

Conference presentations are one of the most important genres in academia due to their crucial role in the dissemination of scientific knowledge (Rowley-Jolivet, 1999). However, studies in academic discourse have mainly focused on written genres such as research articles, and therefore oral academic genres remain a challenge from a methodological point of view.

The multimodal nature of this oral genre has received the attention of scholars from the early 1980s. Dubois (1982), Rowley-Jolivet (2002), Hood and Forey (2005), Räisänen and Fortanet (2006) or Querol-Julián (2011) all provide valuable and enlightening explorations of multimodality in conference presentations. However, the tendency has been to focus on the role of visuals, while other modes that undeniably play a role have largely been neglected.

The complex multimodal ensemble that constitutes the product presentation makes the gathering, synchronisation and interpretation of data a daunting task. Specialised software can facilitate the process to a great extent (e.g. ELAN The Language Archive: <http://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan>), but many questions and methodological decisions still remain underexplored.

In the present study, I zoom into the study of kinesics and paralinguistic features in conference presentations. Specifically, I look at gestures, intonation and head movements in order to elucidate their contribution to the construction of a persuasive message. In addition, I reflect on methodological challenges that arise when approaching this genre from a multimodal perspective. These range from the gathering of analysable data and the construction of a sound theoretical construct (i.e. identifying modes or determining what is persuasive) to practical issues that arise during the analysis itself, such as the use of specialised software or the triangulation of results.

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