

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF KINESIC NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS USED
BY BARACK OBAMA IN HIS SPEECHES**

Стаття присвячена аналізу невербальних засобів комунікації, які використовує президент США Барак Обама під час публічних виступів. Дослідження спрямоване на опис та надання детальної характеристики функціонально-прагматичних особливостей невербальних компонентів комунікації, а саме: жестів, посмішки, помахів руками та інших рухів, які використовує Барак Обама для забезпечення ефективного комунікативного процесу.

Ключові слова: невербальне спілкування, кінесика, політичний імідж, комунікативний процес, публічний виступ.

Статья посвящена анализу невербальных средств коммуникации, которые использует президент США Барак Обама во время публичных выступлений. Исследование направлено на описание и предоставление детальной характеристики функционально-прагматических особенностей невербальных компонентов коммуникации, а именно: жестов, улыбки, взмахов руками и других движений, которые использует Барак Обама с целью обеспечения эффективного коммуникативного процесса.

Ключевые слова: невербальное общение, кинесика, политический имидж, коммуникативный процесс, публичное выступление.

The article deals with the analysis of non-verbal means of communication used by the president of the USA Barack Obama in public speeches. The research focuses on the description and detailed characteristics of functional and pragmatic features of kinesic non-verbal components such as gestures, smiles, hand motions, other movements used by Barack Obama to ensure effective communication.

Key words: non-verbal communication, kinesics, political image, communicative process, public speech.

A great number of observation facts were gathered in the science of language before the beginning of the third millennium and this allowed to expand the study area in the field of non-verbal means of communication [3, 170]. Non-verbal means of communication or body language is a signal system that people began to use when there was no speech interaction.

The scientific observations prove that nearly from 60 to 80% of information received by a person can be transmitted by means of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal aspect of communication is the main message channel (or its main intensifying factor) in the process of addressee's persuasion. Very often influence effectiveness and the capability to build relations with people depend on the skills to use and estimate non-verbal aspects of communication properly [4, 227-231].

The relevance of the topic is stipulated by the tendency of modern linguistic research to study the communicative process from the point of view of unity of verbal and non-verbal components of communication.

The subject area of the research is kinesic non-verbal components used by Barack Obama in his speeches.

The specific topic is the identification of functional and pragmatic features of kinesic non-verbal components represented in Barack Obama's public speeches.

The objective of the article is to describe and give a detailed characteristics of non-verbal means of Barack Obama's communication, gestures in particular, that signal speaker's attitude to another participants of communicative process.

The non-verbal communication traditionally includes:

- phonation understood as lung-power, voice pitch, elocution;
- kinesics – gestures, facial expressions and postures;
- proxemics – the distance between communicators [1, 4].

There is no doubt that non-verbal transmission of information takes place simultaneously with verbal and can enhance or change the word meaning. Exchange of glances, facial expression, raising of eyebrows, a glance signifying approval or disapproval are all non-verbal components of communication interpreted nearly always correctly by an addressee [5].

The introduction of non-verbal components to the communicative process gives the opportunity to reduce to a minimum the decoding of speech that allows the addressee to evaluate its value and to make an adequate communicative action. Research results prove that 55% of the message is transmitted through facial expression, gestures; 38% – through the tone and voice modulation and only 7% belongs to the word [5].

Judging by facial expression, type of smile, glance, tone the utterance is pronounced with, it can be both cooperative and conflict-oriented. But on the other hand, to prevent an undesirable communicative result one can allow himself “not to notice” or “not to understand” the conflict gesture, glance or the tone because of the fact that the information is ill defined for univocal interpretation. Therefore, one can block speaker’s intentions and try to shift the conversation onto the desirable track [3, 171].

In the process of argumentative discourse, the aim of which is to persuade an interlocutor, express one’s point of view, prove that it is the right one, non-verbal aspect of communication takes an important place as one of two levels of feeding with information about the speaker’s state, his/her emotions, intentions and is a marker of the argumentative strategy [4, 227-228].

Each person forms his/her own and unique arsenal of non-verbal elements that he/she uses in the process of communication and argumentation. The effectiveness of a communicative strategy largely depends on the successful use of the non-verbal elements with the purpose of an addressee’s persuasion and the communicator’s positive image creation [4, 231].

In daily activities we often use non-verbal means of communication speaking to various communicative partners. The research and conscious attitude to non-verbal signals that we simultaneously receive and convey open the possibility to raise the effectiveness of social and political influence. So, non-verbal communication is natural in all types of political processes, including an electoral too.

A political leader interacts with the electorate with the help of different kinds of communication, where non-verbal signals play a major role. Each politician has their own style: one carries on a live conversation, the other – loses direct verbal and at the same time non-verbal contact with the electorate [5].

Non-verbal communication is very important for all aspects of a politician's carrier, especially when it refers to the public speeches, socializing, interviews in mass media. The first impression the politician makes on people is based on non-verbal perception and is a good adviser in understanding, whether the politician will have a great success. It is important to note that all people who are in politics professionally are well informed about peculiarities of information mental perception. Maximum continuous attention focusing is impossible. And it doesn't matter how important the information is. The audience is able to concentrate attention within a certain limited period of time. The decrease of attention results in important things omission. To fill all these lacunas the brain tries to anchor something that is the easiest for perception. Gestures are just the thing. If the addressee doesn't understand the content he/she tries to find all the answers in non-verbal behavior. As politics is always full of complicated problems, people try to concentrate mostly on what they see, but not on what they hear. Therefore, the body language is very important in politics [6].

The outstanding talented orator, who has his own unique style of negotiation, is Barack Obama. His political speeches are characterized by precise lay out, they are rich in comparisons, examples from his personal experience. His speech is free from ambiguous reflections, superfluous words; his utterances don't contradict his gestures

and the gesticulation emphasizes and intensifies what has been said. For example, during negotiations with Dmitry Medvedev, Barack Obama mostly all the time sits at the edge of the chair, his chest is directed forward to the communicator; verbal information corresponds non-verbal precisely. His hands are also directed forward to the communicator, his palms are open, the head is tilted slightly down, the glance is very attentive and concentrated on the interlocutor. Obama's elbows rest on his legs. Non-verbal signals suggest that he is always ready to listen to Medvedev's terms and go into the offensive immediately. During those negotiations Barack Obama made a control gesture: stretching his hand he took Medvedev's wrist. At the negotiations of such a high level this is a very audacious move that had worked 100%. Medvedev was touched by such a warm and open gesture of the USA President [7].

But if we trace the negotiation process between Barack Obama and Putin, we can notice some peculiarities: the USA President directed his chest forward to Putin not so rapidly, his tilt forward is minimal, the right hand rests on his knee, and the left one interrupts the communication line completely. In such a case we can easily identify the guest from the host [8].

It is necessary to emphasize how efficiently the USA President uses a handshake. July, 8, 2009 during G8 summit in Italy while shaking hands with Silvio Berlusconi Barack Obama keeps his hand above, as if laying emphasis on his might and the fact that he controls the situation [10]. To intensify a handshake emotionally, Obama uses a handshake and at the same time a free hand touches the hand of the other person, a handshake and a free arm is on the shoulder, a handshake and a free hand covers this handshake [11].

Obama clearly understands that each next gesture gets higher emotional marking. To have a mighty look, the USA President often puts his hand on the communicator's back. It is as if he directs him, dominating by his power and might. Going to vote, Obama, as a real master of gestures, used this technique to demonstrate his leadership.

Communicating with journalists the President always holds his palms open. This helps him to attract attention and gain the confidence. In such a way Obama emphasizes that he has nothing to hide and build confidence. If two palms are open, it signals that the speaker tells the truth [12].

A gesture called “open hands” was observed not once. With the help of it Obama tries to show his will to make advances and to establish rapport. His hands show the interrelation of interests and help him to reach a consensus more quickly [5].

One can observe the way Obama holds his head during public speeches. He never looks down because a bowed head signals submission. An obedience and submission are the last things which any politician would like to demonstrate.

One old technique used by the USA President is soft and friendly waving to the audience or gestures of recognition while walking to the place to deliver a speech. This is a very powerful gesture that shows support and popularity. It demonstrates that the speaker has his supporters among the audience and the President himself is very friendly and this evokes a feeling of solidarity with the audience [6].

Barack Obama can grip the attention of the audience. His way of interacting is very effective. But it is difficult not to notice how the politician reacts to what he doesn't like. One of the gestures that shows his discontent is rubbing an ear. One could notice this gesture used by the USA President while Health Insurance Reform discussion. It denoted that the President didn't like what he had heard. Such a gesture is used by Barack Obama when he is skeptical about something or tries to put pressure on the communicator [5].

The USA President is proficient in the art of persuasion and influence. During his speech, he always wants to have the audience's support. Observing Obama's behavior, one can notice that his hands are always on the table he sits at. If he just sits at the chair, his knees and hands are always in the frame. This is the evidence of the fact, that such a person achieves his goal easier and faster.

Obama never loses his dignity. If people are nervous, they often try to hide this with the help of a smile. In abstracto it is not bad, because a smile helps to establish rapport, but it must be such a smile as Obama's one – a beaming smile. One part of a face smile is its universal micro expression that means disrespect, contempt, disgust. Smile is an important tool for the USA President to establish rapport. Subconsciously we assume that the more important the person is, the less he/she needs to smile. Obama necessarily smiles at the beginning and at the end of the interview not to seem insincere.

If we pay attention to such a gesture of the politician when the hand touches the cheek, it is possible to understand that this gesture is inherent to a person who estimates all pros and cons and can address the situation dispassionately and prudently [2, 192-193].

One more gesture which is necessary to mention is pointing the finger at the audience. Usually it is considered a manifestation of rudeness. In Washington at the meeting with demonstrators Obama replaces it with the more effective and emotional gesture, that doesn't have a negative meaning. When he shows a thumb, it is a sign of extreme trust.

The open posture, smile and hands that show something above the head level – Obama has touched a very important for him personally and sometimes even sacred topic. This gesture is used by the US President when he informs about something extremely important [9].

Taking into account the fact that a universal means of information exchange between people is verbal language, it is necessary to point out that an adequate and full understanding of the utterance is impossible without taking into consideration non-verbal elements of communication.

To create an effective political image it is necessary to consider many aspects, including peculiarities of non-verbal communication. This is imperative for leading politicians when it is necessary to present a vast amount of information in a limited

period of time allotted for a speech. Non-verbal communication supplement the message, and in such a way, reinforce the impression.

During the effective politician image creation it is essential to build up non-verbal communication properly. It should be done in compliance with verbal components of communication and the politician's personal characteristics. Barack Obama's non-verbal communication always emphasizes that he has the upper hand: his posture is straight, the chin in parallel to the floor, head movements are in a horizontal plane; the back is straight, shoulders are straightened, feet are slightly apart, while sitting knees look sideways; gait is a bit relaxed. An effective non verbal communication of the US President both support and strengthen his political image.

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