

### 37.The use of conversational gambits in academic presentations of pre-and in-service foreign language teachers<sup>1</sup>

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#### Abstract

Mastery of speaking skills in a second language (L2) necessitates not only having the full command of the linguistic repertoire but also the knowledge of tactfulness in the target language. Being a tactful communicator requires the use of strategies such as conversational gambits in everyday speech. Gambits are usually multiple linguistic units which convey certain messages such as opening a conversation or keeping it flow smoothly. Such semi-fixed expressions can also be used to highlight several aspects of spoken discourse and to gain time for effective communication. L2 speakers may resort to opening gambits to present or add a new idea to the topic of conversation. Linking gambits can be used to change the subject or connect ideas. Responding gambits signal a response regarding a specific issue. Research investigating the use of conversational gambits is limited to analyses of gambit use in discussions and debates in instructed L2 settings. Although these gambits can be viewed as discourse glues, their use in academic presentations is an understudied area. This study aims at describing and comparing the type and the frequency of conversational gambits used in the audio-recorded academic presentations of pre-and in-service foreign language teachers, within Keller and Warner's framework (2002). The findings suggest that in-service language teachers' use of these three categories of conversational gambits are evenly distributed; however, the pre-service foreign language teachers rely on opening gambits more often than the other gambit types. These foreign language teacher candidates refrain from using responding gambits, which are important in pursuing an academic discussion and directing further follow up questions on the topic. The study offers implications for teacher trainers and curriculum developers in developing the speaking skills of pre-service foreign language teachers.

**Keywords:** Conversational gambits, pre-service and in-service foreign language teachers, EFL, speaking skills, strategic competence

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## Hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin akademik sunumlarındaki sohbet oyunları kullanımı

### Öz

İkinci dil konuşma becerisinde uzman olmak, hedef dilde dilbilimsel repertuara hâkim olmanın yanı sıra iletişim inceliği bilgisine de sahip olmayı gerektirir. Dilin inceliklerine hâkim olmak günlük dilde kullanılan sohbet oyunları gibi stratejilerin kullanımını gerekli kılar. Sohbet oyunları; bir sohbeti açmak ya da bir sohbetin düzgünce akmasını sağlamak gibi belli başlı mesajları iletmeye yarayan çoklu dilbilimsel birimlerdir. Bu tarz yarı yapılandırılmış ifadeler sözlü söylemin çeşitli yönlerini vurgulamak ve etkili iletişim için zaman kazanmak amacıyla da kullanılabilir. İkinci dilde iletişim kuranlar, sohbe yeni bir fikir sunmak için açılış sohbet oyunlarına başvurabilirler. Bağlayıcı sohbet oyunları konuyu değiştirmek veya fikirleri birbirine bağlamak için kullanılabilir. Tepkisel sohbet oyunları ise belirli bir konuya dair cevapları belirtir. Sohbet oyunlarının kullanımını konu alan araştırmalar, ikinci dil öğretilen ortamlardaki müzakere ve tartışmalardaki sohbet oyunlarının kullanımının analizi ile sınırlıdır. Söylem pekiştirici olarak kabul edilseler de sohbet oyunlarının akademik sunumlarda kullanımları yeterince çalışılmamış bir alandır. Bu çalışma; Keller ve Warner'ın (2002) "sohbet oyunları" sınıflandırması çerçevesinde, hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin ses kaydı alınmış akademik sunumlarında kullandıkları sohbet oyunlarının türlerini ve sıklıklarını tanımlamayı ve karşılaştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Bulgular; hizmet içi yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin açılış, bağlayıcı ve tepkisel sohbet oyunları kullanımının eşit bir şekilde dağıldığını, ancak hizmet öncesi yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin açılış sohbet oyunlarını diğer sohbet oyunu çeşitlerinden daha sık kullandıklarını göstermektedir. Bu yabancı dil öğretmeni adayları özellikle akademik tartışmaları sürdürmede ve konuyla ilgili tamamlayıcı soru yönlendirmede önemli olan tepkisel sohbet oyunu kullanımından kaçınılmaktadırlar. Bu çalışma; öğretmen yetiştiricilerine ve müfredat geliştiricilerine, yabancı dil öğretmeni adaylarının konuşma becerilerini geliştirmeleri hakkında bazı öneriler sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Sohbet oyunları, hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi yabancı dil öğretmenleri, Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce, konuşma becerileri, stratejik iletişim yeterliliği

### 1. Introduction

Interaction in a second language (L2) comprises the multi-componential nature of the language. One well-known model of interaction encompasses a series of competencies which dates back to Canale and Swain's (1980) model. In this model, the language ability is conceptualized as the knowledge of morphosyntactic, phonological and syntactic rules (i.e., grammatical competence), sociocultural, discourse and social interactional rules (i.e., sociolinguistic competence) as well as the rules of communication strategies to overcome difficulties at times of communication breakdown (i.e., strategic competence). One of the most dynamic competencies in this model, the strategic competence, is defined as verbal and non-verbal means or strategies to enhance the effectiveness of communication and resolve misunderstandings in the interaction (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1995:7).

The role of strategic competence has received attention in the field of second language acquisition. Research investigating the role of strategic competence ranges from examining the naturalness of telephone conversations in L2 textbooks (Wong, 2002) to public speeches given in English-mediated undergraduate programs (Geçkin, 2022). Celce-Murcia (2008:50) divides the subcomponents of

strategic competence into (meta)cognitive, memory-related, achievement, stalling (time gaining), interacting and social strategies to improve the efficacy of interaction in the L2. Cognitive strategies are put into practice when one outlines, organizes and reviews speech while metacognitive strategies are used when one monitors speech, considers feedback and guesses meaning from context. Memory-related strategies require the use of auditory and visual cues to retrieve meaning. Strategies of code switching and miming fall under the social strategies that involve seeking opportunities to interact with the native speakers of the target language. Learners who appeal to clarification requests and confirmation checks are making use of interacting strategies. Constructions such as *Where was I? Could you please remind me?* constitute time gaining strategies. Phrases such as *I mean* act as self-monitoring strategies. Under this categorization, conversational gambits, generally speaking, are used as a part of stalling or time gaining strategies.

Since the conversational gambit use constitutes the main unit of analysis in this paper, we start with a widely acknowledged definition. Gambit can be defined as a word, phrase, or construction of some type used to open a conversation, to keep it going smoothly, to gain attention and to seek approval (Danesi, 2003: 75). L2 speakers may resort to *opening gambits* (e.g., You'd better sit down!) to start a conversation, to present or add a new idea to the topic of the conversation. *Linking gambits* (e.g., Let me put it another way) are used to keep the conversation going, to change the subject or to connect ideas. *Responding gambits* (e.g., What a pity!) signal emotions or responses regarding a specific issue. This could be in the form of showing interest and sympathy or giving and accepting a compliment. Although conversational gambits in the interlanguage of L2 learners have mostly been analyzed in debates and discussions (e.g., Ariani, 2018; Heredian, Sofyan & Rahmah, 2021), this paper focuses on the use of these gambits in academic presentations. The aim here is to describe and to compare the frequency and the type of gambits used by pre-service (undergraduate students) and in-service (graduate students) foreign language teachers<sup>4</sup> while presenting an academic paper. We will first report previous work on strategic competence of L2 speakers with a specific focus on conversational gambits. Next, we will introduce the methodology of the paper, followed by the results. We will offer a discussion of the main findings and finish off with implications and suggestions for further research.

## 2. Previous work

Before discussing the use of conversational gambits by second language speakers, it is worthwhile to report the use of conversational gambits in the mother tongue to set the baseline for tendency of use. Conversational gambits that were uttered by English and Persian native speakers were compared with the aim of determining the influence of cross-cultural differences on the utilization of conversational strategies (Chalak & Norouzi, 2014). The forty hours of recordings obtained from 72 participants who took part in TV programs constituted the data. The results showed that while the Persian native speakers resorted to *clarifiers* (e.g., I mean...) a lot more than the other types of conversational gambits, the English native speakers employed *starters* (e.g., Well...) along with *clarifiers*. Although *asides* (e.g., Let's say...) were the least frequently uttered types of gambits, the English native speakers made use of these gambits more frequently than the Persian native speakers. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the type and the frequency of conversational gambits are related to culture-specific characteristics of the participants.

<sup>4</sup> Pre-service (foreign language) teachers and undergraduate students, and in-service (foreign language) teachers and graduate students will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

Spontaneous speech recordings were not the only means to investigate gambits. Tatsukawa (2007) evaluated the degree of the conversational abilities of the Japanese high and low achiever high school students (n=264) through a written test of conversational strategies. To eliminate possible mistakes which may stem from lack of vocabulary or conversational strategy knowledge, the first 3,000 most common words for Japanese learners were used in the test. The test items (n=30) turned out to be challenging for the students who received the lowest scores in questions on *self-monitoring strategies* and *comprehension checks*. The students were reported to be more familiar with the components of strategic competence such as *responses for interaction*, *appeal for help* and *compensation*. The study concludes that an in-depth examination of students' strategic competence in the mother tongue through a diagnostic test could benefit both the teachers and curriculum developers.

Previous work in the second language acquisition literature mainly focused on the effectiveness of instruction and exposure in gambit use. These studies utilized interviews, questionnaires and pre-posttest designs as the data collection procedures. One intriguing question addressed was to explore the extent communication strategies (CS) could be instructed explicitly. The students who were exposed to several conversational routines throughout a semester are reported to possess better speaking habits than those who were not taught about conversational gambits (Akbari, 2018). The students who used a higher number of conversational gambits scored higher on tests of fluency whereas lack of such training resulted in less fluency in L2 speech. 16 hours of explicit instruction of communication strategies through communicative tasks is reported to contribute to the oral productions of the students positively. That is, their total number of words, mean t-unit lengths, and total number of t-units in a storytelling task increased significantly after receiving explicit instruction (Saeidi & Farshchi, 2015). Similarly, Alibakhshi and Padiz (2011) investigated the effectiveness and the stability of the explicit teaching of CS to a group of Iranian EFL learners (n=60). A story retelling task, group discussions and a picture description task were used to collect data. Although the experimental and the control group did not statistically significantly differ regarding their use of CS, the students who were given explicit instruction, used two categories of CS, namely the *avoidance* and *language switch* less frequently. The take home message was that the CS instruction was long-lasting and promising, and that the students did not avoid using these strategically important units in their conversations.

The impact of instruction on students who had problems with speaking fluency was investigated by exploring the relationship between the media exposure, self-confidence and conversational gambit use in L2 English. This time, confidence questionnaires and fluency tests on the use of gambits on Netflix movies were used (Primasari, 2021). After applying the questionnaires and interviews to Indonesian junior high school students (n=50), a strong correlation between all the three variables was found. However, the correlation between self-confidence and fluency was found to be the lowest. It can be concluded that speaking skills in the L2 can be manipulated to improve the students' ability and confidence, and schools should support explicit teaching of conversational gambits.

In addition to testing the effectiveness of explicit instruction on strategy use, interviews and direct observations of strategy use of the L2 learners majoring in English studies were also reported. Ariani (2018), for instance, described the types and the functions of the conversational gambits uttered by English Education Program students (n=13) in Indonesia. The data was gathered through direct observations of the students while they were having conversations in the classroom discussion activities. The most frequently used gambit type was linking gambits. Specifically, the students tended to use fillers and short expressions such as *Okay* and *I think*. The frequent use of linking gambits was attributed to social factors such as habits of speaking and preference for communication control.

In a similar vein, Reskiawan (2016) looked into the types of conversational gambits employed by undergraduate English students (n=31) in EFL communication classes. The results revealed that opening, linking and responding gambits were used for many purposes by the participants. However, while opening and linking gambits were used in interrogative and declarative sentences, responding gambits were reported to be employed only in declarative forms. Pallawa (2014) identified conversational strategies devised by the senior English Department students (n=24) in their English conversations. The participants are reported to utilize many verbal communication strategies such as fillers, comprehension checks and self-corrections along with some non-verbal strategies such as nodding and smiling in their naturalistic speech samples. The main finding was that those communication strategies helped the students to maintain their conversations in English smoothly and boosted their confidence.

Rahayu (2006) compared the daily conversational gambits used by English and non-English majors (n=12) this time. An analysis of the audio recordings of daily conversations showed that both groups were knowledgeable about conversational gambits. Yet, the English majors tended to i) use gambits of conversation more frequently; ii) develop their arguments skillfully; iii) apply various types of gambits and iv) use different gambits for the same purposes when compared to the non-English majors who had difficulty in developing arguments, made use of simpler expressions of gambits and employed the same gambits for the same motives. Thus, the utilization of conversational gambits should be supported since it brings about naturalness and fluency to spoken discourse.

The gambit use of L2 learners majoring in departments other than English studies was also explored. Conversational gambits used by the students from office administration and marketing departments in a vocational school (n=38) were gathered through a questionnaire and a set of interviews during speaking classes (Herdian et al., 2021). The most frequently used functions were *offering a suggestion* (42%), *illustrating a point* (66%) and *repeating* (64%) which fall under opening, linking and responding gambits, respectively. One other study which investigated the use of conversational gambits between L2 speakers of English came from 15-minute audio-recorded interviews of a Dutch and an Indonesian speaker with the aim of determining the gambit types used and the functions they fulfilled (Soerjowardhana, 2015). The conversational gambits used served four main functions, namely, semantic framing, social signaling, state-of-consciousness signaling, and communicative signaling. Even though both speakers used a variety of conversational gambits, the gambits with the function of signaling *state consciousness* stood out as the most frequently used ones.

Another research question taken up in the literature was to examine the interplay between the role of one's knowledge of the target language and his use of conversational gambits. For this purpose, conversational gambit use and intercultural communication and turn-taking strategies of the native and non-native English speakers were analyzed (Pöhaker, 1998). The purpose was to find out whether a relationship between the utilization of conversational gambits and one's knowledge of English existed. The audio recorded data revealed that the extent of using gambits with the purpose of being polite was lesser than expected. Non-native speakers of English were less likely to use gambits when compared to the native speakers who tended to employ a variety of gambits which highlighted the significance of conversational routines.

In addition to the gambit use of second language students, the gambit use of second language teachers was also explored. One study reports the communication strategies that were employed by an English teacher with her freshmen students (Muhlisin & Widyanto, 2019). Data comprised of observations and

recordings of the reciprocal relationships between the teacher and the students. The teacher did not avoid using gambits. Rather she used stalling, time-gaining and interactional gambits to easily convey her ideas so that the students would be able to grasp the gist of the content. What is more, the strategies that were used by the teacher in the classes are reported to have positively influenced the flow of the course establishing the continuity of the content. One other study employed a larger group of foreign language teachers (n=36) to investigate their perceptions on the utilization of *hesitation disfluencies* (Santos, Alarcón & Pablo, 2016) through an open-ended questionnaire which explored their awareness in using fillers in the mother tongue, in everyday communication and in their teaching pedagogy. The Mexican foreign language teachers of English are reported to use more fillers, which could be due to the cultural function of fillers in Spanish. The use of fillers in everyday speech contributed to the strategic oral competence. Nearly all of the participants reported that neither the textbooks nor the activities provided in their foreign language classes included explicit instruction on fillers, and thus, that their classes lacked the teaching of strategic oral competence. The explicit instruction along with implicit integration of fillers, which are regarded to be only a small part of language learning, is a must to help the learners internalize the language and use it for several purposes without having any breakdowns in communication.

To sum up, gambit use in instructed second language environments mostly concentrated on the effectiveness of instruction and the knowledge of the language. The data obtained through spontaneous speech samples suggest that L2 students tended to rely more on opening and linking gambits and the explicit instruction of these strategic elements contributed to the students' fluency and self-esteem in communicating in the target language. What is more, the foreign language teachers believed in the need for explicit instruction of conversational strategies including the use of gambits. The contribution of this study is twofold: First, it adds up to the very few studies in the literature which examine gambit use by pre-and -in-service foreign language teachers. Second, research in gambit use has been restricted to analyses of conversations in class discussions. This study is a first in analyzing gambit use in a monologic task which requires presenting and leading the discussion of an academic paper by Turkish EFL speakers. Next, we proceed with the introduction of the method of the study.

### 3.Method

The study is one of a qualitative research design that comprises thematic analyses of the conversational gambits used by undergraduate and graduate English Language Teaching department (ELT) students at a state university in Turkey. The aim of this paper is twofold; first to describe the conversational gambits used by pre- and in- service foreign language teachers, and second, to compare the gambits uttered by those two groups. The research questions are stated below:

1. What kind of conversational gambits are used in the oral academic presentations of the pre-service foreign language teachers?
2. What kind of conversational gambits are used in the oral academic presentations of the in-service foreign language teachers?
3. Do both groups differ in terms of the type and the frequency of the conversational gambits they use in academic presentations?

### 3.1. Procedure

First, the necessary permissions were obtained from the University Board of Ethics (ID= E - 35950415 - 604 - 19071). Next, both groups of participants were given a demographics questionnaire which included their beliefs on speaking skills in L2 and their self-perceived level of proficiency in L2 English. Subsequent to getting the participant consents, the student presentations, which were given as a part of elective courses, were saved on the digital platform where the classes were conducted due to the COVID19 pandemic. The group presentations of the undergraduate students ranged from 2 to 24 minutes (mean=4.42, SD=3.98). There were a total of 1046 utterances by the pre-service foreign language teachers (mean=33.7, SD=23). The individual presentations of the graduate students ranged from 11 to 31 minutes (mean=22.78, SD=7.10). The in-service foreign language teachers had a total of 926 utterances (mean=154, SD=73.5). Finally, the data obtained from these two groups were thematically classified under three broad categories of conversational gambits, namely the *opening*, *linking* and *responding* gambits (Keller & Warner, 2002). The transcription and the coding were done by the authors of the paper. After resolving the discrepancies between the two coders, descriptive and referential statistics were employed to describe within and between group tendencies in gambit use. Descriptive and inferential statistics were run on the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 25).

### 3.2. Participants

Both groups of participants were drawn on the basis of convenience sampling. The first group, the undergraduate students of the ELT department of a state university in Turkey, consisted of 31 students (mean age= 21.7, SD=1.8). 20 of them were females and the remaining 11 were males. The data came from audio recordings of group presentations of several academic papers regarding media literacy and education as a part of the elective course “Media Literacy”. The participants were second- and third-year students pursuing their undergraduate studies in the ELT department. The second group consisted of 6 female in-service foreign language teachers (mean age=28, SD=3.03) doing a master’s degree in the same department. The data from the second group came from the audio recordings of the individual presentations of academic papers on bilingualism as a part of the elective course “Childhood Bilingualism”. The graduate students were all currently teaching at an institution and their years of teaching experience ranged from 3 to 11 (mean=6.33, SD=3.08). Both groups of participants were advanced learners of L2 English. The table below summarizes the information of the participant groups:

**Table 1. Participant demographics in means (SDs)\***

Group	Age	Mean Age of Exposure	Fluency	Native likeness	Naturalness	Training
Pre-Service	21.7(1.8)	9.03 (2.23)	3.5(.64)	2.9(.87)	3.6(.76)	12.9% (4/31)
In-Service	28(3.03)	9.8(.41)	3.7(.51)	2.7(1.03)	(.51)	0%

\*The questions that relate to fluency, native likeness and naturalness were given on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 meant not at all and 5 meant to a great extent.

As can be seen in Table 1, the in-service foreign language teachers reported to have no previous training regarding the use of conversational gambits though they reported to believe that every teacher should be trained to teach them. The results of the demographic questionnaire revealed that only very few

(12.9%) undergraduate students received some training on how to use conversational gambits. Both groups rated their naturalness and fluency above average; yet they found their pronunciation skills in L2 English far from being native-like. Both groups were asked to report their beliefs on the place of gambits in foreign language classrooms. Table 2 depicts the beliefs about the place of speaking activities and instruction on gambit use in EFL contexts:

**Table 2. Items about student beliefs on gambit use in means (SDs)\***

Items	Pre-service	In-service
Speaking activities should have a place in any English language course.	4.94(.25)	5
The use of conversational gambits in daily conversation is of significance.	4.84(.68)	4.33(.52)
Every teacher should be trained to teach about conversational gambits.	4.52(.72)	4.17 (.41)
Students should be encouraged to make use of conversational gambits in their conversations in and out of the school.	4.74 (.56)	4.40 (.55)

\*The items were evaluated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 meant strongly disagree and 5 meant strongly agree

Both groups strongly agreed that speaking activities are an integral part of EFL courses. The pre-service foreign language teachers attached more importance to the daily use of and teacher training on conversational gambits (see Table 2). Both groups held the opinion that foreign language students need to be encouraged to use conversational gambits in and out of academic contexts.

### 3.3. Data coding and analysis

The qualitative data from both groups were coded and the frequency and the percentage of the uttered gambits were calculated. Consider the following examples of how gambits were coded:

1. "... but *the thing is*, most secondary school textbooks covered ..." (S8, pre-service, opening)
2. "*For instance*, an elementary school teacher said that..." (S14, pre-service, linking)
3. "*Sorry*, I didn't hear your question." (S4, pre-service, responding)
4. "So, *the issue is that* many children in this age group cannot read." (S2, in-service, opening)
5. "*Also*, the study showed that there is a significant correlation between..." (S1, in-service, linking)
6. "... um, also, um, *I forgot what I was going to say*, let me think..." (S3, in-service, responding)

After transcribing the recordings, the gambits used by each participant were coded under one of the three categories (see the italicized gambits from 1-6). The first three examples came from the gambit use of the pre-service foreign language teachers and the last three came from the gambit use of the in-service foreign language teachers. Recall that the function of opening gambits was to present a new idea at the



beginning of a conversation or to add a new idea during the conversation (see 1 and 4). Linking gambits were used for changing the subject, holding or relinquishing a turn (see 2 and 5). Responding gambits fulfilled the function of signaling responses to the speaker regarding a specific subject by checking or repeating what was said (see 3 and 6). Descriptive statistics with respect to frequency counts and percentages of the type of gambits and chi square test results will be reported in the next section.

#### 4. Results

The research questions addressed the type and the number of gambits used by pre- and in-service foreign language teachers and whether the two groups differed with respect to their tendencies in gambit use in L2 English. The table below summarizes the type and the frequency of the gambits used by both groups:

**Table 3. The frequency and types of conversational gambits used in means (%)**

Group	Gender	Type and frequency of gambits			
		Opening	Linking	Responding	Total
Pre-service foreign language teachers	Female (n=20)	34 (48.6%)	23 (32.9%)	13 (18.6%)	70 (61.9%)
	Male (n=11)	16 (37.2%)	14 (32.6%)	13 (30.2%)	43 (38.1%)
		50 (44.3%)	37 (32.7%)	26 (23%)	113
In-service foreign language teachers	Female (n=6)	29 (46%)	19 (30.2%)	15 (23.8%)	63

As given in Table 3, both groups used opening gambits more frequently than the linking and responding gambits. It is also important to note that females used a lot more gambits than the male students. The pre-service foreign language teachers had similar rates of linking and responding gambits (32.6% vs. 30.2%) like the in-service foreign language teachers (30.2% vs. 23.8%). Yet, the female pre-service foreign language teachers relied more heavily on linking gambits than on responding gambits (32.9% vs. 18.6%). The following examples from the data illustrate the most frequently used gambits by pre-service (see 7-9) and in-service (see 10-12) foreign language teachers:

7. “Let’s have a look at the materials and methods part of the study.” (S6, pre-service, opening)

8. “For example, stories that are completely made up to make people laugh can affect people’s ideas while gaining news or information.” (S31, pre-service, linking)

9. “Okay, can I go on with the inferences?” (S3, pre-service, responding)

10. “Let’s see when possessive constructions start to be used by children in French and English.” (S3, in-service, opening)

11. “So, first I’ll give some very brief background information.” (S4, in-service, linking)

12. “I’ve enjoyed it very much, *thank you* for suggesting this paper.” (S2, in-service, responding)

When you consider the italicized phrases in the above examples, both groups used *Let’s* as one of the most frequently used opening gambits. *For example*, and *So* were among the most frequently used linking gambits and *Okay* and *Thank you* were the most frequently used responding gambits. The third research question investigated whether the two groups differed with respect to their use of gambits. Overall, the two groups did not statistically differ in their use of gambits in speech  $X^2(1, N=2) = .91, p=.64$ . However, the two groups differed in their use of the linking,  $X^2(1, N=2) = 8.76, p=.003$  and responding gambits  $X^2(1, N=2) = 4.65, p=.03$ . It is also important to note that the in-service foreign language teachers had a higher number of responding gambits when compared to the male and the female pre-service foreign language teachers.

## 5. Discussion

This paper addressed the type and the frequency of conversational gambits used in the academic presentations of pre-and in-service foreign language teachers. More specifically, the opening, linking and responding gambit use of these two L2 teacher groups was described and compared.

To start with, both groups of foreign language teachers valued the explicit teaching of the elements of the conversational strategies. Although the in-service foreign language teachers reported to have had no explicit instruction on gambits, they used all gambit types. They did not have as strong an opinion as the pre-service teachers about training teachers on gambit use. This might be because none of the in-service teachers received training on gambit use and might assume that explicit instruction is not the only way to learn how to use gambits.

Second, pre-service foreign language teachers tended to use opening gambits more frequently than other gambit types. Such a tendency is in line with the previous work in the literature (e.g., Ariani, 2018; Herdian et al., 2021; Rahayu, 2006; Reskiawan, 2016). In an academic context, the use of responding gambits requires listening to the talk very attentively and paraphrasing what was discussed to direct follow-up questions to the speaker. The reason why pre-service foreign language teachers refrained from using responding gambits could be related to not having enough experience with the routines of an academic environment.

Third, both groups were comfortable with using opening and linking gambits probably because these two groups of gambits are not as cognitively demanding as responding gambits. Opening gambits serve the function of starting a conversation and introducing new ideas and linking gambits are used to maintain the conversation going. The pre-service foreign language teachers might have felt more confident and secure in using these two gambit types since they did not require a critical analysis or evaluation of the content of the academic paper. Yet, responding gambits would require a critical eye to evaluate what was presented and direct questions accordingly. As Ariani (2018) suggests the reliance of pre-service foreign language teachers on linking gambits might be related to their speaking habits and desire to control the communication. Recall that linking gambits are used to divert the flow of the topic in the conversation and using these gambits would give the pre-service foreign language teachers the liberty to control the flow of the conversation so that they could save face when they got stuck at some point in their academic presentations.

The study comes with implications for curriculum designers and teacher trainers. First, it has been reported that low input in a second language may result in socio-cultural and interpersonal problems (Gan, 2012). Thus, it is important to increase the number of English classes and open up speaking clubs in foreign languages to improve the learners' use of conversational gambits. The students need to be encouraged to communicate in the target language since research suggests that enthusiastic and encouraging teachers and a safe classroom environment contribute to the motivation and oral skills of the learners (Törnqvist, 2008). Second, the components of strategic competence could be integrated into the ELT syllabus through picture description, storytelling and role play activities which require the use of several expressions such as the use of prefabricated or lexical chunks. These chunks are, by definition, grammatically correct and thus can contribute to the development of fluency in the second language (Nyssönen, 1995). Third, teachers should be cautious while teaching the strategic elements by solely relying on textbooks. Even though they seem to offer the most effective practice activities, they may not be ideal resources when it comes to teaching the socially appropriate communicative strategies in the second language (Faucette, 2001).

Of course, the current study comes with certain limitations. First, the groups did not have an equal number of participants. Second, even though the task requirements were similar, the topic of the presentations was different. The pre-service foreign language teachers presented a single paper as a group whereas the in-service teachers presented a single paper on their own. This was due to the nature of the courses that the data were gathered from, and the number of the students who was allowed to register each course. Third, since the data came from group and individual presentations of the teachers, the time allocated to the oral presentations differed within and between the groups.

By taking the limitations of this study into consideration, for future research, the number of participants in the sampling pool could be enlarged so that parametric measures of statistical analyses can be employed to explore group differences. The male and female pre-service foreign language teachers in this study manifested a slightly different tendency in their gambit use. Hence, the gender effect on gambit use could be an intriguing topic to look into. Another direction for further research could be to compare the native and non-native gambit use of Turkish speakers of other languages across varying ages and levels of proficiency to tease apart the impact of the culture and instruction. It is important to note that in-service foreign language teachers in this study reported to have never been given explicit instruction in gambit use. This, in a way, puts the pre-service foreign language teachers at an advantageous situation since they are taught gambits and their functions within the first-year obligatory course Oral Language Skills. One final suggestion for further research could be to video record the interactions of the L2 speakers so that verbal as well as non-verbal strategy use could be wholly captured.

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