# Multimodal evaluation in academic discussion sessions: How do presenters act and react?

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## Abstract

Evaluation in academic discourse has received considerable attention from researchers. Much of the work on evaluation has focused, however, on written genres, and less attention has been paid to how evaluation unfolds in spoken academic genres. In our present research, we are interested in disclosing how the interpersonal meaning of evaluation is expressed in the discussion session (hereafter DS) that follows conference paper presentations, since DS has already been defined as an "evaluative forum", when comparing its phraseological patterns with those of the presentation.

Though the study of evaluation in spoken genres has been developed focusing exclusively on linguistic aspects, we assume the non-linguistic message that accompanies the linguistic message has an effect on the interpersonal meaning of the communication. Therefore, the aim of our research is to analyse the evaluative meaning conveyed in DSs that follow paper presentations in an applied linguistics conference. In the study, we draw on a social semiotic theory of language and of kinesics and paralanguage to frame a multimodal exploration of this interpersonal meaning. The comparative analysis between linguistic evaluation and multimodal evaluation reveals the significant contribution of non-linguistics features, which are commonly used to intensify linguistic evaluation or to express the speakers' attitude.

**Key words:** discussion sessions, multimodal discourse analysis, conference paper presentations, evaluation, spoken academic discourse, discourse analysis

## 1. Introduction

Conference presentations are one of the first challenges a researcher has to face in his or her career, due to the complexity and inter-relationships between the speech events involved in it. This challenge becomes even more relevant for the non-native speaker when the presentation and the discussion session following it have to be done in

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English. One of the most complete studies of the genre of conference presentations is that of Räisänen (1999), which situates the conference paper presentation as part of a genre chain. This chain starts with the call for abstracts in a conference and ends either with the oral presentation during the conference or with the publication of the proceedings. This author (1999, p.69) defines conferences as "sites for publishing research results and an open ground for confrontation, discussion, and ratification of meaning". Conference presentations are meant to provide a forum to promote interaction between scholars. It is also important to note the complexity of conference discourse. Ventola (1999) coined the term 'semiotic spanning' to acknowledge the involvement of all modes of communication: written as well as spoken texts, visual materials and actions, among others; they all form a cohesive communication event. She points out that the relationship between all speech events, between the paper presentation and its source materials as well as between the presentation and the final version of the paper, as published in the proceedings, is a relationship of multimodality which has links to the past and to the future. Therefore, approaches that describe this relationship such as intertextuality or genre analysis seem to be too narrow and not enough to portray the nature of this genre.

Even though the very complex nature of conference presentations can be inferred from Ventola's (1999) statements, up to now the few studies carried out on this genre have focused solely on written texts. One exception is Hood and Forey's (2005) work on the introductions to plenary lectures at a language testing conference, where they examine the co-expression of attitudinal language and gesture. These researchers identify how gesture can function in addition to language to enhance an alignment of the audience with the speaker. They affirm that it is only when all resources are considered together that the elaborate nature of the rhetorical strategies used can be perceived. With regard to conference paper presentations, their complex multimodal semiotics have not been overlooked by scholars who have explored the use of slides and the interaction between speech and this visual aid (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003; Cassily & Ventola, 2002; Dubois, 1980, 1982; Rowley-Jolivet, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). However, only two studies to our knowledge have ventured to focus beyond the words in a systematic way: in the first case (Author et al., 2006) to analyse kinesics accompanying language, and in the second (Author, 2011), to describe the inter-relation between linguistic and non-linguistic features (kinesics and paralanguage) in the following discussion sessions.

In this paper, we adopt a multimodal approach to deepen in the yet relatively unexplored discourse of discussion sessions (DS) (Webber, 2002; and Wulff et al., 2009) in conference paper presentations. As mentioned, this research genre has already received some attention, being the prime interest the presentation itself (Ventola et al., 2002). Academic dialogue, defined as a spoken conversational exchange between two or more people, is one prominent feature that makes a difference between the discussion session and the monologic presentation that precedes it. DS can turn to be challenging encounters, particularly for novice researchers. As noted by Wulff et al. (2009, p.80) "while the presentation can be meticulously prepared, the following discussion can take directions that can sometimes leave the presenter under-prepared". Thus, the relevance of interpersonal communication management and politeness strategies is of outstanding importance in DS. Evaluation constitutes an essential aspect of interpersonal discourse (Mauranen & Bondi, 2003). Besides Wulff et al. (2009) identify a number of differences in the language used in the monologic presentations and the linguistic patterns in the discussion sessions, which are characterised by a more evaluative language. In this article we attempt to shed some light on how this interpersonal resource, evaluation, is deployed in the interaction presenter – discussant from a global perspective.

*1.1 Discussion sessions*

The status of 'discussion sessions' or 'question and response sessions' following paper presentations in conferences has received different consideration by researchers. Räisänen (2002) refers to these sessions as a genre intimately related to the conference presentation and the conference proceedings. Wulff et al. (2009), however, open a discussion about its consideration as a separate genre or as part of the genre of conference presentations, which would have a part A, the monologue by the presenter, and part B, the discussion session. Author (2011), following Räisänen, mantains that it is a different genre since there are significant changes in the discourse, as well as in the purpose of the communicative event. While the objective of the monologic presentation is sharing the results of a certain study; the discussion session consists of a dialogue between the presenter and the discussants, and its purpose is to open the research for discussion: the presenter has to defend the validity of his or her research in the face of possible criticism by discussants. Therefore, the communicative function of discussion sessions tends to be different from that of presentations. There are also some other

substantial differences: whereas the presentation can be prepared in advance, the discussion session is more spontaneous. On the other hand, the roles of presenter or speaker and audience or hearer are static during the presentation, but they are dynamic, changing with every new contribution in the discussion session from the presenter as speaker and the discussant as audience, to the discussant as speaker and the presenter as addressee and audience (Author, 2011). The two central speakers in DS are named here "presenter", to refer to the researcher who has directly before presented his/her research, and "discussant", a member of the audience who takes a turn to make a comment or ask a question.

Discussion sessions require a special type of analysis which takes into account some of the features of conversation analysis such as turn taking and adjacency pairs. In order to apply these features, Author's (2011) study looks at previous publications on discussion sessions. Ventola (2002) describes the structure of the dialogues between the discussants and the presenter in terms of adjacency pair sequences. She distinguishes three stages in each Question/Comment – Answer/Response pair: beginning, middle and end, and notices the relevance of some non-verbal features, such as the acceptance to take the floor by discussants when they are called to do so by the chairs. In her study, Author (2011) analyses the structure of discussion sessions starting from a turn-taking perspective, which distinguishes three patterns of dialogic exchanges: Comment-Comment, Question-Response, and Comment + Question – Response. Within each turn, she then structures the discourse in these exchanges in Moves, as introduced by Swales (1990) for research articles. Table 1 shows the resulting structure.

Table 1. Generic structure Comment + Question – Response exchange (Author 2011: 252).

| **Discussant's turn: comment + question** | |
|---|---|
| Move 1  Opening the turn | *Announcing the question* or *Reacting to the presentation* |
| **Move 2  Contextualising the question (obligatory)** | *Referring to previous experience* or *Checking understanding of the research* |
| Move 3  Making a comment | *Criticising the research* or *Showing alignment with the presenter* |
| **Move 4  Formulating the question (obligatory)** | *Asking a backward question* *Asking a forward question* |
| **Presenter's turn: Response** | |
| Move 1  Opening the turn | *Reacting to the question* |
| **Move 2  Responding to the question (obligatory)** | *Making a straightforward response* or *Expanding the response* (optional) *Reintroducing the response* (optional) *Making a roundabout response* *Reintroducing the response* (optional) |

This structure will also be used in the research described below, and will be the basis of linguistic analysis and subsequent non-verbal analysis.

## 1.2 Multimodal discourse analysis

The new perspective developed in this study of evaluative meaning is Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). MDA argues that it is not possible to get a complete understanding of spoken discourse unless both linguistic and non-linguistic features are jointly analysed. Over the last decades, it has become increasingly evident for researchers (for e.g. O'Halloran, 2004 or Baldry &Thibault, 2006) that, to understand communication patterns, the analysis of language alone is not enough. All of them highlight the fact that all discourse is inherently multimodal. Since Kress and van Leeuwen's *Multimodal discourse* (2001), research has explicitly and centrally focused on multimodality and MDA as a key concern.

MDA has been applied to a considerable number of modes and contexts. Multimodal studies embrace two main areas: multimodality in language and language systems, and multimodality in other systems. The study of multimodality in language and language systems often focuses its attention on interaction, which is examined from two perspectives: human-to-human interaction (Norris, 2004) and human-machine interaction (Roope, 1999). The present study focuses on the former. In this area multimodality is fundamentally the use of two or more of the five senses for the exchange of information.

The theoretical standpoint for much significant work in MDA has been Systemic Functional Linguistics (Thompson & Muntigl, 2008). Nonetheless, the multimodal nature of the interaction has also received the attention of Conversation Analysis scholars. In interpersonal communication, research has shown how various semiotic systems such as speech, gesture, body position, and eye gaze are simultaneously deployed in interaction (Kendon,1990; Goodwin & Goodwin,1992; Martinec, 2001). However, there are very few multimodal discourse analyses that currently focus on the study of research genres.

## 1.3 Evaluation

This study examines how linguistic and non-linguistic resources are used complementarily in DS in order to convey evaluation. The theoretical constructs followed in this research are based on the Appraisal Theory proposed by Martin and

White (2005). According to Martin and Rose (2003), we use Appraisal to negotiate our social relationships by transmitting to our listeners how we feel about things and people. Appraisal resources are classified according to three domains: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. According to Martin and White (2005, p. 35):

> **Attitude** is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. **Engagement** deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. **Graduation** attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred.

Additionally, these three big systems are in turn articulated into other subsystems. According to the model, three domains define *Attitude*: *Affect* as the resources for expressing feelings (e.g. 'enjoy'), *Judgement* as the resources for judging character (e.g. 'impose'), and *Appreciation* as the resources for evaluating the worth of things (e.g. 'interesting'). *Engagement* envisages the possibility of two dialogic alternatives, *expansion* when positions and voices alternative to the authorial voice are expressed (e.g. 'I think'), and *contraction* when the authorial voice fends off alternative positions (e.g. 'but'). The third system, *Graduation*, adjusts the grade of evaluation through two mechanisms: force, grading the *intensification* (e.g. 'quite') and the *quantification* (e.g. 'many'), and focus, *sharpening* (e.g. 'a <u>true</u> friend') and *softening* (e.g. 'a kind of') non-gradable things.

The aim of this article is to examine the linguistic expression of evaluation and the non-linguistic features that co-occurs with it in the Discussion Session of a paper presentation in a conference on Applied Linguistics, more concretely the analysis of the full expression of evaluation in the reaction of Presenters to Discussants' questions. The comparative analysis between linguistic evaluation and multimodal evaluation reveals the significant contribution of non-verbal resources to the expression of evaluation.

## 2.    Methodology

The results we present in this article belong to a wider research project which explores features of language in its broadest sense (linguistic expression, kinesics, and paralanguage) in a set of ten discussion sessions that follow conference paper presentations in English at an applied linguistics conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in

2006[3]. The conference involved only paper presentations, presented by a group of invited speakers, all experts in their field. It represented a relatively intimate conference setting, with the audience numbering approximately fifty.

The conference presentations and discussion sessions were audio and videotaped, and then transcribed (verbatim transcription). After that, the sub-corpus of discussion sessions was prepared to conduct a multimodal discourse analysis. The research we present in this paper focuses on the examination of the discoursal turns, i.e. comment, question, and response. These discoursal turns shape the dialogue held between a discussant and a presenter following the pattern Comment + Question − Response.

The linguistic evaluation and the generic structure (moves) were annotated on the basis of the verbatim transcription. Then, paralinguistic (loudness, syllabic duration, and laugher) and kinesic features (gestures, facial expression, gaze, and head movement) that co-express with the linguistic evaluation were transcribed. In order to be able to analyse such a large amount of different data at the same time, there was a need for a multimodal annotation tool that time synchronised transcriptions and annotations, with audio and video data. We used ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan/), developed at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (MIP) (Nijmegen, The Netherlands), a free tool that provides a sound technological basis for the annotation, transcription, and exploration of multi-media recordings. Without ELAN it would not have been possible to conduct the analysis at the comprehensive level needed for this study. Figure 1 shows a sample of the multimodal annotation and transcription view in ELAN of a portion of the exchange analysed. The four viewers available in ELAN have been labelled on the figure: video, waveform, time position, and annotation density. The annotation density viewer shows the five types of layers used in the study: a) discussant's and presenter's verbatim transcriptions, tagged as "trans D" and "trans P"; b) annotation of discussant's and presenter's linguistic evaluation, "ling eval D" and "ling eval P"; c) annotation of generic moves, "genre"; d) transcription of "paralanguage"; and e) transcription of kinesics: gesture, head movement, gaze, and facial expression, i.e. "gesture", "head",

"gaze", and "face". All viewers were synchronised and thus displayed at the same point in time. In the example, it can be seen how the expression of the evaluative utterance "the wrong" displays on the screen once the data is transcribed and annotated. The audio and video recordings of the linguistic expression have been enriched with the following information: expression of attitude ("att") during the generic move of responding; co-expressed with a gesture of palm down moving to one side ("PDMs"), facial expression of raising eyebrows ("REs"), a head movement of quick nod ("QN"), and a paralinguistic feature of syllabic duration: long ("SDL").
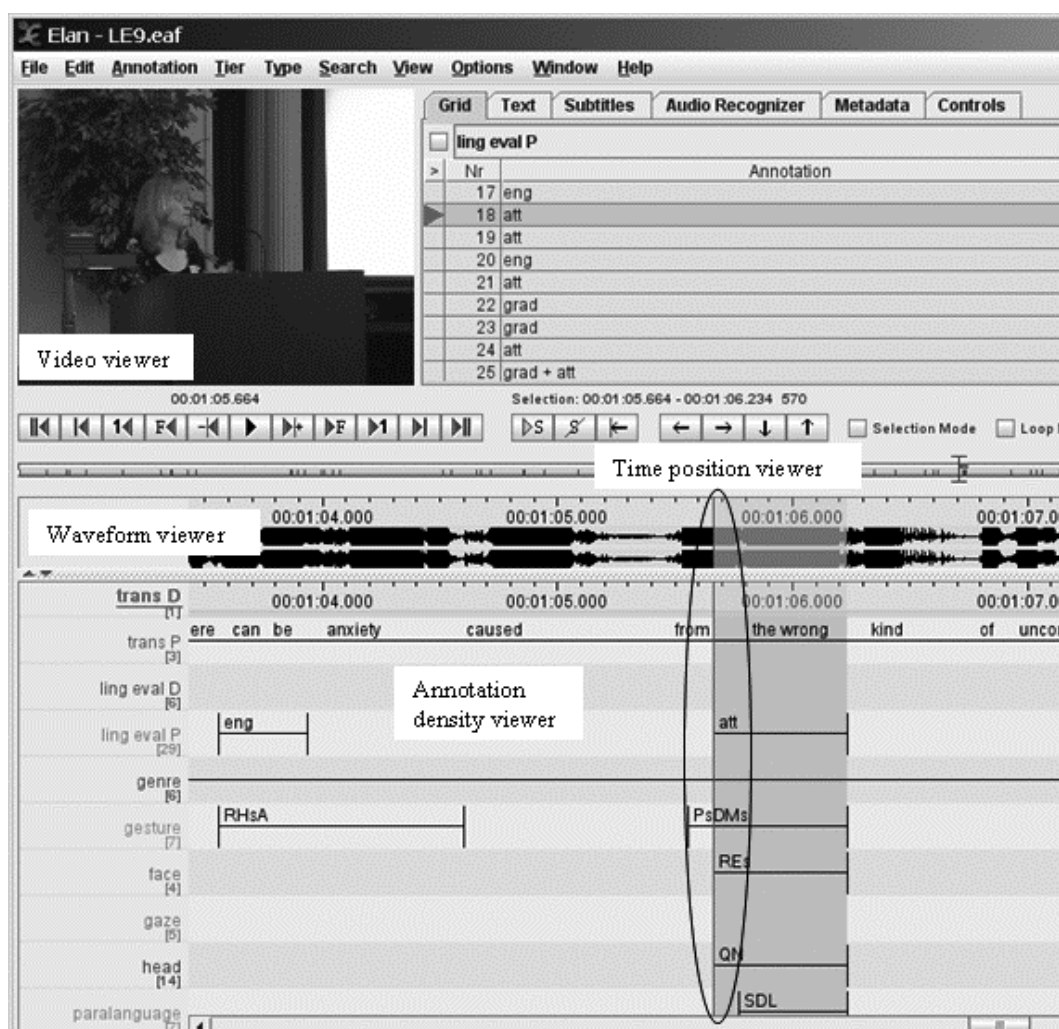


Figure 1. Sample view of multimodal annotation and transcription in ELAN.

The analysis of the semantic resources to express evaluation followed the appraisal model (Martin & White, 2005), as described above. This model, however, was initially developed for the examination of written texts, and although it has been validated for the analysis of spoken discourse, to our knowledge no studies have focused on such

highly interactive discourse as the exchanges of discussion sessions. For this reason, it was necessary to adopt a corpus-driven approach in order to identify evaluative instances and organise them according to the model described. Some changes were necessary to make the model suitable for the needs of the discourse under scrutiny. First, a fourth type of attitude was identified, *acknowledgement*, to consider speakers' expression of agreement or converging on a topic, in their turn as speakers and as listeners' response or backchannels (O'Keefe & Adolphs' (2008) convergence response tokens). Acknowledgement could be described as the evaluation of the alignment with the interlocutor. Secondly, in order to adjust the force of evaluation, instead of using the global term 'intensification' for grading up and down, we distinguished between 'intensification' (e.g. *really*) and 'mitigation' (e.g. *often*) (after Crawford-Camiciottoli, 2009). Furthermore, the examination of evaluation followed a prosodic perspective, a suitable approach to see the connection between evaluative meaning and generic structure.

Regarding the analysis of non-linguistic features co-expressed with semantic evaluation, the study of paralanguage was narrowed down to the identification of three aspects: the speaker's *voice quality* (i.e. loudness and syllabic duration), and *voice differentiator* (i.e. laughter) (Poyatos, 2002); as well as the specification of the functions they accomplish in the discourse. As regards kinesics, we followed McNeill's (1992) classification of gestures which distinguishes four types: *iconic* when there is a formal relationship with the semantic content of speech, *metaphoric* when the relationship is pictorial but the gesture presents abstract ideas, *beats* when the same gesture is used regardless of the content showing the word or phrase as significant, and *deictic* when the gesture points something concrete or abstract. However, as noted on the McNeill Lab website (http://mcneilllab.uchicago.edu/analyzing-gesture/intro_to_annotation.html), these categories should be considered as a continuum rather than "mutually exclusive bins". For the identification of the other kinesic aspects, head movement, facial expression, and gaze, no specific taxonomy was applied. Then, functions of these non-linguistic resources were categorised following previous studies on gestures. Four categories define the model of analysis: *referential* when the kinesic feature represents any aspect of the content of the utterance (Kendon, 2004); *cohesive* when kinesics links part of the discourse (McNeill, 1992); *interactive* when used to maintain interaction rather than to convey meaning (Bavelas et al., 1992); and *pragmatic* which, in turn, can be *performative* showing the speech act, *modal* showing

how the utterance is interpreted, and *parsing* showing punctuation in discourse (Kendon, 2004). Furthermore, evaluation was also interpreted in pragmatic terms where politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) essentially helped to clarify the appraiser's stance. Figure 2 summarises the model followed for the multimodal analysis of evaluative meaning.
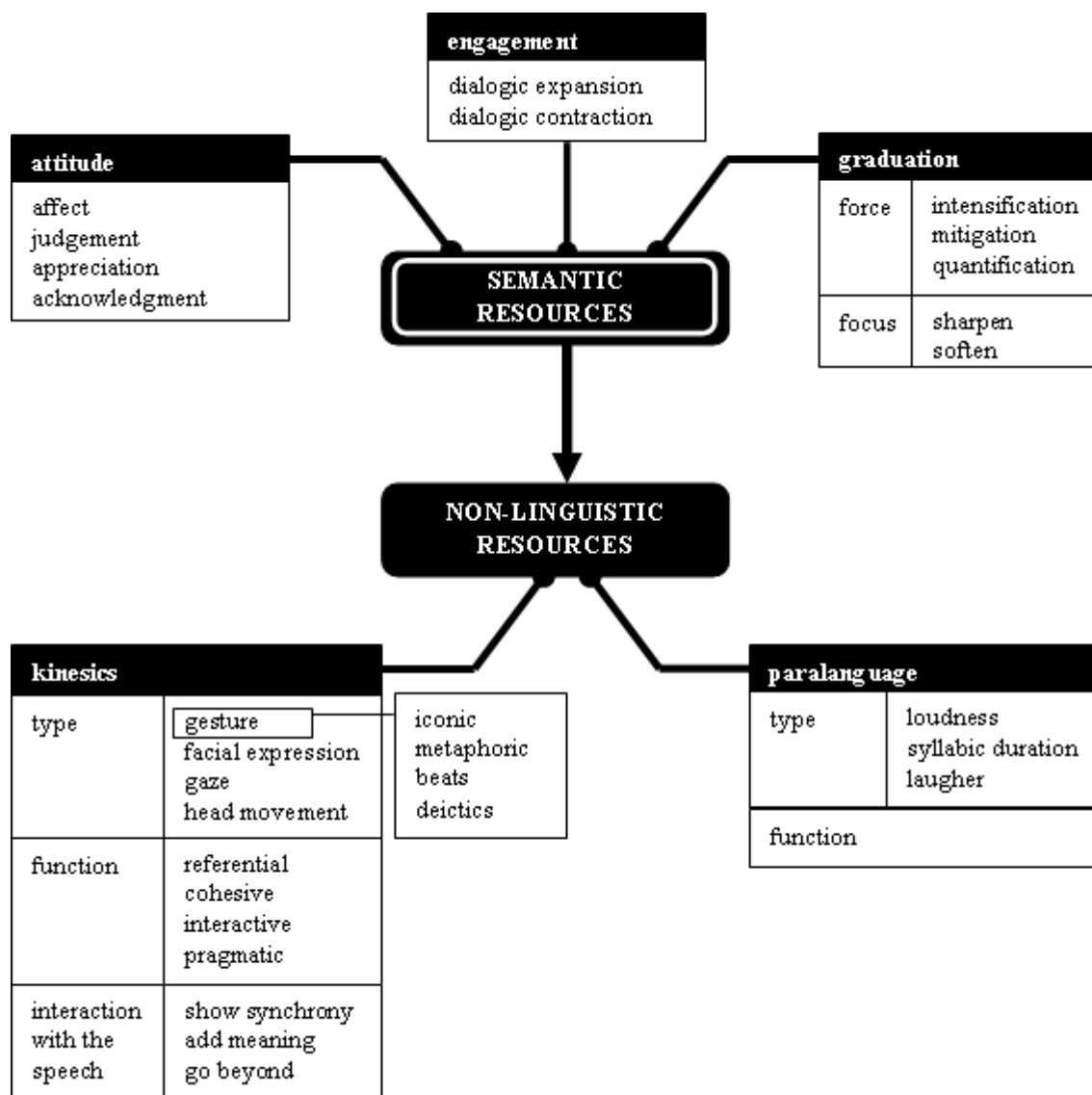


Figure 2. Framework for a multimodal analysis of evaluation.

In this article, we illustrate the results of the study with the analysis of the reaction of the presenter to the discussant's question in a single dialogic exchange. A comparison between linguistic evaluation and multimodal evaluation will bring to the fore the contribution of this innovative approach to the exploration of the expression of interpersonal meaning in spoken academic discourse. It should be pointed out that our

interpretation of the data described in this paper has been discussed with the presenter in the exchange under examination (see Section 3).

## 3.     Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Multimodal analysis

The dialogic exchange under scrutiny follows the pattern comment + question – response. Table 2 shows the generic structure and the verbatim transcription of the exchange. Additionally, the expressions of evaluation are marked in bold type.

Table 2. Generic structure of the dialogic exchange Comment + Question – Response.

| Move | Transcription |
|---|---|
| **Discussant** | |
| Contextualising the question (Referring to previous experience) | (D1.1) *uh going back to the first part of the presentation* |
| Opening the turn (Announcing the question) | (D2) *I **wanted to** ask* |
| Contextualising the question (Checking understanding of the research) | (D1.2) *you **seem** to make a distinction between uh **good** formed consciousness and the **bad** ones, like **you know** consciousness as awareness and consciousness as self consciousness when you do things **too deliberately** in <Presenter: OVERLAP> **yes** </OVERLAP>* |
| Formulating the question | (D3) *is that so?* |
| **Presenter** | |
| Reacting to the question | (P1) *oh that's a **great** question that's a **great** question,* |
| Responding (Straightforward response) | (P2.1.1) *um yeah, awareness and self consciousness **might** be **better** descriptions cuz they are **very different in my understanding** of them and* <br> (P2.1.2) *I I **should** say that **I don't think** unconscious competence is a **problem** if you're not a teacher <Presenter: **LAUGH**> it's it's when you're **trying** to help people come along the pathway that you **need to be able** to dip down and articulate and **be able to** describe the procedure um* |
| (Expanding the response) | (P2.2.1) *but **I think** that self consciousness _it's_it's_ **not unrelated** to this movement because _students_ sense they're not, meeting expectations but they don't know why* <br> (P2.2.2) *so **I think** there **can** be **anxiety** caused from the **wrong** kind of unconsciousness uh the **wrong** kind of unconsciousness **can** lead to the **wrong** kind of consciousness <Presenter: **LAUGH**>* <br> (P2.2.3) *so what we're aiming for is is a sense of power of having students feel they know what the task at hand is and they know how to attain their **own** goals because their competence will **always** be situated they **can** get **as good as** they **want** at presenting or writing here but it's **not going to mean**, they **can** take that back and have that competence at home so they **need** to be to become <Presenter: **LAUGH**> multi competent* |

The first move that discussants can take is *Opening the turn* (D2). They can do it by announcing the question or by showing their reaction to the presentation. In both cases the discussant can choose to use evaluative meaning to carry out the rhetorical function. In the example, the discussant uses a politeness strategy to announce the question.

(1) […] I **wanted to** ask […]

The discussant uses a verb that conveys positive affect of desire, *I wanted*. Nonetheless, the past tense mitigates the expression of desire. This exchange does not follow the common order of the moves expressed in the generic structure observed in the corpus, move 1 is in actual fact move 2 and vice versa. However, it is worth noting the existence of this possibility.

The next move, *Contextualising the question* (D1), is one of the two obligatory moves of the discussant in the exchange (see Table 1). They can choose two ways of contextualising the question, either referring to previous experience or checking their understanding of the research presented to formulate the question on the correct grounds. In addition, discussants can also first refer to previous experience and then check their understanding of the research. In the example, the discussant refers to the presentation, in (2), where no evaluative meaning is expressed, and then checks his understanding of the talk, in (3).

(2) uh going back to the first part of the presentation […]

(3) […] you **seem** to make a distinction between uh **good** formed consciousness and the **bad** ones, like **you know** consciousness as awareness and consciousness as self consciousness when you do things **too deliberately** in <Presenter: OVERLAP> **yes** </OVERLAP> […]

The discussant mitigates his authorial voice, with the expression of dialogic expansion *you seem*, to introduce what he considers is the main idea of the talk. With the use of dialogic expansion, according to Martin and White (2005), the authorial voice here makes space for alternative positions. Then, he develops his uptake noting a distinction between *good* and *bad formed consciousness* when learning a second language. The

adjectives show inscribed[4] positive and negative appreciation and the distinction is intensified with phonetic stress (loudness up) (Chafe, 2002). Nonetheless, these linguistic and non-linguistic resources are not showing the discussant's attitude but reporting the presenter's one. The presenter responds kinesically expressing acknowledgement with a slow head nod. Next, the discussant employs dialogic expansion, with *you know*, to introduce examples of the two types of consciousness, and therefore his interpretation. Bad formed consciousness is described with negative attitude of judgement, *deliberately*, intensified with the adverb *too*. The presenter shows verbal acknowledgement with *yes*, but also kinesic acknowledgement expressed with slow head nods. She also smiles. The facial expression might be interpreted as showing self-protection of positive face, that is, embarrassment for the negative judgement made by the discussant which she agrees with. See kinesic expressions in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Facial expression and head movement co-expressed with "too deliberately".

The last move for the discussant in this type of exchange is *Formulating the question* (D3). As move 2, *Contextualising the question*, this move is obligatory. In the exchange, although the presenter overlaps to show (verbally and kinesically) acknowledgement with the discussant's interpretation of the research the discussant formulates a backward question[5] seeking the presenter's confirmation. Evaluative meaning does not appear in the question.

(4) […] is that so?

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[4] Attitude can be inscribed when a lexical choice is intrinsically evaluative, but it can be evoked when it leads to an evaluative interpretation.

[5] Backward questions are information-eliciting questions that appear to seek answers on some aspect within the scope of the talk and which are not going to pose any problem for the presenter.

Our findings reveal that presenters can convey their response in two rhetorical moves: opening the turn and responding to the question, but only the second move appears in all the exchanges. The first move, *Opening the turn* (P1), shows the presenter's reaction to the question. Presenters can appreciate the question positively, as in example (5), or negatively.

(5) oh that's a **great** question that's a **great** question, […]

The presenter opens the move with the discourse marker *oh* which does not convey evaluative meaning. She shows positive attitude towards the topic of the question, appraising it with the adjective *great* in *that's a great question*, an utterance that is repeated. The verbal expression of positive attitude co-occurs with the kinesic expression head nodding, which could be interpreted as intensifying it.

*Responding to the question* (P2) is the obligatory move of the presenter in this type of dialogic exchange. Presenters can choose to give a straightforward response or a roundabout response. Previous research (Author, 2011) suggests that straightforward responses are commonly followed by an explanatory comment where presenters expand the response, and after that, they can also reintroduce the response. On the other hand, in roundabout responses presenters somehow sidetrack from the subject of the question to eventually give an answer, or not. Roundabout responses can also reintroduce the response at the end of the move. In this exchange, the presenter has already expressed acknowledgement with the discussant verbally and kinesically during the discussant's turn, an attitude that is maintained in move 1 and 2. In move 1, she appraises the question. In move 2, the presenter makes a straightforward response to show the discussant was correct that she had differentiated between a good and a bad form of consciousness. The presenter thinks the discussant's terms "awareness and self-consciousness" captured very accurately the distinction she was trying to convey.

(6) […] um yeah, awareness and self consciousness **might** be **better** descriptions cuz they are **very different in my understanding** of them and […]

From our point of view, the presenter mitigates her authorial voice with *might*, using a negative politeness strategy (Vartalla, 2002). The modal verb is intensified with the co-expression of moving head forward. The presenter does not want to impose upon the

discussant's beliefs, but she appreciates positively the descriptions he proposes with the comparative *better* and intensifies the distinction between the two concepts with the graduation of the adjective *different* with the adverb *very*, in *they are very different*. She employs again dialogic expansion to introduce the straightforward response with *in my understanding*. The presenter nods all the time possibly to intensify her position. Then, in Example 7, she continues with her response showing her agreement with the discussant's suggestion.

(7) […] I I **should** say that **I don't think** unconscious competence is a **problem** if you're not a teacher <Presenter: **LAUGH**> it's it's when you're **trying** to help people come along the pathway that you **need to be able** to dip down and articulate and **be able to** describe the procedure um […]

The presenter opens this part with two utterances of engagement. First, dialogic contraction introduced by the modal verb *should* enhances the authorial voice, and then dialogic expansion with *I don't think* reduces the authorial responsibility (Martin & White, 2005). The first co-occurs with aversion of eyes looking at one side of the room and tilting head to one side, as illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Gaze and head movement co-expressed with "I don't think".

We have interpreted these features as self-protection of positive face since the presenter seems to be about to take a position at odds with the discussant. In the second utterance, the presenter seeks the discussant's eye-contact to be sure the discussant is taking account of her position (Kendon, 1967). She also head shakes quickly, a head movement that co-occurs with the verbal negation intensifying it (McClave, 2000). The presenter uses dialogic expansion in two other occasions to introduce her position at

different stages of the argumentation. She uses a noun of negative inscribed evaluative meaning, *problem,* to refer to unconscious competence. The noun is intensified with long pronunciation of syllable[6]. She also shows aversion of eyes looking towards one side; this could again be interpreted as self-protection of positive face. The presenter only sees unconscious competence as a problem for teachers. She reacts to this statement laughing as a show of positive affect, since the majority of the people in the room including her are teachers. Then, she explains it. She shows positive judgement of capacity with, *you're trying to help*, *you need to be able to [...] and be able to*. In *you're trying to help* the verb *trying* conveys the meaning of attempting to do something that is difficult to do. On the other hand, *need to be able to* introduces the idea of requirement of a skill you must have. The first *to be able* co-occurs with titling head to one side, a head movement that intensifies the utterance in the discourse.

Then the presenter considers it necessary to expand the response by further explaining that she does not think lack of awareness is negative unless one is a teacher.

(8) […] but **I think** that self consciousness _it's_it's_ **not unrelated** to this movement because _students_ sense they're not, meeting expectations but they don't know why […]

In Example 8, the authorial voice is again mitigated with dialogic expansion, *I think*. She uses double negation to show negative appreciation in *it's_ not unrelated*. This is proven with the reasoning that follows it. The utterance *not unrelated* is co-expressed with a gesture that is repeated until *to this movement*. The gesture is a metaphoric one that anticipates with the adjective; the abstract idea evokes the *movement* of *"help people come along the pathway"* (Example 7) in the process of learning. The presenter moves forward one palm onto the other, like one palm down sliding along the opposite palm up without touching each other. Figure 5 illustrates the gesture.

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[6] The ELAN programme can measure the time taken to pronounce a syllable. The comparison with other times the same syllable or word is pronounced allows to point out when the speaker has taken longer than usual to pronounce it. This is interpreted as a way to emphasize a word.

Figure 5. Metaphoric gesture co-expressed with "unrelated to this".

(9) […] so **I think** there **can** be **anxiety** caused from the **wrong** kind of unconsciousness uh the **wrong** kind of unconsciousness **can** lead to the **wrong** kind of consciousness <Presenter: **LAUGH**> […]

For the third time, in Example 9, the presenter states her position. She does it with dialogic expansion twice, first with *I think*, and then with the modal verb *can,* mitigating the authorial voice and conveying the meaning that something is possible or likely, in *there can be* and *can lead*. The first example with *can* co-occurs with hands rotating alternatively; this could be interpreted as also expressing the idea of possibility that one can infer from the modal verb. The metaphoric gesture is co-expressed not only with the modal verb but with the entire utterance *there can be anxiety*, as illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Metaphoric gesture co-expressed with "there can be anxiety".

Instances of negative inscribed evaluative meaning are used with *anxiety* and *wrong*. The adjective *wrong* appreciates the two aspects under discussion, *the wrong kind of unconsciousness* and *the wrong kind of consciousness*. The first *wrong*, that introduces the cause of anxiety, co-occurs with palms moving to one side, raising eyebrows, and with a quick head nod. The gesture can be interpreted as a metaphorical one that

expresses the abstract idea of choosing between two sides, here between "the right type" and "the wrong type". The facial expression could be intensifying the negative appreciation (Ekman, 1972), as quick head nods do. It is interesting to speculate whether her facial expression might have changed with a positive appreciation. In addition, *wrong kind* is also intensified with long syllabic pronunciation. The second *wrong* co-occurs with an upward movement of the head and a change in the direction of her gaze, also upwards. Kinesics might have a parsing function here, marking the discourse structure (Kendon, 2004), since the presenter is introducing a new idea. Furthermore, the third *wrong* is also intensified with raising eyebrows. This facial expression seems to show surprise and could be paraphrased with "can you believe it?" The presenter laughs with this connection where the wrong kind of unconsciousness can lead to the wrong kind of consciousness. Laughter might show positive attitude towards the fact that this relation is governed by the wrong types. This example illustrates how the same word accomplishes different functions depending on the non-linguistic features that co-express with it.

(10)　　　[…] so what we're aiming for is is a sense of power of having students feel they know what the task at hand is and they know how to attain their **own** goals because their competence will **always** be situated they **can** get **as good as** they **want** at presenting or writing here but it**'s not going to** mean, they **can** take that back and have that competence at home so they **need** to be to become <Presenter: **LAUGH**> multi competent

Finally, in Example 10, the presenter relates her reflection to the students. She gradates their goals sharpening them with the adjective *own*, in *their own goals*. She also gradates their competences with *always* intensifying them, in *will always be situated*. The temporal adverb co-occurs with palms down moving from one side to the other, anticipating the abstract meaning of the verb, *be situated.* A lateral sweep of the head is also observed when the speaker utters *always*. According to Kendon (2002), head shakes used in this way function as intensifiers because of their reference to an implied negative 'more than you can know'. The presenter expresses positive attitudes towards students' capacity with *they can get as good as they want*. The modal verb shows positive judgement, as well as the adjective *good* in the comparative structure that intensifies it. In addition, the verb *want* expresses positive desire. The entire utterance

*as good as they want* is co-expressed with a gesture of palms down describing circles and moving forward, the verb co-occurring with the stroke of the gesture. The gesture might be interpreted as representing the abstract idea of improving, of moving forward. However, the presenter also shows the negative side of the situation, conveying negative attitude with *it's not going to mean*. Here the negative appreciation of the situation is mitigated with the verbal tense, where the presenter uses *going to* rather than saying *it doesn't mean*. Finally, she expresses negative judgement with the verbs *can* and *need*. The modal verb gains negative polarity from the negative utterance that precedes it. As for *need*, it is a verb of inscribed evaluative meaning that expresses the idea of a duty; according to the presenter, students must be *multicompetent*. She laughs with this final evaluation as she knows this is difficult to attain, and, possibly, she does not want to be judged by the audience who also know this.

In order to illustrate all the findings discussed here, and to facilitate their comparison with future studies, we have summarized them in Table 3.

Table 3. Presenter's expression of evaluation.

| semantic resource | evaluative cue | non-linguistic resource | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | paralanguage | kinesics |
| Att.: + appreciation | (P1) *oh that's a **great** question that's a **great** question,* | - | head nod |
| Att.: + appreciation | (P2.1.1) ***better*** | - | head nod |
| Att.: - appreciation | (P2.1.2) *a **problem*** | long syllabic duration | aversion of eyes |
| Att.: - appreciation | (P2.2.1) *_it's_it's_ **not unrelated*** | - | metaphoric gesture |
| Att.: - appreciation | (P2.2.2) *the **wrong** kind* | - | moving head up changing gaze direction |
| Att.: - appreciation | (P2.2.2) *the **wrong** kind* | laughter | raising eyebrows |
| Att.: -appreciation | (P2.2.2) ***anxiety*** | - | metaphoric gesture |
| Att.: -appreciation | (P2.2.2) *the **wrong** kind* | long syllabic duration | metaphoric gesture raising eyebrows quick head nod |
| Att.: - appreciation & Grad.: mitigation | (P2.2.3) *it's **not going to mean**,* | - | - |
| Att.: + judgment | (P2.1.2) *you're **trying** to help* | - | - |
| Att.: + judgment | (P2.1.2) *you **need to be able to dip down*** | - | tilting head to one side |
| Att.: + judgment | (P2.1.2) *and **be able to** describe* | - | - |
| Att.: + judgement | (P2.2.3) *they **can** get* | - | - |
| Att.: + judgement | (P2.2.3) ***as good as*** | - | metaphoric gesture |
| Att.: - judgment | (P2.2.3) *they **can** take* | - | - |
| Att.: - judgment | (P2.2.3) *they **need** to be to become* | laughter | - |

| Att.: + affect | (P2.2.3) *they **want*** | - | metaphoric gesture |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eng.: dialogic contraction | (P2.1.2) *I I **should** say* | - | aversion of eyes tilting head to one side |
| Eng.: dialogic expansion | (P2.1.1) ***in my understanding*** | - | head nod |
| Eng.: dialogic expansion | (P2.1.2) ***I don't think*** | - | eye contact head shaking |
| Eng.: dialogic expansion | (P2.2.1) *but **I think** that* | - | - |
| Eng.: dialogic expansion | (P2.2.2) *so **I think*** | - | - |
| Eng.: dialogic expansion | (P2.2.2) *there **can** be* | - | metaphoric gesture |
| Eng.: dialogic expansion | (P2.2.2) ***can** lead* | - | - |
| Grad.: mitigation | (P2.1.1) ***might** be* | - | moving head forward |
| Grad.: intensification | (P2.1.1) ***very** different* | - | head nod |
| Grad.: intensification | (P2.2.3) *their competence will **always** be situated* | - | - |
| Grad.: sharpen | (P2.2.3) *their **own** goals* | - | - |
| - | (P2.1.2) *if you're not a teacher* | laugher | - |

Only a few features seem recurrent, especially head nods and loudness up seem to intensify an attitude of appreciation, which is linguistically expressed with adjectives of positive or negative appreciation such as 'good' or 'bad'. Other features like aversion of eyes, raising eyebrows or tilting head or laughter, though already studied by other researchers in different contexts, would need to be corroborated in further research.

*3.2. The presenter's perspective*

After analysing the results from our point of view as researchers, we submitted the analysis and the video recording to the presenter, as an insider (Mauranen, 2004) in the context of the discourse, in order to confirm our interpretations. Though she acknowledged some of the meanings we gave to her words and gestures, she did not completely agree with our interpretation. The presenter recalls having completely agreed with the discussant in this part of the discussion session. According to her, the words and gestures she used only reinforced her agreement. Moreover, she interprets her contribution in example (7) above as a "straightforward response" in agreement with the discussant, which means there was no need for self-protection of positive face, as we have understood. According to the presenter

> When I went to note that I didn't think unconscious competence was a problem unless one was a teacher, I was making what you're referring to as "a

straightforward response" in that I agreed with the suggestion, I had already said so, and then I expanded my response by further explaining that I didn't think lack of awareness was negative unless one was a teacher. (Personal Communications by email 07/11/2011)

If interpreting words can be subjective, interpreting the intention of gestures and paralinguistic features can be regarded as much more subjective, especially when they convey an evaluative meaning. Reidsma and Op den Akker (2008) note that research on multimodal annotated corpora is always presented as a dilemma, since annotators' subjective processes come into play. However, as Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999, pp. 265-266) have argued

> this condition [referring to the subjective process] does not automatically render the coding enterprise unreliable and invalid. Instead it increases the importance of making the case that judgments of coders are intersubjective, that is, those judgments, while subjectively derived, are shared across coders, and the meaning therefore is also likely to reach out to readers of the research.

Though we have based our analysis on previous studies of evaluative meaning of words and gestures, we cannot disregard the point of view of the person who chose these resources to communicate with the discussant and the audience. Furthermore, we think the research would still be more complete if we could count on the interpretation the discussant and the audience made at the time the discussion took place, something we will take into account in further research.

## 4.    Conclusions

The above description has offered a global analysis of the expression of evaluation from a multimodal perspective. Our analysis has revealed how paralanguage and kinesic features contribute to create the overall meaning of the speech event of discussion sessions in conference presentations. When considering the presenter's non-linguistic reaction during the discussant's turn, this perspective is essential; whereas the presenter only uses one instance of linguistic evaluation to show acknowledgement, she shows her attitude also with kinesic features three times in co-expression with the discussant's negative appreciation. Additionally, the attitudinal meaning conveyed by kinesic

features express the same meaning as the linguistic utterance (head nods seem to show acknowledgement like *yes*), but also new attitudinal meaning (negative affect seems to be conveyed when smiling), from our subjective point of view.

During the presenter's turn, nineteen out of the twenty-nine semantic expressions of evaluation co-occur with non-linguistic features. Moreover, in six instances more than one non-linguistic aspect is co-expressed with an evaluative utterance. This fact brings to the fore the importance of the paralinguistic and kinesic resources employed by the speaker; therefore, it seems more attention should be paid to the meaning conveyed beyond words to express evaluation. Findings have shown that in the dialogic exchange analysed in this paper, non-linguistic features play a primary pragmatic function of the modal kind, either intensifying the evaluative meaning expressed by the linguistic utterance, or showing the speaker's attitude. When conveying attitudinal meaning, kinesics introduce a new perspective to the expression of evaluation, both when co-occurring with utterances that express attitude (showing the same polarity but different type of attitude) and when co-occurring with utterances of engagement.

This article has introduced a new methodology to explore evaluation in discussion sessions, to shed some light on a genre that to date has not received much attention and which can entail serious difficulties for novice presenters. Results have shown the centrality of non-linguistic modes in the expression of evaluation in discussion sessions of academic presentation.

Although it is not common practice in studies using either conversation analysis or systemic functional linguistics, we decided to share our interpretation of the recorded academic speech event with the presenter in order to elicit her opinion. In her reply, the presenter confirms the interpretation given to her words and gestures, except for the part where we perceived an attitude of self-protection of positive face (example 7). The presenter affirms that her words as well as her non-verbal behaviour convey only a "straightforward" answer. In this case, this straightforward answer is contextualised and the way it was delivered (consciously or unconsciously), as compared to the many other options to perform this response, gives way to the possibility of an interpretation that may be different to the first intention of the speaker. However, the presenter's disagreement with some of our interpretation of her utterance reveals the limitations of the analysis, since it is impossible to be completely objective in this kind of interpretation. As concluded by several researchers and recalled by Mauranen (2004),

the interpretation or interpretations of evaluative data by 'insiders', including in this case the presenter, can provide a more complete picture of the evaluative meaning of discussion sessions, complementing the point of view of the 'outsider', the researcher. In any case, an analysis like the one presented hereby can disclose complex data the speaker is not aware of when delivering the discourse. This fact makes us believe that the picture would have been even more complete had we had the possibility to interview the speaker, the discussant and the audience right after the speech event, and therefore triangulate our findings of the performance, something we intend to do in further research. Neither conversation analysis nor systemic functional linguistics has had much interest in triangulating the interpretations of their texts with participants; however, we consider these data would foreground the inside of the interaction, presenters' and discussants' interpretation of the same reality and the interpretation of the outsider. This analysis would provide a comprehensive picture of the multimodal discourse.

The results of this kind of approach can find pedagogical applications in English for academic purposes courses that focus on oral communicative skills at an advanced level, to provide insights into an unrehearsed communicative situation in order to make it easier to understand and to produce not only by paying attention to the words, but also observing the paralinguistic and kinesic features that complete and complement them. Additionally, findings of this type of multimodal analysis can be used in the design of teaching materials, always considering the possible ambiguity of evaluative cues. However, it is not only the findings themselves that might be useful in these realms but also the annotated corpus. The multimodal transcription and annotation of the corpus could also be used in the classroom to show students' instances of authentic communicative situations, and to design teaching materials.

Our findings suggest that the great demand of time and effort that multimodal analysis entails can be worthwhile. This type of research enabled us to interpret evaluation from a broader perspective, and possibly closer to the speaker's intentions and the meaning conveyed by the audience, showing the significant role that paralinguistic and kinesic features play in the expression of evaluation in discussion sessions, information that to date has virtually been ignored by studies of academic spoken discourse

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