

Start-up Pitches: Search Terms

Description/Context: This was for a presentations class. Students were to prepare a start-up pitch for a company they had an idea for. Start-up pitch decks have a set of standard slides and are relatively short. **Level:** CEFR: B2; **Possible Application:** This activity was for 1. how to learn new words (vocabulary acquisition); 2. how to find and evaluate information about communication norms, and 3. also how to build a collection of trusted resources, such as dictionaries/translation sites. This activity was grounded in the idea that students will encounter many different types of presentations in the next 5-10 years, so learning how to find and access the norms for a particular context is an overarching skill that would prepare them, whatever their career path. In all types of communication, there are different genres and contextual norms, so widely applicable.

Vocabulary: *Start-up Pitch* was a term many were unfamiliar with. This emerged in the class before. So first we learned the vocabulary and independent vocabulary learning skills. **Activity:**

1. Students search for the definition/explanation and select which ones they thought were accurate. (Homework before class)
2. Review homework submissions on day 1 in a PowerPoint. (10 slides, I am happy to share those slides if you send me an email.) Most definitions they found were inaccurate, excepting for weblio which was excellent.
3. I then introduce two websites I use:
<https://www.linguee.com/english-japanese/search?source=auto&query=start-up>
<https://context.reverso.net/translation/english-japanese/start-up> (note that definitions go from most common to least)
4. In small groups, students discuss the different meanings of the word (for example to start up a computer) and which are most likely.
5. They then search for the word on 'all', 'news', 'videos' and 'images' and find additional points of reference. This approach ensures multimodal input and something like the timed repetition of vocabulary learning but grounded in context. I share examples (5 slides)
6. We do the same for 'pitch' and look at collocations like 'sales pitch' and 'elevator pitch'. (Another set of slides)

Genre norms: At the start of the class, we had looked at various types of presentations and they had seen how varied they were for style, components, and visuals. For the first unit before this one, I explicitly gave them the norms for an 'about me' or 'about our team' slide and they reproduced it. For this unit they had a very scaffolded, step-by-step lesson in discovering norms on their own. **Activity:**

1. Students record the search terms that they use to find information and determine which they think are more helpful for making a start-up pitch deck, grading the site A-F. (homework)
2. In class, we go over these on PowerPoint (10+ slides). When the query results page appears, we discuss whether it's worth clicking on or not. I point out that many of the .com sites are looking to sell pitch deck design services, so how to quickly weed those out. For the examples that students found below, I asked who had heard of Ycombinator and none had. I point out that this is where reading news in English would be helpful, because then they would know this is a foundational tech incubator. While the video that a student found was rated a C, it was more because it was more for the idea formulation stage. The site had another page for the components, visuals, and tone.
3. As we go through the various websites, I put up my questions/comments so they can see how I evaluated their finds (see below in bold italics). We discuss the noticeably different results (from 1 student) that used Japanese search terms and Japanese websites.
4. We compile a list of the requisite components and other 'how to advice'.
5. Students are assigned to 4 teams to watch real startup pitches and identify/discuss how closely they adhere to the advice.

Start-up Pitches, Search Terms

Directions: Search for information on start-up pitches

Finding **good** information on your own

1. Search **in English, as well as Japanese** (Is the advice different by language? This is where cultural differences are apparent)
2. Certain **types of websites** are more likely to have good information. Our earlier examples on emailing a professor showed that sites ending in **[.edu] or [.org]** were usually better than those that were private [.com]. But there were a few good [.com] ones. Learning which websites are authoritative and using them to find other information will help you find other information in the future.
3. Knowing what is “good” often requires **someone with credibility** telling you at first. Someone with credibility might be a teacher (but is it their area of expertise?), someone who works in that area [are they a leader/expert/have experience or someone just starting out?]. Remember a lot of that information you found for emailing a professor was inaccurate. Building this discernment of who to trust for information is another key point.

Search term	Website you looked at	Grade (A to F)	Advice

Example

Search term	Website you looked at	Grade (A to F)	Advice
Startup pitch presentation technique	https://99designs.com/blog/business/free-pitch-deck-template/	A A Basic	Detailed phrasing techniques and speaking tips. Who is author? Deanna Bray. Who is she? Should you trust her? Search and see what you think.
How to make start up pitch	https://www.ycombinator.com/library/6q-how-to-pitch-your-startup	C C page A site	Idea for start up pitch. Y Combinator is maybe one of the most famous 'accelerators'. See the links on the right.
what is startup pitch	https://www.pitchskills.com/what-is-a-startup-pitch/	C D	I felt that I included advertising. Is reliability a low site? Agreed. Too much advertising and you have to click through more pages to get to more information. Nothing original. No expert advice.
Startup presentation tips	https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/10-steps-perfect-your-startup-pitch	A A+	This said speak alone or tell your story. Others say team. Not all experts agree! I liked: 1. no questions until the end; 2. 10/20/30 rule; 3. Answer the little man; 4. Take notes.