

## PhR 2019 Philological Readings

### **RHETORIC DEVICES AS A MEANS OF EFFECTIVE SPEECH IN BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS**

Irina S. Butyrkina (a), Vera L. Temkina (b)\*  
\*Corresponding author

- (a) Department of English Philology and Methods of Teaching English, Orenburg State University, 13, Pobedy Avenue, Orenburg State University, Orenburg, Russia, butyrkina.irina@yandex.ru  
(b) Department of English Philology and Methods of Teaching English, Orenburg State University, 13, Pobedy Avenue, Orenburg State University, Orenburg, Russia, veratemkina@yandex.ru

#### *Abstract*

The paper considers the importance of using various stylistic devices in presenting new products, ideas or problem solutions. It reveals the concept of stylistic device and analyzes different types of such devices that are used in business speeches. An attempt was made to analyze modern business presentations that are freely available on the Internet from Startupbootcamp, Consumer Electronic Show and other projects to date the frequency of occurrence of stylistic devices used by the speakers during the presentation. The whole set of the rhetoric devices which are under analysis are classified into three groups according to the three types of lexical meanings: logical meaning, nominative meaning and emotive meaning. The analysis allows us to define the percentage of the used stylistic devices and by comparing these stylistic devices in a certain amount of business presentations we consider that it is possible to make up a list of the most frequent language and expressive tools. The experience of the communicators and the knowledge of the techniques that work with the audience help the speakers achieve one of the main goals in presentations, that is to transfer the message effectively for the listeners so that they can perceive it easier and more successfully.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Business, device, message, presentation, rhetoric, stylistics.



## 1. Introduction

“Style” can be seen as a polysemantic term. It comes from the Latin word “stilus” that originally meant a writing instrument used in writing on waxed tablets. Later this word got a further meaning, “the distinctive or characteristic mode of presentation, construction or execution in any art, employment or product, e.g. the fine arts, sport, etc.” (Lehtsalu, 1973, p. 11). The scholars see this term in a different way. The Academician V. V. Vinogradov defined style as “socially recognized and functionally conditioned internally united totality of the ways of using, selecting and combining the means of lingual intercourse in the sphere of one national language or another...” (as cited in Lehtsalu, 1973, p. 14). Professor I. R. Galperin considered that style as a “system of interrelated language means which served a definite aim in communication” (as cited in Lehtsalu, 1973, p. 16).

The linguistic style is studied by the stylistics. As a branch of general linguistics it comprises such objectives as the investigation of the tools of special language which secure the desirable effect of the utterance. In general, stylistics deals with three aspects. They are functional styles of language (discourse), stylistic devices (models in which united semantic and structural characteristics represent a generalized pattern) and expressive means (units which carry additional emotive or logical information). The aspect of our interest is stylistic devices. It can be described as an intentional intensification of semantic and structural properties of a language unit to become a generative model. In the sphere of public speaking and business communication the term “rhetoric device” is frequently used. Rhetoric devices can be considered as the resources of language that the speaker uses to convey to the listeners or readers his or her thoughts and ideas with the aim of persuading them. One can also do it for the sake of encouraging people or evoking certain emotions or feelings and calling the audience for action. The interrelation between stylistic and rhetoric devices is that the “rhetoric device” is much broader term than “stylistic device” and includes different techniques for creating a certain effect.

The paper is structured as follows. In introduction we define the notion of style and linguistic style, point out three aspects with which stylistics deals with and describe stylistic device as an intentional intensification of semantic and structural properties of a language unit as well as the interrelation between stylistic and rhetoric devices. In section 2 we state the problem by presenting the examples of two different introductions and comparing them and in section 3 we discuss what rhetoric devices are the most effective for delivering the messages in business presentations. In section 4 the purpose of the study is grounded. In section 5 we define the methods which allow to conduct the analysis of stylistic and rhetoric devices in modern business presentation. In section 6 we present the results of the research devoted to clarifying the most common rhetoric devices united in four groups and in section 7 we provide a conclusion.

## 2. Problem Statement

A number of speakers spend a lot of time preparing, revising and rehearsing their speeches but cannot achieve their goals. Let us compare two examples: “...Right. Today I'd like to talk about the future of our business. First, I'd like to describe the past. After that I'd like to talk about the present. Finally, I'll try to predict how the business will develop in the future. If you have any questions, please feel free to

stop me. There'll be time for questions at the end” (Freitag-Lawrence, 2003, p. 7); “Good afternoon. It's great to be here today. As you all know I'm the Head of the Design Department. I've been in this job for four years. Before that I worked for another very successful company in France for five years. I'm talking to you today as the manager of the team which developed this new product. By the end of this session, you'll know enough about the new product to be able to sell it with confidence to our customers. You'll know where the idea came from, how it was designed and how it can benefit our customers...” (Freitag-Lawrence, 2003, p. 9).

The two above examples represent the overview of speakers' presentations. The presenter in the first example reveals the main point of the speech in a mechanic way. It creates the atmosphere that lacks enthusiasm and interest from the listener's side (the use of trite expressions “first”, “after that”, “finally”, the sentence “I'll try to predict how the business will develop in the future” needs more details and concreteness). In the second example the speaker is more open and his speech is much more personal. It allows him to establish the connection with the audience. With the help of emotional adjective “great”, personal experience (work in France) and detailed explanation of what the audience will learn by the end of the presentation the speaker provides the basis for effective listening and perception of the information.

The problem is that quite often their speeches feel the lack of expressiveness and emotiveness: the language is dry, the text is long and complicated and there is no any vivid structure. It leads to the audience's failing of the understanding of the speaker's message.

### **3. Research Questions**

Taking into consideration the definition of “style”, “linguistic style”, “rhetoric (stylistic) device” as the resources which are used by the speaker so that to convey the main ideas to the listeners and to serve as a means of persuasion the audience we suggest that there should be the figures of speech with emotive colouring that can be found on the lexical and syntactical levels.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

So, this study aims at revealing how the rhetoric devices can completely change the image of the speech and enhance the effectiveness of transferring the main ideas.

### **5. Research Methods**

As for the research methods, we use analysis of theoretical and practice – oriented literature, methods of linguistic description such as monitoring (while selecting the material for the research), classification, continuous sampling method, and interpretation of language material.

### **6. Findings**

The important element of effective business speech is the presence of expressiveness and artistic means which provide vivacity and vividness of the business text that is rich of factual information and professional terminology. Neutral vocabulary is the basic of any text. Stylistically coloured words, tropes

and figures of speech add a certain colouring to the framework. The choice of stylistic and rhetoric colouring depends on the audience's characteristics. Generally, rhetoric means and devices are divided into certain groups: means based on the interaction of different lexical meanings of the word, means which add complementary characteristics to the objects described, means based on the use of phraseological units and allusions. There is quite an amount of meanings belonging to the word. We are interested in three types of lexical meanings: logical meaning, nominal meaning and emotive meaning. Logical meaning is the concrete meaning of an object or an idea; nominal meaning that names physical beings and things; emotive meaning serves to express feelings and emotions.

The materials of the research are business pitches and presentations which are freely available on the Internet. They are classified according to the groups based on the interaction of the above mentioned meanings. The analysis shows that the most frequent phenomenon in business presentations is the use of the following rhetoric (stylistic) devices:

1. Devices based on the interaction between the logical and contextual logical meanings: Metaphor is a comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share common features: Your eyes on the street (PARKEAGLE - smart sensor network enables cities to optimize their parking capacity) . It is necessary to note the use of idioms in the business texts. Idiom is a group of words that has not literal but metaphorical meaning. For example, in one start-up project "Aerobotics" Oli Bunting uses the word "reap" that means to cut and collect a grain crop and puts it in different context, thus we have "reap the rewards" (to get all the good things that come with something): Aerobotics [aerial data analytics platforms for farmers] – Join us. Reap the rewards (Startupbootcamp InsurTech Aerobotics, 2018).

2. Devices based on the interaction between the logical and emotive meaning of the word: Epithet is a descriptive device, the aim of which is to describe things or people in a more prominent way: pretty exciting, unbelievable, awesome, incredible, amazing, gorgeous, phenomenal, stunning, beautiful, giant, super, revolutionary, breath-taking, pretty nice, remarkable; It has a gorgeous 13.3-inch wide-screen display and a phenomenal full-sized keyboard; A giant leap beyond PC notebooks, It's terrific, super responsive, super precise (Apple Archive, 2018).

Allusion is an indirect reference to a person, place, idea or other thing of significance: The setups we've recreated to deliver TrueView for the National Football League, they produce data at the rate of three terabytes per minute. That means we're creating the data equivalent of all of the text in the Library of Congress in the first quarter of any football game (Intel's CES event, 2018).

3. Devices which give additional characteristics to the objects described: Simile is understood as an explicit comparison between unrelated things with the use of words "like" or "as": a huge heart transplant works like magic (Steve Jobs announces switch to Intel & Podcasting – WWDC, 2018); Ionic liquid could be a superhero of gas capture; learning a foreign language by using an app, it's like becoming all-seeing after reading a book (Harland, 2016).

Analogy can be considered as a strong rhetoric device that shows the connection between two things which are quite dissimilar. In business presentation it is used to support the speaker's ideas: It's like having a DJ mix the songs in your library (Steve Jobs announces iTunes 8 with Genius, 2018); It's got battery. We've been able to achieve 10 of battery life. I can take a flight from San Francisco to Tokyo and watch video the whole way on one charge. It's pretty nice (Apple Archive, 2018); It would take

100,000 of today's fastest laptops — which would reach 1.5 miles into the sky if you're the stacking sort — to equal Roadrunner's computational power; It would take the entire population of the earth, — about six billion — each of us working a handheld calculator at the rate of one second per calculation, more than 46 years to do what Roadrunner can do in one day; If it were possible for cars to improve their gas mileage over the past decade at the same rate that supercomputers have improved their cost and efficiency, we'd be getting 200,000 miles to the gallon today.

4. Syntactical stylistic devices: Inversion is a technique when the normal word order is reserved as it helps the writers and speakers achieve a certain effect: Focus. Focus is the key. And focus we did (SKACE-Startupbootcamp, 2017). Rhetorical questions are not the questions that require the answer. Such questions are asked to put an emphasis to some points or ideas delivered while speaking. These questions are useful in presentations as they help the speaker create a dialogue with the audience: How do I know this? I own a café for the past 10 years. I constantly have to copy and distribute sanitation checklists for my team. And checking on the checklist is even more time-consuming. And that's why we created Flowtify (Freitag-Lawrence, 2003); So how can hotels like Peter's maintain a positive online reputation? The key is to address negative guest experience before checkout (Roomatic pitch, 2018); But how to fix it? What we do is to remove all wasteful steps in the middle, take the process online and focus on what really brings value (24sessions-Startupbootcamp, 2017); Why are Americans spending over 46 million dollars on fitness? Let's face it, we all want the quickest, easiest way to stay healthy and to look good (2017 Elevator Pitch Winner, University of Dayton Business Plan Competition, 2018).

Repetition is the word or set of words which are repeated more than once in the business text: ... our technology records every touch, every swipe, every purchase and every share; In Indonesia there are millions under-employed farmers while on the other side there are millions cycles of underutilized land and millions people ready to participate in farming; What does it mean to serve your users? It means you give them the items they love, the items they want to buy, the items they want to share (Disrupt London Startup LiftIgniter, 2016); Liftigniter built a platform for every single vertical across all types of content, across every single touch point and across all devices. Quite often the speaker repeats the same phrases or constructions in the beginning and in the end of the business presentation, thus making the so – called "frame": Anything, anyplace, anytime, why wait? Join us to get anything, anyplace, anytime (SADDL-Startupbootcamp, 2017); What if hardware could be as iterative, as adaptable, as agile as software? (Collider Startup Battlefield, 2017). The repetition of the first word or part of the sentence is called anaphora: We transform video cameras. We turn them into health monitors. We take a normal video camera. We add our software which has proprietary algorithms analyzing the signals on every pixel on that sensor. We hook it up to our cloud to monitor performance... As a rhetorical device anaphora is aimed at appealing to the audience's emotions and perform different functions such as to persuade people, motivate and encourage them to act. Anadiplosis is also the form of repetition where the last word or phrase of the first sentences repeats in the beginning of the second sentence or clause: Panasonic is announcing the establishment of the digital solution center. The center will be the resource within the new Panasonic system solution company in North America; the solution to their problem is Record Gram. Record Gram is an all-in-one mobile production marketplace, a recording studio and a social network that allows our users to create original songs with award-winning music producers for under \$5...; Imagine

you have an idea. The idea for the part that could be a new product; To truly understand an individual these sites and apps must be able to consider actions from across these silos and that's what we do here at Breinify. At Breinify we create the most robust, dynamic and encrypted profile of an individual (Breinify Solves Personalization, 2016); The new Internet, the Internet of sound (Data Over Audio Through LISNR, 2017). The function of this technique is seen in adding emphasis to the main idea. The repeated constructions are caught by the audience's consciousness and thus they can keep the important information for a long time. It is a common practice when chief managers and CEOs use anadiplosis to make their messages, offers and suggestions obvious and effective.

Antithesis is a device in which two ideas with opposite meanings stand close in the sentence. Primarily, it is used for creating a contrasting effect: the power of data, quite simple but incredibly powerful (Data Over Audio Through LISNR, 2017).

Gradation is a device based on the arrangement of words or statements in an ascending or descending order. Such an arrangement can show growing emotional tension: 2 billion songs have been downloaded. It is equal to 5 million songs downloaded per day. It means 58 songs purchased every second. It happens every minute of every hour of every day (Steve Jobs announces iTunes 8 with Genius, 2018).

Parcelling is a rhetoric device that is based on the separation of the whole sentence structure and formation of several independent speech units (in the terminology of Sweden linguist Charles Bally). In business pitches we can find the expressive aspect of parcelling: "Everyone. Here. Goes shopping. You see amazing products in ads, online or just leafing through a catalogue... (Startup Battlefield Finals: Colormass, 2017); Sony – Make. Believe (Sony, 2018); ThingTrax – Capture. Analyze. Alert (ThingTrax-Demo Day Pitch, 2018).

Segmented constructions are binomial construction in which there are a segment (the first part of the sentence in nominative case) and a correlate (with primarily pronominal connection): For a solid feedback product we need to put the guests in the centre. And that's what we had in mind when we built Roomatic. It improves the guest experience by giving me access to hotel amenities and information (Roomatic pitch, 2018)

Exclamatory sentences are the sentences with exclamatory mark in the end. It helps the speaker convey strong emotions or excitement regarding the launch of the new product or service: vDexI – The connected car era has arrived! (Startupbootcamp InsurTech-vDEXI, 2018), It's like giving a glass of ice water to someone in hell! (Steve Jobs announces iTunes 8 with Genius, 2018).

Syntactical parallelism is a kind of repetition in clauses and sentences. In business presentation syntactical parallelism occurs quite often as it transmits the key idea of the speech: We need a better process. We need a process that promotes simplicity. We need the process that promotes efficiency and transparency. We need Houzeo (Houzeo Simplifies Real Estate. Startup Battlefield Disrupt NY, 2017), Have you ever been rejected? Have you ever been left out when it was time to play? Been blown off at the bar or simply turned down for a job? We all know that feeling. In business sales reps face rejection every single day (Salestack-Startupbootcamp, 2018). Parallelism can play an important role in the process of persuasion. The certain words, phrases or processes are repeated through the abstract or the whole text of the speech so that the audience get the message more clearly. Incomplete (elliptical) sentences are the

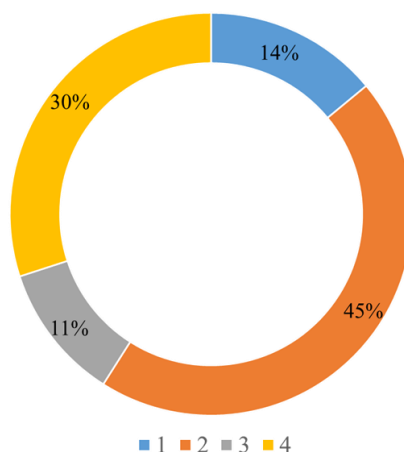
sentences in which one or more word – forms in the subject or in the predicate positions: Personalization. Every digital experience today claims to be personalized (Breinify Solves Personalization, 2016). Such sentences are also used in the projects or companies’ slogans: Sony – Be Moved, LG ThinkQ – Innovation for a Better Life (LG, 2018), HomyHub – Make your garage access simple, convenient and safe (HomyHub-Demo Day Pitch, 2017). They are formed with the help of the imperative mood as they have the goal to call the audience for a certain kind of action.

In total for this research we analysed 30 business pitches that is a sum of 360 hours of speech. We offer the quantitative indicators for each of the above mentioned groups (Table 01).

**Table 01.** The usage of rhetoric devices

| Group of rhetoric devices  | Number of references |
|--|----------------------|
| 1.Devices based on the interaction between the logical and contextual logical meanings | 15                   |
| 2.Devices based on the interaction between the logical and emotive meaning of the word | 50                   |
| 3.Devices which give additional characteristics to the objects described               | 12                   |
| 4.Syntactical devices  | 33                   |

On the basis of quantitative indicators, it is possible to compose the chart with the percentage of groups of rhetoric devices. The chart shows that the prevailing group among rhetoric devices is the second one, that is the devices based on the interaction between the logical and emotive meaning of the word (Figure 01).



**Figure 01.** The percentage of groups of rhetoric devices used in business presentations

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the results of the study devoted to analysing the prevailing rhetoric and stylistic devices in business presentations show that emotive component plays a significant role in the process of creating and delivering the business speech. To make someone buy the product or take advantage of services the speaker should take into account not only the natural desire of the customer or the supply of qualitative

and detailed information but also the emotions which are put into the speech. The more personal the business pitch is, the more enthusiastic and open the customer is. Then it is easier to get the customer who is eager and willing to buy the product and persuade the potential investors to allocate money for the launch of the production or to support a new start up. Emotional intelligence is the most potent instrument in boosting one's own self – awareness, motivation, empathy and social and soft skills that help the speaker become the successful leader.

## References

- Apple Archive (2018, January 25). Retrieved from <https://www.apple.com/ca/newsroom/archive/>
- Breinify Solves Personalization (2016, February 5). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fX9dRmRJNCA>
- Collider Startup Battlefield (2017, March 14). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enwx6e8HeXg>
- Data Over Audio Through LISNR (2017, March 21). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrn24xE8y-0>
- Disrupt London Startup LiftIgniter (2016, April 3). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPKgRJMOKFA>
- Freitag-Lawrence, A. (2003). *English for Work: Business Presentations*. Harlow: Longman.
- Harland, J. (2016, April 15). Ionic Liquids. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhuzh0FOYOU>
- HomyHub-Demo Day Pitch (2017, November 23). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvY5euxd4SU>
- Houzeo Simplifies Real Estate Startup Battlefield Disrupt NY (2017, December 16). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBW1NfLg-v8>
- Intel's CES event (2018, September 8). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lbM5vsqJd8>
- Lehtsalu, U. (1973). *An Introduction to English Stylistics*. Tartu: Tartu State University.
- LG (2018, January 17). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUQ-UO42FGQ>
- Roomatic pitch (2018, April 23). Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y\\_Xo1GSG9A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y_Xo1GSG9A)
- SADDL-Startupbootcamp (2017, July 13). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1GTnaFA5gw>
- Salestack-Startupbootcamp (2018, September 4). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5hHer8Ph8Y>
- SKACE-Startupbootcamp. (2017, August 18). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHAP0wPfmnw>
- Sony (2018, October 13). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgixA-vMJww>
- Startup Battlefield Finals: Colormass (2017, August 22). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnJYxAI3HrQ>
- Startupbootcamp InsurTech Aerobotics (2018, January 27). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENqQ2WMEYo4>
- Startupbootcamp InsurTech-vDEXI (2018, February 19). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xg4EqZYeFgM>
- Steve Jobs announces iTunes 8 with Genius (2018, April 20). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XsgEH5HMvI>
- Steve Jobs announces switch to Intel & Podcasting – WWDC (2018, June 12). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNwvAuc0nCU>
- ThingTrax-Demo Day Pitch (2018, May 15). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yArdN8PXXIk>
- 2017 Elevator Pitch Winner, University of Dayton Business Plan Competition (2018, May 10). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKHg1wOsZx>
- 24sessions-Startupbootcamp (2017, August 17). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt8K5wW0j74>