LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS
ON BUSINESS SALES PITCH SCRIPTS

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Abstract:
Many challenges are faced by sales representatives in the effort of closing sales deal of product or service offered to their prospective clients. The goal is to persuade the clients to invest in the offered products or services. To perform this, sales representatives need a well-constructed sales script that can help them in enticing their clients. In relation to this, numerous tips and step-by-step advices are given by business professionals on how to craft a good sales script. However, looking at this situation in linguistic spectrum, it is observed that those tips and advices given are lacking justification from the linguistic perspectives which may provide new insights in the craftsmanship of a well-structured sales script. Hence, this paper serves to provide a steady parameter set to give linguistic guidelines for crafting an excellent pitch script. With reference to the theories developed by scholars like Schffrin (1994), Martin (2012), and Widdowson (1996), an analysis was conducted on 10 samples of sales script taken from one of the most successful international sales companies. Data collected shows that there are 6 different types of key linguistic components embedded within the scripts at a different frequency level. One prominent discovery of this study revealed that the different frequency of these key components leads to a rhythmic patterns and themes that immediately distinguish a good sales script with a successful one.

Keywords: business sales pitch script, sales representative, formalist theory, functionalist theory, linguistic components, linguistic patterns

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1. Introduction

According to Sherry (1988), pitching is a variant of personal selling in which the sales encounter is governed by a spiel or a script designed to recruit and enrapture an audience to such a degree that its members are moved to purchase the trader's products. Similarly, Asala (2012) mentioned that pitch script can be referred to as a powerful tool for projecting a confident and competent professional image. Many writers are keen on publishing articles, journals or even books on advocating variant viewpoints, advices, or guidance on how to create a good pitch script. This is however based only on intuitive, observation or even based on experience of professionals. It is seen that guidance provided by most of the professionals are lacking justification particularly from the linguistic point of view.

This is where the real problem begins. Upon analyzing and focusing too much on the mentioned aspects above, little is focusing on the side of linguistic components that are embedded in the pitch script which function as a spell or the incantation used in winning the heart of the prospects. The fundamental aspect of this research comes with an assumption that each 'pitch script' is linguistically designed and molded into such a language that could affect the decision of the prospect (potential client) after being pitched. Thus, this paper focuses on analyzing and identifying the prominent linguistic devices engaged at different textual levels within the pitch script which are responsible in giving significant impact on the potential prospects' decisions. This paper answers the following questions:

1) What are the linguistic components found in the business sales pitch scripts?
2) What are the linguistic patterns used in the sales scripts?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In setting an itinerary of this research which analysis of sales pitch script is involved, knowledge of discourse analysis therefore could platform us with an excellent framework in which attempts to identify categories, themes, ideas, views, roles, and so on, within the text itself can be carried out.

Schriffin (1994) stated that discourse analysis is indeed a splendid theoretical framework which is *very vast though somewhat vague*" field filled with a range of problems and solutions. It is also one of the least defined areas of linguistics. Thus, problems that come with the approaches to discourse analysis will generally be rooted from the fact that an understanding of discourse is based on scholarship from several different academic disciplines (Cunningham, 2010).

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

2.2.1 Formalist and Functionalist Theories of Linguistics

Schiffrin (1994) proposed that there are two definitions of discourse analysis. These two definitions are referred by her as Formalism and Functionalism whereby an interest in the abstract form and structure of language is associated with the paradigm of Formalism whilst the Functionalism paradigm concerns more on the interesting part of what language is used to do.

Formalists study language as an independent system that is embedded within the human capacity whereas, *Functionalists* study language as it is a part in its relation to social function. However, this is not to be taken in a way that each is mutually exclusive, but simply that at their core each generally occupies opposite sides of the academic compartment, accompanied by their own group of scholars, methods, and also intentions (Schiffrin, 1994).

After a thorough look on this, it is obvious to say that business sales pitch certainly trends around functionalism. The pitching process in sales pitch recognizes and acknowledges the flexibility of social constructionism without having to be tied down to one of the rigid rules and thought cycles of it (Cunningham, 2010).

2.2.2 Widdowson's 3 Steps in Analyzing Text

Widdowson (1996) described that the purpose of stylistic analysis is in a simplest sense to put investigation into "how the resources of a language code are put to use in the production of actual messages". Stylistic is concerned with the production of actual messages as well as the pattern of use in the given text and is often used for the purpose of analysing linguistic aspects of a text. He proposed three phases in analysing the text:
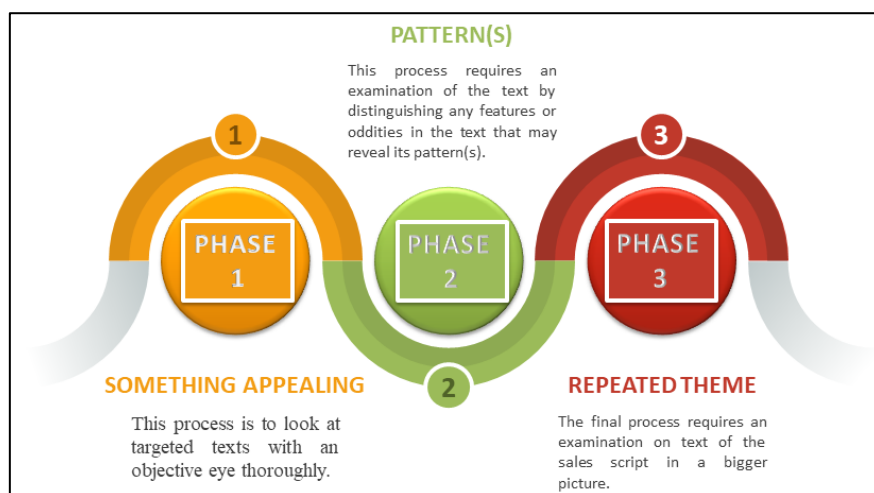

Figure 1: Widdowson's 3 Steps in Analyzing Text

2.2.3 Martin's Sales Linguistic Structures

Martin (2012) explained that language indeed plays a very big role in adding the persuasiveness of a pitch. His recent article entitled *Persuasion Tactics of Effective Salespeople* introduced Sales Linguistic as the revolutionary fresh field, represents the

essence of how sales representatives and customers use language during the decision-making process:
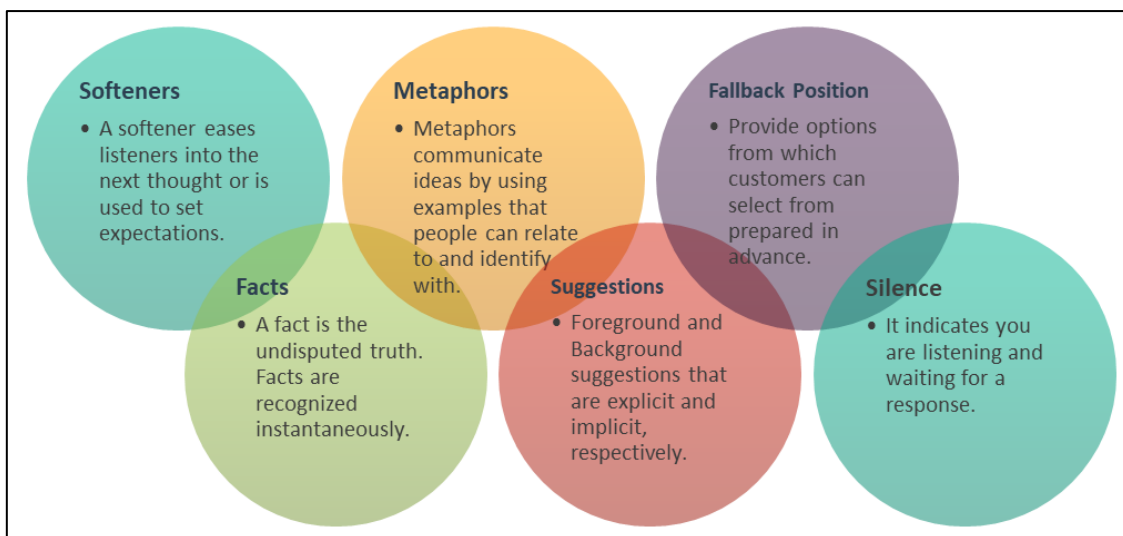

Figure 2: Martin's Sales Linguistic Structures

3. Methodology

Ten scripts of business pitch taken from an international company were used for the linguistic analysis. The data were then analysed based on the parameter adapted from Widdowson's Three Steps of Analyzing Text (Widdowson, 1996):

- Phase 1: Something appealing,
- Phase 2: Patterns,
- Phase 3: Repeated themes.

Next, any linguistic patterns occurred in the text were identified and labelled based on Martin's Sales Linguistic Structures (Martin, 2012):

1) Softeners,
2) Facts,
3) Metaphors,
4) Suggestions,
5) Fallback Position,
6) Silence.

All gathered data were recorded in a form of charts and tables and since the qualitative research is used as an instrument for this study, validation from language experts is sought for the purpose of thesis credibility.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction
Ten samples of pitch scripts were analyzed in this chapter for the purpose of revealing its linguistic composition. The analysis done for this study comes in the form of collecting

and stating data based on Martin's Sales Linguistic Structure (2012) to find any interesting features, and is followed by recognizing patterns occurred as well as to examine data acquired for comparing purposes of two divided categories of sample pitches.

4.2 Coding and Labelling
Identified linguistic components are marked using code / label as below:

Table 1: Coding and Labelling for Key Linguistic Components

Key Elements	Code / Label
Softener	**(A)**
Fact	**(B)**
Metaphor	**(C)**
Suggestion	**(D)**
Fallback position	**(E)**
Silence	**(F)**

4.3 Linguistic Components
Below are the results of analysis done with the aid of Sales Linguistic Structures as proposed by Martin (2012). There are six key components embedded in all the 10 sales pitch scripts:

Table 2: Linguistic Components in Ten Business Sales Pitch Scripts

Script	Component						Total Components
	(A)	**(B)**	**(C)**	**(D)**	**(E)**	**(F)**	
1	7	5	3	12	9	10	46
2	3	3	3	16	9	10	44
3	8	6	2	14	9	8	47
4	6	6	6	14	4	14	50
5	7	5	3	14	6	14	49
6	4	5	2	13	5	8	37
7	5	4	1	11	6	9	36
8	5	5	3	11	2	11	37
9	10	3	3	11	4	11	42
10	6	5	6	12	2	10	41
Total	**61**	**47**	**32**	**128**	**56**	**105**	**502**

Despite the complicated nature of analyzing text for the key elements of Sales Linguistic Structure proposed by Martin (2012), analysis results for phase 1 are promising. The most interesting fact acquired after the analysis was that all of the key components embedded in the pitch script are inspected to have more than 35 times of occurrences per pitch.

In regards to this, Pitch Script number 4 has the highest usage of key linguistic components in a pitch which is 50 times of occurrences in its whole text, whereas Pitch Script number 7 has the lowest usage of key linguistic components in a pitch which is 36 times of occurrences in its whole text. This brings a gap of 14 key linguistic components missing in Pitch Script number 7 as compared to Pitch Script number 4. Looking at the

data in a bigger context, all of the pitch scripts have higher occurrences of key linguistic components of Suggestion (D) which is 128 times of occurrences in all of the pitch scripts text, followed by Silence (F) with total occurrences in all 10 pitch scripts of 105 times. Softener (A) is the third highest key linguistic component used in all 10 pitch scripts which is 61 times of occurrences, followed by the 56 times of occurrences for the Fallback Position (E) of the linguistic component. Next to this is the usage of Fact (B) with total of 47 times of occurrences in all 10 pitch scripts. Analysis done also reveal that the lowest usage of key component in all 10 pitch script is Metaphor (C).

Also, from the analysis, it is seen that both Suggestion (D) and Silence (F) are in fact the most prominent two key components that appeal to first impression as striking. To concur with Widdowson's 3 Steps in Analyzing Text, these two key components are then taken to Phase 2 for the purpose of ramification.

4.4 Linguistic Patterns

From the analysis in Phase 1, the most striking features that immediately stand out came from two key components of Suggestion (D) and Silence (F). To see whether these two components provide specific patterns for the text, ratio test will be conducted for this will reveal the frequency of both two key components as complimentary components that form a specific pattern for the sales pitch scripts.

Table 3: *(D)* to *(F)* Ratio in Sample Pitches

Script	(D)	(F)	Ratio
1	12	10	1.2
2	16	10	1.6
3	14	8	1.75
4	14	14	1
5	14	14	1
6	13	8	1.62
7	11	9	1.2
8	11	11	1
9	11	11	1
10	12	10	1.2

As suggested by Widdowson (1996), patterns of language can be discovered by distinguishing any features or oddities in the text that may reveal its pattern(s). Hence, when the total of Suggestion (D) and Silence (F) in each of the pitch script was divided, one apparent point of interest immediately stands out; all of the sales pitch scripts are inspected to have the tendency to contain at least the value of 1.0 of Suggestion (D) to Silence (F) ratio.

Since the objective of the analysis is to seek out the pattern contained in pitch scripts, it is a promising result to see that the entire ratios acquired from all of the different pitch scripts only differ slightly from each other. This means that the amount of linguistic component of Suggestion (D) is proportional to the linguistic component of Silence (F).

Hence, the pattern contained in all the successful pitch scripts is seen even more visible. For every successful sales pitch script, there is a strong composition of two key components which are Suggestion (D) and Silence (F) embedded within the text. This composition is identified and converted into a form of ratio. The ratio symbolized the pattern of the text which in this case, pattern embedded within the text identified to have the value of at least ratio 1.0 to not more than ratio 1.8 for every successful pitch script.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

From the analysis done of all ten sample pitch scripts, findings showed that a well-crafted pitch script has the anatomy of all the six key sales linguistic components which are Softener, Fact, Metaphor, Suggestion, Fallback Position and Silence. All these components are seen essential in the craftsmanship of sales pitch script. However, it is seen that a pattern of component of Suggestion and Silence are likely consistent to have more frequency than other linguistic components in each sales script. In relation to this, differences and similarities of each sales script are found in which it leads to a discovery of repeated themes in all the sales scripts.

The composition of sales pitch script analyzed in this study aligned with all the criteria and advices given by business professionals in crafting a good sales pitch. For instance, the use of sales linguistic component 'Silence' allows the salesperson to gain dominance in conversation when pitching prospective clients. This is because the function of Silence is to indicate that the salesperson is listening and waiting for response. In line with this, the objective of engaging with prospective clients is to get them to keep on talking. The more prospective client talks, the more information will be gained which help the salesperson to uncover the reason why his/her product/service is the solution to the prospective client's problem.

Also, as seen in the results acquired from the analysis, the component of Silence goes hand in hand with the component Suggestion. This is because these two components are interrelated. Exhibit A, in Pitch Script 1 (The Deepwater Forum Asia Pacific 2012) it can be seen that the script line of *"I have been in contact with a lot of industry experts and according to them hydrate formation and flow line assurances are some of the major concerns that they face. Is this the case with your company as well?"* has both of the components elements. Suggestion is used to communicate ideas and suggestion which later lead to developing a state where the salesperson is given a chance to ask more questions to get more information. At the state when the prospective client is answering the question, the linguistic component Silence tagged to follow the component Suggestion as the salesperson needs to listen to the respond.

However, it is an erroneous act to ignore other components identified in the analysis as all the other components carry out a perfect complimentary bond to strengthen the composition of the sales script. For example, Softener is used to ease the listener into the next thought or is used to set expectations. Especially when it comes to the Asian business style, Softener is seen as a tool to add the effect of respect. Exhibit B, in Pitch Script 5 (Human capital Innovation in Oil, Gas and Petrochemicals 2012 Asia

Pacific) there is a line of "*so if you don' mind me asking*" where the salesperson would use this choice of talk to send the idea or thought to the listener that he or she cares about their right not to be questioned. This gives the listener a positive impression upon the salesperson which also add up the persuasiveness of the pitch script.

Similarly, Fallback Position can also be considered as a form of technique that implies the same rule of Softener. Instead of giving ultimatums that force prospective clients to accept or reject the closing of the pitch, Fallback Position provides options from which prospective clients can select from prepared in advance. Again, this implies to the reality of people in that they do not like to be pushed to accept something out of their will. With the use of Fallback Position, salesperson will appear not to be pushy and this will ease the listener who listens to the pitch.

Other than that, findings also show that there are elements of another two key components in the sales script which are Fact and Metaphor. Logically, where would credibility of a pitch be if fact is not presented to the listener? This shows that Fact is indeed extremely important in the composition of the sales script, as salesperson must present to listener points which are true to gain the listeners' trust.

However, since sometimes Fact can be so overwhelming to be understood, the linguistic components of Metaphor is used to communicate facts or even ideas in a form of examples that listeners can relate to and identify with. In this sense, Metaphor enables complex concepts and theories to be explained in an understandable, interesting, and persuasive manner.

6. Recommendations

Even with a small sample size, this study has found a quantifiable point of interests between successful and less successful sales pitch scripts. It is hoped that in future research, expansion, and further exploration of the subject of linguistic components in sales scripts can be conducted. As seen until now, there are not many studies carried out on the sales pitch script concerning the area of language. Therefore, a much larger horizon of study would become useful in digging the inner linguistic potential of text contained in sales script. Better exploration of this area in future would be a great work of research for many of the interrelationship between other aspects of the pitch script cannot be pointed out in this study.

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