Editorial

Multimodal Analysis of Specialized Discourse

In recent years, different theories and approaches have been developed towards research on discourse from a multimodal perspective. The main premise is that "language is inherently multimodal" (Fortanet-Gómez and Crawford Camiciottoli, 2015:2), that is to say, messages are codified across an indeterminate number of 'modes' (words, gestures, facial expressions, writing, colors, music, electronic presentations, etc.) that contribute to the creation of meaning (Jewitt, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Among the most well-known approaches to multimodal studies, three may be highlighted: Multimodal Social Semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2005), Multimodal (or Systemic Functional – Multimodal) Discourse Analysis (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; O'Halloran, 2004, O'Toole, 2011), and Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis (Norris, 2004; Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Studies focusing on specialized discourse, however, have rarely adopted a multimodal point of view (Plastina, 2013; Prior, 2013). And, in the few cases in which this has been the perspective, they have centered for the most part on the study of written materials (Guo, 2004; Yuen, 2004), and some of them on lectures (Bernad-Mechó & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019) and conference presentations (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2012). The analysis of specialized discourse still has much to contribute by applying multimodality theories and methodologies, with the aim to obtain a more complete vision of the intrinsic characteristics of this discourse.

The articles in this monographic volume will therefore be focused on multimodal studies of specialized discourse. The specific purposes of this discourse are business and finance, medicine, science and nursing. There are articles dealing with professional discourse, student and teacher classroom discourse, and media, research and institutional discourses, as well as with a number of different genres: earnings calls, students' presentations, business and product pitches, investor reports, research dissemination talk, medical drama and docu-series, formal and informal classroom texts, promotional videos produced by research groups and from the *Nature* Online Video Streaming Archive, conference presentations, and university websites. We

hope *Ibérica* readers find a special interest for the wide variety of fields and genres studied by the articles in this special issue.

The first contribution is a guest article by BELINDA CRAWFORD CAMICIOTTOLI, **"Multimodality and financial communication: The case of earnings calls"**. She deals with a very specific business genre, the earnings call, that is, a teleconference in which executives present their companies' economic results to professional financial analysts. The multimodal analysis shows the intersemiotic complementarity of several semiotic resources in this genre: prosodic features, accompanying visual supports with numerical data, graphics and images. Verbal and non-verbal resources cannot be understood in isolation. Their combination conveys pragmatic meanings which can sometimes be regarded as authoritative and at other times as tentative, depending on the goals of the participants in the earnings call.

The second article is **"A multimodal approach to business presentations for the tourism industry: Learning communication skills in a master's programme"** by JUAN CARLOS PALMER-SILVEIRA., which deals, like the article following it, with students' presentations simulating business discourse. Palmer-Silveira describes the use of multimodal resources by students giving a presentation to persuade businesspeople to choose a 5-star hotel in Barcelona. A total of 28 presentations by students enrolled in the Master's Degree in English Language for International Trade at Universitat Jaume I (Castelló, Spain) were recorded and analysed. Results show the special relevance of three elements: gestures, pace and rhythm, in the development of appropriate communication skills.

Similarly, in **"Beyond language: A multimodal analysis of success in non-native Business-English pitches"**, ANTONIO JIMENEZ-MUÑOZ analyses from a multimodal perspective 140 business pitches and 376 investor reports presented by students in a Business English course. Results show statistical evidence of the influence of non-verbal elements on pitch success, which reveals an implicit impact of non-verbal aspects and soft skills – such as presenting and negotiating - in academic assessment. From a pedagogical perspective, the author points out the need for a rubric-based assessment method which can consider both speech and other modes – or their combinations – as well as skills-oriented effectiveness under simulation, in order to better match curricular expectations of employability.

In **"Modal coherence in specialised discourse: A case study of persuasive oral presentations in business and academia"**, JULIA

VALEIRAS-JURADO probes into what exactly makes these persuasive presentations effective. Specifically, the question under study is whether it is the choice of persuasive strategies, the number of semiotic modes, or the consistency in the use of these modes (i.e. modal coherence) that affects persuasion more directly. The case study presented compares a research dissemination talk and a product pitch. The results suggest that modal coherence is of crucial importance for the effectiveness of a persuasive presentation. In other words, a varied and balanced use of modes seems to be beneficial, but increasing the number of modes will not make communication more effective unless they are used coherently.

VERONICA BONSIGNORI in **"A multimodal analysis of spoken medical English in expert-to-expert interaction in TV programmes"** focuses on oral communication between professionals in medical contexts. Due to the difficulty in obtaining a real-life corpus, she analyses two American TV products, the medical drama Code Black (2015-present), and the medical docu-series Boston Med (2010). Findings seem to reveal that gaze direction and head movements become more prominent in some sequences as substitutes of gestures when doctors need to use their hands and body posture to help patients. Gestures, however, appear to be much more relevant when doctors discuss a clinical case, either to formulate a diagnosis while visiting a patient or to argue about how a patient was assisted.

In his article **"Display cases, catalogues and clock faces: Multimodal social semiotic analysis of information graphics in civil engineering",** ZACH SIMPSON investigates the social semiotic practices surrounding the use of information graphics within the specialized discourse of civil engineering. The types of written texts collected include formal texts produced by students for the purpose of assessment, informal texts produced by the participants (such as notes taken during classes or discussions), and assigned or given texts such as textbooks and class notes. Three broad social practices surrounding the use of information graphics are identified, each of which is characterised by the representational functions it fulfils: display case, catalogue and clock face graphics. These practices are described, and the features of each of them are explained. The paper concludes with a brief reflection on how delineation of the social practices associated with information graphics enables understanding of civil engineering knowledge.

The following two articles deal with the discourse of research. **"Bridging the gap between experts and publics: The role of multimodality in disseminating research in online videos"**, by MARÍA JOSÉ LUZÓN, analyses two types of online research videos: promotional videos produced by research groups themselves or their institutions, and videos from the Nature Online Video Streaming Archive, which act as a complement to a published paper. These videos are addressed to audiences with different degrees of expertise, so researchers are expected to meet the information needs of various publics. The purpose of the study is to analyze how multimodal strategies are used to recontextualize knowledge for an interested public. The strategies to engage the readers and attain affective engagement are realized by orchestrating resources of speech (e.g. lexical and grammatical choices which convey intimacy, informality or affinity), image and gestures.

In **"Introducing nursing Conference Presentations: A Step Forward"**, MIGUEL RUIZ-GARRIDO studies the beginning or set-up stage of conference presentations in Nursing. The aim of the study is to check whether there is a common pattern to start paper presentations in an international Nursing conference, and to analyse those initial sections from a multi-layer perspective. A dataset of 16 invited conference presentations on nursing are analysed. Data indicate that paralinguistics and kinesics play a relevant role when speaking in public, mostly when supporting the creation of the speaker's persona and the relationship with the audience. In this analysis, pitch or silence, on the one hand, and head and hand/arm movements and gestures, on the other, are common semiotic resources that support the spoken language. Additionally, metadiscourse and non-linguistic features show diversity in the promotion of speakers' personae and audience engagement.

The last article in this special issue researches institutional discourse. **"Representation of international students on Australian universities websites: A critical multimodal discourse analysis"**, by ZUOCHENG ZHANG and WENCHAO TU conceptualizes university websites for international students as multimodal texts employing language and other semiotic resources such as images to represent these students. The interplay between images and linguistic texts assists in achieving accommodation in human communication. Based on a qualitative inquiry into the webpages for international students on the official websites of three Australian universities, the article shows how these institutions categorize international

students and represent them in perceived activities and interpersonal relations through language and other modes. The discursive representation of international students by the three Australian universities is discussed in relation to conceptual shifts in international student education, diversity management and multimodal discourse analysis. The article concludes with implications for international student representation and university webpage design, as well as education in languages for specific purposes.

This special issue of *Ibérica* also contains four book reviews related to its monographic topic: *Introducing Multimodality* (by Carey Jewitt, Jeff Bezemer & Kay O'Halloran, Routledge 2016), commented on by LARISSA D'ANGELO (Universitá degli studi di Bergamo, Italy); *Multimodality across Communicative Settings, Discourse Domains and Genres* (by Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli & Veronica Bonsignori, eds., Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2016), evaluated by ADRIANA GORDEJUELA (University of Navarra, Spain); *Multimodal Analysis in Academic Settings: From Research to Teaching* (by Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli & Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez, eds., Routledge Studies in Multimodality 2015), assessed by JAN ENGBERG (Aarhus University, Denmark), and *Doing Visual Analysis* (by Per Ledin & David Machin, Sage 2018), reviewed by L KUMARAN RAJANDRAN (Universiti Sains Malaysia. Malaysia).

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