SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

What is sociolinguistics?

Sociolinguistics is the study of the way people use language in society. Sociolinguists study the unwritten rules we all follow subconsciously when using language and identify how we employ various strategies to achieve a desired outcome. In other words: they study the "grammar of communication."

Why do I need a linguist?

Language is a part of everything we do. Deep knowledge of language is, therefore, a huge asset. Linguists have a unique set of skills to interpret and understand interaction and can provide insights into your client relationships you would never have had before. Harness the power of science to improve your communications and edge out the competition.

How does it work?

Sociolinguistics theory provides a toolkit for examining language data in a scientific, systematic way. It is a framework that can be trusted, tested, and replicated. Applying this theoretical lens and the expertise of a skilled analyst to your communication will unearth questions, ideas, and findings that would have gone undiscovered with a more traditional approach, AND will help you translate the patterns in your clients' language into something meaningful that you can act on.

Linguistic analysis can be applied to:
- Client feedback surveys
- RFP documents
- Marketing Materials
- Website design
- Internal communication practices
- Pretty much anywhere you use language in your business

Following are examples from real Client Savvy clients. Request full SAMPLE ANALYSIS REPORTS by emailing answers@clientsavvy.com.

CASE STUDY 1 OVERVIEW:
LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

Background
ACME Construction is a 3,000+ contractor with offices across the country. They utilize Client Feedback Tool to monitor their success across offices and business divisions and identify potential problems. Client Savvy provides insight into the scores reported through CFT and what those patterns reveal, but up until now the firm hasn't paid much attention to the comments that often accompany feedback scores. The firm asked Client Savvy to provide an analysis of what their clients are trying to tell them in the comments.

Problem
Qualitative data like free text comments can be difficult to analyze reliably. To the untrained eye, the data is chaotic and any insights are unreliable.

Solution
Client Savvy conducted a sociolinguistic analysis of ACME's client comments.

Outcomes
The analysis identified several key themes in the data that led to specific recommendations for how to improve their service. The currents running through the language in their client feedback were not necessarily organized by question or topic, and so were not immediately evident when doing a scores-based analysis. These themes covered more emotional, abstract, and relational issues within the firm that were not limited to a specific stage or aspect of project delivery or a certain type of project. Without a linguistic analysis, the firm would not have been alerted to concerns and opinions that clients were repeatedly expressing in their feedback.

> Key Examples:
> Staffing was a major concern to clients, not in terms of quality, but quantity. Many simply stated the project was understaffed, but others provided more nuanced assessments:
>> *"John Doe is an excellent project manager. Probably needed two of his caliber on the project, at least for some of the time."*
>
> The firm also discovered that clients' anxiety about the staffing was closely linked to concern about the level of effort, especially in the end phase of a project:
>> *"Felt like attention to the project dwindled towards the end..."*
>
> Further exploration of this issue revealed that clients had concerns that the large size of the firm led to less attention paid to their project – undoubtedly that insecurity could be related to clients' high criticism of team staffing and effort.

ACME adjusted their end-of-project staffing protocol to create more positive close-out experiences for their clients, reducing the sense of "abandonment" and increasing measured loyalty. Key staff now stay engaged more closely through total completion.

CASE STUDY 2 OVERVIEW:
LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF NET PROMOTER SCORES

Background
ACME Engineers is a large (1,700 employee) Civil Engineering company with clients in both the public and the private sector. They have included questions based on the Net Promoter system, which is a way of assessing loyalty. The Net Promoter System uses scored responses to categorize your clients into those who will help your brand's success (Promoters) those who will hinder it (Detractors) and those who will do neither (Passives). ACME wants to better understand their NPS data.

Problem
The NPS system creates clear categories based on the scores respondents give, but doesn't provide the tools for deep analysis into how to apply that knowledge beyond identifying where each client falls along the spectrum.

Solution
Client Savvy conducted a sociolinguistic analysis of ACME's NPS data.

Outcomes
The analysis helped the firm not only understand WHO were their Promoters, Detractors, and Passives, but also WHY certain clients felt that way. Put another way, it helped the firm identified the areas where they could not afford mistakes, and the areas were the stakes were not as high.

> Key Example:
> ACME Engineers learned that the attribute most highly correlated to "promoter" outcomes is high-quality staff. The highest correlation to detractor was price – but mention of cost was non-existent in Promoter comments, which were almost exclusively about praising the high quality of staff. This tells ACME that when the right staffing assignments are made, the firm can pass along the cost of retaining top staff, as hiqh-caliber of personnel provides value beyond cost concerns.
> > *"[John Doe] is among my top trusted advisors and I will go to him first if I need help in the future."*

Comments like the one above raise an interesting potential liability for the firm – this particular client values their relationship with John Doe above their relationship with ACME. Were John Doe to move on, they might not retain this client. The firm implemented plans to retain top talent, connect their exceptional staff to the right clients, and work to replace interpersonal connections with loyalty connected to their overall brand.

CASE STUDY 3 OVERVIEW:
LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF BASELINE SURVEY RESULTS

Background
ACME Engineers is a Civil Engineering company with nearly 5,000 employees nationwide. The firm employs Client Savvy and the Client Feedback Tool to conduct annual baseline surveys of their clients along with ongoing project-based feedback. They utilize the baseline data to track their overall client relationships, identify trends and areas for improvement, and get a better sense of what their clients are looking for in a consulting firm. The firm had a Board meeting approaching, and asked Client Savvy to help frame their client relationships into key findings and recommendations for the board.

Problem
Typical analysis of baseline surveys breaks down the numerical scores and organizes them according to a number of different metrics and cross-sectional surveys. This level of analysis, however, does not always reveal the motivations or sentiments that motivate clients.

Solution
Client Savvy conducted a sociolinguistic analysis of ACME's baseline survey results.

Outcomes
The linguistic analysis revealed many common themes between clients as far as how they conduct their work and communicate within their teams. The analysis also delved deeper into how the clients view the business practices of the firm – something that wasn't expressly asked about in the surveys and so was not brought to the surface in other discussions of baseline data.

> Key Example:
> ACME learned that clients felt a sense of 'abandonment' after projects went to the 'punchlist' phase. As critical staff members moved on to new projects, perceptions during transition suffered. The firm also discovered that staff transitions, unavoidable in a large company with projects lasting years, has had positive and negative impacts on their clients' perceptions.
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> Positive:
> *"I used to be highly unsatisfied. However our new engineer is outstanding and has completely turned things around."*
> Negative:
> *"The engineer on my project recently retired. We are working through the transition."*

For the firm, this notion of smooth transitioning and succession planning has become a key part of their new strategic plan. They implemented a plan to carefully pair two key internal staff (one account oriented, one project oriented) on each major client/project. In addition, they solicit feedback during and immediately after a staff transition to assure positive perceptions are maintained and peak performance delivered.