topic by asking John about his future plans on line 22. All in all, Example 24 supports Turner and Gardner's (see Gardner 2001: 55−56) suggestion that *okay* indicates minor and *alright* bigger topical shifts.

In Example 25, the change-of-activity token *okay* is used in a slightly different way from that of Example 24. Before the extract starts, the participants have been talking for a while about terrorist attacks and how people are afraid of them:

Example 25: (C2: 1242−1262)
The participants are talking about the fear of terrorism:

```
1        John:              I just hate that ever since September the eleventh
2        Satu:              mm ((moves her hands on the table))
3        John:              it's this fear of another terrorist [attack [constantly]
4 →      Satu:                                                [    yes  okay     ]
5        Pekka:                                                     [   yeah   ]
6        Kelly:             mm
7        John:              there were terror attacks before this I mean for god's sake
8                           in England we've been living with IRA for how long now
9        Kelly:             $uh$
10       John:              and [yet we scream]=
11       Kelly:                 [   (x) yeah     ]
12       John:              =and jump every single time someone says you know takes the
13                          mi- takes the (mic) $out an Irish person$
14       Satu:              mm
15       John:              (x) makes fun of an Irish person you know something like
16                          that (0.6) but ever since September the eleventh now it's like if
17                          you say anything that could be interpreted [as    ]
18       Satu:                                                         [yeah] ((nods))
19       John:              as some kind of like religious blaspheme all of a sudden there's
20                          gonna be a Jihad and you know
21                          [on your] head and something like that
```

On line 3, John repeats nearly in identical words what he has said just a moment ago about people being constantly afraid of terrorist attacks. Satu replies to this immediately with an *okay* which is preceded by the acknowledgement token *yes*. By doing so, she obviously wants to indicate that she has noticed John repeating himself and that a new direction should be taken in the conversation. John does not seem to trouble much about Satu's overlapping *yes okay* and goes on talking about the fear of terrorist attacks. However, he moves the focus of his talk momentarily to the fear of

IRA attacks in England and on line 16 comes back to the consequences of September 11th. In this example, it remains a bit unclear whether John actually ignores Satu's *okay* or whether Satu's utterance gives cause to a minor topical shift. Nevertheless, a bigger topical shift takes place not until a few lines after the end of the extract and it is initiated by Satu who in the first place obviously wanted to change the topic of the conversation.

To conclude, since only three instances of the change-of-activity type of overlap occurred in the conversation, it is practically impossible to compare the Finnish and British uses of overlapping change-of-activity tokens to each other or to make any generalisations concerning their characteristics. What can be said on the basis of the three instances is that both the Finnish and British speakers of English produced overlapping change-of-activity tokens to indicate a willingness to move on in the conversation and that their occurrence did not seem to cause any competition for turn-space.

5.2.5 Assessments

The four preceding sections have shown how different kinds of response tokens were used non-competitively in overlap in the conversation. In this section, it will be demonstrated that assessments which are listener responses rather similar to response tokens were also found to occur non-competitively in overlap.

As section 2.3.5 indicated, recipients use assessments to comment on and assess what the prior or current speaker has said in his/her turn (Goodwin 1986: 210). What differentiates assessments from response tokens is that they do not, like most response tokens, contribute to the management of turn-taking and treat the ongoing turn as preliminary to something else (Gardner 2001: 6). In addition, we learned earlier that assessments can be many kinds of lexical utterances, for instance *Oh wow*, *Beautiful* and *That's bad*, but also mere sounds with an appropriate intonation contour, such as *Ah:::*, or physical gestures. Furthermore, it was suggested that assessments are most often used in the middle of extended turns and that they normally come to completion before the current speaker begins a new turn-constructional unit. (Goodwin 1986: 209, 214–215.)

The analysis of the data revealed that, during the conversation, the participants produced overlapping assessments 20 times altogether. 11 of these instances were uttered by the Finnish and 9 by the British speakers of English. However, it is worth pointing out that 9 of the 11 Finnish instances were produced by the Finnish female Satu. Her influence on the overall distribution of overlapping assessments should, therefore, be kept in mind when evaluating the representativeness of the findings that will be presented in this section.

An old aphorism "It's not what you say but how you say it" seems to apply perfectly to assessments since it was discovered that very different kinds of utterances were able to function as assessments in overlap. The following Examples 26, 27, 18, 28 and 29 illustrate different kinds of overlapping assessments, all of which have in common that they evaluate what the speaker holding the floor has just said. What makes these instances as well as all other instances found in the data non-competitive with respect to turn-taking is, firstly, that they are reasonably brief, which was also the case with response tokens, and overlap is, therefore, resolved rather quickly. Secondly, they are uttered in such a way that the speaker holding the floor does not feel his/her speakership threatened. The absence of the prosodic combination "high pitch and increased loudness" appears to be a crucial factor contributing to this outcome (see French and Local 1983: 21–28).

Let us now look at the different kinds of assessments that were found in the data more carefully. As was noted earlier, the overlapping assessments found proved to differ in the terms of the expression type that they represented. In Example 26, we find a mere sound *oh:* which is produced with a special kind of tone of voice to indicate that John has found Kelly's words cute or adorable. It should be noted here that *oh* can be used in various functions, for example as a newsmarker, but in this context it is clearly an assessment since it is uttered with an assessing tone of voice.

Example 26: (C2: 721−724)
Kelly is telling the others how her drama students are doing:

```
1      Kelly:              and everybody's fine apparently and doing well and (x) that
2                          hello [e heh hh]
3 →    John:                    [  oh:   ] (("isn't that nice" kind of tone of voice))
4      Kelly:              there's like **AH:** HAH so I wanna get back
```

In Example 27, in turn, the word *yeah,* which normally functions as an acknowledgement token, is used as an assessment. In this example, Kelly's overlapping *yeah* on line 5 is like a whisper which is produced in an enthusiastic and assessing tone of voice. Furthermore, it is accompanied by victorious hand gestures. Kelly's *yeah* obviously refers to the word *Kortepohja* which is one the residential areas of Jyväskylä that John has just pointed out to be particularly good for going to parties. The impression one gets is that Kelly wants to indicate that she lives in Kortepohja and that this residential area is a great place to live in for a student like her. This example shows that practically any word can function as an assessment when it is produced in an assessing tone of voice and especially when assessing bodily gestures are related to its occurrence.

Example 27: (C2: 56−62)
The participants are talking about the different residential areas of Jyväskylä:

```
1      John:           where are you living here in Jyväskylä
2      Satu:           in Keltinmäki back there long way
3      John:           the thing if you wanna get to the parties you have to live in places
4                      like erm Kortepohja [or Ristonmaa]
5 →    Kelly:                              [  *yeah*   ] ((raises her hands victoriously))
6      John:           somewhere
7      Kelly:          e [heh heh]
```

The assessment found in Example 18, which was introduced in section 5.2.3 already, is a combination of the newsmarker *oh* and the adjective *great*. In this example, the overlapping utterance *oh great* on line 4 assesses what Pekka has told about his hobbies. In Kelly's view, the information that Pekka has given seems to be newsworthy or new, which is indicated by the newsmarker *oh*, and 'great' as well. The analysis of the conversation also revealed that the newsmarker *oh* preceded not only freestanding adjectives, which is the case in Example 18, but also lengthier utterances doing evaluative work, for instance complete sentences.

Example 18: (C2: 337−344)
Pekka is telling the others about his hobbies:

```
1       Pekka:              [and but I listen to lot of  ] music and I play in two bans I
2       Kelly:              [e heh didn't bother $(x)$]
3       Pekka:              [   sing   ]
4 →     Kelly               [oh great]
5       Pekka:              and I
6       John:               cool
7       Pekka:              sing heh I also play clarinet and base guitar
8                           and um and I have an acoustic guitar
```

Examples 28 and 29, in turn, exemplify overlapping assessments which were a little bit longer than those in Examples 26, 27 and 18 and which were more or less complete sentences. In Example 28, there are actually two such instances: on lines 3 and 5. Both Satu's *we- yeah yeah it's (x)*, which begins with a partial production of the particle *well*, and Pekka's *yeah that's true (x) yeah* could be called second assessments since they have the same referent as the first assessment which is provided by the current speaker John − the atmosphere of a local night club (see Pomerantz 1984: 59−64). Satu and Pekka's respective overlapping assessments seem to indicate that they strongly agree with John's initial evaluation on the night club. This is achieved, for instance, with a repetitive use of the acknowledgement token *yeah* and with a supporting tone of voice. All in all, the acknowledgement token *yeah* proved to be common in overlapping utterances doing evaluative work, which was the case with the newsmarker *oh*, too.

Example 28: (C2: 264−271)
John is telling the others about his experiences in local night clubs:

```
1       John:               and it was it felt like you were going to a meat market
2                           [the way people were going there]=
3 →     Satu:               [   we- yeah yeah it's (x)          ] ((strongly supporting tone of voice))
4       John:               =[it really did          ]
5 →     Pekka:               [**yeah that's true (x)**] yeah
6       Kelly:              yeah
7       John:               but Kharma I think because it's all for the international
8                           exchange students
```

Last, Example 29 shows an overlapping assessment which is a combination of a comparison structure and laughter. Kelly's *(x) better than mine eh heh* on line 3 which is produced in a soft tone of voice appears to be a second assessment similarly to the assessments of the previous example. It differs, however, slightly from those

instances. At the beginning of this example, Pekka asks John about his Finnish skills. On line 2, John initiates an evaluation of his language skills but, before he manages to finish his sentence, Kelly provides a humorous assessment of the Finnish skills of John – that John's Finnish is certainly better than hers. Consequently, Kelly produces a second assessment before John has even finished the first one. What is noteworthy in this example is that Kelly's assessment of John's language skills is by no means turn-competitive even though the overlap is lengthy. The soft tone of voice in which the overlapping assessment is produced and its supporting content are, no doubt, involved in making the overlap non-competitive with respect to turn-taking.

Example 29: (C2: 98−117)
John has just been introducing himself to the others:

```
1       Pekka:              first question how's you Finnish
2       John:               er eh I can [understand Finnish not too bad] but it's really
3 →     Kelly:                          [ ¤(x) better than mine eh heh¤ ]
4       John:               hard to speak it
5                           it's [just  ] no offence but just $a really awful language for an=
6       Pekka:                   [yeah]
7       John:               =[ English speaker$]
```

As was suggested earlier, the overlapping assessments found in the data were generally rather brief. However, the examples presented in this section have shown that the length of overlapping assessments varied greatly. This can be seen, for instance, by comparing Example 26, where the assessment is a mere sound *oh:*, to the second instance of Example 28, *yeah that's true (x) yeah*, which is a complete sentence. A close analysis of all overlapping assessments revealed that instances of this kind of overlap which were longer than one word or sound were clearly more common in the data than overlapping assessments which consisted of one word or sound only.

Furthermore, the Finns and the British were found to prefer assessments of different length: the Finnish participants produced assessments which were longer than one word or sound proportionally clearly more often than the British participants did. To put it differently, the Finns seemed to prefer longer assessments. This can be noticed, for example, by looking at Examples 26, 27 and 28: In Example 26, John's assessment *oh:* consists of one sound and Kelly's *yeah* in the following example is a single word. Satu's *we- yeah yeah it's (x)* and Pekka's *yeah that's true (x) yeah* in

Example 28, on the other hand, are much longer assessments consisting of several words.

When looking at the places where overlapping assessments occurred, it was detected that a vast majority of instances was located in the middle of turn-constructional units of the current speaker. In other words, assessments were produced before the current speaker could be projected to start a new TCU. This can be seen clearly, for instance, in Example 29 where Kelly says *(x) better than mine eh heh* at a place where John has just started to produce the TCU *I can understand Finnish not too bad*. As for the location overlapping assessments, the results of the present study are, consequently, practically identical to those of Goodwin (1986: 209).

In addition, analysing the data revealed that the prosodic features of overlapping assessments were more varied than those of overlapping acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers and change-of-activity tokens. The variation concerned tone of voice in particular. As opposed to the four response token types which only infrequently were produced with a clearly non-standard tone of voice (e.g. soft voice), assessments very often involved a special kind of tone of voice, for instance a supporting, sympathetic, criticising, whispering or sighing tone of voice. The fact that assessments are able to do evaluative work in the first place appears to rely, therefore, to a great extent on their prosodic richness.

To sum up, this section has shown that not only various lexical constructions but also sounds were able to function as overlapping assessments in the data, which is an observation supported by Goodwin's (1986: 214–215), too. Furthermore, it was pointed out that overlapping assessments differed in length and occurred most often in the middle of TCUs. What is more, their prosodic features seemed to be exceptionally varied. As for the Finnish and British participants of the conversation, the Finns were found produce more frequent and longer overlapping assessments than the British. Otherwise, they appeared to use overlapping assessments in similar ways.

5.2.6 Laughter

Similarly to response tokens and assessments, laughter was also found to occur non-competitively in overlap showing that its producer was listening carefully to what the current speaker was saying and orienting to be primarily a recipient at that point of the conversation. In other words, overlapping laughter functioned as a kind of listener response. 30 instances of this kind of laughter were discovered in the data.

As was suggested in section 2.3.6, previous research has indicated laughter to be a complex interactional phenomenon that may be used to express humour or amusement but also a variety of other things, such as intimacy or the delicateness of the topic being discussed (Jefferson 1984b, 1985; Jefferson et al. 1987; Haakana 1999). It was also pointed out that speakers are often able to control the production of laughter and can use it, therefore, as an interactional resource (Jefferson 1985: 33–34; Haakana 1999: 23). Furthermore, previous research has discovered that there are at least two main types of laughter: invited and volunteered laughter. Invited laughter comes into being when one speaker invites another speaker to laugh by laughing him-/herself and volunteered laughter occurs, in turn, without an invitation from a prior speaker. (Jefferson 1979: 80–82.) As to overlap, many scholarly papers have shown that laughter occurs regularly in overlap without causing any interactional problems (see e.g. Glenn 1989 and Ford and Thompson 1996: 160–161).

In the present study, the two main types of laughter introduced by Jefferson (1979: 80–82) were found to occur in overlap. Instances of invited laughter occurred 13 times and instances of volunteered laughter, in turn, 14 times in the data. In addition, there were three instances of overlapping laughter in the conversation that had characteristics of both invited and volunteered laughter. Despite the fact that invited and volunteered laughter occurred equally often in overlap in the conversation and that the Finnish and British speakers of English produced overlapping laughter equally many times (see Table 2), there were, nevertheless, clear differences in the types of laughter that the Finns and the British favoured: The Finns produced invited overlapping laughter 10 times and the British only 3. With instances of volunteered overlapping laughter, the situation was the opposite since the British speakers of English produced 10 instances and the Finnish only 4. In this case, the difference

between the Finnish and the British participants could not be adequately explained with idiosyncratic differences either.

Let us now discuss both these types of overlapping laughter individually and introduce some concrete examples found in the data. As was suggested above, invited laughter came into being in situations where the prior speaker produced laughter him-/herself, either laughed as such or produced an utterance laughingly (see Examples 31 and 32) and, by doing so, invited another speaker to laugh, too. It seemed that the prior speaker in a way invited one or more of his/her interlocutors to enter his/her turn-space in order to show solidarity or to support his/her undertaking. It was clear, nevertheless, that the entry to the prior speaker's turn-space was only temporary and a real speaker transition did not in most cases take place. It is precisely because of this invitation to speak simultaneously that overlaps of this kind are non-competitive with respect to turn-taking: the prior speaker inviting another speaker to laugh with him/her by laughing him-/herself cannot possibly consider the resulting overlap problematic since s/he him-/herself urged the other speaker to overlap in the first place.

It should be noted here that invited laughter bears actually great resemblance to another type of non-competitive overlapping talk that will be introduced later on in this chapter, that is, conditional-access-to-the-turn overlap. What these types of non-competitive overlap have in common is that they both came into being in situations where the prior speaker invited other speakers to further his/her undertaking in some way. Looking at the data also revealed that instances of invited laughter started in most cases almost immediately after the invitation had been provided. This obviously resulted from an overall tendency to prefer laughing at the same time rather than serially one after another, which Glenn (1989) considers to be an essential characteristic of laughter.

In the following, Examples 30, 31 and 32 illustrate invited overlapping laughter. In Example 30, Pekka is telling his interlocutors about his musical hobbies: first about the instruments that plays and then about the fact that he likes the Beatles. Invited laughter occurs in this example as a result of a conversational sidetrack that John initiates when Pekka has just finished telling about his instruments. What happens is

that John introduced a humorous name for acoustic guitar – *a happy guitar* − and laughs after that. By laughing himself, John apparently invites the others to laugh, too. Satu accepts this invitation almost immediately and produces her laughter *eheh* in overlap with that of John's. The laughter of these two speakers is produced in a similar tone of voice, which gives one the impression that Satu wants to support John's undertaking and show solidarity towards him.

Example 30: (C2: 341−350)
Pekka is telling about his hobbies:

```
1       Pekka:          and I
2       John:           cool
3       Pekka:          sing heh I also play clarinet and base guitar
4                       and um and I have an acoustic guitar
5       John:           a happy guitar hh[hhhh]
6 →     Satu:                          [eheh] ((smiles))
7       Kelly:          you have one [ I'm so coming to your place hh e heh  hho]
8       John:                        [yeah help yourself [I can borrow you if you want]
9       Pekka:                                           [    and I'm a I'm a huge    ]
10                      huge Beatles [fa- of the the Beatle of the band of the Beatles]
```

Example 31 introduces a piece of conversation where Kelly is telling about the fear of discrimination at schools. In this example, a same kind of chain of events takes place as in the previous example: John invites the others to laugh and Satu accepts the invitation and laughs in a similar tone of voice in which John produced his invitation. This time, John's invitation is not, however, mere laughter but two acknowledgement tokens that are produced laughingly. What is more, the reason for John uttering his *$yeah yeah$* in the first place is that he is acknowledging and assessing Kelly's extended turn which is not yet complete. John *$yeah yeah$* is, therefore, an instance of volunteered laughter indicating acknowledging and amusement but it seems to function at the same time as an invitation to laugh – at least to Satu.

Example 31: (C2: 1734−1743)
The participants have been talking about the fear of discrimination:

```
1       Kelly:          =[yeah] if you've gotta be politically correct [everything]=
2       John:                                                         [    yes   ]
3       Kelly:          =you do and say no you can't even say (0.7) blackboard (0.5)
4                       ((points at the blackboard in the room)) or
5                       white[board it's like [you  ]  have to say] ((talks with her hands))
6       John:                [   $yeah   [yeah$]
```

```
7 →    Satu:                                      [ e heh]      yes    ]
8                         (0.8)
9      Kelly:            [er:   ] chalkboard=
```

In Example 32, in turn, Satu is the one who invites the others to laugh when telling about her social life. On line 2, she uses the concept *party boy* when referring to a person who might organise a party and finds this phrase obviously amusing since she produces the rest of her sentence laughingly. Unlike in Examples 30 and 31, all participants start laughing after Satu has produced the first laugh particle. The reason for this seems to be that what Satu said in her turn was truly funny and all of them could, therefore, accept her invitation to laugh. This particular instance exemplifies also clearly the general observation that invited laughter began in most cases almost immediately after the invitation. In this example, one word appears to be enough for the recipients to recognise the laughter onset since they all initiate their laughter simultaneously after the laughing production of the word *for*.

Example 32: (C2: 33−40)
Satu is telling about her social life:

```
1      Satu:            drink and smoke eh mm well I like dancing I just *asked* Pekka
2                       wh-  when he will be (1.2) a party boy $for [me and$       ]
3 →    John:                                                      [heh heh heh   ]
4 →    Kelly:                                                     [e heh heh heh]
5 →    Pekka:                                                     [   e heh       ]=
6                       =organise a party
7      Satu:            $yeah$ and
8      Pekka:           for friends yeah
```

The following Examples 33 and 34 exemplify volunteered overlapping laughter. In these two examples as well as in all other instances of volunteered overlapping laughter found in the data, it can be seen that they are not preceded by any invitation to laugh and are produced consciously in overlap with the ongoing turn. Their purpose seems to be to provide some kind of evaluation on the contents of the ongoing turn, a function that is normally related to assessments (see also Haakana 1999: 279). The specific meaning of each instance of volunteered overlapping laughter could be determined, however, only by looking at closely how laughter was produced and in what kind of conversational context in occurred. In the instances found, laughter was mainly used to express amusement or surprise towards the contents of the ongoing turn.

It is worth noting that, unlike in instances of invited laughter where the tone of the invitation to laugh was predominantly adapted, in instances of volunteered laughter the tone of the laughter was not predetermined. To put it differently, by producing volunteered laughter, the recipients were able to express their view on the contents of the ongoing turn perhaps in a freer way than by producing invited laughter. In the instances found, the tone of volunteered laughter was, nevertheless, warm and co-operative and no real critique was expressed with the help of laughter.

As was indicated earlier, volunteered laughter was found to do same kind of work that response tokens and assessments do in overlap: to show that a conversationalist considers him-/herself a recipient and not a turn-holder at that point of the conversation. It is obviously this factor that made speakers produce their laughter in a way that did not challenge the ongoing turn. They seemed to avoid, for instance, the prosodic combination "high pitch and increased loudness", which French and Local (1983: 21–28) regard as a marker of turn-competitive incomings, and to keep their overlapping laughter relatively short.

Let us now have a look at how volunteered overlapping laughter operates in Examples 33 and 34. In Example 33, Pekka is telling the others how his mother got upset with him because he had not watched the news and did not know about the cartoon scandal of 2005. When Pekka is still in the middle of explaining the incident and starting to quote his mother, John produces a brief laughter *e heh* on line 7 in overlap with Pekka's turn. The way in which John utters his *e heh* reveals that he apparently finds the behaviour of Pekka's mother hard to believe. After providing this brief assessment on the contents of Pekka's turn so far, John lets him continue the explanation in the clear.

Example 33: (C2: 1395−1403)
The participants have just been talking about the power of the media:

```
1     Pekka:             my mum called (0.8) and she asked have you watched the
2                        news no ((indicates answering the question with his gestures))
3     John:              m[m  ]
4     Pekka:              [and] a she told me about this [cartoon scandal]=
5     Satu:                                             [   about (x)   ]
6     Pekka:             =and then she started yelling almost yelling [>why]=
```

```
7 →   John:                                              [e heh ]
8     Pekka:        =haven't you watched the news because you should watch
9                   the news [there is there is there's a very big thing<]
```

In Example 34, in turn, John is telling his interlocutors how much one should be
earning annually before one has to start paying his/her study loan back in the UK. He
provides his explanation in a rather vivid way moving his hands and body and, as a
result, Satu laughs cheerfully in overlap with John's extended turn on line 8. By
doing so, Satu obviously wants to indicate that she finds John's explanation and the
way he presents it, in particular, very amusing. Satu's entry into the current speaker's
turn-space is limited, however, to laughter only and John continues his turn after the
overlapping laugher as if nothing had happened.

Example 34: (C2: 1588−1599)
John has been telling the others how one can possibly avoid paying his/her study loan back
in England:

```
1     John:        and at the moment I think you have to be earning twenty
2                  thousand a year (0.6) to before you
3                  sta[rt paying back                 ]
4     Kelly:          [you think thinking of lowering it] will lower it [ to fif]teen
5     John:                                                             [ well-]
6                  where I was I was originally fifteen but how many jobs do you
7                  know pay twenty thousand [POUND a year] ((moves his hands and body vividly))
8 →   Satu:                                [hh he he he heh]
9     John:        not just euros but twenty thousand pound [a year]
10    Satu:                                                  [ huh? ] ((smiles))
11    John:        directly from education (0.5) I mean directly out of (0.6)
12                 [university level]
```

As was suggested at the beginning of this section, there were some instances of
overlapping laughter in the data that seemed to have characteristics of both invited
and volunteered laughter. Two instances of this kind will be introduced at the end of
this section. In Example 35, John is telling his interlocutors about a female Muslim
friend of his whose parents do not like her spending time with him:

Example 35: (C2: 1078−1092)
John is telling about a female friend of his who is a Muslim:

```
1     John:        well she lies she has to lie whenever she comes to visit me
2                  she has to say she's visiting a girlfriend because did she
3                  [kn- they] know (0.4) she knows that they they would never=
4     Pekka:       [   (x)   ]
5     John:        =agree with her spending time with me so
```

```
6        Satu:          uh huh
7                       (0.5)
8        Kelly:         [ you   perso]nally=
9        John:          [even though]
10       Kelly:         =$or [(xx)$    ]
11       John:               [NO NO] [just becau- just] because I'm a guy yeah
12 →     Pekka:                            [    e heh    ] ((moderate laughter))
13       Satu:          [mm]
14       Kelly:         [mm]
15       John:          er a non-Muslim guy (.) [even though] we're just friends
```

On lines 8 and 10, Kelly asks John to clarify the conduct of the parents: is it because of John's personal characteristics or because of something else. The audio or video recordings do not unfortunately reveal how Kelly's question ends on line 10. The recordings reveal, nevertheless, that she produces the end of her question laughingly. John, in turn, replies to Kelly's question before she has even finished it and states firmly that the parents' attitude does not result from his personal characteristics but from the fact that he is a guy and a non-Muslim guy. Right after John has initiated his statement Pekka laughs moderately and looks at John at the same time.

There are at least two possible explanations for why Pekka laughs on line 12. Firstly, it could be that Pekka considers Kelly's laughing production of her utterance as an invitation to laugh and decides to accept this invitation by laughing himself. Secondly, it could be that Pekka finds the prominence with which John replies to Kelly's question amusing and provides, therefore, volunteered laughter indicating amusement. Unfortunately, the interactional context does not show which of these explanations is more likely. One possible way of seeing the situation would be that Pekka's laughter results from both Kelly's laughing production of her utterance and John's excessively defensive turn-beginning.

In Example 36, too, several explanations can be given for why John laughs on line 7. In this extract, John is introducing his view that if one wants to go to parties, one has live in districts where many students live − such as Kortepohja or Ristonmaa:

Example 36: (C2: 58−65)
The participants are talking about the different residential areas of Jyväskylä:

```
1       John:              the thing if you wanna get to the parties you have to live in places
2                          like erm Kortepohja [or Ristonmaa]
3       Kelly:                                [   *yeah*   ] ((raises her hands victoriously))
4       John:              somewhere
5       Kelly:             e [heh heh]
6       Satu:                [ mmm: ][oh:        ] I don't think so I ride my bike
7 →     John:                         [hh hih hih]
8       Satu:              very often if I want to go party it's not [a trouble] to get there
```

When John's turn is reaching a possible completion, Kelly utters the word *yeah* which is almost like a sigh in an enthusiastic and assessing tone of voice and raises her hands victoriously at the same time. An obvious reason for this is that she lives in Kortepohja herself. After John has finished his turn, Kelly produces some laughter which is apparently related to her preceding hand gestures that were somewhat exaggerated. On the following lines, Satu, on the other hand, makes clear reference to John's statement about parties and says that she does not agree with him. Before Satu has even properly started her turn, John laughs in overlap with her on line 7.

One explanation for John's laughter might be that he responds to Kelly's *e heh heh* on line 5 which could be interpreted as an invitation to laugh. Another possible explanation might be the beginning of Satu's turn, *mmm:*, which is produced in a rather sceptical tone of voice indicating that Satu does not agree with John. It is possible, therefore, that John finds Satu's tone of voice humorous and starts laughing as a result. Furthermore, John may have initiated his laughter due to both of these factors, as was suggested with the preceding example, too.

To summarise, the analysis revealed that instances of overlapping laughter found in the data were either invited by a prior speaker or voluntarily produced. In addition, in a few cases, overlapping laughter seemed to have characteristics of both invited and volunteered laughter. Both the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation produced instances of all three types but they seemed to prefer, however, different types: whereas the Finns produced primarily invited overlapping laughter, the British provided mostly instances of volunteered overlapping laughter. The ways in which the Finnish and the British speakers of English produced instances of each type, were, nevertheless, similar.

5.2.7 Conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps

The data revealed 17 instances of non-competitive overlap that seem to represent the category "conditional access to the turn" that Schegloff (2000: 5–6) has introduced. As we learned in section 2.2, conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps can be various kinds of overlaps which have in common that they come into being because the turn-holder yields to another speaker or invites another speaker to further the turn-in-progress and the initial and subsequent speaker end up, therefore, talking simultaneously. In addition, it was suggested that most familiar cases of this kind of overlap are words searches, in which another speaker is invited to find a word that the current speaker cannot retrieve, and collaborative utterance constructions, where the current speaker starts an utterance and hands it to another speaker for completion. (Schegloff ibid.)

It was discovered that the conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps found in the conversation represented both main types that Schegloff (2000: 5–6) has identified − word searches and collaborative utterance constructions. Furthermore, collaborative utterances constructions proved to be of two kinds: initiated either by the primary speaker or by a recipient. Consequently, three kinds of instances belonging to conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps were discovered in the data and each of these types will be discussed and exemplified in this section.

As for the frequency of the different types of conditional-access-to-the-turn overlap, recipient initiated utterance constructions were the most common type of overlap with seven instances. Overlaps related to word searches placed second with six instances and primary speaker initiated utterance constructions, in turn, had the lowest number of instances in the data, four to be specific. When the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation were compared as to how many times they produced instances of the three types of overlap found, it was discovered that the Finns and the British produced recipient initiated utterance constructions equally often.

Comparing how often the Finns and the British overlapped as a result of words searches or due to primary speaker initiated utterance constructions proved to be, however, somewhat problematic. The problems resulted from the fact that these types of overlap came into being first and foremost because the primary speaker predominantly selected the person who was to provide the required word or completion, for instance by looking or pointing at him/her, as Examples 37, 38 and 39 will show. To put it differently, the recipients were more or less obliged to provide the required word or completion, which, in turn, contributed to the occurrence of overlap.

Due to the exceptional character of word searches and primary speaker initiated utterance constructions, it seems actually more fruitful to look at who initiated them than to pinpoint who produced the required utterance in overlap. When analysing how often the Finnish and the British participants started word searches or primary speaker initiated utterance constructions that lead to overlap, it was discovered that the Finns started only word searches and the British, in turn, only primary speaker initiated utterance constructions. The fact that the Finnish participants started all word searches is actually not surprising since they as non-native speakers of English possibly cannot have the same amount of English vocabulary in their repertoire as native speakers do and problems in finding a word are, therefore, very likely to occur.

Other major differences between the Finns and the British were not, however, detected when the ways in which they initiated conditional-access-to-the-turn sequences leading to overlap or produced the actual overlaps were looked into. Both groups seemed to perceive the nature of conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps in the same way: when the required word or completion had been provided, the floor was given immediately back to the primary speaker and no contest for speakership arose.

Let us now look at the three types of conditional-access-to-the-turn overlap separately with the help of authentic examples from the data. Example 37 provides several instances of words searches; the following Examples 38 and 39, in turn, instances of primary speaker initiated utterance constructions, which are actually

quite similar to word searches, and, finally, Examples 40 and 41 introduce instances of recipient initiated utterance constructions.

Example 37: (C2: 1188−1205)
Kelly and John have asked Satu to explain what the cartoon scandal of 2005 was all about:

```
1         Satu:          so it was about (0.9) these er: what count[ry ] ((turns to Pekka))
2 →       Pekka:                                                   [Da]nish Denmark
3         Satu:          Danish er magazine that publishes erm (1.2) some
4         Pekka:         some pictures of er erm
5         Satu:          Mu- Mohamed
6         Pekka:         M- [M- Mohamed yeah] ((Satu and Pekka gaze each other))
7 →       Satu:             [ Mohamed yeah   ] [Mohamed]
8         John:                              [   er:     ]
9         Satu:          and: it was like a what are they called the ((turns to Pekka))
10                       [it's like funny pictures]
11 →      Pekka:         [    er: caricature        ]
12        Satu:          [yes it er    ]
13 →      John:          [caricatures]
14        Satu:          [  yes:   ]
15        Pekka:         [pictures ]
16        Kelly:         [oh: okay] so
17        Satu:          and the Islamic people were like **OH OH NO** and everyone
18                       ((waves her hands dramatically))
```

Analysing the data revealed that in word searches, the primary speaker invited one or more of his interlocutors to enter his/her turn-space temporarily in order to find a correct word or a correct pronunciation of a word. As a result, simultaneous speech often occurred. In Example 37, there are actually four overlaps that seem to result from word searches. Before the extract starts, Kelly and John have asked Satu to tell them about the cartoon scandal of 2005 since they had not heard about it before. The first word search starts on line 1 where Satu cannot remember the name of a country in English. Satu turns to Pekka who has heard about the cartoon scandal and, by doing so, invites him to help her in searching the correct word. Pekka responds before Satu has even finished her sentence and provides the correct country name in overlap on line 2. After that, Pekka lets Satu continue her explanation.

A new word search leading to overlap occurs, however, only a few lines after when Satu and Pekka try to figure out how to say the name of an Islamic prophet in English. In this case, it is not quite clear which one of them actually initiates the word search but overlap occurs, in any case, when Satu and Pekka together try to

find the correct way to pronounce *Mohamed*. A strong indicator of this collaborative word search is that Satu and Pekka look at each other when struggling with the word.

Another word search follows right after this as Satu cannot remember what "funny pictures" are called in English. When trying to figure out the word, Satu turns again to Pekka who interprets this as an invitation to participate in searching the correct word and produces the English word *caricature* on line 11 in overlap with Satu's still unfinished turn. John decides to take part in the word search, too, even though Satu has not gesturally invited him to do so and says *caricatures* in overlap with Satu's turn on line 13. The reason for this seems to be that he is not quite satisfied with the way Pekka pronounced *caricature* and provides, therefore, a better pronunciation of the word.

The primary speaker initiated utterance constructions found in the data were actually rather similar to word searches since they both were started by the speaker holding the floor and lead to overlap. The difference between these two classes was, however, that primary speaker initiated utterance constructions were not aimed at finding an individual word or a correct pronunciation of a word but more like an appropriate completion to the primary speaker's undertaking. Following Examples 38 and 39 exemplify primary speaker initiated utterance constructions that were started and performed by the British participants, which was the case with all other instances belonging to this class, too.

In Example 38, Kelly is trying to explain to the others what kind of drama education she has done. In doing so, she uses the concept *B-tag* which she obviously suspects to be an unfamiliar term to her interlocutors since she asks John, Satu and Pekka on lines 3 and 4 whether they know the word. At the same time, Kelly points at them with her index finger. At least John interprets this to be a signal that one of them should explain what *B-tag* is and provides himself an explanation on line 5 in overlap with the end of Kelly's question. John produces his *yeah a national diploma* in a low and quiet voice and gives the floor right back to Kelly, which is a clear sign that he does not compete for speakership but has simply said what has been asked.

Example 38: (C2: 500−508)
Kelly is telling about her education:

1	Kelly:	er I also have er: training in drama [in] (Leonof)
2	Satu:	[mm] ((nods))
3	Kelly:	but I did a B-tag of an I don't know if you guys know
4		[what that is] ((points at the others with her finger))
5 →	John:	[yeah a national diploma]
6	Satu:	e- em ((shakes her head))
7	Kelly:	it's a national diploma it's equivalent [to A-levels]
8	John:	[like erm:]
9		vocational (.) education

The situation of Example 39 is the opposite since Kelly is the one who helps John in furthering his undertaking. In this extract, John is trying to recall the original version of an English nursery rhyme which is currently regarded as racist and, when doing so, he looks at Kelly who is obviously familiar with the rhyme. Kelly considers this to be an invitation to complete the rhyme and provides, therefore, the final words of it on line 3 when John is still talking. As in Example 38, the resulting overlap does not challenge the primary speaker's turn since Kelly lets John continue right after she has said *catch a nigger by its toe*.

Example 39: (C2: 1948−1955)
John is recalling a nursery rhyme which has been changed because of its racist content:

1	John:	>what was it that eeny meeny miny< (0.4) eeny meeny miny
2		moe it used to be [eeny meeny miny yeah]= ((looks at Kelly))
3 →	Kelly:	[catch a nigger by its toe]
4	John:	=$catch a nigger by$ its toe it was like
5	Kelly:	it's catch a baby practice
6	John:	yeah that's the [thing when I was at school]=
7	Kelly:	[(x) don't know]
8	John:	=there was catch a nigger by its toe

The last type of conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps discovered in the data, recipient initiated utterance constructions, differed from the other two types in that a recipient invited him-/herself to further the primary speaker's turn-in-progress by producing a well-fitted projection of how the primary speaker was to finish his/her current TCU. What happened in the instances found was that the primary and the incoming speaker ended up saying almost the same thing in overlap after which the incoming speaker stopped talking and let the primary speaker continue. This kind of chain of events can be seen, for instance, in Examples 40 and 41.

Example 40 shows a piece of conversation where John is telling the others how a female friend of his who is a Muslim dresses when she goes to the local night club Kharma. Before John gets to describing her clothing in more detail on line 8, both Kelly and Satu start projecting what he is about to say and, as a result, John, Kelly and Satu end up talking simultaneously. Kelly actually succeeds rather well in predicting what John was to say, as can be seen on line 9. The audio and video recordings did not unfortunately reveal Satu's exact wording on line 10 but what she says seems to be a continuation of John's turn-in-progress, too. It is also worth noting that John turns to Satu only after she has started talking. In other words, John did not gesturally invite Satu to complete his turn but Satu initiated the completion by her own will. After Kelly and Satu have provided their completions, they let the primary speaker John continue who, in turn, appears to acknowledge the completions that Kelly and Satu have given by saying *yeah* on line 12.

Example 40: (C2: 1063−1074)
The participants have just been talking about local night clubs:

```
1         Satu:           but I- I have never seen a Muslim girl dancing in the disco
2                         (0.8) e- with the clothes like the [he-] ((demonstrates a scarf with her hands))
3         John:                                              [no ] yeah
4                         (0.6)
5         Satu:           never ever and
6                         (1.5)
7         John:           well my friend (0.5) goes to Kharma a lot so she's usually
8                         never she dresses just   [as a normal girl] ((turns to Satu))
9  →      Kelly:          ((slightly increased volume))[as  has been  as][ked] ((nods))
10 →      Satu:                                        [      (xx)      ]
11        Satu:                                                          [ ye]ah
12        John:           ye[ah]
```

In Example 41, which is the final example of this section, Satu is telling her interlocutors about an incident in the street where her mother used the word 'neekeri' which is the Finnish counterpart for the English word 'nigger' without being aware of its current connotation. An overlap resulting from a recipient initiated utterance construction comes here into being at the stage where Satu is describing the intentions of her mother. Pekka seems to project how Satu is to finish her TCU *she didn't meant anything e-* on line 7 and decides, therefore, to complete it. Overlap occurs when Satu finishes the TCU herself and starts a new one right after. The overlap is, however, over very quickly since Pekka produces the completion

accompanied by an acknowledgement token but nothing more. After getting the floor only to herself, Satu acknowledges Pekka's completion by saying *yes* at the end of line 7.

Example 41: (C2: 1851−1862)
Satu is telling about an incident in which her mother used the word 'nigger':

```
1       Satu:           all the words has different kind of meanings in (0.9) in (0.7)
2                       different times (0.5) my mother says oh (0.4) when we walked
3                       in a streets it's like (0.7) eh look neekeri a nigger (0.4) and I
4                       was oh mother ((looks terrified))
5       John:           $yeah$=
6       Satu:           = SHHHH ((puts her hand in front of her mouth))
7                       and er she didn't meant anything e- [bad because] yes
8 →     Pekka:                                              [  bad yeah  ]
9       Kelly:          yeah
10      Satu:           because e- (0.7)
11      Satu:           [   yeah  $yeah$:                                      ]
12      John:           [it's the connotations who work that's the thing yeah]=
```

The previously introduced recipient initiated utterance constructions appear to be identical to what Lerner (1989, 2004a) has called "pre-emptive completions". According to him, pre-emptive completions are syntactically fitted continuations of the current speaker's turn-in-progress that are produced by a recipient to bring the turn-in-progress to completion. He also acknowledges that pre-emptive completions are a systematic source of overlapping speech since they are built to continue an already ongoing turn. Lerner emphasizes, however, that pre-emptive completions are only conditional entry devices to turn-space and not bids for the change of speakership. (Lerner 1989: 173; Lerner 2004a: 227, 241.) Lerner's observations seem to match, therefore, more than well with the ones made in the present study.

To conclude, what seems to make conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps non-competitive with respect to turn-taking, as Schegloff (2000: 5–6) has suggested, is that the interlocutors realise that the current speaker is performing a turn which is not yet complete. Even if the interlocutors may momentarily enter the turn-space of the current speaker, this entry is only conditional since they are either invited or voluntarily willing to further the current speaker's turn-in-progress. In other words, allowing the entry does not mean that the current speaker is ready to yield the floor to his/her interlocutors. Being aware of this, the recipients do not challenge the

current speaker's turn even though word searches and collaborative utterance construction would provide an opportunity for this.

5.2.8 Transitional overlaps

The previously introduced types of overlap, listener response overlaps and conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps, had in common that they were not produced to initiate change of speakership but more or less to acknowledge the current speaker's right to his/her turn and possibly to contribute to the turn-in-progress. The type of overlap presented in this section, transitional overlap, differs considerably from listener response and conditional-access-to-the-turn overlap since instances of transitional overlap came into being in situations where speaker transition took place, that is, when the prior speaker gave the floor to a new one. However, the change of speakership was not competitive, as this section will show.

As we learned in section 2.2, transitional overlaps occur as a by-product of two activities: a recipient starts talking at a possible completion of the ongoing turn while the current speaker decides to continue beyond the possible turn-completion. Moreover, it was pointed out that the possible turn-completion is not so much a specific point but rather a flexible transition place within which speaker transition may occur. (Jefferson 1983: 2–3.)

In addition to the earlier discussed observations, Jefferson (1983, 1986) has also suggested that there are at least four points within the transition place or space at which a new speaker may start talking and where overlap may, therefore, come into being. These points are i) precisely at the possible turn-ending (possible completion onset), ii) at the final sound(s) of the last word of the TCU-in-progress (terminal onset), iii) at the last item (e.g. a word) of the TCU-in-progress (last-item onset) or iv) slightly after the possible turn-ending when a new TCU has already been introduced (unmarked next position onset). In other words, transitional overlaps may come into being at a possible turn-completion or before or after it.

The analysis revealed that there were 54 transitional overlaps in the conversation. A clear majority of them, 33 to be specific, were produced by the British participants

and the remaining 21 by the Finnish participants. What made these overlaps non-competitive with respect to turn-taking was the fact that even though they fundamentally resulted from a recipient's willingness to take the floor from the current speaker, they occurred at places where the ongoing turn had already reached or was just about to reach a possible completion. Consequently, the overlap did not hinder the current speaker's undertaking to a great extent. In addition, the resulting overlaps were rather brief and the prosodic combination "high pitch and increased volume" that French and Local (1983: 21–28) regard as a marker of turn-competitive incomings was absent in the talk of the incoming speakers.

The transitional overlaps found in the data could be divided into three classes on the basis of the place where they came into being: into possible completion overlaps, into final sound overlaps and into last item overlaps. As the names suggest, these three classes are similar to those of Jefferson (1983, 1986) with the exception that instances of non-competitive "unmarked next position" overlap were not discovered in the data. At this point, it is also worth noting that when referring to transitional overlaps that start at the final sound(s) of the possible turn-ending, the term "terminal overlap" will not be used in the present thesis. This is done to avoid confusion since Schegloff (2000: 5), for instance, uses this term in a slightly broader meaning. Instead of terminal overlaps, I will be talking about final sound overlaps in this thesis. In addition to the three classes mentioned above, a handful of instances of transitional overlap related to laughter were discovered in the data. Unfortunately, these instances could not be divided into different classes on the basis of the place where they occurred. They will be discussed, however, at the end of this section.

Final sound overlaps were by far the most common type of transitional overlap in the conversation with 25 instances out of 54. Possible completion overlaps, in turn, were produced 16 times, final item overlaps 8 times and transitional overlaps related to laughter 5 times. The relative distribution of the instances of all four classes was nearly identical among the Finnish and the British participants. In other words, the Finnish and the British speakers of English produced instances of the four kinds of transitional overlap proportionally equally often. All in all, no differences were found in the ways in which the Finns and the British produced transitional overlaps except

for the quantitative one that the British overlapped transitionally clearly more often than the Finns did.

The previously introduced findings conflict slightly with the results of Halmari's (1993: 408, 425–426) study which suggested that Finns often initiate overlapping talk over the last sounds or over the last word of the current speaker's utterance and native speakers of English, in turn, in the middle of the interlocutor's utterance or turn. It is, of course, not without problems to compare the results of these two studies since Halmari looked into telephone conversations and regarded most instances of overlap as interruptive. Nevertheless, Halmari (ibid.) suggests that there are differences in the places where Finnish and native speakers of English normally initiate overlapping talk whereas the data of the present study indicates that − as least with transitional overlaps − no such differences exist.

Let us now discuss each type of transitional overlap individually and look at a few examples from the data. In Examples 1 and 42, the first of which was already introduced at the beginning of this thesis, instances of possible completion overlap can be found. What differentiates possible completion overlaps from final sound and last item overlaps is that this kind of overlaps were not achieved but they came into being because the prior speaker did not finish his/her turn where the incoming speaker expected him/her to. In other words, the fact that a possible completion overlap occurred was more or less an accident that resulted from speaker transition. In Example 1, Kelly obviously expects John to stop talking after he has finished the TCU *but it's used quite well at schools* and starts her own turn at that point. John, however, adds the tag question *isn't it* to his turn and a brief overlap occurs as a result.

Example 1: (C2: 748−752)
John and Kelly are talking about the use of drama in education in the UK:

```
1      John:            [this is not] sort of specifically sort of part of the curriculum
2                       but it's used quite well at schools [isn't it]
3 →    Kelly:                                         [  it's  ] yeah i- it is in
4                       the curriculum but it comes onto English and
5                       tha[t's pretty much] it as role play
```

Example 42, in turn, exemplifies a rather minimal and less visible turn-transition that leads to overlap. Instances of this kind were, however, common in the data. In this extract, Pekka is telling the others about his positive experiences on being in a Swedish bar where smoking was prohibited. Kelly reacts to Pekka's exprerinces by saying *yeah oh* on line 8. Her utterance is a combination of the acknowledgement token *yeah* and of the newsmarker *oh* which seems to indicate acknowledging and surprise. When producing her utterance, Kelly leaves, however, a very minimal pause between the two tokens. Satu wishes to participate in the conversation, too, and obviously wants to start her turn right after Kelly. Satu expects, however, that Kelly produces nothing more than the acknowledgement token *yeah* since Kelly does not utter her *oh* immediately after the acknowledgement token. A short a transitional overlap results, consequently, as Kelly produces the newsmarker *oh* after the minimal pause and Satu starts her turn at the same time.

Example 42: (C2: 639−649)
The participants have been talking about legislation banning smoking in bars:

```
1      Pekka:              =and a (0.7) I was erm (1.2) in the end of last year I was in
2                          Sweden and there it's banned already
3      Kelly:              mm
4      John:               ye[ah    ]
5      Pekka:                [it was] so (0.7) nice to be [in the] bar there
6      Satu:                                             [ mm ]
7      John:               m[m ]
8      Kelly:               [ ye]ah [oh?]
9 →    Satu:                       [you] can breath [oh   ]   ((demonstrates breathing
10     Pekka:                                       [yeah]            with her hand))
```

Examples 43, 44 and 45 illustrate final sound overlaps which were the most common type of transitional overlap in the conversation. In this type of overlap, the occurrence of simultaneous talk was achieved. In other words, the incoming speaker started his/her turn on purpose before the current speaker had finished his/her still incomplete TCU to guarantee that s/he gets the next turn. The resulting overlap was, however, very minimal since it occurred at the final sound(s) of the TCU-in-progress, as can be seen in the following examples.

In Example 43, the participants are talking about different kind of fears. On the first lines, Satu is telling the others about her mother who is afraid of bomb attacks. In the course of Satu's explanation, John realises that she is to finish her turn with the

phrase *for sure* and decides, therefore, to begin his turn at the final sound of this phrase. Pekka and Kelly seem to project the turn-completion as well because they both produce acknowledgement tokens at the very same moment when John enters the floor. Since Satu finishes her turn at the place where John expects her to, the resulting overlap is very short and speaker transition takes place in a smooth way.

Example 43: (C2: 1286−1293)
The participants have been talking about the fear of terrorist attacks:

```
1      Satu:              [   my mot]her didn't want to go to Egypt because
2      John:              uh huh
3      Satu:              she said that somebody will bomb us (0.8) for su[re   ]
4      Pekka:                                                            [mm]
5      Kelly:                                                            [mm]
6 →    John:                                                              [  I ] mean
7                         if you think about the the big drugs fair in the in the nineteen
8                         nineties there was this idea of like these (0.5) drug cartels
```

In Example 44, a similar kind of recognition of the final word of the turn leads to overlap. In this extract, Pekka is comparing the ethnic situation of Jyväskylä and Helsinki. He hesitates, however, a little bit in doing so and John takes the floor temporarily by providing an assessment *oh definitely* to Pekka's turn on line 3. Pekka appears to be, nevertheless, ready to continue his still incomplete turn right away and, having projected how John is to finish his assessment, Pekka starts his self-repair at the final sounds of the word *definitely*. This leads to simultaneous talk that lasts a little bit longer than that in Example 43 but change of speakership is still rather smooth.

Example 44: (C2: 990−995)
The participants have been talking about Muslims living in Finland:

```
1      Pekka:             but there's a big big difference between Jyväskyl- for example
2                         in eh-
3      John:              oh defini[tely    ]
4 →    Pekka:                      [between] Jyväskylä and Helsinki for [instance]
5      Satu:                                                  ((nods))   [   mm   ]
6      John:                                                             [   mm   ]
```

The data revealed that transitional overlaps and final sound overlaps in particular could occur between very short TCUs, for example between two response tokens

only. Example 45 shows two instances of final sound overlap where at least the TCU preceding the overlap is very short:

Example 45: (C2: 456−463)
Pekka has just told that he plays in two bands:

1	John:	[have you ever played in] a: Ilokivi or anywhere
2	Pekka:	er yeah we played (0.8) the the sauna apartment
3	John:	yea[h]
4 →	Pekka:	[Ilo]kivi no not the (0.9) not where where there are ((looks at John))
5	Satu:	a *pub* in the big hall ((demonstrates 'big' with her hands))
6	Pekka:	yea[h]
7 →	John:	[o]kay
8	Pekka:	big ((shows quotation marks with his hands))

In this piece of conversation, it is worth noting that both *yeahs* preceding the overlap are most likely audible to the participants. The video recording reveals that Pekka surely notices John's *yeah* on line 3 since Pekka is looking at him at the very moment. In the second instance, John is not looking at Pekka but sits right next to him, which makes it very probable that he perceives Pekka's *yeah* on line 6. The resulting overlaps on lines 4 and 7 cannot be, therefore, purely accidental. In both cases, the incoming speaker starts talking at the final sound of *yeah* which they obviously expect to be the last and only item in that turn. Instances such as these show that interlocutors monitor very closely what the others are saying. Furthermore, they indicate that final sound overlaps even between very short TCUs enable, for their part, fast and smooth interaction.

Examples 46 and 47 illustrate last item overlaps which were not as common in the data as possible completion and final sound overlaps were. Similarly to final sound overlaps, last item overlaps were achieved but they began even earlier in the TCU-in-progress, namely before the last item which was normally a single word. By starting his/her turn at the last word of the ongoing turn, the incoming speaker showed even more willingness to secure the next turn to him-/herself than could be noticed with final sound overlaps. Of the different types of transitional overlap found in the data, last item overlaps come, therefore, perhaps closest to competitive overlaps even though they are, nonetheless, clearly more non-competitive than competitive with respect to turn-taking.

Example 46 shows a very prototypical case of last item overlap. At the beginning of this example, Satu introduces a new discussion topic by asking her interlocutors what they think about the cartoon scandal of 2005. Both John and Kelly answer rapidly that they do not know what that is, which Satu, in turn, finds very hard to believe. John provides his answer first on line 2 and Kelly follows right after on line 3. Last item overlap comes here into being when Kelly predicts how John is to end his answer and starts, therefore, her own answer simultaneously with the last word of John's turn. The resulting overlap is very short and it causes no competition for turn-space between John and Kelly.

Example 46: (C2: 1167−1171)
Satu is introducing a new discussion topic from the conversation task handout:

```
1       Satu:           the how about the recent cartoon scandal ((looks at the paper))
2       John:           I have no idea what that [is ]
3 →     Kelly:                                   [no] I don't know [what that is        ]
4       Satu:                                                      [NO YOU DON'T]
5                       WHAT ((looks astonished))
```

In Example 47, where the participants are talking about conflicts between Christianity and Islam in Finland, similar kinds of speaker transitions can be observed. In this example, there are, however, three people who resort to last item overlap in order to get the next turn:

Example 47: (C2: 829−840)
Kelly is referring to the conversation task handout:

```
1       Kelly:          but to be honest I- this this thing going on to answer B (0.5)
2                       [the  ]=
3       Pekka:          [yeah]
4       Kelly:          =conflict between Christianity and Islam seen in everyday
5                       life in Finland is not something that I've come across but then again
6                       I've never (x) here for short [time     ]
7 →     Pekka:                                        [I haven't] come across [it either   ]
8 →     John:                                                                 [I've had a]
9 →     Satu:                     ((hesitates)) [          n- no        [     I    ]
10      John:           ironically I actually er: recently started hanging out with a er
11                      a girl erm >a girl called Aida< she's half: Egyptian half
12                      Finnish
```

Pekka and Satu seem to proceed in identical ways in securing the next turn. They both realise that Kelly has just told her view on the conflict between Christianity and Islam in Finland and that she is to finish her turn soon. Pekka and Satu predict that

the utterance *for short time* on line 6 will complete her turn and start, as a result, their own turns in overlap with the last word of Kelly's turn. John, on the other hand, still seems to be thinking about the topic of the conversation when Pekka and Satu take the floor. He is, however, obviously listening to what Pekka in particular is saying since he enters the floor with a cautious voice at a place where Pekka is just about to produce the last item of the TCU *I haven't come across it either*. What is very interesting in this piece of conversation is that there appears to be no competition for speakership even though three people talk simultaneously even twice. This is most likely due to the fact that the participants chose very carefully where and how to enter the floor.

The final type of transitional overlap, overlap related to laughter, is somewhat different from the previously introduced classes of transitional overlap since, in this kind of overlap, speaker transition took place in overlap with the current speaker's laughter and not with normal speech. For this reason, it is difficult if not impossible to say where in the ongoing turn (at the final word or sound) this kind of overlap started. The resulting overlap was, in any case, achieved since the recipient entered the turn-space of the laughing turn-holder before s/he had finished his/her turn. However, this kind of overlaps did not seem to cause any problems in the conversation or result in competition for turn-space.

It appeared that the current turn-holder's laughter gave the recipients an opportunity to secure the next turn for themselves in an easy way without having to worry about problems that may arise when overlapping with normal talk, such as hindering the prior speaker's undertaking or initiating competition for turn-space. This observation is in line with Glenn's (2003: 50–51) suggestion that, in some occasions, laughter may actually function as a turn-taking cue for the next speaker which indicates that the current speaker has reached a possible TRP in his/her utterance[11].

---

[11] Jefferson (1979: 83–87) has also paid attention to speaker transitions that begin when the prior speaker is laughing. In her view, a new speaker enters the floor in overlap with the prior speaker's laughter because s/he has interpreted this laughter as an invitation to laugh and, by proving topical talk related to the prior turn, s/he can decline the invitation to laugh. Jefferson's explanation did not, however, explain adequately the occurrence of transitional laughter overlaps in the data of the present study since the instances provided by Jefferson were slightly different from those of the present study.

The following Examples 48 and 49 exemplify transitional laughter overlaps found in the conversation. In Example 48, John enters the floor on line 6 in overlap with Kelly's turn which consists of laughter only. In Example 49, in turn, Pekka initiates his turn on line 4 at a point where the current speaker Kelly is producing the laughter *hhg e heh* as part of her turn. In both cases, Kelly's laughter seems to in a way invite the recipients to enter the floor. What is more, Kelly shows no willingness to get her turn back after the speaker transition has taken place, which suggests that change of speakership was expected and perhaps even intended. All participants of the conversation produced at least one overlap of this kind. As was mentioned earlier, overlaps related to laughter were, nevertheless, the rarest type of transitional overlap in the data.

Example 48: (C2: 139−145)
John has just told about the difficulty of learning Finnish:

```
1       John:               and so [we still say] kiitos and all this ole hyvä for everything=
2       Pekka:                      [    (x)    ]
3       John:               =it's really funny
4       Satu:               yes
5       Kelly               eh heh [he]
6 →     John:                      [so] er: let's see I'm studying digital culture but I'm
7                           sort of focusing my area on erm digital media and education (.)
```

Example 49: (C2: 944−949)
The participants have been talking about a murder that took place in Sweden:

```
1       Satu:                       [but] it's horrible
2       Pekka:              yeah it's
3       Kelly:              yeah oh hhg e h[eh wow] ((moderate laughter))
4 →     Pekka:                           [do you ] personally know any
5                           Muslims living in Finland ((reads from the paper))
6                           (0.6)
```

To sum up, analysing the data revealed that the conversationalists produced four kinds of transitional overlaps in order to move from recipiency to speakership: possible completion overlaps, final sound overlaps, last items overlaps and overlaps whose occurrence was related to laughter. Of the four types, final sound overlaps proved to be most common in the data. As for the Finnish and British participants of the conversation, it was discovered that the British produced transitional overlaps clearly more often than the Finns. However, the general way in which the Finns and the British overlapped transitionally was similar.

5.2.9 Accidental overlaps

The type of overlap presented in this section formed the second largest type of non-competitive overlap in the data with 120 instances. Whereas the other types of non-competitive overlap that have been introduced in this thesis were achieved, with the exception of transitional possible completion overlaps, accidental overlaps were not produced on purpose. In other words, the aim of the interlocutors was obviously not to speak simultaneously but to produce their utterances in the clear. Due to various reasons they failed, however, in doing so. The resulting overlaps will be called, therefore, accidental overlaps in this thesis.

What made overlaps of this kind non-competitive with respect to turn-taking was the very fact that they were not achieved. For this reason, they could not have been produced to compete for speakership in the first place. As far as I know, this kind of overlaps have not been discussed as such in previous research but their existence has been acknowledged at least indirectly by Jefferson (1983, 1986) who has suggested that some overlaps result from the fact that people are not listening or hearing what the others are saying. In this section, we will see, however, that accidental overlaps may also come into being when people are listening to each other but something unexpected happens.

Initially, it is worth pointing out that comparing the Finnish and British instances of accidental overlaps was very difficult due to the nature of this type of overlap, as was suggested in section 5.1 already. The reason for this is obvious: when two or more people ended up talking at the same time, it was hard to say who was to blame for the overlap especially when none of them had overlapped on purpose. The distribution of instances among the Finnish and British speakers of English presented in Table 2 should be, therefore, treated with some caution. In this table, individual instances of accidental overlap have been divided into Finnish and British instances by evaluating which of the four participants was most likely to initiate the overlap. In some cases, this decision was, however, practically impossible to make, as we will see later on in this section.

The data revealed three kinds of overlaps that could considered accidental. The most common type of accidental overlap in the data with 66 instances was what I will call simultaneous starts. As the name of this class suggests, two or more participants started talking at the same time and overlap occurred as a result. To use Sacks et al.'s (1974) terminology, interlocutors self-selected at the same time. In this kind of instances, it was practically impossible to say who initiated the overlap. A close analysis of the conversation revealed that simultaneous starts occurred in different kinds of interactional contexts and took differing forms, as Examples 50, 51 and 52 will show.

In Example 50, John is explaining the others when people have to start repaying their study loans in the UK. On line 3, he finishes the long TCU that has begun on line 1 already and does not continue right away to a new TCU. Satu and Kelly notice this pause and decide to comment on or respond to John's preceding TCU in the clear before he continues his explanation. What happens is that Satu and Kelly end up producing acknowledgement tokens *mm* and *yeah* at the same time. This particular overlap and many equivalent overlaps seemed fundamentally to result from the fact there were several interlocutors in the conversation. If there had been only two people talking to one another, overlaps of this kind would not have occurred.

Example 50: (C2: 1583−1590)
John is telling the others how he is trying to avoid repaying his study loan:

```
1       John:           your bir- e- e- the cont- the contract that you have with the
2                       government is th- idea that your your (x) grant you a certain
3                       level of living
4 →     Satu:           [ mm]
5 →     Kelly:          [yeah]
6       John:           and at the moment I think you have to be earning twenty
7                       thousand a year (0.6) to before you
8                       sta[rt paying back                    ]
```

In Example 51, in turn, where the participants are talking about the safety of travelling in Islamic countries, there appears to be some uncertainty about who should take the floor after John completes his turn on line 2. John's turn is followed by a 0.7-second silence after which three participants, John himself included, decide to enter the floor. The three participants initiate their turns at the very same moment, which leads to a brief overlap. It seems that overlap comes here into being because

the conversationalists try to avoid lengthy pauses. When such a pause occurs, they rush to fill it in. This observation is in line with Jefferson's (2004: 45) suggestion that lengthy pauses after possible turn-completions provide a routine locus for overlaps. What is also interesting in this extract is that the Finnish female Satu enters the floor after the pause, too. Her behaviour contrasts with earlier findings for instance by Sneck (1987: 60−61) according to which Finnish speakers of English tolerate longer pauses than native speakers do.

Example 51: (C2: 1280−1288)
The participants are talking about possible dangers related to travelling in Islamic countries:

```
1       John:               I mean like my friends went to Egypt for their wedding and
2                           they had no problems [at all]
3       Satu:                                    [yeah]
4                           (0.7)
5 →     John:               [you know]
6 →     Kelly:              [   (xx)   ]
7 →     Satu:               [   my mot]her didn't want to go to Egypt because
8       John:               uh huh
9       Satu:               she said that somebody will bomb us (0.8) for su[re   ]
```

In Example 52, on the other hand, John and Kelly's simultaneous starts on lines 5 and 6 most probably result from the fact that they are together trying to explain to Satu and Pekka what *B-tag*, a term used by Kelly earlier, is and, in doing so, misinterpret each other's intentions to talk. Kelly seems to presume that John is not going to continue his possibly complete turn *like erm: vocational education* and decides to take the floor after Satu's *yeah* on line 4. John, on the other hand, does not anticipate Kelly's move and supplements his turn with the words *sort of thing* after Satu's acknowledgement token. The fact that overlap occurs in this situation appears to be, therefore, purely accidental.

Example 52: (C2: 506−512)
Kelly and John are trying to explain what B-tag is:

```
1       Kelly:              it's a national diploma it's equivalent [to A-levels]
2       John:                                                       [ like erm: ]
3                           vocational (.) education
4       Satu:               yeah
5 →     Kelly:              [yeah they use all] practical so there wasn't so much theory=
6 →     John:               [   sort of thing   ]
7       Kelly:              =within it so what we did was performance based
```

Another type of accidental overlap found in the data was related to short listener responses that were meant to be produced in the clear but occurred, nevertheless, in overlap with the prior speaker's turn. The analysis revealed 41 instances of this kind. The listener responses that accidentally occurred in overlap were acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers, change-of-activity tokens and assessments, the first of these being the most common utterance type. At this point, it is worth noting that the type of overlap presented here differs from those discussed in the sections dealing with acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers, change-of-activity tokens and assessments. The difference to these types of overlap is that instances of accidental listener response overlap were not produced on purpose even though the utterance types involved were the same.

Accidental listener response overlaps came into being in situations where the prior speaker was projected to finish his/her turn or at least to have a brief pause before continuing but where s/he did not do so after all. Not having projected the prior speaker's continuation, the recipient produced his/her response, therefore, in overlap with the prior speaker's turn. This type of overlap bears actually great resemblance to transitional possible completion overlap that was discussed in the previous section. What makes these two types of overlap different is, however, the fact that even though they were both unintentional, accidental listener response overlaps did not primarily result from speaker transition. Listener responses, for instance *yeah*, *mm* and *oh*, are produced by recipients in the first place to indicate that they are listening to what the primary speaker is saying and that the primary speaker may continue if s/he wishes. To put it differently, it was difficult to see listener responses doing speaker transitional work when their primary purpose was to show recipiency. For this reason, transitional possible completion overlaps and accidental listener response overlaps are not discussed under the same heading in this thesis.

As to the ways in which the Finnish and the British participants were involved in producing accidental listener response overlaps, it was noticed that the Finns uttered listener responses leading to accidental overlaps slightly more often than the British did. This difference seems to result, however, from idiosyncratic differences in using listener responses. The Finnish female Satu who in earlier sections was found to produce more overlapping listener responses than the others produced 80 % of the

Finnish accidental listener response overlaps and nearly half of all instances. But, as was suggested earlier in this section, comparing who initiated accidental overlaps in the first place is not straightforward and the comparisons made here should treated, therefore, with some caution.

Let us now have a look at Examples 53, 54 and 55 which show a couple of accidental listener response overlaps that occurred in the conversation. In Example 53, John is telling the others about the current state of British schools. A few lines earlier, John has told that there are big differences between the Finnish and British school systems, and, remembering what John has just said, his interlocutors probably predict that he is soon going talk about the Finnish school system as well:

Example 53: (C2: 1542−1553)
John is comparing the Finnish and British school systems:

```
1       John:             they are under funded (0.5) they don't have [the amount of]
2       Satu:                                          ((nods)) [      mm      ]
3                         yes
4       John:             sort of so the amount of people failing the map p- [passing]
5       Satu:                                                        [ mm   ]
6       John:             (0.4) is sort of balancing up and people in the middle are sort
7 →                       of (0.4) like last: [but in] Finland you've concentrated more=
8 →     Pekka:                         [ yeah]
9 →     Satu:                          [  mm ] ((nods))
10      John:             =on [ edu]cating
11      Satu:                 [yeah]
12      John:             everybo[dy so you have a better standard so]
```

On line 7, John finishes the TCU *people in the middle are sort of like last* which can be projected to be a reasonable ending to the initial part of this explanation. Two prosodic clues point to this direction, too: he uses a falling intonation contour and stretches the last word of the TCU. Pekka and Satu seem to interpret the situation in this way and obviously expect that John is going to have a brief pause before moving on to the Finnish school system. As a result, Pekka and Satu both produce an acknowledgement token right after John's complete TCU − at a place which they expect to be overlap-free. John, however, does not halt for a moment but goes on right away to describing the Finnish school system and ends up, therefore, talking simultaneously with Pekka and Satu.

The situation of Example 54 is quite similar to Example 53. Before the extract starts, John has been telling about himself for a while. In the extract, he has reached a point where he tells about his studies. However, at this point of the conversation, it is clear that he is still in the middle of an extended turn. An accidental overlap comes here into being since Satu and John more or less misinterpret each other's intentions. Satu seems to think that John has completed telling about his studies at the end of line 2 and that he is going to tell about something else after a pause. John actually pauses for a short moment after having finished his sentence and turns to look at Satu. Satu interprets this to be a sign that she should somehow comment on what John has just said before he can continue telling about himself. She produces, therefore, the newsmarker *really* accompanied by nodding. What happens is that John and Satu end up talking at the same time as John, who does not apparently expect Satu's response, provides a more detailed description of his field of study.

Example 54: (C2: 144−148)
John is introducing himself:

```
1       John:                    [  so ] er: let's see I'm studying digital culture but I'm
2                                sort of focusing my area on erm digital media and education (.)
3 →                             [so I'm   ] looking at how media is used and all the=
4 →     Satu:                   [really↑↓] ((nods))
5       John:                   =arguments and concerns of the different things
```

In Example 55, in turn, a turn-completion instead of a pause seems to be awaited. Satu has previously asked John and Kelly about the use of drama in education in England. In the example, John and Kelly are providing the answer. At the end of line 5, Kelly's explanation reaches a possible completion. The fact that she produces her TCU *that's pretty much it as role play* with a clearly falling intonation makes this prediction even stronger. John apparently considers Kelly's turn to have reached a completion since he comments on it by saying *yeah true*, which is a combination of an acknowledgement token and assessment, on line 8. Kelly is not, however, finished with her explanation and starts a new TCU after a minimal pause. As a result, Kelly and John talk for a brief moment simultaneously.

Example 55: (C2: 748−755)
The participants have been talking about the use of drama in education:

```
1      John:                [this is not] sort of specifically sort of part of the curriculum
2      John:                but it's used quite well at schools [isn't it]
3      Kelly:                                        [  it's  ] yeah i- it is in
4                           the curriculum but it comes onto English and
5                           tha[t's pretty much] it as role play
6      John:                   [  yeah yeah    ]
7 →    Kelly:               [but they're trying] get you to use it where everywhere now
8 →    John:                [    yeah true      ]
```

The last and the rarest type of accidental overlap found in the conversation contained instances in which two or more speakers ended up talking at the same time because one of them did not obviously hear or register that someone else had started his/her turn already. This kind of accidental overlap will be called, therefore, inaudible start overlap in this thesis. The data revealed 13 instances of inaudible start overlap. Eight of these were at least ostensibly started by the British participants and five by the Finnish participants. As has been pointed out earlier, these numbers should not be given, however, too much attention due to the unintentional character of accidental overlaps.

Instances belonging to inaudible start overlap were rather similar to the previously introduced simultaneous start overlaps, as Examples 56 and 57 will show. The difference between these two types of accidental overlap was, however, that in inaudible start overlaps, the speakers did not start talking precisely at the same moment but the first speaker began one syllable earlier than the second (and third) one or the speakers started talking even within the same extended sound. Jefferson (1986: 164, 167) has actually given this space between the two (or three) beginning TCUs or turns a special name: "blind spot". In her view, the occurrence of blind spots is related to situations where all conversationalists are simultaneously in the speakership orientation and may not, therefore, necessarily hear bits of talk by their interlocutors.

Example 56 shows two instances of inaudible start overlap. The first of these can be seen on lines 2 and 3 where Satu and Kelly enter the floor after a 0.7-second silence in the conversation. They both obviously want to produce their utterances in the clear and do not anticipate that someone else is going to start speaking at the same time.

When Satu initiates her utterance, Kelly is looking at the table. Not seeing Satu's face, Kelly cannot, therefore, expect that she is about to say something. The audio and video recordings reveal that Satu's turn-initial *w* is most likely audible to her interlocutors but Kelly, who is oriented to producing her own utterance, evidently registers it too late to avoid overlap. In the second instance of inaudible start overlap on lines 8 and 9, the situation is very similar. This time, however, Satu and Kelly have opposite roles. When Kelly starts her *um*, Satu is momentarily looking to another direction and, for this reason, is not able to predict Kelly's starting. As in the previous instance, Satu apparently hears Kelly's *u*-sound too late to postpone her own starting.

Example 56: (C2: 895−905)
The participants have been talking about the murder of a Muslim girl in Sweden:

```
1                                (0.7)
2 →     Satu:            w[e are] quite lucky because we don't have to think things like
3 →     Kelly:             [ hm ] ((looks at the table))
4       Satu:            that (0.7) that if y- if I do like this will my parents go after me
5                        ju- just to oh kill the girl now he's doing so bad things
6                        ((intensifies the quote with her hands))
7       John:            mm
8 →     Kelly:           u[m   ]
9 →     Satu:              [like] happens in Sweden and ((looks away from Kelly))
10                               (1.5)
11      Pekka:           Turkey
```

The inaudible start overlap presented in Example 57, in turn, is a little bit different. In this extract, Pekka is telling what he thinks about cigarette smoke and the others are commenting on what he says. The accidental overlap which is of interest here occurs on lines 6, 7 and 8 where Satu, John and Kelly simultaneously comment on Pekka's previous line. In this case, John and Kelly dot not apparently register that Satu has initiated her comment before them. This may result from two factors: Firstly, the volume with which Satu produces her *yeah* is not very high. Therefore, it is possible that John and Kelly simply do not hear her initiation. Secondly, both John and Kelly are looking at Pekka when Satu enters the floor. The fact that John and Kelly were apparently focusing on what Pekka was to say next may have prevented them, consequently, from registering Satu's turn-initiation. In any case, a brief overlap that none of the three participants involved seemed to initiate on purpose came into being.

Example 57: (C2: 608−617)
The participants are talking about smoking in bars:

```
1      Pekka:              =one of the reasons why I don't go out often is that cigarette
2                          smoke
3      Satu:               mm
4      Pekka:              'cause I ca[n't stand it]
5      Kelly:                        [ YEAH    ]
6 →    Satu:               ye[ah   ]
7 →    John:                 [mm] ((looks at Pekka))
8 →    Kelly:                [like]= ((looks at Pekka))
9                          =[(xx)]
10     Pekka:               [  it  ] it gets to the clothes and [the hair] and
```

As a final point it should be mentioned that even though it was difficult to compare the Finnish and the British speakers of English as to how often and what kind of accidental overlaps they started, it can be said that both the Finns and the British were contributing to the occurrence of all three kinds of accidental overlap, that is, they either "initiated" the overlap or "were overlapped" by the others. This suggests that the general way in which the Finnish and British participants managed turn-taking in the conversation was similar.

5.3 Summary of the findings

Analysing the data revealed that both the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation overlapped most often non-competitively with respect to turn-taking: 72 % of the overlaps found were non-competitive. When looking into the non-competitive overlaps in more detail, nine separate types of overlap were detected whose existence has been acknowledged more or less directly in previous research (see e.g. Jefferson 1984a, Goodwin 1986, Glenn 1989, Halmari 1993, Schegloff 2000 and Gardner 2001).

Six of the nine types of overlap were rather similar in nature and they were given, therefore, the name *listener response overlaps*. These overlaps had in common that they acknowledged the prior speaker's right to his/her turn and, in most cases, provided some kind of evaluation or understanding of what the prior speaker had just said. The remaining three types of non-competitive overlap were not, however, very similar to one another: conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps were produced in

order to complete an utterance or turn in progress; transitional overlaps were related to speaker transition and accidental overlaps occurred, in turn, in places where simultaneous talk was neither intended nor expected.

The analysis revealed that listener response overlaps were by far the most common type of non-competitive overlap constituting 58 % of all instances. As for individual types of non-competitive overlap, achieved acknowledgement token overlaps were clearly the most common type with 40 % of all non-competitive overlaps. Accidental overlaps placed second constituting 27 % of all non-competitive instances. The remaining seven types fell clearly behind. As Table 2 indicated, the sizes of the individual types of non-competitive overlap differed considerably: the largest type, acknowledgement token overlaps, had 180 instances in the data whereas the smallest, change-of-activity token overlaps, had only three.

When comparing the Finnish and the British participants of the conversation to each other as to what kind of non-competitive overlaps they produced and how often, no dramatic differences were found between these two groups. Both the Finns and the British provided instances of all nine types of overlap even though in many types either the Finnish or the British participants produced a considerably larger number of instances than the other group (see Table 2). In a few types, however, clear qualitative differences were found in the ways in which the Finnish and the British speakers of English produced these overlaps. When looking into overlapping laughter, for instance, it was discovered that the Finnish participants clearly preferred invited and the British, in turn, volunteered laughter. In conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps, a distinct difference was also detected: the Finns started all word searches and the British all primary speaker initiated utterance constructions leading to overlap.

Furthermore, it was noticed that, in many cases, the qualitative and quantitative differences found did not necessarily result from the fact that the participants were either Finnish or British but from idiosyncratic differences in using language. The Finnish female Satu, for instance, was found to produce acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmarkers and assessments far more often in overlap than the other three participants, which also had an effect on the overall distribution of instances.

Table 2 indicates, for example, that the Finns overlapped altogether slightly more often than the British did. A closer analysis revealed, however, that this difference could be mainly explained with the fact that Satu produced overlapping listener responses exceptionally often. Nevertheless, all differences between the Finnish and British participants, such as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, could not be explained with idiosyncratic differences.

In the following chapter, some explanations will be given for the differences and similarities found between the Finnish and British participants of the conversation. Furthermore, the results of the present study will be discussed on a more general level and connections to previous research on overlap and on intercultural conversations will be drawn.

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the major findings of the present study and to consider what kind of implications they have. The present chapter is divided into three sections, the first of which is devoted to examining the most important results of the study and their relation to previous research, which was already touched upon in the preceding chapter. In section 6.2, in turn, the reliability and representativeness of these results as well as the way in which the study was conducted will be evaluated. Finally, section 6.3 introduces some questions that the results of the present study have raised and it also provides some suggestions for further research.

6.1 Results

The purpose of the present study was to look into instances of non-competitive overlap but, as a by-product, interesting observations were also made concerning the distribution of non-competitive and competitive overlaps. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, more than 70 % of both the Finnish and British instances of overlap were non-competitive with respect to turn-taking. This finding is in line with the results of Sneck (1987: 47, 65) who discovered that, in his intercultural telephone conversations, non-interruptive simultaneous talk was more common than

interruptive simultaneous talk. One has to keep in mind, however, that it is not without problems to compare the results of these two studies since Sneck (1987) analysed telephone and not face-to-face conversations and his interruptive/non-interruptive overlaps do not correspond directly to our competitive/non-competitive overlaps even though they bear many similarities (see section 2.1 and footnote 10 in section 3.2).

Nevertheless, the results of both the present study and those of Sneck (ibid.) suggest a general trend that most overlaps are not produced to take the floor from the current speaker prematurely but to do something else instead. The nine types of non-competitive overlap that were found in the data shed some light on what that something could be. At this point, it is worth noting that the occurrence of any overlap is related to the local management of turn-taking but at least non-competitive overlaps also seem to have additional functions embedded in them. The nine types of overlap presented in this thesis try to capture some of these additional functions keeping at the same time in mind the close connection of overlaps and turn-taking.

The nine types of overlap found were not very surprising since previous research has referred to their existence, as we have learned earlier: for instance, Gardner (2001) has shown more or less directly that acknowledgement tokens, continuers, newsmakers and change-of-activity tokens may come into being in overlap; overlapping assessments have been discussed by Goodwin (1986) and simultaneous laughter by Glenn (1989, 2003); conditional-access-to-the-turn overlaps have been introduced by Schegloff (2000: 5–6) and, finally, Jefferson (1983, 1986) has identified transitional overlaps and referred, at least indirectly, also to the possibility that some overlaps are accidental. The previously mentioned types of overlap form the majority of overlaps discussed in previous research that could be characterised as non-competitive. The data of the present study appears to provide, therefore, a rather good and comprehensive picture of different kinds of non-competitive overlap found so far.

The different classes of non-competitive overlap that were discovered in the conversation differed greatly in size, which suggests that certain types of non-competitive overlap are more common than others. Two major types of overlap

stepped out from the data: listener response overlaps, which included acknowledgment tokens, continuers, newsmarkers, change-of-activity tokens, assessments and laughter, and accidental overlaps. As was pointed out in the preceding chapter, close to 60 % of all non-competitive overlaps were listener responses. This result finds support in the results of Halmari (1993: 424–426) who discovered that back-channel overlaps which are very similar to listener response overlaps (see footnote 9 in section 3.1) were the most common type of overlap in her data. On the basis of these two studies, it seems, therefore, that a very common function of overlaps is to show listenership and to indicate that the recipient is closely following what the current speaker is saying.

The analysis also revealed that the Finns produced 47 % more overlapping listener responses than the British did. As was suggested earlier, this difference mainly resulted from the fact that the Finnish female Satu uttered certain listener responses exceptionally often in overlap. Interestingly, the results of the Oulu Project provide a possible explanation for her behaviour. As we learned in section 3.1, the project revealed that Finnish speakers of English used more back-channels in intercultural face-to-face conversations than native speakers did (Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski 1988: 113–114). Furthermore, it was suggested that the Finns used back-channels instead of taking proper turns at talk and that the linguistically less competent Finns, in particular, used back-channelling as a kind of compensatory strategy (Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski ibid.). Even though the Oulu Project did not pay special attention to overlapping back-channels (or listener responses), some connections can be drawn between these two studies. It may very well be that the Finnish female produced overlapping listener responses highly frequently to compensate her language skills with which she did not seem very comfortable at least at the beginning of the conversation.

As for accidental overlaps, they constituted the second largest type of non-competitive overlap. It is worth noting, however, that the number of accidental overlaps found in the data might have been a little bit lower if there had been fewer participants in the conversation. Many accidental overlaps – but not all – seemed to result from the fact that there were more than two participants in the conversation. This view is supported for instance by Hakulinen (1998: 50, 53) who suggests that

simultaneous speech occurs in multi-party conversations in particular. For all that, the high frequency of accidental overlaps in the data tells, in my opinion, something general about the character of overlapping talk: even though most overlaps are achieved, many of them are still more or less random (see also Jefferson 1983: 1 and Jefferson 1986: 153).

One of the aims of the present study was to pinpoint differences and similarities in the ways in which the Finns and the British overlapped. In the analysis, more similarities than differences were found: The Finns and the British produced non-competitive overlaps proportionally equally often; both groups uttered overlaps belonging to all nine types of non-competitive overlap and the largest individual types of overlap were also the same among the Finnish and British participants (see Tables 1 and 2). As for differences, the Finns and the British did not produce instances of all nine types of overlap equally often and, within some types, they favoured different kind of instances. To generalise, the similarities found concerned prevailing ways to produce overlaps, that is, their general frequency and types. The differences, in turn, dealt more with the micro level of overlapping, such as the preference of certain subtypes.

By and large, previous studies that have looked into intercultural conversations between Finnish and native speakers of English (e.g. Kärkkäinen and Raudaskoski 1988, Nikula 1996, Sneck 1987 and Halmari 1993) have indicated that there are clear differences in the conversational behaviour of Finnish and native speakers of English. However, the present study suggests that, as for overlap and non-competitive overlap in particular, the differences are not striking and that, generally, Finnish and British speakers of English overlap in similar ways. The slight conflict between the results of the present study and those of previous research can be explained at least partly with the very different kinds phenomena that were examined in these studies (e.g. social competence and modifying expressions vs. overlap).

All in all, the fact that the Finns and the British were found to overlap in similar ways can be seen as an indication of the universal nature of the research object. The mechanisms of turn-taking to which the occurrence of overlap is tightly connected are commonly regarded as universal, that is, they are not considered vary from one

culture to another (see e.g. Hakulinen 1998: 33–34), and the results of the present study give support to this view.

To conclude, the present study does not provide much evidence for the claim that Finnish and native speakers of English would overlap in different ways due to their differing cultural backgrounds, even though some studies have pointed to this direction (see Sneck 1987 and Halmari 1993). It is worth pointing out, of course, that a study like the present one which looked into intercultural data only would hardly be able to confirm a clear connection between the conversational behaviour and the cultural or linguistic background of the participants since no NS-NS conversations in English or in Finnish were used for comparison.

The present study suggests, however, that many minor differences found between the Finnish and British participants, such as the highly frequent use of overlapping listener responses by the Finnish female and the Finnish preference for initiating word searches, may result from idiosyncratic differences in using language and/or from the non-native-like language skills of the Finnish speakers of English. However, further research utilising both inter- and intracultural data is needed to confirm where the minor differences between the Finns and the British really result from.

6.2 Evaluation

The results of the present study provide information on the characteristics of non-competitive overlap in one intercultural conversation between Finnish and British speakers of English. Much caution is needed, therefore, in making generalisations concerning the nature of overlapping talk on the basis of these results only. This does not mean, however, that we could not compare the results of the present study to those of previous research (see e.g. Sneck 1987 and Halmari 1993) or could not say anything general about overlapping talk.

Taking into account the scale and aims of the present study, the results gained can be considered rather reliable. At least two factors point to this direction. Firstly, the results concerning the different types of overlapping talk and the distribution of

overlaps into these types are in line with those of previous research (see Gardner 2001, Goodwin 1986, Glenn 1989, 2003; Schegloff 2000: 5–6; Jefferson 1983, 1986; Sneck 1987: 47, 65 and Halmari 1993: 424–426). This suggests that the results of the present study are not random. Secondly, the data collection method – the use of both video and audio recordings – enabled a very close and detailed analysis of the conversation in which attention was paid both to the verbal and non-verbal activity of the participants. This factor undoubtedly had a positive influence on the reliability of the results gained.

All in all, the use of video recordings proved to be essential in analysing instances of overlapping talk. In several cases, the non-verbal behaviour of the participants which the video recording captured was crucial in deciding whether an incomer's overlapping speech was competitive or not. Furthermore, gestures and gazes revealed by the video recording played also an important role in dividing instances of non-competitive overlap into the nine types. They provided, for instance, information on the recipients' level of involvement which in many cases distinguished acknowledgement tokens from continuers (see section 5.2.2). Moreover, without visual information it would have been laborious if not impossible to associate correct overlaps to their producers and locate the overlaps temporally in situations where all four participants spoke fast at the same time.

The present study has, no doubt, its limitations as well. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the data used restricted the scope of the study. Firstly, looking into an intercultural conversation revealed differences and similarities in the conversational behaviour of the Finnish and British participants but it did not show adequately, however, where the differences and similarities resulted from. Intracultural conversations in Finnish and in English as points of comparison might have provided answers to this question, since they would have shown whether the Finns and the British overlap in different ways when they use their mother tongue in an intracultural context. Intracultural conversations have actually been utilised in successful ways for comparison for instance by Nikula (1996), Sneck (1987) and Halmari (1993). Finding reasons for the differences and similarities in the conversational behaviour of the Finns and the British did not belong, however, to the main goals of the present study and intracultural data was, therefore, not collected.

Another limitation concerning the data is obviously the one that a simulated conversation instead of an authentic conversation was used in the present study. As was pointed out in section 4.2.1, in simulated conversations, the participants may be more cautious of their language use (Nikula 1996: 229) and, for this reason, interaction may not be as smooth and natural as in authentic encounters. For practical reasons, which dealt among other things with the difficulty to find and record authentic multi-party conversations between Finnish and British speakers of English, a simulated conversation was utilised, nevertheless, in the present study.

Finally, analysing the data also revealed a limitation concerning the analytic framework used. In the conversation, there were namely some overlaps that shared characteristics of two or more types of overlap. In the analysis, they were put, however, only to one of the nine classes that seemed to capture their primary function. Therefore, future studies looking into different types of overlapping talk should perhaps use a more flexible analytic framework which would take into account the diversified nature of some overlaps in a better way.

6.3 Implications

The earlier sections of this chapter have already introduced a few suggestions for further research that the results of the present study as well as the previously discussed limitations have aroused. In this section, a few more observations concerning future research and theoretical and methodological issues related to the study will be made.

To begin with, looking into overlapping listener responses, such as acknowledgement tokens, raised the question of how listener responses that come into being in the clear differ from overlapping listener responses. A general impression gained from looking at the data was that the meaning or function of listener responses did not appear to alter much on the basis of their placement in relation to turns in progress. Nevertheless, more detailed and larger-scale research is needed to find out whether this is really the case.

Even though the present study has for its part contributed to the field of studying spoken interaction between Finnish and native speakers of English, more research is still needed to capture the special characteristics of this kind of interaction. Authentic face-to-face conversations, in particular, that have so far not been looked into from a conversation analytic or pragmatic point of view would offer fruitful data for future research. Studies of this kind would help us to understand, among other things, why people participating in intercultural interaction in their daily lives often report that something went wrong or was odd but cannot pinpoint what that something was.

Furthermore, the nature of simultaneous talk in general also requires more thorough and larger-scale investigation which would enable us to see in a more comprehensive way what overlap actually is and which factors in addition to local the turn-management lead people to overlap. The present study introduced a way to look into the different types of non-competitive overlap in a conversation and the numerous types found raise the question whether instances of competitive overlap, too, could be divided into further types on the basis of their special characteristics. This would be, no doubt, an interesting topic for future research.

Working on the study also raised a theoretical question dealing with overlap as a concept. Previous definitions for overlap in interaction rely on the principle that overlap is a verbal or at least a vocal phenomenon. The present study as well as many other studies have indicated, however, that interaction is not limited to the vocal level but occurs also through bodily gestures, such as hand gestures (see e.g. Schegloff 1984 and Goodwin 2000). The prevailing approach to overlap does not take into account the fact that for instance mere hand gestures that an interlocutor performs simultaneously with the ongoing turn may be interpreted by the floor-holder as turn-competitive and lead to change of speakership. Sympathetic nodding during the ongoing turn, on the other hand, may be interpreted by the floor-holder as a similar kind of recipient behaviour that vocal listener responses do. Bodily gestures seem to have an active role in turn-taking and, accordingly, this point of view should be taken into account when considering and defining what overlap is.

Lastly, transcribing the conversation revealed a methodological issue that should be paid attention to. It was noticed that the transcription conventions of conversation

analysis (see e.g. Jefferson 2004) were not able to capture some aspects of interaction, such as tone of voice or non-verbal behaviour, in an adequate way. Many efforts have already been given to describe, for instance, bodily behaviour in transcripts (see e.g. Schegloff 1984, Goodwin and Goodwin 1986 and Goodwin 2000) but more work needs to be done in the years to come to introduce transcribing conventions that would capture both verbal and non-verbal behaviour in satisfactory terms. Such conventions would provide researchers an opportunity to produce more accurate transcripts and, consequently, make transcripts more useful in analysing talk-in-interaction.

As we have now discussed the main results of the present study, evaluated their reliability and representativeness and brought up some implications derived from the study, it is time to move on to the final chapter of this thesis where conclusions will be drawn.

7 CONCLUSION

The present study was carried out, firstly, to shed some light on what kind of non-competitive overlaps occur in intercultural conversations between Finnish and British speakers of English and, secondly, to detect possible differences in the ways in which Finns and the British overlap non-competitively in this kind of conversations.

The results gained from analysing one such conversation suggest that the variety and functions of non-competitive overlapping talk can be great and that even highly frequently produced non-competitive overlaps do not seem to cause any inconvenience for the interlocutors − quite the contrary. Furthermore, the results showed that the production of simultaneous talk was in the vast majority of cases deliberate. As for possible differences between Finnish and British speakers of English, no dramatic differences were found in the overlap behaviour of these two groups. All in all, the findings of the present study were in line with those of previous research.

Several conclusions can be drawn on the basis of these findings. First, non-competitive overlaps evidently have important functions in conversations: They are involved in the mechanisms of turn-taking and, therefore, in maintaining smooth interaction. They also appear to have a central role in creating interpersonal relations, for instance by showing solidarity and involvement. It seems that non-competitive overlaps enable fast and efficient communication where recipients do not have to wait with their comments or utterances until the current speakers has finished his/her undertaking and where speaker transition can take place anticipatorily. Consequently, non-competitive overlaps give recipients an opportunity to be active conversationalists even though they are for the time being in the role of recipients.

Second, it seems that one aspect of the turn-taking conventions that Sacks et al. (1974) have outlined does not fully apply to instances of non-competitive overlap: the "one-at-a-time" principle which is at the core of the turn-taking conventions of Sacks et al. (ibid.) appears to be relaxed with non-competitive overlaps. Previous research on overlapping assessments by Goodwin and Goodwin (1987: 26) has pointed to this direction, too (see also Ford and Thompson 1996: 159–164). Nevertheless, overlap and turn-taking as phenomena seem to be universal, at least to some extent, since no dramatic differences were detected between the Finns and the British. We should remember, of course, that all our participants came from two western countries whose cultures are rather similar. More clear-cut differences may occur, therefore, between participants who had truly different cultural backgrounds.

To conclude, it is hoped that the present study has increased knowledge on the nature of overlapping talk and has helped us to understand what non-competitive overlap actually is and why it comes into being. Hopefully, the study has also given new information on spoken face-to-face interaction between Finnish and native speakers of English which, no doubt, still provides plenty of fascinating topics for future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

phra[se1] [phra]se2	overlapping speech
phrase1= =phrase2	latching speech
(0.9)	a pause, timed in tenth of a second
(.)	a pause shorter than 0.4 seconds
PHRASE	loud speech
phrase	prominence via high pitch
<u>phrase</u>	stressed pronunciation
¤phrase¤	soft speech
<phrase>	slow speech
>phrase<	fast speech
phra:se	noticeable extension of the sound or syllable with the colon
phra-	cut of a word
phrase	mispronunciation
((coughs))	transcriber's comments
(phrase)	unclear speech
(x)	incomprehensible item, probably one word only
(xx)	incomprehensible item of phrase length
(xxx)	incomprehensible item beyond phrase length
$phrase$	laughing production of an utterance
§phrase§	singing production of an utterance
phrase	whispering production of speech
.	falling intonation at the and of a prosodic unit
?	rising intonation at the end of a prosodic unit
↑↓	rising-falling intonation at the end of a prosodic unit
↑	rising intonation at the beginning or within a prosodic unit

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONVERSATION

Participant 1

Pseudonym:	Satu
Gender:	Female
Age:	23
Country of origin:	Finland
Native language(s):	Finnish
Self-evaluation of English skills:	Reasonably good, adequate
Field of study:	Primary education

Participant 2

Pseudonym:	Pekka
Gender:	Male
Age:	23
Country of origin:	Finland
Native language(s):	Finnish
Self-evaluation of English skills:	Speaking: adequate, Listening comprehension: good +
Field of study:	Teacher education and visual arts

Participant 3

Pseudonym:	Kelly
Gender:	Female
Age:	20
Country of origin:	UK
Native language(s):	English
Time of residence in Finland:	9 weeks
Field of study:	Primary education and English education

Participant 4

Pseudonym:	John
Gender:	Male
Age:	33
County of origin:	UK
Native language(s)	English
Time of residence in Finland:	3 years (not continuously)
Field of study:	Digital culture

APPENDIX 3: CONVERSATION TASK

CONVERSATION TASK

1) GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER (TAKE YOUR TIME)

2) TALK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING TOPIC:

A) Christian and Islamic ways of living are in conflict in today's world. Conflicts such as

> the terrorist attacks on the Word Trade Center and the Pentagon
> the war on Afghanistan
> the war on Iraq
> the bombings in Madrid and London
> the immigrant riots in France
> the recent cartoon scandal

are manifestations of this clash. Do you agree? Why/why not?

B) Can the conflict between Christianity and Islam be seen in everyday life in Finland? Do you personally know any Muslims living in Finland? It is said that the Finnish school system tends to discriminate pupils with a Muslim background. Traditional school Christmas parties or daily assemblies, for instance, manifest Christianity and Christian values. Do you agree? What consequences does this have?

C) If a world-wide conflict between Christian and Islamic ways of living does exist, what can be done about it? How can conflicts be prevented in future?

YOU MAY ALSO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING THAT YOU FIND OF INTREST AT ANY POINT OF THE CONVERSATION!

YOU WILL BE ASKED TO STOP AFTER 45 MINUTES.