

## PRESENTATION SKILLS AS IMPORTANT MANAGERIAL COMPETENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on presentation skills of future managers in the context of their communication competences. Communication skills can give a job-seeker a significant advantage on the labour market. The research makes significant theoretical and empirical contributions to the process of developing the interpersonal communication skills and competences of the future managers, e.g. the students of management. Genre analysis and action research were applied with the aim of deeper understanding and possible explanation of different aspects of the students' presentation skills on professional topics. The outcome of our study showed that the most problematic areas included stylistic and pragmalinguistic aspects of formal organization of the presentations.

**Keywords:** managerial skills, presentation, communication competence, intercultural communication, genre analysis

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### Introduction

Successful managers must fully understand that effective communication is a key factor in achieving the goals of an organization. The way they communicate with their subordinates and co-workers influences the employees' performance and productivity. The overall atmosphere within an organization also depends on the forms of managers' communication and thus the managerial interpersonal skills are very important nowadays. The preparation of future managers as good orators and effective communicators is therefore of a vital importance. Education is considered an important factor in preparation for future jobs and it becomes universal and more focused on practice. Employees must be more specialized as to their skills. A great importance is put on practical skills and theoretical knowledge applied into practice.

One of the way the future managers could be prepared is to focus on the development of their overall social intelligence (Frankovský et al., 2015) and personality potential including communication skills in the context of communication competence as a more general notion with a cultural connection and a great impact that culture has over the communication skills and the way people communicate. The process of globalization and internationalization in all

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areas of social and economic life including business organizations influences also the process of communication, communication goals as well as managerial activities within a company at all levels of management. Attention is being paid to the ability to communicate effectively in intercultural context. According to Maťková et al. (2016), working in an international company requires not only the ability to communicate in one foreign language but it is also one of the basic requirements when applying for a job.

This paper looks at presentation skills of future managers in the context of managerial interpersonal communication skills and competences. Presenting professional ideas is an important part of managers' personal skills. Students of the first year at the master's level of studies at the Faculty of Management of the University of Prešov are prepared for their professional life also in terms of foreign language communication skills. As a part of their evaluation of Business English courses, the students are required to give presentations on professional topics. They are evaluated by their teachers based on four observed aspects of their presentation performance. We carried out an action research and discourse analysis of the genre of presentation and found out that students were still having problems with presenting professional topics, even when trained how to do it.

### **Managerial Communication Skills and Competences**

The personality of a manager is created by a complex of skills, competences and knowledge including managerial communication potential. The communication competence of a manager, his/her ability to communicate effectively represent basic managerial and organizational activities of every successful manager who wants to motivate his/her employees to adequate and high-quality performance. As Marcelli (2009) points out, communication is always connected with specific community. Latin *communicare*, the origin of the word communication, is close to words meaning community. In this context, Marcelli (2009) states that, seemingly trivial, but in fact an important aspect of communication is that it is shared. It is an act of making things come together. Globalization, mass media, and Internet have caused that there are new challenges for individuals to be able to adapt to new working and living conditions. It is the process of interpersonal communication, or the content and the quality of information that managers deliver to the other people in an organization which "initiate, define, maintain, or further a relationship" that determine the success of this process of communication (Dainton and Zelle, 2005). In this context, communication is not only understood as another managerial activity but rather as something that influences all the other managerial activities such as managing, controlling, planning or leading (Dainton and Zelle, 2005). Nowadays, a great emphasis is put on a manager's image seen as a cornerstone of a successful managerial career (Lelková et al., 2015) as well as on continuing development of manager's personality potential, managerial skills and abilities including the interpersonal communication skills.

Several authors (Boyatzis, 1982; Whetten and Cameron, 2002; Robbins and Hunsaker, 2003; Bambacas and Patrickson, 2008; Lajcin et al., 2012) defined three basic categories of interpersonal skills in the area of management: leadership, the process of communication and motivation of people. These categories include communication interpersonal skills that influence such managerial activities as e.g. solving conflicts, coping with demanding situations in managerial work, (Frankovský et al., 2009) teambuilding, promoting changes, sending messages, providing feedback, identifying goals, clarifying expectations, persuading, delegation of tasks, the occurrence of cognitive distortions in decision-making (Birknerová et al., 2015) etc. Aggarwal (2011) adds that in today's globalized world, students at business schools have to be taught flexibility, leadership skills and willingness to continuous learning. Lash and Wellington (2007) contribute to the discussion by connecting competitive advantage of international companies with environmental issues while Kot (2014) highlights also corporate social responsibility. We can agree that all the above mentioned aspects of managerial competences are important for a personal as well as career development of a future manager. The European Union (2011) itself integrated the concept of key competences into its legislation. In it, the European Union (2011) states that these competences acquire "the shape of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to each context are fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society." The most important aspect of the definition in the context of our article is that these competences "provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation." The European Union (2011) proposed a tool of reference for its member countries "to ensure that these key competences are fully integrated into their strategies and infrastructures, particularly in the context of lifelong learning." We can then conclude that these competences are crucial elements of people's professional development. Štefko et al. (2010) also stress the importance of long-life education. Fridrichova Klimova and Semradova (2013) claim that students who want to be successful in their future jobs, must acquire various communication competences including socio-cultural skills. In the age of globalization, communication in foreign languages is a part of everyday life, which is especially true about international business communication. That is why current university curricula should mirror these needs and universities should offer their students – in our case possible future managers – such courses that would enable them to be successful in the labour market (Frydrychova Klimova and Poullova, 2011).

### **Methodology and Discussion**

Genre analysis is currently important and widely-used approach to the analysis of texts or discourse (Hyland, 2004). As Johns (2002) points out genre analysis have recently caused significant changes in learning. On the other hand, Dančišinová (2012) highlights also the weakness of this approach to discourse analysis which she identifies as being not clearly theoretically defined. That is why

in paper, we combine genre analysis of professional discourse with the methods of observation and action research. Action research is carried out in classrooms as a modern way how to improve learning of professional skills necessary for the practice and involves teachers and students alike (Burns, 2010). Its aim is to identify any possible problematic areas in the classroom and in response purposeful intervention and possible solutions are offered by a teacher. As Edge (2001) puts it, action research is oriented towards the means, ends, theory, institution, society and a teacher. Its main advantage therefore is that it is connected with real life experience in the classroom. It is connected with the practice and predominantly depends on the professionalism of teachers and interaction with students.

Presentation skills are no doubt an important part of current managerial training. Presenting specific agenda or projects is a necessary aspect of professional life of a manager. Students at the Faculty of Management at the University of Prešov also present their ideas and specific topics connected with management, marketing or economics at their courses. One of the most important as to their presentation skills is an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. To be more specific, it is a course with the focus on business English topics and skills. Therefore, the topics of the presentations are context based, i.e. they deal with advertising, finances, etc. Students of these courses are at first trained to give presentations. At the beginning of the course, they are lectured, shown videos and given space for questions concerning presentations on professional topics.

No doubt, English language courses are important parts of present-day education at universities. It is also true for the students of managerial disciplines. Therefore, they predominantly choose to attend ESP classes. At the Faculty of Management, the course is evaluated throughout the semester when its participants have to fulfil certain conditions to get credits. One of them is to give a presentation on a specific topic from the field of management, marketing or economics. Formal requirements of these presentations are defined as follows:

- approximately 30 minutes long
- not read but presented
- the structure of introduction, main body and conclusion
- correct pronunciation
- interactive approach
- space for discussion.

To sum it up, following aspects are evaluated (table 1).

**Table 1. Evaluated aspects of presentations**

<i>Evaluated aspect</i>	<i>Number of points</i>	<i>Evaluated aspect</i>
speaking, not reading	0 - 5	interactive approach
being a good presentation manager	0 - 5	language correctness

The action research and observations of presentations were done throughout the summer term of 2016 [The research was carried out since February 15th 2016 till April 29th 2016]. The research focus was on the students [122 pairs of two students were selected, i.e. 244 students were observed during the research ] of the first year of the master's studies majoring in Management at the Faculty of Management of the University of Prešov in Prešov, Slovakia. The research sample was selected based on two preconditions: firstly, they study Management, and secondly, they were graduates majoring in Management at the bachelor's level of studies. These two conditions mean that the selected students, based on the course of their studies, aim at the job positions of managers and related ones. Above mentioned aspects were evaluated by respective lecturers based on their professional knowledge and experience. Students could be given maximum of twenty points. To pass this part of the course, they had to acquire at least ten points, which is 50% of the total number of points. The list of topics for their presentations was as follows:

- dealing with changes (describe a development of a selected company)
- managing meetings (tips for successful business meetings)
- presentation of a successful company and its structure
- advertising media and methods (in general)
- advertising on TV
- advertising in newspapers and on the Internet
- successful advertising campaign (give a real-life example)
- talking money (financial terms, describing trends, etc.)
- cultural differences
- culture shock.

122 presentations on given topics in sixteen classes were observed as a part of the research. Lists of topics were the same for each group and only those presentations were selected which were presented in cooperation of two students. Students could acquire twenty points based on the previously mentioned evaluated aspects. All the students pass this part of the course evaluation, i.e. they acquired at least 50% of the points. The course was taught by two teachers. At the beginning of the summer term, the students were lectured what to take into account when preparing for the presentations and were informed what aspects were going to be evaluated. They also knew an evaluation scale. They all had experience with presenting from the previous semester, when they were told what was right or wrong with their presentations. The results of the observations is summarized in the following (table 2).

**Table 2. Results of the research**

<i>Number of acquired points</i>	<i>Number of presentations</i>	<i>Evaluation (%)</i>
20	8	100
19	16	95
18	12	90

17	8	85
16	22	80
15	28	75
14	4	70
13	10	65
12	6	60
11	4	55
10	4	50
<i>Per 1 presentation (average)</i>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>79</b>

The average number of points per student was 15.8, which is 79% of the full number of points. That equals C (2) in evaluation scale (table 3).

**Table 3. Evaluation scale**

Number of points	%	Evaluation
20-18	100-90	A
17-16	89-80	B
15-14	79-70	C
13-12	69-60	D
11-10	59-50	E
9-0	<50	FX

The most problematic areas identified by the lecturers as those which cost students the points were: reading, not speaking, incorrect pronunciation and no interaction with the audience. It is these aspects that should be improved in order to prepare the students for the practice. If they manage to improve their presentation skill, it will give them a significant advantage in labour market. In order to acquire the necessary presentation skills, students should be also offered courses on presentation skills in professional settings. Students of non-philological study programs have to be given larger space for professional communication in foreign languages in connection with the practice. Students also have to be motivated to improve their skills and understand that presentation skills are important part of their future professional life and not only a part of evaluation of the university English language course. Students must understand the importance of managerial interpersonal communication skills needed to perform their future roles of managers.

We realize the limitation of our research being that the students were not working managers at the time of the research, but we believe that the education of future managers is important in the context of the professional skills acquisition of each

manager. As for the future study directions, the research in the real-life context should be carried out focused on presentation skills and the actual form of those presentations by professional managers and their impact on business relations. Research findings can contribute to improvement of the teaching methods and consequently to better professional skills acquired by future managers. We believe that presentation skills and the art of communication is an integral part of the personality of a good manager.

### **Managerial Implications**

The research makes significant theoretical and empirical contributions to the process of developing the interpersonal communication skills and competences of the future managers, e.g. the students of management. The research results may help both academics and practitioners to be more ready to understand the process of communication and the nature of managerial interpersonal skills. It also provides an insight into the process of developing and improving the communication skills of the future managers by evaluating the students' presentations on different professionally related topics and thus eliminating the possible mistakes by giving presentations which has an impact on the overall communication competence of to-be-managers and which can improve their managerial behavior in the future. It can also provide a clearer picture of the overall manager's profile and skills which an effective manager should possess.

The changes in the world and the technical development influenced the work as well as the skills and requirements put on managers and the importance of managerial communication skills. The organizational structure of companies became flatter (Gantry et al., 2008) and less hierarchical but with more responsibilities. Due to decreasing the number of employees in order to decrease the costs, elimination of the levels of management, flatter organizations, technological development, such as e-mail and the Internet, there is a good reason to believe that the skills managers considered important in the past, have changed. These changes also influenced the way managers communicate and cooperate. There is a growing need for better communication, work coordination, performance improvement and bigger independence and trust (Gantry et al., 2008; Salas et al., 2005; Zaccaro et al., 2004). This means that successful managers must pay attention also to cultural differences and the questions of multiculturalism and globalization.

### **Conclusion**

Managers must fully understand their roles, tasks and responsibilities and adapt their abilities and skills to a wide range of needs to perform their work effectively. Since organizations are becoming more global, the managerial skills including the communication skills are changing as well. More emphasis is put on intercultural communication where culture plays an important role because there is a close



connection between culture and a character of communication behavior (Bednářová et al., 2012). The process of globalization of the economic world and business organizations influences also the process of communication, communication goals, personal activities in a company and all levels of management in general. It also influences the process of the selection of employees when applying for a job. Successful managers are the managers who, apart from other tools, use all forms of effective communication in order to reach the identified goals of organizations. It has to be taken into account when future managers are prepared for their jobs. Presentation skills therefore play an important role in the development of communication competences.

### Summary

In the paper, we dealt with communication skills and language competences of future managers. We focused on presentation skills as it is a very important factor giving job seekers a significant advantage in the labour market. After carrying out the action research and genre analysis, we found out that the most problematic areas were pragmalinguistic, i.e. the students read their presentations instead of really presenting them, their interaction with the audience was not satisfactory, etc. We propose that the attention is paid to the motivation of students to develop the presentation skills. Understanding of the importance of communication in foreign languages is also an important factor which can lead to better performance of managerial work.

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**UMIĘTNOŚCI PREZENTACYJNE JAKO WAŻNE KOMPETENCJE  
KIEROWNICZE W KONTEKŚCIE KOMUNIKACJI ZAWODOWEJ**

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł skupia się na umiejętnościach prezentacyjnych przyszłych menedżerów w kontekście ich kompetencji komunikacyjnych. Umiejętności komunikacyjne mogą dać osobom poszukującym pracy znaczną przewagę na rynku pracy. Niniejsze badanie wnosi znaczący teoretyczny i empiryczny wkład w proces rozwijania umiejętności interpersonalnych i kompetencji przyszłych menedżerów, np. studentów zarządzania. W celu pogłębienia wiedzy i możliwości wyjaśnienia różnych aspektów umiejętności prezentacji studentów w kwestiach zawodowych zastosowano analizę gatunkową i badania w działaniu. Wyniki niniejszego badania wykazały, że najbardziej problematyczne obszary obejmują stylistyczne i pragmalingwistyczne aspekty formalnej organizacji prezentacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** umiejętności menedżerskie, prezentacja, kompetencje komunikacyjne, komunikacja międzykulturowa, analiza gatunku

**演講技巧作為專業通信背景下的重要管理人員**

**摘要：**本文重點介紹了未來經理在溝通能力背景下的演講技巧。溝通能力可以使求職者在勞動力市場上獲得顯著的優勢。該研究對發展未來經理的人際溝通能力和能力的過程進行了重要的理論和實證貢獻，例如。管理學生。應用類型分析和行動研究，旨在更深入地理解和解釋學生在專業話題上的表現技巧的不同方面。我們研究的結果表明，最有問題的領域包括演示文稿正式組織的風格和作風。

**關鍵詞：**管理技能，演講，溝通能力，跨文化交際，流派分析。