

Conversation Gambits Used to Enhance Communication in an English for Educators Course¹

Frases conversacionales utilizadas para mejorar la comunicación
en un curso de inglés para educadores

LIC. JAZMÍN VINDAS CARMONA

Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Cartago, Costa Rica

cvindas@itcr.ac.cr

ORCID ID: [0000-0002-9352-1440](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9352-1440)

BACH. ANA LUCÍA GUTIÉRREZ CORRALES

Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica

ana.gutierrezcorrales@ucr.ac.cr

ORCID ID: [0009-0000-3049-8549](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3049-8549)

BACH. MARÍA ALEJANDRA RIVEROS ORJUELA

Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica

maria.riveros@ucr.ac.cr

Abstract

This research addresses the incorporation of conversation gambits into an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. The primary objective is to determine the influence of implementing conversation gambits on communication skills. This involves examining the frequency with which students effectively use them and identifying the most frequently used gambits introduced by facilitators. The study involved a total of 15 students and three instructors, forming a targeted group of educators. Also, it adopted a mixed-method approach, employing a descriptive research design. Five focused observations and frequency tables were used as instruments for data collection. The findings revealed a noteworthy trend as students did not actively employ the conversational gambits introduced by facilitators. This behavior is attributed to the absence of consistent enforcement of the conversation gambits throughout the lessons. The study sheds light on the crucial role of reinforcement in promoting the incorporation of conversation gambits into the communication repertoire of educators in ESP courses.

Keywords: conversational gambits, useful language, fixed phrases, lexical phrases, communication skills

Resumen

Este estudio aborda el impacto de la incorporación de frases conversacionales preestablecidas en un curso de Inglés con Fines Específicos (ESP). El objetivo principal es determinar el impacto de la implementación de estas frases en las habilidades comunicativas que tiene la población estudiantil de inglés. Lo anterior implica examinar con qué frecuencia las personas estudiantes utilizan efectivamente estas expresiones de conversación e identificar cuáles son las más utilizadas por las mismas. La investigación involucró a un total de 15 estudiantes y tres personas docentes. Además, adoptó un enfoque de método mixto y un diseño de investigación descriptiva. Se utilizaron cinco observaciones focalizadas y distribuciones o tablas de frecuencia como instrumentos para la recopilación de datos. Los hallazgos revelaron una tendencia significativa ya que la población estudiantil no empleó activamente las frases preestablecidas para la conversación que las personas docentes introdujeron. Este comportamiento se atribuye a la falta de reforzamiento consistente de las expresiones a lo largo de las lecciones. El estudio destaca el papel crucial del refuerzo para promover la incorporación de las frases en el repertorio de comunicación de la población educadora en cursos de ESP.

Palabras clave: frases preestablecidas, lenguaje funcional, expresiones fijas, expresiones convencionales, habilidades de comunicación

Introduction

There is a wide array of techniques and strategies employed by instructors for teaching a second language (L2). When it comes to specifically enhancing communicative skills, there is a variety as well. One of the various resources that instructors frequently use for this purpose is what is commonly known as *conversational gambits*. Keller (1979), who has been one of the most recognized advocates of conversation gambits in English classes, defines the word *gambit* as sets of semi-fixed expressions or signals consciously learned and used by English learners as a strategy to facilitate and enhance their communication. Scholars have also employed various terms to denote similar instances, including *functional* or *situational language*, *formulaic language*, *fixed* or *lexical phrases*, and other related terms. Regardless of the term employed, they all come together with a shared objective: boosting oral skills so that conversations sound more natural.

Several scholars, including Soerjowardhana (2015), Faizal (2016), Akbari (2018), and others, agree on using the terms “phrases” and “words” to define the concept of conversational gambits. To elaborate, Faizal (2016) asserts that these phrases and words assist individuals in expressing their intended message. As the name implies, the primary focus of conversation gambits is on facilitating conversation. Therefore, they are widely recognized for promoting communicative competence among non-native speakers of the language. According to Akbari (2018), “briefly defined, gambits and routines refer to the words and phrases that facilitate

the flow of conversations. As such, one way to help learners acquire oral proficiency is to teach gambits that support the social skills emphasized” (p. 35). In essence, incorporating conversational gambits into language instruction has proven as a valuable strategy for nurturing oral proficiency among language learners since these signals help speakers to structure their conversations.

Conversation gambits can be classified based on their function. For instance, Keller and Warner (1990) categorize them based on the micro-skills they fulfill, determining whether they can be used for initiating a conversation, connecting different topics, or responding in oral interactions. Simultaneously, their use varies based on that classification, serving different modes or sub-purposes. To illustrate, with the realm of opening gambits, a mode involves asking for information, and expressions such as “I’d like to know...” and “Could you tell me?” are useful in fulfilling this purpose. In the context of linking gambits, a micro-skill pertains to emphasizing a point, where useful expressions like “that’s just the point” and “but the real question is...” come into play. Lastly, responding gambits encompass a micro-skill focused on showing interest, and phrases like “right” and “really?” serve as effective tools for achieving this objective. Hence, conversational gambits can be introduced in second-language teaching by categorizing them into sets based on their meanings or functions.

The current research project aims to address the general question of how the implementation of conversation gambits genuinely improves the communication skills of a specific group of educators in an English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) course. Moreover, this study aims to answer the following specific questions: How do facilitators incorporate conversation gambits into L2 teaching lessons? How often do students actually use those gambits to enhance communication? What are the most frequently used gambits for educators in a second language classroom? The method employed for collecting data to address these inquiries includes observations conducted in virtual L2 lessons, along with the use of frequency tables to tally the occurrences of specific variables in the observations. It is important to mention that the students of this ESP course happen to be educators; therefore, the word students will be used to refer to those who are learning.

Literature Review

Functional and situational language in teaching

Conversational gambits share similarities with functional and situational language since they are all interconnected aspects of language learning and communication skills. Both functional and situational language are labels that represent ways of organizing language, and there is a clear overlap between them. The difference lies in the fact that functional language consists of expressions that function or serve different purposes, and situational language comprises expressions used in specific situations, moments and places (Thaine, 2021).

Popescu (2021) addresses the word “function” in this context as encompassing “the complexities of language

in actual use” (p. 408). Consequently, functional language proves versatile and useful in communicative contexts. The term can be defined as sets of phrases or so-called chunks of language that help with drilling dialogues (Popescu, 2021). These potential dialogues resemble real-life conversations given they encompass the functions that language performs in everyday situations such as *making excuses, complaints or offers, agreeing, disagreeing, giving advice, asking for help, inviting someone, making suggestions, making request, apologizing, thanking, evaluating, persuading, arguing, informing, questioning, expressing emotions* (Ash-Shammari & Al-Sibai, 2005; Thaine, 2021; Popescu, 2021), among others. Therefore, functional language helps learners understand the meaning of expressions in order to use them appropriately in real-life conversations. Conversational gambits are related to functional language as they also serve specific functions in conversations.

This type of language teaching leads to the Functional-Notional Approach. According to Ash-Shammari & Al-Sibai (2005), one of the advocates of this approach was David Wilkins who adopted a functional perspective of language when he “realized that it was possible to group language items for teaching purposes not only in terms of the grammatical category to which they belonged to but also in terms of the language function they performed” (p. 5). The authors also sustain that the Functional-Notional Approach is considered an alternative to structural approaches since it does not focus on linguistic aspects of the language but on communicative needs. It involves transferring language functions to

communicative contexts, making the development of general language competence its primary goal, and language functions its leading element. This is consistent with how Popescu (2021) emphasizes that the functional approach enhances students' communication skills "without the pressure of rigid grammar rules" (p. 408).

In regard to situational language, Smith and Loewen (2018) highlight the role of "situations" as its defining feature. When introducing this type of language, students are presented with situations that require language use in authentic communication. Consequently, situational language comprises expressions or phrases that people commonly use in specific contexts or situations such as *at a restaurant, at the hospital, while shopping for clothes*, among others (Thaine, 2021). According to Dudley and Jo (1998) language sets can be categorized based on meaning, and when grouped according to associations related to a specific topic, they are referred to as situational sets. Therefore, when presented with sets of situational language, students can choose suitable expressions based on specific circumstances.

The teaching approach derived from situational language teaching is known as the Situational Approach. It is often perceived as an attempt to provide an alternative to structural or grammar-focused approaches, as its initial proposal aimed "to develop a more communicative approach to language teaching" (Ash-Shammari & Al-Sibai, 2005, p. 2). This attempt involved starting language instruction with spoken language. However, its main tenet centered around the use of language in context, drawn from those

previously mentioned social situations in which a foreign language might be used. These situations, whether real or hypothetical, constraint the selection of linguistic forms that are taught (Shammari & Sibai, 2005).

Both functional and situational language are interconnected to conversational gambits since these fixed sequences of words and expressions are used to fulfill specific communicative functions within the context of a conversation. In language teaching contexts, teachers integrate functional and situational language into lessons to enhance and improve the learners' ability to communicate effectively in various real-life or authentic situations. This practice provides a practical and structured way for learners to acquire and use conversational gambits as well as functional and situational language in their interactions.

Importance of conversation gambits in language learning and teaching

As previously noted, teachers can rely on conversational gambits as a tool to help students practice and improve their oral communication skills given gambits serve conversational purposes. Therefore, the main functionality of conversational gambits is that they assist in maintaining and regulating a smooth flow of a conversational talk (Sahib, 2014; Soerjowardhana, 2015; Akbari, 2018; Zulaikah et al., 2023). As a result, conversation gambits can be beneficial for the teaching and learning process since teachers and students can apply them to facilitate their discussions by using them to open conversations, connect ideas, and respond to what has been said.

Moreover, students facilitate their own learning and performance of the language when using conversational gambits to ask questions, clarify meaning, and express their opinions. Overall, students can communicate more easily in L2, promoting active participation during class.

The use of conversation gambits in English teaching is also related to social factors. They include phrases and vocabulary that are essential for social interactions. According to Coulmas (1980), Sahib (2014) and Zulaikah et al. (2023), these expressions serve as signals used at different levels of conversational strategy, indicating the general frame of the topic to be taken up, as well as the various social and communicative signals used in discourse. Similarly, Faizal (2016) argues that people who never employ gambits when having conversations are often perceived as abrupt or even rude, potentially resulting in negative attitudes towards these people. Therefore, the author emphasizes the essential role of conversation gambits in shaping conversational behavior and facilitating positive social interactions. Essentially, gambits help students understand the social and communicative signals used in authentic English conversation, and this can be useful in a variety of contexts, such as business meetings, job interviews, and social interactions of other kinds.

Additionally, the advantages of conversational gambits in teaching involve psychological factors associated with motivation and self-confidence during L2 performance. Proficiency in using of conversational gambits enhances students' confidence in speaking because "the more conversational

fillers and routines learners utilize in their speaking, the fewer pauses and hesitations they might have while conveying their messages and negotiating meaning" (Akbari, 2018, p. 36). Likewise, Faizal (2016) found that games incorporating conversation gambits had a positive impact on students' English achievement and motivation, and the effectiveness of the games was attributed to the provision of suitable experiences for the application of the gambits. Consequently, by learning and mastering conversational gambits, learners practice and develop oral skills with greater confidence and fluency. Overall, conversation gambits are an important aspect of oral communication in English and should be included in English language teaching and learning.

Similar studies

Since Keller (1979), relatively little has been said, written, or researched on the subject, considering that over five decades have already gone by. Among the limited researchers found, Soerjowardhana (2015) studied the use of conversation gambits in a communicative interaction between an intermediate English-level learner and another non-native English speaker. Therefore, the participants included two individuals whose L1 was not English. This research employed a mixed approach and its focus was on conversational gambits as a means to facilitate communication in English as a foreign language. The methodology involved non-participatory observation of a tape-recorded interview, which was later transcribed. Results indicated that both the interviewer and the

interviewee employed gambits as conversational strategy signals to mutually understand the conversation.

Pursuing a similar goal, Akbari (2018) studied the oral fluency that intermediate English students had when using conversational gambits in listening and speaking classes. A total of 60 students participated in this quantitative study, with half of them assigned to an experimental group and the remaining half to the control group. The frequency of gambit tokens in interactions was tallied based on the classification of conversational gambits proposed by Keller and Warner (1990), and t-test results were employed to compare the data derived from interactions in both groups. Findings revealed that students in the experimental group outperformed the students in the control group in fluency tests, attributed to the use of conversational gambits.

In a similar vein, Ariani (2018) conducted descriptive research on the employment of conversation gambits by English students to structure their statements in five different classroom discussions (a communicative activity). The study included a population of approximately 63 students. Data collection methods encompassed direct observations, field notes, and interviews carried out through video recordings. The findings of the study revealed that the most frequently used conversation gambits were those related to linking, primarily serving the purpose of controlling communication. Furthermore, the results indicated that students tended to favor some gambits over others. This preference was attributed to their inclination to use equivalent fixed phrases in their native language.

Therefore, the use of linking conversation gambits in this study effectively assisted English students in engaging more effectively in class discussions and enhancing their oral skills as a means of communication control.

Method

A mixed-methods approach was deemed most appropriate for this research project, given the nature of both qualitative and quantitative data generated from five focused and non-participatory observations, along with frequency tables employed as research instruments (Appendices A and B). Numerical and non-numerical information was gathered to answer the proposed research questions. Considering the detailed, comprehensive and depictive information primarily derived from the observations, the study adopted a descriptive research design. Additionally, frequency tables facilitated the summarization of collected data in a tabular format, displaying the number of times a variable appeared within a total of observations. These methods are employed to analyze the effectiveness of introducing conversation gambits and their subsequent use by educators. In order to interpret and analyze the data collected, researchers identified patterns, relationships, and trends.

The research employed a purposive sampling technique, selecting 15 students enrolled in an English for Specific Purposes course, along with their three respective instructors as research participants. The course was developed by three English professors who delivered it as part of their final

practicum. It consisted of seven synchronous virtual lessons in which all three took turns participating. One of the three practicum instructors took on the lead role in each session, while the remaining two served as assistants. The students taking part were predominantly teachers from various subjects, which is why the course was named “English Language for Educators”. There were teachers specializing in English, social studies, mathematics, nursing, Spanish, and commerce. Those who did not perform a teaching role worked as counselors in educational settings.

Analysis of the Results

Data collected from the observations indicated that practicum instructors introduced a total of 16 sets of conversation gambits throughout seven sessions that were recorded. Teachers introduced at least one and up to four sets per session, ensuring a minimum of one conversational gambit set on ev-

ery class day. However, for the scope of this study, only five observations were conducted for the sake of data simplification and the convenience of researchers (Table 1). Therefore, out of the initial 16 conversation-gambit sets, 10 were subject to analysis.

As part of introducing each gambit, instructors first displayed them on screen. Subsequently, they informed students that the fixed phrases presented were intended for use in the upcoming activity, mentioning the general purpose of introducing the sets to the class. Nevertheless, instructors did not go further to state the specific purpose of each phrase from the set. Considering the basic nature of the expressions and the group’s English proficiency level, this did not seem to impact the comprehension of the phrases at first glance. Moreover, students did not ask for clarification. However, this point will be revisited later in the discussion. Finally, instructors proceeded to review the pronunciation of the words involved before having students use the conversation gambits in the activity.

Table 1
Conversation-gambit sets used throughout the sessions.

Observed Session	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Number of sets per session	2	3	1	3	2

The introduced sets were designed for different purposes. For instance, the initial set introduced on the first day of class aimed to facilitate students’ interactions when introducing themselves. This set included sharing participants’ names, their place of residence, and

information about their academic and professional backgrounds. The second set was intended for an icebreaker activity, where students presented their own created drawings, which were meant to depict their favorite activities and hobbies. Consequently, this second

set aimed to assist learners in presenting their drawings. The above examples are just a glimpse to illustrate the dynamics in each class. While the remaining sets served similar purposes, the majority were specifically tailored for use in break-out rooms to support group work assignments. A smaller portion was intended for incorporation into homework tasks.

After displaying the sets on screen, the instructors proceeded to introduce each gambit at least once. Depending on the complexity of the expression and the purpose of the activity, some gambits were introduced either twice

or even up to four times. Still, the estimated number of gambits to be employed in most sessions differed significantly from the actual quantity of gambits used (Table 2). The estimated number was calculated by multiplying the number of conversation gambits introduced by the actual number of students present in the sessions. Therefore, there are two reasons for the variations in the estimated number per session. Firstly, the number of gambits introduced in each session differed, and secondly, the attendance varied among sessions as well.

Table 2
Estimated vs. actual gambit usage.

Sessions	S. 1	S. 2	S. 3	S. 4	S. 5	Total entries	Total %
Number of gambits introduced	17	11	3	13	9		
Estimated quantity of gambits to be employed	238	132	30	156	108	664	100%
Actual quantity of gambits used	156	25	5	10	8	204	30,7%

As evident in the preceding table, and as mentioned earlier, there is a notable difference between the estimated and the actual conversation-gambits usage. For instance, in the first session, 17 gambits were introduced to 14 students, which yields an estimated 238 instances in which students could have implemented the gambits for carrying out the activities. This previous scenario is the expected and thus, the ideal situation. However, out of those

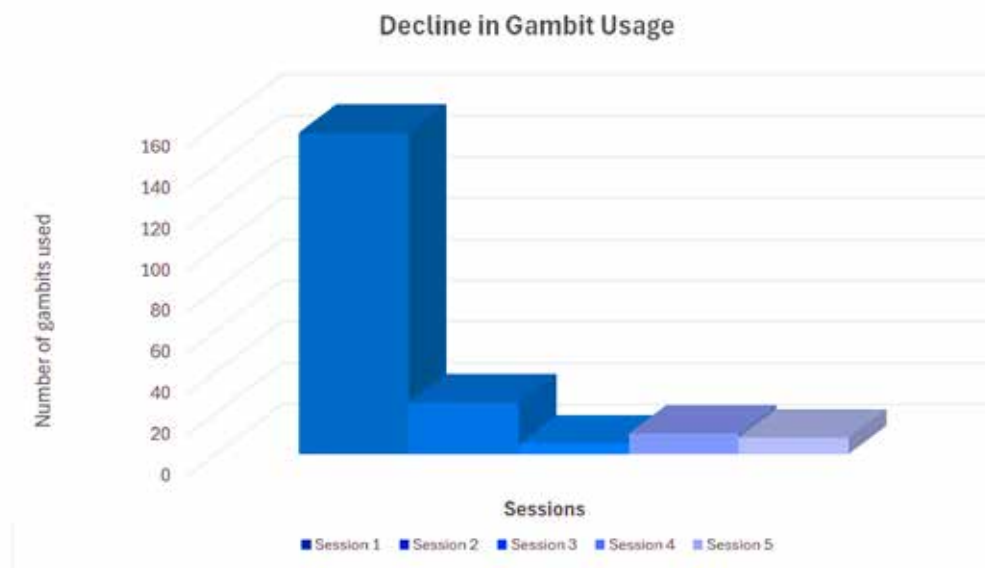
238 instances, students actually implemented only 156. This pattern was repeated in the subsequent sessions. To summarize this data, researchers collected both the total estimated quantity of gambits to be employed in the observed sessions and the actual quantity of gambits used. This corresponds to a total of 664 potential entries in five observations, representing the ideal percentage of 100%. The 204 entries collected from the five observed

sessions only account for 30,7% of the instances in which students actually used conversation gambits. In other words, 69,3% of opportunities to benefit from the use of conversation gambits in class activities were wasted.

Another pertinent finding that emerged from the instrument application is the decline in the use of conversation gambits throughout the sessions. Consequently, not only did students use them less than expected, but their usage also decreased as the course sessions progressed (Figure 1).

As evidence of this, Table 2 shows that 156 instances actually occurred in the first session, with 17 gambits introduced. Nonetheless, in the last observed session, there were only a total of eight instances with nine introduced conversation gambits. The gambit usage rate decreased from 9,17 in the first session with 14 students to 0,88 in the last session with 12 students. Expressed differently, there was a 90,4% decline in the ratio of gambits used per introduced gambit.

Figure 1
Decline in Gambit Usage



The previous findings lead to another point that addresses one of the research questions stated at the beginning. The most effective conversation gambits for educators were the ones introduced in the first session given the usage rate. The observations indicated that during the first class, the gambit “My favorite

(color/ food/ activity/ animal/ object) is...” was used a total of 41 times, followed by “I like to (play/ run/ read/ travel...)” with 17 occurrences. Furthermore, other gambits such as “My name is...”, “I am a (profession)”, and “I work at (company’s name)” were each used 14 times in total. In other words, each gambit was used once per student.

In five sessions, instructors introduced 53 conversation gambits divided into 11 different sets. Therefore, the average (mean) gambit usage throughout the observed lessons was 40,8. It can be inferred that the used gambit quantity in the first class surpasses the mean ($\bar{x} < 156$), while the quantity used in the last session falls below the average ($\bar{x} > 8$). Although this finding could have been influenced by other variables, such as the number of students present in each one of the sessions under study (since this data was used to tally the total instances), the impact of this variable is minimal. This is because the number of students present in those two specific sessions did not vary significantly, and the variation of two students is not significant enough to have a substantial impact on the outcome.

Discussion

The results presented in this section provide valuable insights into the implementation, usage, and effectiveness of conversation gambits in the observed material that goes beyond the numbers and percentages obtained. First, after thoroughly reviewing the recordings, it was evident that the use of the phrases was not enforced throughout the lessons. For instance, the facilitators would begin each task by presenting a list of useful language phrases or sentences that students could rely on to formulate their answers. This process would entail reading them out loud and occasionally providing a few examples for each structure. However, instructors refrained from offering more specific and

detailed information about the conversation gambits, including the specific purpose behind each phrase or encouraging students to produce examples on their own to understand how the gambits functioned. Moreover, they did not insist on having students employ conversation gambits while conducting the assigned classroom activities.

At a first glance, the previously referred omission did not seem problematic, but when students participated, they did not use the proposed gambits as expected, and thus its implementation did not seem cemented as an organic part of the classroom dynamic. This previous behavior can be attributed to a variety of reasons that the researchers of this study can only hypothesize about given the shared academic background in ESL teaching with the facilitators of the observed course.

One factor that could be contributing to the students not employing the conversation gambits may lie in the degree of difficulty that each set progressively represented as well as the students' English proficiency level. While each session's conversation-gambits sets to become increasingly more advanced would be the expected pattern, the students did not appear to assign relevance to the conversational gambits they were asked to use, thus, the level of difficulty kept rising while the actual employment of the phrases was not. For instance, if the behavior corresponding to the first session is compared to all subsequent sessions, wherein basic phrases like "my name is..." and "I work at..." were effortlessly and successfully used by the students, then it is plausible to infer that students did not encounter much difficulty in using them.

On the other hand, phrases such as “the answers from (the survey/ the questionnaire...) suggest that...” or “these results suggest that...” (both from session 4) were not equally used. Given the students’ English proficiency, they might have felt more comfortable employing simple phrases that were recognizable or directly responding to the given prompts or questions without relying on the language at all by providing fragments than venturing into more advanced vocabulary. To recapitulate, the limited employment of the introduced gambits during the lessons could be attributed to the perceived difficulty that students experienced with them.

Additionally, the collected data suggests that the sets of conversation gambits that were designed to be used during each task did not transfer into other activities, that is, students did not seem to recall the language that had been previously introduced, which leads to conclude that the significantly limited effectiveness these conversation gambits had pertained solely to the task or activity they were written for. To sum up, all these possible considerations might point to the reasons why this study’s results suggest that the use of conversation gambits in the observed material was not highly effective.

Limitations and Recommendations

Despite the efforts to conduct a rigorous study in a short amount of time, it is important to recognize the inherent limitations that come with any research process. Time constraints restricted the researchers’ capacity to delve deeper into the study. Moreover, researchers could only thoroughly observe five out

of the seven provided recordings and the total of 15 classes. This limitation arose because the ESP classes observed for the study were happening simultaneously with researchers’ own classes. This incomplete coverage of the full material, although not a variable that we were able to control as we only had access to the video recordings of the classes we were able to observe, means that our study may not fully capture the entirety of the proposed syllabus and lesson plans by the practicum students. Additionally, finding relevant literature to support our theoretical framework was rather challenging, as the initial assumption about the abundance of information on the importance of conversation gambits proved to be an oversight. Thus, the scarcity of sources relevant to the study’s focus presented difficulties in establishing a robust foundation for the findings.

While these limitations affect the study, they also serve as opportunities for future research and methodological refinement. To reduce the impact of time constraints, future studies could consider an extended research period or alternative scheduling arrangements. Additionally, increasing the number of observed classes and diversifying the sample can enhance the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the study’s results. Furthermore, researchers should proactively address the challenge of scarce literature by perhaps exploring interdisciplinary sources that could shed light on the selected area of research, or broadening the scope of the topic by including other areas of study. Finally, future research should explore contextually relevant strategies for implementing conversation gambits in English lessons, focusing on the

dynamics and methodologies that optimize the enhancement of communication skills among learners.

Conclusion

This research paper sought to explore the communicative role that conversation gambits played in an ESP virtual course designed for an ESL population of educators. The results presented in this study indicate that the most effective conversation gambits introduced by the course facilitators and employed by the students were those which represented simple and familiar structures such as “my name is...” and “my favorite... is...”. The limited transferability and repetition of the observed conversation gambits, which was evidenced by a consistent lack of enforcement and employment of these structures, prevent this research from establishing a solid foundation to delve deeper into the questions that guided this endeavor. The collected information does not provide enough evidence for a connection to be made that would elucidate on the impact that these expressions may have had on enhancing the communication between educators and students, and it cannot factually correlate the limited use of conversation gambits to a visible impact in confidence nor class participation.

Reflection

Conducting this research process, from observing the classes to writing the final paper, has greatly impacted the researchers’ understanding of the importance of conversation gambits in the ESL classroom. The initial expectations

for this project’s results were largely fueled by the emphasis that our study program places on the design and implementation of these structures in our current and future teaching. In many exercises for previous courses, we had been instructed to design conversation gambits for our target population and we felt confident that this was a skill we had developed successfully, so the results we obtained from our observations were at first unexpected. However, it helped us visualize the gap between simply designing sets of conversational gambits for the purpose of being graded on our lesson-planning skills, and actually implementing these with a real group of students in which a plethora of factors come into play. It also taught us that being intentional in our teaching does not only imply creating and designing thoughtful material, but also being consistent with our implementation and enforcement of it in order to bear positive learning results.

Notes

1. All authors contributed equally to this work. [x]

References

- Akbari, J. (2018). Enriching speaking fluency through conversational gambits and routines among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 3(1), 35-43. <https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.3.1.35>
- Ash-Shammari, T., & Al-Sibai, D. (2005). *A presentation of the situational approach & the function-*

- al-notional approach to syllabus design*. Retrieved from <http://www.orion2020.org/archivo/cen/ap-proach.pdf>
- Ariani, D. (2018). Conversational gambits used by the English Education Program students of graduate program of State University of Padang in classroom discussion. *English Franca*, 2(2), 137-157. <https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v2i2.528>
- Coulmas, F. (Ed.). (1980). *Conversational routine: Explorations in standardized communication situations and prepatterned speech*. Gruyter, Inc.
- Dudley, E. & Jo, M. (1998). *Development in ESP: A multiple disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Faizal, A. (2016, September). *The effects of conversation gambits visual-novel game on students' English achievement and motivation* [Conference presentation]. 2016 International Electronics Symposium (IES). <https://doi.org/10.1109/ELECSYM.2016.7861054>
- Herdian, I., Sofyan, D., & Rahmah, M. (2021). Conversation gambits in classroom speaking activities. *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture and Education*, 595, 375-378. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211119.058>
- Keller, E. (1979). Gambits: Conversational strategy signals. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 3, 219-238. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(79\)90032-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(79)90032-8)
- Keller, E., & Warner, S. (1990). Conversation gambits: Real English conversation practices. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(3). <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587237>
- Popescu, A. (2021). Teaching functional language for business purposes. *"Ovidius" University Annals*, 21(1), 408-411. <https://stec.univ-ovidius.ro/html/anale/RO/2021/Section%203/34.pdf>
- Sahib, A. (2014). *A theoretical survey of gambits in English everyday communication*. University of Babylon. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313025689_A_theoretical_survey_of_gambets_in_everyday_English
- Smith, M., & Loewen, S. (2018). Situational language teaching. In J. I. Lontas, T. International Association, & M. DelliCarpini (Eds.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0174>
- Soerjowardhana, A. (2015). Gambits: Conversational strategy signals used by non-native speakers of English in natural conversation. *Lite*, 11(2), 142-157. <https://doi.org/10.33633/lite.v11i2.1060>
- Thaine, C. (2021, November 24). Teaching functional and situational language. *Cambridge University Press ELT Blog*. <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2021/11/24/teaching-functional-situational-language/>
- Zulaikah, Hikmahwati, & Afas, M. (2023). An analysis conversation gambits used by fourth semester of English education program at Nurul Huda University. *Darussalam English Journal*, 3(1), 93-126. <https://doi.org/10.30739/dej.v3i1.2329>

Appendices

Appendix A. Observation sheet

Universidad de Costa Rica
Sistema de Estudio de Posgrado
Escuela de Lenguas Modernas
Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language
PF-0303 English Teaching Methods

Research: Conversation Gambits Used to Enhance Communication in an English for Educators course.

This instrument aims to gather information about conversational gambits used by English teachers to enhance students' communication skills in virtual lessons.

General Information

Observations #:

Number of students:

I. Checklist.

Aspects to observe:

• Generalities

Observation Criteria	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments/ Evidence
1. The team introduces at least one conversation gambit set during the lesson.				
2. The team introduces from 2 to 3 sets of conversation gambits during the lesson.				
3. The team introduces more than 4 conversation-gambit sets during the lesson.				
4. Conversation gambits are introduced as the foundation for conducting oral activities.				

• Instructors

Observation Criteria	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments/ Evidence
1. Explicitly inform students that the aim is to use the conversation gambits provided in the upcoming activity.				
2. Provide examples to model the use of the conversation gambits presented in context.				
3. Model the pronunciation of words included in the phrases.				
4. Clarify any unfamiliar or confusing expression from the conversation-gambit sets before starting the activity.				
5. Explain the purpose for which each expression can be used.				

• Students

Observation Criteria	Yes	No	Sometimes	Comments/ Evidence
1. A majority effectively uses the conversation gambits provided when carrying out their oral or written tasks.				
2. Use introduced conversation gambits more than once during the lesson.				
3. Ask clarification questions about the meaning of the expressions provided.				
4. Continue applying conversation gambits learned in the following classes.				

II. Elaboration Section.

Aspects to observe:

What are some of the most used conversation gambits introduced by practicum instructors?

Appendix B. Frequency tables

Observation #: 1

Session #: 1

Number of students:

Set	Conversation Gambit	Introduced (teachers)	Used (students)	Repeated
1	My name is...			
	I live in...			
	I study...			
	I am a...			
	I work at...			

2	This is my drawing.			
	I drew a... because I like...			
	My favorite color/ food/ activity/ object/ animal is...			
	I like to play/ run/ read/ travel...			

Observation #: 2**Session #: 2****Number of students:**

Set	Conversation Gambit	Introduced (teachers)	Used (students)	Repeated
1	I choose... points. Rectangle number...			
	Our answer is...			
	The word is pronounced as...			
	What rectangle do we choose?			
	What amount do we choose?			
2	The answer is			
	I agree/ I disagree			
	I think the word means			
3	I think this is a (content word/ function word)			
	I agree/ I disagree			
	I consider this a keyword.			

Observation #: 3**Session #: 3****Number of students:**

Set	Conversation Gambit	Introduced (teachers)	Used (students)	Repeated
1	I think that...			
	The correct pronunciation/ structure/ word is...			
	I agree/ I disagree			

Observation #: 4**Session #: 5****Number of students:**

Set	Conversation Gambit	Introduced (teachers)	Used (students)	Repeated
1	How do you pronounce...			
	How do you say in English?			
	A benefit could be that....			
	I think this is very important because...			
	In my opinion,			
2	As a result...			
	This study found that...			
	Another important finding...			
	The answers from (the survey/ the questionnaire...) suggest that...			
	These results suggest that...			
3	I think that the (rubric/feedback/element) is important in evaluation because (it helps students/ it helps to learn/ it improves the performance).			
	The (rubric/ checklist) is the best option to evaluate (performance/ knowledge/ attitudes).			
	The (feedback/rubric) helps students to see the (mistakes/ performance/weaknesses/ strengths).			

Observation #: 5**Session #: 6****Number of students:**

Set	Conversation Gambit	Introduced (teachers)	Used (students)	Repeated
1	To me, the most difficult part was...			
	In my opinion, ... is easy.			
	... made me check my notes.			
	... is/ refers to/ means ...			
	I agree / I disagree with you.			
2	How do you pronounce "...”?			
	How do you say "...” in English?			
	I think that...			
	I agree / I disagree with you...			