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Verbal and nonverbal means of persuasiveness in business presentations

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Вербальные и невербальные средства убедительности в бизнес-презентациях

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Abstract. To attract a potential customer a presenter should be capable of mastering verbal and nonverbal communication tools. To increase sales, speaker has to use all accessible means in the best way in order to grab customers' attention and get them to purchase new product. The article investigates interconnections between verbal and nonverbal means for achieving persuasiveness in business presentations. The aim is to analyze the use and connection of verbal and nonverbal means in business presentations performed by one of the most outstanding speakers Mr. Steve Jobs. The conducted analyses showed that effective verbal (stylistic devices, powerful language, lexical diversity) and nonverbal means (posture, gestures, eye contact, clothing, voice and pause) are important in business presentations to achieve persuasiveness.

Keywords: verbal means; nonverbal means; business presentation skills; persuasiveness

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Аннотация. Овладение вербальными и невербальными средствами коммуникации позволяет выступающему привлечь потенциального клиента. Для увеличения продаж говорящий должен прибегать ко всем доступным средствам, чтобы клиент обратил свое внимание на новый продукт и купил его. Исследована взаимосвязь между вербальными и невербальными средствами коммуникации для достижения убедительности в бизнес-коммуникации. Целью является проанализировать использование и взаимосвязь между вербальными и невербальными средствами в бизнес-коммуникации на примере выступления одного из выдающихся ораторов Стива Джобса. По результатам проведенного анализа эффективные вербальные (стилистические приемы, эмоционально-окрашенная лексика, лексическое разнообразие) и невербальные (поза, жестикуляция, визуальный контакт, стиль в одежде, голосовые характеристики и расстановка пауз) средства коммуникации играют важную роль в достижении такой цели, как убедительность.

Ключевые слова: вербальные средства; невербальные средства; навыки проведения бизнес-презентаций; убедительность

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BUSINESS PRESENTATION, ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND GOALS

Nowadays, public speaking and business presentations are used for the purpose of conveying ideas and concepts. Presentation is a way of communication between businesses, associations and educational institutions. They provide an opportunity to share a great deal of information in a very short time [1, p. 125].

As a particular type of communication, business presentations were studied by J. Kupsh and P.R. Graves [1], A. Jay and R. Jay [2], A. Bradbury [3], S. Siddons [4], A. Kaul [5], C. Gallo [6], M. Agarwal [7], V. Shalini [8] and others.

A clear understanding of what has to be achieved is the most important point in providing business presentations. The purpose may be to persuade, to inform or to impel listeners to some actions. Therefore, as E.M. Guffey, K. Rhodes and P. Rogin state: 'Whether your goal is to persuade or to inform, you must have a clear idea of where are you going. At the end of your presentation, what do you want your listeners to remember or do?' [9, p. 376].

However, the purpose of presentation depends also on an audience that is why a speaker needs to know it: number of people, gender, age, professional level, etc. Martin John Yate and Peter Sander claim that 'you will not reach your goal unless you understand the people that you want to influence' [10; 11]. Thus, one of the most important aspects is to find the needs of an audience.

Public communication (or public speaking) as a rule 'tends to be formal, structured and planned', its purpose usually is to 'inform or persuade', as well as 'entertain, introduce, announce, welcome or pay tribute' [11, p. 21].

The first thing in oral presentation has to be taken into consideration is *persuasiveness*. According to M. Agarwal, 'business messages frequently persuade employers, customers or clients to purchase a product or service or adopt a plan of action. To be effective, persuasive

messages must show readers or listeners just how a product, service or idea will benefit them specially' [7, p. 99]. S.K. Ridgley agrees on this issue: 'In business presentations your purpose is always to persuade. This is the case 95 per cent of the time. In short, you want your audience to do something. Your presentation must persuade the audience to do something and explicitly call them to act' [12, p. 30].

As we are discussing persuasive presentation for achieving its purpose, there are formulated requirements to the message sent to listeners what has to be done for achieving persuasiveness:

- 1) it must bring to audience a new way of thinking;
- 2) the audience must be involved in the story and its result;
- 3) it must have an effect on their decision making;
- 4) it must have a call for an action by explaining the weaknesses and logical ways and destinations [13].

The structure is the second important part of a presentation which helps to transfer the message to an audience. According to W. Hackenberg, C. Leminsky, and E. Schulz-Wolffgramm, 'The anatomy of the presentation is internal structure of primary importance' [14, p. 20]. Ideas have to be structured in an absolutely logical way. Terms and phrases need to be chosen and formulated with accuracy. S. Weinschenk also shares such opinion: 'a good presenter must structure the presentation so that people will feel that they are making small steps to mastery along the way and how they are succeeding on the way to goals' [15].

To sum up, we may say that a well-prepared and persuasive presentation can have an incredibly strong impact on an audience. By practicing and careful preparation one can achieve excellent results; 'however there are more than a few points that can help to make a good quality presentation even for beginners. The first thing to study is the verbal content of the presentation itself' [6, p. 3].

VERBAL AND NONVERBAL MEANS OF PERSUASIVENESS

Communication is an important aspect in a society as it serves as a bridge between each individual enabling them to transfer and receive information and valuable knowledge. According to M. Agarwal 'the purpose of communication (i. e. inform, instruct or persuade) and also the role we play (i. e. a boss or a junior member) influence our choice of channel' [7, p. 3].

All human beings communicate on two levels: verbally and nonverbally. 'Communication with words is called verbal communication which can be written or oral.' However, nonverbal communication consists of 'physical gestures, facial expressions and other nonverbal cues' [7, p. 6]. Scientists point out the importance of the last one: nonverbal means can represent the most part of human overall message [16].

Both types of communication play a crucial role in business presentation for persuasiveness to achieve its goal. Verbal communication contributes significantly in business presentations. As R. Kipling says 'Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind' [cited in 17: chapter 1]. Words in business can be used to inspire or to influence, motivate or persuade. To make presentation persuasive a speaker has to use 'emphatic' and 'powerful language' to reason an audience [18, p. 1123]. Emphatic language refers to verbal means which make speech powerful and underline certain ideas. To make a powerful speech it is needed to use 'lexical diversity', which is a significant part of persuasion. Lexical diversity refers to 'the range of different words used in a text, with a greater range indicating a higher diversity' [19, p. 381]. In other words, a speaker has to strive to give the speech which avoids that sort of repetition, and instead uses different vocabulary for the same ideas. Moreover, listeners prefer diversity of lexis because it is more interesting to listen [20, p. 375].

As a rule, to make speech efficient presenters with high power of persuasion use 'figurative language', also called 'stylistic devices'. In addition, these tools make speech more interesting, attractive and unforgettable. Stylistic devices are the verbal means that make a language richer and more 'saturated'. I. Galperin defines stylistic devices as 'the special media of lan-

guage which secure the desirable effect of the utterance' [21, c. 9]. One of the most used stylistic devices to persuade an audience is a metaphor. I. Galperin states that metaphor 'means transference of some quality from one object to another. Metaphor creates an influential image in one's mind' [21, c. 139]. One can achieve communicative purposefulness by using right metaphors in presentations; it makes speech more powerful and persuasive.

Another powerful tool is 'repetition'. C.L. Griffin states that repetitions are 'repeated keywords or phrases at the beginnings or endings of the sentences or clauses to create a rhythm' [22, p. 184]. This is an important tool for a presenter to make a presentation memorable for an audience. Therefore, an audience memorizes the main idea and certain aspects.

Apart from spoken words in verbal communication, the voice itself has an impact. Vocalics is an essential element in business presentations as well. It consists of such aspects of voice as tone or pitch, rate and volume. The meaning of a message might be changed by use of different tones or pitches. According to M. Argyle 'changes of pitch can also be used to accent particular words, though this is usually done by loudness.' [23, p. 151]. While a presenter is speaking, an audience interprets not only words but also the elements of voice. A. Sethi, B. Adhakari in the book '*Business Communication*' explains pitch as: 'the highness or lowness of your voice'. While speaking the pitch of a presenter must be 'varied'. Lack of pitch can seem to an audience monotone and they can lose the interest to the topic [24, p. 218].

Another nonverbal mean, which is concerned with vocalics, is volume. A. Sethi, B. Adhakari explains volume of speech as: 'the intensity of your voice is another characteristic of your voice that leaves considerable impact on the audience. The presenter's 'voice level' should be adapted to the 'size of the audience and the room' [24, p. 218]. In business presentations the volume of speech plays also an important role for achieving persuasiveness. According to A. Mehrabian 'speech volume has previously been found to indicate a more dominant and self-assured feeling.' Moreover, speech volume indicates the loudness of the voice [25, p. 102].

To conclude it is necessary for a speaker to know how to modulate the aspects of vocalics properly, in order to persuade listeners and achieve the communicative purposefulness.

Body language is a significant part of human communication. While interacting humans use body language to send nonverbal signs which are encoded automatically. M. Argyle, one of the best-known British social psychologists, has proposed the following definition: 'Nonverbal communication, or bodily communication, takes place whenever one person influences another by means of facial expressions, tone of voice, or any of the other channels' [23, p. 2].

The first point in nonverbal means to take into account is the posture of a presenter. It is the first thing that an audience notices. The posture refers to the way how a presenter sits or stands. A straight posture shows the confidence and complete control of a presenter. A. Sethi and B. Adhakari advise to avoid the 'casual posture'. It reflects an attitude of carelessness [24, p. 219]. Sri J. Kushal and S. Ahuja in the book 'Business Communication' suggest that presenters should 'keep body erected without appearing stiff, and comfortable without appearing limp' [26, p. 121]. In that way the posture signals importance and credibility of a presenter.

The most expressive part of the face in communication is eyes. They have considerable effect on communication. Eye contact is the way how a presenter could keep the contact with audience. By maintaining eye contact with audience the speaker will be considered as 'interested in the audience' and their opinion. Otherwise, speaker's lack of eye contact may cause the listener to interpret the message less favorably [27, p. 140]. Many researchers consider that without effective eye contact the presenter cannot reach the persuasiveness [28, p. 96].

The next nonverbal means are clothing and personal appearance. By the presenter's appearance an audience can determine his/her 'status', 'credibility' and 'persuasiveness'. C. Hamilton says: 'when a presenter or professor walks in front of an audience, most people have already decided what kind of person and speaker he or she is before a word is spoken just by what is seen nonverbally' [27, p. 146]. However, to determine why the personal appearance is important in presentations, it is needed to understand that people 'see' before 'hear' and 'have already

formed perception' (ibid). Consequently, after audience see the appearance of a presenter, they hear his/her voice which is also determined as nonverbal communication.

One more nonverbal mean is gesticulation or kinesics. Kinesics is the widest 'subcategory' of nonverbal communication as it refers to all body movements [29, p. 159]. However, J.W. Neuliep adds that kinesics 'consists of the use of the hands, arms, legs, and face to send messages' [30, p. 286]. Gestures may enhance the speech in many ways, for example, to clarify and support the words, dramatize ideas, emphasize the words, function as a visual aid and stimulate the audience's response. By using right gestures a presenter gives power to the sent message and emphasizes the ideas in order to persuade audience.

To sum up, both verbal and nonverbal means are very important when one tries to inform and persuade an audience during business presentations. Therefore, in the empirical research we analyze the use of verbal means and their interplay with nonverbal means in order to determine the achievement of persuasiveness.

ANALYSIS OF STEVE JOBS' BUSINESS PRESENTATION

The first presentation of the former Apple CEO Steve Jobs was examined as a material for the research. It took place during the iPad 2 – Apple Special Event on March 2, 2011. The total duration of studied video is 59 minutes 43 seconds¹.

Aforementioned speaker was chosen for the analysis based on the following criteria: the speech is considered to be up-to-date and the speaker is well-known in his industry, recognized to be an authority. According to the opinion of Forbes contributor C. Gallo: 'Steve Jobs is still the world's greatest corporate storyteller' [6, p. 1]. Steve Jobs' presentation skills have inspired people all over the world and also many experienced presenters. In addition, another Forbes contributor K. Krogue in his article 'Great Presentations: Tips from Great Presenters' mentioned Steve Jobs as an effective presenter [31].

¹ Steve Jobs introduces iPad 2 – Apple Special Event (2011). URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3zl7hJfbzU> (accessed: 17.09.2019).

First, in order to make conclusion about persuasiveness of his presentation, we have analyzed nonverbal means that Mr. Jobs had used during his presentation as well as the connection between nonverbal and verbal messages.

As noticed, Mr. Jobs is referred as a confident presenter. According to R. Anthony and B. Boyd the posture that is 'squared and not hunched' signalizes that the presenter is relaxed and comfortable [28, p. 102]. Mr. Jobs' posture was 'straight and 'alive' that shows he was confident in sharing his message with the audience. Moreover, Mr. Jobs was dressed in a black long-sleeve crew neck shirt which was tucked in his jeans. The sleeves of the shirt were rolled up. Mr. Jobs' might have selected this clothing style because it was comfortable, looked simple and it made him look equal to the audience. It gives an impression to the audience 'we are alike and you can trust me, I look like you, and you can trust me'. The most important thing thing is that Mr. Jobs outfit did not distract from the message he sent.

The next point to analyze is Mr. Jobs' eye contact with the audience. As C. Hamilton underlines, in order to get the audience's attention, it's important for the presenter to have a smile on the face with a right eye contact. This helps presenter to persuade an audience [27, p. 141]. When Steve Jobs entered onto the stage, he walked with a confident posture, a smile on his face and an eye contact with the audience. During his presentation he always tried not to lose the eye contact with the audience. First, he made a joke and maintained eye contact with the audience from the left side, then from the right side (0:44–0:54). Moreover, even when Mr. Jobs showed the first slide, he tried not to look at it, but at his audience. He did not have any notes in his hand: what he did was telling information and while keeping eye contact with the audience, getting reaction from them (1:08–1:16). This way he gained trust and interest of the audience in the topic.

With regards to the gestures gestures, they were diverse and attention-grabbing. It can be illustrated by the following words: '2010 turned out to be the year of the Ipad' (4:56–5:03). By making a fist and bringing it strongly down on the palm of his hand, he used emphatic gesture to show strong feelings and to make the message more clear and interesting. However, another

gesture is transitional, when Mr. Jobs used his fingers to list out the features that he added to Ipad (20:03–20:10). The next gesture that he used is descriptive. For instance, when he said: 'and we made it thinner', he started to show with both hands the size of a product (20:10–20:15). However, the last gesture that we considers clear and interesting is a locative gesture. For example, when Mr. Jobs said: 'this idea of using magnets that grasp it and auto align it', he pointed his finger towards the audience to make them think about this exact idea (26:36–26:41). Moreover, he used a lot of open palm gestures to show his honesty and openness to the audience.

As we talk about the structure of the presentation, it consisted of the introduction and the body. According to C.L. Bovee and J. Thill, the business presenter should summarize the main ideas, classify the major objectives. He/she should make the audience to understand and follow the major points and relate them to the overall topic [32, p. 473]. Mr. Jobs defined the boundaries of the presentation, saying 'We got something great to announce today, before we get to it I have got a few updates for you, the first thing I would like to talk about is Mac-Book' (0:55–1:03). Mr. Jobs followed his plan, opening and closing each of sections with words, and making clear transitions between them.

In the introduction Mr. Jobs attracted the audience's attention introducing MacBook, App store and Ipad, and it was enough for him to add images, short sentences and numbers to arouse the audience's interest to the presentation and its topic (3:39–4:07). In the body of the speech Mr. Jobs spoke about the uniqueness and quality of the Apple, and also about statistics of Apple products sold, by presenting simply images and numbers on the slides.

Speaking about language means for powerful speech style, Mr. Jobs used metaphors to emphasize the success of their product.

'Legendary ten hours battery life'

'It is a smart cover'

'It is dramatically thinner'

'Incredible and magical user interface'

Besides, he used specific powerful words/phrases with repetitions to emphasize the product benefits so that the audience would remember. Mr. Jobs showed his passion for computer design therefore during his presentation,

he used words like: 'beautiful', 'cool', 'simple', 'great', 'smart'. Moreover, there are some examples of how Mr. Jobs described the product with powerful words and phrases:

'I would love to show you'

'It is got an all new design, it's just beautiful'

'And we think 2011 gonna be the year of Ipad 2'

'We got some really cool accessories'

'It is really simple, works great and it's just 39\$'

'We have got great accessory.'

'For the original Ipad we did a case, the case is pretty cool.'

In order to be effective, Mr. Job's persuasive messages showed audience how a product benefitted them personally. There are some examples of product advantages given by Mr. Jobs:

'You can remove it in a second'

'You can add it in a second'

He continued by telling what people actually can do with this product by using such adjectives as 'faster', 'lighter', 'thinner' to emphasize better quality of new product. All in all, Mr. Jobs' powerful phrases and words demonstrated that he was a passionate enthusiastic presenter. He strongly believed that Apple could create products and introduced them in a way that made people believe it would help to reach their dreams.

While the presenter speaks the audience interprets not only words but also the elements of voice. We found out changes in the pitch of the Mr. Jobs' voice. Changes in the pitch of Mr. Jobs indicated either emphasis on a specific word at the beginning of a new thought. Furthermore, we have registered examples when the pitch of Mr. Jobs' voice rose noticeably:

[*pitch rises*] 'Everybody has got a tablet.' (15:04)

[*pitch rises*] 'And it's got an all new design, it's just beautiful.' (18:59)

'And [*pitch rises*] that is iPad 2. [*pitch falls*]' (23:00)

Moreover, we also noted some examples of the pitch of Mr. Jobs' voice fell.

'It's a smart [*pitch falls*] cover' (25:43)

'The polyurethane cases are 39 [*pitch rises*] dollars... the leather cases are 69 [*pitch falls*] dollars.' (29:10)

The use of the lower pitches almost always occurred at the end of the sentences.

However, the rate of Mr. Jobs' speech was normal that is from 80 and 160 words per minute. It was easy to follow and understand every word that he said.

The significant element of rate is pause. According to A. Sethi and B. Adhakari by using pause a presenter delivers a speech with the emphasis on certain parts. It gives time for presenter to 'collect thoughts' [24, p. 218]. Furthermore, the author has observed some examples of short unfilled pauses and some examples of long unfilled pauses. Short unfilled pauses are up to 1 second, and long unfilled pauses are 1 second and longer:

'And the first thing is. <...>' (15:57)

'Black and white, <...> black or white here.' (19:34)

'Now, in addition to preserving the battery life. <...>' (20:55)

'So, <...>' (15:42)

'Second <...>' (17:06)

'Not a little bit thinner <...>' (17:48)

It is clear that Mr. Jobs was a professional public speaker and he knew the best way to achieve persuasiveness in business presentations. All in all, the speech was powerful with a diverse and powerful language. In addition, he used several visual aids to emphasize ideas; even without them the presentation would have been effective as well. This is a great example of how business presentations should look like.

From the observations listed above, it can be concluded that Mr. Jobs had confidently managed to combine the verbal and nonverbal means in order to make his presentation persuasive. He made a powerful impression on the audience and it raised the interest in the products he introduced during the business presentations. It could be judged by the sales statistics increasing from 11.12 million to 15.43 million units sold.

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