



# Strategic Monolingualism and Multimodal Accommodation in Global Tech Keynotes: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Apple, Google, and Samsung

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## Abstract

This research examines strategic monolingualism as an accommodation strategy in global technology keynotes, analyzing thirty presentations from Apple, Google, and Samsung (2020–2024). Research has shown that code-switching is a good way to find a balance between global and local needs. However, tech companies only use English to reach multilingual audiences, which is strange. How do monolingual presentations reach a global audience without using different languages? Quantitative analysis shows that there is a more direct address, more inclusive pronouns, and less hedging, which creates corporate certainty. Qualitative analysis indicates that multimodal resources—such as live demonstrations, accessibility features, cultural framing, and synchronized visuals—serve as meaning-making alternatives (semiotic substitution) to code-switching. Instead of switching languages, businesses switch between different ways of communicating (visual, verbal, musical) to get things done. Drawing from Communication Accommodation Theory, Politeness Theory, and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the study identifies strategic monolingualism as a transition wherein various modes collaborate to engage diverse audiences, supplanting conventional bilingual accommodation. This pattern—linguistic homogeneity facilitating semiotic heterogeneity—redefines accommodation beyond code-switching frameworks. The results help teachers of English for Specific Purposes by showing that multimodal literacy is important for professional communication. They also help business people who need to balance brand consistency with global engagement by giving them a Multimodal Accommodation Framework.

**Keywords:** *strategic monolingualism, multimodal discourse analysis, corporate sociolinguistics, global communication*

## **Introduction**

Multinational tech companies are using livestreamed product launches more and more to show off new ideas and build their brand identity with people all over the world. These events have live demonstrations, moving images, and spoken language, which all work together to make multimodal communicative spaces where language choices become strategic resources. Traditional researcher says that switching between English and local languages is necessary for global brand consistency and local audience engagement. However, an analysis of thirty recent Apple, Google, and Samsung keynotes shows that English monolingualism is still the norm, even though these companies operate in multilingual markets.

However, corporate code-switching research has focused on workplace meetings (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015), written reports (Swales, 1990), and digital marketing films (Piller, 2003). These studies rarely explore structural typology, pragmatic functions, and multimodal meaning co-construction using quantitative and qualitative methods. Multimodal corporate communication, specifically video-based formats and pandemic-related digital transformations, has been studied recently (Liu et al., 2024; Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer Silveira, 2025). These studies have focused on CEO remarks, financial communication, and organizational discourse, not high-stakes technology product debuts.

The deliberate use of monolingual English in high-stakes, internationally disseminated keynotes, notably by leading technological corporations, has not been carefully explored. Strategic monolingualism as a brand-level accommodation strategy in global technology presentations has yet to be studied, but corporate English as a lingua franca is effective and adaptable (Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024; Tan, 2024). This study uses Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2016; Giles et al., 2023) to examine how speakers use non-linguistic tactics to meet audience norms.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) has been extended to digital and human-machine communication situations, showing that accommodation in mediated technological environments uses multimodal rather than linguistic principles. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran, 2004) examines how visual, audio, and accessible resources interact with spoken discourse, while Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) examines corporate face-threatening act management. Reinterpreting strategic monolingualism as a brand selection, Poplack's (1980) structural typology is enhanced by evaluating the apparent non-use of code-switching and (Myers-Scotton, 1993) Markedness Model.

This research aims to fill in those gaps through a mixed-methods analysis of thirty flagship events, specifically, ten Apple events (including WWDC and product launches), ten Google keynotes (including I/O and product reveals), and ten Samsung Unpacked livestreams that occurred from 2020-2024. Each event engaged audiences collectively in the hundreds of millions of viewership. Collectively, these events represent prominent sites of corporate messaging. Using Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2016), Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987),

and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2010), this research looks at how speakers approach audience norms through non-linguistic approaches, enact face-threatening acts, and enact corporate ideology through discourse structures.

The structural typology of code-switching is extended by considering the conspicuous absence of code-switching in conjunction with the Markedness Model and reconceptualizing strategic monolingualism as a marked brand choice. Multimodal discourse analytics provide the foundation for interested analysis of how visual, musical, and accessibility affordances work alongside amplified spoken English in the service of persuasion.

## Method

This research employs a mixed-methods framework that combines quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse analysis to investigate how strategic monolingualism facilitates accommodation through pragmatic and multimodal strategies. This methodology is based on Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2016), which elucidates the concepts of convergence and divergence in communication behaviors; Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which addresses the management of face and relational alignment; and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran, 2004), which examines the interplay of linguistic and visual elements in meaning-making. Furthermore, this mixed-methods strategy fills existing gaps in the methodologies of corpus linguistics literature, which tends to emphasize quantitative aspects while questioning the generalizability of frequency patterns, and discourse analysis, which provides interpretive depth to the author's exploration of the acceptance of new usage patterns (Fairclough, 2010).

The corpus consists of 30 keynote presentations in English from Apple, Google, and Samsung, spanning the years 2020 to 2024. This amounts to a total of 1,200 minutes of video content and roughly 372,000 words of transcribed dialogue. The selection of data was guided by four key criteria: (1) global audience reach (Phillipson, 1992), (2) the variation in genre between developer and consumer events (Swales, 1990), (3) the inclusion of both pandemic and post-pandemic presentation formats (DeFilippis et al., 2022), and (4) the richness of multimodal elements—to guarantee a representative sample.

Data were transcribed, corrected, and temporally aligned with video recordings, followed by annotation for multimodal features such as live demonstrations, on-screen graphics, background music, and accessibility tracks. Verbal coding focused on seven categories of discourse markers—direct address, inclusive pronouns, transitions, emphasis, gratitude, hedging, and rhetorical questions—while multimodal coding recognized five accommodation features: product demonstrations, music, cultural framing, accessibility, and visuals. Quantitative analysis computed normalized frequencies per 1,000 words, and qualitative interpretation analyzed representative discourse segments. Inter-coder reliability surpassed .80, and triangulation across linguistic, multimodal, and

audience engagement data confirmed validity and depth.

## Results

Corpus analysis shows that monolingual keynotes create closeness between people by using discourse markers more often than is normal in conversation. Table 1 shows the normalized frequencies per minute for all thirty events.

Table 1: Discourse Marker Frequencies (per minute)

Marker Type	Apple	Google	Samsung	Interpretation
Direct "You"	5.41	4.72	6.07	Direct audience convergence; Samsung highest
Inclusive "We"	3.28	4.32	4.27	Collective identity: strongest in Google
Transition markers	1.05	0.87	0.70	Structural convergence for clarity
Emphasis markers	0.98	0.49	0.72	Affective intensity: Apple leads
Gratitude	0.15	0.21	0.45	Samsung foregrounds warmth
Hedging	0.10	0.26	0.09	Low across all, assertive stance
Rhetorical questions	0.04	0.21	0.05	Google uses most developer dialogue.

These frequencies show patterns that are consistent. Direct address, such as "you" or "your," happens 4.7 to 6.1 times per minute, which is much more than in casual conversation (1.2 times per minute) or academic presentations (0.8 times per minute). This practical intensification leads to what is known as "parasocial intimacy," where audiences feel a personal connection even though they are only communicating with one person. Samsung's high direct address frequency (6.07/minute) fits with its brand image as relational and consumer-focused. Google's high use of inclusive pronouns (4.32/minute) fits with its developer-community ideology, which emphasizes collaborative innovation. The pattern shows pronoun-based convergence, which means that bilingual speakers might switch languages to show support, while monolingual speakers might use more address density to achieve the same level of closeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The lack of hedging, with all companies below 0.3/minute, shows that businesses are confident and polite. According to Traditional Politeness Theory, face-threatening acts need to be softened by hedging, deference, and indirectness. But corporate keynotes consistently downplay negative politeness and upplay positive politeness. Samsung's gratitude markers (0.45/minute) enhance faces by showing appreciation, while Apple's emphasis markers (0.98/minute), which include words like "*amazing*," "*incredible*," and "*revolutionary*," show enthusiasm and create a warm feeling that makes up for assertive certainty. This reversal, where confidence rather than deference controls face, shows how institutions work: brand personas take on face risks through authority, and hedging goes against the idea that technology must

always seem to be the answer (Winner, 1986).

Temporal analysis shows how evolution works. From 2020 to 2024, the number of times "we" was used in direct address went up from 4.1 to 5.7 per 1,000 words. This change, from framing things as a group to getting people involved on their own, fits with the changes to virtual formats that were caused by the pandemic. When presenters had to speak to cameras instead of live audiences, linguistic personalization became even more important, showing how organizations can learn from digital accommodation strategies.

Pragmatic intensification functions within verbal channels, whereas multimodal features facilitate cross-channel accommodation. Table 2 shows how multimodal features are spread out, showing systematic patterns.

Table 2: Multimodal Feature Distribution

Multimodal Feature	Apple	Google	Samsung	Function
Live demos	100%	100%	90%	Cognitive convergence via visualization
Music	60%	100%	100%	Emotional convergence via affect
Cultural framing	50%	0%	90%	Symbolic convergence via localization
Accessibility (captions/ASL)	100%	100%	100%	Ethical convergence via inclusivity
Graphics	100%	90%	100%	Visual convergence via scaffolding

The fact that 90-100% of the industry uses live demonstrations and 100% of the industry uses accessibility tracks shows that everyone agrees that visual and accessible modes must make up for the lack of language uniformity. Demonstrations create what it is called cognitive convergence through visualization. Instead of explaining features in multiple languages, presenters show how things work visually, which helps people from different language backgrounds understand. This shows modal substitution, where a visual demonstration takes the place of a verbal explanation's cognitive function. Universal access infrastructure, captions, and ASL interpretation indicate a transition from linguistic justice (offering multiple languages) to semiotic justice (offering multiple modalities). The Google I/O 2021 keynote showed this with tri-modal synchronization, where spoken English, on-screen code animations, and ASL interpretation were all in sync.

Music and cultural framing demonstrate strategic variation, indicating brand-specific accommodation philosophies. Samsung uses music at all of its events, usually high-energy electronic tracks that sync up with product reveals. This creates affective convergence through sonic intensity. Music is a universal language of feelings. Rhythmic intensity can express excitement across language barriers better than words can. Samsung's 90% cultural framing deployment versus Google's 0% is the biggest difference. At the start of many Samsung events, people greet each other in Korean for 10 to 15 seconds before switching to English. The events also feature

pictures of Seoul's skyline and K-pop-inspired music. This symbolic localization shows respect for other cultures without breaking the rules of language. Apple's "California Soul" motifs (50%), movie landscapes, and references to Silicon Valley also give the project a symbolic base. Google's lack of cultural framing demonstrates a deliberate neutrality ideology, opting instead for technical universalism that surpasses cultural particularity.

Three unique corporate sociolinguistic identities arise within a context of shared English monolingualism. Apple presents itself as an innovative leader through the use of narrative emotional authority, high-quality film production, and polite language that focuses on gratitude. Google acts as a democratic teacher by using cognitive collaborative strategy, the most inclusive pronouns (4.32/minute), rhetorical questions (0.21/minute), and making all technical information available to everyone. Samsung becomes a charming global host through a relational emotive approach, the highest direct address (6.07/minute) and gratitude (0.45/minute), lively music (100%), and cultural localization (90%). These arrangements show that linguistic uniformity makes semiotic differentiation possible: the same English-only medium can support very different corporate identities through multimodal configuration.

## Discussion

The integrated findings have four theoretical and three practical implications for corporate communication and ESP pedagogy. This work extends Communication Accommodation Theory beyond linguistic convergence to multimodal accommodation, which emphasizes pragmatic intensification, emotive amplification, visual demonstration, and accessibility rather than code-switching (Giles, 2016). The fact that direct address frequencies (5-6/minute) exceed conversational norms shows compensatory intensification, where monolingual speakers increase interpersonal markers to achieve solidarity effects normally achieved by bilingual speakers through code-switching.

This expands CAT's reach from linguistic to intersubjective accommodation, implying convergence across any semiotic channel that reduces social distance. This discovery supports contemporary CAT research on accommodation in digital and virtual environments (Giles et al., 2023), expanding the theory's relevance from direct linguistic convergence to mediated multimodal convergence in human-machine and technology-mediated human-human interactions. Modal substitution—the functional replacement of linguistic alternation by visual, auditory, and accessible modes in ideological or practical restrictions that limit code-switching—must be studied in future accommodation research.

Findings recontextualize Politeness Theory for institutions through confidence politeness: Regardless of face-threat intensity, business environments promote excitement, thankfulness, and inclusion and discourage hedging and subordination (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hyland, 2005). Institutional face functions

differently from interpersonal face, as seen by the systematic lowering of hedging (<0.3/minute) during face-threatening actions including assertive statements, instructions, and self-promotion (Goffman, 1986). Authority allows brand personalities to take risks; uncertainty reveals weakness.

This suggests that Politeness Theory requires context-specific parameters: academic discourse views hedging as intellectual humility (Hyland, 2005), political discourse uses it for deniability, and corporate discourse suppresses it to promote innovation ideology. Instead, than assuming universal face-management rules, future politeness research must define boundary circumstances that enable or prevent negative politeness. The contrast between rhetorical inquiries at developer conferences (0.15-0.21/minute) and affective markers at consumer launches (0.7-1.0/minute) shows genre-specific face economies: cognitive politeness for experts (collaborative problem-solving) and emotional politeness for consumers (aspirational transformation).

Third, the study redefines the Markedness Model for monolingualism: in multilingual organizations, English-only delivery is a marked choice that reflects global prestige, technological modernity, and brand coherence, not a default (Myers-Scotton, 1993). All thirty incidents showed no code-switching, despite the organization's multilingual competence, suggesting purposeful policy. This contradicts the markedness analysis that considers code-switching as a marked form (Auer, 1998; Poplack, 1980); strategic non-switching is the ideologically driven alternative.

Myers-Scotton's (1993) theory must include layered markedness: organizational strategies that produce marked options that are internally unmarked but externally marked to societal expectations. Corporate monolingualism, unlike linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) or language standardization (Milroy & Milroy, 2012), promotes semiotic creativity rather than linguistic repression, which affects language policy research. Samsung is not multilingual because they preserve Korean welcomes (10–15 seconds) before transitioning to English. They are only respecting different cultures without breaching brand-level language homogeneity.

Fourth, multimodal compensation systematically accommodates through semiotic substitution and the semiotic balance principle (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Businesses utilize live demonstrations (90-100%), accessible tracks (100%), and strategic music/cultural framing because they realize multimodal intensity must increase when language diversity decreases. Semiotic equilibrium argues that communicative efficacy requires meaning allocation across channels, and language uniformity requires multimodal diversity. (O'Halloran, 2004) Multimodal Discourse Analysis requires functional equivalence theory to define when modes can substitute for each other's communicative functions.

We found that visual demonstration replaces language explanation (cognitive function), music replaces verbal impact (emotional function), and accessible infrastructure compensates for multilingual provision. Modal substitution is related to recent multimodal discourse study on how corporations establish brand identity and handle crisis communication via visual, verbal, and audio channels (Ledin & Machin, 2019; Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer Silveira, 2025). However, systematic theory is lacking to explain substitution conditions. Samsung's S24 Ultra's temporal synchronization seamlessly synchronizes vocal proclamation, visual emergence, audio crescendo, and lighting intensification, multiplying meaning instead of adding.

Different genres demonstrate flexibility. Long lengths (around 17,200–17,800 words), many presenters (50–79 WWDC; 5–9 I/O), rich technical content, and high innovation-term density (192–199 WWDC; 204 AI references at I/O 2024) make developer conferences pedagogical dialogues for expert audiences (2020). Consumer launches (Apple Events, Samsung Unpacked, Pixel reveals) are mid-length (8,700–12,100 words), have fewer presenters (0–27), and emphasize lifestyle benefits and premium positioning for non-experts. Strategic monolingualism's genre-specific pragmatic distribution shows how marker selection and frequency modulation can change interpersonal outcomes in English, replacing solidarity and identity negotiation in code-switching.

The study offers three recommendations for ESP pedagogy in business communication (García, 2017). Along with linguistic proficiency, curriculum must teach multimodal accommodation skills including synchronizing verbal delivery with visual demonstrations, choosing brand-appropriate music, and developing accessibility infrastructure as ethical convergence. Recent ESP research emphasizes the importance of integrating genuine digital corporate genres into educational programs (Nervino, 2023), while multimodal literacy is increasingly recognized as essential for professional communication proficiency (Huang & Xia, 2024): aligning verbal delivery with visual demonstrations, choosing music that matches brand identity, and creating accessibility infrastructure as ethical convergence. Current ESP courses focus on written and spoken English, but they rarely cover multimodal communication.

Our research suggests these skills are crucial for global corporate communication. Secondly, pedagogy should differentiate genre-specific accommodation strategies: technical audiences need cognitive convergence (collaborative framing, rhetorical questions, detailed demonstrations), while consumer audiences need emotional convergence (affective markers, aspirational narratives, lifestyle benefits). Genre awareness training helps professionals optimize pragmatic and multimodal arrangements. ESP must prepare students for multimodal professional discourse as digital corporate communication increasingly relies on video platforms and authentic YouTube and LinkedIn content.



Third, ESP must address ethical accommodation (accessibility as semiotic justice) to include sensory and linguistic diversity. Third, ESP must address ethical accommodation (accessibility as semiotic justice) to include sensory and linguistic diversity. Training should include captioned best practices, ASL interpretation coordination, and visual clarity. Accessibility is crucial to professional communication.

Strategic recommendations for corporate practitioners are also found. Companies can improve keynotes by (1) keeping high pragmatic convergence (5+ direct address/minute, 3-4 inclusive pronouns/minute) to create parasocial intimacy that compensates for mediation (Horton & Wohl, 2016); (2) increasing positive politeness (gratitude, enthusiasm) and reducing hedging to show confidence that fits innovation ideology (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hyland, 2005); and (3) using universal multimodal features. These tactics project global authority and semiotic variety to maintain brand consistency without deleting culture (Piller, 2003).

The study illuminates sociolinguistic implications for understanding linguistic authority in digital globalization (Bourdieu, 1991). English is an ideological placeholder that stabilizes semiotic experimentation, not a precise language. Multimodal creation in monolingual English balances brand coherence (linguistic consistency) and audience diversity (semiotic heterogeneity) for global enterprises. This challenges sociolinguistic binaries of global and local: globality is enacted locally through multimodal cues (cultural framing, regional aesthetics) and locality worldwide through common linguistic medium (Piller, 2003). Globalization's paradox is illustrated by the communicative system's equilibrium: as the medium becomes more linguistically uniform, the message must become more semiotically diverse to sustain audience engagement across cultural boundaries (Holborow, 2015).

## Conclusion

This study examined purposeful monolingualism in thirty worldwide technological keynotes by Apple, Google, and Samsung (2020–2024) to show how linguistic consistency paradoxically promotes global inclusiveness. English-only delivery uses pragmatic intensification and multimodal orchestration to unite audiences, replacing code-switching's solidarity, comprehension, and identity negotiation.

Three key patterns stood out. Monolingual keynotes exhibit systematic discourse marker intensification, with frequencies of direct address (4.7-6.1 instances/minute) and inclusive pronouns (3.3-4.3/minute) exceeding conversational and academic norms, while hedging remains low (<0.3/minute), promoting confidence politeness and group celebration over deference. Second, demonstrations (90–100%) and accessibility tracks (100%) are used consistently in multimodal compensation. Brands use music and culture to stand out. Third,

strategic monolingualism is ideological and measures technical progress, global prestige, and brand coherence.

Our findings expand Communication Accommodation Theory to include multimodal accommodation, recontextualize Politeness Theory for institutional settings, reinterpret the Markedness Model for organizational monolingualism, and establish the semiotic balancing principle. The findings show that multimodal accommodation skills are essential professional competencies and inform English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education and business communication strategy. Four shortcomings are noted in this study. Three US-based corporations limit generalizability. Analysis focuses on output, not reception. Pandemic forms dominate the timeline. Fine-grained prosodic analysis is unclear. Future study should include cross-industry patterns, audience reception, virtual versus physical media, and non-linguistic convergence.

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