

What Happens When Students Negotiate?

Eric Freedman

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This paper is based on the practical experience of teaching negotiation in English to French managers and executives. Its immediate sources are 1) a wide-ranging state-of-the-art presentation given at the AILA-LSP Symposium in Finland last Summer, and 2) a series of transcripts of video-filmed student negotiations.

Specific classroom situations of negotiation simulations are analysed and placed in the wider "real-world" context of business negotiations. After a review of the current literature, both on business negotiations and on negotiating pedagogy, parallels and divergencies are noted on the part of business teaching specialists and applied linguists in negotiation analysis. The various movements of negotiating are looked at, and special attention paid to the dynamics of learner production in negotiation training.

The definitions of negotiation are multiple—the etymology of the word is Latin (*negotiare*: to trade; *negotio*: occupation, trade, business). From the roots: *neg-* (negative prefix: not) and *otium* (leisure). Thus negotiation has its roots in the opposition to leisure, and may therefore prove to be a particularly acceptable educational activity for those adults who reject the concept and reality of games in training (a case we have already had the occasion to analyse).

Although, when the word 'negotiation' entered the French language in the 14th Century, it had the meaning of intervention, go-between (*l'action de s'entremettre*—thereby foreseeing today's development of arbitration and ombudsmanship, one of its present, generally accepted, significations is that of a bilateral or multilateral complex dynamic process, combining conflict and co-operation, whose aim is to settle a past, present or potential dispute, excluding force and violence. Its development has for long been assimilated to the domains of diplomacy and commerce, although it now has a tendency to encompass all human interaction and of becoming "a permanent mode of relationships between individuals" (Bellenger, 1984: 4) where decisions requiring agreements through compromise are to be made (for example, within families, with friends, neighbours). It is a constructive and

productive mode of interactive problem solving which demands a consensus not always attained.

Negotiation has the following characteristics:

- a confrontation, an exchange, in the form of a sequential activity, between "protagonists" who either represent their own interests or are delegates, and who may be in a power relationship (for example, buyer/seller; employer/employee etc)
- a different point of view as to the possible outcome, the expression of this difference being the specificity of negotiation as committed communication
- a compromise to be constructed upon reciprocal concessions.

Thus, although all negotiation is a confrontation aimed at reaching an agreement on a shared project, theoreticians since the 1960s (mainly in the field of psychosociology.) have developed a typology of negotiations, based on interactive dynamics: conflictual on the one hand (in game theory: win/lose), and co-operative negotiation on the other (win/win). In reality, there is a mixture of these two types during the communicative interaction that makes up a negotiation. .../...

Apart from Moran, little account is made of training and pedagogy, although we can see recent developments in management training in negotiation (Lebel, 1984; Le Cloarec, 1985) and an awareness by sociologists of what may be termed the negotiation imperative: "Negotiation must be placed at the heart of reflection on everyday working structures" (Sainsaulieu, 1985: 432).

Negotiation may also be at the heart of pedagogical structures. To cite Widdowson (1983:97): "a central task for teaching is to set up conditions whereby learners will actually engage (in) discourse procedures to achieve what they can recognize as relevant communicative outcomes.(...) This is where methodology comes in: its function is to devise activities which will promote the use of procedures for making sense."

The teaching of business negotiations in L2 fulfils this double role: that of conditions for communicative outcomes and that of procedural activities for making sense - integrated into the business specific purpose of the LSP training programme.

For in the job-specific context of professional business negotiations, pedagogy has a role to play in the establishment of language programmes of negotiating as

LSP. This is where we may view parallels and divergencies - in the communicative process; in the teaching process; in the negotiation process.

Much that Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 128-130) have to say about ESP methodology applies equally to business negotiation processes: second language learning is developmental (using existing knowledge to make new information comprehensible); active; decision-making; not just linguistic; predictive; emotive. However, their consideration of language learning as to a large extent incidental and not systematic may occur within the business negotiation activity, which, however, should itself be deliberate and systematic. As for the specific pedagogical techniques they outline, these too find parallels in the negotiation process, including prediction, information gaps and topic variety.

What of the business negotiating process itself? "Negotiation is basically an act of communication" (Bellenger, 1984: 55). Similar to all communicative activity, it is a series of movements with the specificity of being an art cultivating persuasion, and a process of discovery and sequenced learning. As all interactive pedagogy of oral expression, it is divided into moves and turns, strategies and tactics, integrating socio-cultural contexts, with the specificity of using packages and variables, integrating technical-commercial contexts.

Negotiation is essentially composed of movements or phases. These phases are themselves by now well-known to business specialists: social introduction (chatting); discussion (information exchange); proposing; bargaining, with the resultant compromise or breakdown. (See Barnes, 1982). The question we have to ask ourselves is, do these phases show up in 1) authentic "real-world" business negotiations and 2) student simulated negotiations?

According to studies carried out in Finland (Lampi, 1986), based on audio recordings of British "co-operative" negotiations, the macro-structure was found to consist of three main phases: chat; discussion; bargaining.

As for our studies on student simulated negotiations (based on 1986-87 video-transcripts of French managers simulating negotiations from Lees, 1983), these also show three main phases, if we exclude an extremely perfunctory introduction move: discussion; proposing; bargaining.

On looking more closely at what happens in the proposing and bargaining phases, we took as an example the use of the clause *if/then*. Examining the transcripts (not included in this summary, but available on request and distributed at the convention), we noted student attempts to change the topic and consider the global package; bargaining on a discount price, and, after a long bargaining session

on counter-trade, conflictual negotiating reaching breakdown. Concerning a second simulation: after stating their positions, the respective parties went from a proposing phase, through an attempt to consider the global package, to bargaining proper, equally divided between the two parties, and continuing until an imposed bonus offer was presented on sales targets as a compromise, this being agreed to finally.

Throughout this simulation, one party did in fact dominate, and this floor-taking, rather than floor-sharing, seems to be one of the main differences between student (mainly conflictual) simulations and "real-world" co-operative business negotiations.

Within student simulations themselves, we have noticed differences according to the category of participants (business school students or adults in further training). See Appendix 1. These differences, in many cases, go beyond the negotiation discourse event itself, and are socio-culturally determined.

For negotiation is also knowing cultural variables, and perhaps this is one of the main points at issue (see Moran, 1987). As "Le Monde" (29.7.87) put it: "Le problème quand on négocie avec les Français, c'est qu'ils attendent toujours quelque chose en échange."

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Appendix 1

	Business School Students	Adults Formation Continue
Pre-negotiation	Creative brainstorming Little business experience Never listen to BBC Rarely read English-lang. press Never telephone in English	Less creative brainstorming More business experience Sometimes listen to BBC Sometimes read English-lang. press Regularly telephone in English
Negotiation	Perfunctory social introductions Problems in understanding role play worksheets/instructions Short-term memory on who/where Group discussion "combat" against other group Playfulness evident Documents too unwieldy Confidence in teacher as "negotiation expert" Problems in question-forming Numbers centred	Perfunctory social introductions Problems in understanding role play worksheets/instructions Short-term memory on who/where Group leader shows himself "know-it-all" Seriousness evident Documents not realistic enough Confidence in teacher as teacher, but not necessarily as "negotiator" Problems in question-forming Numbers centred
Post-negotiation	Hurried debriefing No interest in further reading No interest in theoretical follow-up	More thorough debriefing Interest in further reading Interest in theoretical approach
Career	Majority want to go into marketing	Majority are "technico-commerciaux"