Digitalizing a Multimodal Genre-Based Approach to Teaching Elevator Pitch: Pedagogical Implications and Students' Experiences

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Abstract The health situation brought about by COVID-19 has contributed to the emergence and implementation of novel teaching formats (e.g., hybrid, online) in higher education. This scenario, characterized by the increasing use of technology and digital resources, calls for a methodological and pedagogical shift to best support the teaching and learning process. This study aims to discuss the digitalization of a multimodal genre-based approach to teaching Elevator Pitch presentations in the ESP context. In doing so, we report on the methodological adaptations needed to digitalize and implement the pedagogical proposal and the implications of its transition to an online environment. In addition, this study explores the learning experiences of students as recipients of the pedagogical proposal. Methodologically, a survey was administered to identify students' perceptions of the application of the pedagogical proposal. The results provide insights into the students' perceptions of its implementation concerning the classroom dynamics, the digital resources used, and the presentation format. The study concludes with a reflection on the implications of carrying out digitalization and the transition to online environments.

Keywords Online university teaching and learning · ESP · Digital resources · Multimodal genre-based pedagogy · Elevator pitch presentations · Multimodal literacy

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1 Introduction

The unprecedented sanitary emergency caused by the COVID-19 outbreak has had repercussions in almost every aspect of life. Education is not an exception as the pandemic has disrupted regular face-to-face teaching worldwide. Most higher education institutions have been forced to make pedagogical adaptations, generally characterized by the increasing use of technology and digital and audiovisual resources. In early 2020, rapid on-the-spot adaptations were required to continue with the academic commitment. However, at that time, most lecturers were somewhat ill-prepared to make an effective transition from on-campus to distance teaching. Consequently, tutorials and courses on how to teach online began to become popular. Although necessary then, online teaching and learning may go beyond the mere use of technology, digital resources, and emergency teaching practices (González-Lloret, 2020). Thus, teaching and learning online entails a complex methodological and pedagogical shift in which semiotic technologies and new forms of interaction come to the fore.

During the first period of the pandemic, as well as in the following academic year, the implementation of various teaching formats such as online, hybrid or hyflex (hybrid-flexible) became mainstream. These teaching formats can offer distinct teaching and learning experiences. The first involves an online environment; nevertheless, the other two entail a combination of face-to-face and online settings. In a hybrid format the same students participate in both on-site and online sessions, while in a hyflex format some students are physically in the classroom and others are online (Ruday & Cassidy, 2021). These teaching formats may include synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication with varying types of interaction. The teaching environment selected, in turn, may influence course design, planning, assessment, and delivery (Querol-Julián & Beltrán-Palanques, 2021).

The present study is motivated by the need to better understand how to transition from conventional on-site teaching practices to novel formats in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in a foreign language context. Arguably, this shift should be done consciously to offer students an effective learning experience focused on the development of the fundamental skills and necessary competences. For this purpose, language teachers should enhance students' multimodal communicative competence and multimodal literacy. Specifically, multimodal communicative competence (Royce, 2007) transcends the traditional language-based approach and recognizes the contribution of other semiotic modes in the meaning-making process. This notion is related to multimodal literacy, which may be understood as the knowledge students can gain to understand, navigate, and communicate effectively through a variety of semiotic resources (e.g., Liang & Lim, 2021; Lim, 2018). Researchers have initiated discussions on the implementation of multimodality in the language classroom. For example, Lim (2018) proposes a pedagogical model based on the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) approach (O'Halloran, 2007, 2008) and aligned with the Learning by Design Framework (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015) to

provide students with the required literacy to construct multimodal texts. Liang and Lim (2021) also present a pedagogical framework that engages students in digital multimodal composing and guides them to develop the knowledge and skills needed for digital communicative practices. Similarly, Jiang (2017) documents the benefits of implementing digital multimodal composing in the language classroom.

In the context of specialized language, Ruiz-Madrid and Valeiras-Jurado (2020) recommend the adoption of a multimodal discourse perspective to implement the genres of Product and Research Pitch presentations. Likewise, Ruiz-Madrid (2021) explores, from a multimodal discourse perspective, the opening and closing moves of Research Pitches and introduces an informed-based approach to training novice researchers. Drawing on SFL and multimodality, Morell (2015) discusses a model for teaching conference presentations in English as a lingua franca, in which special attention is paid to the construction of ideational, textual, and interpersonal meanings. Furthermore, a growing number of studies draw on genre-based pedagogy (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2005) to address multimodal discourse practices in the classroom. For example, Feng (2021) examines, among other aspects, the integration of the multimodal digital genre of PowerPoint presentations in ESP. Querol-Julián and Fortanet-Gómez (2019), adopting a SFL perspective, propose a multimodal genre-based approach to dealing with conference presentations in the English for Academic Purposes classroom. Overall, these studies presented thus far attempt to examine ways to raise students' awareness of multimodality through the construction of specific genres.

In addition to this, a few studies have discussed the implementation of multimodality in ESP contexts during the COVID-19 times. For example, Querol-Julián and Beltrán-Palanques (2021) propose a team-teaching proposal between the ESP lecturer and the English-medium instruction/education lecturer to deal with the multimodal genre of PechaKucha presentations (20 slides, 20 s each slide). The authors explain the transition of the pedagogical model from a face-to-face to an online context and reflect on the methodological and pedagogical adaptations needed for its effective implementation. Similarly, Beltrán-Palanques (2022) describes the transition from an on-site to an online setting of a multimodal genre-based approach to teaching Elevator Pitch presentations. To this end, the author discusses the digitalization of the pedagogical approach, and the challenges ESP teachers may face throughout this process. Fundamentally, these studies seek to reflect on the methodological and pedagogical changes that are necessary to carry out an effective transition, as well as to respond to the demands of the digitalization of language teaching and learning during the pandemic.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, it aims to discuss the implementation of a digitally enriched pedagogical proposal and the implications when moving it into an online setting. Second, it attempts to explore students' learning experiences as recipients of the adapted pedagogical proposal. The present study, carried out during the COVID-19 times, will serve as a case in point to describe the teaching action taken to cover the syllabus during the sanitary situation.

2 A Multimodal Approach to Teaching Elevator Pitch Presentations

The pedagogical approach presented here focuses on the genre of Elevator Pitch presentations. This genre was chosen to develop students' multimodal competence and literacy, as well as their creativity and critical thinking skills. This genre falls into the category of blitz or rapid-fire presentations and is characterized by its brevity (Harinck & van Leeuwen, 2020). Broadly speaking, an Elevator Pitch is defined as an innovative oral presentation (Daly & Davy, 2016) that is usually, but not exclusively, associated with the business field. In an Elevator Pitch presentation, speakers are expected to effectively present an idea or a product in a highly engaging and persuasive manner without digression. The presentation should be brief and concise (e.g., about a minute) and as clear as possible to the audience, who may be potential investors. As in any other type of presentation, to effectively deliver an Elevator Pitch, speakers should pay attention to how to convey content (ideational meaning), organize discourse (textual meaning), and establish a relationship with the audience (interpersonal meaning) (Halliday, 1978). Due to the multimodal nature of Elevator Pitch presentations, speakers should also center on how to instantiate these three meanings multimodally.

A way to implement genres in the classroom is through genre-based pedagogy. In this case, we draw on the model proposed by Querol-Julián and Fortanet-Gómez (2019), proven to be effective to address spoken genres from a multimodal perspective (see Beltrán-Palanques, 2022; Querol-Julián & Beltrán-Palanques, 2021). This teaching/learning cycle has three phases, namely joint deconstruction, joint construction, and independent construction (Martin & Rose, 2005). In the deconstruction phase, the teacher can identify students' prior knowledge, focus on specific model texts (e.g., language features and structure, communicative purpose), and guide them to deconstruct samples through demonstration, modeling, and discussion. The joint construction phase goes a step further as the teacher and students co-construct sample texts that are aligned with those explored in the previous phase. Thus, collaboratively, they attempt to reflect, for example, on the structure of discourse, the communicative purposes, or the use of semiotic resources. As for the independent construction phase, students are encouraged to construct their samples.

The model devised for this study involves a contextualized language teaching/learning experience in which students go through systematized phases aimed to enhance their multimodal competence and literacy. Table 1 presents the structure of the multimodal genre-based approach developed for the study.

As shown above, the model consists of three phases, each one containing various steps that serve to engage students in the multimodal composition of an Elevator Pitch presentation. These phases go from a more teacher-dependent stage (i.e., joint deconstruction and joint construction) to a more independent stage (i.e., independent construction) in which students, autonomously, construct their presentation. Throughout this model, students are offered opportunities to critically analyze samples and innovative ideas, as well as to participate in peer feedback and assessment practices.

Table 1 Phases and steps within the multimodal genre-based model. (Based on Beltrán-Palanques, 2022; Querol-Julián & Beltrán-Palanques, 2021; Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019)

Pedagogical model		
	Phase	Step
Session 1	1. Joint deconstruction	1.1. Introduction and genre presentation 1.2. Sample analysis and discussion: Multimodal deconstruction
	2. Joint construction	2.1. Recapitulation 2.2. Generation of ideas 2.3. Feedback and discussion 2.4. Guidelines generation
Session 2	3. Independent construction	3.1. Planning and preparation 3.2. Rehearsal 3.3. Presentation 3.4. Discussion and peer assessment

3 Methodology

3.1 Context

Most Spanish higher education institutions are on campus, with the exception of some distance-learning universities. Accordingly, before the pandemic, education within the Spanish context was generally face-to-face, as is the case analyzed in the present study. Specifically, this study was carried out at a Spanish university (Universitat Jaume I) during the COVID-19 times with a group of students majoring the Bachelor's Degree in Video Game Design and Development. The chosen ESP course consists of theoretical and practical sessions, and it is intended to prepare students for professional communication in their field of specialization. The practical sessions involve two sub-groups, practice 1 and practice 2.

The pedagogical proposal was implemented during the first term of 2020/2021 in a group of 57 students, who were mostly first-year students. In addition to their interest in the field of video games, these students also showed enthusiasm for aspects related to digital communication, audiovisual media, programming, and art.

The course was originally planned to be taught face-to-face but with the worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was temporally delivered online. The pedagogical proposal was implemented in two sessions of 3 hours each. The first session (i.e., joint deconstruction and joint construction) was developed on-site, and the second session (i.e., independent construction) was carried out online. The implementation of the proposal was conducted during the practice sessions. Therefore, the teacher applied the approach twice.

Given this unusual situation, it was decided to explore students' learning experiences in both scenarios (i.e., face-to-face and online) through a survey. From the full group of 57 students, 18 students volunteered to complete it. The small number of participants may be due to its voluntary nature. Also, its administration coincided with a time when other surveys were sent out (e.g., institutional surveys). These issues may have resulted in a smaller than desired pool for the present study.

3.2 Instrument

An online survey, powered by Qualtrics, was developed to gather information as regards students' learning experiences. Two external lecturers from the field of Applied Linguistics reviewed the survey and provided feedback on its design, sections, and individual items. The survey consisted of nine blocks with a total of 25 items:

1. Consent form (1 question)
2. The genre (1 question)
3. Face-to-face sessions (3 questions)
4. Online sessions (3 questions)
5. Preparing, recording, editing, and presenting the Elevator Pitch (6 questions)
6. Elevator Pitch: Asynchronous vs. synchronous (4 questions)
7. Assessing the Elevator Pitch (2 questions)
8. Overall experience and professional development (4 questions)
9. Comments (1 question)

Due to space limitations and the scope of the chapter, we selected some blocks that seemed to be relevant to this study. Table 2 shows the chosen blocks.

As illustrated above, four blocks were selected. While the first two referred explicitly to the learning experience in both scenarios, the third focused on the presentation delivery format, and the fourth on the assessment procedure. The survey was made available through the virtual platform upon completion of the pedagogical implementation.

4 Pedagogical Implementation

Owing to COVID-19 circumstances, technology and digital resources were integrated into the pedagogical proposal from the onset. This was done not only to comply with the sanitary situation on campus (e.g., social distancing in the classroom) but also to support and facilitate an urgent transition to an online teaching format. Digital resources were carefully selected according to their pedagogical affordances to promote interaction and engage students in classroom dynamics, such as individual or group work (both on-site and online). Specifically, the proposal was digitally enriched using *Google Jamboard*, *Google Slides*, *and Mentimeter* (Classroom Response System (CRS), also known as "Clickers"). *Google Jamboard* and *Google Slides* were useful to enhance both group and individual work. *Mentimeter* was employed to pose questions online, foster interaction, and collect students' responses. Furthermore, *Google Meet* and *Discord* supported the development of the online session. *Google Meet* was chosen as it allows for videoconferencing and instant messaging (i.e., video-, audio-, and/or text-based communication) as well as video recording. *Discord* is a free voice, video, and text group-chatting

Table 2 Blueprint of the chosen items of the survey

Item	Answer type
Face-to-face sessions	
Q1. How satisfied are you with the face-to-face session devoted to the Elevator Pitch?	Multiple-choice
Q2. Was the face-to-face session devoted to the Elevator Pitch interactive?	Multiple-choice
Q3. In the face-to-face session, was it useful to…?	Multiple-choice
Online sessions	
Q4. How satisfied are you with the online session devoted to the Elevator Pitch?	Multiple-choice
Q5. Was the online session devoted to the Elevator Pitch interactive?	Multiple-choice
Q6. In the online session, was it useful to…?	Multiple-choice
Elevator Pitch: Asynchronous vs. synchronous	
Q12. Was it challenging for you to present the Elevator Pitch asynchronously?	Multiple-choice
Q13. Justify your response.	Open
Q14. Do you think a live presentation would be more challenging?	Multiple-choice
Q15. Justify your response.	Open
Assessing the Elevator Pitch	
Q16. In the online session, was it useful to…?	Multiple-choice
Q17. You can add any other comment related to your experience while working in small groups to assess the presentations	Open

platform that enables users to create themed servers and open rooms within them. This digital platform was helpful in facilitating spaces for group work.

The pedagogical proposal was implemented in two sessions. The first session was delivered face-to-face, while the second one was online. In what follows, we present an overview of the implementation of the pedagogical proposal.

The joint deconstruction phase comprises two steps: Introduction and genre presentation (1.1.) and Sample analysis and discussion: multimodal deconstruction (1.2.). In the first step (1.1.), the teacher, to activate students' background knowledge, contextualized and introduced the topic of oral presentations without explicitly referring to the format of an Elevator Pitch. The teacher posed a few questions (e.g., *have you ever given an oral presentation? what was the topic of your presentation? how did you feel?*) to make the students reflect on their prior experience. Then, to familiarize the students with the genre, the teacher defined the main characteristics of an Elevator Pitch focusing on its communicative purpose, format, and structure. That is, the teacher briefly explained that an Elevator Pitch consists of a short oral presentation in which speakers present innovative ideas/products to potential investors. Then, he described its structure drawing on Daly and Davy (2016, p. 124):

0. Pre-pitch action/comment (optional)
1. Greeting the audience (optional)
2. Identifying oneself and one's company, product or service

3. Announcing amount of investment required
4. Explaining/presenting the production or service
5. Presenting the history/achievements of company and/or founder(s) (optional)
6. Describing future plans
7. Presenting target customer(s) (optional)
8. Recapitulating and developing (optional)
9. Thanking the audience (optional)
10. Expressing willingness to answer questions (optional)

Next, the notions of persuasion and engagement (interpersonal meaning) were addressed, as they are essential to the success of Elevator Pitch presentations. This is because presenters try to convince the audience of the originality and usefulness of an idea or a product, as well as to attract and hold their attention. To illustrate this, the teacher showed two videos: the spot of an Elevator Pitch event and an Elevator Pitch contest winner. The former was a video that announced a virtual competition (Rice Business Plan Competition, RBPC) that was celebrated in the US in 2020. The latter involved a face-to-face presentation that took place at a university in the US. These two videos helped introduce the genre and discuss its professional and innovative nature. The second video also served to identify and discuss the varied semiotic resources the speaker used to construct meaning (e.g., gestures, gaze direction, facial expressions).

After this short introduction, the students were organized into groups (4–5 members in each) to carry out two analyses (1.2.). Approximately, 7 groups were formed in each of the practice groups (i.e., practice 1 and practice 2). For each analysis, the teacher chose an Elevator Pitch presentation delivered online during the pandemic in the 2020 RBPC Elevator Pitch competition. Presentations delivered online were purposely chosen because the students had to prepare a similar digital project.

The students watched the videos at their own pace using their devices (e.g., laptops, tablets). For the first analysis, they were asked to explore the structure (following Daly and Davy (2016)) and the type of language the presenter employed (e.g., expressions, verb tenses). For the second analysis, the students were asked to observe the strategies the presenter used to address the audience, maintain their attention, and convince them of the usefulness of their idea/product. For both analyses, the students were encouraged to identify notable semiotic resources (e.g., gestures, gaze direction, facial expressions) the presenters instantiated while performing the Elevator Pitch. Each group provided the outcomes of their analyses on a *Google Jamboard* slide. The students' outcomes were shown on the screen and all together, guided by the teacher, commented on them.

The joint construction involved four steps: Recapitulation (2.1.), Generation of ideas (2.2.), Feedback and discussion (2.3.) and Guidelines generation (2.4.). To recapitulate (2.1.) and further explore how presenters create interpersonal meaning, the students watched a sequence of two entrepreneurs trying to persuade and engage a jury. In this case, it consisted of a face-to-face presentation taken from the British TV program *Dragons' Den*. This video was chosen because it showed the judges' feedback and comments on the usefulness of the ideas and products presented. The

students were asked to justify how the two presenters persuaded and engaged the jury. They worked individually and provided their responses on *Mentimeter*. Then, the teacher showed the students' contributions, and all together commented on them.

To start working on their presentations (2.2.) and receive support from the teacher and their peers (2.3.), the students were asked to generate ideas (ideational meaning) for their Elevator Pitch. They were asked to think of innovative ideas/products framed within their field of expertise. Since the Elevator Pitch presentations had to be performed individually, each student worked on their own and wrote their ideas on a *Google Jamboard* slide. Once their ideas were posted, oral peer feedback and discussion were held to help students improve the quality of their ideas.

After that, the teacher and the students co-constructed some basic guidelines for their Elevator Pitch presentations (2.4.). The guidelines contained recommendations about how to organize the spoken discourse (Daly & Davy, 2016) and establish interpersonal meaning with the audience from a multimodal perspective. Some of these suggestions were, for example, posing rhetorical questions, using self-references and referential *you*, adopting an appropriate body posture in front of the webcam (e.g., head and trunk position), using gestures to accompany discourse, and looking at the webcam.

Finally, the students were encouraged to start working on their presentations. A submission deadline was set. They were asked to prepare a 1-min digital Elevator Pitch presentation with no slides, similar to the digital presentations explored in the joint deconstruction phase. *Google Meet* was proposed to support video recording. Although a live presentation would be recommended, an asynchronous presentation was deemed beneficial. This type of format allows students to pause and restart their speech and prepare a final version they feel comfortable with. It is generally true that asynchronous presentations, compared to live presentations, could be less natural and lack spontaneity. Nevertheless, in this case, this format was considered suitable to make the students practice and rehearse, reflect on their communicative skills, and foster their multimodal literacy.

The independent construction phase was delivered online. It was made up of four steps: Planning and preparation (3.1.), Rehearsal (3.2.), Presentation (3.3.), and Discussion and peer assessment (3.4.). The first three steps involved autonomous work outside the classroom. The students had 2 weeks to plan and prepare the Elevator Pitch, rehearse and perform the presentation in video format, and edit the video if required.

The live online session was supported by *Google Meet*. In order to engage the students in group work, breakout rooms were created on *Discord*. The students were divided into groups of 4–5 members to co-assess some Elevator Pitch presentations (approximately 4). For this purpose, each group entered a *Discord* room to watch some of the presentations, formulate a few questions for the presenters (*Google Jamboard*), and prepare a short presentation (*Google Slides*). The assessment focused on how ideational (topic), textual (structure), and interpersonal (persuasion and engagement) meanings were multimodally instantiated. To guide the students' task, the following questions were posed: *what is it about? how is it structured? does the presenter connect with the audience?* (Morell, 2015).

Each group worked in a specific breakout room (Fig. 1). The teacher entered rooms at his discretion or when notified by a group member. The students were allowed to enter other rooms if necessary/desired.

Based on the teacher's experience, we may point out that the interaction generated on the *Discord* rooms was different from that on *Google Meet*. When the students were in their breakout rooms, they led their discussions, shared their screens, and became responsible for the ongoing flow of interaction. All the group members generally interacted. However, while the students were on *Google Meet*, the level of interaction was more limited as only a few participated. This could be possibly attributed to the fact that they were in a large room and English was the language of communication. In contrast, when the students were in their breakout rooms, they tended to use Spanish among them. English was mainly used to interact with the teacher and to complete the task.

After completing the task, the students went back to *Google Meet* to carry out the discussion and peer assessment activity. Figure 2 shows how the interaction was constructed during this session.

Each group posed specific questions and commented, one at a time, on the Elevator Pitch presentations they examined. Their speech was visually supported by *Google Jamboard* (Fig. 3) and *Google Slides* (Fig. 4).

Group members and presenters had to switch on their webcams and interact orally. In this situation, the use of chat was only allowed to provide any extra information (e.g., links) or if a student experienced a technical problem. The teacher moderated the session while the students were actively engaged in the discussion. The same procedure was followed for each of the groups. To conclude the session, the teacher made some general remarks about the organization of the discourse and the way in which the students established interpersonal meaning. In addition, he

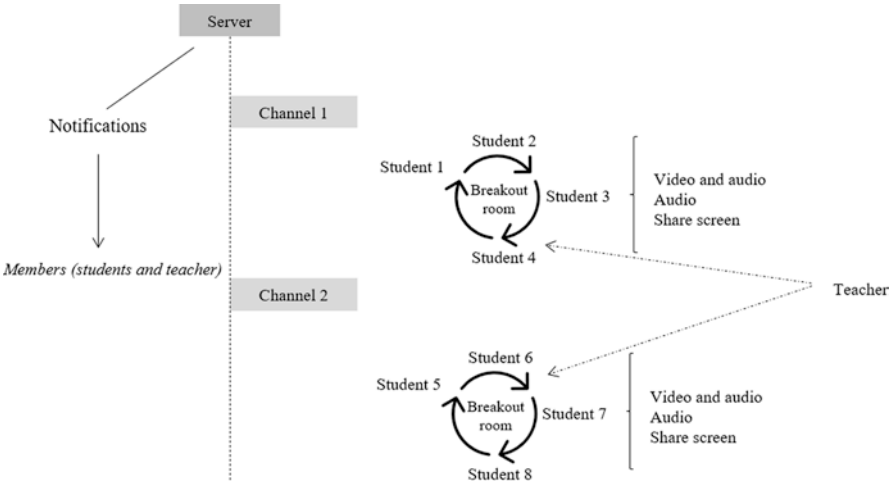

Fig. 1 Sample of breakout room interaction. (Self-developed)

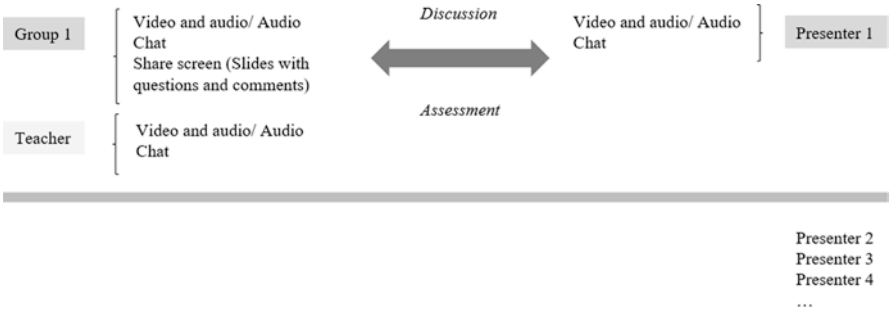

Fig. 2 Interaction in the main room. (self-developed)

Fig. 3 Examples of students' questions on *Google Jamboard*

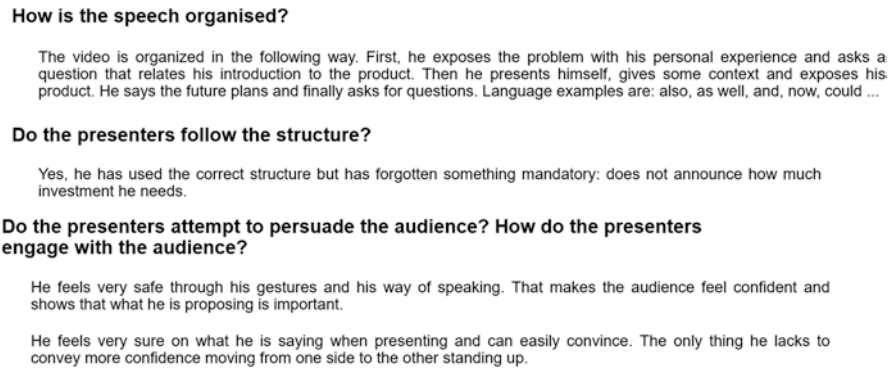

Fig. 4 Example of students' comments on *Google Slides*

reflected on the multimodal resources the students used to construct meaning in the Elevator Pitch presentation.

Throughout this online session, the interaction between the teacher and the students took place through *Google Meet* and *Discord*. Both platforms allow for audio, video, and chat communication. In the main room (*Google Meet*), the teacher used video and audio to deliver the session. He usually responded to the students' comments and questions orally and made use of the chat to, for example, share links. The students typically employed audio and chat to interact with the teacher. They

rarely switched on their webcams in these interactive episodes; nevertheless, they turned them on during the discussion and peer assessment step. The interaction among the students typically occurred via audio and chat. Some of the students' contributions to the chatbox involved sharing information and links and solving technical problems. While the students were working in their breakout rooms (*Discord*), they usually used audio to communicate with their peers, although some switched on their webcams. The teacher had his webcam turned on when interacting with the students on *Discord*. Additionally, the students interacted through an instant messaging app while the session was in progress. In some ways, that was useful for reporting on unexpected situations that occurred during the session.

The use of semiotic technologies (Lim, 2021) was necessary for the design and implementation of the pedagogical proposal. The major challenge was to come up with solutions to engage the students in the activities and promote interaction. For this purpose, we selected digital applications (i.e., *Mentimeter*, *Google Jamboard* and *Google Slides*) that served to involve the students in the activities and promote interaction. Likewise, we used platforms that permitted video/audio/written communication (i.e., *Google Meet* and *Discord)*. In turn, these applications were useful for fostering varied classroom dynamics that enhanced students' interaction. It should be noted that these applications can also be integrated into face-to-face lessons. More specifically, *Mentimeter* and *Google Jamboard* may be beneficial to boost students' participation and interaction, and *Google Meet* to carry out asynchronous presentations.

5 Students' Learning Experience: Results and Discussion

Eighteen students volunteered to complete the survey, which was administered to explore their learning experiences as recipients of the pedagogical implementation.

The students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the face-to-face and online sessions. Overall, the students were satisfied with the two sessions, even though they seemed to be more pleased with the face-to-face session (n = 17; very satisfied 4, 13 satisfied) than with the online session (n = 14; very satisfied 5, satisfied 9). This result may be probably related to the students' familiarity with the face-to-face teaching format. Moreover, the transition to the online format was not initially planned and perhaps some students felt a bit uncomfortable with this change.

Concerning classroom interaction, the results show that the online session was generally understood as slightly more interactive (n = 16) than the face-to-face session (n = 13). A possible explanation for this result is that the opportunities for interaction in the online session were more varied. That is, the students had different channels of communication (e.g., chat, audio) to interact and, in most cases, they could select the one that was most convenient for them. Moreover, in the online setting, the students worked in breakout rooms without the constant presence of the teacher. Taking advantage of this situation, though, the students used Spanish more

frequently, which was detrimental to their practice of English; yet, it increased their positive perception of the online interaction situation.

In addition to this, we were interested in the students' perception of the usefulness of the classroom dynamics and the choice of the digital applications. Overall, the results point to the usefulness of the pedagogical decisions made and the digital resources selected.

In the case of the face-to-face session, the students considered it useful both to work in groups to carry out the analysis of the Elevator Pitch presentations (n = 14; very useful 6, moderately useful 8), as well as to plan their ideas for the Elevator Pitch (n = 13; very useful 8, moderately useful 5). An interesting result is observed regarding the provision of teacher and peer feedback (n = 16; very useful 11, moderately useful 5). The teacher and, most importantly, the students provided their peers with feedback on the content of their proposals for the Elevator Pitch presentation. This result supports the suitability of the activity, which aimed to help the students improve the ideas for their presentations. Also, the results show that the digital applications exploited in the face-to-face session were convenient. Specifically, the students viewed it useful to answer questions through *Mentimeter* (n = 14; very useful 3, moderately useful 11), provide comments on *Google Jamboard* slides (n = 11; very useful 5, moderately useful 6), and post their ideas for the Elevator Pitch presentation on *Google Jamboard* (n = 15; very useful 6, moderately useful 9).

For the online session, similar classroom dynamics and digital applications were implemented. In general, the students regarded the classroom dynamics and the choice of the digital applications as helpful. Specifically, the results indicate that the students perceived both group work to perform the assessment (n = 15; very useful 6, moderately useful 9) and peer assessment (n = 14; very useful 5, moderately useful, 9) as useful. These results seem to support the appropriateness of promoting group work activities that encourage students to reflect on and evaluate their peers' performance. The students had to post their questions on a *Google Jamboard* slide and create a *Google Slide* presentation with a few comments. In this case, using *Google Jamboard* was regarded as useful only for half of the students (n = 9; very useful 4, moderately useful 5). Perhaps this digital resource was not that practical at that point, especially because the students had to also elaborate on a presentation. On the other hand, most of the students found it useful to prepare a presentation with *Google Slides* (n = 13; very useful 6, moderately useful 7). This presentation was helpful for the students to structure and visually represent their assessment comments. By making students create such presentations, teachers can try to enhance their skills to communicate in digital contexts. Furthermore, the students were asked about the usefulness of employing *Google Meet* and *Discord* to promote interaction. Although both platforms were useful, the students seemed to prefer *Discord* (n = 17; very useful 12, moderately useful 5) to *Google Meet* (n = 14; very useful 7, moderately useful 7). This result can be expected since they proposed using *Discord* for the online session. This group of students was quite familiar with this platform since it is commonly used by the gaming community. Moreover, *Discord* was probably considered to be more convenient to the students for two

reasons: first, interaction took place in small groups; second, the absence of continuous monitoring from the teacher offered them the possibility of using Spanish. In contrast, interaction on *Google Meet* happened with the entire group using English. In turn, this finding could explain why the students, as noted above, perceived the online session as more interactive than the face-to-face session.

Finally, we were interested in exploring the students' perceptions regarding the presentation format. As explained in the previous section, the students prepared an asynchronous Elevator Pitch presentation. The students recognized that performing the presentation asynchronously was, overall, challenging (n = 15; moderately challenging 8, slightly challenging 7). Besides, they were asked whether delivering the presentation live, either on-site or online, would represent a more challenging experience. As expected, all the students reported that it would be more challenging (n = 18; definitely yes 16, probably yes 2). In this case, however, we did not ask them which format within the two synchronous modalities (i.e., on-site or online) would be more challenging. This information could have served to decide which one to use in future implementations.

The students were requested to justify their responses. Six students claimed that in an asynchronous presentation they had more time to prepare and video-record themselves as many times as necessary to improve their delivery. Likewise, nine students commented that the synchronous modality would be more challenging because of the impossibility of editing and restarting the presentation. Another key aspect was the presence of the audience. Specifically, three students indicated that an asynchronous presentation might be less demanding than a live presentation due to the lack of an audience. This is also supported by the fact that three other students stated that a live presentation would be more complicated precisely because of the presence of the audience. In general, these results appear to suggest that the students showed a preference for the asynchronous format.

The survey shed some light on the students' experience throughout the implementation of the multimodal genre-based approach. The findings suggest that the students were generally satisfied with both teaching formats, even though they showed a preference for the face-to-face classroom. With reference to the interactive nature of the two sessions, the students appeared to find the online session slightly more interactive, probably because the online setting offered more varied channels to communicate (e.g., chat, breakout rooms) than the face-to-face session. Concerning this, the use of *Discord* was perceived as particularly useful. In this context, the students had great opportunities to interact with each other to accomplish the peer assessment activity. Nevertheless, the presence of the teacher was somehow limited and therefore the students tended to use Spanish. On this matter, it seems that the presence of the teacher should be increased to encourage students' use of English. The breakout rooms were also beneficial to provide the students with opportunities to take a more active role and become more responsible for their learning process (e.g., Hansen-Edwards, 2013).

Moreover, it should be noted that the methodological decisions regarding the choice of the classroom dynamics and digital resources were proven to be effective. In general, group work and feedback/assessment activities were identified as quite

fruitful. In a way, these findings serve to justify the decisions made to promote the students' engagement in the activities, reflection on the construction of the Elevator Pitch, and interaction. The digital resources used in the pedagogical proposal were effective since they enabled the students to actively participate and engage in the activities. Besides, they were beneficial to promote interaction and collaborative work. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that sometimes digital resources may not be that necessary (i.e., *Google Jamboard* in the discussion and peer assessment step). Finally, the results show the students' preference for asynchronous presentations, mainly due to the possibility of preparing and editing a version they find appropriate and presenting it without the presence of an audience.

Overall, these findings seem to highlight the effectiveness of the methodological decisions made to design the pedagogical proposal during the COVID-19 times. Digital resources were carefully selected to engage the students in a range of activities and promote interaction. The digitalization of the pedagogical approach contributed to making the students aware of the complexity of interacting and constructing meaning online. By the same token, the elaboration of a digital multimodal composition (Elevator Pitch presentation) served to develop the students' multimodal literacy, which is essential in contemporary communication.

6 Conclusion

This chapter invites reflection on how digital technologies can support and facilitate language teaching and learning. As described in this chapter, digitalizing and moving into an online environment goes beyond the mere use of technology. A well-defined methodological approach is required to better adapt pedagogical practices to the new teaching formats (González-Lloret, 2020; Querol-Julián & Beltrán-Palanques, 2021). Nevertheless, the digitalization and transition to online contexts should be done considering students' communicative needs and the development of their multimodal literacy (Lim, 2018; Querol-Julián & Beltrán-Palanques, 2021). Against this backdrop, this study aimed to present a digitally enriched multimodal genre-based approach, its transition to an online environment, and implementation, as well as to explore the students' learning experiences as recipients of this proposal.

The first part of the study offers insights into how a multimodal genre-based approach, focused on Elevator Pitch presentations, can be digitally enriched and transitioned to an online context. As discussed, the use of semiotic technologies (e.g., digital applications) was needed to support the design and implementation of the proposal. Methodological decisions ensured the implementation of the proposal both on-site and online. The main concern was to select specific classroom dynamics and digital applications that served to engage the students in the pedagogical process, meet their learning objectives, and promote interaction. The study described the implementation of the pedagogical proposal and the use of technology and digital resources to support the completion of the activities and promote interaction.

The second part of the study focused on the students' learning experience throughout the pedagogical proposal. For this purpose, a survey was administrated upon its implementation. Overall, the results seem to show the usefulness of the efforts made both to digitalize the multimodal genre-based approach and to choose specific classroom dynamics. Specifically, the students viewed the digital applications employed as quite useful for carrying out the activities and interacting. As to classroom dynamics, working in groups and providing/receiving feedback and assessment comments were highly valued. These findings may have implications for future applications of the model in terms of the procedure followed, the design of the activities, the classroom dynamics, and the selection of the digital applications. The survey also provided information on the students' preference for asynchronous presentations mainly due to the possibility of repeating the recording until it was convenient. Although live presentations may be generally advisable, asynchronous presentations are also valuable to promote students' multimodal literacy. In a way, this can contribute to making students aware of how the meaning-making process is constructed and represented in digital contexts.

The results from the survey seem to point to general satisfaction with the procedures followed to implement the pedagogical approach. Nevertheless, the reduced number of students who responded to the survey does not allow us to make any strong claims in terms of the effectiveness of the pedagogical adaptation. A larger number of students responding to the survey would have been desirable. In future studies, the number of participants should be expanded to determine the effectiveness of the pedagogical adaptation. Another limitation is that the students' multimodal awareness was not measured. Therefore, further research should be carried out to explore students' development of multimodal literacy.

By and large, this study attempted to illustrate how semiotic technology can be exploited to digitalize language teaching and learning. Well-informed methodological decisions are necessary to best adapt to novel teaching formats. Although the findings of this study are limited to a specific teaching context, the experience described here may serve other teachers that aim to digitalize language courses in ESP.

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