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A FRAMEWORK FOR MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THE CASE OF PERSUASION IN
ORAL PRESENTATIONS

In oral genres speakers resort to more than words to convey their meaning (Kress 2010). Research suggests that persuasion is frequently achieved through a combination of meaning-making resources (Sparks et al. 1998, O'Keefe 2002, Perloff 2003, Poggi & Pelachaud 2008). The orchestration of different modes can be especially decisive in achieving effective persuasive oral communication. However, our understanding of persuasion is often focused on specific elements of the message considered in isolation. Little attention has been paid to the overall effect achieved by the complex multimodal ensemble that constitutes oral discourse.

The present study proposes a methodological framework that affords the analysis of persuasive strategies in oral genres combining a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) perspective (Querol-Julián 2011, Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2014) and ethnography (Rubin & Rubin 1995). It focuses specifically on the integration of the following modes: words (Carter 1997), intonation (Brazil 1997), head movements (Kendon 2002) and gestures (McNeill 1992, Kendon 2004). Unlike other modes, they are always there in any instance of oral discourse. The preliminary findings highlight how all of them affect the overall persuasive effect (Valeiras 2015, Valeiras & Ruiz 2015), and hint at a correlation between persuasion and modal density (Norris 2004).

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