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A Qualitative Discourse Analysis of Algerian Discussants' turns in Conference Discussion Sessions

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Abstract:
This study aims to understand the organization of Algerian discussants' turns in conference discussion sessions by describing their forms, functions and the use of translanguaging within the turns. Twenty-six turns were analyzed, extracted from three discussion sessions in an English-mediated conference in computer science organized in 2025 in Algeria. Research findings revealed that discussants formulate their turns as questions more than comments. They mostly seek clarifications and facts about the presentation to critically evaluate the presenter's research, but mitigate the criticism using politeness devices. The results also showed that Algerian discussants use translanguaging to flexibly interact and align themselves with other speakers. The study contributes to existing knowledge of how communication unfolds in academic scientific discourse.
Kevwords: Conference discussion sessions: discourse analysis: forms and functions of discussants' turns, translanguaging in academic discourse

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria, reflecting global trends observed in other non-native English speaking countries, has promoted English as the language of higher education and research, and its growing presence in Algerian academia can be observed in its in academic conferencing. For Algerian researchers, conferences are key academic events to advance their careers, and network with the research community (Hardi, 2019; Tiaiba, 2024); they are also important for doctoral students working to gain course points required for the completion of their doctoral studies (Tiaiba, 2024). Today, academic conferences in Algeria use English as one of the conferencing mediums along with Arabic and French, or as the main medium, specifically in international conferences. A move that mirrors the country's endeavor towards international academic visibility and globalization (Ghouali & Haddam Bouabdallah, 2024; Rouabah, 2022).

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Among the various conference genres, the discussion session (DS) is a highly demanding genre for non-native speakers of English, specifically for the discussants (Kawano, et al., 2024; Li, et al., 2025; Xu, 2022). The participating attendees find it challenging to engage successfully with the presented work (Guest, 2013; Webber, 2002; Xu, 2022). They struggle to ask the right questions and to formulate them correctly, which further raises their concerns about being perceived as lacking academic rigor (Guest, 2018; Xu, 2022). Despite these reported difficulties, little is known on how these speakers communicate in DSs. Research is especially scarce in the Algerian context. The few studies that have attempted to explore DSs using discourse analysis frameworks mostly focused on native speakers of English (Guest, 2018; Jurado, 2015; Querol-Julián, 2011; Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2012; Webber, 2002; Wulff, et al., 2009; Xu, 2022; Ventola, 2002); fewer still have described the turns of the discussants in DSs. The discourse of Algerians as non-native speakers of English in DSs at English-mediated conferences is yet to be examined. Therefore it is important to understand the organization of the discourse of Algerian speakers as discussants and how certain communicative functions are fulfilled within that structure.

Capturing naturally occurring interaction in this context requires describing the actual language use during these sessions, but communication in DSs might not be exclusively managed using English since the Algerian academic landscape remains multilingual. French is still moderately used as the language for instruction and research in Algerian universities, and Arabic is also used in some academic disciplines (Ghounane, 2023). Thus, the discussants' use of multiple languages in an English-mediated conference should also be considered when describing the organization of their discourse, wherein discussants use features of a language different from the one they were previously employing. These language practices can be regarded as part of translanguaging (Vogel & García, 2017) in which interactional purposes and communication needs mediate the speaker's translanguaging practices (i.e. the use of features that belong to different languages as part of one linguistic repertoire to effectively communicate in a given context). Any use of features or structures belonging to a language rather than English by Algerian speakers, as discussants in academic conferences will be addressed within the framework of translanguaging. Given the need to understand the discourse of Algerian discussants in conferences, the present study aims to describe the discussant's turns in terms of form, function and code. Accordingly, this study analyses 26 turns of discussants in three DSs from a conference in computer science in Algeria, guided by the following questions:

RQ1. What are the forms of discussants' turns in conference discussion sessions?
RQ2. What are the functions of discussants' turns in conference discussion sessions?
RQ3. How is translanguaging enacted within discussants' turns in conference discussion sessions?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The genre of discussion sessions

Conferences are a combination of genres, interconnected to form genre sets, and orderly follow a specific sequence through genre chains (Hyland, 2006). DSs are one of the agnate conference genres, distinct but interconnected to the other conference genres. They usually follow the conference paper presentation, the plenary session, or conference workshops, or are integrated within poster sessions (Guest, 2018). Applied linguists uses the term 'discussion session' to describe this genre (Guest, 2018; Querol-Julián, 2011; Wulff, et al., 2009). This stems from the idea that the term 'Q&A session' limits the interaction to questions and answers, thus excluding other forms of statements from the interaction.

Some researchers consider the DS as part of the conference presentation (CP) and not as a separate genre (Jurado, 2015; Wulff et al., 2009). However, one significant communicative function that distinguishes DSs from the CPs is evaluation (Querol-Julián, 2011; Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2014), in which the research is assessed by the audience. In addition to this difference, CPs are monologic, preplanned speeches delivered by a presenter and managed by the chair; they also involve minimal and indirect interaction with the audience (Guest, 2018). On the other hand, DSs are unscripted, unpredictable conversations between the presenter, the discussants and the session moderator (Guest, 2018; Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2014). The participants involved in both genres, their roles and the communicative function they perform differ; the two events, then, are separate genres, only linked together through genre chains that form a conference, and DSs need to be studied separately.

Discussion sessions are a type of research genres where the aim is to provide valuable feedback on a research in progress (Guest, 2018). They follow a certain turn-taking structure to achieve specific communicative purposes (Xu, 2022). The moderator leads the turn-taking process by opening the floor for the discussion; this is followed by a conversation between the discussant and the presenter, usually consisting of a discussant turn followed by a presenter's turn (Webber, 2002; Xu, 2022). However, DSs are spontaneous, and variations in turns might occur (Guest, 2018). During this interaction, evaluativeness is a common characteristic (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2014; Xu, 2022) wherein discussants take turns to judge the presentations while managing the turn-taking process through politeness devices (Guest, 2018). This is especially important for non-native speakers of English to be able to formulate and deliver their turns, evaluate the research, deal with the unpredictability of DSs, and maintain face-saving and face-threatening acts (Guest, 2018). This creates challenges for the discussants who need to contribute to the discussion in a professional way (Xu, 2022). However, discussants' turns are largely neglected in the literature on the genre of DSs.

2.2. Previous studies on discussants' turns in DSs

Few studies have attempted to describe the genre of DS by exploring discussants' turns from a discourse analytic perspective (Querol-Julián, 2011; Ventola, 2002; Webber, 2002; Xu, 2022). Querol-Julián (2011) examined the rhetorical moves of turns in DSs by identifying the structures of the turns (comments, questions and a combination of comments and questions), and then devising the moves within the turns according to the identified structures. The three structures start with the same move, opening the turn. The research was criticised by Xu (2022) because the categorization and label of 'comment' was used to describe the structure of a comment as well as the moves within the same structure, which could confuse readers and EAP practitioners. In addition, the classification of Querol-Julián (2011) did not consider the functions of the identified structures, especially that the function is strongly linked to the structure of the turn.

Webber (2002) examined the function of questions in a corpus of 130 questions and their replies in discussions following symposium presentations at international medical conferences. She has classified the questions in the corpus into: information-eliciting about facts, information-eliciting about opinions, criticism or attack, suggestions, comment, mixed comment and information eliciting. A number of issues can be found in the pragmatic categorization of Webber (2002). The category of comments was vague; it included turns in the form of statements where the discussants explained some points that were neglected by the presenter, as well as turns that were a combination of statements

and questions where the discussant sought more details about the presentation. Labeling statements as questions and classifying them as comments is ambiguous. Additionally, suggestions were not in the form of statements where the discussant provides recommendations, but were questions asking for possible solutions to specific problems in the research. Using the term 'suggestion eliciting' might have been more descriptive of this function. This reinforces the idea that examining form and function should be analyzed together for a more comprehensive classification of turns in discussion sessions.

A recent study by Xu (2022) investigated the rhetorical structure of 268 questions and comments used by discussants in 80 computer science conferences. Xu (2022) examined the generic moves in discussants' turns by first categorizing turns into questions and comments, the functions of comments used into giving suggestions or making arguments, and the functions of questions into seeking factual information, opinions or justifications, and then she conducted an analysis of generic moves, by identifying the rhetorical moves that occur within the previously categorized turns. However, Xu (2022) do not specify or explain whether the turns of the discussants were initiated by audience members or the moderator. Although the research of (Wulff, et al., 2009) examined the types of chair turns in conferences, it mainly focused on the expected role of the chair, opening the floor, selecting participants to ask questions, and closing the floor. Thus, the possibility of the moderator's involvement in the DS as a discussant calls for further analysis.

One further limitation to consider is that these studies on DSs on conference language in general have mostly focused on native speakers of English, excluding non-native speakers of English. The research of Xu (2022) might have included both L1 and L2 speakers of English, but the researcher identified the L2 speakers based on her own intuitions, and the DSs selected for the corpus were part of top conferences to ensure that the speakers delivered high level presentations to high performing audiences, so the data had no instances of multiple language use. Therefore, these studies do not adequately reflect other possible communicative contexts, particularly ones that involve multilingual speakers in a context that requires the use of English for communication.

One exception to this research gap is the study of Ventola (2002). She focused on the use of English as a lingua franca, code switching and the arising issues of using two languages, German and English, on conference interaction. She has implied that English as a lingua franca has become dominant in conferences, but in contexts where participants are multilinguals, code switching is used in meaning making. The results showed that in a few instances, communicating in more than one language can be successful, but the researcher has argued that code switching interferes with communication and hinders participation. However, it is important not to presume that using multiple languages in conferences is an issue, but to consider how speakers employ their multilingual repertoire as one linguistic system to successfully make meaning in conferences, i.e., how translanguaging is used in conferences as multilingual events. Most empirical studies on translanguaging were related to classroom discourse. Research on translanguaging in higher education settings is scarce, and has mainly focused on purposefully planned use of translanguaging by university teachers (Groff, 2017). Translanguaging in spontaneous interaction in scientific academic discourse such as DSs is yet to be studied. Insights on how translanguaging is used not as a pedagogy, for instruction purposes, but rather for meaning making in natural multilingual interactions are required.

3. Data Collection

The DSs were audio-recorded by the researcher at an academic conference at the University of Oran, Algeria in 2025. The conference was English-mediated,

and addressed various research areas in computer science. Conference organizers gave the researcher permission to access the venue, and the presenters gave written consent to be audio-recorded. As for the discussants, only verbal consent was given by the attending members before the beginning of each conference presentation. The rationale for choosing a conference in computer science is to represent a fundamental field of study and research, on a global and national scale. The DSs used for this study followed CPs in three different parallel sessions dealing with different but overlapping sub-fields of computer science, Big Data & Advanced Analytics, AI & Optimization, and Distributed Systems & Network Intelligence. The time average of the DSs is 5 min 20 sec.

3.1. Transcription

Orthographic transcription (verbatim) was used to manually transcribe the DSs. Some notation symbols were adapted from the transcription system of Jefferson (2004). Despite the conference being English-mediated and the presentations delivered in English, the DSs that followed were not entirely in English. In the original transcript, each language was transcribed according to its. However, for readability purposes, a translation of French to English was added to the discourse segments presented in the results and discussion part. Additionally, cognates were highlighted using a bold font to emphasize which words are French, and any utterance in French was underlined.

To anonymize identifiable information, the following labels were used: MOD for the moderator, PRE for the presenter, AUD for an audience member. To differentiate speakers with the same identity within the same discussion; for example, more than one participating audience member, numbers were added to the labels such as AUD1 and AUD2. The same labels were used throughout the three discussions, but they do not necessarily refer to the same speaker. Other details that can disclose confidential information were omitted and replaced with ((reduced)). The parts that were not audible in the audio were marked with ((inaudible)).

4. Data Analysis

The study is a qualitative research that uses discourse analysis for form-function mapping of turns and for describing the translanguaging instances that emerge in the discussants' turns. The framework of analysis is based on conversational analysis (Sacks, et al., 1974), move analysis (Swales, 1990), pragmatic analysis of the expression of evaluation, and translanguaging theory (García, 2009).

To identify the turns and their forms, the researcher listened to the audio recordings and read the compiled corpus multiple times to assign each turn to its speaker, following conversation analysis techniques (Sacks, et al., 1974). Additionally, using the genre analysis approach of move analysis by Swales (1990), the researcher identified and categorised segments within the turns that are used to achieve certain communicative purposes. The aim was not to provide a final account of the moves within the turns, but to help identify if the turn is in the form of a 'comment+question' or only a 'question' depending on the moves within the turn.

Concerning the analysis of turn functions, the appraisal theory by Martin and White (2005) was used to determine which function is performed in the turns based on the criticality of the turn since DSs primarily involve an evaluation of knowledge wherein academics appraise and assess the research work delivered by the presenter (Querol-Julián, 2011, Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2014; Wulff, et al., 2009; Xu, 2022). The analysis also used the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). It took into consideration the presenter's responses, whether the discussant's turn threatened the presenter's positive or negative face, Positive

politeness where the discussant attempts to claim common ground and alliance with the presenter, and negative politeness where the discussant avoids confrontation with the presenter's personal freedom and choice were also applied.

The final step involved describing the enactment of translanguaging in the corpus using an emic approach. Without imposing pre-selected set of functions, the researcher followed a turn-by-turn analysis to relate translanguaging instances to the context and describe the the purposes for using translanguaging.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Discoursal turns of the discussants

First, the researcher identified the discussants' turns in the discourse. Table (1) describes the number of turns in each DSs, classified in accordance to the speakers. Although the present study focuses on the turns of the discussants, who are usually members of the audience, the researcher considers a discussant as a role rather than a person; thus, the discussant's role is not limited to the speaker's identity (member of the audience or session moderator). Languages used by the discussants in each session are also included in Table (1). The total number of discussants' turns in the corpus is 26 turns. The turns were rarely uninterrupted by backchannels (e.g. yeah, oui, yes), denoting continued attention from the interlocutor, or by successful attempts of other speakers to take the floor, which projects the spontaneity of the discussion. Despite this conversational characteristic of DSs, the three DSs in this corpus have one adjacency pair wherein the first pair part is that of the discussant followed by a second pair part of the presenter. This means that DSs are more structured and constricted than casual conversations (Querol-Julian, 2011; Xu, 2022).

Table 1. Speakers and number of their turns in each DS

DSs	Presenter	Chair/Moderator		Audience member	Languages used by the discussant
		Expected role	Discussant		
DS1	8	2	6	/	English+French
DS2	14	4	1	10	English
DS3	9	2	9	/	English+French

5.2. Forms of the discussants' turns

The turns of the discussants were divided into two forms, questions and comments. These were also identified by Querol-Julián (2011) and Xu (2022). 23 turns were questions, while three were comments. Although the present corpus is small, the results are congruent with those found in the study of Xu (2022) in which only 14% of the corpus of 268 turns were categorized as comments. Xu (2022) did not provide an explanation for this large difference in the frequency of turn types, but it can be argued that even though the number of questions is proportionally higher in discussion sessions, turn-taking remains varied in terms of turn types. This indicates that the term 'Q&A session' cannot fully describe this genre.

5.2.1. Questions

Turns were classified as questions only when the discussant is clearly seeking an answer for the question asked. This was similar to the classification of Xu (2022). Utterances whose communicative function is to ask a question and which were followed by an answer from the presenter were also categorized as questions. In excerpt (3), the utterance was spoken with a rising intonation to ask

whether the data used in the study is heterogeneous. The symbol ? was used for this type of form.

Excerpt (3):

AUD: You have uh various sources of data?

Additionally, a turn can have more than one question when the presenter has comprehension issues. For example, excerpt (4) shows that the first turn in DS1 included one main question; however, instead of providing an answer to the question, the presenter expressed his lack of understanding, which made the discussant follow the presenter's turn with two questions in a turn (see excerpt 5).

Excerpt (4):

MOD:...how to define the routes of each uh of many uh vehicles in when delivering uh goods to customers?

Excerpt (5):

MOD: No how to make how we can use algorithme to schedule uh the delivering of goods to customers?((reduced)) what is the difference between the classical vehicle routine and the uh the this uh vehi- this scheduling?

In this turn, excerpt (5), the first question is a reformulation to the main question in excerpt (4), while the second question '*what is the difference between the classical vehicle routine and the uh the this uh vehi- this scheduling?'* is an extension to further explain the main idea of the first question. Turns that include more than one question might signal difficulties in formulating well-structured questions as noted in the study of Guest (2013), but in the current study, no similar turns were identified. The turns with more than one question led to the same direction.

5.2.2. Comments

On the other hand, a turn was classified as a comment when it was formulated as a statement. In Xu (2022), questions that were not followed by a response to the question asked were classified as a comment such as rhetorical questions. However, in the present dataset, all the questions were followed by a response, which shows that the discussants were not trying to make a point, but were mainly interested in the presenter's response.

Turns that were a combination of questions and comments were not used in this corpus unlike the ones identified in the study of Querol-Julián (2011) and Wulff et al., (2009). The turn structure of 'comment+question' listed in Querol-Julián (2011) included four moves, opening the turn, contextualising the question, making a comment and formulating the question, whereas in this dataset, the few lengthy turns simply provided contextual details before asking the question. That is, they did not include the move of 'making a comment'. For example:

Excerpt (6):

MOD2: Uh thank you too for your insightful presentation I'd like just to clarify about the question of my colleague Dr ((reduced)) uh she asked if the data is structured or unstructured or semi-structured and they uh because she thinks that the data has audios videos texts uh so on the data has only clicks from users which are the students s((reduced)) it's like uh click screens when users uh uhh maybe buy on the internet ((reduced)) do you agree?

In this example, the discussant's turn followed a sequence of questions from an audience member (AUD); the discussant contextualized the question by referring back to the presentation and the type of data used in the research. Then he mentioned the question asked by the AUD on the same point before formulating his question '*do you agree*?' Thus, this turn is labeled as a question rather than a comment+question.

5.2.3. The moderator's role as a discussant

An aspect not addressed in the literature is the moderator's role as a discussant (Querol-Julián, 2011; Wulff et al, 2009; Xu, 2022). In this study, the results showed that at the core of the discussion and in many turns, the moderator plays the role of a discussant (in the form of questions and comments). However, in the opening turn of DS3, the moderator's turn begins with a move that belong to the role of the moderator (opening the floor for discussion) before engaging in the interaction as a discussant. Therefore, this and another similar turn in DS1 were classified in Table (1) as both an expected role of the moderator and a discussant's role because during one turn, the speaker switches his role from the session chair to the discussant. The switch is separated by pauses, or a change in language.

5.3. Functions of questions

The function of questions identified in this corpus are requesting facts, requesting opinions and requesting clarifications. In each of these turns, the discussants were assessing and judging the presentations, so unlike Webber (2002) who classified 'a turn that criticizes the presentation' as a distinct function, and other turns as not critical, in this study, criticism is embedded within each function type. The results revealed that questions where the discussant seeks clarification and factual details were more frequent, and were mainly about the research methodology, a similar result to that of Xu (2022).

5.3.1. Requesting facts

In this type of turn, the discussant seeks factual information about the research. This type of turn does not pose a challenge to the presenters because they only need to recall facts about their research. In DS2, questions functioning as requesting facts were more common than the other functions, compared to the other DSs; for example:

Example (1)

```
AUD: You had structured data? they are structured?
PRE: Yes they are structured yes
```

Example (2)

```
AUD: You have studied the behavior?
PRE: Yeah yeah the behavior of students
```

In these examples, the discussant wanted to know the type of data used. Asking the same question in multiple turns might indicate that the discussant is confused, which could mean that he is seeking clarification; however, these turns were considered as seeking facts because the presenter simply recalled information from the presentation.

5.3.2. Requesting opinions

In this type of questions, the discussant presents a hypothetical scenario or an alternative situation related to the presenter's research and asks for the presenter's opinion on how to deal with it. These types of turns were not directly evaluative, and in some cases showed alignment with the presenter (Brown and Levinson, 1987); for example, by using *'thank you'*.

Example (3)

```
AUD: Uh thank you mister ((reduced)) I want uh to
know uh please uh (...) because that uh we know
all that educational data are is ((reduced))
```

heterogeneous they uh are not homogenous so what can you propose uh to fix this issue?

In example (3), the discussant asked for the presenter's recommendation of possible solutions to the problem of heterogeneity in educational data.

Example (4)

MOD: Et par rapport à l'implémentation réelle elle sera implémentée sur le véhicule ou sur quoi?

"And concerning the actual implementation it will be implemented on the vehicle or on what?"

Here, the discussant is asking for future applications of the solution proposed in the research, which was followed by the presenter's turn expressing his views on the possible implementation of the proposed technique on vehicles.

5.3.3. Requesting clarifications

When asking this type of question, the discussants express their understanding or possible misinterpretations of some aspects of the presentation, then ask the presenter to provide further details, to explain them differently, or to confirm or reject the discussant's interpretations. The study of Xu (2022) has identified 'seeking justification' as a function of questions where the discussant indicates the drawbacks of the research and asks for justifications, and she described it as a highly evaluative function. However, in the current dataset, the turns requesting clarifications are evaluative but are not explicitly critical of the research; for example:

Example (5)

MOD: I think there is another problem with the the scheduling (.) how to define the routes of each uh of many uh vehicles in when delivering uh goods to uh customers?

Example (6)

MOD: Je n'arrive pas a comprendre c'est quoi que **congestion** vous avez c'est c'est quelle condition?

"I'm having trouble understanding which congestion you have which condition it is"

The turn in example (5) displays that the discussant does not completely understand some of the research methods and thinks that there might be a problem concerning the methods used in UAV scheduling, which requires further clarifications. The authorial voice in example (5) is mitigated using *"I think"* as a saving-face technique, acknowledging that alternative viewpoints might exist and making the evaluation less confrontational (Martin & White, 2005). In example (6), the turn is also not directly critical; it demonstrates the discussant's confusion regarding the type of congestion used in the research, and his request for further explanations.

The corpus included other expressions related to this type of function such as *'just to clarify the question of', 'do you agree?', 'can you please explain', 'je veux une explication'*. The discussants generally used explicitly positive utterances. Expressions with negative connotations, which are indicative of negative views towards the research and are thus highly evaluative (Martin & White, 2005), were not used in this data. However, the discussants' requesting clarifications might be face threatening when the presenter has difficulties responding to the question, which was mostly the case in this data. Therefore, this function is still evaluative, but not denote strong criticism.

5.4. Functions of comments

The main function of the comments in this research is to offer suggestions. The discussants proposed solutions to issues or unresolved points in the presented research. These comments are not highly critical compared to the questions, but they still express evaluation since they tacitly assess the research limitations, and then propose other perspectives.

In example (7), the discussant attempted to contribute additional information on how to tackle the issue of using drones to deliver packages by suggesting steps that should be explored first.

Example (7)

MOD: So I think the most important and the most evident problem that we can solve first is the the middle term scheduling before starting to deliver goods to deliver goods to customers

While in example (8), the discussant suggested a solution to a problem in the research, which was evaluated in preceding turns (the type of map to use with UAV vehicles), then offered a course of action for future research.

Example (8)

MOD: We can have use like bird distance <PRE overlap=yes> like bird distance but in vehicle routine we use the uh the map distance uh (...) so uh I think the the next the next study uhh from this study is how to will how will uh to understand analogies between the classical problems and problems related to uh UAV

In both examples, the discussant used *'I think'* as a form of saving-face, by softening the claim (Martin & White, 2005), as well as the use of inclusion language *'we'* to express alliance with the presenter, a sign of positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This function of turns highlights the idea that conference presentations are one sub-genre of research in progress where the presenter is open to positive contributions and collaborations from the audience, rather than a final product such as the research article, a point similarly expressed by Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005).

5.5.Translanguaging in the discussants' turns

The results revealed that translanguaging was enacted through different forms, a single word, multi-word sequence or full sentences. Translanguaging was mostly initiated by the discussant to clarify, to include others, to communicate meaning, and to organize the interaction.

5.5.1. Repetition and translation for clarification

The discussant restated questions in another language to clarify his ideas and help the presenter understand and respond to the question. This has also been identified as a recurrent discursive function of translanguaging in classroom discourse (Garcia & Wei, 2014). In example (9), the discussant has asked the same question two times in two separate turns in English then repeated it in French. The switch occurred when the discussant interpreted the presenter's inability to hear the question as a lack of understanding and thus used translanguaging for clarification.

Example (9)

MOD: I want a simple expla- explanation in natural language a simple explanation in unnatural language about the problem you are trying to solve?
PRE: Sorry but I can't hear you well okay so (...)
MOD: Je veux une descr- **description** en langage naturel sur le problème que vous avez résolu?

"I want a description in a simple language about the problem you have solved"

Repeating the same idea by translating it can be understood as form of face-saving (Brown & Levinson, 1987); the discussant wanted to avoid causing embarrassment to the presenter and chose to translanguage instead, but it can also be related to the discussant's own face to avoid appearing incompetent in asking questions.

5.5.2. Inclusion and togetherness

The discussant attempted to accommodate the participant's wants by switching to the same language the other speaker was using. For instance, even though the discussant used French to ask a previous question, in order to accommodate the presenter's choice of language in his response (English), the discussant switched back to English at the beginning of the next turn. This might signal a sense of togetherness with other multilingual speakers, which is a sign of positive politeness wherein the discussant tries to identify and align with the presenter (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

5.5.3. Demonstrating language ability

The discussants wanted to contribute to the discussion regardless of the language used. Contrary to Ventola's (2002) interpretation of how code switching can reduce participation, the discussants drew from their existing linguistic resources and strengths to be part of the discussion, employing multilingualism to their advantage (García & Li, 2014; Vogel & García, 2017). For example, in order to ask about the type of congestion used in the research and its relation to IoV, the discussant used English in the first turn, and then completely switched to French in the following turns while the presenter was responding in English. This might indicate that it is more natural for the discussant to talk in French about this topic. Additionally, the insertion of single words within a turn; the use of '*diaporama', 'algorithme', 'énergie'* might indicate that the discussant uses them most naturally in French, especially that the words, *'algorithme', 'énergie'* are cognates, and the discussant could have continued using English for these words as well during his turn, but instead retrieved them in French.

It is important to remark that French has been the language of instruction in higher education in Algeria, and the shift towards EMI in is witnessing a gradual implementation, so the discussants in this case used the language they usually use for communication in academic settings.

5.5.4. Organizing the interaction

Multilingual speakers creatively arrange multilingual interaction using their linguistic resources. They alternate between languages to separate and change subjects, which is usually achieved through discourse markers (Kolu, 2018). In this data, they use translanguaging to separate roles and create boundaries between different functions in the interaction.

Example (10)

MOD: **Question** pas de **question**? (.) okay uh est-ce-que um can you please uh explain

For instance in example (10), the speaker used French as part of his role as chair to ask whether the audience have questions, and to separate that role for his role as a discussant, he switched to English *'can you explain'*.

7. CONCLUSION

This study sets out to examine Algerians' academic discourse as discussants in conference DSs. The results show that discussants, both audience members and session moderators, either ask questions in order to request facts, opinions or clarifications, or make comments in order to offer suggestions. This implies a form-function relation, wherein the structure of turns in the discourse is

linked with specific functions. The most commonly performed functions are asking for facts and for clarifications. This is partially consistent with the findings of Webber (2002) and Xu (2022), which implies that DSs in scientific fields mainly focuses on extracting more details about the research, but the current data also suggests that DSs are evaluative genres, where research gets scrutinized by members of the scientific discourse community who ask for further clarifications, and they soften the criticism through mitigating language, in line with these studies (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2014; Wulff et al., 2009). Another major research finding is that within these turns, the discussants use translanguaging to facilitate understanding, to make connections, to generate meaning and to create boundaries between different communicative functions. This suggests that Algerian discussants do not necessarily follow the designated language of the conference, and instead use languages fluidly to communicate (García, 2009).

The research contributes to the limited literature on the genre of DS, specifically in the Algerian context. It raises important questions regarding translanguaging in scientific discourse in which multilingual speakers employ their full linguistic repertoire in interaction. This might raise awareness of ESP and EAP practitioners and help them in developing teaching materials for Algerian academics engaging in conferences. This need is further emphasized by the notable lack of teaching materials for non-native English speakers, which are limited to commercial guidelines that do not address the communicative needs and linguistic backgrounds of these speakers. Further studies need to be carried out to fully describe the turn-taking process in DSs since the study was limited to examining the turns of discussants. The current corpus used is considerably adequate for a qualitative discourse study, but using a larger corpus of discussion sessions, and supporting the findings with numerical data might reveal further insights on the genre of DSs.

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