

LINGUISTIC AND PARALINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES OF BUSINESS PITCHES

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Persuasive communication is the essence of a successful business. Within the scopes of business communication, business pitch, in its widest meaning, is an oral presentation of a unique concept, innovative idea, product, service with an intent to be sold to customers, get funding from potential investors, launch new collaborations, etc. The evolving culture of business pitching has become quite popular thanks to entrepreneurial investing reality shows, such as “Shark Tank”, “Dragon’s Den”, etc. The analysis of pitching performances reveals that strategic use of linguistic and paralinguistic features can greatly impact the persuasion and decision-making process. The aim of the article is to highlight some of the main linguistic and paralinguistic peculiarities from mentioned famous realities.

Keywords: linguistics, business communication, business pitch, persuasion, linguistic features, paralinguistic features.

Persuasive communication is the ability to convince others of your way of thinking. From the perspectives of linguistics, persuasion may be defined as those linguistic choices that aim at changing or affecting the behavior of others or strengthening the existing beliefs and behaviors of those who already agree [1].

The types of communication used within different business organizations or firms may cause some complexities. Various factors can contribute to the ways in which business people use language in order to reach their specific goals. A variety of distinct fields and disciplines have shaped business discourse, including discourse analysis, dialogue analysis, ethnography, genre theory and organizational communication. In conjunction with extra-linguistic contexts, business discourse can be defined as the verbalization of business

mentality, realized in the form of an open multitude of thematically linked texts on a wide range of business issues [2].

From the latter follows, that business discourse in its turn may also have its functional sub-classifications, such as entrepreneurship discourse: contexts about starting a venture, acquiring funding, selling, scaling, also in relevance with management, financing economics, marketing, etc. Within verbal forms of communication, one format, used by the greater part of incubation schemes, investment gatherings and entrepreneurship competitions has appeared as the “industry standard” in recent years: a 5-to-10-minute entrepreneurial pitch in which the entrepreneur narrates a range of slides, providing an outline of the business plan to potential investors [3]. In the world of business pitching, the final decision-making part is influenced by various factors – from the personality of the pitch-maker to the prospect’s sense of how well he or she understands the idea and empathizes with their needs. Bridging the gap between developing a solution and delivering that solution to an audience depends on the effectiveness and persuasiveness of the business pitches.

Nowadays entrepreneurs are given a chance to choose any platform out of a variety of entrepreneurial venues in which they are able to meet investors, business angel networks, institutional or corporate venture capitalists and pitch their ideas, get support. Different venues may require different approaches. For the pitch to be persuasive and successful, first of all it must be engaging, informative, compelling. One should convince the prospects of both the viability of the business idea and personal business acumen. For this to happen, most importantly a business pitch should have a clearly defined structure. In most cases investors and business angels reject investment opportunities because of presentational weaknesses concerning clarity, content and structure of the pitches. Along with these points, it is worthwhile to know that specific use of language and paralinguistic aspects may have a huge impact on the credibility and persuasiveness of a pitch. For this reason, this article provides several linguistic and paralinguistic aspects on designing the components of business pitches.

For the purpose of this study a mix of successful business pitches have been analyzed. The samples have been taken from the two most popular entrepreneurial TV programs, reality shows Dragon’s Den and Shark Tank [4-5].

The selection of **grammatical structures** is an essential aspect to consider while organizing the pitch. The use of sentences as the smallest unit does

present some difficulties. The issue is that, generally, presenters do not naturally speak in formal sentences. Spoken language is abundant with false starts, abrupt stops, cropped sentences, and a number of grammatical problems that would otherwise be forbidden in formal written circumstances. Research suggests that spoken language is produced in units that rely less on syntactic closure and more with intonational and semantic closure. When only considering spoken language, language would be more likely viewed in terms of intonation units which are reflective of the “underlying focuses of consciousness” that are used to compile and organize information, rather than underlying the grammatical structure [6].

Taking into account the different types of **sentence constructions** (simple, compound, complex and compound-complex) used by the pitch-makers, it is also worthwhile to imply the possible issues that might occur while uttering the speech. The pitch-makers may have written a more organized and well-constructed pitch before appearing on the stage, but in spoken language, also considering the intensity of the moment, they can make not only semantic but also structural errors. For example, leave the sentence incomplete or utter some uncompleted 25 thoughts. Such cases often occur on non-professional platforms. But these errors are being veiled by good charisma, enthusiasm and flexibility of the pitch-maker. Without deviating from the main discussion, it is essential to mention that one way to make the written pitch clearer is to limit the use of long sentences. And the easiest way to do so, one should divide them into two or more shorter sentences. Short sentences are considered to be more powerful and appealing, and their use should not be underestimated.

Sentence patterning is the next aspect to be discussed in the scope of language specifics of business pitches. Sentence patterns can be recognized as the way sentences are usually structured. The basic sentence pattern in English is followed by subject-verb-object (**SVO**). Accordingly, it should be stated that the prevailing part of business pitches, which are pitched in English, follow the SVO sequence. However, when all sentences of the pitch follow this sequence, it becomes monotonous and dull. To make the sentence a bit interactive, entrepreneurs use different nouns meaning the same subject, or the subject which is used in the beginning may be replaced by adverb, verb, adjective, gerund, infinitive, etc. Here is a simple example retrieved from Den’s show for skincare business Tan Cream by entrepreneurs Gillian Robson and Katy Foxcroft’s:

“This protection is the ultimate safe way to tan”.

“Our product safes your skin”.

“Tan Cream cleverly combines the SPF of 50 with gradual and natural self-tan in a luxurious everyday moisturizer for your face and body [4-5].

In the above mentioned examples, it is outlined how the subject of the sentence can be replaced by new nouns. In this way, the pitch-maker does his best to keep the audience’s attention and avoids using the same noun for the “cream” product replacing it with the words such as “this protection”, “our product”, “Tan Cream”.

Proceeding to **parts of speech**, the next essential aspect to be considered. The analysis of the language used in business pitches in accordance with part of speech uncovers some interesting results. According to the entrepreneurial and management study carried out by Daly and Davy, a fundamental role in entrepreneurial pitches is played by adverbials. The frequent ones are “basically”, “now”, “essentially”, “effectively”, “actually”, “additionally”, “in effect”, “hopefully”, “first of all”, “as it were”, “then”, “obviously”, “therefore”, “in summary” and “in conclusion”. These attain an essential signaling function and help to structure the discourse for both the pitch-maker and prospects [7].

Regarding **pronouns**, personal pronouns are prevailing in business pitches. Pitch-makers mostly employ the first person “I”, “me”, “my” at the beginning, but “we”, “our” and “us” in the middle sections when referring to their company, product or service. Most commonly they begin with “I” and finish with “we”, whereas other pitch-makers use only the first person singular forms, taking into consideration that they are individual entrepreneurs, without a company or any shareholders. Some of them use “we” inclusively meaning the cooperation between their company and investors: to show they are ready to create a team and work collaboratively. “You” is mainly used to address the prospects, with one fancy example of the plural form “yourselves”, perhaps to accentuate that a particular aspect is addressed to all the investors and not just one of them. Without any doubt “you” may also be employed when addressing a typical person, in this way avoiding using the neutral “one” [7].

With the help of these ‘You’ statements, entrepreneurs describe what the product can give people or what they can get, when sharks and dragons invest in the business. For example:

“This is Intelliweed: one simple click and your weeds are dead. So you can target with absolute precision what it is you want to kill and what it is you don’t want to kill”.

“Sharks, as you know there are heaps of mannequins available, but surprisingly there was none that functioned and articulated like a real baby. None that requires you to support the head or allows you to practice the realistic handling and positioning of a newborn”[4-5].

Instead of ‘you’, they could use ‘anyone’ or ‘one’, but with this method the founders of these small businesses make the investors to be a part of the “experience” and feel as if this product or service is exactly designed for them.

Lexical selection or word choice in business pitches is manifested in a relatively simple way. Pitch-makers avoid using vague words or phrases. Rather, they use simple and high-frequency vocabulary. Although there are a number of entrepreneurs who include some technical lexical domains, when they share details on how their service or product works. The use of stylistic devices, in other words **creative use of language** greatly contributes to the effectiveness of the business pitch. These stylistic devices are mainly employed when presenting arguments. Some of the most effective ones that entrepreneurs include are metaphors, anaphora, hyperbole, simile, epithet, etc. For example:

Hi my name is Will, and I’m the heart of Mak Tok (Metaphor).

And together, let’s bring Mak Tok to every kitchen and every heart across the world (Hyperbole).

“When it was finally ready, he took it to a house party and at that party it became the centerpiece. Everyone wanted to try it, everyone wanted to know about it, but most importantly everyone actually really liked it. So, we sat down and we chatted and we realized there were certain barriers stopping people doing this” (Anaphora) [4-5].

As described, the specific use of language greatly influences the persuasiveness and effectiveness of the further investment part. Moreover, the features of paralanguage and non-verbal communication should also be highlighted. In their turn, they play a major role in persuasive communication and the analysis of several business pitches prove the hypothesis.

Much is known about **paralanguage**, which is defined in Merriam-Webster Dictionary as the combination of optional vocal effects (such as tone of voice) that accompany or modify the phonemes of an utterance and that may communicate meaning. Whenever uttering the words or sentences,

entrepreneurs can also modulate their paralinguistic, or in other words, acoustic properties of their utterance such as the pitch or volume. They can speak in a loud or soft voice, use a high or low pitch, and a plenty of other vocal features. The general paralinguistic features included **voice quality**, which refers to such characteristics as nasality-denasality (speaking through nose), breathiness and hoarseness (when the vocal cords cannot vibrate as smoothly as they normally do), as well as a number of other factors. Entrepreneurs paid special attention to their voice quality and **volume cues** while pitching. The latter refers to the relative intensity of the voice, such as loudness or softness of the voice. There are some cases when entrepreneurs pitch in a very loud voice or in a very low voice, for which the audience may get tired. The entrepreneurs should differentiate ranges and levels of the voice pitch. The starting point of every phono passage is the highest, then gradually diminishes towards the end. In this way they avoid delivering their pitch in a monotonous way.

Obviously, **the rate of the voice** should flow naturally and effectively. Rate refers to the speed with which entrepreneurs speak. Speaking too fast or too slow or with too little variations are the main problems of the rate. Pauses or voice brakes are very essential from the perspective of psychology. This lets the entrepreneurs have a strong psychological influence on the prospects' attention. The rhythm of entrepreneurs' pitch should be properly organized. It is vital for having a great pleasant voice. The effect of strict rhythmicity is very important for not sounding choppy.

To conclude, the growing significance of entrepreneurship and innovation for business prosperity and economic growth has given a birth to a brand-new genre that nowadays is almost widespread: it is business pitching. The observations that have been conducted in this article led us to find out how pitch-makers combine verbal and nonverbal communication means within the pitching process, in order to succeed in receiving investment offers from the prospects.

The examples of successful business pitches from the famous entrepreneurial TV shows Dragon's Den and Shark Tank that have been analyzed for the purpose of this article show that the linguistic and paralinguistic aspects covered here assist the entrepreneurs to reach their ultimate goals, that is to make a deal with investors.

**ՀԱՎԻՐՃ ԳՈՐԾԱՐԱՐ ՆԵՐԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՄՆԵՐԻ ԼԵԶՎԱԿԱՆ ԵՎ
ՀԱՐԱԼԵԶՎԱԿԱՆ ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ
Չալոյան Հ. Ս.**

Համոզիչ հաղորդակցությունը չափազանց կարևոր տեղ է զբաղեցնում հաջողված բիզնեսներում: Գործարար հաղորդակցման տեսանկյունից հակիրճ գործարար ներկայացումն այն յուրահատուկ և նորարար գաղափարների, որն է արտադրանքի կամ ծառայության բանավոր ներկայացումն է, որի նպատակն է շատ վաճառքներ գրանցել, նոր ներդրումներ ներգրավել, ֆինանսավորում ստանալ հնարավոր ներդրողներից, նոր համագործակցություններ խթանել և այլն: Հակիրճ գործարար ներկայացումների անընդհատ զարգացող մշակույթը հայտնի է դարձել ձեռնարկատիրական ներդրումային ռեալիթի շոուների շնորհիվ, ինչպիսիք են «Shark Tank», «Dragon's Den» և այլն: Այդ հակիրճ գործարար ներկայացումների վերլուծությունները ցույց են տալիս, որ լեզվական և հարալեզվական առանձնահատկությունների կիրառումը կարող է մեծապես ազդել համոզելու և որոշումներ կայացնելու գործընթացի վրա: Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է հայտնի ձեռնարկատիրական ռեալիթի շոուներից վերցված օրինակների հիման վրա ընդգծել հիմնական լեզվաբանական և հարալեզվական առանձնահատկությունները, որոնք կարող են ազդել համոզման և գործարքներ կնքելու գործընթացի վրա :

Բանալի բառեր. լեզվաբանություն, գործարար հաղորդակցություն, հակիրճ գործարար ներկայացում, համոզում, լեզվական առանձնահատկություններ, հարալեզվական առանձնահատկություններ:

**ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ И ПАРАЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ
КОРОТКИХ БИЗНЕС-ПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЙ
Чалоян А. С.**

Убедительная коммуникация - основа успешного бизнеса. В рамках делового общения бизнес-питчинг - это устная презентация уникальной концепции, инновационной идеи, продукта, услуги с намерением их продать клиентам, получить финансирование от потенциальных инвесторов, начать новое сотрудничество и т.д. Развивающаяся культура бизнес-питчинга стала довольно популярной благодаря реалити-шоу о предпринимательском инвестировании, таким как «Shark Tank», «Dragon's

Dep» и т. д. Анализ выступлений в питчинге показывает, что стратегическое использование лингвистических и паралингвистических особенностей может сильно повлиять на процесс убеждения и принятия решений. Цель данной статьи - выделить некоторые из основных лингвистических и паралингвистических особенностей этих знаменитых реалии-шоу, которые могут способствовать процессу убеждения и выигрышу сделки.

Ключевые слова: лингвистика, деловое общение, бизнес-питчинг, убеждение, лингвистические особенности, паралингвистические особенности.

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