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CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

Under the conditions of market economy, business sphere is becoming the main area of professional activity for many people. Regardless of the fact that a lot of business activities have gone online, public speaking skills still remain an essential skill for effective performance. The era of globalization makes the issues related to cross-cultural communication of vital importance. Business contacts with foreign partners require knowledge of basic rules, ethical standards and business relations traditions that are based on some protocol, national, cultural and ethnic differences in styles and techniques of public speaking. Lack of such knowledge and interference of national stereotypes become the main barriers in doing international business. This determines the relevance of the topic of our research.

Sources analysis proves that despite wide coverage of the issue in research papers (by D. Börner, H. Hadiarni, M. Hum I. Paleha, M. Power, Dra. Rahmah, P. van Rosmalen, P. Sari, J. Schneider, M. Specht, Z. Zulhermindra, etc.), national and cultural peculiarities of public speaking appear to be unrevealed and acute.

The purpose of the research is to outline verbal and non-verbal peculiarities of public speaking in diverse cultures.

Public speaking is defined as the activity of speaking on a subject to a group of people [1]. It is aimed at achieving a specific goal, which may consist in informing, persuading, selling, entertaining etc. However, the overall purpose of any public speech is to attract the attention of the audience. If a speaker manages to keep the attention within the presentation due to his/her personality or the techniques he/she uses, the general goal is likely to be achieved. When it is not, one may think of the tough crowd.

Tough crowd is known to be the audience that is difficult to please. However, this notion can acquire a new sense when a speaker deals with the audience consisting of the representatives coming from different cultural backgrounds.

If a speaker is going to deliver a presentation to culturally diverse audience, he/she has to retain cultural knowledge that covers local customs and types of public presentations, which are admired in the community. Thorough study of the target audience contributes to the development of the successful presentation strategy and techniques. If you cannot get this information in advance, it is advisable to ask about the diversity of the group at the beginning of the presentation.

Awareness of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication is the key to promote efficient social interaction. We have investigated the above topic in three planes: cognitive, operational and reflexive.

Cognitive aspects enable creating a socio-cultural portrait of the target audience. They cover the analysis of the cultural background information in terms of the content and structure of the presentation, e.g. topics relevant to the audience, appropriate form of delivery, etc.

Operational aspects involve coherent manner of delivery, communicative patterns of verbal and non-verbal behavior of the target audience. Verbal elements include correct grammar, lexical and stylistic structures, effective use of expressive means (metaphor, rhetorical questions, allegory, hyperbole, etc.), relevant quotes, anecdotes, poems. Non-verbal elements reckon for speaking rate consistency and variability, powerful use of gestures, eye contact with the audience, speech etiquette in terms of encouraging discussion and feedback, dealing with cultural errors, the correct use of visual aids.

Reflexive aspects relate to prevention of communication failures and misunderstandings in the context of intercultural communication, empathy and tolerance, awareness of cultural diversity.

Let us illustrate and analyze the above-mentioned aspects. Most of us automatically assume that our cultural norms are universally upheld and are often left confused when people do not share our axioms. A simple overview of basic cultural assumptions would be enough to give you the knowledge you need to avoid most serious miscommunications. During speaking to an international audience (especially if speaker's words are being translated into other languages), it's wrong to use any of the language-specific tips such as alliteration, rhyme or puns as well as culturally-specific allusions or jargon. Unnecessary technical terms, geek-speak should be avoided, too. Direct or forceful language is often considered rude in many honor-system countries like those of the Far East [2]. The use of local words and phrases can be a sign of affection to the audience. They help to make a speaker closer to the audience. However, it is extremely important to be sure of their correct use and pronunciation not to get trapped.

Humor in public speaking can serve as a bridge to connect with the audience and can melt the ice. However, when it comes to the international audience, a speaker should realize that the reaction can be quite different for different cultures. On the contrary, it can have a negative effect and offend somebody accidentally or you might face a taboo topic of the country. For example, in Australia, public speaking break out sessions are called syndicates. If you were making a joke that used the word syndicate, you may totally confuse the audience and they won't laugh [3].

Thus, knowledge of cultural and ethnic characteristics of the audience is crucial to look professional when speaking in public as it helps to make the interaction effective.

REFERENCES

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