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## MULTIMODAL STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS IN ENGLISH FOR NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS

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**ABSTRACT.** *The goal of this article is to describe the course “Academic English for Teaching and Presenting” (designed to help non-native speakers to communicate effectively in English for Academic Purposes) and to better understand the strategies and tactics needed by 19 Spanish academics to carry out an effective presentation in English. To achieve this objective, data was collected from the following sources: a questionnaire to elicit information about the participants’ experience and needs, a multimodal analysis of the recordings of their presentations, the PowerPoint © or LaTeX © slides, peer evaluation grids and the participants’ evaluation of the course. As the results may suggest, those speakers with a high competence in the English language frequently use a variety and combination of modes and paralinguistic and interpersonal tactics, whereas those with a low competence tend to focus on the oral mode and do not resort to body language or interactive strategies. The findings of this study point to the need to focus on multimodality and interactivity in academic presentation courses.*

**KEY WORDS:** *EAP, genre studies, presentations, Spanish academics, international congresses, multimodality, paralinguistic and interactive strategies.*

**RESUMEN.** *El objetivo del presente artículo es describir el curso “Academic English for Teaching and Presenting” (diseñado para ayudar a hablantes no nativos a comunicarse de manera efectiva en Inglés con Fines Académicos) y poder entender mejor las estrategias y tácticas que 19 docentes e investigadores españoles necesitan para llevar a cabo un presentación eficaz en inglés. Para lograr este fin, los datos fueron recogidos utilizando distintas fuentes: un cuestionario para obtener información acerca de la experiencia y las necesidades de los participantes, un análisis multimodal de las grabaciones de las presentaciones, las presentaciones PowerPoint © y Latex © y las evaluaciones, realizadas por los participantes, de las presentaciones y del curso. Los resultados sugieren, quizás, que los participantes que tienen un nivel alto en lengua inglesa suelen utilizar una variedad y combinación de modos y tácticas paralingüísticas e interpersonales, mientras que los que tienen un nivel bajo tienden a centrarse en el modo oral y no recurren a estrategias de lenguaje corporal o de interacción. Este estudio apunta hacia la necesidad de prestar atención a la multimodalidad y la interactividad en los cursos sobre presentaciones académicas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Inglés con Fines Académicos, análisis de géneros, presentaciones, docentes e investigadores españoles, congresos internacionales, multimodalidad, estrategias paralingüísticas y de interacción.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that English is the language used at the majority of international conferences in all parts of the world, regardless of the field of study, i.e. it has become the current *lingua franca* of academic presentations. At these worldwide congresses, native and non-native English speaking researchers meet to share their findings through verbal talks, which in most cases are enhanced by multimedia presentation programs, such as PowerPoint© or LaTeX©. The written papers presented by the academics have been previously approved and/or accepted by a qualified academic commission some time before the event. Thus, there is no questioning the relevance or the validity of the study or its representation in the written form. However, there is no guarantee that the researcher is well-prepared to carry out an effective presentation, whether the speaker be native or non-native. Nevertheless, researchers of other

languages are usually at a disadvantage with regard to investigators who are reporting on their studies in their mother tongue.

Unfortunately, little has been published on the experiences and strategies followed by non-native English speaking academics. In so far as description of courses, most published material deals with EAP (English for Academic Purposes) to help foreign students in English speaking countries to follow through with university courses (Flowerdew 2002; Jordan 1997; Swales 2000), but little has been written about the case of academics who are experienced in doing and reporting on research in their own language, but are now confronted with writing and presenting in English. In general, more has been published on academic writing than in academic speaking genres concerning foreign academics (Fortanet *et. al.* 1998, 2004; Swales 1990, 2004).

In so far as presentations are concerned, there have been many commercial oral presentation guides to help speakers to be effective (e.g., Comfort, 1995; Ellis & O'Driscoll, 1992). On a more academic level, Reinhart (2004) has published an excellent guide for academics in general (not specifically non-native speakers) to be more effective in their presentations. With regard to conferencing and the status of the English language, *The Language of Conferencing* (Ventola *et.al.* 2002) is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of papers focusing on: whole conferences and their component genres, some particular discourse features and the intercultural and educational implications of the increasing domination of English as an international conference language. In the cited volume, Ventola, Shalom and Räisänen also begin to view conferences as multimodal, that is as events in which communication comes about through the use of different modes or multimodality. In the words of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001: 20), multimodality is the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event (such as a conference presentation), together with the particular way in which these modes are combined.

We agree with Ventola (2002: 17), who states, “Merely stating the difference between modes is not sufficient - speakers must also be shown how they could/should vary their linguistic and non-linguistic realisations when mode changes are necessary in various speaking contexts”. Our aim is much like Shalom’s (2002: 51-68) in that the pedagogic motivation for this paper also stems from the need to further our understanding of how academic discourse communities carry out their communicative purposes in the conference forum. In addition, we wish to inform our teaching and to help non-native novice academic speakers to carry out relatively successful presentations.

There is a need to design courses that will help academics to communicate their research in English successfully. These courses should aid academics to report on their research not only in written, but also in spoken genres. If we imitate studies for university students entering either undergraduate or graduate programs in English we should help academics to become more aware of the particular genre and to take note of the multitude of modes used in communicating.

In the present study, which has been inspired by ethnography, we have attempted to describe the case of a group of Spanish academics, from different fields at the University of Alicante, who enrolled in a twenty-hour course which was designed to help them carry out presentations in English at international congresses. It takes into account the description of the course, the participants and their experience, recordings of their presentations, the PowerPoint© or LaTeX© slides, and the participants’ peer evaluations as well as an assessment of the course. Besides describing the course and all of its components, it also explores the combination and diversity of modes within the presentations of the variety of fields. The following research questions guided our multimodal discourse analysis:

1. What modes are used?
2. Are there differences in the use of modes depending on the field?

3. What combination of modes is most frequent and is there a relationship between effectiveness and the use of modes?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Keeping with the guidelines of qualitative analysis and ethnographic studies, several instruments were used to obtain a holistic view of the situation: the course, its participants and their use of multimodality:

- A qualitative description of the course,
- Questionnaires to better understand the non-native academics' situation with regard to academic presentations,
- A multimodal analysis of the video recordings of each of their presentations,
- Summaries of peer assessment grids,
- The participants' evaluation of the course.

To simplify matters we will describe: the course, the participants and how the data was collected in a concise manner.

### 2.1. *The course*

“Academic English for Teaching and Presenting” is the course sponsored by the *Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación* of the University of Alicante, which aims to help academics from different fields to carry out an effective talk in English at international conferences. The twenty-hour course has two major parts. Part I consists of becoming aware of the characteristics of the multimodal presentation genre and setting up strategies for a successful performance. Part II involves individual performances of research presentations and post discussions that include the instructors and peers' constructive criticism and feedback. In the first half hour participants are asked to share their reasons for having enrolled for the mini-course and are informed of the main objectives:

- To take note of the verbal and non-verbal language that will help to link and organize our spoken multimodal discourse.
- To review guidelines for effective communication in Academic English.

Part I is guided by awareness questions such as: What are the three main components of any presentation? (The audience, the message and the speaker), What must the speaker know about the audience to carry out a successful talk? What modes will the message take into account? (Spoken, written, image and body language), What verbal and non-verbal connections may be made to go from one point to another? (i.e., discourse markers, stress, intonation, gestures and body movements). Once the participants are made aware of the general characteristics of most talks, they are asked to work in groups of related fields to come up with ‘rules of thumb’, visual tactics and ten steps to follow in the carrying out of a successful presentation (Morell, 2007). Part II consists of the actual performance of each participant. They are required to prepare a short presentation (20 min.) on a topic from their field, preferably one which they have the intention of delivering at an actual conference and should therefore keep in mind all the idiosyncrasies of their particular academic presentation genre. The talks are accompanied by slides (usually PowerPoint© or LaTeX©).

## 2.2. *The participants*

The participants of the group under study are 19 Spanish academics working at the University of Alicante, Spain. Their level of competence in English ranges from upper intermediate to advanced and they come from a variety of research fields (Earth Sciences, Robotics, Archeology, Chemistry, Linguistics, Economics, Pedagogy, Engineering, Optics, etc.). With the aim of gathering data about their experience and needs for conducting presentations in English, a questionnaire was given to the subjects at the beginning of the course. The first part of the questionnaire focused on the students' experience and needs for presenting in English, whereas the second part had to do with the specific characteristics of presentations of their field. In other words, the distinguishing features of their field's spoken academic genre.

## 2.3. *The data*

The collection of data was done in an eclectic fashion, that is, apart from the abovementioned questionnaire, information was gathered from four other sources, namely recordings of oral presentations, the PowerPoint© or LaTeX© files used by speakers, peer assessment grids and an evaluation of the course. The recordings were used to carry out a multimodal analysis, in other words, an interpretation of the use and combination of the different modes. The analysis of each digitally recorded talk was aided by the corresponding slide presentation. Besides this objective material, we made use of a peer evaluation grid, which allowed us to have a general subjective view of each performance, and the evaluation of the course, which helped us to determine the assets and liabilities of "Academic English for Teaching and Presenting".

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. *Results from the questionnaires*

The results from the surveys are based on the academics' responses to the questions and are described in the following order: a) Level of competence in English, b) Experience presenting in English and, c) Characteristics of the presentations in their fields.

#### 3.1.1. Level of competence in English

The majority of the academics stated that they had enrolled in the course because they wanted to improve their level of English for presentations. As indicated by the questionnaires, 89% of the participants had an intermediate level and 11% an advanced level in the English language. Their practice of the language had been mostly in written rather than in spoken academic English.

#### 3.1.2. Experience presenting in English

Although the subjects had attended many conferences in English (31% had listened to 1-5 conferences in English and 32% had been to a conference in English 11 or more times), they had less experience in carrying out a presentation in English. As can be observed in the graph below, the majority had not given a conference in English, and only 6% had presented in English 6-10 times.

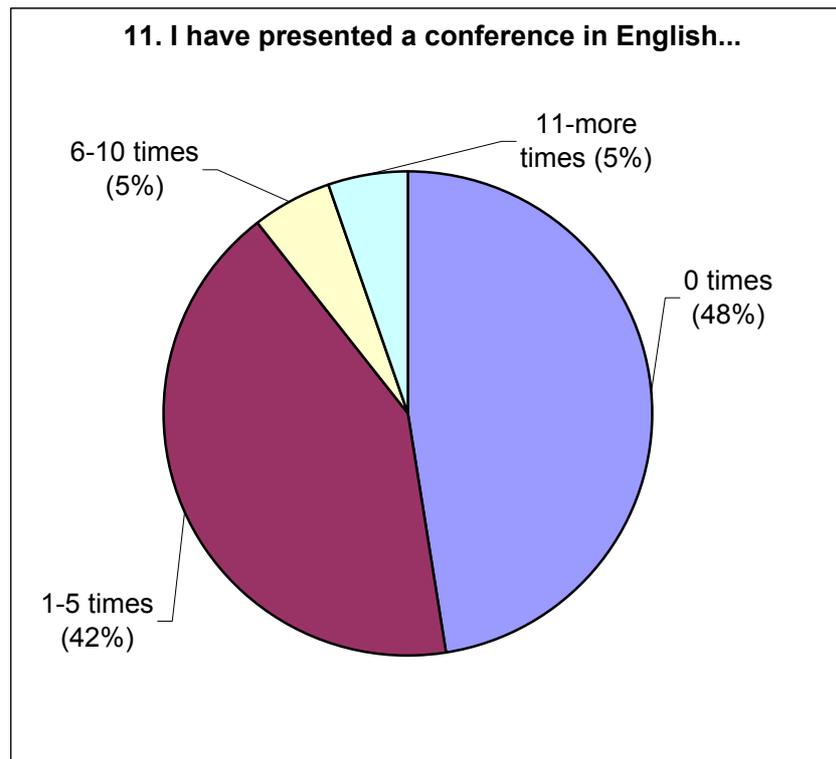


Fig.1. *Experience presenting in English*

### 3.1.3. Presentation characteristics in the different fields

The academics responded to questions about the specific features of presentations in their discipline. All of them stated that a coordinator introduced them to the audience, that the conferences were formal and these had been held in a variety of places including conference halls, auditoriums and university classrooms.

Regarding the features of the presentations, the differences can be seen in the absence of some parts. In many cases, the academics indicated that in the conferences of their particular disciplines there was a lack of any interactive features such as attention capturing beginnings, explicit statements or questions to focus on the main objectives, debates or questions to involve the audience. In addition, in so far as the use of multimedia, the participants from the technical sciences claimed to use LaTeX©, whereas those from the social sciences used PowerPoint©.

### 3.2. *Results from the multimodal discourse analysis*

As was mentioned in the introduction, the three questions which guided our multimodal discourse analysis were:

1. What modes are used?
2. Are there differences in the use of modes depending on the field?
3. What combination of modes is most frequent and is there a relationship between effectiveness and the use of modes?

Therefore, we set out to take note of the predominant modes and the sequence of modes used every two minutes of the first eight minutes of each talk. We also took into account the

field and topic of each speaker, since it was hypothesized that they may affect their performances. In other words, it seemed natural that technical science lecturers might make more extensive use of visual aids than those from the social sciences or humanities. Finally, as can be seen in the table below, some additional comments concerning each presentation were included. (Note - so as not to exceed the permitted length of the paper, we have only included the annotations of twelve of the nineteen presentations).

Speaker	Field-Topic	Predominant mode	Sequence of modes	Comments
1	Computational Sciences and Artificial Intelligence - "Teaching a Computer Language".	2 <sup>nd</sup> min. - spoken 4 <sup>th</sup> min. - spoken 6 <sup>th</sup> min. - spoken 8 <sup>th</sup> min. - spoken.	simultaneous use of spoken and written. Sometimes speaking without referring to the written	Lack of confidence in English. Excessively preoccupied with verbal. Referred very little to PPT. Some hand movements
2	Civil Engineering – "Global warming & predictions".	2 <sup>nd</sup> min.- spoken + image 4 <sup>th</sup> min.- spoken + image 6 <sup>th</sup> min. - spoken + image 8 <sup>th</sup> min. - spoken + image	introduced with verbal then image. Simultaneous use of verbal and image	Fairly accurate. Used pointer. Questions, carried out exercise, good use of discourse markers. Moved back and forth from screen.
3	Computational Sciences & Artificial Intelligence – "3D data application & stereo vision".	2 <sup>nd</sup> min.- spoken + image 4 <sup>th</sup> min.-spoken 6 <sup>th</sup> min.- spoken 8 <sup>th</sup> min.-spoken	simultaneous	Lack of confidence in English. Didn't point, just clicked on mouse. Some hand movements
4	Civil Engineering – "Microstructure of Portland Cement Paste".	2 <sup>nd</sup> min.- spoken + image + body 4 <sup>th</sup> min. - spoken + written 6 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken + body 8 <sup>th</sup> min. image + spoken	simultaneous	Continuously referred to screen; used mouse & pointer. High vocabulary.
5	Economics - "How does Entrepreneurship work?"	2 <sup>nd</sup> min. – spoken + written 4 <sup>th</sup> min.- spoken + written 6 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken + written 8 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken+ written + image	simultaneous use of modes (spoken + written + image) some body	Uses hand to enumerate points. Moves around classroom.
6	Applied Physics – "Plastic Lasers"	2 <sup>nd</sup> min. – spoken + written 4 <sup>th</sup> min. – spoken + written + image 6 <sup>th</sup> min. – spoken + image 8 <sup>th</sup> min. images explained orally + body	Sometimes simultaneous and others consecutive. 3 sequences: 1. spoken-image 2. spoken + written + image 3. spoken-image + written	High volume. Large images small lettering, Written progressively backgrounded.
7	Prehistory - "The Iberians"	2 <sup>nd</sup> min. – spoken + body	Consecutive: oral + body –	Expressive use of body language. Attractive

		4 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken + body + written 6 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken + body 8 <sup>th</sup> min. – spoken + body + image	image + written	images. Asked questions.
8	Robotics - “Omnidirectional images”.	2 <sup>nd</sup> min – spoken + image 4 <sup>th</sup> min. - image + spoke 6 <sup>th</sup> min. – image + spoken 8 <sup>th</sup> min. – image + spoken	Usually consecutive; when simultaneous indicates “I am going to show an image”. 1 <sup>st</sup> speaks 2 <sup>nd</sup> image, 3 <sup>rd</sup> explains image orally & sometimes with hand gestures	Refers explicitly to images.
9	Optics – “Characteristics for choosing correct camera”.	2 <sup>nd</sup> min. spoken – written 4 <sup>th</sup> min.- spoken-body-written 6 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken + image – body (pointed) 8 <sup>th</sup> min.- Spoken (audience’s questions)	Usually consecutive (except 6 <sup>th</sup> min)	Not much attention paid to images in spite of topic. Used humor.
10	Statistics - “Tools in Bio-informatics”.	2 <sup>nd</sup> min.- spoken-body-written 4 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken-body-image 6 <sup>th</sup> min- spoken-body-image 8 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken-body- written + image	Usually consecutive	Usually speaks to explain while moving and at times faces and points at the screen. Gave back to audience. Makes many references of images. Simultaneous use of modes difficult to follow.
11	Pedagogy - “Creativity in Educational Processes”.	2 <sup>nd</sup> min. – spoken 4 <sup>th</sup> min spoken – body (written but not referred to ) 6 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken-image 8 <sup>th</sup> mn. Spoken (+ image not referred to)	Simultaneous (spoken and body) mostly only spoken	PPT and images on slides not referred to.
12	Computing Technology – “Domain Name Service”	2 <sup>nd</sup> min.- spoken + written (not referred to) 4 <sup>th</sup> min.- spoken * written (not referred to 6 <sup>th</sup> min. – spoken + image 8 <sup>th</sup> min. spoken + written (not referred to)	Consecutive.	Oral predominance. Use of monotonous tone. No pointing or turning to screen.

Table 1. *Multimodal Analysis Chart*

In response to the questions which guided this multimodal analysis, we may say that all four modes examined, i.e., spoken, body, written and image are used to a greater or lesser extent. In addition, the most predominant, in most cases, is the spoken mode followed by either the body movements or written mode (on the slides) and last the images. Generally speaking, the presentations of the technical sciences in these talks make greater use of images; however, it is only those speakers with a higher competence level that actually foreground the visuals, except for one case, in which we noted that many images were used but not excessively mentioned.

A careful and reiterated view of the recordings and of the data found in the table above, suggests that speakers with a higher competence level in English tend to use a greater variety and combination of modes. These speakers (i.e., speakers 2, 4 and 7) appeared to be more concerned with communicating their messages (than those at lower levels) and made an extra effort to combine modes to enhance the audience's comprehension. In certain cases, although linguistic inaccuracies were noted, the speaker came across as a good communicator due to his/her effective use of modes and interactive strategies (e.g., Speaker 7).

In contrast, in other situations, those speakers with a good domain of the English language, who made a simultaneous use of modes, as was later confirmed in the peer evaluations, were not so easy to follow (see Speaker 10). On the other hand, those with a lower level of competence could not help being overly concerned with the spoken mode and therefore would at times not even refer to the written or visual modes at their disposal (See Speakers 1, 11 & 12). In some of the extreme cases, it seemed as if the verbal presentations had nothing to do with the accompanying slides. Further comments on the relationship between effectiveness and the use of modes can be found in the discussion where we have attempted to triangulate the results of the questionnaire, the multimodal discourse analysis and the evaluations.

### *3.3. Summary of the peer assessment grids*

The peer evaluation grids were designed to reflect all of the concepts and tactics provided in the course to aid in carrying out a successful presentation. As can be noted in Fig.2 and Table 2 below, each presentation was evaluated, by each academic, according to the contents of the course, that is, the verbal and non-verbal language that links and organizes the spoken multimodal discourse and the guidelines for effective communication in Academic English. Table 2 summarizes the general comments for each speaker by listing all of the aspects the academics were to take note of when evaluating their peers. The check mark (✓) indicates the presence or the successful use of the given characteristic. The cross (X) signifies the absence or misuse of the feature, whereas a percentage indicates the proportion of academics who believed that the particular item was present or carried out well.

ACADEMIC ENGLISH FOR TEACHING AND PRESENTING										Evaluation of				
SPEAKER														
OPENING	Greetings and introduction?													
	Effective motivation?													
	Clearly stated objective?													
	Contents list shown?													
MESSAGE	Clearly explained?													
	Relevant information?													
	Logical order?													
	Discourse markers well used?													
	LANGUAGE AND PRONUNCIATION	Clear pronunciation?												
		Natural?				Read?				Memorized?				
		Emphasis on key words?						Used an appropriate tone and intonation?						
		Enthusiastic about his/her topic?												
	MODES	Eye contact with the audience?												
		Appropriate gestures and postures?												
		AUDIOVISUAL AIDS	Content per slide: too much - enough - not enough?											
			Contrast and colours used effectively?											
Good letter size?														
Good use of figures, tables or graphs?														
WAS THERE A SUMMARY?														
WERE AUDIENCE'S QUESTIONS ANSWERED?						DID HE/SHE LEAD US TO FURTHER THOUGHT?								
DID HE/SHE SAY <i>THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION</i> ?														
COMMENTS:														

Fig. 2. Copy of the peer-evaluation grid used in the workshop.

Speaker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Greetings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Motivation (attention grasping)	X	√	X	√		√	√	√	√	√	75%	√
Objective	√	√	√	√	70%	√	√	√	√	√	85%	√
Index	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√
Logical order	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	75%	√
Clear explanation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	50%
Natural speech	√	√	70%	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	75%
Pronunciation	X	√	70%	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
Intonation	X	√	70%	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
Tone	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
Discourse markers	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	75%	50%
Stress on key words	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	70%	X	X
Eye contact	√	√	80%	√	√	√	√	√	√	80%	√	X
Gestures	X	√	70%	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
Graphs/figures	X	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√
Color	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√
Contrast	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√
Letter size	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
Interaction	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
Summary	√	√	√	X	75%	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
Led to further thought	X	X	X	√	65%	√	√	√	√	75%	X	√

Table 2. Summary of the presentations' peer evaluations.

As may be noted from the table above, and according to the participants of the course, speakers 2,4,6,7,8, 9 and 10 made use of nearly all the verbal and non-verbal language aspects as well as the guidelines recommended to assure a successful performance. In contrast, speakers 1, 3, 11 and 12 failed to make use of or were unsuccessful in carrying out many of the suggested tactics. In all four of these cases the speakers were unsuccessful in the use of paralinguistic features (i.e., pronunciation, intonation, tone, stressing key words etc.) and in most of the interpersonal variables (motivation –attention grasping beginning, interaction, summary and leading to further thought). In the case of speaker 5, although he made good use of both the paralinguistic and the interpersonal features, he was ineffective in the visual tactics (i.e., graphs/figures, colour, contrast, letter size).

### 3.4. Results of the course evaluation

The course evaluation sheets designed by the “*Instituto de las Ciencias de la Educación*” aim to improve the quality of the courses or workshops offered to the teaching and research staff of the university. In this particular case, the forms were distributed to the participants at the end of the last session. They were asked to anonymously evaluate the following aspects on a scale of 1 to 10: interest of course content, materials used, learning sensation, group participation, methodology, instructors’ preparation, use of work carried out and global course evaluation. The average grade for each item ranged from 8 to 10.

For our purposes, the following suggestions, made by the participants in the open ended evaluation section, serve as interesting modifications and extensions to fulfil the needs of the non-native English speaking academics. Several participants recommended that we make use of the video recordings in other sessions either to comment on the use or misuse of modes or for the individuals to become more aware of their own performance. As an alternative to giving presentations on the research of each academic, one participant suggested that we propose two or three topics to be done individually by several members of the group, so that we could see how the same topics could be presented differently. At least five academics proposed to design presentation courses for specific disciplines in order to deal with the idiosyncrasies of each field of study. One further suggestion was to maintain an open workshop throughout the academic year for individual academics to present their papers and obtain constructive feedback before going to a particular international conference.

## 4. DISCUSSION

In the present study we have described the course (workshop) “Academic English for Teaching and Presenting”, the particular case of 19 academic participants and their presentations. Our aim was not only to portray the program, but also to better understand the effects of the use of modes. In revising our results from the variety of instruments used, we have noted that the effectiveness of the presentations depends on a range of verbal and non-verbal features and modes as well as on the linguistic and communicative competence level of the participants.

To begin with, our concern was on the use of and combination of modes. In this respect, we have found that it is almost inevitable not to use at least the following modes: spoken, written, image and body language. For the most part, the most predominant mode was the spoken, followed by either the body movements or written mode (on the slides) and last the images. Generally speaking, the technical sciences represented in these talks did make greater use of images, yet in some cases the images were only in the background. It appears to be that those speakers who used images and foregrounded them had a higher competence level.

Our findings also suggest that those academics with a higher English language competence level seemed to make greater use of a variety of modes, whereas those with a lower competence level concentrated mostly on the spoken mode. In so far as the sequencing of modes is concerned, generally speaking, those with less confidence in the language seemed to favor a simultaneous use of modes or, perhaps it would be better to state that, they concentrated on the spoken while in the background appeared either the written or the image. In contrast, those who were more confident with the language experimented more with the consecutive, as well as with a combination of both consecutive and simultaneous use of modes. For example, several speakers started speaking, then showed an image and then explained it orally while using body language.

In revising our results we have found that the participants who, for the most part, used the variety of modes in diverse combinations, were also able to include and combine the textual (e.g., objective, index), paralinguistic (e.g., pronunciation, tone, intonation) and interpersonal (e.g., motivation, interaction, further thought) features that were recommended in the workshop for a successful performance. On the contrary, those who did not use a variety and combination of modes were unsuccessful in their use of the paralinguistic and interpersonal aspects.

Another finding which was confirmed by the questionnaire, the multimodal analysis and the evaluations was that most academics had not paid much attention to the use of interactive features prior to this course. This lack of interaction was mentioned in the questionnaires, where academics stated that in their fields presentations hardly ever included techniques to captivate the audience or any strategies to enhance bi-directional communication (such as questions and debates). In other words, in the specific contexts of spoken academic sharing of knowledge, the transmission of content seemed to be the exclusive goal.

Although the outcomes of this study may not be generalizable at all levels we can begin to postulate some characteristics for well-designed presentation courses for Spanish academics. First, these types of workshops should be designed according to the participants' level of competence. As we were able to prove in several cases, lack of confidence in the use of the English language inhibited the proper use of paralinguistic and interpersonal tactics. Second, courses to aid non-native English speaking academics should emphasize the use of multimodality. This assumption is supported by the fact that the presentations evaluated as effective made good use of a variety of modes usually in a consecutive sequence. Third, academics must be made aware of the fact that effective communication at international congresses does not only involve the transmission of ideational content but also of interpersonal strategies. Finally, as was suggested by several participants on the course evaluation, there is a need to design and offer presentation courses for non-native English speaking academics of specific fields, so that they may have a closer look at the peculiarities of their own disciplines.

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