

# Engagement Resources Used by Novice and Professional Marketers in Persuasive Presentations

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**Abstract**— Numerous studies have investigated the use of evaluative language in texts. Few studies, however, have addressed the use of Engagement resources in spoken persuasive texts. This paper attempts to fill this gap by reporting part of a larger study aiming to investigate how novice and professional marketers make use of Engagement resources in persuasive presentations. The study used a qualitative approach by collecting video data of the marketers' performances. There were two kinds of marketers involved: novice and professional. Novice marketers referred to semester IV students of DIII English majoring in Speaking for Business Purposes. Professional marketers were business executives whose job was presenting newly launched products. The data were analyzed by following Martin and White's (2005) framework of Appraisal Theory. The results revealed that the novice and professional marketers had different favor in using Engagement resources in their persuasive texts. The professional marketer seemed to have more powerful persuasive resources than the novice one. The research findings of the study might suggest that English teachers should provide scaffoldings for students in using effective engagement resources to structure their persuasive texts.

**Keywords**— persuasive texts, appraisals, attitude resources, systemic functional linguistics

## I. INTRODUCTION

It has been acknowledged that persuasive skills are highly needed by individuals. The skills are applicable almost in all aspects of life [1], including workplaces. The competency of persuading people even gains its importance in business companies, which produce products and provide services for customers. In this context, persuasive skills are used to convince the customers to buy the products or to use the services provided by the company.

In order to be able to attract the customers, the staffs need to use engagement resources. Engagement is one subcategory of evaluative language proposed by [2]. In this evaluative language system, engagement is concerned with the position of the speakers' voice with respect to other voices. This is performed by either expanding or contracting their dialogic space with their potential customer [2,3]. With regard to expansion, the speakers actively open dialogic space with

alternative voices. This can be done through entertain and attribute resources. Entertain expresses the speaker's intention to hedge and can be lexicogrammatically realized with the expressions of modality (e.g. *may*, *will*, *can*, *probably*, etc), circumstances, (e.g. *in my opinion*), mental and verbal projections (e.g. *I think that*, *I am convinced that*), and evidence/appearance-based postulation (e.g. *apparently*). Attribute expresses the speaker's intention to acknowledge or distance himself from the alternative value positions and can be realized with reporting verbs (e.g. *said*, *claimed*), mental process verbs (e.g. *believe*, *suspect*), and adverbial adjuncts (e.g. *according to*) [1,3].

With respect to contraction, the speakers reduce dialogic space with alternative voices by using proclaim or disclaim resources. Proclaim is used by the speakers when they intend to emphasize the commonality between their own position and the listeners' position. This could be done through some lexical items such as *of course*, *admittedly*, *point out*, *demonstrate*, *I contend*, *I agree*, etc. Meanwhile, disclaim is employed by the speakers when they need to deny or counter alternative positions. The lexicogrammatical resources used to express this function are *no*, *not*, *nothing*, *although*, *yet*, *even*, *still*, etc [2,3].

The aforementioned engagement resources are not only used by the sale and marketing staff (professional marketers thereafter) but also are practiced by English for Foreign Language (EFL) learners (hereafter novice marketers) majoring in Speaking for Business Purposes). In this course, the students performed a simulation resembling real-world activities that they may encounter in their future career, such as presenting newly launched products to customers. Based on our preliminary study, however, we observed that students had not effectively used engagement resources in their business presentation. Accordingly, they seemed to fail to convince the customers about the value of their presented product. On the contrary, this condition was hardly noticed in the performance of the real sale and marketing staff.

Considering the fact that there were differences between the professional marketers and the novice marketers, we then conducted a study that aimed at digging up how these two kinds of marketers used their engagement resources in their business presentations. By comparing them, the gaps in the use

of engagement resources could be found. These gaps are expected could provide empirical findings of the needs for students to master and employ effective engagement resources in their texts, in particular, in their business presentation.

Studies demonstrating the use of engagement resources have been conducted by some scholars [for instance 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. Nevertheless, these studies only focused on investigating the use of engagement resources in written texts. Little research has addressed how such resources are used in spoken ones, particularly in spoken presentation texts. Additionally, studies aiming to compare the novice and the professional speakers in using engagement resources are also quite scarce to find. In order to provide a balanced investigation on this area of study, the present study aims at investigating how novice and professional marketers employed engagement resources in their persuasive presentation.

Compared to the professional marketer, the novice one used fewer and more limited engagement resources. When this case happens, we argue, the novice marketer produces less persuasive text. As a result, he can not achieve the communicative purpose of producing such text. Accordingly, a study aiming to explore and document practices of novice and professional marketers in using engagement resources is needed. The research findings can boost both English teachers/lecturers and students' awareness on the importance of using engagement resources to create a well argued persuasive text.

To fill this need, the present study sought to address the following questions: a) how did the novice marketer use engagement resources in a persuasive presentation?; b) how did the professional marketer use engagement resources in a persuasive presentation?; c) how were engagement resources used by the novice marketer similar to those used by the professional marketer?; and d) how were engagement resources used by the novice marketer different from those used by the professional marketer?

## II. METHOD

This study is taken from a larger research aiming at investigating how novice and professional marketers employed language and gestures to convey ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in their multimodal persuasive presentations. This paper, however, limits the scope to report how novice and professional marketers made use of engagement resources in their persuasive presentations.

The study used a qualitative approach, particularly videography research design. This is because this research design provides opportunities for us to collect data in a natural context [7]. Besides, this technique also allows us to record the phenomenon under investigation in a naturally occurring setting.

With respect to the research design implemented in the study, that was videography, there were two video data used as data sources in the present research: video data of the performance of novice marketers and video data of the performance of professional marketers. Owing to the differences in the nature of the marketers, the procedures of collecting data for each kind of marketers were also different.

On one hand, the video data of the novice marketers were collected by video-recording the students when they were performing persuasive presentations. Ten students majoring in Speaking for Business Purposes took part in this study. However, due to the study's limitation, only one out of those ten students' performances was selected as the data for the study.

On the other hand, the video data of the professional marketers were obtained by downloading the performances of sales and marketing staff directly from the YouTube channel. There were eight performances gathered. Nevertheless, the time constraints had limited us to take only one video data to be used as the data source in the study. The selection of these two video data (one video data of the novice marketer and one video data of the professional one) was held by administering purposive sampling technique and was based on the principles of data adequacy. Even though the sources of data were video data, the unit of analysis in the study was clauses produced by the novice and the professional marketer.

There were some steps that we executed to analyze the data. They were: (i) transcribing data manually. We listened and watched the performances of the two marketers over and over until we became familiar with the data; (ii) coding clauses. We identified types of engagement within the clauses into two main divisions: expansion and contraction. We highlighted lexical items containing expansion and contraction resources; (iii) classifying data. We classified the data of contraction and expansion into their subcategories. Expansion was further divided into entertain and attribute, meanwhile contraction was divided into proclaim and disclaim; and (iv) interpreting and drawing a conclusion. We read the data and ensured that the data were relevant to the objective of the study.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes engagement resources used by both novice and professional marketer in their persuasive presentations. The similarities and differences of using engagement resources between the two marketers are also presented. Each of which is presented as follows.

### A. Engagement Resources Used by the Novice Marketer

Our data analysis revealed that the novice marketer performed both types of Engagement: expansion and distraction. Expansion was expressed through entertain, meanwhile, contraction was realized through disclaim. Each of which is presented in the following section.

#### a) Expansion: Entertain

Entertain was the first most frequent type of engagement resources used by the novice marketer. He employed this resource by using modals and modal adjuncts of probability and usuality. The examples are presented below.

1. This tracker chip will help you to find your phone
2. So, probably, in your smartphone, the skin is covered by corning gorilla glass, right?
3. So, whenever there is a brand new series of processor or ram or maybe your ram or processor got damaged

Examples 1-3 show that the novice marketer used modals (*will*) and modals adjunct (*probably* and *maybe*) to show his range of possibilities [2]. In this case, he showed his own individual subjectivity toward the cases he was trying to deliver to the audience.

#### b) Contraction: Disclaim

Disclaim was the second most frequent type of engagement resources used by the novice marketer. Through Disclaim, he expressed his denial or rejection about something [2]. This was shown as in the following examples.

4. *Even though* your hand is shaking, the focus is still in the balance
5. Another smartphone *doesn't* have this kind of feature

From the above clauses, it is shown that the word *even though* in Example 4 was used to express his concession or counter expectation. Meanwhile, the negation used in Example 5 indicated a denial of feature owned by the other product. These disclaim resources were used to convince the audience about the features of the presented product. As shown in Example 5, the negation is used as a resource for introducing the alternative positive position [2].

### B. Engagement Resources Used by the Professional Marketer

There were two types of engagement resources used by the professional presenter: expansion and contraction. Expansion was expressed through entertain, meanwhile, contraction was realized through disclaim and proclaim. Each subcategory of engagement resources is reported below.

#### a) Contraction: Disclaim

Disclaim was the first most frequent type of engagement resources performed by the professional marketer. This was shown in the following examples.

6. *But*, let me just start talking to you a little bit about Lumia
7. *But before* we jump in too far
8. *You can't see this because it's so dim*
9. *You don't have to push a button*

Disclaim was used to negate, deny, or contrast propositions [2]. The lexicogrammatical *not* used in Examples 8 and 9 indicated that the professional presenter used resources of negation. Meanwhile, the conjunction *but* expressed in Examples 6 and 7 showed that he employed resources of contrast.

#### b). Entertain

The second most frequent type of Engagement used by professional marketer was entertain. The resources of entertain were modals and modality adjuncts. They were shown in the following examples.

10. *They're building the best products for windows that can possibly be made for Windows 10*
11. *Can I tell you about the new phones really quick?*
12. *Would you guys agree?*
13. *All the generations of work that have come into the camera on these new products will blow your mind*

14. *...and probably the most fun way to see it is to see how continuum really does bring the PC*

Examples 10-14 showed that the professional marketer used modals and modality adjuncts to show his range of possibilities. The modals were *can*, *would*, and *will*, meanwhile, the modal adjuncts used by him were *possibly* and *probably*. Referring to [2], these resources were used by the speaker to show his individual subjectivity.

#### c) Proclaim

The third most frequent type of engagement resources used by the professional marketer was proclaim. In this case, the professional marketer showed his personal statement with regard to the opinions of others. This was expressed through the lexis *obviously* as shown the following example.

15. *Obviously, it's like pushing more than one phone in a phone*

According to [2], proclaim is used to present the proposition as highly warrantable. By producing the utterance as shown in Example 15, the professional marketer tried to influence the audience to buy the presented product.

### C. The Similarities of Engagement Resources Used by the Novice and Professional Marketer

Drawn from the research findings, there were two similarities between the novice and the professional marketer in using engagement resources in their persuasive presentation. The first similarity was that both marketers used two types of engagement resources: expansion and contraction resources. These resources were used to show his position and stance about the issue being presented. This research finding is similar to the study conducted by [5] and [8], which found that the participants of the study employed both expansion and distraction resources in their text. These resources were used in order to create a well-argued text.

The second similarity was both marketers seemed to invite rather than challenge their listeners' views. This was characterized by the use of entertain resources in their persuasive presentation. By doing this, the marketers tried to build and maintain their personal relationships with their audience. This result confirms the study, which was conducted by [8], which also found that dialogic expansive such as entertain was used in the study to negotiate interpersonal meanings between the text producer and the receiver.

### D. The Differences of Engagement Resources Used by the Novice and Professional Marketer

Interestingly, our data analysis suggested that there were two differences between the novice and the professional marketer in using engagement resources in their persuasive presentation. Firstly, the two marketers had different favored in using engagement resources. The professional marketer preferred to use disclaim the most, meanwhile, the novice marketer favored entertain the most. The professional marketer used Disclaim resources to reject or supplant the dialogic alternative. This was performed because he was the expert who

informed the audience about the facts, particularly on the advantages gained by the audience when they bought the presented product. Through disclaim resources, he contracted the dialogic space since he stated about facts, not his subjective opinions. The resources of dialogic contraction, such as disclaim are important in creating a strong voice to show the speaker's stance on the issue being presented [6]. In disclaim, the speakers do not support other voices presented in their texts and draw their listeners to take on their positions.

On the contrary, the novice marketer used entertain resources the most. This was employed as he presented more about his own opinions about the product than the facts. This strengthens the argument proposed by [2] that the speaker explicitly presents his individual subjectivity toward certain cases through entertain resources. Through this resource, the marketer anticipates potential disagreement on the part of the addressee regarding the proportion.

Secondly, compared to the professional marketer, the novice marketer used fewer engagement resources. Accordingly, the novice marketer seemed to produce a loose structure of persuasive text than the professional marketer. This condition might be caused by the little opportunity given to them to use English in their classroom [9,10,11], particularly practicing how to use engagement resources appropriately and effectively to create a good structure of text. Our research findings then confirm the study conducted by [6] and [12] that more proficient speakers tended to exploit more evaluative resources to build a well-argued text and to show a stronger sense of position.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that in spite of the similarities, the professional and the novice marketer shared some differences. The differences found between them showed that there were gaps that need to be bridged by English language practitioners. In light of this research finding, we believe that our study can contribute to English language teaching. Thus, we suggest the English teachers revisit their teaching and learning strategies by providing more scaffolding on the use of engagement resources in texts. Additionally, our research findings might provide an empirical account of the importance of designing English learning materials, which contains engagement resources.

Even though the study has been considered useful in providing the pedagogical contribution, the study still has a limitation. One of the acknowledged limitations of the study is that it focused on the use of language only. In fact, when speakers are presenting, they do not only employ single semiotic resource but also use other resources, such as gesture. Therefore, future work is needed to explore in detail how speakers use engagement resources via gesture.

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