

# New genres and new approaches: Teaching and assessing product pitches from a multimodal perspective in the ESP classroom

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**ABSTRACT:** One of the most innovative genres in today's business communication is the product pitch (PP), mainly characterised by its multisemiotic nature (Daly & Davy, 2016), which makes it essential to take a multimodal approach to the analysis and teaching of this genre (Tamarit & Skorczynska, 2014; Valeiras-Jurado, 2017). However, despite the increasing importance of this oral genre in the business field, little research has been conducted on the teaching of PPs to business ESP students. The purpose of this paper is therefore to present an innovative pedagogical model consisting of a learner-led genre-based pedagogy based on a teaching-learning cycle that fosters critical thinking and multimodal awareness (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019). Following the four stages of the cycle proposed, and with the constant scaffolding of the lecturer in the initial stages, a group of tertiary business students were requested to decode the multimodal ensembles of a YouTube PP to subsequently create their own PPs. These samples were assessed multimodally by the rest of the class (peer review) and by the teacher using an "all-mode-inclusive" rubric. This innovative pedagogical approach to a new genre increased students' motivation and multimodal awareness, surpassing the traditionally exclusively language-bound teaching and assessment of ESP.

**Key words:** Product Pitch (PP), multimodal awareness, multimodal assessment, scaffolding, teaching-learning cycle.

## **Nuevos Géneros y Nuevos Enfoques: la Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje del *Product Pitch* desde una Perspectiva Multimodal en la Clase de Inglés Especializado**

**RESUMEN:** Uno de los géneros más innovadores de la comunicación empresarial actual es el denominado "Product Pitch" (PP), caracterizado sobre todo por su naturaleza multi-semiótica (Daly & Davy, 2016), que precisa un enfoque multimodal para su análisis y enseñanza (Tamarit & Skorczynska, 2014; Valeiras-Jurado, 2017). Sin embargo, es escasa la investigación sobre la enseñanza de los PPs a estudiantes de inglés empresarial. El objetivo de este artículo es presentar un modelo pedagógico innovador basado en el estudio del género y dirigido por el propio aprendiz que se desarrolla en torno a un ciclo de enseñanza y aprendizaje que promueve el pensamiento crítico y la percepción de la multimodalidad

(Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019). Siguiendo las cuatro etapas del ciclo propuesto y con la ayuda constante del profesor, un grupo de estudiantes de negocios decodificó las agrupaciones multimodales de un PP de YouTube para posteriormente crear sus propios PP, que fueron evaluados desde el punto de vista multimodal por el resto de la clase (evaluación por pares) y por la profesora utilizando una rúbrica que incluye todos los modos. Este enfoque pedagógico innovador de un nuevo género aumentó la motivación de los estudiantes, así como su percepción multimodal, superando la enseñanza y la evaluación del inglés especializado exclusivamente centrada en el lenguaje.

**Palabras clave:** *Product Pitch* (PP), percepción de la multimodalidad, evaluación multimodal, apoyo, ciclo de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

## 1. THE PRODUCT PITCH: A NEW MULTIMODAL GENRE IN ESP

When dealing with oral genres, it is customary in ESP business courses to focus on presentations and negotiations. However, despite the well-known fact that business communication today needs to be adapted to the use of new media and technologies, many other increasingly important and representative genres may not be receiving all the attention they deserve. Current market trends and demands from society show the need for persuasive genres that use visual and interactive means (Cestero-Mancera, 2017). Moreover, the use of authentic materials in real-life situations makes an important contribution to meaningful practice. When students participate and get involved in disciplinary or subject-specific practices, they are offered the possibility of learning about the real business context (Ford & Forman, 2006) and about the functional use of community-specific genres, becoming aware of their tone, their degree of formality, their sequence of components and their structure, along with their multimodal nature (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019).

It is in this scenario that the entrepreneurial pitch – “a brief description of the value proposition of an idea or company which entrepreneurs use to present ideas to potential equity shareholders” (Daly & Davy, 2016, p.121) – stands out as one of the most innovative genres. One variety of the entrepreneurial pitch is the product pitch (PP), “short presentations that introduce a new product to the market” (Ruiz-Madrid & Valeiras-Jurado, 2020, p.28), which can be considered effective if it can truly persuade the audience about the added value of the product and encourage them to buy it or to invest in its development and commercialisation.

From a linguistic perspective, two prominent specific features of PPs are their brevity and the direct and simple register used, aimed at reaching and convincing the audience. A third, and maybe the most important, characteristic of this genre is its multimodal nature (Daly & Davy, 2016; Viney et al., 2017; Valeiras-Jurado, Ruiz-Madrid & Jacobs, 2018; Jiménez-Muñoz, 2019). According to these studies, a key underlying idea is that all expressive resources or embodied modes available (e.g. gesture, posture, gaze) are equally important and should thus be integrated in the “equation” when teaching the genre.

However, despite its growing impact and importance in the business field, little research has been carried out on the teaching of this genre in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses framed within the wider context of entrepreneurship and communication. Several authors consider that the product pitch should be part of business communication as a type of ESP (Ducasse, 2020), but very few business schools and degrees provide training in

business pitches as a sub-genre of oral presentations with its specific rhetorical and linguistic characteristics (Daly & Davy, 2016). In addition, despite the undeniable impact of non-verbal elements on pitch success, ESP teaching and assessment of this genre is still very much language-bound and multimodal aspects tend to be regarded as secondary items to teach and assess, as has been the tradition in ESP pedagogy (Prior, 2014). However, the shift “to more situated, practice-oriented notions of discourse might have made mode and multimodality a central concern of ESP” (p. 519). Our claim is that a multimodal perspective is essential not only to analyse and teach this genre (Tamarit & Skorczynska, 2014; Valeiras-Jurado, 2017), but also to assess it, since research suggests that non-verbal elements are even more directly related to pitch success than verbal aspects (Valeiras-Jurado, Ruiz-Madrid & Jacobs, 2018; Jiménez-Muñoz, 2019; Ruiz-Madrid & Valeiras-Jurado, 2020).

## **2. A GENRE-BASED TEACHING-LEARNING CYCLE APPROACH TO MULTIMODAL COMPETENCE**

In this article, we make a proposal for the incorporation of the product pitch in a Business English course based on the framework for the development of language curricula provided by the systemic-functional notion of genre (Martin & Rose, 2008; Martin, 2009). As stated by Morton (2010), although genre-based pedagogy has generally focused on the production of written texts, the process of joint construction of meaning as part of the “teaching-learning cycle” (Rothery, 1996) can also meaningfully guide the production of oral discourse. Developed by researchers from the Sydney School (Martin, 1999; Rothery, 1996), this “teaching-learning cycle” guides students towards a gradual discovery, appreciation and control of genres in which the teacher’s support is progressively removed as the learner gains independence. The multimodal nature of most of today’s academic and professional genres has led to an increasing interest in applying multimodal approaches to genre-based pedagogy (Morell, 2015; Campoy-Cubillo & Querol-Julián, 2015; Fortanet-Gómez & Bernad-Mechó, 2019; Ruiz-Madrid & Valeiras-Jurado, 2020). For instance, Morell (2015) showed that effective speakers use modes that tend to overlap and combine in order to convey meaning. In the interviews held in her study, participants acknowledged the importance and need for greater awareness of the affordances of the modes available for communication. The multimodal awareness that this study tries to promote can then lead to improved genre performance. In the same line, Ruiz-Madrid and Valeiras-Jurado (2020) share Morell’s concern for the students’ multimodal awareness. With this objective in mind, they proposed some activities addressed to students of Economics in order to make them aware of the use of mode ensembles in research and product pitches. Their results showed that students find it easy to identify linguistic traits and gaze, whereas they have difficulties when asked to identify the use of gestures and intonation, which the authors suggest could be a result of students’ lack of knowledge and/or training in these modes.

The original model, created by Rothery (1996) and later developed and applied by other authors, including Querol-Julián and Fortanet-Gómez (2019), basically proposes a three-stage teaching-learning cycle. Despite the somehow assumed leading role of the linguistic mode,

the main objective of our pedagogical proposal is to make students understand this genre as an ensemble of “linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes of meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p.166). Additionally, we have incorporated a fourth stage, assessment (see section 3), since we consider it a fundamental part of any comprehensive and complete teaching-learning process. Students need to learn the several semiotic resources that make up meaning (Archer, 2010), and they need “to engage in the critical analysis of multimodal texts and videos, which in turn requires a detailed understanding of how such texts function to begin with” (O’Halloran, Tan, & Smith, 2015, p.260). In his multimodal analysis of business pitches in an ESP course, Jiménez-Muñoz (2019) also defended the need to implement an improved method for assessment, one that includes both speech and other modalities, to better match the real-life skills targeted by curricular design. Jiménez-Muñoz (2019, p.83) showed, on the one hand, that “non-verbal cues, paralinguistic elements, presenter’s use of multimedia and realia, and a number of other factors influence success in real-life terms, as measured by start-up valuation”. On the other hand, when analysing the several modes individually, he found that the success of the pitches was closely related to the students’ use of hands, eye rapport, visuals and voice modulation rather than language proficiency. Section 3 offers a detailed explanation of the pedagogical model presented in this article.

In this paper, we intend to prove the effectiveness of a multimodal pedagogy and the choice of the product pitch to teach oral skills and multimodal competence to Business English students. With this aim in mind, two research questions have been posed:

RQ1. Can a multimodal pedagogy approach to product pitches enhance students’ oral skills in Business English?

RQ2. Do students have a greater multimodal awareness after the implementation of this approach?

### 3. THE MODEL

As shown in Figure 1 and mentioned above, in order to answer the research questions, we adapted, expanded and updated the above-mentioned original model by integrating a fourth stage, that of assessment. The three different phases this original approach is composed of evolve from more teacher-supported phases (Joint Deconstruction (1) and Joint Construction (2)) to more autonomous ones (Independent Construction (3)) (Martin and Rose, 2005). Accordingly, students should develop multimodal awareness in the first two phases, and effectively reflect it in the third phase, that is, the Independent Construction of the genre. The fourth stage (added to the original model), Assessment, is a critical part of the approach since it subsumes the knowledge acquired in previous stages and constitutes an invaluable opportunity for reflection, critical thinking and content assimilation.

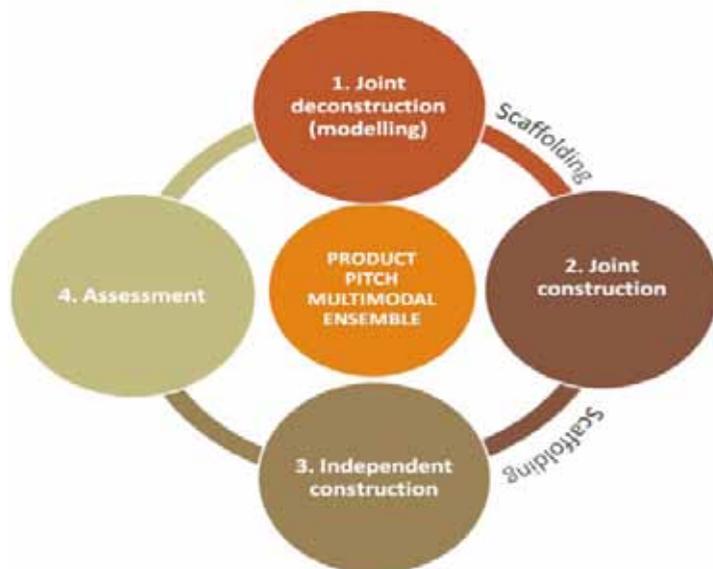


Figure 1. Model for teaching PP from a multimodal perspective based on Querol-Julián and Fortanet-Gómez (2019)

In our proposal, the four stages to teach the product pitches multimodal ensemble were framed in an authentic business context: the sale of a product. The first stage is Joint Deconstruction (or Modelling), which raises genre awareness and critical thinking. The students are introduced to a sample of the genre, which they then analyse in order to observe the several modes that make up the ensemble. As they proceed with the deconstruction, the teacher provides instruction on the metadiscourse of multimodality. Attention is paid to both the macro level of the discourse (the rhetorical structure) and to the micro level (lexico-grammatical distinctive features, non-verbal semiotic resources). The modes dealt with are the ones generally used in oral communication (the linguistic and embodied modes), which are explained in more detail in section 4.3. At the same time, modelling allows students' content knowledge (as regards the genre) to be expanded and meaningfully assimilated.

In the second stage, that of Joint Construction, students work collaboratively (also with the teacher) to start constructing their own samples of the genre. In stages one and two, the teacher's support is critical for the correct development and implementation of the model.

In the third stage, that of Independent Construction, students are required to produce their own sample of the genre (in this case their own PP) in an independent way, that is, without the teacher's assistance and using the knowledge and skills they have individually acquired and developed in previous stages.

In the fourth and final phase, the results of the previous stages are assessed. In this proposal, Assessment consists of teacher and peer assessment, so that students can gather useful feedback to help them improve, can increase their critical thinking and self-awareness, and can meaningfully close the circle of the teaching-learning cycle.

The added value of the approach presented in this article is, on the one hand, the use of multimodal discourse analysis of authentic product pitches in an initial stage to proceed with the implementation of a student-centred teaching-learning model in which the teacher guides the student towards a comprehensive understanding of the genre and final production. On the other hand, all this process is complemented by multimodal teacher and peer assessment. In fact, effective speakers convey meaning by using different modes that often overlap and combine (Morell, 2015), and improved performance is greatly dependent on being aware of the affordances they all offer.

## 4. METHOD

### 4.1. Subjects

The activity was implemented in a Business English class in the third year of the degree in Business Administration at Universitat Jaume I. In the experimental group there were 54 students, and 110 in the control group. Most of these students (in both groups) had a lower-intermediate level of English (A2-B1). Due to space limitations, further detailed information on subjects is provided in the complementary webpage <https://teachingandassessing.estudio9.net/>

### 4.2. Instruments

The first instruments used to implement the model were a pre-activity and a post-activity test, as well as a final “all-mode-inclusive” rubric, which was used by the students for peer-review and by the teacher for co-assessment. Due to space limitations, further detailed information on instruments is provided in the complementary webpage <https://teachingandassessing.estudio9.net/>

### 4.3. Implementation

Before starting with the four stages of the implementation, students in the experimental group were asked to complete the pre-test on their laptops or using their mobile phones. In the Joint Deconstruction (modelling) stage, students were first explained what a product pitch is, as well as its aim and general structure. In this first stage, an ideal model of product pitch was shown to students for the first time, hence the label of “modelling”. It was a product pitch entitled *The Hot Seat*, created and performed by Aaron Pugh, a student at the University of Dayton (USA) who was the winner of the 2013-14 Business Plan Competition Elevator Pitch at that university. The video of this PP was found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sE5UXVIkz0>). The video recording lasts 51 seconds and its aim was to promote a heated cushion to be used in American open-air stadiums in cold weather. As we considered it important for the teaching of the genre, we transcribed the product pitch using the automatic subtitles provided by YouTube as a guide. Moreover, as the speed of the speech could be a problem for students’ understanding, some scaffolding was applied by reducing it to 75% of its normal speed. Then, students received explanations on the

modes generally used in oral communication: intonation, pitch or stress and pauses, gestures (beats, iconic, metaphoric and deictic gestures) and language (use of personal pronouns, verb tenses, short direct sentences and repetition). Next, the model was deconstructed, so that students could jointly (as a class and with the teacher) analyse prosodics (by just listening to the voice of the presenter), the gestures (by watching the muted video) and language (by looking at the script of the PP). They were then shown the whole PP so that they could observe the multimodal ensemble.

In the second stage, that of Joint Construction, students were asked to start creating the script of their own PP in pairs. Before this, the teacher supplied them with a list of products they could use, together with their corresponding websites. This was done in class, with the teacher's scaffolding so that support and supervision in initial stages were constant. Most students (though not all) submitted their scripts for review by the teacher, and the mistakes in their scripts were marked, although not corrected. They could also ask the teacher questions by email in a kind of asynchronous scaffolding, as well as during office hours. For the Independent Construction stage, students then had 2 weeks to create and record their own PPs based on all the knowledge acquired in the previous stages.

In accordance with what has been explained, the instructions provided to students (and the stages involved) could be summarised as follows:

- Joint Construction with scaffolding: Write a transcript from 150 to 300 words long following the structure and language you have seen. Upload it to the Virtual Classroom if you want your teacher to review it.
- Independent Construction (i): Rehearse with your partner.
- Independent Construction (ii): Video record your product pitch (1-3 minutes).
- Independent Construction (iii): Upload your recorded product pitch to the Virtual Classroom.

All the PPs created, a total of 27, were uploaded to the Virtual Classroom and the application was opened so that all students had access to their classmates' submissions for the assessment stage. Students were then distributed in groups of 6-7 and they were assigned a number of PPs so that all submissions were peer assessed by two groups. Each group had the same number of rubrics on paper as video recordings they had to assess, and all students in the group had to discuss and agree on the rating given to each PP. They were asked to justify their decisions and relate their answers to what had been observed in the Joint Deconstruction stage. For example, when asked about the correctness of the language used, peer reviewers had to check the use of personal pronouns, verb tenses, short direct sentences and repetition. Once they had finished the peer assessment, the teacher added up the students' ratings for each PP and the winners received a small prize and a diploma, as well as the applause of the whole class, who had selected the winners.

Finally, the teacher carried out her own assessment and provided a final grade which took into account both her own and the students' assessment. As regards evaluation, the grade for this activity, together with the grades obtained by students in two other oral activities carried out throughout the subject, was considered to be 40% of the final mark of the subject. The other 60% was obtained in the written exam. After the whole activity had finished, students were asked to complete the post-activity test, in order to find out whether their perception of the several modes had changed; 38 students answered this test.

We also wanted to check the validity of the activity by comparing this group with a control group. In the control group, students were explained “traditional” business presentations from a far more language-bound perspective, and they did not deal with product pitches. Before addressing business presentations, they were administered the pre-activity test (the same as for the experimental group) and, after they had finished, they were given the post-activity test to complete.

#### **4.4. Data collection and analysis**

After finishing the activity, the data obtained from the instruments were collected. We compared the results obtained from the pre-activity and post-activity tests for both the experimental group and the control group. While 42 of the 54 students participating in the experimental group answered the pre-activity test, 38 completed the post-activity test. In the control group the pre-activity test was answered by 110 students and the post-activity test had 80 replies.

The second and most important instrument to collect the data was the rubric, which was completed by students working in groups as peer assessment, and by the teacher. A printed copy of the rubric was handed out to each group in class and then collected by the teacher after it had been completed. Then, the teacher also completed the rubric for each PP recording independently. The average of the ratings obtained in both the teacher’s and the peers’ rubrics was the students’ grade for this activity, which was communicated to them together with the feedback. In order to endow the data obtained with reliability and validity, they were processed by means of the statistical software IBM-SPSS-25 (IBM Corp. Released 2017. IBM SPSS Statistics v 25.0 for Windows; Armonk, NY, USA). The adjustment of the variables to the Gauss bell model was verified by means of skewness and Kurtosis descriptive indexes along with the Shapiro-Wilk’s goodness of fit test, specific for  $N < 50$  samples. All variables showed the right adjustment, and they were distributed according to statistical normality. Therefore, parametric tests were employed for the data analysis: Student RM (Repeated Measures) to contrast the values of the means and Pearson correlation coefficients.

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section will be divided into two parts related to the research questions. In each of them the data obtained through the corresponding instruments will be analysed and interpreted.

### **5.1. Can a multimodal pedagogy approach to product pitches enhance students’ oral skills in Business English? (RQ1)**

In this paper, we have presented the model followed to teach product pitches with a learner-led approach, based on a teaching-learning cycle that fosters thinking-based learning and multimodal awareness. The 54 students participating in the experimental group produced 27 samples (they worked in pairs) of this genre, which were assessed by their peers and by the teacher as independent constructions of the genre. The results of the assessment using the

rubric described above may be representative of the students' success in effectively creating a product pitch and subsequently showing an improvement in their oral skills in English.

As pointed out in the Method section, the level of English of most students was lower intermediate (A2-B1), according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is true that at these levels spontaneous production is normally limited and mainly focused on familiar topics in everyday situations. However, given the fact that the genre had previously been jointly deconstructed and constructed in class, that it was a recorded task (allowing for unlimited repetition) with no interaction involved, and that students could have their scripts revised by the teacher if they so wished, we consider the task was feasible and suitable for their level of English. This seems to be confirmed by the good results of the activity obtained from the peer and teacher's assessment as compared with the final grades obtained by all students (197) in the whole course (see Figure 2).

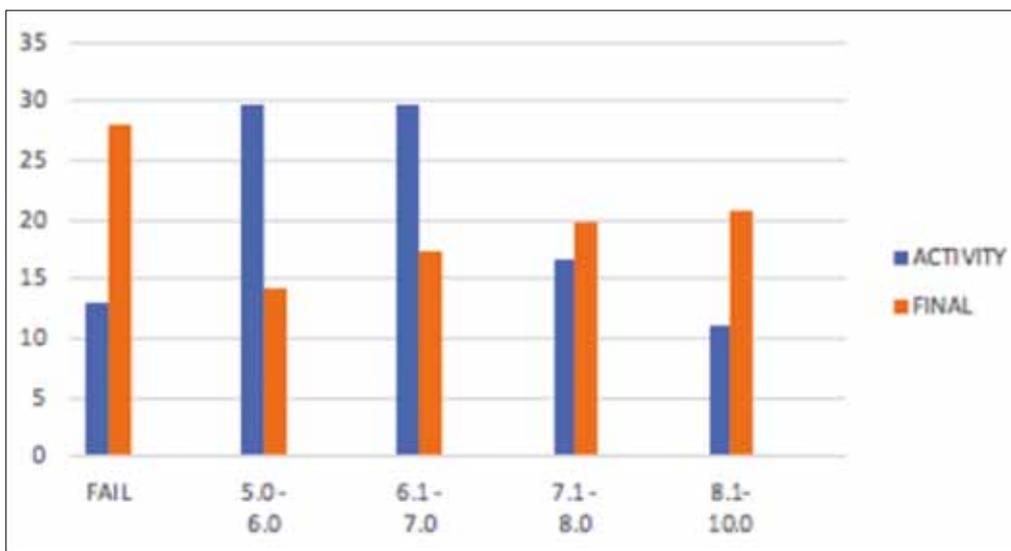


Figure 2. Grades obtained by students for the activity and total final grades for the subject (max. 10 points)

Only 7 students obtained a grade below 5 out of 10 (13%) (notice that each student was rated individually), which meant they had failed and needed to take a final oral test, while the rate of failure in the final grades for this subject was 28%. There was no significant difference between the grades allotted by the teacher and those allotted by students, and the final grade was only modified by up to 0.5 points due to students' assessment grades. This meant that many students with an initial low level of English managed to do a good job in this activity, probably by somehow offsetting their linguistic limitations with their increased multimodal awareness. However, the percentage of high grades (7 and above) for this activity was lower than those obtained as final grades for the whole subject, which indicates it was difficult to make a very good performance in this activity.

The use of a genre such as the PP that they consider innovative and important in their field may also have motivated students. In fact, in the post-test, students in the experimental group were asked about their attitude towards the introduction of product pitches in the subject and about 90% liked the activity. They found it interesting and entertaining and, as one of the students stated, they particularly appreciated having had the opportunity to experience “what real product pitches feel like and to practise them”. Other students felt it was a dynamic and creative activity. Another aspect they valued very positively was the chance to use and practise sales-related content they had already learned in other subjects such as Marketing, so that its cross-curricular nature was also enhanced, generating as well very interesting synergies (that students seem to value) in this respect. Regarding peer review, some students acknowledged it as a good way to learn while others considered it a waste of time, maybe because they are not used to this type of assessment or find it too challenging.

## **5.2. DO STUDENTS HAVE A GREATER MULTIMODAL AWARENESS AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS APPROACH? (RQ2)**

In order to answer this question, we analysed two types of results. The first is the average rating provided by the students (peer assessment), together with the teacher, for each of the multimodal aspects in the rubric: language, posture, gestures, facial expression, eye rapport, prosodic features (pauses, intonation and stress). The second result is the responses to the pre-test and post-test of both the experimental and the control groups.

Regarding the rating by the teacher and the students, Table 1 shows all the modes that were taken into account by students in creating their product pitches (they were familiar with the rubric before their performance) and, therefore, for assessment. The minimum and maximum value, the mean and the standard deviation obtained in the ratings can also be seen. The highest rating by students corresponds to language (3.49) and the lowest, with very similar values, to gestures (3.18), eye rapport (3.15) and prosodic features (3.14). The teacher’s highest value also corresponds to language (3.53) and the lowest to gestures (2.97) and eye rapport (2.96). The reason may be the long-assumed belief, fostered by the most traditional views on ESP, that language is the main mode of communication and the only one to be considered for assessment, whereas gestures and eye rapport are new aspects for the students. As the results of the pre-activity test prove (see Table 3), gestures were not considered very relevant by students before implementing the activity. However, students became aware of their importance after it, as shown in the post-activity test, and they were very critical when assessing this aspect of their classmates’ performance. These results about the students’ ability to identify the multimodal characteristics of an oral activity are only partially in line with those of Ruiz-Madrid and Valeiras-Jurado (2020). According to these authors, language and gaze (or eye rapport) would be among the easiest aspects to assess by students, whereas gestures and prosodic features would be some of the most difficult.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis: Results of the rating by students and teacher

PARAMETERS	STUDENTS (N=28)				TEACHERS (N=28)				TOTAL (N=56)			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
LANGUAGE	1.5	5.0	3.49	±0.81	1.0	5.0	3.58	±0.95	1.0	5.0	3.53	±0.87
POSTURE	1.5	5.0	3.37	±0.98	0.0	5.0	3.20	±1.22	0.0	5.0	3.28	±1.10
GESTURE	1.6	5.0	3.18	±0.94	0.0	5.0	2.77	±1.23	0.0	5.0	2.97	±1.11
FACIAL EXP	1.2	5.0	3.23	±0.89	0.5	5.0	3.02	±1.06	0.5	5.0	3.12	±0.97
EYE RAPPORT	1.0	4.5	3.15	±0.91	1.0	5.0	2.78	±1.05	1.0	5.0	2.96	±0.99
PROSODIC FEATURES	1.2	4.6	3.14	±0.86	1.0	5.0	3.15	±1.08	1.0	5.0	3.15	±0.97

These results were contrasted by means of the Student RM test in order to determine whether the differences in the mean values by students and teachers were significant (significant means  $p \leq .05$ ). The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlational and differential analysis. Contrast between mean values by the teacher and the students (T-S)

PARAMETERS	PEARSON		STUDENT MR			C.I. 95% (MIN/MAX)
	r	P-value	Dif. T-S	t-value	P-value	
LANGUAGE	.82	.000	0.09	-0.83 NS	.415	-0.13 / 0.30
POSTURE	.53	.004	-0.17	-0.83 NS	.411	-0.59 / 0.25
GESTURE	.55	.002	-0.41	-2.07 *	.049	-0.83 / -0.01
FACIAL EXPRESSION	.55	.002	-0.21	-1.17 NS	.252	-0.57 / 0.16
EYE RAPPORT	.56	.002	-0.37	-2.15 *	.040	-0.74 / -0.02
PROSODIC FEATURES	.59	.001	0.01	0.08 NS	.934	-0.34 / 0.37
N.S. = NOT significant* = Significant						

From a statistical perspective, the analysis does not show any significant differences between the mean values by the teacher and the students in language, posture, facial expression and prosodic features. However, there is a significant difference in eye rapport, with a lower mean in the teacher’s rating (2.78 vs. 3.15), and in gestures, also with a lower mean by teacher (2.77 vs. 3.18). As pointed out above, these are new aspects for the students, who may not be ready yet to perceive their correct use and harmonious integration in their classmates’ performance. Nonetheless, the comparison between the students’ and the teacher’s rating, in general, shows a high level of correlation.

Regarding the pre- and post-activity test results, the number of students who rated some of the aspects of the product pitches (and the business presentations in the control group) with 1 or 2 was almost imperceptible, so we decided not to reckon it in our analysis. Most students scored each aspect with 4 or 5 (4+5), so we added the percentages devoted to these

ratings in the results of the pre- and post-activity tests in the experimental and the control groups. Table 4 summarises the results for the experimental and the control groups, as well as the standard deviation.

*Table 3. Results of the pre- and post-activity tests in the experimental and control groups*

PARAMETERS	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP				CONTROL GROUP			
	<i>pre-test</i>		<i>post-test</i>		<i>pre-test</i>		<i>post-test</i>	
	<i>4+5</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>4+5</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>4+5</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>4+5</i>	<i>sd</i>
POLITE LANGUAGE	90.3	0.73	89.5	0.71	<b>94.5</b>	0.62	<b>97.6</b>	0.54
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	92.8	0.7	81.5	<b>1.01</b>	85.5	0.8	83.8	0.7
BUSINESS DISCOURSE AND TERMINOLOGY	<b>95.2</b>	0.6	77.9	<b>1.02</b>	89.1	0.7	87.6	0.69
RIGHT TONE OF VOICE	<b>97.7</b>	0.55	<b>92.1</b>	0.64	90	0.67	<b>97.5</b>	0.54
EMPHASIS ON KEY WORDS OR IMPORTANT PARTS OF SPEECH	92.9	0.63	89.4	0.75	90.9	0.71	95.1	0.59
FACIAL EXPRESSION	90	0.74	82.1	0.72	82.7	0.78	85.1	0.73
BODY POSTURE	81	0.8	84.2	0.75	87.3	0.71	93.7	0.61
GESTURES	90.1	0.72	<b>92.1</b>	0.72	82.8	0.71	87.5	0.7
EYE RAPPORT	88.1	0.7	<b>94.8</b>	0.68	<b>94.5</b>	0.6	<b>97.5</b>	0.53

Table 3 shows the evolution from the pre-activity test to the post-activity test in both groups. In the experimental group, there are some aspects that dramatically decreased their importance for students: the use of business discourse and terminology, physical appearance, and facial expression, although two of them showed the highest standard deviation, which means there was a diversity of opinions among students. This may be due to the explanations received about the characteristics of the genre of product pitches, especially as regards business discourse and terminology. As a general rule, students are recommended to use layperson words rather than specific business terminology in order to reach a wider audience. This contrasts with the specific terminology used in business presentations.

In the case of facial expression, we can observe a decrease of almost 8 points. This is an unexpected result, since in product pitches facial expression is very relevant and revealing, and it is also not in line with the results obtained in the next question regarding the most important aspects in product pitches and business presentations (see Table 5). This may be due to the fact that students have never been specifically trained to identify facial expressions, and even the instruction provided for this activity did not particularly focus on this semiotic mode. On the other hand, eye rapport is the aspect that gains most relevance when comparing the pre-activity and post-activity tests in the experimental group, followed

by gestures and the right tone of voice. However, eye rapport was one of the lowest rated features in the rubric by both the teacher and the students, as observed in Table 1. This is an outstanding finding which may be due to a focused criticism on this aspect by both assessing parties, or to a flaw in the Deconstruction and Joint Construction stages, so that students failed to learn how to make use of this non-verbal feature in an effective way.

If we observe the control group, polite language, the right tone of voice and eye rapport became even more relevant after the activity and showed a very low standard deviation. Polite language refers to the use of hedging and the way to address the audience, which is more relevant in face-to-face business presentations than in product pitches, as well as the right tone of voice. Eye rapport is also very relevant for these students when speaking to the audience. It should be noted that only the right tone of voice changed in priority from the pre- to the post-test in the control group.

Table 4 shows the resulting lists of the aspects that students take into account in product pitches and in business presentations according to the priorities expressed by students in their rating, as presented in Table 3.

Table 4. Ranking of model resources for the experimental and the control groups

PRE. TEST	POST. TEST	PRE. TEST	POST. TEST
<i>experimental group</i>		<i>control group</i>	
Tone of voice	Eye rapport	Polite language/ Eye rapport	Polite language
Business discourse	Gestures	Emphasis	Eye rapport/ Tone of voice
Emphasis	Tone of voice	Emphasis	Emphasis
Physical appearance	Polite language	Tone of voice	Emphasis
Polite language	Emphasis	Business discourse	Body posture
Gestures	Body posture	Body posture	Business discourse
Facial expression	Facial expression	Physical appearance	Gestures
Eye rapport	Physical appearance	Gestures	Facial expression
Body posture	Business discourse	Facial expression	Physical appearance

As shown in Table 4, when comparing the experimental and the control groups, there are many differences, even in the pre-test when students have not yet been introduced to business presentations or to product pitches. As there are no pre-established criteria to create the groups, we understand students do not have a fixed idea about the importance of the modes. Notwithstanding, there are some aspects that change their position noticeably from the pre-activity test to the post-activity test results in both groups, as pointed out above. We will start by discussing the verbal features, namely, business discourse and polite language. In the experimental group, business discourse (position 2, pre-activity test) is pushed down to the last position in the post-activity test, while polite language remains

almost unchanged. The reason for this may be that it was explained to students that they need to use layperson's language in product pitches instead of specific business discourse, while still keeping the language polite. In contrast, for the control group, presentations are much more business-specific and polite language is seen as the most relevant characteristic, whereas business discourse remains more or less in the same position in the middle of the table. This result may be explained by the fact that the unit on business presentations is language-bound, as explained above, and politeness, respect for other cultures and specific discourse are highlighted as central aspects.

Regarding non-verbal discourse, eye rapport is highly prioritised in both groups' post-activity tests, which coincides with the results of Table 3, although students value this aspect higher than the teacher when rating students' performance (see Table 1). Other aspects such as tone of voice gain importance in the control group and lose some relevance in the experimental group, also in accordance with Table 3. In general, not very relevant changes can be observed except for gestures. This semiotic mode becomes a far more relevant aspect to consider in product pitches (position 6 in the pre-activity test), as shown in the results of the post-activity test (position 2). Gestures were explained in detail in class, and that may have led the teacher to be more critical than the students when rating performance (see Table 1). Students acknowledged the relevance gestures have but may have found it difficult to assess a parameter that was new to them.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The activity presented in this article introduces a pedagogical proposal in which multimodal discourse analysis is introduced in the ESP classroom in order to enhance students' awareness of the multimodal nature of a new genre, namely, the product pitch.

The first research question asked about the effectiveness of the multimodal pedagogy (based on the teaching-learning cycle) when introducing product pitches with the aim of enhancing students' oral skills in Business English. This effectiveness was measured by the results obtained in peer and teacher assessment by using an "all-mode-inclusive" rubric that measured not only language, but also the various semiotic modes involved in the product pitch, following Jiménez-Muñoz (2019). In the assessment by means of the rubric, both the students and the teacher rated the language used by students the highest, whereas gestures and eye rapport seemed to be perceived as the least relevant non-verbal features in the product pitches. However, despite the differences in the modes that were rated, most students obtained a medium range grade (5-7), and only seven failed the oral activity, higher grades than in the whole subject, which prove the effectiveness of the multimodal pedagogy. Regarding the answers provided about their satisfaction, they may be due to the high motivation experienced because of undertaking a new kind of activity also based on a pedagogy that was innovative for them: a critical thinking model in which they deconstructed and constructed an authentic genre, with the support of the teacher.

With reference to the second research question, students in general seem to have become more aware of the several semiotic modes intervening in a product pitch and, subsequently,

in real oral communication. This is shown in the pre- and post-activity test, in which they had to assess the importance of a number of aspects related to different semiotic resources. The responses of the experimental group were compared to those of a control group. In the experimental group, students seem to have become more aware than the control group of the use of some features such as eye rapport and gestures. Even so, they were not as critical as the teacher in assessing these aspects after the students' performance, as their ratings showed a significant variation when compared to each other. However, other aspects such as emphasis on key words, important parts of speech (pitch) or facial expression did not seem to have been perceived as so relevant, probably due to their lack of previous training in multimodal literacy.

This research was focused on a pilot study on the implementation of a new genre, the product pitch, and a new approach to that genre, a multimodal teaching-learning model. We believe the results obtained can have a number of pedagogical implications. Firstly, the use of authentic discourse analysis and a task-based approach. Learning how to analyse and create authentic and updated professional discourse is one of the priorities for business ESP students, especially when they can only learn this type of discourse in the English subject, as is the case in most business degrees in Spanish universities. Moreover, a relatively new genre was selected for the task, the product pitch, which is often used to market products and ideas online in today's companies. Secondly, a multimodal approach was proposed, as the product pitch is a spoken genre in which embodied modes play a key role (Daly and Davy, 2016; Jiménez-Muñoz, 2019; Viney et al., 2017). And thirdly, we opted for a teaching-learning model, to which we added assessment, to teach the genre of product pitches not only from a language-bound perspective but by integrating the different (and necessary) semiotic modes in the "equation". We have found relevant differences between the importance students give to some non-verbal aspects such as eye rapport and the rating of this feature in their performances of product pitches. This unbalance may be due to a failure to teach this trait or to the previous low awareness of students regarding this and other non-verbal modes of discourse. Making students aware of all the embodied modes available is crucial to foster successful communication, also from a professional perspective, and this is something traditional ESP courses have not addressed to date.

Nevertheless, this study also has some limitations. The sample of students, although representative, is rather small, and not all of them answered both tests. Further research including a larger sample and a more systematic approach to data collection could corroborate or modify the results. Furthermore, despite the relevant results, some aspects need further research to become fully conclusive and future studies could also shed some light on the students' evolution as regards the identification and the implementation of multimodal discourse.

Moreover, for pedagogical reasons, this study has analysed both the students' and the teacher's perceptions (assessment) on the individual use of semiotic modes in a single business genre. A more integrated approach to the assessment of PP could be subsequently presented to strengthen the understanding of PPs as multimodal ensembles. Some other complementary studies could also examine the multimodal intensity (the relevance of some of the modes) and the multimodal density (number of modes intervening in the communicative event) (Norris, 2004) and explore the correlations between the data obtained and the ratings by the teacher and the students.

Finally, one of the most important characteristics of this research is its transferability to all modes (written, oral and visual) and media (printed, digital), as well as to all genres and disciplines. Following Kress (2011), we believe most genres are multimodal nowadays and, consequently, a multimodal genre-based pedagogy is essential for teaching and learning them.

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## 9. APPENDICES

*Due to space limitations, appendices are provided in the complementary webpage*  
<https://teachingandassessing.estudio9.net/>