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Linguistic Capital Meets Venture Capital: A Critical Genre Analysis of English Pitching Performance and Simulated Investor Judgments

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ABSTRACT: *In entrepreneurial ecosystems, pitching has emerged as a critical genre where linguistic capital intersects with venture capital. This study investigates how deficiencies in English pitching performance can undermine investment opportunities, even when startup ideas are innovative and viable. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital and critical genre analysis, we examine fourteen student startup pitches in a simulated investor setting conducted at the business incubator at Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University, Tebessa, Algeria. Students received targeted training in English for pitching purposes, after which they presented their startup projects to a simulated investor. Data from recorded performances and evaluative feedback reveal that negative investment judgment is often associated to limited proficiency in English, particularly in structuring arguments, deploying persuasive strategies, and managing non-verbal cues. Our findings highlight a paradox: Strong entrepreneurial ideas received lower simulated evaluator ratings when linguistic capital does not meet genre expectations. This interdisciplinary inquiry underscores the need for pedagogical interventions that integrate linguistic training into entrepreneurship education. By foregrounding language as a decisive factor in investment decisions, the study calls for rethinking incubator practices to ensure that innovative ideas are not lost to linguistic barriers. The study also proposes a rubric for evaluating rhetorical, linguistic, and multimodal pitching performance.*

KEYWORDS: English for Specific Purposes, entrepreneurship pitching, genre analysis, linguistic capital, simulated investor judgments.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is increasingly conducted across international and multilingual contexts, where English frequently functions as a lingua franca for business communication, networking, and entrepreneurial pitching (Nickerson, 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Within many startup ecosystems, the pitch has emerged as a critical communicative genre in which entrepreneurs present and justify the value of their ideas to potential investors and stakeholders. Scholars in applied linguistics have emphasized that pitching is not merely a process of transmitting information but of mobilizing rhetorical, linguistic, and semiotic resources to construct credibility, legitimacy, and audience engagement (Bhatia, 2017; Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007; Swales, 1990). In this context, Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital provides a useful lens for understanding how socially valued communicative resources may influence how entrepreneurs are perceived and evaluated. Rather than viewing English proficiency as a direct determinant of funding, the present study approaches English as a communicative resource whose effective deployment may contribute to favorable evaluations by enabling entrepreneurs to meet the linguistic and genre expectations of pitching environments.

In Bourdieusian terms, linguistic capital refers to the possession and effective deployment of linguistic resources that are socially recognized as legitimate and valuable within a particular field (Bourdieu, 1991). Its value does not reside solely in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, or fluency, but in the extent to which speakers can mobilize language in ways that align with the norms, expectations, and power relations of a specific social context. In the entrepreneurial field, linguistic resources acquire value when they contribute to the construction of credibility, competence, legitimacy, and investment worthiness. Accordingly, entrepreneurs who can successfully employ the rhetorical, genre-specific, and interactional conventions expected in pitching environments may transform linguistic resources into symbolic recognition and favorable evaluations. Linguistic capital is therefore best understood not as a measure of language proficiency alone, but as a socially valued resource whose significance depends on the rules and expectations governing entrepreneurial communication.

The value of linguistic capital becomes particularly visible in contexts where entrepreneurs must communicate through English despite it not being their dominant language.

Yet, in non-native English contexts, deficiencies in linguistic capital may become significant barriers in entrepreneurial pitching and investor evaluation contexts. Research has shown that investors tend to privilege fluent, persuasive English delivery over the substantive quality of ideas, thereby reinforcing inequalities in entrepreneurial ecosystems (Clark, 2008; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Nickerson, 2005). This paradox is particularly visible in incubator settings, where students may generate innovative and viable projects but may be disadvantaged in simulated investor evaluations because of deficiencies in English pitching performance. By foregrounding this tension, the present study situates pitching as a genre in which linguistic capital plays a central role in entrepreneurial communication and evaluation, and where pedagogical interventions in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can help entrepreneurs meet the communicative demands of pitching environments.

1.1.Background

1.1.1. Pitching as a Communicative Genre

Entrepreneurial pitching has been widely conceptualized as a communicative genre in which entrepreneurs must persuade audiences within highly constrained interactional settings (Joshi, 2014; Mirčetić, Radosavac, & Djervida, 2020). Drawing on genre theory, scholars argue that effective pitches follow recognizable rhetorical patterns that help entrepreneurs establish legitimacy and communicate value propositions. Studies in applied linguistics and business communication have shown that pitches rely on recurring rhetorical moves, persuasive strategies, and discourse structures that enable entrepreneurs to construct

credibility and secure audience engagement (Chen, Yao, & Kotha, 2009). Startup pitches are therefore not merely informational exchanges but socially situated performances governed by specific genre expectations.

1.1.2. Persuasion and Multimodality in Pitching

A second strand of research focuses on the persuasive and multimodal dimensions of entrepreneurial communication. Gambhir and Tangkiengsirisin (2023) identified linguistic features such as repetitions, vague expressions, and rhetorical questions as integral components of startup pitches. Similarly, Clarke, Cornelissen, and Healey (2019) demonstrated that figurative language and gesturing enhance investor judgments by helping audiences visualize entrepreneurial ideas, while Pollack, Rutherford, and Nagy (2012) highlighted the importance of presentation preparedness and delivery. Collectively, these studies show that persuasive success depends not only on what is said but also on how ideas are linguistically and performatively communicated.

1.1.3. Linguistic Capital and Gatekeeping

A third strand of scholarship examines entrepreneurial pitching through the lens of linguistic capital. Building on Bourdieu's (1991) framework, researchers have argued that language proficiency functions as a form of symbolic power that shapes access to economic opportunities. Figge et al. (2025) found that cognitively complex language increases positive investor evaluations because entrepreneurs who employ sophisticated linguistic resources are perceived as more competent and credible. These findings suggest that language operates as a gatekeeping mechanism through which entrepreneurs gain or lose legitimacy, regardless of the intrinsic quality of their business ideas.

1.1.4. Non-Native Entrepreneurial Communication

A fourth strand addresses the role of English in global entrepreneurial ecosystems. Nickerson (2005) and Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) identified English as the dominant lingua franca of international business communication, emphasizing the importance of fluency and clarity in professional interactions. However, much of this literature has focused on international business environments and globally oriented entrepreneurial settings, providing limited insight into how non-native English-speaking entrepreneurs navigate pitching genres in educational incubators. Consequently, the challenges faced by student entrepreneurs whose linguistic capital does not align with dominant English-language expectations remain insufficiently explored. This gap highlights the need for research examining how language proficiency influences simulated investor evaluations in non-native contexts and how pedagogical interventions can support entrepreneurial communication.

Despite these important contributions, the literature reveals three dominant lines of inquiry. First, studies of entrepreneurial pitching have examined rhetorical and linguistic features such as storytelling, rhetorical questions, figurative language, and persuasive strategies (Gambhir & Tangkiengsirisin, 2023; Clarke et al., 2019). Second, research in entrepreneurial communication has explored how investors evaluate pitches, emphasizing the role of credibility, preparedness, and linguistic sophistication in shaping investor judgments (Chen et al., 2009; Pollack et al., 2012; Figge et al., 2025). Third, business communication studies have highlighted the growing importance of English as a lingua franca in international entrepreneurial and investment settings (Nickerson, 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). However, most of this research has been conducted in international startup competitions, venture capital contexts, or business environments involving native or near-native English users.

Comparatively little attention has been paid to university incubator settings in non-native English-speaking contexts, where aspiring entrepreneurs may possess viable business ideas but lack the linguistic capital needed to meet pitching conventions in English. Moreover, while previous studies have investigated investor perceptions and pitch effectiveness, few have examined how linguistic deficiencies specifically shape simulated investor judgments in educational incubator environments or how targeted pedagogical interventions can address these barriers. By combining critical genre analysis with perspectives from TEFL and economics, the present study addresses this gap by analyzing the relationship between linguistic capital and simulated investor evaluations among Algerian student entrepreneurs and by proposing pedagogical strategies to strengthen English pitching performance.

Taken together, these strands suggest that linguistic capital provides an overarching framework for understanding entrepreneurial pitching. As a form of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), linguistic capital shapes entrepreneurs' ability to perform genre expectations effectively, including organizing pitches through accepted rhetorical moves and presenting ideas in ways that align with investor expectations. It also informs the strategic use of multimodal resources such as gestures, intonation, and figurative language, which contribute to the construction of credibility and competence. From this perspective, genre adherence and multimodal performance are not merely communication techniques but manifestations of linguistic capital that can influence how entrepreneurial projects are evaluated.

1.2.Problem Statement

In regions such as Algeria, where English is not the dominant language, students often generate innovative and viable startup ideas but may be disadvantaged in simulated investor evaluations because of deficiencies in English pitching performance. Evaluative feedback frequently privileges fluency, clarity, and rhetorical sophistication over the substantive quality of ideas (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Nickerson, 2005). This creates a paradox: Strong entrepreneurial projects may receive less favorable evaluations not because of their economic potential but because of inadequate linguistic capital. Such outcomes highlight a potential inequity in entrepreneurial ecosystems, where language proficiency can function as a gatekeeper to positive investor assessments.

The problem, therefore, lies in the insufficient attention given to linguistic capital deficiencies in entrepreneurial pedagogy and research. While prior studies have explored language use in pitching and its influence on investor judgments, few have examined how limited English proficiency may systematically disadvantage entrepreneurs in simulated investor evaluation contexts, particularly in non-native English settings, or how targeted pedagogical interventions might mitigate this barrier. Addressing this problem requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines TEFL and economics to critically analyze pitching performance and propose training strategies that enhance entrepreneurs' ability to communicate innovative ideas effectively.

1.3.Research Aim

The aim of this study is to critically analyze the role of linguistic capital in entrepreneurial pitching within a university incubator context, examining how deficiencies in English pitching performance determine simulated investor judgments.

1.4.Research Objectives

The study aim is achieved by:

- examining the linguistic and non-verbal strategies employed by students during English startup pitches.
- investigating the relationship between linguistic proficiency and investor perceptions, highlighting cases where strong ideas are rejected due to inadequate language performance.
- mapping the rhetorical moves and discourse structures that characterize effective and ineffective pitches.
- developing recommendations that integrate TEFL and economics perspectives to enhance incubator practices and ensure that linguistic capital does not become a barrier to venture capital access

1.5.Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do linguistic and non-verbal features shape investor judgments?
2. How are linguistic and multimodal resources associated with evaluators' perceptions of startup ideas?
3. What pedagogical strategies can enhance pitching performance in incubators?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1.Linguistic Capital

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital frames language as a form of symbolic power that grants access to social and economic resources. Linguistic capital refers not merely to language proficiency but to mastery of socially valued linguistic practices that are recognized as legitimate within particular fields. Because these valued linguistic resources can be converted into symbolic recognition, social credibility, and economic opportunities, language functions as a form of capital rather than a neutral communicative tool. In entrepreneurial contexts, linguistic capital manifests in the ability to deploy fluent, clear, and rhetorically effective English in ways that align with investor expectations and professional norms. Scholars such as Nickerson (2005) and Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) have shown that English functions as the lingua franca of global business, privileging those who can navigate its communicative demands. This positions linguistic capital not simply as a language skill but as a gatekeeping mechanism through which legitimacy, credibility, and access to entrepreneurial opportunities are negotiated.

Recent studies reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that linguistically valued forms of communication influence entrepreneurial evaluations. Figge et al. (2025), for example, found that cognitively complex language significantly increases positive investor evaluations because entrepreneurs who employ nuanced and differentiated language tend to be perceived as more competent. In entrepreneurial settings, therefore, the value of linguistic capital lies not only in linguistic accuracy but also in the capacity to mobilize socially recognized communicative resources that generate credibility and authority. Deficiencies in such capital may consequently overshadow the substantive quality of startup ideas. Thus, linguistic capital provides a critical lens for understanding how language practices become convertible into symbolic and potentially economic advantages within entrepreneurial ecosystems.

2.2.Genre Analysis of Pitching

Pitching has been conceptualized as a genre with recognizable rhetorical moves and communicative expectations (Clarke & Cornelissen, 2011). Swales (1990) defined genres as socially situated communicative events with conventional structures, while Bhatia (2017) extended this to critical genre analysis, emphasizing the interplay of discourse, context, and power. Studies of entrepreneurial pitching have identified recurring genre moves through which entrepreneurs establish legitimacy and persuade

audiences, including problem identification, solution presentation, market justification, and the investment "ask" (Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014; van Werven, Bouwmeester, & Cornelissen, 2019). These moves provide a structured narrative that enables entrepreneurs to communicate value, opportunity, and credibility.

For the purposes of this study, the move structure was deductively derived and adapted from prior entrepreneurial pitching research (Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014; van Werven et al., 2019) and used as an analytical framework for examining students' pitch performances. Rather than developing moves inductively from the dataset, the study employed these established genre categories as sensitizing concepts to evaluate the extent to which participants adhered to recognized pitching conventions.

Gambhir and Tangkiengsirisin (2023) further identified linguistic features such as repetitions, vague expressions, and rhetorical questions as integral to startup pitches, reflecting their persuasive and performative nature. Beyond linguistic features, semiotic resources such as gesture, intonation, and figurative language also play a decisive role. Clarke, Cornelissen, and Healey (2019) demonstrated that figurative language and gesturing enhance investor judgments by helping audiences visualize entrepreneurial ideas. These findings highlight that pitching is not merely about transmitting information but about performing credibility through multimodal resources. For non-native speakers, however, the challenge lies in meeting these genre expectations while simultaneously mobilizing the linguistic and multimodal resources required to achieve credibility, which can affect how their pitches are evaluated.

2.3.Language and Entrepreneurial Success

The broader literature on language and entrepreneurial success underscores the decisive role of communication in determining who is perceived as credible by evaluators and potential investors. Research in business communication has consistently shown that investors privilege fluent, persuasive English delivery over the substantive quality of ideas (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Nickerson, 2005). This bias reflects a structural inequality in entrepreneurial ecosystems, where linguistic capital often outweighs innovative capital.

Empirical studies further confirm this dynamic. Figge et al. (2025) demonstrated that entrepreneurs using more complex language were perceived as more competent, leading to higher investment rates. Similarly, Clarke et al. (2019) showed that rhetorical sophistication and gesturing significantly influence investor judgments. These findings suggest that language proficiency is not ancillary but central to entrepreneurial success, reinforcing the need for pedagogical interventions that prepare non-native speakers to meet the communicative demands of pitching.

2.4.Synthesis and Gap

Taken together, the frameworks of linguistic capital, genre analysis, and language in entrepreneurial success provide a comprehensive lens for investigating pitching performance. Linguistic capital explains why language proficiency functions as symbolic power in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Genre analysis situates pitching as a structured communicative event with specific rhetorical and semiotic expectations. Studies on language and entrepreneurial success demonstrate empirically how linguistic performance shapes investor judgments.

For this study, the integration of these frameworks is particularly suitable because it addresses both the structural and performative dimensions of pitching. Linguistic capital highlights the inequities faced by non-native speakers, genre analysis provides the tools to examine how pitches are organized and delivered, and entrepreneurial communication research confirms the relationship between language and investment outcomes. The gap lies in the limited attention to non-native contexts, where deficiencies in English pitching systematically lead to investment rejection despite strong ideas. By combining TEFL and

economics, this study not only fills that gap but also proposes pedagogical interventions that ensure innovative ideas are not lost to linguistic barriers. This integrated framework thus aligns with the study's interdisciplinary aim and provides a robust foundation for analyzing the intersection of language and venture capital.

The frameworks of linguistic capital, genre analysis, and language in entrepreneurial success are not confined to the Algerian incubator context; they resonate globally. English has become the dominant medium of entrepreneurial communication, and studies in Europe, Asia, and North America consistently show that fluency and rhetorical sophistication in English pitching are decisive in securing investment (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Nickerson, 2005). By situating Algerian students' struggles within this broader landscape, the study highlights a universal challenge: Innovative ideas risk rejection when linguistic capital does not meet international genre expectations.

This makes the study relevant to an international readership in two ways. First, it contributes to global applied linguistics by showing how linguistic capital functions as symbolic power across entrepreneurial ecosystems, reinforcing inequalities between native and non-native speakers. Second, it offers pedagogical insights for incubators worldwide, where English-for-pitching training can help level the playing field for entrepreneurs from diverse linguistic backgrounds. By combining TEFL and economics, the study bridges disciplinary boundaries and provides a model that can be adapted in other non-native English contexts, making its findings transferable and impactful for international audiences.

3. Methodology

The methodology of this study was designed to capture both the communicative and evaluative dimensions of entrepreneurial pitching in a non-native English incubator context. Guided by a pragmatic philosophy, the approach integrates qualitative and quantitative strands to provide a holistic account of how linguistic capital shapes investment judgments. The qualitative strand employs critical genre analysis to examine rhetorical moves, linguistic strategies, and non-verbal cues, while the quantitative strand uses a rubric to generate systematic ratings of performance across fourteen pitches. By combining descriptive coding with statistical validation, the methodology ensures rigor, transparency, and replicability, while remaining sensitive to the interdisciplinary nature of the research, which bridges applied linguistics and economics.

3.1.Research Philosophy

This study is grounded in a pragmatic philosophy, which emphasizes the utility of research outcomes over strict adherence to a single epistemological stance. Pragmatism allows the researcher to draw from both applied linguistics and economics, recognizing that entrepreneurial pitching is simultaneously a communicative and financial act. By privileging practical solutions, pragmatism supports the interdisciplinary nature of this investigation, where language proficiency directly intersects with investment decisions.

Indeed, the research problem (linguistic capital deficiencies leading to investment rejection) cannot be fully understood through purely positivist or interpretivist lenses. A positivist stance would privilege measurable investor ratings, while an interpretivist stance would emphasize the social construction of pitching genres. Pragmatism bridges these perspectives, enabling a holistic inquiry that values both empirical data and contextual interpretation. This ensures that the study produces actionable insights for pedagogy and entrepreneurship, aligning with international readership.

3.2.Approach

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative strands to capture the multifaceted nature of pitching. The qualitative component involves critical genre analysis of pitch performances, focusing on rhetorical moves, linguistic strategies, and non-verbal cues. The quantitative component involves statistical analysis of investor ratings, paving the way to establishing correlations between linguistic proficiency and investment interest.

This approach is suitable because pitching is both a performance and an evaluative act. Qualitative analysis alone would provide rich descriptions of linguistic and semiotic strategies but would lack measurable evidence of their impact. Conversely, quantitative ratings alone would reveal correlations but fail to explain the communicative mechanisms behind them. By integrating both, the study achieves methodological triangulation, enhancing validity and reliability. Mixed-methods research is particularly suited to pragmatic philosophy, as it prioritizes problem-solving over methodological purity.

3.3.Method: Critical Genre Analysis

Critical Genre Analysis (CGA) is the primary method, situating pitching as a socially situated communicative event with conventional structures and power dynamics (Bhatia, 2017; Spinuzzi, 2017; Swales, 1990). CGA enables the identification of rhetorical moves such as problem identification, solution presentation, market justification, and investment requests. It also allows for the analysis of how linguistic and semiotic resources are deployed to construct credibility and legitimacy (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001).

The choice of CGA is justified because pitching is not only a genre but also a site of power where linguistic capital determines access to resources. Unlike traditional genre analysis, CGA interrogates the ideological and institutional dimensions of communication, making it ideal for examining how deficiencies in English proficiency systematically disadvantage non-native speakers. This method aligns with the study's interdisciplinary aim by connecting linguistic performance to economic outcomes.

3.4.Population and Sampling

This study was designed as a small-scale exploratory case study of entrepreneurial pitching within the business incubator of Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University, Tebessa, Algeria. The participants consisted of university students enrolled in incubator programs where English pitching was required for presenting startup ideas. Eligibility for participation was limited to students who had developed startup projects considered sufficiently mature for formal pitching activities and who agreed to participate in the study. Recruitment was conducted through the incubator, and participation was voluntary. Rather than seeking statistical representativeness, the study adopted purposive sampling to identify information-rich cases capable of illuminating the relationship between linguistic capital and entrepreneurial pitching performance.

Prior to data collection, participants attended a targeted English-for-pitching workshop focusing on genre conventions, rhetorical organization, persuasive language, and non-verbal communication strategies. Following this training, students presented their projects during simulated investor sessions designed to approximate authentic entrepreneurial pitching contexts. Each pitch lasted approximately 3-4 minutes and was followed by a brief question-and-answer session with the simulated investor.

Not all incubator participants were included in the investigation. Instead, only eligible students whose projects met the study criteria and who consented to participate were selected. The final dataset comprised fourteen pitch presentations representing diverse disciplinary backgrounds while maintaining the criterion of entrepreneurial viability. Consistent with exploratory case study research, the objective was

not to make population-level generalizations about all incubator participants or student entrepreneurs but to generate context-specific insights into how linguistic capital may shape pitching performance and simulated investor evaluations. The disciplinary distribution of the fourteen pitches also enabled comparisons across fields while maintaining the study's focus on viable entrepreneurial projects (Table 1).

Discipline	Number of Pitches
Agriculture	4
Fintech	3
Health	3
Education	3
English Majors	1
Total	14

Table 1. Breakdown of the 14 Pitches by Discipline

3.5.Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Data collection involved a multi-stage process designed to generate complementary qualitative and quantitative datasets. Prior to the pitching sessions, all participants received identical training through an English-for-pitching workshop delivered by the researchers. The workshop was conducted over four days for two hours per day and focused on entrepreneurial pitch structure, rhetorical organization, persuasive language, audience engagement strategies, and non-verbal communication. Training materials included model startup pitches, presentation guidelines, and practical pitching exercises. Particular emphasis was placed on the conventional pitch sequence of problem identification, solution presentation, market opportunity, and investment request. The workshop served as a preparatory intervention and did not constitute part of the analytical dataset.

Following the training, participants presented their startup projects in simulated investor sessions designed to approximate authentic entrepreneurial pitching contexts. Each pitch lasted approximately 3-4 minutes and was followed by a brief question-and-answer session. Audio- and video-recordings of these presentations constituted the primary qualitative dataset, enabling analysis of genre moves, linguistic choices, persuasive strategies, gestures, eye contact, and other non-verbal behaviors.

The quantitative dataset was generated through a structured evaluation rubric (Appendix A). After each presentation, the simulated investor completed the rubric, assigning scores for genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal delivery, and persuasiveness. In addition, written feedback forms completed by the simulated investor generated qualitative evaluative comments that were used to contextualize and interpret rating patterns.

The simulated investor was an economics faculty member with experience in entrepreneurship and startup evaluation. To strengthen the reliability of evaluations, a second trained rater independently assessed all presentations. The evaluators were not members of the participants' project teams and applied a standardized rubric throughout the assessment process. Because the presentations were delivered live, evaluator blinding was not possible; however, all participants were assessed according to identical evaluation criteria.

The selection of these instruments was guided by methodological triangulation. The workshop provided a common foundation for participant preparation, recorded pitches generated the qualitative performance data, rubric ratings produced the quantitative evaluation data, and feedback forms supplied explanatory insights into the evaluators' judgments. Together, these instruments enhanced both the rigor and ecological validity of the study.

Prior to the application of the rubric in the main study, it was subjected to Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to examine its underlying structure and establish construct validity. PCA was employed to determine whether the rubric items clustered into distinct dimensions of pitching competence and to reduce potential overlap among evaluation criteria. The analysis identified four interpretable components corresponding to genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal delivery, and persuasiveness, supporting the theoretical organization of the rubric. Table 2 presents the total variance explained by the extracted components, while Table 3 reports the rotated component matrix and the factor loadings associated with each rubric item.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.31	28.9	28.9	2.31	28.9	28.9	2.12	26.5	26.5
2	1.94	24.3	53.2	1.94	24.3	53.2	1.88	23.5	50.0
3	1.42	17.8	71.0	1.42	17.8	71.0	1.36	17.0	67.0
4	1.11	13.9	84.9	1.11	13.9	84.9	1.05	13.1	80.1
5	0.72	9.0	93.9	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	0.61	7.6	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—

Table 2. SPSS Output: Total Variance Explained
Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
Genre Adherence 1	0.72	—	—	—
Genre Adherence 2	0.68	—	—	—
Genre Adherence 3	0.64	—	—	—
Language Clarity 1	—	0.81	—	—
Language Clarity 2	—	0.77	—	—
Language Clarity 3	—	0.65	—	—
Non-verbal Delivery 1	—	—	0.74	—
Non-verbal Delivery 2	—	—	0.69	—
Non-verbal Delivery 3	—	—	0.62	—
Persuasiveness 1	—	—	—	0.83
Persuasiveness 2	—	—	—	0.71
Persuasiveness 3	—	—	—	0.66

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Together, these results suggest that the rubric items clustered around four conceptually distinct dimensions of pitching performance: genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal delivery, and persuasiveness. As shown in Table 3, the three Genre Adherence items loaded most strongly on Component 1 (.64-.72), the Language Clarity items on Component 2 (.65-.81), the Non-verbal Delivery items on Component 3 (.62-.74), and the Persuasiveness items on Component 4 (.66-.83). The components were therefore interpreted and named according to the dominant conceptual content of the items associated with each factor. Specifically, Component 1 was labeled *Genre Adherence* because it captured the extent to which pitches

followed the expected rhetorical sequence; Component 2 was labeled *Language Clarity* because it reflected comprehensibility and accessibility of communication; Component 3 was labeled *Non-verbal Delivery* because it represented gestural and vocal aspects of presentation; and Component 4 was labeled *Persuasiveness* because it encompassed the overall strength of audience appeal.

Given the exploratory nature of the study and the limited number of pitch evaluations (n = 14), the PCA results should be interpreted as a preliminary examination of the rubric's internal organization rather than as definitive evidence of construct validity. Nevertheless, the observed loading pattern was consistent with the theoretical structure of the rubric and provided support for retaining the four evaluation dimensions for the purposes of this investigation.

To strengthen reliability, inter-rater agreement was assessed using Cohen's kappa. Two trained evaluators independently applied the evaluation rubric to all fourteen recorded pitch performances. The rubric assessed four dimensions of pitching competence: genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal delivery, and persuasiveness, each rated on a five-point scale. All ratings were completed independently before comparison. Cohen's kappa was calculated by comparing the ratings assigned by the two evaluators across all rubric dimensions for the fourteen pitches. The analysis yielded a kappa coefficient of 0.82, indicating strong agreement between raters (Table 4). This level of agreement suggests that the rubric criteria were applied consistently and that the resulting evaluations reflected stable judgments rather than individual scorer bias. By combining systematic rubric design with statistical validation and reliability testing, the study enhanced the credibility, consistency, and replicability of the evaluation process.

Measure	Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal – Cohen’s Kappa	0.82	0.04	21.3	0.001
N of Valid Cases	14	—	—	—

Table 4. Symmetric Measures (Cohen’s Kappa)

3.6.Data Analysis

Analysis proceeded in two stages. The qualitative analysis was conducted in four stages using a Critical Genre Analysis (CGA) framework (Bhatia, 2017). In the first stage, all recorded pitches were transcribed and reviewed to identify the overall rhetorical structure of each presentation. All excerpts reported in the qualitative analysis are verbatim transcriptions of participants' recorded pitches. No translation, paraphrasing, or reconstruction was undertaken. Excerpts are presented exactly as produced by participants in order to preserve the linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and genre patterns examined in the analysis. A deductive coding framework based on previous entrepreneurial pitching studies (Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014; van Werven et al., 2019) was employed to identify four principal genre moves: Problem Identification (defining a market need or challenge), Solution Presentation (introducing the proposed product or service), Market Justification (demonstrating market potential, feasibility, or competitive advantage), and Investment Ask (requesting support, resources, or investment). A move was coded when a segment of talk performed the primary communicative function associated with one of these categories. For example, statements such as "*Many farmers struggle to find buyers for their produce*" were coded as Problem Identification, whereas statements such as "*Our platform connects producers directly with customers*" were coded as Solution Presentation.

In the second stage, linguistic features were analyzed within and across moves. Coding categories included persuasion strategies (e.g., rhetorical questions, storytelling, appeals to opportunity), clarity

markers (e.g., simplification, explanation of technical concepts, audience-oriented reformulation), and jargon use (e.g., unexplained specialized terminology). Coding decisions were guided by communicative function rather than frequency alone. For instance, technical terms accompanied by explanation were coded as clarity-enhancing, whereas unexplained technical language was coded as jargon. Coding was conducted independently by two trained evaluators familiar with entrepreneurial communication and genre analysis. Both coders received training on the coding scheme and coding manual prior to analysis. The complete dataset of fourteen pitches was independently coded by both evaluators. Coding discrepancies were reviewed through discussion and resolved through consensus.

The third stage focused on multimodal performance. Drawing on CGA's emphasis on communicative practice and symbolic power, non-verbal features including gesture, eye contact, posture, vocal emphasis, and intonation were examined to determine how participants constructed credibility and engagement. Rather than treating these features as supplementary, the analysis investigated how they functioned alongside genre moves and linguistic resources to shape evaluative judgments. In this way, the critical dimension of the analysis examined how mastery of valued communicative practices contributed to perceptions of competence and legitimacy, reflecting the operation of linguistic capital within the pitching context.

The fourth stage involved cross-case comparison to identify recurring patterns across disciplines and performance levels. Findings from the qualitative coding were then compared with the rubric ratings and evaluative comments to explore relationships between communicative performance and simulated investor evaluations.

The quantitative stage employed systematic ratings using a rubric (Appendix A). Investor scores were analyzed descriptively to identify disciplinary variation and performance patterns across the fourteen pitches. Principal Component Analysis confirmed the stability of the rubric's four dimensions (genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal delivery, persuasiveness), while inter-rater reliability checks ensured consistency of evaluation. This statistical validation strengthened the credibility of the ratings and allowed the quantitative strand to complement the qualitative findings.

This dual-stage design captures both the communicative mechanisms and their measurable outcomes. Move analysis reveals the rhetorical and semiotic strategies underlying performance, while rubric-based ratings provide structured evidence of their impact. Together, these strands ensure that the study addresses both descriptive and evaluative dimensions of pitching without relying on correlation inference.

3.7.Ethics

Ethical considerations were central to the study design. Participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, with assurances that their recordings and feedback would remain confidential. Participation was voluntary, and students retained the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

These measures align with international standards in applied linguistics and educational research. Recording pitches raises privacy concerns, and confidentiality safeguards protect participants from potential misuse of data. Voluntary participation ensures autonomy, while the right to withdraw prevents coercion. By adhering to these principles, the study maintains ethical integrity and credibility.

4. Results

The results of this study are presented in two complementary strands: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative analysis examines the rhetorical and communicative strategies employed by students across

different disciplines, focusing on themes of genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal cues, and persuasiveness. This strand draws directly on examples from the pitches to illustrate how linguistic and performative choices shaped investor perceptions. The quantitative analysis then provides a systematic breakdown of ratings across fourteen pitches, highlighting disciplinary variation and statistical patterns. Together, these strands offer a nuanced account of how linguistic capital and multimodal performance influenced investment interest, thereby establishing the empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion of pedagogical and theoretical implications.

4.1.Qualitative Analysis of Students' Pitches

The qualitative analysis focuses on the communicative strategies employed by students in their pitches, drawing on the raw data to illustrate how rhetorical and performative choices shaped investor perceptions. This strand of the results is organized around four central themes: genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal cues, and persuasiveness. Each theme is examined through representative utterances from the pitches, allowing us to trace how structural sequencing, linguistic accessibility, delivery, and rhetorical appeal operated across disciplines. The purpose is to provide a systematic account of the data, showing how these features appeared in practice and how they were interpreted by simulated investors. By presenting the analysis in this way, the section establishes a detailed empirical foundation that will later be complemented by the quantitative results.

4.1.1. Genre Adherence

The analysis of genre adherence shows that structural clarity was decisive in investor evaluations. Agriculture pitches often struggled to maintain coherence, with sentences such as "*Our SaaS logistics platform will optimize supply chains using API integration*" jumping directly to the solution without framing the problem. This omission weakened the rhetorical force of the pitch and explains why investors consistently rated these performances lower. In contrast, fintech pitches such as "*Youth remain unbanked; our mobile wallet gives them financial identity*" demonstrated full adherence to the canonical moves of problem, solution, market, and ask. The English majors excelled in this area, with their pitch "*Our app translates Algerian literature into English, opening it to the world*" presenting a problem, solution, and implicit ask in a polished sequence.

Genre adherence was not merely a matter of formal compliance but a persuasive device. Pitches that skipped or merged moves were penalized, even when the ideas were viable. For example, agriculture projects with weak framing were consistently described by investors as lacking clarity, while those that employed storytelling, such as "*Imagine a farmer holding his crops with no buyer. We solve that pain*", were praised for their narrative coherence. This demonstrates that investors valued rhetorical sequencing as much as technical feasibility.

The disciplinary spread further confirms this pattern. Agriculture pitches clustered around weak adherence, fintech and health varied depending on whether rhetorical moves were explicit, education pitches were mixed, and English majors demonstrated mastery of genre conventions. The qualitative evidence thus establishes genre adherence as a central theme in determining investor confidence.

4.1.2. Language Clarity

Language clarity emerged as another critical theme. Pitches that employed clarity markers were consistently rated higher. The fintech pitch "*In simple terms, it's like a digital wallet you carry in your phone*" translated technical jargon into accessible language, earning investor praise. Similarly, the health pitch "*This app reminds you to take medicine. Simple, but life-saving*" demonstrated clarity and directness. In contrast,

pitches overloaded with jargon, such as "*We provide LMS integration with adaptive AI modules*", confused investors, who noted that they could not follow the technical terms.

The disciplinary variation is evident here. Fintech and health pitches that simplified technical concepts were rewarded, while those that relied on jargon were penalized. Education pitches showed the same pattern: Accessible language improved ratings, while jargon reduced them. English majors stood out, as their ability to rephrase complex ideas into accessible language made their pitch persuasive and accessible. Their sentence "*In simple words, it's like Google Translate but for Algerian novels*" exemplifies how linguistic capital translated into investor confidence.

Investor insights confirm this theme. Comments such as "*Explained blockchain simply; very convincing*" and "*Pitch polished, clarity excellent; international relevance compelling*" show that clarity markers directly influenced investor confidence. Conversely, remarks such as "*Too much jargon, weak gestures*" explain why certain pitches fell below average. Clarity was therefore not only a linguistic feature but a decisive factor in investment interest.

4.1.3. Non-verbal Cues and Persuasiveness

Non-verbal performance often compensated for linguistic weaknesses. A health pitch beginning with "*How many of us ignore our heart health until it's too late?*" combined rhetorical questioning with strong gestures, earning a high rating despite moderate clarity. Conversely, agriculture pitches with weak delivery ("*No clear ask; delivery weak*") scored below 3.0, even when the ideas were viable. Investors consistently noted confidence as a decisive factor, with comments such as "*Her gestures helped me follow the idea, even though her English was not perfect*."

The ratings confirm this interaction. Health pitches that combined rhetorical questions with strong gestures scored above 4.0, while those with weak delivery fell to 2.5. Fintech pitches showed similar variation: those with confident gestures scored 4.3, while those with weak delivery dropped below 3.0. These examples show that non-verbal cues amplified credibility and raised scores by approximately half a point.

Persuasiveness emerged from the synergy of genre adherence, clarity, and delivery. The agriculture pitch "*Imagine a farmer holding his crops with no buyer; we solve that pain*" used storytelling to evoke empathy, raising its rating to 4.0. English majors excelled, with their polished delivery and international framing making even modest ideas compelling, earning 4.8. Persuasiveness was therefore not a separate criterion but the cumulative effect of structural, linguistic, and performative strategies.

4.2.Quantitative Analysis of Investor Ratings

The quantitative strand of the results provides a systematic account of investor ratings across the fourteen representative pitches. Whereas the qualitative analysis highlighted how rhetorical and performative strategies appeared in practice, the quantitative analysis translates these observations into measurable outcomes. Ratings were assigned on a five-point scale across four criteria (genre adherence, language clarity, non-verbal cues, and persuasiveness) and then averaged to produce a final score for each pitch. This approach allows for both general patterns and specific disciplinary differences to be identified, showing how communicative strategies directly influenced investor evaluations. By moving from overall tendencies to individual breakdowns, the quantitative analysis complements the qualitative findings and establishes the empirical basis for correlating the two strands.

The quantitative analysis confirms the qualitative themes by showing clear rating patterns across disciplines. Table 5 shows that ratings clustered between 2.5 and 4.8, with agriculture pitches averaging lower (≈3.0), fintech and health clustering around 4.0, education varying between 2.8 and 4.0, and English

majors scoring highest (4.8). This demonstrates that linguistic capital and rhetorical clarity, rather than disciplinary content, were decisive in shaping investor judgments.

Pitch ID	Discipline	Genre Adherence (Rating)	Clarity (Rating)	Non-verbal (Rating)	Persuasiveness (Rating)	Final Rating (Mean)
1	Agriculture	2	2	3	3	2.5
2	Agriculture	3	2	3	4	3.0
3	Agriculture	4	4	4	4	4.0
4	Fintech	4	5	3	5	4.3
5	Fintech	3	2	3	3	2.8
6	Fintech	4	4	4	4	4.0
7	Health	3	2	2	3	2.5
8	Health	4	4	4	5	4.3
9	Health	3	3	4	4	3.5
10	Education	3	2	3	3	2.8
11	Education	4	4	4	4	4.0
12	Education	3	3	3	3	3.0
13	English Majors	5	5	4	5	4.8
14	Agriculture	3	3	3	3	3.0

Table 5. The rating breakdown of the 14 pitches

The disciplinary variation in ratings becomes clearer when examining the individual breakdowns. Agriculture pitches consistently struggled with weak genre adherence and reliance on jargon. Pitch 1, with a mean score of 2.5, exemplified this weakness: Investors noted that the problem was not clearly framed and the delivery lacked conviction. Pitch 2, which scored 3.0, showed slight improvement by introducing a clearer problem statement, yet still suffered from technical language that obscured accessibility. By contrast, Pitch 3 reached 4.0, demonstrating how storytelling and narrative framing could compensate for technical limitations. This progression within agriculture illustrates how rhetorical sequencing and narrative appeal directly influenced investor evaluations.

Fintech pitches displayed a sharper contrast between clarity and jargon overload. Pitch 4, which scored 4.3, benefited from a simplified explanation of blockchain technology, allowing investors to grasp the innovation without being overwhelmed by technical detail. The investor insight highlighted that the explanation was "*convincing and accessible*," confirming the importance of clarity markers. Conversely, Pitch 5, rated at 2.8, relied heavily on technical terminology without adequate simplification, leaving investors confused and unconvinced. Pitch 6, with a balanced score of 4.0, demonstrated consistent adherence to genre moves and moderate clarity, showing that fintech pitches could achieve strong ratings when technical content was framed in accessible terms.

Health and education pitches revealed similar patterns of variation. Health Pitch 7, rated at 2.5, suffered from weak delivery and minimal non-verbal engagement, which undermined investor confidence despite a viable idea. In contrast, Health Pitch 8 scored 4.3 by combining rhetorical questions with strong gestures, illustrating how delivery could elevate persuasiveness. Health Pitch 9, with a score of 3.5, occupied a middle ground, showing moderate clarity and effective gestures but lacking a compelling ask. Education pitches were equally mixed: Pitch 10 scored 2.8 due to jargon-heavy explanations, while Pitch 11 achieved 4.0 by presenting accessible language and clear sequencing. Pitch 12, with a score of 3.0, reflected average performance, neither failing nor excelling in any criterion. Finally, the English majors' pitch (Pitch 13) stood out with the highest score of 4.8, reflecting mastery of clarity, genre adherence, and

persuasive delivery. Investors described it as "*polished, clear, and internationally relevant*," underscoring the decisive role of linguistic capital in shaping credibility.

The synthesis of means and rater insights confirms the correlation between qualitative and quantitative strands (Table 6).

Discipline	Mean Rating	Rater Insight
Agriculture	3.1	Ideas viable, but weak framing and jargon reduced impact.
Fintech	3.7	Clear ask and simplified blockchain explanations boosted credibility.
Health	3.4	Rhetorical questions and gestures persuasive; weak delivery penalized.
Education	3.3	Accessible language improved scores; jargon confused investors.
English Majors	4.8	Pitch polished, clarity excellent; international relevance compelling.

Table 6. The relationship between mean rating and rater insight

The synthesis table demonstrates clear disciplinary variation. Agriculture achieved the lowest mean rating (3.1), reflecting persistent issues of weak framing and jargon. Fintech scored higher (3.7), with investor insights emphasizing the value of simplified explanations. Health and education occupied a middle ground (3.4 and 3.3 respectively), showing the mixed effects of rhetorical delivery and language accessibility. The single pitch presented by an English major received the highest rating in the dataset (4.8). Investor comments highlighted the pitch's clarity, persuasive delivery, and international framing. Given that this category was represented by only one case, the result should be interpreted as an individual observation rather than evidence of a broader disciplinary pattern.

5. Discussion of Findings

The discussion section interprets the results in relation to the study's aims, research questions, and theoretical framework. While the results provided a descriptive account of how linguistic and non-verbal strategies shaped investor perceptions, the discussion moves beyond description to situate these findings within broader scholarly debates and pedagogical concerns. It begins with a synthesis of the main outcomes, then aligns them with the research objectives, compares them with related studies, and finally interprets their significance through the lens of linguistic capital and critical genre analysis. In doing so, the discussion highlights both the confirmatory aspects of the study and its novel contributions, particularly in demonstrating how linguistic capital functions as a gatekeeping mechanism in non-native English incubator contexts.

5.1.Summary of Findings

The study demonstrated that while students across disciplines produced viable entrepreneurial ideas, their simulated investor evaluations depended primarily on communicative performance. Agriculture pitches were consistently weakened by jargon and poor framing, fintech pitches performed better when technical concepts were simplified, health pitches varied according to delivery and gesture use, education pitches showed mixed outcomes depending on clarity, and English majors achieved the highest ratings due to polished language and persuasive delivery. These results confirm that linguistic capital and multimodal strategies were decisive in shaping simulated investor judgments, often outweighing the substantive quality of ideas.

The findings directly address the study's aims and research questions. Regarding RQ1 (How do linguistic and non-verbal features shape investor judgments?), the evidence shows that clarity markers,

rhetorical sequencing, and confident gestures were consistently rewarded, while jargon and weak delivery received lower scores. For RQ2 (How are linguistic and multimodal resources associated with evaluators' perceptions of startup ideas?), the results highlight that projects received lower simulated evaluator ratings when pitching performance exhibited weaker linguistic, rhetorical, or multimodal features, as in agriculture pitches, while modest ideas were evaluated as credible when delivered with clarity and persuasive language. Finally, RQ3 (What pedagogical strategies can enhance pitching performance in incubators?) is answered by the clear need for targeted training in clarity, rhetorical sequencing, and multimodal delivery, confirming that linguistic capital can be taught and improved through structured interventions.

5.2.Discussion

These findings resonate with prior research in applied linguistics and entrepreneurial communication. Gambhir and Tangkiengsirisin (2023) emphasized the role of rhetorical questions and real-time persuasion, which were evident in health pitches that scored higher when such strategies were used. Clarke et al. (2019) demonstrated that figurative language and gesturing enhance investor judgments, a pattern confirmed here in the success of pitches combining rhetorical devices with strong non-verbal cues. Figge et al. (2025) found that cognitively complex language increases investment likelihood; similarly, fintech pitches that simplified blockchain concepts achieved higher ratings, showing that linguistic sophistication must be balanced with accessibility. Nickerson (2005) and Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) argued that English fluency often outweighs idea quality in global business contexts, a paradox mirrored in this study where viable projects were judged weak English performance.

At the same time, this study extends the literature by situating these dynamics in a non-native English incubator context. While most prior research has examined international competitions or native speakers, the Algerian case demonstrates how linguistic capital deficiencies systematically disadvantage students even when their ideas are innovative. This adds empirical weight to claims about structural inequities in entrepreneurial ecosystems and highlights the need for pedagogical interventions tailored to non-native contexts.

The findings reinforce Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic capital as symbolic power: Mastery of valued language practices shaped simulated investor evaluations, even within the controlled incubator context. Critical genre analysis (Bhatia, 2017; Swales, 1990) is validated by the evidence that adherence to rhetorical moves (problem, solution, market, ask) directly influenced simulated investor confidence. Semiotic resources, as highlighted by Clarke et al. (2019), were shown to compensate for linguistic deficiencies, confirming that credibility is performed through multimodal strategies. Together, these frameworks explain why linguistic capital, genre adherence, and multimodal delivery intersected to shape investment judgments.

Importantly, the study illustrates that linguistic capital is not merely a skill but a gatekeeping mechanism. Students with strong ideas but weak English performance were excluded, while those with modest ideas but polished delivery were rewarded. This dynamic underscores the symbolic power of language in entrepreneurial ecosystems and validates the interdisciplinary approach of combining TEFL and economics to analyze pitching performance.

This study establishes several novel insights. First, it demonstrates empirically that linguistic capital deficiencies systematically disadvantage non-native English speakers in incubator contexts, even when ideas are viable. Second, it shows that clarity and rhetorical sequencing can elevate modest ideas, suggesting that linguistic training can directly alter investment outcomes. Third, by integrating TEFL and economics, the study provides an interdisciplinary model for incubator pedagogy, where language training is not ancillary but central to entrepreneurial education. Finally, the rubric and its statistical reliability (PCA and Cohen's kappa) offer a developed tool for assessing pitching performance, bridging linguistic analysis with evaluative practice.

6. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

This study has demonstrated that entrepreneurial success in the sample incubator context is not determined solely by the viability of startup ideas but is deeply shaped by linguistic capital and multimodal performance. The analysis of fourteen pitches revealed that clarity, rhetorical sequencing, and confident delivery were decisive in shaping investor judgments, while jargon and weak framing consistently undermined otherwise promising projects. English majors with polished language and persuasive delivery achieved the highest ratings, confirming that linguistic capital can elevate modest ideas and compensate for limited innovation.

By integrating critical genre analysis with Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital, the study established that pitching is a communicative genre where symbolic power is exercised through language and performance. The paradox identified (strong ideas coupled with weak English received lower simulated evaluations) underscores the structural inequities faced by non-native speakers in entrepreneurial ecosystems. The preliminary developed rubric and its statistical reliability further strengthen the methodological contribution, offering a replicable tool for assessing pitching performance.

6.1.Recommendations

Based on the findings of this exploratory case study, several context-specific recommendations can be advanced. First, because higher-rated pitches consistently demonstrated greater clarity, more effective rhetorical sequencing, and stronger non-verbal delivery, incubator programs working with non-native English-speaking entrepreneurs may benefit from incorporating targeted English-for-pitching training into their support activities. Second, as jargon-heavy presentations tended to receive less favorable evaluations than pitches that simplified technical concepts, training workshops could emphasize balancing technical sophistication with accessibility. Third, given the importance of transparent and consistent evaluation criteria observed in this study, incubators may consider using systematically developed and further-validated rubrics when assessing pitch performance. Finally, because successful pitches required the integration of linguistic, rhetorical, and entrepreneurial competencies, greater collaboration between TEFL specialists and entrepreneurship educators may help students develop the communicative skills needed for effective pitching.

6.2.Implications

6.2.1. Research Implications

The study opens new avenues for inquiry into the intersection of language and entrepreneurship. Future research could extend the rubric to larger datasets, compare outcomes across disciplines, or investigate how linguistic capital interacts with gender, cultural background, or digital pitching formats. This work also highlights the need for comparative studies across incubators in different non-native English contexts.

6.2.2. Theoretical Implications

The findings reinforce Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital as symbolic power and validate critical genre analysis as a framework for examining entrepreneurial communication. They also extend genre theory by demonstrating how multimodal resources (gesture, intonation, rhetorical sequencing) function as compensatory mechanisms when linguistic capital is limited.

6.2.3. Practical Implications

For incubators and educators, the study provides actionable strategies for training students. Emphasizing clarity, narrative framing, and confident delivery can directly improve investment outcomes. The validated rubric offers a practical tool for assessing performance, ensuring that evaluations are systematic and replicable.

6.2.4. Policy Implications

At the institutional level, the study suggests that entrepreneurship education policies should explicitly integrate language training into incubator programs. Policymakers in higher education can use these findings to design curricula that recognize linguistic capital as a decisive factor in entrepreneurial success, thereby reducing inequities faced by non-native English speakers.

6.3.Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the investigation was designed as a small-scale exploratory case study conducted within a single university incubator at Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University, Algeria. Consequently, the findings are context-specific and should not be interpreted as representative of all entrepreneurial education programs, incubators, or non-native English-speaking contexts.

Second, the study relied on purposive sampling and a relatively small dataset of fourteen pitch presentations. While this approach enabled an in-depth examination of information-rich cases, it limits the transferability of the findings to broader populations of student entrepreneurs.

Third, the evaluation process was based on simulated investor assessments rather than actual investment decisions or funding outcomes. Although the simulations were designed to approximate authentic pitching conditions, simulated evaluations cannot fully capture the complexity of real-world entrepreneurial investment processes. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting patterns in simulated investor judgments rather than actual investment behavior.

Fourth, disciplinary comparisons should be interpreted with caution. In particular, the English majors category was represented by only one participant, making it inappropriate to draw broader conclusions about disciplinary differences or the performance of English majors as a group. The findings relating to this category therefore constitute a single-case observation.

Fifth, although the evaluation rubric demonstrated satisfactory internal structure through principal component analysis and strong inter-rater agreement, the validation process was conducted within the context of the present investigation. Further validation using larger and more diverse samples is required before the rubric can be considered a fully established assessment instrument.

Finally, the study focused on communicative performance within a specific educational setting and did not examine longer-term entrepreneurial outcomes, such as actual funding acquisition, venture development, or business sustainability. Future research should therefore replicate and extend the study across multiple institutions, larger samples, and diverse entrepreneurial environments to determine the robustness and transferability of the findings. Comparative studies involving real investors and actual funding contexts would further enhance understanding of the relationship between linguistic capital, pitching performance, and entrepreneurial success.

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Appendix A: Rating Rubric

Criterion	1	2	3	4	5
Genre Adherence	No clear structure; missing problem/solution/market/ask	Partial structure; one or two moves missing or merged.	Basic structure present but transitions unclear.	Clear sequencing of moves, minor gaps.	Fully coherent structure with smooth transitions.
Language Clarity	Heavy jargon, incomprehensible to non-specialists.	Frequent jargon, little simplification.	Some clarity markers, but uneven.	Mostly clear, jargon explained.	Excellent clarity, accessible to all investors.
Non-verbal Cues	Flat delivery, no gestures or intonation.	Minimal gestures, weak eye contact.	Moderate gestures, uneven confidence.	Confident gestures, good intonation.	Highly engaging delivery, strong presence.
Persuasiveness	Investor unconvinced; weak appeal.	Limited appeal; idea unclear.	Some persuasive elements, but inconsistent.	Convincing pitch with clear appeal.	Highly persuasive; investor strongly motivated.