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INTRODUCING BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS TO NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

1. Introduction: Communication and BELF

In international business environments, the ability to communicate effectively is essential. Good communication skills help professionals to clinch deals, to sell more products and to enhance the economic stability of a firm. Professionals often admit that communicating a message is not a simple activity, as many elements take part in the process of sharing ideas, concepts and feelings within a business setting. Additionally, that difficulty is even higher when a professional has to use a foreign language to communicate. If learning a foreign language is a demanding activity, using it in a specific business setting can be something traumatic for a non-native speaker.

English has become the main language in most business settings, acting as the corporate language used by most multinational companies worldwide (Palmer-Silveira 2015). However, as Apelman (2010, 10) points out, "working in another language than one's mother tongue may result in impaired knowledge and information flows, cultural clashes, and the feeling of personal linguistic shortcomings". English is a globalized phenomenon (Rogerson-Revell 2007), but that does not mean that everyone can use the language successfully (Galloway and Rose 2015). In short, Business English has become the Lingua Franca of international commerce, though many people admit having problems when using it.

English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) refers to the professional use of English as a shared language in interpersonal business encounters. It is the language used in global business encounters by international business professionals in order to succeed while carrying out business activities, becoming a common frame for communication among professionals working with companies from all over the world. One of the activities that many professionals will have to carry out internationally, in order to clinch a deal, will be to develop business presentations in front of customers. To do so they will have to show some communication strategies that will help them to perform this activity successfully. Many non-native speakers combine several strategies while using English for business purposes, such as paraphrasing, code-switching or clarification, trying to overcome communication problems in order to convey the intended meaning. In any case, and as Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen point out (2013, 22) scholars had moved away from teaching English for business purposes towards English for Business Communication. In their opinion, "the notion of ELF as any speaker's 'right' that supports a power balance among speakers, was a turning point in (their) thinking: no more benchmarking to native speakers but rather to an effective business communicator no matter what his/her native tongue." In fact, English has become a tool used by both native and non-native speakers to communicate effectively in business settings. Professionals are mainly worried about stating concepts and ideas accurately and, to do so, they often combine their business knowledge, an accurate use of BELF, and some multicultural competence.

Nevertheless, many studies have observed that, apart from language itself, the way that a message is delivered is, at least, as important as the words used (Mehrabian 2008; Cicala, Smith, and Bush 2012; Querol-Julián and Fortanet 2012; Evans 2013). Linguistic problems are often minimised by a good professional delivery. It often includes physical and psychological signals that can be inferred by the receiver, helping him/her to receive the message successfully. Firms are aware that language is relevant, and they often hire people with excellent levels of English, considering it as the main language of business. However, these companies also demand universities to train future professionals with communication skills, requesting academic institutions to pay attention to persuasion techniques (Palmer-Silveira 2017; Valeiras Jurado, Ruiz-

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Madrid, and Jacobs 2018), which often imply different semiotic resources to be effective, such as words, gestures and intonation (Poggi and Pelachaud 2008).

To implement meaning, successful communication is delivered throughout modes apart from words. Some aspects to be considered when analysing communication in commercial settings are body language, gestures, facial expressions, pace and rhythm, images, colours, or numbers (Jewitt 2009; Kress 2009; Crawford Camiciottoli 2015; Valeiras-Jurado 2017; Bernad-Mechó 2018). All these elements help any business professional to deliver a message more effectively, enhancing his/her opportunities to clinch a deal. In business settings messages should be clear and simple. Additionally, business presentations have to clarify contents, especially considering that in many instances either the speaker or the receiver (or even both) can be defined as non-native speakers of English.

Our purpose is to analyse, from a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) approach to business presentations, the way students introduce themselves (and the firm they have chosen) to foreign customers, considering the communication strategies adopted, paying special attention to the way they alter native-speaker norms.

2. The use of multimodality in the introductory section of business presentations

Most lecturers often point out that a good business presentation implies much more than words: business presentations are multimodal. Business professionals use different resources to engage their audience (including props and audio-visual displays). Professionals pay attention to the way they dress, move, look at their audience and even walk (Gurung, Kempen, Klemm, Senn, and Wysocki 2014), and rehearse their presentations many times, trying to see how all these aspects can be used in order to enhance communication. Customers are often persuaded by the combination of different linguistic, paralinguistic and kinesic features.

One of the most effective ways to engage the audience when offering a business presentation is by means of an engaging introduction. To do so professionals often rely on many different features, combining them in order to get everyone's attention. A good message has to be supported by many paralinguistic and kinesic features, combining them in order to establish a clear position from the beginning of the presentation. There are some elements that tend to be used in those initial seconds of the presentation (maintaining eye contact with the audience, using some clear gestures, approaching movements, or changing the pace and rhythm of the speech), allowing the presenter to get the attention of all the attendees.

Keeping eye contact, often defined as gaze, is paramount in order to convey a message. It allows sender(s) and receiver(s) to engage in a close relationship while taking part in a business interaction, becoming an important cue for the development of social activity (Pittenger, Miller, and Mott 2004; Bailly, Raidt, and Elisei 2010). The receiver will understand that the message is sent to him/her by the presenter, and that will facilitate a closer relationship between them. Additionally, that direct contact tends to be enhanced by the use of some gestures and head shakes, adding emotion in any communicative expression (McNeill 1992; Ekman 2003). Facial expressions and emotions are processed by the receiver's brain (Kendon 2004; Calder, Rhodes, Johnson, and Haxby 2011), offering information on the speaker's involvement. Both eye contact and gestures become visual-spatial phenomena, allowing the sender to increase the emotional aspects of the message.

The way the presenter places him/herself in front of the audience also enhances his/her ability to convey a message. Most presenters try to offer an image of confidence during the initial seconds of their presentations, and analyse in detail how to place themselves in front of the audience. Starting from an open position, placing themselves in the centre of the stage, with arms slightly separated from the body, most speakers often move freely and naturally to get closer to their listeners, increasing the image of control (Grayson Riegel and Dowling 2017). Then presenters choose a rhythm to speak to their audience, trying to sound as natural as possible. Breaking that natural rhythm can be used to get the audience's attention for a specific purpose.

Presenters also play with their voice to get everyone's attention. They use pace and rhythm to stress relevant concepts and ideas. The presenter should decide whether to use a slow or quick pace, though they often play with different tempos, using some elements such as speeding up concepts or ideas, using silences, or repeating a concept twice. They often combine different paces, creating a specific rhythm for the presentation. Listeners can then notice that something is being stressed by those changes of pace and rhythm.

Besides all these features, most presenters often use digital presentation systems to offer information, PowerPoint being the most widely used (Yates and Orlikowski 2007). Most business presentations are offered with the help of a computer-projector setup (Zelazny 2006). When introducing presentations, many

professionals offer two basic slides: in their first slide they present the name/logo of the firm, and their name and position, while in the second one they introduce the outline of the session.

Our research will analyse the way prospective professionals use a multimodal approach to introduce a business presentation. The corpus of this study has been compiled during five years, video-recording presentations delivered by international students in a master's program. Students enrolled in the Master's Program in English Language for International Trade learn about the importance of English as a Lingua Franca in business settings, being the global language used to work internationally (Crystal 2003). In fact, and although some other languages have been used as lingua francas, "English has played an increasingly dominant role in business transactions in general around the globe over the course of the last two decades" (Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009, 181). As Gajšt (2014, 78) points out, "as much as 80% of communication around the world that takes place in English is carried out between non-native speakers", and this allows them to carry out business transactions successfully, becoming a lingua franca for them. Lecturers pay attention to this important area of research from a discursive perspective, observing how students develop promotional presentations in the classroom. They also take into consideration that the audience is often formed by non-native speakers of English, and that intercultural awareness has to be considered. However, other elements are also considered when analysing the way a person offers a presentation to an audience. In our study we pay attention to different elements (gaze, gestures, movements, voice and visuals), trying to see if their use can help the presenter to get the audience's attention during the introductory part of their presentation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Context and participants

In our study we analyse a corpus of 81 introductions to presentations developed in the course *SAR005 "Business Presentations and Persuasive Language",* taught as a compulsory subject of the professional itinerary of the *Master's Program in English Language for International Trade* at Universitat Jaume I (Castellón, Spain) during five academic years (from 2013/14 to 2017/18). This subject has been taught since this Master's program was established, back in 2005.

The 81 students completing the activity, a 10-minute business presentation, were 59 female and 22 male, and ages ranged from 22 to 38, being the average age 25.08 at the time of the experiment. Most of them (56 subjects) had previously completed University degrees in both linguistics and translation, whereas 25 students came from other backgrounds (communication, advertising, law, business administration, economics, primary education, tourism, chemistry, and geography). Students need to have a B2 (or equivalent) level in English in order to join the master's program. We can define the participants in this study as members of international groups, as they come from sixteen countries (Spain, Croatia, Argentina, Portugal, Norway, Serbia, Italy, France, Canada, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Ecuador, Ukraine, Ghana, and Morocco). English is the only language allowed in their presentation module.

Before taking part in this activity, students attended some sessions where the master's coordinator explained the dynamics of the master's program, letting them know that they would have to engage in practical activities during the course. In all the cases our participants had already performed four previous presentations, and feedback had already been offered to them related to those activities. Students knew that all the presentations had to be completed successfully in order to get a passing mark.

Students had to offer a 10-minute presentation, in which they should persuade a group of possible customers to buy a product. That product had to be real, and it was up to them to choose it. In this simulation, classmates were asked to pay closer attention and offer some written feedback on their colleagues' presentations. To prepare the presentation, students had a whole week to get as much information as possible about the product and the company they had chosen. We asked them to introduce the presentation in no more than 15% of the total time allocated, so there was a limit of 90 seconds to introduce the talk to the audience.

Our participants had been asked to find as much information about the chosen product as possible, but at the same time trying to be selective and keeping in mind the interests of the members of the audience that would attend their presentation. They had also been told to offer a clear layout at the beginning of their presentations, and a set of concluding remarks in its final part, focusing on the objective of the talk. They knew beforehand that the success of the presentation would be based on how they managed to engage their audience since its

introduction. PowerPoint presentations (or similar programs) were welcome.

3.2 Procedure

Students were video-recorded, using an HD camera, in order for us to later analyse the kind of multimodal elements they used to introduce their presentations. Five elements have been analysed: a) gaze; b) gestures; c) movements; d) intonation, pace and rhythm; and e) visuals. Cultural differences arise when dealing with some of these features (mainly gestures and intonation), and students analysed those differences during the initial weeks of the course, trying to deliver professional presentations that could be performed in front of people coming from different countries and cultures, as it is the case in our master's programme. Next we describe how these elements have been studied and coded in this analysis.

Gaze: As a rule, students should try to maintain eye contact with their audience. As they also use visuals to introduce their presentation, they sometimes turn their back to the audience, reading from the screen, losing eye contact as a result. Keeping eye contact is quite hard for some people, mainly if they come from some Asian cultures, where it is not a traditional way to deliver a presentation. In order to analyse eye contact, we have observed three different possibilities:

- EA (eye contact with the audience): the presenter keeps eye contact during the introduction, focusing on the audience, without looking at the screen.
- ES (presenter looks at the screen): the presenter occasionally has a quick look at the screen, to be sure the message appearing there can be read by the audience.
- EU (presenter looks up): the presenter tries to remember ideas or concepts and looks up, trying to visualize the information. By doing so the presenter loses eye contact with the audience, offering an image of forgetfulness and lack of confidence.

Gestures: Students often use gestures in order to clarify concepts. We have paid attention to two different types of gestures: head and hand movements. Regarding facial cues and head movements, they reinforce concepts appearing in the presentation. Random head movements often show some lack of control during the communicative process. Some head movements appearing in our corpus are the following:

- HA (head agreement/"ducking"): the presenter swiftly moves his/her head up and downward, trying to reinforce the positive aspects of the point commented.
- HD (head disagreement): the presenter swiftly moves his/her head left and rightward, trying to reinforce the negative aspects of the point commented.

Additionally, the use of hands in order to emphasize ideas or concepts can be summarised in these movements:

- CF (closed fists): the presenter closes his/her hands to show strength, highlighting the relevance of the concept introduced.
- OH (open hands): the presenter shows the palm of his/her hands to represent the truth (used as a clarifying movement).
- PF (pointing finger): the presenter uses this deictic movement to stress a relevant concept, something s/he does not want the audience to miss.
- EF (enumerating fingers): the presenter uses three or four fingers to indicate how many parts their message is divided into, adding them as long as they enumerate all the concepts they want to introduce in their talk.

Movements: The way students use space in order to communicate has also been analysed, the movements ranging from a totally static position to a much more active attitude:

- SP (static position): the presenter does not move during the talk, staying in the same spot used to start the presentation.
- SW (slow walker): the presenter walks slowly during the talk while looking at his/her audience.

Intonation, pace and rhythm: there is a general structure based on the predominance of the pace followed (quiet, medium or rapid), though presenters have also combined paces forming the specific rhythm of the presentation:

- QP (quiet pace): the presenter opts for speaking slowly and clearly, stressing concepts throughout the introduction.
- MP (medium pace): the presenter decides to introduce information to his/her audience maintaining the

same speed s/he uses in real life.

- RP (rapid pace): the presenter introduces concepts to the audience without enough time for them to grasp the general structure of the presentation.

Possible changes of pace become the specific rhythm of a presentation, something that many presenters use to get as close to their audience as possible, and we have noticed different possibilities when analysing our 81 introductions to presentations, though considering that in a short period of time, those changes are at times hard to be seen:

- SR (steady rhythm): based on maintaining a steady pace all throughout the introduction.
- MR (modified rhythm): we can observe how the presenter speeds up or down the pace of the introduction.

Additionally, in order to stress some ideas, presenters often use silence and repetitions to introduce their presentations more accurately:

- US (using silences): The presenter tries to get the attention of the audience by including time lapses.
- RC (repeating concepts): A concept is repeated twice (or even three times) to stress its importance.

Visuals: Regarding the use of visual devices, presenters have opted for using the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation software. We focus on the two main types of slides used in their introductions:

- WS (Welcome slide): The presenter includes a slide introducing him/herself and the company s/he works for.
- LS (Layout slide): the presenter introduces a slide with the different parts of the talk.

In our analysis we pay attention to the possible use of these resources in the introduction of the presentation. To do so we start by analysing the length and basic structure of the eighty-one introductions compiled. Then, we analyse the use of each one of the different modes (paralinguistic and kinesic features) throughout these introductions. We also pay attention to possible intercultural differences in the use of some of these features among our students. To end up, we interviewed the students, trying to check out why they acted that specific way.

4. Results

As it has been recommended during the course, most students pay attention to intercultural awareness, understanding that clarity, simplicity and some basic communication strategies can help them deliver their message more appropriately to a non-native audience. That is why their introductory sections tend to be simple. The initial part of the presentation establishes the contact between sender and receivers, and the use of adequate strategies to communicate the message will help to overcome any intercultural problem.

The 81 introductions to presentations forming our corpus start with greetings, followed by an explanation of the layout, though in ten recordings the presenters have opted for including an initial request for attention before introducing themselves and the layout of the presentation. The introductions have therefore been divided into three different parts, following this structure:

- (Optional) Request for attention (anecdote, funny comment, rhetorical question)
- (Compulsory) Greeting (including the name of the speaker and company)
- (Compulsory) Layout of the presentation (explaining the different sections of the talk)

Regarding the total length of the introductions, Table 1 shows the corpus analysed, stating the specific amount of time (minutes and seconds) used in these introductions.

Student (male/female)	Length of the introduction	Student (male/female)	Length of the introduction	Student (male/female)	Length of the introduction
14A (F)	1.02	**15J (F)**	0.59	**17B (F)**	1.10
14B (F)	0.58	**15K (F)**	1.00	**17C (F)**	1.11
14C (M)	0.47	**15L(M)**	0.50	**17D (M)**	1.02
14D (F)	1.12	**15M (M)**	1.04	**17E (F)**	1.14

14E (F)	1.01	15N (F)	0.58	17F (F)	1.26
14F (F)	0.56	15O (F)	0.59	17G (F)	0.58
14G (M)	1.05	15P (F)	1.19	17H (M)	0.57
14H (F)	1.02	16A (F)	1.02	17I (M)	1.11
14I (F)	1.21	16B (M)	1.18	17J (F)	1.12
14J (F)	0.50	16C (F)	1.27	17K (F)	1.14
14K (F)	0.58	16D (F)	0.59	17L (F)	1.01
14L (F)	1.01	16E (F)	1.28	17M (F)	0.54
14M (F)	0.57	16F (M)	0.54	17N (M)	1.05
14N (M)	1.14	16G (F)	0.59	17O (F)	1.10
14O (M)	1.00	16H (F)	1.12	18A (F)	1.16
14P (F)	1.06	16I (F)	1.08	18B (F)	0.56
14Q (F)	1.26	16J (M)	1.15	18C (F)	1.21
14R (M)	0.58	16K (F)	1.14	18D (M)	1.08
15A (M)	1.23	16L (F)	1.09	18E (F)	1.04
15B (F)	0.50	16M (F)	1.12	18F (F)	1.22
15C (F)	0.47	16N (F)	1.07	18G (F)	0.58
15D (F)	1.19	16O (F)	1.28	18H (M)	0.59
15E (F)	1.02	16P (F)	1.00	18I (F)	1.13
15F (M)	0.57	16Q (M)	1.10	18J (F)	1.22
15G (F)	0.52	16R (F)	1.22	18K (F)	1.03
15H (M)	1.11	16S (F)	1.06	18L (M)	1.08
15I (F)	1.00	17A (M)	1.07	18M (F)	0.49
Total	89.25 minutes recorded (an average of 1.1018 minutes per recording)				

Table 1: Length of the introductions

The overall length of the introductions recorded varies considerably, ranging from 47 to 88 seconds, but in all cases presenters have respected the 90-second limit suggested by the instructor. Considering the time actually used to later deliver their presentations (around 10 minutes in all cases), results show that the length of the introduction of the presentations analysed equals 89.25 seconds, averaging 1.10 minutes.

Use of modes in the students' introductions	Total usage among the 81 introductions analysed	Percentage of use
EA - Eye contact with the audience	76	93.82%
ES – Presenter looks at the screen(s)	57	70.37%
EU – Presenter looks up	12	14.81%
HA – Head agreement (ducking)	21	25.92%
HD – Head disagreement	11	13.58%
CF – Closed fists	3	3.71%
OH – Open hands	78	96.29%
PF – Pointing finger	17	20.98%
EF – Enumerating fingers	16	19.75%
SP – Static position	41	50.61%
SW – Slow walker	40	49.39%
QP- Quiet pace	11	13.58%
MP – Medium pace	61	75.31%
RP – Rapid pace	9	11.11%
SR- Steady rhythm	61	75.31%
MR - Modified rhythm	20	24.69%
US – Use of silence	7	8.64%
RC – Repeating concepts	6	7.40%
WS – Welcome slide	81	100%
LS – Layout slide	78	96.29%

Table 2: Modes used in the corpus analysed

Regarding gaze, students are well aware of the need of getting in touch with their audience through eye contact, and most students can manage to look directly at the audience during the introduction of their presentations. We have only seen 5 examples of students showing great problems to maintain eye contact with their listeners, and in all cases they are well aware that this is something they have to work on in order to improve it, as they have pointed out in subsequent interviews. In any case, and apart from these five specific cases, students often stop paying attention to the audience and look at the screen, turning their back to the listeners. The fact of using a PowerPoint presentation forces many of our subjects to modify their body position in order to read information from the screen, even when they know the printed text by heart. Most students look at the screen quite quickly, returning to the EA position, but in four cases they simply forget that the audience is looking at them, and they read aloud all the information appearing on the screen, including all the items appearing in the layout slide. Additionally, in 12 of the recorded presentations, students stop looking at the audience, and they look up, at least once during their introductions, trying to remember a concept or word

that does not come to their minds. It becomes a fairly natural movement that, if repeated too often, gives a negative image of forgetfulness that jeopardises the rhythm of the introduction. Looking at the person we are talking to shows our interest in him/her, and even students coming from cultures where eye contact is not frequent are keen on learning how to act in a multicultural business world. For instance, one student coming from China pointed out in the interview that it was really hard for her to maintain eye contact while presenting a product, but she was eager to work on it.

Regarding gestures, we paid attention to head movements that could aid the message being conveyed by the presenter. The movement most often observed in our corpus is HA, a short movement of the head based on moving it up and down in order to show agreement. It is seen in 21 of the introductions analysed (25.92%). This is a movement used quite often during presentations, but mostly when explaining in detail some sections (especially when stating features of the product), and it is not too frequent in introductions. It implies positivity, and presenters use it in order to show conviction and strength. Similarly, the use of HD, moving the head from left to right (or vice versa) is seen in 11 presentations from our corpus (13.58%), generally when introducing negative concepts. Paying attention to the cases observed, this head movement tends to be used among those students modifying the general structure of the introduction, adding the optional request for attention at the beginning of the session by showing a problem that the product which is about to be presented can solve. Related to the use of hands in order to enhance the delivery of a message, this is often a resource employed with the purpose of increasing the communicative competence of presenters, emphasizing the concepts introduced. Hands are used to stress meaning, to point out some features that might be of interest for the audience. Regarding the use of closed fists (CF) or open hands (OH), the second movement is clearly more relevant in our corpus, with 78 students starting their presentations by showing an open position, also showing their open palms to the audience. Our subjects have decided to start their session (with just three exceptions) opting for an open position (just in front of the audience, arms separated from the body and open hands showing their palms). Whereas CF can only be seen in 3 introductions (and in all three cases students later stated that it was due to their nerves), the OH position is often used. In all the cases analysed, presenters use just an open hand, as the other one is holding the wireless presentation remote clicker, something that has to be considered while analysing the recordings. That position tends to be kept during the rest of their presentations, moving the hands up and down, especially when introducing emphasizers. The PF movement is also quite usual in our corpus, as 17 students (20.98%) point out a concept they want the audience to pay attention to by using this deictic resource. Similarly, the EF movement appears in 16 introductions (19.75%), enumerating the concepts that would later be introduced in (the rest of) the presentation. This is often used while introducing the layout of the session. We have to be careful with gestures, as there are many misunderstandings internationally, as some frequent Western gestures may not be easily understood in Eastern cultures, and vice versa. The more our students learn about those intercultural differences, the more opportunities they will have to succeed in the business world.

Most gestures used by presenters are often accompanied by body movements. Students do not necessarily stay in the same position during the whole presentation, and they have learned to move physically closer to the audience. When analysing the introduction of the presentations forming our corpus, we have seen that the amount of students staying in the same place during this initial section is quite similar to the number of students deciding to move around the stage. Whereas 41 subjects stayed in the same position (SP) during the whole introduction, 40 colleagues opted for moving while speaking, moving slowly while paying attention to the audience. These students that introduce their session and walk are slightly more aware of the position of the audience, and in all cases we are dealing with students that tend to maintain eye contact with their listeners. One of the most relevant aspects observed is that all our Eastern European (9 cases) and Asian (6 cases) students have opted for staying in the same position. In interviews they admitted that it is very hard for them to change what they have been doing for many years, and that they feel more comfortable while developing their presentations without moving.

One of the main problems that instructors had to deal with in the past was the speed of the introductions, which were often too fast. Students have been recommended to control the speaking pace, trying to facilitate the comprehension of their message. Regarding the way our subjects have introduced their products orally, we can define most introductions as QP (9 cases) and MP (61 cases), as they have opted for speaking slowly and clearly, stressing concepts throughout the talk, avoiding any rush. Nevertheless, we have to admit that they

have been able to control the pace during the introduction of the sessions, but not so well in the following sections of their presentations, as in many cases they start speaking faster along their speeches. Results seem to suggest that the general nature of the students (motivated, quiet, etc.) may affect the way they deliver their presentations, though we can help them to improve, designing a more elaborate rhythm.

Considering that we are dealing with a very short section of a whole business presentation, we thought that our subjects would not use different types of paces during the brief introductions, creating a specific rhythm. This was the case among 61 of our subjects, but we have also found 20 cases in which the presenters have tried to modify the pace, generally starting slowly and speeding up the introduction when listing the different sections commented in their layout. Students have opted for modifying the slow/medium rhythm used in their initial slide (name of the speaker and company), increasing the speed on purpose when explaining the layout of the presentation. Seven students have also used silence to introduce the presentations, generally after a rhetorical question, whereas six students repeated some concepts during this initial section, due to the pressure they felt while completing this task.

All our subjects have opted for Microsoft PowerPoint as a visual aid to enhance their message, and all 81 subjects have used a slide stating their name and position in the company, as well as the name and logo of the corporation. This slide has become a necessary tool to introduce the session to an audience. Similarly, and with just three exceptions, our participants have considered the need to use a second slide to present the layout of the presentation, something that facilitates the task of the members of the audience. It is important to remark the fact that PowerPoint Presentation has become the main reference related to visual aids, as some other systems often give problems in some computers. In any case, instructors always recommend students to pay attention during rehearsals to the way their slides appear on screen, in order to avoid any later problems. Our subjects are recommended to check everything well in advance, in order to be sure that no time will be wasted during the final presentation. Results imply that most students show a clear attitude towards intercultural awareness, understanding that clarity, simplicity and some basic communication strategies can help them deliver their message more appropriately to a non-native audience.

5. Discussion and further research

Introductions to business presentations are often well-devised pieces of discourse, in which presenters try to get their audience's attention throughout the use of an ensemble of different modes, as the results compiled in our piece of research suggest. Presenters are aware of all the different elements that can help them to get closer to the listeners in a more effective way. The instructors in the master's program on which our participants were enrolled reinforce this aspect when teaching students how to face an audience in order to present products or services. Considering that we are just focusing on the initial 45/90 seconds of their presentations, our study has paid special attention to the use of different aspects related to gaze, gestures, movements, pace and visuals while introducing their talk. Results have shown that most students know that they can use many non-verbal strategies to convey meaning, creating different modes that are used in their presentations. In this paper we have not paid attention to other communication strategies used by our students in their presentations (paraphrasing, semantic avoidance, or code-switching), also used to increase their communicative competence, and that establishing that connection with the audience throughout the combination of some of these modes will help them to be more effective in their future business activities. In any case, we have analysed how international students used both linguistic and paralinguistic features in English in order to communicate to native and non-native members of the audience, using the language as a business lingua franca in order to get their message successfully delivered. Students understand English as the language of business communication, and work on using non-verbal modes in order to enhance their communicative abilities, trying to overcome any linguistic difficulties they might find. If this can be observed in complete business presentations, those initial seconds devoted to introduce the topic of the session offer many linguistic and (mainly) paralinguistic features that enhance the communicative purpose of the presenters. The importance given to those non-verbal strategies is stressed in the introductions to presentations compiled in our corpus.

Results suggest that students work hard on maintaining eye contact with their audience during the introduction of their presentations. In any case, they often turn their back to the audience and read information from the screen, thus losing eye contact with their audience. This often spoils partially the communicative process, as

some members of the audience feel ignored by the speaker. This is something that lecturers should teach future professionals not to do, or at least to minimise, as it affects negatively the engagement of some listeners in the communicative process. Sharing an idea or a concept with some listeners implies necessarily getting their constant attention, and this initial part of presentations sets the tone for the rest of the talk.

Regarding gestures, about two fifths of the subjects analysed use head gestures to emphasise positive and negative aspects in their introductions. There is a more relevant use of their hands during this activity, as they tend to offer what we define as an open position to start their presentation (open arms separated of the body, with open hands). Other deictic gestures can also be observed during this initial section, mainly using fingers to point at the audience, or using them to count different aspects of the product endorsed. Our results suggest that lecturers should work on the use of gestures with the students, stressing them as a way to point out some important ideas, but also indicating that an abuse of gestures in the rest of the presentation would jeopardise the communicative effect of the message. We should keep in mind that the audience, when facing a presentation in which the speaker abuses of gestures, might pay more attention to form than content, disregarding the possibility of acquiring the product presented.

Students decide if they opt for a static position or (if they opt) for moving while introducing the presentation to the audience. In our analysis we have seen very similar results (41 vs 40) when analysing the recorded presentations, but the important fact is the combination of the initial physical position with the rest of modes that are used in their introductions. Those subjects who walk along the stage during their introduction tend to look at the audience, maintaining eye contact, and play with pace and rhythm during this initial part of their presentation. Static presenters look at the screen more often, losing eye contact with their audience, and the use of one single pace during their introductions tends to be the norm. We have also seen that most Eastern European and Asian students prefer staying in the same position, whereas Western students often move more freely on the stage.

In order to get the audience's attention, subjects should find the right pace and rhythm. In their introductions, most students have opted for choosing a slow or medium pace, keeping a steady rhythm, without major alterations. Only one fourth of the subjects analysed have opted for modifying that rhythm. Instructors tend to recommend modifying this rhythm in order to stress important concepts, remarking those aspects of a product that can be interesting for the listeners. This, combined with the use of some gestures and body movements, can enhance the communicative effect of the speaker.

Visuals are nowadays a basic resource used in most presentations, and all our subjects have opted for supporting theirs with the PowerPoint software. It is very hard to find a presentation without the support of visuals. Instructors should teach future professionals how to use these visual devices properly, as in some cases an erroneous use of this type of aid can jeopardise the presentation, with the audience paying attention to the screen, disregarding the speaker's task. Instructors recommend writing few words on screen and using images, as they often offer more information than words, and can be more illustrative. Nevertheless, as we are just paying attention to the introduction of presentations, two slides are basic, and in both we are mainly dealing with text (welcome and layout slides).

Despite the relevant number of introductions forming our corpus, this piece of research has some potential limitations that might help us to develop further research on the topic. For instance, an important step would be to compare our results with authentic presentations developed by professionals, trying to observe similarities and differences based on experience. Our hypothesis is that well-trained professionals would also combine many of the modes studied in this analysis. After observing the results presented in this paper, we have also decided to work on a second study, based on interviewing the same students while checking their recordings, and asking them for the reasons to choose different modes during their presentations, trying to see if these were well-reasoned options or if they have acted spontaneously. Multimodality applied to business presentations can enhance the communicative competence of present and future professionals, and further efforts should be devoted to increasing their communicative skills throughout the interplay of different modes. It will be up to those students, future business professionals, to combine those modes appropriately in order to transmit their messages successfully.

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