A pedagogical application of multimodal analysis of discussion sessions to the teaching of conference discourse in an additional language

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Conferences are one of the most important forums that scholars have to disseminate research and interact face-to-face with colleagues in their field of expertise. In this academic social genre, the discussion session that follows the paper presentation is particularly challenging for novice researchers. Wulff, Swales & Keller (2009) identified considerable differences between the language used in the monologue and in the discussion session, which is characterized by patterns of evaluative language. However, oral communication is multimodal, and speech is just one part of the oral and visual information that is conveyed and perceived when we construct meaning (Jewitt, 2013). This viewpoint was adopted by Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez (2012), who revealed the importance of the combination of nonverbal and verbal devices to express evaluation in the discussion sessions of conference paper presentations.

The interaction between speech and kinesics is not commonly taken into consideration in courses to introduce researchers to conference presentations. Gullberg (2006) argues that it is necessary to teach both the characteristics of speech and gestures, especially in second and foreign language settings. Gestures help the novice researcher to improve listening comprehension in the additional language; they can be eventually used as a compensation device; and an appropriate use of gestures guarantees a good integration in the academic discourse community.

The aim of this paper is to present a proposal of pedagogical application of the results of previous research on the multimodal features of discussion sessions to a course of introduction to conference presentations for novice researchers. Taking as a point of departure the concepts of critical consciousness (Bizzell, 1992) and critical thinking (Atkinson, 1997), we propose a process of observation for the identification of verbal and non-verbal features and their evaluative function, in order to reflect on them and try to integrate them in the students' repertoire.

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Biodata

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