

“Is there any room for  
negotiation in this?”  
Corpus insights into  
negotiating

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# Corpus

- **CANBEC** (Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus)\*
  - 1 million words spoken data
  - Meetings: 912,734 words
  - 64 meetings from 26 companies
- Part of the **Cambridge English Corpus** (CEC)
  - 1.8 billion words

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# CANBEC

CANBEC has information about:

- Purpose of meeting
- Topic
- Relationship of speakers:
  - Internal meetings (IM)
  - **External meetings (EM)**
    - Contractually-bound
    - Non-contractually-bound

# Data

4 external meetings (1-5 hours) with substantial negotiation activity:

- **Meeting 1:** Logistics meeting between two pharmaceutical companies (UK and German)
- **Meeting 2:** Sales meeting to renew network support contract (UK)
- **Meeting 3:** Sales meeting between a tyre manufacturer and a vehicle manufacturer (UK)
- **Meeting 4:** Meeting between vehicle manufacturer and hydraulics manufacturer specialising in cranes to discuss progress on a joint project. (UK)

# How do you know it's a negotiation?

- 'what we've got here is probably one of the areas that we- that we could **negotiate** on' (Meeting 2)
- S3: Is there any room for **negotiation** in this?  
[2 sec]  
S5: Mick. There's already **negotiation**. We're just not buying. (Meeting 3)
- 'I mean we can **negotiate** some reduction on the plating price with quantities but it's still not gonna be enough.' (Meeting 4)

# The Stages of a negotiation

(Stage 1: Relationship-building)

Stage 2: Information exchange

Stage 3: Bargaining → **core phase**

Stage 4: Agreement

(Graham 1983, Charles, 1996, (Bjørge 2010))

# The Stages of a negotiation

Charles and Charles 1999:

‘Bargaining is a far more **subtle activity** than the full blooded exchanges practised in many Business English courses’ (73-4)

‘Negotiators seemed to hold themselves in that second task-related **information exchange** stage, merging that with **persuasion**, re-cycling pieces of **non-task sounding [relationship-building]**, and pushing the final stage away from them, to be conducted later on, perhaps outside the negotiating room.’ (p74)

# The Stages of a negotiation

## Negotiating a network support contract (Meeting 2)

- Pre-meeting 'shop' talk
- Seller (S) gives details of offer and shows willingness to be flexible  
(Buyer listens)
- Buyer (B) indicates a problem
- S shows willingness to compromise
- B explains her needs and priorities
- B summarises offer
- S shows willingness to improve offer and makes further offer

# The Stages of a negotiation

## Negotiating a network support contract

- B and S collaboratively review factors to consider for deal
- B evaluates her business positively and S shows enthusiasm
- S asks for quotes
- B and S agree action points for further negotiation
- Small talk

# The Stages of a negotiation

## Negotiating a network support contract

- Pre-meeting 'shop' talk Relationship-building
- Seller (S) gives details of offer and shows willingness to be flexible Information exchange/  
Bargaining  
(Buyer listens)
- Buyer (B) indicates a problem Bargaining
- S shows willingness to compromise
- B explains her needs and priorities Information exch.
- B summarises offer
- S shows willingness to improve offer and makes further offer Bargaining

# The Stages of a negotiation

## Negotiating a network support contract

- B and S collaboratively review factors to consider for deal **Information exchange**
- B evaluates her business positively and S shows enthusiasm **Relationship-bldg**
- S asks for quotes **Information exchange**
- B and S agree action points for further negotiation
- Small talk **Relationship-building**

# Bargaining

## Making an offer

- But if you were to say “Well look we w= we're pretty sure we're gonna have sixteen by say February" erm or or you know an agreed date we're prepared to obviously up the level of discount. (Meeting 2)
- But what we will say and we don't like giving money away [1 sec ]. If you can do the job and it is a little more [1 sec ] We will live with it providing you can produce what we want when we want it. (Meeting 3)

# Bargaining

## Refusing a request/offer

- So this will be a double work for us to to say “Okay we have to cancel one order and er [1 sec] increase the the next order”. Because they are on a different different erm [1.5 secs] time line. ... so I think this will be not the way which we can /?/. (Meeting 1)
- Alright. Well our problem is we can't afford to pay eleven hundred and ninety two pounds [2 secs] so straight away we have to have a look and say “What can we do to er [1 sec] er bring this down?” (Meeting 4)

# Bargaining

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# Hypothetical Reported Speech (HRS)

- **HRS** = Quoted utterances (direct reported speech) that have not actually been spoken, but are projected as hypothetical in an imaginary world or as possible in a future situation
- 79 instances of HRS in 4 meetings analysed
- Most HRS occurred in negotiating sequences

# CANBEC

- *If* is in the top 15 keywords
- Frequent 'clusters':

*if you*

*if I*

*so if*

*if we can*

*if you look at*

*if you say*

(Handford, 2010)

## Making an Offer (Meeting 2, Network Support)

S: Erm but you know we're prepared to do something like if you say "Well look I'm pretty sure that we're gonna be up to sixteen by by Christmas time or +

B: Yeah.

S: + by er April".

B: This is additional to what we've got now?

S: Yes.

B: Right.

S: Well [pause] yes although we would include your servers your – your current servers in this = in this pricing scheme so we'd say "Right well /five to nine/ you've already got eight" you know or +

B: Right.

S: + or nine say. So that +

B: Okay.

S: + that's already included. Y= y= yeah. We would include your existing servers with that. But if you were to say "Well look we w= we're pretty sure we're gonna have sixteen by say February" erm or or you know an agreed date **we're prepared to obviously up the level of discount+**

S2: Right. Okay.

# Refusing a Request

Meeting 1 (Pharma):

B: So we've got three different orders. So I guess the question is assuming it's the same delivery address can we combine any of those orders.

...

S: So this will be a double work for us to to say "Okay we have to cancel one order and er [1 sec] increase the the next order".

Because they are on a different different erm [1.5 secs] time line.

## Making a Counter-proposal (Meeting 4, Cranes)

1. B: So / if I've / read this correct. What we're really saying here is that [0.5 sec] you wanna sell this to us for eleven hundred and ninety two pounds. Is that right?
2. S2: If =
3. S1: You can order in batches of twenty.
4. B: Yeah.
  - [2 secs]
    1. S1: That's our minimum sort of batch order.
    2. B: Alright. Well our problem is we can't afford to pay eleven hundred and ninety two pounds [2 secs] so straight away we have to have a look and say "What can we do to er [1 sec] er bring this down?" Cos th= that's well over the target costs of what we of an engineering point of view would have been working on. So is there any opportunities in what we've got here to have a look to to see if there's er [1 sec] ways round we can er [0.5 sec ] reduce it.

# Summarising other's position

## (Meeting 1, Pharma)

B: ... We might be talking about [inhales] eight thousand packs and twenty thousand and in which case you're saying "Look +

S: Yeah.

B: + you know that additional twelve thousand packs is ano= is an extra day's work".

S: Yeah.

B: And I can imagine why you're saying "No".

S: Yeah.

B: "We're not prepared to firm that up." So I think we've got to look at production capacities.

S: Yeah.

# Why use Hypothetical Reported Speech (HRS)?

Myers 1999a and 1999b (focus group discussions)

Dual function of HRS /DRS:

- **Involving**, e.g. through dramatization
- **distancing**. e.g. by providing external evidence

# Functions of HRS in Negotiating

HRS is used to:

1. craft **persuasive arguments**

e.g. through

- Enacting desirable/undesirable scenarios
- Dramatising
- Providing evidence

# Functions of HRS in Negotiating

HRS is used to:

2. show **affiliation** and contribute to **relationship-building**
  - Giving voice to other's position
  
3. Move the negotiation in a particular direction

# Business Relationship and Negotiating

**Contractually bound vs.  
non-contractually bound external  
meetings (Handford, 2010)**

- Contractually-bound
  - More conflict
- Non-contractually-bound
  - Co-operative discourse is the norm

# Business Relationship and Negotiating

**Meetings 3 and 4: HRS less frequent**

→ More direct negotiating style

- Contractually bound
- Manufacturing sector

‘All bullshit apart I I know we take the piss out of each other but [1 sec ] the general feeling is that we we can rely on Hall and Sons’

(Meeting 3, Tyre Manu)

# Business Relationship and Negotiating

Meetings 1 and 2: HRS more frequent

→ More indirect negotiating style

## Meeting 2: Non-contractually bound

S1: we're always- we're always happy to help with.

S2: Yeah.

S1: I mean- it's- you know if you're doing well then it means you know business for us+

S2: Yeah. Exactly.

S1: +you know ultimately so yeah absolutely.

S2: Yeah. Okay. That's good.

# Business Relationship and Negotiating

## Meeting 1: More indirect negotiating style

- Contractually bound, but new relationship
- Pharmaceutical industry
- Cross-cultural negotiation

‘I think it's gonna er create much greater awareness both at [company name 1] and [company name 2]. I think like our discussion today about the whole planning process we now have a much better idea what you're facing.’

# Teaching Negotiating

## Business relationship and negotiating (Awareness-raising)

Listen to two extracts from negotiations where the customer or supplier refuses an offer or request.

- In which one is the refusal more indirect and polite?
- Why do you think the speakers are more polite in one of the meetings?

To answer this question, think about the following points:

- 1) What industry are they working in?
- 2) How do you think the relationship is different in each of the meetings, for example:
  - a) How well do the speakers know each other?
  - b) Do the speakers share the same culture?

# Teaching Negotiating

## Business relationship and negotiating (Awareness-raising)

### **Business Advantage Intermediate 7.3 (Meeting 1)**

Nick: So, Stefan, we've got three different orders. The question is, assuming it's the same delivery address, can we combine any of those orders?

Stefan: Well, Nick, the general point is if we receive different orders on different dates every week, this automatically creates a new order in our system. So, if we have to combine them, that means we have to cancel one order. This makes a lot of work in terms of the scheduling process. So, this would double our workload if we said, 'OK we have to cancel one order and increase the next order', because they are on a different time line.

# Teaching Negotiating

## Business relationship and negotiating (Awareness-raising)



### **Business Advantage Intermediate 14.3 (Meeting 4)**

David: So, if I've read this correctly, what we're really saying here is that you want to sell this to us for eleven hundred and ninety-two pounds. Is that right?

Tom: You can order in batches of twenty.

David: OK.

Tom: That's our minimum sort of batch order.

David: Alright. Well, our problem is we can't afford to pay eleven hundred and ninety-two pounds, so straightaway we have to have a look and say, 'What can we do to bring this price down?' So, is there any opportunity in what we've got here to see if there's a way we can reduce it?

# Teaching Negotiating

## Business relationship and negotiating (Awareness-raising)

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Nick: So, Stefan, we've got three different orders. The question is, assuming it's the same delivery address, can we combine any of those orders?

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David: So, if I've read this correctly, what we're really saying here is that you want to sell this to us for eleven hundred and ninety-two pounds. Is that right?

Tom: You can order in batches of twenty.

David: OK.

Tom: That's our minimum sort of batch order.

David: Alright. Well, our problem is we can't afford to pay eleven hundred and ninety-two pounds, so straightaway we have to have a look and say, 'What can we do to bring this price down?'. So, is there any opportunity in what we've got here to see if there's a way we can reduce it?

# Teaching Negotiating

## Making conditional offers

In negotiations, offers are often linked to conditions. Here the supplier makes a conditional offer by imagining what the buyer might say:

- But if you were to say “Well look we w= we're pretty sure we're gonna have sixteen by say February” erm or or you know an agreed date we're prepared to obviously up the level of discount

Such ‘imaginary speech’ can be a more friendly and persuasive way of making a conditional offer, because it shows you are taking the buyer’s point of view.

# Teaching Negotiating

## Making conditional offers

Use 'imaginary dialogue' to make the following conditional offers:

1. If you ordered at least 20, we could offer you a further discount

*e.g.: If you said, "Well, we'd like to order at least 20", we could offer you a further discount.*

1. If you order by January, we will offer you this year's prices.
2. If you need to change the specifications, we can be flexible.

# Conclusion

- Real negotiations are complex, but core bargaining sequences can be identified.
- Hypothetical reported speech (HRS) is a powerful rhetorical device in negotiations used to craft persuasive arguments and for relationship-building.
- HRS is used frequently in bargaining (making proposals and counter-proposals, responding to proposals), and therefore useful to teach.
- Real negotiations show the importance of relationship-building.

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