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Original scientific paper

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THE USE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN ENTREPRENEURIAL CONTEXT

Abstract

The first association of nonverbal communication is the body language. It is a skill, ability for someone to understand the message that is sent from the interlocutors. Body language is especially important in the business communication. With the proper understanding and use of the nonverbal communication everyone can see the ability and the will for collaboration, team work and the preparedness for changes. With the improvement of the body language, significant steps in the development of the individual's potential and achievement of the set goals can be made. This is especially important for the proper management of the entrepreneurial small business. For the entrepreneurs, small business's owners and the business leaders who are facing a lot challenges in their work and fight with the ruthless competition, knowing and implementation of the nonverbal communication is the best tool that they have in their job.

This research analyzed the connection between the entrepreneur's personal characteristics and nonverbal behaviors. The result of the study suggests that while Macedonian entrepreneurs are becoming aware of the power of nonverbal communication, they still don't make their business decisions based on the analysis of nonverbal communication.

Keywords: entrepreneurs, nonverbal communication, body language, message, organization

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Introduction

The business sector is the essential part of every economy, and the institutional and regulatory frameworks provided by the governments play an important role in its success. However, many people share the opinion that the business success still lays in the hand of the entrepreneurs who starts and run their own businesses.

There are a lot of evidence on large firm's importance for the growth and technological activities in different sectors and countries (Patel and Pavitt, 1991; Malecki, 1993). However, caused by the turbulent changes in recent years in the functioning of the national economies, followed by the global financial market crisis which significantly changed the working environment of the companies in general, the importance of the small businesses management and entrepreneurship has grown (Kennickell, Kwast and Pogach, 2015). Entrepreneurship itself cannot be separated from the personal characteristics of the owner-entrepreneur, his/her knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes, or so-called human factors (Širec and Močnik, 2010). One of the most important skills relevant for the whole process of entrepreneurship is communication skill. The challenge of communication is for the entrepreneur to communicate effectively enough for the stakeholder to at least continue the relationship, or even better, to extend it, for example, as a business partner, as an employee or as a finance provider. This is important because entrepreneurs need to create credibility and get legitimacy to be able to get resources, both financial and human, in the start-up of a business, but also in the growth phase as well (Shane, 2003). Previous research had shown that entrepreneurs often suffer from liability of newness, as they lack a track record for the business (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Since this is the case, they have to draw on alternative forms of communication (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) and they need to think strategically regarding communication (Hitt, Ireland, Camp and Sexton, 2001). However, it is not fully clear how they are to accomplish this, but certainly the improving skills and intensify the use of nonverbal communication is a proper way to succeed.

1. The use and forms of nonverbal communication

People often do not say what they think, or while communicating try to hide certain information. Everyone has their own flaws and nobody is perfect, but everyone can shine before others if that is what he desires. In the business world, sometimes comes to certain frauds resulting in massive damages. To avoid these potential problems, the entrepreneurs, owners of small businesses, need to understand nonverbal communication and predict what their interlocutor really thinks and whether he/she is telling the truth.

Whenever talk to someone, the body with a variety of small gestures, moments, changes in posture and facial expressions, facilitates speaking. Most people are unaware that daily they use the silent language when communicating (Goman, 2011). Nonverbal communication, or also known as body language, represents an unconscious response to what is being said, in what position is the interlocutor placed and what is the atmosphere of the discussion (Goman, 2008).

Verbal and nonverbal messages may mutually coincide or differ. Most often what makes an impression on others is not what it is said, but rather what it is not said, and can be read it through the body language. Nonverbal messages more precisely clarify the verbal messages. Sometimes the verbal and nonverbal symbols disagree. One might say: "That's fine", but if the voice is tense and the person does not look at the recipient, then the question is on what symbol does the recipient trust – verbal or nonverbal? When verbal and nonverbal symbols are in conflict, the recipient usually trusts the nonverbal communication (Means, 2012, p.69).

Nonverbal communication in fact, is about the way people sit, walk, stand and express themselves through certain gestures. It can be conscious (deliberate) or unconscious and can take the following forms (Gjorgjievski, 2013, p.132):

- **Body movement** – includes movement of the hands, head, feet, legs, body position, eye movement and facial expression.
- **Hands and palms** – the person should *always keep hands open* when starting a conversation. Throughout history, open palms were interpreted as openness, honesty, a sign of truth. *Pointing gestures* seem aggressive, so they should be avoided. The person should also avoid *gestures that last more than three beats*, because they may hint that the person is set

dictatorial and wants to order. If a person wants to highlight a particular point or to even emphasize the meaning of that point that can be achieved by *pressing fist*.

- **Attitude, body posture** – The position of a person can be closed or open. The positive attitudes towards the other are usually followed by tilting forward, especially when sitting. While the negative or hostile attitudes are signaled by tilting backwards.
- **Facial expression** – the person should be aware of all the gestures that are served to the interlocutor, and include mouth movement, use of eyebrows, use of cheeks, head movements, eye contact etc. Eye contact is especially important. People that look away are either really nervous, lie or something else distracts them. When people look down, they experience unpleasant emotions, or they are really upset.
- **Physical characteristics** – body type, attractiveness, height, weight, hair color and complexion.
- **Touch** – represents an important nonverbal behavior. The person needs to distinguish between body contact and touching.
- **Artifacts** – all personal items or stuff that brings the person which communicate with.
- **Space** – Robert Sommer defined what is called personal space as the area around each person, in which it does not want others to enter, unless they are called (Wainwright, 2000).
- **Voice (paralanguage)** – all aspects of voice, which are not strictly a part of the verbal message, and include the tone and voice, speed and volume of the message, pauses and hesitations between words.
- **Environment** – physical and psychological environment in which the communication takes place. This includes furniture, design, lighting, temperature, smells, colors, sounds in the room etc.

Scratching the surface of the nose, neck or other body part or rubbing of the eyes generally indicate discomfort, inconvenience, embarrassment, boredom. *Hand placed under the chin* usually means that a decision is being made or judgment for what it is being said. Very often used gesture is *friction on the palms of each other*. Friction on the palms of each other expresses a positive expectation. *Palm in palm*, known as interlocking fingers is another frequently used gesture worldwide.

Although seemingly it looks as if it were a self-confident person, however, the researches show that it is actually a gesture of frustration (Pease, 2014, p.38).

The body language is no longer an enigma. Today, people are in condition to study all the signs of the human nonverbal behaviors and to use them as supplement of the verbal messages. People make very important decisions and conclusions based on the body language. Taking care of all this dimensions of nonverbal communication, which are explained above, the individual could be one step ahead. With the language of the business, it would mean that nonverbal communication helps entrepreneur in the process of making important decisions on hiring, promotion, making partnerships and collaborations, identifying potential customer, improving marketing and sales, etc.

2. The entrepreneur and his/her competence regarding nonverbal communication

Making the correct decision within the given time frame is a crucial factor for a successful entrepreneur today. Entrepreneurs are in constant interaction with all stakeholders from the internal and external environment of the company, so knowing how to effectively communicate using both, verbal and nonverbal communication can help them managing their businesses with great success. According to many studies communication skills are in top priorities for entrepreneurs and small business owners (Montagno, Kuratko, and Scarcella, 1986).

Those in business must be prepared in such a way as to make their face agree with the message that the consumer expects to receive. The communication experts agree that when two people have a face-to-face conversation only a small fraction of the total message they share is actually contained in the words they use. A portion of the message is contained in the tone of voice, accent, speed, volume, and inflection. However, approximately 93% of it is understood through nonverbal communication behaviors (Stoker, 2013). The combination of gestures, postures, facial expressions, and even clothing can support or interfere with the verbal messages that a person delivers.

The entrepreneur who has just established his/her company has to decide whom to hire on all position into the organization. Many individuals will apply for the open positions, and he/she should choose the best of them. It happens very often that all candidates who apply for

the job to have all the necessary qualifications with respect to knowledge, experience and other skills that are required. The entrepreneur is facing a difficult task, and in such situations, usually the one who left the best impression on the face-to-face interview, gets the job. The first impressions are the most important and they help the entrepreneur to make a better decision. It is considered that the first five minutes are the most critical period when it comes to a meeting between two individuals. This is the period when the impressions are formed, retained and later on it's even possible to strengthen them (Pease, 2014, p.84). Only the entrepreneur who understands nonverbal communication and who can successfully read the personalities and their characters will more likely do the right choice and hire the right person.

Also, when running a meeting, an entrepreneur who understands nonverbal communication will much easily persuade his/her employees to follow the company's vision. He/she will much effectively convey his viewpoints and opinions without insulting other employees. He/she will know how, in which way, which tone and voice color to address them and to be taken seriously. He/she will much easily impose his/her own authority, but still to not act offensively. He/she will much easily spot whether any of the employees has lost the motivation, does not feel well, is disgruntled or has any kind of open issue and thus will know how to choose the right way to approach and help him. Employees' (dis)satisfaction always influences the business results of their organizations.

When the entrepreneur needs to convince the potential buyers of the superiority of company's product and make them come up with a positive decision for buying, only if he/she understands gestures and expressions customers make and pays attention whether they have locked feet or legs, whether their hands are open or closed, the way of their posture etc, he/she can easily get into the psyche of the customer and see if they are hesitant or not. If the entrepreneur notices that the buyer takes a more defensive stance, he/she will immediately know that he/she needs to change his/her approach and to apply a new one that will bring a positive sale.

The entrepreneur who understands nonverbal communication and applies body language will much easily succeed in negotiations with the suppliers. He will apply those gestures that will present him as a person full of confidence, reliability and honesty, and certainly all people want to cooperate with such persons. On the other hand, through body

language he will see if the other party i.e. the suppliers or the competitors are honest and do not intend to do something vile and unexpected.

3. The use of nonverbal communication by entrepreneurs in Republic of Macedonia

To make up the whole picture about the use of nonverbal communication by entrepreneurs, it was necessary to make a research on actual and potential entrepreneurs in Macedonia, in order to determine how much they know about nonverbal communication and how much they are using it in their business activities. One portion of the respondents hasn't shown any entrepreneurial behavior, so they are treated as non-entrepreneurs.

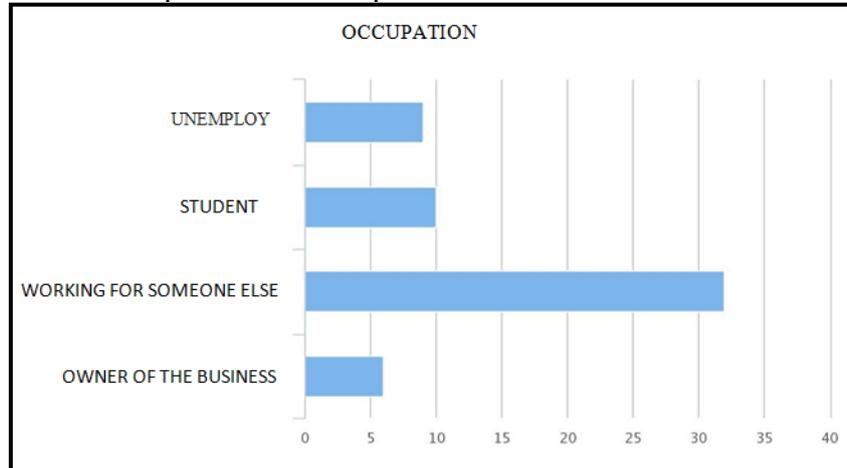
The survey was conducted anonymously electronic questionnaire from 19.01.2015 to 09.02.2015 on the sample of 58 individuals, 48% male, and 52% female. Most of them are aged between 18 and 24 years (40%), and 35% of individuals were in the age between 25 and 34. According to their answers about education level, it was shown that the biggest part of all respondents have higher education (87.7%), and the rest of them have secondary education (12.3%).

In order to separate the individuals and get results of how much of them are really entrepreneurs, the occupation they had at the moment was used as one of the main parameters.

The research shows that 43% of all respondents (31 individuals) have already started their own business (6 individuals) or work as an employee, are unemployed or study at a university and have a plan to start one in the next 3 years (25 individuals) (Chart 1).

Owning a business and the intention to start a new business in the next 3 years were the main variables how to distinguish the entrepreneurs from the respondents who are non-entrepreneurs. The additional control variables how to determine entrepreneurial behavior were the "self-initiative", "attitude towards taking risk" and "attitude towards entrepreneurial teams".

Chart 1 – Occupation of the respondents



Source: Authors' research

According to the question “Are you ready to always take an action without being pushed by someone else?” 96.6% of individuals gave positive answer (Chart 2).

Chart 2 – Self-initiative respondents



Source: Authors' research

Most of the respondents (85.7) properly understand the importance of the team for the entrepreneurial process, and are ready to participate in such a team (Chart 3).

Chart 3 – Team player respondents



Source: Authors' research

The research shows that 90.9% of all respondents are calculated risk-takers when it comes to business (Chart 4).

Chart 4 – Risk taker respondents



Source: Authors' research

After distinguish between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs has been done, the next step of the research was to find out how much the entrepreneurs know about nonverbal communication and how often they use it. Although 61% of individuals were usually more concentrated of what they say, they also pay much attention to movements that another person is making with their bodies while talking.

Table 1 – Knowledge and use of nonverbal communication by entrepreneurs

Knowledge and use of nonverbal communication	Entrepreneurs
	14 female / 17 male
Pay attention on the body position and their movements	13 (92.8%) / 15 (88.2%)
Pay attention more on what the other person is doing	3 (21.4%) / 8 (47.0%)
Consider that the hands gestures are one kind of a message	13 (92.8%) / 16 (94.1%)
Consider that body language is a conscious process	1 (7.1%) / 5 (29.4%)
Consider that body language isn't the same all over the world	4 (28.6%) / 11 (64.7%)
Know that in Japan the "ring" gesture means money	1 (7.1%) / 3 (17.6%)
Consider that the slow steps mean self-confidence	5 (35.7%) / 6 (35.3%)
Consider speaking rapid means greater credibility	2 (14.3%) / 5 (29.4%)
Consider watching aside means dishonesty	5 (35.7%) / 8 (47.0%)
Consider crossed arms means a threat	9 (64.3%) / 8 (47.0%)

Source: Authors' research

Even 88% of individuals consider that the each hand gesture is a kind of message.

The results from the research on nonverbal knowledge and nonverbal communication practice of the Macedonian entrepreneurs are presented in Table 1.

Most of the entrepreneurs, both male (88.2%) and female (92.8%) are very much aware about the importance of the body language and its manifestation. In line with this statement goes the fact that 94.1% of male entrepreneurs and 92.8% of female entrepreneurs understand that different hand and palm gestures are being used to send different messages.

But, at the same, they do not know how to correctly interpret the exact meaning and secret messages sent through these gestures and body language in general. For instance, only 35% both male and female entrepreneurs understand properly the meaning of walking slow as walk of someone with power and self-confidence. The same with the position of the interlocutor, when he/she look aside while talking. Only 47% of male entrepreneurs and 35.7% of female entrepreneurs know that it means a sort of dishonesty or keeping something secret.

Male entrepreneurs do not know the right meaning of the crossed arms, because only 47% say that it is a kind of closed defensive shield, blocking out the outside world. From the other hand, female entrepreneurs know much more about this gesture (64.3%), and are aware that shields act in two ways: one is to block incoming attacks and the other is a place behind which the person can hide and perhaps not be noticed. Crossed arms may thus indicate anxiety which is either driven by a lack of trust in the other person or an internal discomfort and sense of vulnerability (that may, for example, be rooted in childhood trauma).

The voice as a form of nonverbal communication is the most unknown by the Macedonian entrepreneurs. 29.4% male entrepreneurs and only 14.3% female entrepreneurs understand speaking rapid in line with greater credibility.

It is also interesting that opposite to what is the situation with similar researches in other countries, Macedonian female entrepreneurs know and use less body language in their business activities than their male counterpart.

Conclusion

It is a fact that nonverbal communication helps entrepreneurs to move further in terms of their business success. People who better understand nonverbal communication and use it more frequently, are more likely to be better in daily negotiations, cooperation and making all important business decisions. The research results show that there is a huge difference between the uses of nonverbal communication by the Macedonian entrepreneurs and her use in other countries. In other countries, nonverbal communication is part of the organizational culture and a topic into the overall business strategies of the organizations.

The analysis has shown that the entrepreneurs are aware of the the nonverbal communication and its characteristics, but what is more important, they are aware also for the benefits that come with its use. However, they don't take the body language so seriously when it comes to making business decisions. The results show that the entrepreneurs have only the basic knowledge of nonverbal communication, they know how important it is, but only small part of them fully understands it. Only a small part of them really knows the nonverbal communication with all her dimensions: voice (paralanguage), environment, artifacts, space, facial expression, and environment. What is also interesting result from this research is that men entrepreneurs are much more aware and familiar with the nonverbal communication that the female entrepreneurs.

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