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A prosodic Analysis of Unfilled Pauses in English Advertisements

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Abstract

This study investigates the forms and functions of unfilled pauses in English commercials within the framework of commercial discourse, therefore addressing a major gap in prosodic studies of scripted, monologic genres, which remains understudied compared to conversational or political speech. It focuses on how advertisers intentionally manipulate pauses as language tools for syntactic demarcation and persuasive strategies to enhance audience engagement. By using Praat, the research analyses a dataset of 25 British English advertisements and detects two primary types of pauses: short (0 to 500 milliseconds) and long (exceeding 500 milliseconds). Moreover, it explores the interplay between these pauses and syntactic frameworks, alongside their implications for semantic emphasis. The data reveal that pauses demonstrate isomorphic relationships (55.9%) corresponding with syntactic boundaries, alongside non-isomorphic relationships (44.1%) linked to significant information. The findings emphasise the importance of strategically employing pauses to enhance language coherence, act as persuasive instruments to engage the audience's attention, and underscore

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information pertinent to the product in question. This study seeks to deepen the comprehension of prosodic features, including pauses, in mediated communication through the synthesis of concepts from cognitive theories and cross-linguistic examinations.

Key words: prosodic features, unfilled pauses, syntax-prosody alignment, isomorphic and non-isomorphic relationships, commercial advertisements

تحليل عروضي للتوقفات غير المعبأة في الاعلانات الانكليزية

اوس عباس يونس ال عربو
كلية الاداب / جامعة الموصل

الـمستخلـص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في أشكال ووظائف التوقفات غيرالمعبأة في الإعلانات التجارية الإنكليزية في إطار الخطاب التجاري، وبالتالي معالجة فجوة كبيرة في الدراسات العروضية للأنواع النصية والمونولوجية، والتي لا تزال غير مدروسة مقارنة بالكلام الحواري أو السياسي. تركز الدراسة على كيفية تلاعب المعلنين عمدًا بالتوقفات كأدوات لغوية للترسيم النحوي والاستراتيجيات الإقناعية لتعزيز مشاركة الجمهور. باستخدام برنامج برات, يحلل البحث مجموعة بيانات مكونة من 25 إعلانًا باللغة الإنكليزية البريطانية ويكشف عن نوعين رئيسيين من التوقفات: قصيرة (من 0 إلى 500 مللي ثانية) وطويلة (تتجاوز 500 مللي ثانية). علاوة على ذلك، يستكشف الدراسة التفاعل بين هذه التوقفات والأطر النحوية، إلى جانب آثارها على التأكيد الدلالي. تكشف البيانات أن التوقفات تُظهر علاقات متماثلة (55.9٪) تتوافق مع الحدود النحوية، إلى جانب علاقات غير متماثلة (44.1٪) مرتبطة بمعلومات مهمة. تؤكد النتائج على أهمية استخدام التوقفات بشكل استراتيجي لتعزيز تماسك اللغة، والعمل كأدوات إقناع لجذب انتباه الجمهور، والتأكيد على المعلومات ذات الصلة بالمنتج المعني. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تعميق فهم الخصائص العروضية، بما في ذلك التوقفات، في التواصل الوسيط من خلال دمج المفاهيم من النظريات المعرفية والفحوصات عبر اللغوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخصائص العروضية، توقفات غير معبأة، محاذاة النحو والعروض، العلاقات المتماثلة وغير المتماثلة، الإعلانات التجارية.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research identifies two primary types of unfilled pauses: short pauses and long pauses. Sholars, e.g., Lehiste (1975), Swerts & Geluykens (1994), Banner et al. (2003), and DiCristo et al. (2003), have identified and analysed both types of pauses. Moreover, they have always argued that the primary role of unfilled pauses is to delineate syntactic and/or discourse borders.

Unfilled pauses—silent intervals in speech—serve dual roles in advertisements: isomorphic relationships (aligning with syntactic boundaries) and non-isomorphic relationships (deviating from syntax to emphasise key information). This study asks: How do these dual functions interact in scripted ads to balance linguistic coherence and persuasive intent?

Strangert (2005) analyses a Swedish news broadcast and a political interview, showing that unfilled pauses can signify functions beyond merely marking syntactic boundaries. She identifies four functions of unfilled pauses: marking syntactic boundaries, emphasising semantic focus (a pause before or after a significant word or phrase), providing the speaker with time for forward planning, and signalling the speaker's readiness to yield the conversational turn to an interlocutor.

This study also examines analogous types of unfilled pauses. The functions are limited to unfulfilled pause roles in delineating syntactic boundaries and essential information dictated by semantic emphasis. The study focuses on these two functions due to data constraints and the advertisement delivery methods. All advertisements are presented by individual speakers and are defined by their brevity, being read aloud, and potentially rehearsed by the presenters before their live presentations. Therefore, taking into account the additional functions outlined in Strangert (2005) would be impractical and complex.

For a better understanding of the dual role of unfilled pauses in English advertisements, this study seeks to address two research questions: How do unfilled pauses function as linguistic tools for delineating syntactic structures in scripted ads? Additionally, how do unfilled pauses serve as persuasive techniques to enhance the communicative effectiveness of ads? These questions are critical for uncovering the interplay between linguistic structure and rhetorical intent in mediated discourse.

This study aims to identify and analyse unfilled pauses in English advertisements. Unfilled pauses are explored as language strategies for marking syntactic structures and persuasive strategies for achieving advertising goals. The work also delineates the potential of pauses to enhance the retention of messages and the engagement of audiences in advertisements. These results are beneficial for researchers who are interested in the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of spoken language, as well as for advertisers who are seeking to enhance their communication strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Unfilled pauses are characterised as silent gaps of time. They have been extensively analysed for their syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic functions across several spoken languages (Clark, 1996). Initial research by Lehiste (1975) suggested that unfilled pauses essentially mark syntactic boundaries; a perspective validated later by Swerts and Geluykens (1994), who focused on their roles in organising speech. Strangert (2005) enhanced this understanding by identifying four functions of pauses in Swedish broadcasts: syntactic demarcation, semantic emphasis, cognitive preparation, and turn-taking signals. These works underscore many purposes of pauses, despite differing speech genres and cultural contexts.

In advertising, the conciseness and scripted structure of material need the strategic use of pauses. Pauses are crucial for clarifying grammar and serve persuasive purposes as well. Strangert's (2005) semantic emphasis function adeptly fulfils the advertising necessity to underscore salient product features, such as [SPF thirty] or [Huawei Mate 10] (see examples 3 and 4 in section 4.2, respectively). Research on other languages highlights cultural distinctions. For example, Mandarin speakers use shorter pauses in casual circumstances but longer ones for reluctance, while English speakers pause to indicate thought or emphasis (Fang et al., 2021). Such differences illuminate how communicative intent and linguistic structure interact.

The cognitive underpinnings of pauses are equally important. Unfilled pauses, as noted by Clark & Tree (2002), reflect cognitive load and assist speakers in structuring forthcoming dialogue. In scripted contexts like advertising, this preparation is intentional, and pauses enhance rhetorical impact. Research on turn-taking (Sacks et al., 1974) suggests that pauses in monologic advertising can replicate conversational rhythm, thereby fostering audience engagement. Nonetheless, the distinct aims of advertisements—persuasion and conciseness—restrict pause functions mainly to syntactic delineation and semantic emphasis, as observed in the present study.

Speech analysis tools like Praat allow correct pause length and syntactic structure assessment (Boersma & Weenink, 2018). Di Cristo et al. (2003) and Bannert et al. (2003) relate pause lengths to prosodic boundaries using similar tools, providing a foundation for commercial analysis. These methods show that structured speech uses isomorphic relationships—pauses that match syntactic edges—more often than non-isomorphic ones, which signal semantic emphasis (Strangert, 2005). In advertising, where pauses must balance language consistency with persuasive appeal, this dual purpose is vital.

Expanding the cross-linguistic perspective, Al Arabw (2018) examines the prosodic design of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) political monologues, noting that short and long pauses serve analogous syntactic and semantic functions to those observed in English advertisements. Notwithstanding cultural disparities—where Arabic pauses convey authority and English pauses highlight persuasion—the analysis reveals a universal pattern: short pauses (0–0.500 milliseconds) coincide with phrase

boundaries, whereas long pauses (>0.500 milliseconds) fit with clause boundaries. This aligns with Lehiste's (1975) seminal research, indicating that syntactic segmentation through pauses surpasses linguistic and cultural limits. Al Arabw's (2018) findings shed light on a common cognitive-linguistic mechanism where pause duration indicates structural hierarchy. He identifies syntactic-semantic correspondences in Arabic political monologues, where pauses convey authority, whereas English commercials use similar processes for persuasion. This aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), suggesting that pauses may function as peripheral cues to enhance message appeal. In contrast to spontaneous speech (Clark & Tree, 2002), where pauses are indicative of cognitive planning, Bell's (1984) audience design theory posits that pauses in advertising are tailored to correspond with listener expectations.

Despite the extensive research conducted on the syntactic and cross-linguistic dimensions of unfilled pauses, a significant deficiency remains in the comprehension of their dual function as structural and persuasive components in scripted, monologic media, such as advertisements. Strangert (2005) and Al Arabw (2018) highlight functional similarities across genres, particularly in the manner in which pauses mark syntactic structure in political monologues and news broadcasts. Still, there is a lack of systematic research on the deliberate modulation of pauses to meet the unique needs of advertising; a genre that is characterised by brevity, persuasion, and a refined presentation. Furthermore, while Al Arabw's (2018) research suggests a universal aspect to pause functions, the extent to which these functions align with culturally specific rhetorical objectives (such as persuasion in English compared to authority in Arabic) remains insufficiently explored. This paper addresses these gaps by analysing how isomorphic and non-isomorphic pauses in English advertisements navigate the interplay between linguistic coherence and persuasive intent, thereby fostering cross-linguistic discussions on the relationship between universal pause mechanisms and culturally driven communicative strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data samples analysed in this study consist of advertisements and/or commercials created in British English by a diverse group of randomly selected male and female media professionals. The advertisements are derived from 10 video files (mp4) acquired from YouTube. The downloaded MP4 video files were converted to WAV format using Fre:ac (Kausch, 2011), a free audio conversion software (Version 1.0.21a). The audio files were transferred to Praat, a software for speech analysis (Boersma & Weenink, 2018), where segmentation of syntactic and temporal structures was performed. A total of 25 commercial advertisements were randomly selected and analysed, without any selection criteria (see to the References for a list of 10 links to the video files from which the 25 advertisements were sourced).

The sample size of 25 advertisements corresponds with previous genre-specific studies, such as Strangert (2005), who examined 20 news segments. While the dataset is limited to British English, this homogeneity controls for dialectal variation. Default Praat pitch settings (50–300 Hz for males, 50–600 Hz for females) were selected for efficiency, as manual calibration for 25 speakers was impractical. Automated

measurements were validated against manual checks of 10% randomly selected pauses, yielding 95% consistency.

3.1. Syntactic structures

Syntactic structures, including syntactic phrases, syntactic clauses, and non-syntactic extracts, are comprised in the second tier. All three structures are recognised using syntactic parsing, adapted from studies on English syntax, such as Hurford (1994) and Eppler and Ozon (2013).

Syntactic phrases (p) are clusters of two or more words that are interrelated. The phrase may contain a verb or noun, but it may lack a subject performing an action. The phrase constitutes a component of a clause and/or sentence. Thus, the meaning at its far right margin is considered incomplete. There are six types of phrases: noun phrases, verb phrases, adverbial phrases, gerund phrases, infinitive phrases, and prepositional phrases. Conversely, a syntactic sentence is a compilation of words comprising a subject executing a verb.

Syntactic clauses (C) are categorised into two primary types: independent and dependent. An independent clause can function as a standalone sentence, as its meaning is full at the end. A dependent clause cannot function alone as a sentence and requires an independent clause to form a complete sentence, as its meaning is incomplete at the end. A dependent clause typically commences with subordinating conjunctions, such as although, since, if, when, and because.

Non-syntactic extracts pertain to the extreme right margins of a word or a series of words linked to empty pauses that do not delineate the boundaries of syntactic phrases or sentences. Non-syntactic extracts are not annotated in the second tier, and their segmentations remain unfilled in the figures derived from Praat.

3.2. Temporal structures

Temporal structures, including unfilled pauses, are retrieved semi-automatically by manually establishing boundaries after magnifying the audio four times in Praat to ensure that no segment of the pause is included in the speech extracts. In addition to estimates of unfilled pauses, the habitual pitch ranges of the speakers are illustrated in figures derived by Praat, utilising the default estimations often linked to male and female speakers in the software. The standard minimum pitch range for male speakers is approximately 50 Hertz (Hz), while the standard maximum pitch range is around 300 Hz. The standard lowest pitch range for female speakers is approximately 50 Hz, while the standard maximum pitch range is around 600 Hz. We opted for the defaults instead of manual estimations because of the substantial number of speakers—specifically, 25 speakers. Moreover, the little data samples generated by these speakers rendered it unfeasible to manually ascertain their usual pitch ranges, as bigger datasets from each speaker are requisite for such calculations.

The figures generated by Praat furthermore display pitch traces for the various advertisements. The rationale for presenting pitch traces, although intonation is not pertinent to this study, is to furnish further evidence of a pause in a specific context, in conjunction with the evidence of auditory perception. The additional data presented through pitch traces includes rhythm breaks and pitch resets. Moreover, Praat statistics comprise two labelled tiers. The initial tier displays the advertisement wording, together with estimations of unfilled pauses that denote durations of temporal structures. The second tier delineates the syntactic structures of the advertising.

Based on the mean/average durations of unfilled pauses at the right edges of phrases, estimated at M=0.455 milliseconds, and the average durations of unfilled pauses at the right edges of clauses, estimated at M=0.993 milliseconds, as illustrated in figure 3.1 below, we propose the following two temporal structures across the 25 selected advertisements.

A *short pause* is characterised as an unfilled duration ranging from zero to 0.500 milliseconds. The estimations, varying from zero to 0.100 milliseconds and signifying small pauses, are delineated in the figures derived from Praat through the inclusion of boundaries devoid of corresponding values.

A *long pause* is defined as an unfilled pause lasting longer than 0.500 milliseconds.

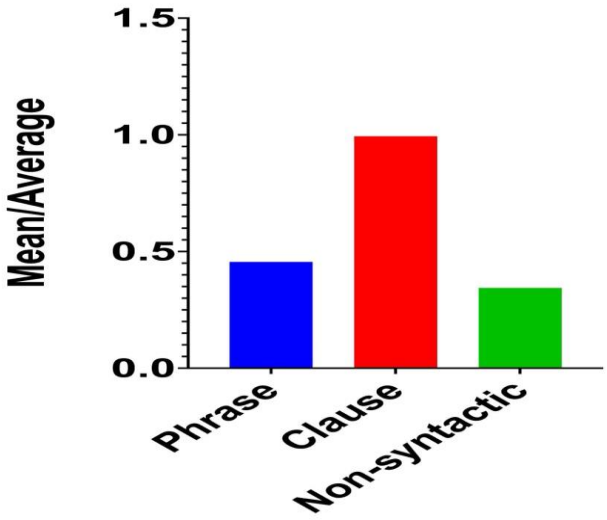


Figure 3.1. Mean/average of unfilled pauses at phrase, clause, and non-syntactic boundaries across 25 advertisements.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The focus thus far has been on categorising and elucidating the recognised temporal and syntactic patterns in English ads separately. This section examines the connections between temporal structures and syntactic structures, as well as the outcomes that can be drawn from these connections.

This study identifies two sorts of links between temporal structure and syntactic structure: isomorphic and non-isomorphic interactions. The isomorphic and non-isomorphic correlations are the foundation from which the principal arguments of this work are derived. This paper primarily argues i) the function of pause as a language technique and ii) the function of pause as a persuasive tactic in advertisement delivery. The following discussions and examples illustrate and analyse these two categories of interactions.

4.1. Isomorphic relationships

An isomorphic relationship is a language phenomenon that entails anticipated correspondences and/or coincidences between various comparable linguistic forms. In this work, temporal structures must have conventional temporal markings at specified syntactic edges to be regarded as isomorphic with syntactic structures. The standard indications in this context typically assert that short pauses align with the boundaries of phrases, whereas long pauses correspond with the boundaries of clauses.

A total of 238 unfilled pauses were formed across the 25 analysed commercials. One hundred sixty-six of these pauses were motivated by syntax. Specifically, 33 out of 166 were generated at the right edges of phrases, while the remaining 133 were generated at the right edges of clauses. Of the total 238 pauses, 72 were semantically motivated, occurring at non-syntactic boundaries. The 72 pauses are considered non-isomorphic to the syntax and will be discussed shortly in section 4.2. Furthermore, five of the 33 pauses at phrase boundaries and 28 of the 166 pauses at clause boundaries are deemed non-isomorphic, notwithstanding their placement in syntactic positions. The rationale for their classification as non-isomorphic lies in the fact that the five pauses at the margins of phrases exceed the estimate of 0.500 milliseconds, while the 28 pauses at the edges of clauses fall below the estimate of 0.500 milliseconds. Consequently, the five pauses at phrases and the 28 pauses at sentences diverge from the proposed temporal markers at syntactic boundaries inferred from the mean/average durations of unfilled pauses at the borders of phrases and clauses (see figure 3.1). We address these variations in section 4.2, together with the 72 semantically motivated pauses. Figure 4.1 below details the frequencies of occurrences of both isomorphic and non-isomorphic pauses, whether at syntactic or non-syntactic edges. Figure 4.1 is immediately followed by table 4.1, which accommodates distributions of pause typology by function.

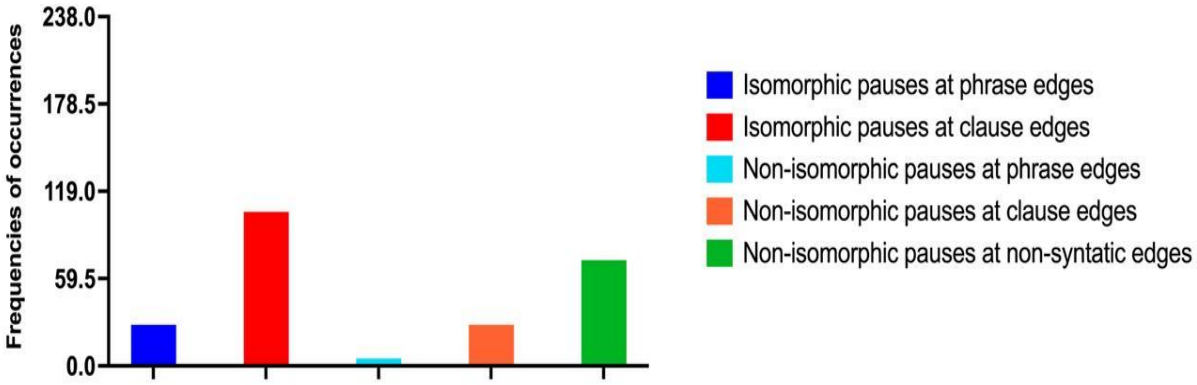
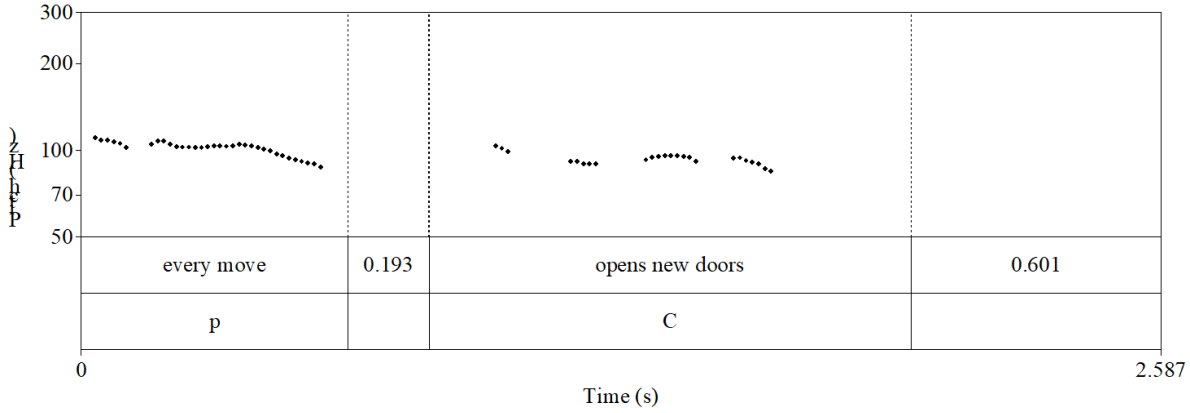


Figure 4.1. Frequencies of occurrences of isomorphic and non-isomorphic pauses at syntactic and non-syntactic boundaries.

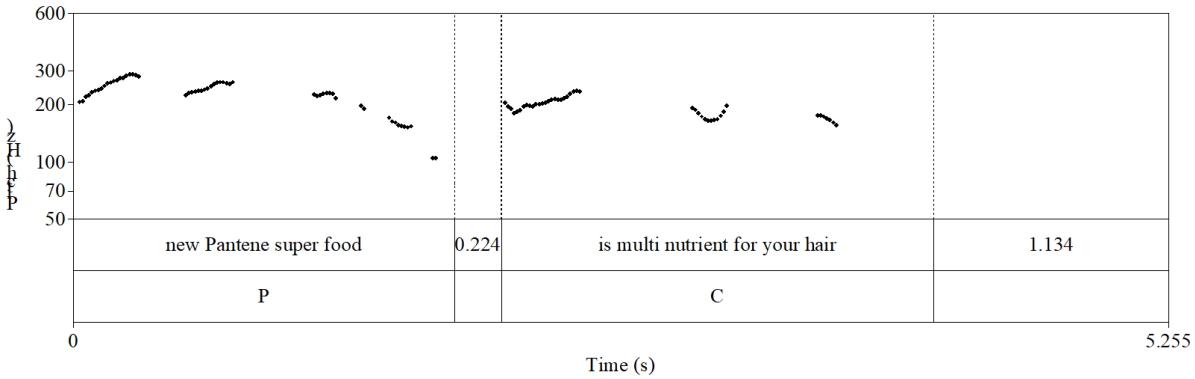
Pause Type	Frequency	Syntactic Boundary	Semantic Emphasis
Isomorphic (short)	33	100%	27%
Isomorphic (long)	133	100%	15%
Non-isomorphic	72	0%	100%

Table 4.1: Distribution of pause types by function.

Examples 1 and 2 below exhibit instances of isomorphic interactions between temporal structures and syntactic structures. The delimitations of the phrases [every move] in 1 and [new Pantene superfood] in 2 correspond with pause durations estimated to be under 0.500 milliseconds, which suggest the proposed temporal demarcation at phrases in section 3.2. Furthermore, the boundaries of the independent clauses [every move opens new doors] in 1 and [new Pantene superfood is multi-nutrient for your hair] in 2 align with pause lengths exceeding 0.500 milliseconds, which also corroborate the proposed temporal marking at clauses in section 3.2. Consequently, the durations of pauses in instances 1 and 2 exhibit isomorphic relationships with the phrases and clauses.



Example 1. Praat figure displaying pitch trace, durations of unfilled pauses, and syntactic structure for the extract "every move opens new doors".



Example 2. Praat figure displaying pitch trace, durations of unfilled pauses, and syntactic structure for the extract "new Pantene superfood is multi-nutrient for your hair".

Instances that exhibit isomorphic linkages, in relation to the linguistic contexts of the material in which they appear, are typically regarded as indicative of linguistic coherence. The temporal patterns that correspond with the syntactic ones are believed to correlate to signify linguistic processing and/or the progression of the content. Thus, the alignment of these temporal structures with the appropriate edges of their corresponding syntactic structures signifies viable linguistic strategies for demarcation.

As already mentioned, the goals and obligations represented by isomorphic linkages go beyond basic language methods. Specific isomorphic connections could point to other uses. An isomorphic relationship denotes a consistent mode of communication and can also result from persuasive techniques (see section 4.2 below for further information).

4.2. Non-isomorphic relationships

We have emphasised how temporal structures align with equivalent syntactic structures, resulting in isomorphic interactions. We also briefly emphasised temporal markers that differ from those in isomorphic relationships, leading to non-isomorphic relationships. These non-isomorphic relations fall into two categories: i) when the temporal domains are linked to non-corresponding syntactic domains, and ii) when the temporal domains are linked to non-syntactic domains. In other words, where the grammar does not necessitate pauses, yet they nonetheless occur.

As previously stated in section 4.1, a total of 33 pauses out of 166 (five at phrase boundaries and 28 at clause boundaries) indicated the first type of non-isomorphic links, whereas 72 pauses out of 238 indicated the second type of non-isomorphic relationships. The second group of non-isomorphic interactions predominates in the advertised products.

The second category of non-isomorphic relationships between temporal and syntactic structures, namely the non-syntactically (semantically) motivated temporal markings, together with the syntactically motivated temporal markings delineated in section 4.1, parallels with the findings of Strangert (2005). In her examination of a political interview and a news reading, Strangert contended that semantically motivated temporal marking may precede or directly correspond to "critical information". Critical information is characterised as information that holds greater significance for the speaker and/or listener. The significance is determined by examining the subject matter and meanings of the advertisements, particularly what may serve as the focal point for the speaker and/or audience.

This work also adopts the notion that semantically motivated temporal markers align with crucial information. In this work, the concept encompasses i) temporal markings indicative of the first category of non-isomorphic relations and ii) temporal markings representative of isomorphic ties. The concept pertaining to i) is limited solely to instances when the edges of phrases are indicated by non-corresponding pauses, excluding edges of clauses marked by such pauses. The limitation to phrases arises because the non-corresponding long pauses at their boundaries are sufficiently prominent to signify that the information they directly represent is essential or that the forthcoming information they precede is crucial (see the phrases in upcoming examples 3 and 4, respectively). In contrast, the non-corresponding short pauses at the edges of clauses lack sufficient prominence and predominantly occur at points where a dependent clause follows (see the dependent clause in example 3). Temporal structures that exhibit isomorphic relationships with syntax mostly serve as linguistic demarcation strategies. However, some may also align with crucial information and function as persuasive techniques.

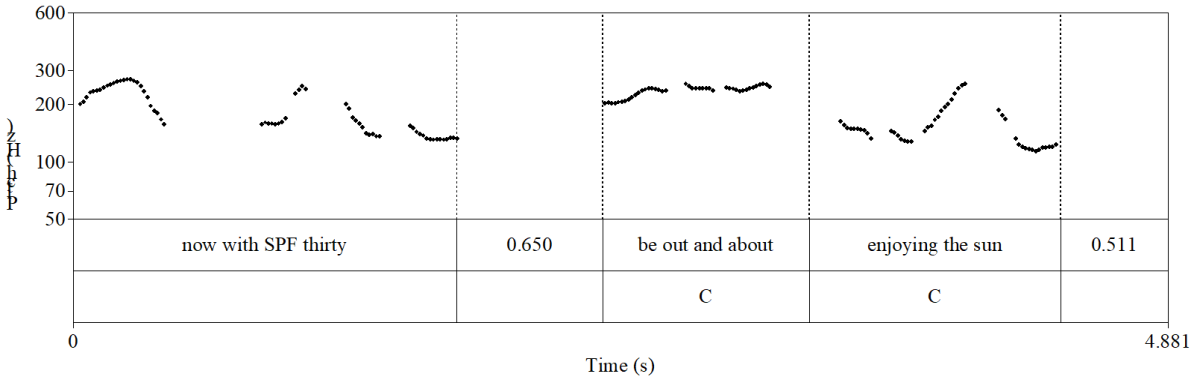
Instances that exhibit non-isomorphic linkages, as well as certain cases demonstrating isomorphic relationships when analysed within their language contexts and the progression of meaning, may be construed as a result of persuasive methods. Highlighting essential information or withholding it till a later point in an advertisement can effectively capture viewers' attention, perhaps resulting in successful persuasion.

Instances of non-isomorphic interactions between temporal structures and phrases are illustrated in examples 3 and 4 below. The boundaries of the phrases [now with SPF thirty] in 3 and [more importantly] in 4 align with pause durations exceeding 0.500 milliseconds, which diverge from the proposed temporal marking of phrases in section 3.2. In examples 3 and 4, the speakers exhibit pronounced extended pauses, typically indicating the boundaries of sentences, to delineate the edges of phrases. In example 3, the speaker explicitly correlates the essential information [now with SPF thirty] with an extended pause. The acronym SPF (Sun Protection Factor), a type of sunscreen, is the focal point. Consequently, by emphasising this crucial information with an extended pause, the speaker is likely capturing the audience's attention and encouraging them to acquire this product. Non-isomorphic pauses preceding [SPF thirty] (Example 3) exemplify Clark & Tree’s (2002) cognitive load theory, where extended silence allows audiences to process highlighted information. In example 4,

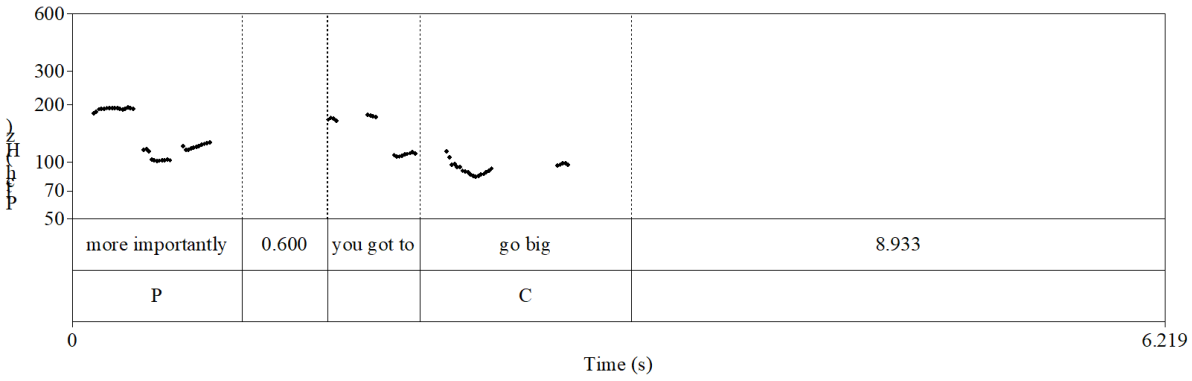
the speaker exhibits an extended pause prior to the pivotal information [you got to go big]. The extended pause may be employed to capture the audience's attention for the forthcoming content. The following information pertains to the "Huawei Mate 10", a mobile device. The phrase consists of the second-person pronoun "you", addressing the audience, followed by "got to", indicating an obligation synonymous with "have to", and concluding with "go large", which alludes to the Huawei Mate 10. Consequently, the speaker may be attempting to persuade the audience to acquire this particular mobile phone.

The short pauses at the boundaries of the sentences in instances 1 and 2 in section 4.1, which exhibit isomorphic linkages, may also be construed as persuasive strategies, in addition to their reading as linguistic strategies. In example 1, the short pause directly corresponds to the phrase [every move], which is essential information, and precedes the crucial information [opens additional doors]. By employing a short pause between these two bits of information, even though less pronounced than the extended pauses in non-isomorphic interactions illustrated in examples 3 and 4, the speaker may be capturing the audience's attention. This advertising pertains to "Diesel perfume". The speaker asserts that each movement disseminates fragrance and evokes new possibilities. Consequently, the speaker seeks to convince the audience to acquire and don the scent, positing it as the essential element for success. In example 2, the short pause directly highlights the essential information [the new Pantene superfood], which refers to a brand of shampoo and serves as the focal point. By emphasising this crucial information with a short pause, the speaker may be capturing the audience's attention and encouraging them to acquire this product.

The non-isomorphic link between temporal structures and sentences is seen in example 3 below. The boundary of the clause [now with SPF thirty be out and about] coincides with a short pause, which departs from the proposed temporal marking of clauses in section 3.2. The short pause at the clause's margin does not align with essential information. Consequently, it does not serve as an effective persuasive strategy. The short pauses are likely attributable to the dependent clause [enjoying the sun], which succeeds the preceding main sentence. The short pause may indicate semantic continuity, suggesting to the viewer that further information is forthcoming and that the current segment remains incomplete. The short pause may indicate semantic continuity, suggesting to the viewer that further information is forthcoming and that the current chunk remains incomplete. The two long pauses at the boundaries of the clauses, [now with SPF thirty be out and about enjoying the sun] in example 3 and [most importantly you got to go big], manifest isomorphic relationships with the grammar. Consequently, both function as linguistic strategies of demarcation.



Example 3. Praat figure displaying pitch trace, durations of unfilled pauses, and syntactic structure for the extract "now with SPF thirty be out and about enjoying the sun".



Example 4. Praat figure displaying pitch trace, durations of unfilled pauses, and syntactic structure for the extract "more importantly you got to go big".

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Analysis of 25 English advertisements shows that unfilled pauses serve both as grammatical indicators and persuasive devices. Isomorphic pauses, which account for 55.9% of all pauses, are generally consistent with sentence boundaries (133 cases), thereby promoting syntactic consistency. The results align with the frameworks proposed by Lehiste (1975) and Swerts and Geluykens (1994), indicating that pauses play a significant role in structuring conversation. The importance of non-isomorphic pauses in underlining critical information is underscored by their occurrence rate (44.1%), especially at non-syntactic boundaries, aligning with Strangert's (2005) observations. For instance, long pauses preceding phrases such as [SPF thirty] (example 3) or [Huawei Mate 10] (example 4) enhance semantic emphasis and deliberately capture the viewer's attention towards the product's advantages.

Commercials' use of pauses to persuade aligns with cognitive theories that suggest silence improves memory (Fon et al., 2011). Pauses create cognitive blockades by segmenting content, which helps audiences understand announcements like [multi-nutrient for your hair] (example 2). This is consistent with research on hedges and boosters by Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012), which found that deliberate pauses enhance rhetorical effect. Moreover, Horne's (2007) discovery that pauses in

Swedish discourse promote introspection parallels the suspenseful impact of short pauses at phrase boundaries, exemplified by [every move] (example 1). Cross-linguistic comparisons clarify these findings. Mandarin pauses improve grammatical clarity (Fon et al., 2011), whereas English advertisements employ pauses to amplify emotional impact.

Extended pauses preceding pricing information raise anticipation, exploiting cultural norms of assertiveness (de Boer & Heeren, 2020). Conversely, in Japanese ads, pauses may emphasise collective harmony rather than individual persuasion, requiring advertisers to adapt strategies for high-context cultures, underscoring the cultural specificity of pause functions (Kim, 2018). Al Arabw's (2018) analysis of political monologues in MSA offers critical insights: Despite cultural adaptations, such as the designation of authority in Arabic and suspense in English through pauses, the fundamental functions of short and lengthy pauses (syntactic demarcation and semantic emphasis) remain unaltered. Despite variations in superficial applications, this universality suggests an intrinsic cognitive-linguistic framework that regulates the utility of pauses.

These findings indicate that advertisers may purposefully implement extended pauses (>500ms) prior to product differentiators (e.g., pricing or unique features) to leverage cognitive priming, wherein pauses serve as peripheral cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) to improve message recall. Conversely, in high-context cultures like Japan, where pauses signify harmony (Kim, 2018), the same strategies may require adjustment. The findings indicate that unfilled pauses in English advertisements serve as complex tools that integrate syntactic precision with persuasive creativity to capture viewer attention. By comparing these results with cross-linguistic findings, the study shows how pauses change depending on culture and communication settings. This helps us better understand their role in mediated discourse.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that unfilled pauses in English advertisements serve double purposes. More specifically, they match with syntactic boundaries (phrases and clauses) in an isomorphic relationship to demonstrate linguistic strategies, e.g., promoting language coherence and comprehension. Additionally, they mismatch with syntactic edges in a non-isomorphic relationship to convey persuasive strategies, e.g., shedding light on critical information regarding product qualities to grab the attention of viewers. The findings enhance previous research by demonstrating how pauses are modified to meet specific demands of advertising; a manner distinguished by brevity, persuasive intent, and adept execution.

The research also reveals a shared cognitive-linguistic framework that regulates the significance of pauses, despite superficial differences across languages and contexts. Previous cross-linguistic studies have consistently demonstrated the syntactic and semantic functions of pauses. Likewise, the present study underscores the adaptation of pauses to certain communication aims, e.g., indicating the progression of speech or generating suspense in English advertising.

This study advances the prosody-pragmatics interface by unraveling how pauses serve syntactic and persuasive roles in scripted ads—a duality previously underexplored in mediated discourse. The study's limitations—such as its focus on rehearsed advertisements—invite further research on spontaneous vs. scripted speech. Future work could test these mechanisms in emotional vs. informational ads or non-Western contexts (e.g., Arabic ads), where cultural norms may reshape pause utility. In addition, analysing non-native speakers' pauses could reveal the influence of fluency on advertisement efficacy. Overall, this research enriches our comprehension of how prosodic features, like pauses, boost viewer engagement in mediated speech, connecting linguistic theory with practical application.

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