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Innovation and digital affordances in interactive science documentaries: A case study

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Interactive documentary is an emergent genre which makes use of digital affordances in order to communicate science using varied narrative structures (Gaudenzi, 2013). Interactive documentaries can adopt different patterns of discourse organisation or modes of interaction with viewers interested in science. These are complemented by multimodal tools existing in digital platforms. In the context of science communication online, these documentaries also provide attractive interfaces that can be used for the dissemination of scientific knowledge to diversified audiences. These interfaces harness the interactive and multimodal nature of Web 2.0 in order to make control of the contents available to users. Nonetheless, there may exist a dissonance between the perception of user control and the actual interactivity afforded within the site. Using Adami's (2013) framework for the analysis of interactivity combined with Alkarimeh's (2019) analysis on perceived interactivity, I use a case study to examine how an interactive science documentary makes use of different semiotic modes aimed at facilitating science communication by profiting from digital interactive tools. For that purpose, I look at the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of interactive sites/signs as mapped by Halliday's metafunctions, and compare them against the scales of perceived interactivity. Specifically, I will analyse how the paradigmatic facet of the interactive sites/signs enables an expansion of the multimodal resources available in the database, opens the possibilities for the transmission of scientific content, and creates the illusion of users' control over the interface in order to ensure a 'deeper understanding of its contents' (Holsanova, 2014).

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I joined the PhD programme in English Studies at the University of Zaragoza. My main research interests are genre analysis and multimodality. I aim to understand digital genres of science and, in particular, how multimodal genres can today be used by scientists to make science accessible and attractive to non-expert audiences, and by the latter, to democratise the interests of scientific research in a context of cloud economy.

Recommendation (for student section)

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