# THE GENRE OF THE BUSINESS MEETING: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY.

**Michael J. A. Handford, MA**



**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**March, 2007**

CONTAINS CD

UNABLE TO COPY

CONTACT UNIVERSITY

IF YOU WISH TO SEE

THIS MATERIAL

# Contents

# Figures and Tables

## List of Figures



## List of Tables

# Abstract

The present study analyses a corpus of audio recordings of authentic business meetings. The recordings were made in a variety of companies in the UK, and also in Eire, Germany and Japan. The companies which provided the data vary considerably in terms of area of business and size. The meetings themselves differ in terms of number of speakers, the relationships of the speakers, and the purposes and topics discussed; throughout the thesis the influence of these factors on communication is discussed.

Previous studies of the language used in business meetings have focussed on either specific aspects of one type of meeting, such as strategies in sales negotiations, or have attempted to describe the attributes of 'the business meeting' based on arguably unrepresentative data. For example, frameworks purporting to describe the genre of the meeting have been based solely on internal, or intra-organisational, data. This study is unique in that it analyses and compares a wide range of both internal and external meetings. The main purpose of the thesis is to explore the corpus in order to construct a generic model which accounts for the recurrence and dynamism within the data. This involves quantitative and qualitative analysis at the level of lexicogrammatical choice, including pronouns, deontic-modal expressions, certain key words such as *problem*, *issue* and *if*, metaphors and idioms, and vague language. Various 'higher level' factors are also explored, such as speaker goals, strategies, conflict, convergence, 'face', turn-taking, and overall structure. Through applying different approaches, such as corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and genre analysis, to the same data, a more fine-grained understanding of the data is achieved, and the assumption that business

meetings are demonstrably different from and yet related to everyday spoken English is explored.

The results indicate that business meetings can be categorised as a distinct genre with recurrent aspects which speakers and listeners orient towards, recognisable to both participants and observers. The study also highlights consistent differences between internal and external meetings. There is also evidence for a probabilistic relationship between the genre and the language used therein.

## Acknowledgements

The development of this thesis has involved many guides and friends, but my deepest gratitude must go to Mike McCarthy my main supervisor and my wife Mayu. They have both enabled me to maintain momentum when obstacles, inner and outer, appeared, and seemed to expect culmination with galvanising certainty. Thank you also to Svenja Adolphs, my second supervisor, who along with Mike helped me develop a more rigorous attitude than I was naturally inclined to apply.

I will also be forever indebted to Ron Carter and John McRae for their support, guidance and example during my time as a student at Nottingham. With Mike McCarthy they have formed a dynamic, progressive triumvirate, and have provided inspiration to many. Thank you for the ride, and for teaching me the meaning of education.

CANBEC would not have been possible without the considerable support of CUP, particularly the assistance and understanding of Ann Fiddes. All those involved in the collection of data, especially those anonymised ones who were willing to be recorded, deserve a very big thankyou. As always, I owe a lot to Simon, Justin and Graham.

Other friends, fellow students and colleagues who have helped me include Francesca Bargiela, Zoltan Dornyei, Jane Evison, Doug Forrester, Alex Gilmore, Sarah Grandage, Almut Koester, Mike Nelson, Petr Matous, Louise Mullany, Anne O'Keeffe, Peter Stockwell, Norbert Schmitt, Hiro Tanaka, John Worrall and Tony Watson.

Thank you also to the University of Tokyo for being extremely flexible and supportive in allowing me time to write the thesis.

Finally, to my parents Kate Smith and Mike Handford, who helped me get here, the out-laws Masaya and Hisako, and to my little ladies Julia and Maya for providing the motivation.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Rationale

### 1.1.1 Background

This thesis examines a practice which occurs every day around the world, in hundreds of thousands of different contexts, and yet one about which we know relatively little. Business meetings, both within companies and between companies, are the oil that makes the machinery of business work; they are the most basic activity through which business is done, and, unlike a century ago, when the business letter may have reigned supreme as the vehicle of communication across distances, in our era of rapid transport and paperless communications, face-to-face meetings and, latterly, telephone- and video-conferencing have become the principal channel through which relationships are forged, goods, services and prices are negotiated, and deals are done. This is all achieved by something which often looks like the ordinary, banal kind of conversation one might have with a good friend over a beverage, but which also has its own rituals, patterns and conventions which have evolved over the centuries, created and re-created by the people whose job it is to make business happen.

Rituals and patterns in conversation result, over time, in artefacts which resemble one another, and which the researcher can freeze in the transcripts of recordings, observe and analyse. Such repeated events are often loosely called *genres*, just as in writing we are familiar with the *genre* of, say, the novel, the sonnet, the news editorial or the scientific report. In speech, by far the most frequent recurring artefact or genre is the casual conversation, and researchers have suggested that informal, spontaneous conversation is the primal form which gives birth to other forms of spoken language, whether conventionalised and institutionalised to a greater or lesser degree. It is in everyday conversation, many have argued, that we will find

the clues to how these other types of talk operate, by looking at how closely they mirror conversational practices and, equally, by the degree to which they depart from conversational practices.

This thesis, therefore, investigates the linguistic behaviour of participants in authentic English-language business meetings in relation to a number of well-researched conversational practices which have been shown to illuminate, explicate and characterise other types of talk outside of the business world. This may tell us whether business meetings have evolved as a genre of speaking in a way that we can confidently categorise them, just as others have done for genres such as interviews, academic lectures, service encounters, and so on. Through a description and analysis of a corpus of audio recordings, the notion of the dynamic, symbiotic relationship between genre and linguistic choice is explored. The most frequent and key lexicogrammatical units in the corpus provide the foundation for the study, which are categorised in terms of their discourse functions. A selection of these items and functions are argued to be evidence of genre-creating speaker strategies, which can be found both within and across turns, and at various phases of the genre in question. The aim of this thesis is therefore to show how speakers create, acknowledge participation in and utilise the genre of the business meeting through their choice of language.

Many of the features examined here have been studied in institutional environments other than business, and have been shown to be extremely useful in establishing the generic 'fingerprints' of individual genres; it is for this reason that they are chosen for analysis in the present thesis. The choice is by no means arbitrary. For example, clusters and their related functions have been fruitfully studied in academic discourse (Biber and Conrad, 1999; Oakey, 2002; Simpson, 2004), as has

turn taking (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Watson, 1992; Walsh, 2006). Turn-taking in medical and healthcare environments has also been studied using conversation analysis methods (ten Have, 1995; Maynard, 1992). Specific markers of genre such as vagueness have been studied in media discourse (O'Keefe, 2003; 2006), healthcare discourse (Adolphs et al, 2006), and academic discourse (Evison et al, 2006; Evison and Handford, 2006), and in each case have been shown to possess characteristics which serve conventionalised purposes within those domains of discourse. Genre itself, not an easy concept to pin down in speech, has received attention in various fields including media discourse (Fairclough, 1995b; O'Keeffe 2006), academic discourse (Swales, 1990; Rose, 1997; Hyland, 2004), and in medical discourse using frame analysis (Tannen and Wallat 1993).

Whereas research in the institutional environments outlined above forms a considerable body, business communication has received relatively less attention. Notable exceptions are Lampi (1986), Boden (1994), Firth (1995a), Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Koester (2001; 2006). While the present study would not have been possible without this body of work, there are considerable gaps within the field of business discourse which this study aims to address. For instance, previous models of the genre of the business meeting are highly mechanistic and do not account for the variety and dynamism present in the data. This study will develop a framework which accounts for the dynamism and the recurrent features of meetings. Turn-taking in meetings has received insufficient attention, and in relation to this the effect of the Chair and the relationship of the speakers has not been systematically addressed, particularly in relation to external meetings such as sales negotiations. Crucially, the most well-known research which describes 'meetings' only includes data from internal meetings, an overgeneralisation

which has ramifications for numerous textual and contextual features. Differences between internal and external meetings will be shown in relation to turn taking and the role of the Chair and the power issues concerning the relationship of the speakers, but also in terms of lexicogrammatical, functional, strategic and generic features of meetings. Because previous researchers have neglected to address this distinction, many of their assertions made concerning linguistic features and functions, face, power, conflict, speaker goals, strategies and genre will be qualified or questioned.

### 1.1.2 CANBEC

Several large available corpora have provided many broad insights into both written and spoken language use, and the most famous of these corpora include the BNC (British National Corpus), the Brown Corpus and the LOB (Lancaster/Oslo-Bergen) Corpus. One problem with larger corpora is that they tend to homogenise registers, which has led to the creation of many specialised corpora particularly in the area of speech. These include CANCODE, the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse English, MICASE, the Michigan Corpus of Academic Speech in English, ICE, the International Corpus of English, and LCIE, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English. Smaller corpora allow us to analyse specific categories such as a register or time period (Reppen and Simpson, 2002). They may also be used to shed light on the linguistic behaviour or a discourse community or allow for analysis of particular sociolinguistic factors, as with the COLT Corpus of Teenage English.

CANBEC, the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Business English, which will be explored in this thesis, is also such a specialised corpus of spoken English. One justification for studying the language in this corpus is that within the field of spoken business English there are very few corpora of spoken business English

meetings (see McCarthy and Handford, 2004) and it will be later argued that those which have received most academic attention e.g. the Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) corpus on which their research is based, and the New Zealand LWP (Language in the Workplace) corpus which provides the data for Holmes and Stubbe's *Power and Politeness in the Workplace* (2003), are not as representative as CANBEC: for example they are composed of wholly internal or intra-organisational meeting data. Approximately one quarter of the recordings from CANBEC, in contrast, contain external or inter-organisational data. CANBEC contains data from a wider range of countries and nationalities, and from a wider range of companies than any other business English corpus.

Developing a corpus is a costly, time-consuming and difficult endeavour, especially in the case of a corpus of spoken business English. A popular alternative to collecting authentic data from businesses is to use some other form of language. In terms of data for research on business meetings, Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 57) state 'A large proportion of earlier research on meetings has been based on self-reported data, interview or questionnaire responses and relatively unsystematic observation (or)...on data collected in rather artificial settings, such as between student participants in laboratories responding to simulated situations.' In answer to the question of why a corpus of authentic spoken business data is superior to invented or role-play dialogue, and thus justifies the time, cost and effort involved in its creation and investigation, it is important to consider the following three areas: research, business practice, and teaching business English.

In relation to research, according to Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 15) there are 'fundamental differences between real-life organisation discourse practices and apparently similar situations re-created in an artificial environment.' This is

because the overall goal of any interaction 'is its most powerful structuring force' (Kasper, 2000: 317), and the motivation for and creation of authentic dialogue comes from the participants. Role plays, however, are brought into being for research purposes, and therefore differ at the fundamental level of why the participants are communicating. This difference manifests itself in terms of many discourse features, such as the overall exchange structure, speaker turns, speaker-hearer coordination and the way in which participants achieve their transactional and interpersonal goals (ibid: 317). All of these features will be explored in this thesis.

Another key difference concerns the area of business practice, most noticeably in the area of manuals for business practitioners, otherwise know as *How To* manuals. Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 2) criticise such manuals as 'absurdly simple...(because) communication is seen as a straight line in which the message passes from the transmitter to the receiver'. These manuals, which may contain invented dialogues and graphic representations of communication, tend to neglect the areas of discourse outlined in the previous paragraph. The study of authentic dialogues in contrast shows the interwoven, cyclical and often meandering uses of language which speakers and listeners employ to co-construct meaning and relationships.

The third area concerns teaching materials and differences between the language contained in teaching materials particularly for the EFL and ESL markets and what language business professionals actually produce. Work by Williams (1988) and more recently by Nelson (2000) have shown that there are considerable differences at the lexicogrammatical-, turn- and strategic levels. This means that students are often not taught an appropriate way to communicate.

While all three of these areas are of obvious importance, the point here is that authentic communication encapsulated in the form of a 'principled collection of

natural texts' (Biber et al, 1998: 4) can offer far more reliable insights on language use and the choices made by participants than created dialogues, or semi-authentic dialogues in the form of role plays or simulations. Given that there is insufficient or overgeneralised research in the field of authentic spoken business English used in meetings, the present study will address this. It is worthwhile because this study will provide a more fine-grained description of the field in question, thereby allowing us to gain a more subtle and profound understanding of human communication and the goals, strategies and lexicogrammar of business people, and the constraints under which they communicate in internal and external business meetings.

## 1.2 General research questions

While the specific research questions and hypotheses will be outlined in chapter four, in general terms the following questions will be explored throughout this study:

- In what way is business English different from other types of spoken English?
- Can we define business meetings?
- Is the language produced in meetings between colleagues in the same company the same as that produced in meetings between participants from different companies?
- Are business meetings a genre within the existing parameters of spoken English?

## 1.3 The broad hypotheses of the study

In order to briefly explore what these questions may illuminate and therefore the general hypotheses of the thesis, we will examine a short extract from one of the meetings in CANBEC. The meeting itself involves two companies, the host, which is

a multinational pharmaceutical company, and their supply company, also a multinational. Speaker one (<$1>) works for the pharmaceutical company, and speakers two and three work for the supply company. The meeting takes place in Germany, and is a regular monthly logistics meeting. For the transcription codes, see Appendix 4.

**[Extract 1.1. meeting number #151001. External meeting.]**

<$1> <$G?> communication point of view and I think what you've told us today is that it's not as simple as changing it in logistics and packaging just go on. You've got a lot of <$E>

inhales <\$E> conversations backwards and forwards.

<$2> At the moment yes. At the moment yes and and this is the only reason why we have to to change our organization <$=> to a <\$=> to a master supply organization.

<$1> Erm <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> tell me last night.

<$3> Er yes.

<$1> A good meal out in <$H> Aachen <\$H>?

<$3> Yeah. <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> Yeah.

<$3> We go to the same restaurant as we er <$G?> <$H> dinner with <\$H> Ada and and Ton. <$=> And <\$=>

<$4> At the <$G2>?

<$3> Jah.

<$4> Mhm.

<$1> Oh <$H> Lycae <\$H>?

..... (several turns later).

<$1> Cos you're not a morning person.

<$2?> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> <$E> laughs <\$E> I think we should make a start. Helen er was on a teleconference when erm when I left the office. Erm I I guess for me er same sort of er agenda as normal if we can work through the logistics work stream meeting minutes erm picking up the various sections. I think <$X> there're | there are <\$X> a few things we we've sort of scribbled at the end in terms of <$=> e= under <\$=>

any other business. I'd certainly like to look at the technical meeting er minutes. That's part of the agenda in terms of the logistics section but there's also the <$E> 1 sec <\$E> section four <$=> of the <\$=> of the technical meeting minutes er goes through the you know how we're moving from the project into the operational phase.

<$2?> Yeah.

Even without any background information, certain aspects of this dialogue suggest to us that it is a business meeting as opposed to, say, a conversation between friends. There is explicit mention of an agenda and implicit reference to the regularity of these communicative acts which involve the same participants: *I guess for me er same sort of er agenda as normal.* The dialogue also contains specialised vocabulary e.g. *logistics work stream.* The meeting seems to be moving through different stages, and there is considerable face-work going on. Turn taking is also interesting, as speaker one very much directs who can speak and the topic under discussion, even when the topic is not agenda-related.

As speaker one mentions, the agenda is largely the same as usual, but there is also another issue over the efficiency of the communication channels within the supply company which he wants to discuss, and actually alludes to at the very beginning: *You've got a lot of <$E> inhales <\$E> conversations backwards and forwards.* This euphemistically means that the supply company's 'labyrinthine' communication channels are causing concern with the pharmaceutical company, as the latter believes it is hurting logistical efficiency and therefore profits (insights based on follow-up interview with speaker one). *I think <$X> there're | there are <\$X> a few things we we've sort of scribbled at the end in terms of <$=> e= under <\$=> any other business* is also a reference to this issue. For the present study, more pertinent than the issue itself is the manner in which it is expressed. From this we can

see certain features that regularly occur in the corpus: indirectness, vagueness, choice of pronouns, institutional identity, lexical choice, mitigation of a face-threatening act, and the obfuscation of power. Were the speaker to communicate baldly, he would say 'I have noted two problems which we have with you, under any other business'. But he does not. This study will analyse how speakers communicate within business meetings, and will attempt to interpret through reference to goals and strategies why speakers choose to express themselves in one way, typically as in the above quotation, rather than another, as in the invented bald paraphrase.

Another theme which seems relevant is that of the transactional/interpersonal distinction. Nunan (1993: 11) states that 'transactional language occurs when the parties are concerned with the exchange of goods and services. Interpersonal language occurs when speakers are less concerned with the exchange of goods, and more concerned with socialising.' If we look at the change of topic by speaker one, then we could argue that this is a clear example of interpersonal, or relational, or phatic, talk:

<$1> Erm <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> tell me last night.

<$3> Er yes.

<$1> A good meal out in <$H> Aachen <\$H>?

It is quite different from speaker one's previous, highly transactional, comment on the communication channels of the supply company. It appears to have nothing to do with the agenda, and therefore not relevant to the meeting. It seems to be a 'topic drift' i.e. 'A point of order resulting in a conversational aside' (Boden, 1994: 89). One could therefore argue that this type of language is not very relevant to work, which is by definition transactional. Indeed some studies of authentic business data have deleted all examples of such relational language because of this very reason (e.g. Brown and Lewis, 2002). The present study, however, will argue that such language is directly

relevant to the purpose of the meeting if we broaden our understanding of purpose beyond directly fulfilling the requirements of the written or unwritten agenda. In the follow-up interview, speaker one said that he felt the meeting had become too serious and too focussed on the agenda given the stage of the meeting, and that this could be detrimental to the success of the meeting. By using relational language, the speaker is trying to achieve a transactional goal: he is attempting to create an atmosphere which will facilitate the achievement of his company's desire to have more efficient communication. This is a theme that reoccurs throughout the corpus, and calls into question the transactional/interactional distinction when applied within the genre of business meetings: interactional language, from a goals perspective, can be interpreted as serving transactional goals.

The relationship between corpora and context, and in particular CANBEC and context, will also be discussed. Many of the perspectives offered above would not have been possible without the opportunity to go back and ask the participants questions. In order to move from quantitative facts to qualitative interpretations we must have contextual information. By context I mean both a static description of relevant factors and a more dynamic, local yet less fixed description (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Context does not however offer solutions to all our queries, and the further we move away from the text itself the less certain our interpretations become, even with reflective insights offered by the participants. The role and limitations of context will therefore be an underlying theme.

In terms of the broad research questions outlined above, certain themes thus seem pertinent. Meetings will indeed be recognisable as such, especially in terms of turn taking, topic and different phases or stages. Certain words and phrases may be very frequent, e.g. agenda. The issues of speaker relationship and power and building

social relations are also likely to be important. From this perspective we can also expect differences in internal and external meetings.

## 1.4. Summary of chapters

Including this introduction and the conclusion, this thesis contains ten chapters. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature in the relevant fields, for example pragmatics, discourse analysis, and institutional and business discourse. Chapter three provides a description of the data and discusses some of the issues of data collection and organisation. Chapter four analyses a mini-corpus of recordings made in an Internet server provider (ISP) company, the purpose of which is to generate sets of features observable in a small, manageable corpus which can be tested against a larger body of data. These findings are developed into a framework for the subsequent five chapters, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Chapter five is the first full quantitative chapter; it analyses frequency and keyword lists of single words and clusters from the whole corpus, of over 900,000 words, extracted using Wordsmith Tools©. Chapter six is the second quantitative chapter and again looks at lexicogrammatical features, this time using CIC Tools© which allows for a more contextual understanding of the features in question. There then follow three qualitative chapters, all of which analyse features from a sample corpus of 72,000 words. The first qualitative chapter, chapter seven, explores the areas of vagueness, deontic modality, idiomatic language use, and problems and decisions. Chapter eight discusses turn taking in meetings, and chapter nine looks at the genre of the business meeting and proposes a matrix combining the overall structural organisation of the meeting with a selection of speaker strategies. Chapter ten is the conclusion, and

discusses whether the research questions have been answered and whether the hypotheses have been supported or refuted, as well as wider implications of the study.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Introduction

'Communication is not cooperation, but it may lead to cooperation.' Mey, (1987: 289)

The present study is predicated on the notion of the significance of frequency or reoccurrence in language use. Given that corpus linguistics is concerned with 'what frequently and typically occurs' (Stubbs, 2001: 151), quantitative corpus findings will aid our understanding of the typical and frequent features of the business meeting. The novel approach to business-meeting data taken here therefore combines the bottom-up methods of corpus linguistics, which rely on notions of frequency of lexicogrammatical features, with top-down genre analysis which looks for the recurrent and optional elements of social activities within a text. This approach should counteract many of the criticisms concerning the use of corpora (Flowerdew, 2005), for example the issue of attempting to account for sociocultural context with decontextualised fragments of language (Widdowson, 1998; Hunston, 2002). Charles (1996: 20), in a paper on business negotiations, argues that well-known applied linguistics models such as conversation analysis and the exchange structure of Sinclair-Coulthard could 'produce findings which would answer the question of how the text related to the business context within which it had been produced'. The framework developed and applied in this thesis also attempts to address this question through the application of appropriate approaches, such as conversation analysis, genre analysis and discourse analysis. This should allow us to see how functions, strategies, goals and genres are achieved through the selection of certain lexicogrammatical features both within and across turns.

This chapter outlines the literature relevant to the present study. As such, genre and concepts related to genre including speaker goals and discourse communities will be discussed, as will the transactional/interpersonal distinction. Literature concerned with spoken business English and in particular the language of business meetings will be compared to other forms of institutional discourse and to everyday English. In the later quantitative sections of the thesis, there is a corpus-based comparison of everyday English and business-meeting English, which will provide original and objectifiable findings concerning the occurrence of lexicogrammatical items.

The first section of the chapter will explore Swales' (1990) concept of the discourse community, as this will enable the thesis itself to be positioned within a larger context; furthermore, the notion of discourse community and the related concept of communities of practice (Wenger 1998) can help to shed light on the linguistic behaviour of participants in business meetings. Context and face will then be discussed, as an understanding of these admittedly contentious concepts can offer powerful insights into authentic discourse.

## 2.1 Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice

This section has two main aims: the first is to position the study itself through an application of Swales' (1990) notion of Discourse Community, and the second is to explore the related concept of communities of practice and its relevance to the language produced in business meetings. This latter concept has been seen as having particular relevance to institutions, their members and the language they produce (Rampton, 1998; Gee, 2000; Wenger and Snyder, 2001; McCarthy and Handford, 2004). While the reasons for this view are varied, here Communities of Practice are

seen as an especially potentially productive concept because of the strong focus on the repertoire or lore of the participants. One strength of the notion of discourse community is that it provides a global or top-down perspective on various aspects of communication. Because of these different strengths, each of the concepts will be referred to at different stages of the thesis when deemed appropriate.

### 2.1.1 Positioning the study

Swales (1990: 24-27) states that there are six defining characteristics for a discourse community. They are:

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common goals.
2. A discourse community has (participatory) mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. A discourse community utilises and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise.

This is a study of a corpus of spoken business English. It is possible, however, to recognise the 'discourse community' of business people independent of the corpus itself, thereby positioning the groups of speakers in the corpus in the wider context. Using Swales' (ibid) criteria, we can say the ultimate goal of business is to make money, and there are various corporate and individual goals which facilitate this to

varying degrees. Mechanisms of intercommunication include faxes, meetings, lunches and dinners, golf games, presentations and emails; these mechanisms aid the flow of information, which in turn enable the achievement of goals. In relation to genre, the focus in this study is on business meetings. The specific lexis referred to here has been effectively operationalised by Nelson (2000, 2006) in his corpus studies of the lexis of business English, and examples of business jargon are not difficult to bring to mind. Swales states that people enter discourse communities as apprentices and can become experts; the business community is clearly such an environment.

The area I am proposing to develop in terms of the above framework is that of participatory mechanisms (*2*), of which business meetings are an example. Previous corpus-based studies on business meetings do not provide the level of information on the participatory mechanism of meetings that is present in this thesis. For example, they tend to discuss 'meetings' in general, and yet their data under analysis does include external meetings (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). By making the description of meetings more delicate, genre (*4)* above will also be addressed, i.e. the genre of the business meeting. This will be achieved through pinpointing and analysing a set of linguistic items and practices in speech. The following brief extract gives an example of how language can help participants reach their goals in a specific participatory framework, i.e. an external business meeting:

**[Extract 2.1. #39001: External meeting (EM). $1 is the sales director of an ISP company, and $2 is the MD of an IT sales company.]**

<$1> ...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+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +by er April".

Here the sales director is offering a vague discount to his client if she can guarantee an increase in business. He creates a conceptual world or 'shared social space' (Vygotsky, 1987), the realisation of which would be favourable to both parties. This is achieved through the use of this multi-word unit *if you say* which will be explored in more detail in chapter four. The issue of vague language is also relevant, as it is a further way that participants can reconstruct and reconceptualise the boundaries of their communication (Evison, O'Keeffe and McCarthy, 2006). Several pragmatic and semantic areas are examined in this thesis. These include vagueness, irrealis, modality, metaphor and idiomaticity, hedging, as well as statistically significant single words and longer units, like the cluster *if you say*, and the evaluative nouns *issue* and *problem* which also indicate the speaker's stance (Poncini, 2002). This is because they have not been analysed systematically in the literature on the genre of the business meeting (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Scollon and Scollon, 2002), but, as mentioned in the introduction and discussed in later chapters, they have been shown to fulfill conventionalised roles in other genres. They will be shown to relate to the participatory mechanism in question, indicating how participants create a social space. Such features could also be seen as forming part of the lexis of the business discourse community, and could thus lead to an extension of the register beyond the mainly transactional and referential nouns categorised by Nelson (2000; 2006) to include various pragmatic 'interpersonal markers' (Koester, 2001; 2006). For example, as will be seen in chapter five, many of the most frequent multi-word units in business meetings fulfill either interactional or discourse marking functions, and as such do not include nouns. Various multi-word units are very common in meetings, and as yet their use has not been adequately accounted for in the literature.

Turn-taking can be regarded as another medium by which participants create a social space (Schegloff 1996). Through turn-taking, speakers can create a coherent flow of communication and develop a line of thought. We could say that turn-taking lets minds meet, and differences in turn-taking can contribute to different types of negotiated thinking. Once again, the insights from the CANBEC data will show in chapters four and eight that to categorise 'turn taking in the business meeting' as a unitary phenomenon with the Chair always at the centre dictating events is to oversimplify the reality. Equally, there can be significant differences between turn taking in everyday casual conversation and in business meetings, for example when the power relationship between the speakers is significant, and the purpose of the meeting is reviewing the subordinate's work.

### 2.1.2 Communities of practice

According to Scollon and Scollon (1998), a community of practice develops over time a mutually understandable set of social practices, which exist because of some common purpose. Wenger (1998: 76-80) states that there are three crucial dimensions of a community of practice:

a) Mutual engagement (regular interaction)

b) A joint negotiated enterprise (a process, not just a shared goal, but ongoing effort to negotiate and build contributions towards the larger enterprise)

c) A shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time (routines: linguistic terminology, meals, how much social talk is tolerated).

Individuals working in various types of institutions could be seen as members of communities of practice. In analysing workplace discourse, comparing one community of practice to another can be highly productive. According to Holmes &

Meyerhoff (1999: 177) 'The extent to which practices at one workplace differ from those at another has implications for people who join these workplaces, and also for outsiders who want to interact with those members effectively.'

It seems fair to say that a community of practice, as a discourse community (Swales 1990) with an emphasis on developing the raison d'etre of the community, creates the appropriate genres for the type of activity in which they are involved (Swales, ibid). Hence the business meeting is an appropriate genre for the various activities that can go on in business, especially management (Boden, 1994; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). This is not to suggest that the language produced in business meetings is uniform across different communities of practice. Rampton (1998) states 'social organisation and language use are interwoven, and so when our speech community alters, there are often consequences for the kinds of language practice we attend to', showing that the key factor is the speech community or community of practice, and the genre, in this case the business meeting, is a vehicle which allows for the achievement of goals through communicative means. Participants in meetings are involved in an ongoing enterprise, they often meet regularly, many would argue too regularly, and particular industries will have terminology*, both literal and figurative. Such language use is closely tied up with the identity of the institution: 'Institutions too have identities and talk is a central means through which these group-level identities are supported or contested.' (Tracy & Naughton, 2000: 80).

Another aspect that makes the business meeting suitable for business and is

*Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 10) also highlight how the jargon and shorthand of a community of practice reflect 'the extent to which meaning is embedded in context, and the crucial status of shared knowledge is essential in comprehending what is going on.' They therefore argue for a comprehensive approach to context which combines the fine-tooth comb analysis of conversation analysis with a top-down view, thereby highlighting pertinent features of the participants' roles and the emphasised aspects of a social identity at a given time. Sarangi and Roberts (1999) and Koester (2001, 2006) also take such an approach, as do I.

related to the particular community of practice in question is the notion of constraint: in terms of topic, agenda, the Chair, participants, and time. The notion of constraint ensures the meeting does not 'get out of hand' or 'run on and on'. In business, the proverb 'Time is Money' is central to much business practice (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), so it is essential that it is not wasted. Meetings, through the exercise of power of the Chair (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003) can be 'kept on track' or can be finished when deemed appropriate. Usually only the senior manager or the Chair has the power to end the discussion. Subversion and other forms of tension are nevertheless often simultaneously present (ibid), and such tension can be explained from a goals perspective.

This idea of the tension between the constraining and empowering force of communication is further developed by Sarangi and Roberts (1999:1), who argue that workers participate in, are restricted by, and also create their work environment through communicative practices:

> *Workplaces are held together by communicative practices...But workplaces are also sites of social struggle, as certain ways of talking, recording and acting are produced and ordered over time. This regulation of communicative resources, in turn, controls access to the workplace and opportunities within it.*

Through analysing the communicative processes and products of differing communities of practice, we can construct a picture of what goes on in different workplaces and among different groups in the same workplace. While previous business communication research has talked in fairly general terms about the effect different relationships between speakers can have on the discourse, this study develops and applies a systematic breakdown of power relationships in terms of speaker position, goal, department, as well as meeting purpose and topic. While

communities of practice can help shed light on the wider cultural and intercultural aspects of communication, this area is only briefly touched on in this thesis.

## 2.2 Context

Context is one of the most central concepts in linguistics, but also one of the thorniest (Auer, 1995). As this thesis will analyse instances of authentic language use, and given the importance of context in interpreting language use (ibid; Brown and Yule, 1983; Verschueren, 1999; Koester, 2001, 2006), it will be discussed here before moving on to more specific areas.

Drew and Heritage (1992: 19) define context as follows:

> *Utterances and actions are context-renewing i.e. the interactive context is continually being developed with each successive action. Moreover each current action will, by the same token, function to renew (i.e. maintain, adjust or alter) any broader or more generally prevailing sense of context which is the object of the participants' orientation and action...The Conversation Analytic perspective embodies a dynamic approach in which "context" is treated as both the project and the product of the participants' own actions...as inherently locally produced and transformable at any moment.*

This definition highlights the centrality of language within the communicative act, and the ability language has to affect our comprehension of the context we find ourselves in. Within the genre of the business meeting, while there are undoubtedly regular, stable factors, the context can be seen to change from utterance to utterance. For example, this is the very beginning of an internal weekly financial meeting in a multinational bank:

**[Extract 2.2 #64001. Internal meeting (IM) in an investment bank. Weekly meeting to update records in IT division. Speaker one ($1) is the Chair.]**

<$E> door slams <\$E>

<$1> Oh. <$G?> You didn't have to slam it.

<$E> laughter <\$E>

<$1> All right. Let's get started.

<$M> <$E> clears throat <\$E>

<$1> One eight three three. <$H> Seefare <\$H> financials.

This extract shows that the interactants' perceptions of what is important or appropriate do not necessarily remain stable through the course of a whole meeting, or even a particular turn. Here we have one turn (Sacks et al 1974) involving different consecutive moves (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) or changes in footing (Goffman, 1981), each of which alters the context from informal pre-meeting, to signalling the end of the pre-meeting and announcing the beginning of the formal meeting (two moves), to addressing the first topic of the agenda and eliciting feedback (two moves). Our understanding of context and hence genre needs to reflect this type of dynamism, and will therefore be explored throughout the later chapters of the thesis.

A more top-down, externally-imposed, static understanding of context would not be able to effectively account for the dynamism evident in the above shifts, and interpreting the data from such a fixed contextual perspective would mainly involve listing as many factors as possible. One argument against a cataloguing of contextual factors is that there are 'indefinitely many potentially relevant aspects of context' (Schegloff, 1992: 110). If we then try to list all of the relevant contextual factors, how do we know where to stop? Also, how we can tell which factors are important, and which not? We will need to 'invoke mysterious processes for which it is difficult to find evidence' (Sinclair, 1992: 82).

Schlegoff (op cit.) states that describing the identities of the participants in a speech event e.g. the Sales Manager, is an insufficient and misleading approach to context: we need to show which aspects of someone's identities become 'procedurally relevant' at a given moment in the interaction, and what repercussions there might be in the interaction of such changes. The brief extract above shows clearly how the Chair of this meeting shifts from bantering, to starting the meeting, to focusing on the agenda, and in so doing he orients towards the different identities of humorous colleague and professional expert responsible for the efficacy of the meeting. Insights derived from a conversation analysis approach, which sees context as a product and process of the participants' social actions, will therefore be drawn and discussed. That all dialogues were constructed turn by turn is one of the most powerful insights provided by conversation analysis, and remembering this should enable the analyst to become sensitive to the ever-present tension between linguistic constraint and possibility as the discourse unfolds in real time.

As with other genre-based studies (Hasan, 1985, Ventola, 1987; Swales, 1990; McCarthy, 1998; Koester, 2001, 2006) the challenge is, nevertheless, to recognise what is recurrent without glossing over what is dynamic and changeable, and as such Schegloff's (op cit) strict conversation analysis position will not be consistently upheld: while attending to the specific, in the background there is constantly the acknowledgement of the 'regularly occurring and conventional forms' (Scollon and Scollon, 1998) that in many ways encourage us to recognise a particular genre. Indeed, as Scollon and Scollon (ibid: 32) argue, from the point of view of participants it is the 'shared knowledge of context which is required for successful professional communication'. It logically follows, therefore, that if such knowledge (of, say, setting, roles, agenda) is requisite from the participants' perspective, so it must be for

the researcher to develop an understanding of the text in question. Arminen argues (2001: 437) 'in institutional contexts, in particular, the disclosure of the context-sensitive meaning of the activities may depend on access to participants' knowledge or organisational particulars without which the analysis may remain insufficient.' While such organisational knowledge on my part is variable, and this is a valid criticism of such large corpus-based studies (see Murphy, 1998, and Arminem, op cit), known text-exogenous contextual factors which will illuminate the discourse will be invoked and discussed. While this stance is open to the criticism of subjectivity, it seems the best way of steering between the 'theoretical as well as practical impossibility' of attempting to account for all possible contextual aspects (Cook, 1990: 15) and the dogmatic adherence to a strict conversation analysis position. I therefore hope to account for the 'mutually reflexive relationship' of context and talk, where each dynamically shapes the other (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992: 31).

## 2.3 Face and Politeness

All human interaction has the potential to develop into conflict and confrontation, and politeness is a system of interpersonal strategies which is intended to minimise the threat (Lakoff, 1990). In work situations, face threats such as requests, orders, complaints, refusals, are an occupational hazard, and it could therefore be argued that the workplace is potentially a highly confrontational environment. This would help to explain the conclusions of Holmes and Stubbe when they state:

> *Our analyses indicate that most workplace interactions provide evidence of mutual respect and concern for the feelings or face needs of others, that is, politeness. Politeness is one important reason for modifying the blatant imposition of one's wishes on others.* (2003: 7)

This observation is supported by the data in CANBEC, and the issues of politeness and face within the workplace in general and the business meeting in particular will be discussed in this section.

The notion of 'face' as an academic construct can be traced back to the work of Goffman (1967), and Sacks (1972) but it has received its most systematic, and arguably most criticised interpretation from a pragmatic perspective from Brown and Levinson (1987). While their approach will not be applied in its entirety, it does cover and raise many issues relevant to institutional discourse, such as politeness, power, conflict and their contextual realisation. This section will discuss these issues and relate them to business meetings.

Social interaction is, according to Brown and Levinson (ibid), characterised by each interactant's desire to have his or her own face wants met. They outline universal face wants (since criticised in terms of cross cultural applicability by Gu, 1990; Matsumoto, 1988; Janney and Arndt, 1993; see below) based on the notions of positive face and negative face. The former refers to our need for praise or admiration, and the latter to our desire for 'freedom from imposition' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

In general people will not go out of their way to violate one another's face*, for example criticise somebody or impose upon them. This can be explained through reference to Leech's politeness principle (1983): minimise (all things being equal) the

*When deciding how to formulate a face-threatening utterance three main variables are to be considered:

- P. The perceived power differential (i.e. level of (in)equality) between the interlocutors.
- D. The perceived relative social distance between them.
- R. The perceived threat or danger of the content of the utterance (rank).

The weight of an FTA can thus be calculated:

$$W(FTA) = D + P + R.$$

An increase in the weight will mean more politeness strategies (bald on record; positive politeness, negative politeness, off record; don't do the act) need to be employed (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

expression of impolite beliefs, and maximise (all things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs. When it is deemed necessary to perform a face-threatening act (FTA), however, people will attempt to mitigate it. This mitigation is achieved by employing various politeness strategies, for example being positively polite to your interlocutor e.g. complimenting him or her, or allowing him or her plenty of room to reject the imposition, or wording it in such a way as to appear non-conflictual.*

There are various linguistic features which can be interpreted as examples of negative politeness, operating within institutional contexts. Purposive vagueness and hedging occur frequently in workplace situations (McCarthy and Handford, 2004), and Koester (2002) has argued that indirect, as opposed to direct, speech acts are employed in workplace conversations to avoid appearing rude. Hedging pragmatic particles such as *I think*, *you know*, *I mean*, are a common, but not ubiquitous, feature of communication between subordinates and managers, both in bottom-up requests from the subordinate to the manager, and in top-down directives, and can be directly related to issues of face and politeness (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). In terms of positive politeness and workplace scenarios, Holmes (2000a: 49) has also argued that small talk is regularly employed to serve as a 'positive politeness function'. How these pragmatic areas achieve their linguistic realisation will be discussed throughout this thesis, but the following short extract should exemplify some of the pertinent issues.

*As mentioned above, the Brown and Levinson model has been heavily criticized. For example, while D, P and R are undoubtedly criteria which help to explain the weight of an FTA, particular emphasis may be culture-specific (Gu 1990; Matsumoto, 1988; Janney and Arndt, 1993). The relationship between politeness and individual identity and group interdependence also differs according to culture (Fukushuma, 2000). Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) has forcefully criticised the model for being ethnocentric, and provides an overview of other criticisms of the model in terms of its assumptions. Also the idea that we can objectively measure politeness strategies seems questionable (Adolphs, 2001).

**[Extract 2.3. #79001. IM, in a hydraulics company involving the sales team. Speaker one ($1) is the sales manager and is chairing the meeting, and speaker two ($2) is the marketing manager. They are peers. ]**

<$1> ...and **we'll draft a letter and get it out+**

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> **+as soon as possible.**

<$5> Yeah.

<$2> And we'll look at those spares. I've made a note. I've put spares.

<$1> **Can we get that letter out next week David?**

<$2> Yeah. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> **Nothing else to do?**

<$2> No.

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

Speaker one, when asking *<$1> Can we get that letter out next week David?* is of course requesting that David, if not write the letter himself, at least accept responsibility for making sure it is written and sent out. The framing of a deontic modal request or command as an epistemic modal question is common in the data, and a plausible explanation is provided by references to face wants: asking someone directly whether an action is possible is less face-threatening than asking or telling that person to do the said action.

When considering politeness and face, context should also be considered in order to reach a thorough understanding of the communicative exchange in question (Brown and Levinson, 1987). If we employ a conversation-analysis approach to context it can help to explain why two turns later the Chair asks David more directly:

<$1> **Could you draft the letter** and then just get them to do the mail shot from here?

<$2> Yeah. Yeah.

From a conversation-analysis perspective, we can argue that the context has changed with each subsequent request: the weight of each request or directive becomes greater. We could explain *we'll draft a letter* as being a pre-request in that it allows the speaker ($1) to 'check out whether a request is likely to proceed' (Levinson, 1983: 357), given that request refusals are dispreferred (ibid), at least in non-conflictual discourse (see chapter seven). With speaker two concurring with the pre-request, speaker one then moves on to the more direct request *<$1> Can we get that letter out next week David?* Finally the Chair requests more directly *Could you draft the letter?* With each subsequent turn, the request becomes more of a direct imposition on David, but because the request is constructed gradually and arguably collaboratively over various turns the face threat is less than had the Chair launched in immediately with *Could you draft the letter?*

The notion of meaning being developed through the sequencing of the talk is relevant here. As Boden and Zimmerman (1991: 10) argue:

> *The resources for mutual understanding are found in the fundamental nature of sequencing – that the elements of interaction are not merely serially realised as 'once and for all' but are rather actions that are shaped and reshaped over the course of the talk...Mutual understanding is thus a methodical achievement employing the resources provided by the mechanisms of conversational interaction.*

If we attempt to merely extrapolate the meaning of the import of the talk then we cannot account for the way meaning is achieved. Sarangi and Roberts' criticism of business 'how to' manuals mentioned in the introduction is relevant here: they describe the portrayal of language present in such training books as unacceptably simplistic because communication of a message is seen as travelling in a single, direct, unidirectional line from the transmitter to the receiver (1999: 2). Were an

individual to consistently communicate in such a bald, uninteractive manner, it seems highly unlikely his or her interlocutors would be eager to communicate further. Indeed, the present study analyses data where such bald, on record utterances can be seen to reflect and create an atmosphere of conflict, and explores how such conflict is further embedded over turns through the use of metaphor.

The choice of pronouns is also significant. In the initial pre-request, the Chair uses a non-accountable, inclusive *we*, and then chooses *we*, rather than *you* for the first, less weighty request, but which is combined with the vocative David, thereby leaving no doubt as to responsibility while personalising the request and addressing face concerns (McCarthy and O'Keeffe, 2003). Finally the Chair uses the more direct *you* (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Again, by gradually rather than immediately appropriating responsibility for the letter, which is reflected in the choice of personal pronouns, the face threat is lessened.

As noted by Holmes and Stubbe, 'Humour functions as a particularly effective politeness strategy' (2003: 7). The ironic question by the Chair, *<$1> Nothing else to do?* could be seen as an instance of positive politeness following the threat to speaker two's negative face caused by the request. By implicitly acknowledging that speaker two undoubtedly has lots of other things to do, the Chair, it could be argued, is recognising David's desire to be seen as a hardworking and competent individual. We could also interpret this as an instance of the Banter Principle (Leech, 1983: 144). That is, in order to show solidarity with speaker two, speaker one says something that is obviously untrue and could be impolite, which leads us to interpret that what speaker one says to speaker two is impolite and clearly untrue. Therefore what speaker one means is polite to speaker two and true (in this case, I respect you because you work very hard). Culpeper (1996: 350) also argues that banter is

'indicative of relative equality in terms of authority and closeness in terms of social distance'. This contrasts with the assertion of Holmes and Stubbe (op cit) who argue that humour is often found in hierarchical contexts. One possible solution to this paradox is to interpret the context as fluid and multi-layered, with the roles of Chair and members being fixed and therefore hierarchical within the present context of the meeting, but simultaneously dynamic with the Chair acknowledging speaker two's equal status outside of the meeting but within the company.

From a traditional speech act position (Austin 1962; Searle 1965, 1969), which proposes a one-to-one correlation between a single utterance and an individual function (e.g. utterance: *please do this*; function: *request*), this unfolding of the request cannot be accounted for effectively. Neither can it from a top-down approach to context which only accounts for the non-linguistic contextual factors, as these do not change: the Chair is still the Chair and the meeting is still in the meeting room. If we accept that illocutionary force, like speaker goals (see below), can unfold and be achieved over various turns, then a notion of face seems to have considerable explanatory depth: the force or directness of the request gradually increases over turns, as this way the threat to the interlocutor's face is lessened. It will be argued here that CANBEC provides a positive answer to the question of whether or not there is empirical evidence for the concepts of face work and related politeness strategies (Fraser, 1990). (See Adolphs (2001) for a discussion of indirect speech acts and prefabricated chunks such as 'can you X?')

A powerful critique of the Brown and Levinson model is offered by Penman (1990: 16), who pinpoints the following conceptual problems:

- Facework can be accomplished through other means than politeness, as facework is a larger concept than politeness

- Their politeness theory does not deal with face aggravation
- Although a distinction is drawn between self and other-directed strategies, they fail to deal with self-directed strategies.

These points are related. Self-directed strategies, for example 'I must be stupid' do not involve a sense of politeness in terms of being polite to our interlocutor. From a business perspective, a related concept could be termed 'self-directed corporate face', based on an extension of 'corporate face' (Charles, 1996), when a representative of a company refers to their own company, e.g. the dead metaphor or clichéd *we pride ourselves on our (after-sales service).*

In addition, other and self-directed face aggravation does occur in business, both at the personal and the corporate level. While potential face aggravation, for example in the form of expressions of obligation, does tend to be more common in internal meetings where managers are often instructing, this is not always the case, as the following exchange at the end of an acrimonious meeting between the operations controller of a pub-chain company (speaker one) and the estates manager of a brewer shows:

**[Extract 2.4. EM]**

<$1> John. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> I don't envy you. You must be welcomed up and down the country.

<$2> Well yeah. <$=> Most people are <\$=> Most people are kinder than you are but there you go.

Koester (2002) demonstrates how during times of face aggravation or conflict direct speech acts are far more common than during non-conflictual communication, for example superiors using direct performatives, for example *I disagree*. Thomas (1984) also arrived at a similar result in her study of cross-cultural communication, stating that direct speech acts are employed when the superior wishes to assert his or her (although usually his – Tannen, 1994) dominance over the subordinate(s). The

notion of face referred to from now on will therefore include the possibility, and indeed within the reality within much business discourse, of face aggravation and its relationship with conflictual or baldly power-enforcing language as action (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Needless to say, any linguistic interpretation of face work and potential or actual conflict will refer not only to the level of speech acts but will include other relevant aspects of communication such as turn-taking, e.g. interruptions and self selection (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Tannen, 1994) and speaker goals (Tracy and Coupland, 1990; Swales, 1990; McCarthy, 1998).

## 2.4 Genre Introduction

One of the central aims of this thesis is to develop a corpus-informed notion of the genre of the business meeting. Although significant work has been done in this and other workplace-related fields (Lampi, 1986; Boden, 1994; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997; Pan, Scollon and Scollon, 2002; Koester, 2001, 2002, 2006; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), it is still an area which is relatively nascent. Perhaps because of this the field does not uphold a fixed methodological framework, and therefore relevant aspects of corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, conversational analysis, pragmatics, business communication and genre analysis will be brought together to build a realistic and dynamic representation of the business meeting. Such an approach is becoming more common in related studies of institutional discourse, for example O'Keeffe's (2006) investigation of media discourse, Koester's (2006) study of workplace discourse and Walsh's (2006) work on classroom discourse.

The question of why genre is a relevant concept for the present study can best be answered when we consider the realisation that business meetings are intuitively recognisable as such, and are different from other types of institutional discourse and

other types of discourse (Cuff and Sharrock, 1985). When the participants were asked to categorise the communication which had been recorded, all the data analysed here were described as meetings. It is the analyst's job to turn these intuitions into a theoretical framework which reflects and can account for the empirical data. When we consider McCarthy's (1998:32) justification that 'genre is a useful concept that captures the recurrent, differing social impacts (i.e. cooperative sets of behaviour) that participants enter upon in the unfolding discourse process', we can see that the business meeting is a recurring event, in which participants can be seen to be cooperating with varying degrees of success and sincerity, and which is recognisably different from other forms of (institutional and non-institutional) discourse. These aspects, to be discussed in detail below, suggest the suitability of a genre-based analysis of the business meeting. What makes the present study different from other generic studies of business meetings include:

- the range and amount of data, both internal and external
- the depth and scope of analysis of many of the recurrent linguistic features, and their relationship to the proposed generic framework which describes the overall structure of the meeting
- generic 'fingerprints' which allow us to infer that the participants are recreating the genre of the meeting through certain strategies
- the account of the variety in turn taking
- the categorisation of the relationships of the participants
- the systematic exploration of areas such as face and conflict.

### 2.4.1 Genre: some definitions

A distinction is often drawn between texts and genres, and their relationship (Biber and Finnegan, 1986; Biber, 1988; McCarthy, 1998; Askehave and Swales, 2001)

Texts are, as McCarthy (ibid: 32) states, 'simply the patterned traces of social activities', and it is for the genre analyst to find meaning in the texts through relating them to these social activities. There are various definitions of spoken genre, for example Bakhtin's (1986: 60) global proposal that genres come into existence because 'each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances'. While this definition may be difficult to apply in practice (Hasan 1985), it captures two features of genre which will be discussed in this study: genres come into existence over time i.e. they unfold as real-time events, and genres are not rigidly stable. This definition has been further developed within a business context by Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999: 14), who highlight the role of the community which is involved in the use and interpretation of the said genre. This definition manages to highlight the link between the textual and the social, a relationship that is rigorously analysed by Swales (1990). He states:

> *genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.* (ibid: 58)

The elements outlined here can be broken down as follows

1. genres provide a classificatory model
2. genres are created with specific purposes in mind
3. there are expert members of genres responsible for their creation and use
4. by implication, there are non-expert users, and non-users
5. genres have individual, recognisable structures in terms of content and style
6. genres have limits and non-permissible elements in terms of content and style

7. genres are shaped according to their purpose.

While this definition is a powerful one, not least the idea of perceived constraint also noted by Duranti (1983: 20), it may tend to overly focus on the rigid elements of genre, and not take into account what McCarthy notes as the 'dynamism, fluidity, variability, mixing and negotiation' apparent in more recent descriptions of spoken genre (1998: 30). Swales does, however, emphasise the primary importance of goals, describing genres as 'the communicative vehicles for the achievement of goals.'(1990: 46). It will be argued here that through relating genre to speaker goals, as recommended by Swales, which are in turn related to genre-specific strategies, we can then account for the fluidity and variation apparent in the data. This will also allow us to propose that certain lexicogrammatical features tend to occur within a specific genre* (Adolphs, 2002). This study will also show that certain speaker strategies tend to reoccur in meetings, and these strategies can take certain lexicogrammatical forms, and they invoke the genre. Also relevant is Wenger's (1998) argument that particular communities of practice develop their own linguistic repertoire.

The proposition that certain lexicogrammatical features tend to be found in specific genres would directly question Hasan's (1985) assertion that there is no direct strict causal relationship between genre and specific lexicogrammatical features: the relationship is probabilistic. This means that we cannot propose a strictly causal relationship between lexicogrammar and genre. I do agree, however, that there is no deterministic relationship between lexicogrammatical features and business meetings,

*Such a finding would be important because, as Drew and Heritage state, "Lexical choice is a significant way through which speakers evoke and orient to the institutional context of their talk" (1992: 29). Through understanding the lexical choices made by participants, we can then begin to appreciate what the participants are doing and how they are positioning themselves within the environment in question. The relationship between the language of speakers and the specific institutional context of the genre of the business meeting will be explored throughout this thesis.

but we can say that certain words, phrases and structures are more likely in business meetings than in other genres, e.g. *agenda,* or *we need to,* and that many of these features address recurring strategies. The relationship of genre and register is relevant here, and is discussed in the following section: lexicogrammatical choices are constrained by register, and specific registers complement specific genres (Couture, 1986). This relationship will be further discussed in the next section.

### 2.4.2 Language, register and genre

One of the most influential linguistic frameworks of genre has been proposed by Bhatia (1993). Working on written language, he proposes a three level method of analysis for defining genres:

1. lexico-grammatical
2. text-patterning
3. structural.

Arguing that the three levels are interrelated, the model is intended to be holistic and can take us beyond linguistic description to a more explanatory understanding of language, encompassing psycholinguistic as well as sociocultural factors. The structural level attempts to explain the schematic involvement of the text or genre in question. Koester (2001: 42) argues that particular conventionalised lexicogrammatical features and textual patterns will be found within certain genres, and that this aspect allows us to account for variation in genre because there will be different approaches for creating the same genre. The present thesis will argue that this is the case in relation to the genre of the business meeting, and will demonstrate so through a study of such features in context.

While Halliday's work (1978, 1985, 1989) and that of other systemic functional linguists (e.g. Martin, 1992; Benson and Greaves, 1985; Christie and Martin, 1997) on the relationship between language, register (Field; Tenor; Mode), metafunctions (Ideational, Interpersonal, Textual) and genre cannot be analysed in detail because of space constraints, a brief discussion of register in comparison to genre is necessary. This is because my hypotheses explicitly refer to these concepts.

The relationship between register and genre is a complex one, not least because the terms are not applied consistently in linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 1978; Biber, 1995; Crystal, 1995; Lee, 2001). While the distinction is sometimes unclear in systemic linguistics (see Ventola, 1984), even among Halliday's own definitions (see Martin, 1992), Couture's position is highly illuminating (Swales, 1990). Genre, she argues, constrains at the level of discourse structure and 'it specifies conditions for beginning, continuing and ending a text' (1986: 82). Register, on the other hand, constrains at the lexicogrammatical level, and reflects stylistic choices. Even though genres do have 'complementary' registers (ibid: 86), the two do not necessarily overlap. In this thesis, references to register follow Couture's definition, the concept of genre and McCarthy's (1998) assertion that participants demonstrate awareness of involvement in the said genre are explored in greater depth.

Drawing from Halliday, the notion that genres are realised through specific macro and micro linguistic choices underpins the present study, as does the argument that interpersonal linguistic features are present within each and every clause. Also in line with a systemic functional position is the assertion that we must study real examples of language in use if we are to gain insights into what people actually do with language and why a text means what it does (Eggins, 1994: 5).

Of specific relevance to this study is the work of Koester on workplace discourse (2001, 2006). Drawing on McCarthy (1998), she develops a three-part classification of her workplace corpus involving:

1. Task orientation (transactional vs. non transactional)
2. Discourse roles (unidirectional or collaborative)
3. The goal of the encounter.

This classification manages to relate language choice to speaker goals, and provides a system for analysing workplace data. This is of obvious relevance to business meetings, which have clear goals, are transactional in orientation and although may often tend to be collaborative in nature, display varying degrees of unidirectionality. In terms of business meetings, it is improbable that a single meeting could be described as unidirectional or collaborative, and it may be more accurate to apply the distinction at the level of turns or phases.

Koester's classification draws on McCarthy's (1998) collaborative vs. unidirectional language distinction. When analysing collaborative discourse in her workplace corpus, Koester identifies three types of talk which she calls genres:

1. making arrangements
2. decision-making
3. discussing and evaluating.

She also includes a separate type of talk, in essence extended closing, checking and confirming the things discussed (2001: 21). These elements, it will be shown, are present in business meetings, and sometimes all of them within the same meeting. Within unidirectional discourse, she proposes five genres: briefing, service encounters, procedural and directive discourse, requesting action/permission/goods (or favour-seeking), and reporting (2006: 32). While service encounters are not found

in business meetings, the other types of talk are. These types of talk are combined with others and organised into a systematised contextual framework which will be outlined in the next chapter. Koester's generic model will be critiqued in the final genre chapter.

### 2.4.3 Genre and speaker goals

Arguably the greatest challenge for any genre-based description of language is to account for the recurrent features of the given genre, while incorporating the fluidity and variation which do not only not lend themselves to abstraction, but may actually question or negate the said recurrent features. One possible approach to this problem is outlined below.

There is the problem of idealisation or reification of genres: many descriptions of genres focus on the obligatory or fixed elements of the specific genre (e.g. Hasan, 1985, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997), yet such abstractions may not reflect the complexity of the empirical evidence (Ventola, 1987; Threadgold, 1989; Koester, 2004). This may well be because participants do not intend to replicate a genre when they are communicating in a specific context (McCarthy, 1998). They are primarily concerned with achieving their goals.

Therefore, we should see genres from the perspective of speaker goals (Swales, 1990) as this lets us account for the variety and dynamism inherent in genres. As Sarangi and Roberts state:

> *'The competent members of a given workplace community not only manifest in their daily lives what counts as routine practice, but also, at a metalevel, they bring to scrutiny the very boundaries of institutional knowledge for renewal and reification.'* (1999: 4)

Speaker goals are, however, often elusive to the observer (Penman, 1990), and therefore empirically unverifiable. They may be multiple and conflicting (Tracy and Coupland, 1990), and therefore provide a questionable basis for understanding discourse: how do we know which goal is relevant, and how do we know whether it is a speaker's goal, even if he or she says it is (Hopper and Drummond, 1990)? Goals may also be emergent rather than predetermined (ibid), in which case not they may not be recognised as goals in the folk, causal, meaning of the term. Related to this is Fairclough's assertion that goal-driven models encourage us to view interaction as being more under the conscious control of the participants than is often the case (1995a: 45). Cicourel (1991) warns the analyst against looking for desired evidence in language when there may be nothing important actually going on. Another danger is that we imbue specific genres with goals, rather than seeing them as a setting 'where speakers act in the pursuit of goals of their own' (George, 1988: 312). One possible solution is to look for instances of different types of goals, and infer wherever possible, always acknowledging that we are working at the level of inference (McCarthy, 1998). In CANBEC we can find evidence of corporate strategic goals, emergent goals, and personal goals, but this evidence is often at best inferential.

## 2.5 The Transactional/Relational Distinction

A distinction is often drawn in discourse analysis between transactional, or task-focussed language, and phatic or relational or interpersonal language, which is primarily relationship-focussed (Nunan, 1983; Brown and Yule, 1983; McCarthy, 1998). While recent research has been seeking to readdress the balance (McCarthy, 1998, 2000; Coupland, 2000; Holmes, 2000a; Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Koester, 2001, 2004, 2006; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Mirivel and Tracy, 2005), the importance or

relevance of relational talk is by no means universally accepted. Indeed, Malinowski (1923), whose seminal work brought 'phatic communion' to the attention of academia, also held it in considerably lower esteem than transactional talk, and since then phatic or relational talk has often been seen as 'aimless' (Malinoswki, reprinted 1972: 149). (See Coupland (2000) for an overview of various criticisms of the notion of phatic talk.) This study, however, aims to support the argument that there is far more to interpersonal language* than just filling the gaps between the important transactional elements of communication and as such is indebted to the work of Laver (1975) who argued that relational talk can be strategically employed to prevent unwelcome and potentially hostile silences, or to move towards consensus. My central claim is that, while we can often separate language in terms of being transactional or relational, at the goal level the distinction within the genre of the business meeting is highly questionable. There is empirical evidence and rational argument which supports the claim that interpersonal language is employed with clear transactional goals in mind, and in some contexts the opposite is also possible.

### 2.5.1 The transactional/relational linguistic distinction

In his analysis of service encounters, McCarthy (2000) distinguishes four types of talk. The distinction is also relevant to business communication in general and business meetings in particular because instances of each can be found in internal and external business meetings. They are:

1. Phatic exchanges (greetings, partings)
2. Transactional talk (requests, enquiries, instructions)

*From a Hallidayan (1985) perspective, the linguistic and paralinguistic realisation of these aspects fall into the register category of tenor, and the functional interpersonal category.

3. Transactional-plus-relational talk (non-obligatory task evaluations and other comments)
4. Relational talk (small talk, anecdotes, wider topics of mutual interest).

McCarthy notes that even in transactional talk (2) participants still 'reinforce the relational context' (ibid: 104) through interpersonal (Halliday 1985) choices such as pronouns, e.g. communal *we,* rather than *I* or *you.* In business meetings transactional talk tends to comprise most of the language and time, although relational elements are visible at the lexico-grammatical level in terms of interpersonal features, and at the turn and sequence level (Koester, 2004). This categorisation of talk is a powerful one, and will be applied when analysing the data. Even phatic exchanges (1) and relational talk (4), it will be argued here, can be interpreted as achieving transactional goals despite their obvious relational content.

The business meeting, that seemingly most transactional (Boden, 1994) of speech events, provides evidence of relational talk at various stages of the event. If we approach the discourse from a speaker goals and speaker relations perspective (McCarthy 2000) then a purely transaction-as-meaning account fails to stand up to the empirical evidence: speakers in business meetings appear to be deliberately using what is, on one level, interpersonal language with transactional goals in mind. The sales director ($1) in the extract who starts talking about football to his client ($2) towards the end of an important sales negotiation does not, it is argued here, do so randomly:

**[Extract 2.5. #39001. EM. Sales negotiation between ISP provider (speakers one and three) and IT sales company (speaker two).]**

<$1> I think next time we'll just get together and we'll we'll thrash it out and then+

<$2> Lovely.

<$1> +get something together.

<$2> Okay.

<$1> Okay? Great.

<$2> Yeah. That's great. Thanks very much.

<$3> Okay. <$E> exhales <\$E> <$E> 2 seconds <\$E> Right.

<$1> And I think we've got a football match the week after next <$G?>.

Here, one possible justification for this new topic is the addressing of the transactional goal of making sure his institution makes a profit, and this is achieved through reminding the client of their companies' mutual relationship. The choice of 'And' before informing the client about the football game is telling, in that there is no semantic link between the ideas of coming to an agreement and playing football. The link is a *relational* link and is best understood pragmatically rather than semantically. What he means is: we can come to an agreement, and we play football together, because we are in a worthwhile relationship, so let's not let it slip.

A common approach to the distinction is that of Eggins and Slade (1997), who distinguish clearly between 'casual conversation' and work discourse, arguing that they are quite separate and separable, which, as Coupland (2000: 13) notes, fails to account for the dynamic nature of 'discursive renegotiation' where participants alter stance towards the content of the dialogue and towards each other. This present study aims to show that the distinction at the goals level cannot be accounted for from an empirical perspective, where evidence of multiple goals is widespread, as with other data-driven studies of institutional discourse (see Tracy and Coupland, 1990).

In terms of analysing language in business situations, Holmes (2000a:37) employs a system of clines outlining criteria for distinguishing business talk from phatic communication:

| CORE BUSINESS TALK | PHATIC COMMUNICATION |
|---|---|
| Relevant 'on topic' talk | Atopical talk |
| Maximally informative | Minimally informative |
| Context-bound | Context-free |
| Transactional | Social |

Here, *Relevant* refers to the companies core business, *Informativeness* means referential with high information content, *Context bound* means that understanding requires a great deal of background knowledge, and relates to the type of talk and its relationship to organisational goals, which in turn relate to the agenda. (It should be noted that the transactional and social elements refer to language and not to goals.) This framework is relevant to the present study because these criteria can be directly applied to business meetings. However, transcripts of authentic meetings show how the boundaries between, say, on topic and atopical talk are often blurred.

In terms of frequency of relational talk, Koester (2004) states that the relationship of the speakers (how close they are) and the setting (i.e. open-plan offices are conducive) are highly significant. The exercise or downplaying of power differences can also be significant (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Both of these studies base their findings on wholly internal data. The present study, however, differs from other corpus-based studies of workplace discourse in that it explores the distinction between internal and external meetings, for example the occurrence and role played by relational language in external as compared to internal business meetings, and how within internal and external meetings the power-based relationship (for example manager and subordinate) also affects linguistic choice.

### 2.5.2 Transactional and relational goals

Swales (1990: 43) states 'Speakers (also) have goals when engaging in casual conversation, but often these goals are largely relational and not transactional.' It will be argued here that this is not necessarily the case, particularly in relation to business meetings, and that what causes this view is an inappropriate conflation of language and goals. The position taken in this thesis is closer to that of Candlin when he states: '...any given utterance, whether apparently relationally [sic] or transactional in character, can potentially serve both interpersonal and ideational goals' (2000: xviii). That is, we can use relational language, for example talking about football, to achieve a transactional goal such as encouraging the client to buy more stock. Conversely, we can use transactional language to achieve an interpersonal goal, for example discussing our bank details with our bank manager because we find him or her attractive (obviously depending on the health of the balance).

The position taken here draws on, but is slightly different from, that of Koester (2001, 2002). She states that 'in most types of discourse speakers orient to both transactional and relational goals, although one type of goal might be dominant' (2001: 56), whereas my position is that, in certain genres, apparently relational goals are in fact transactional goals. It is closer to Koester when she states that genres 'depend as much on relational elements as they do on purely transactional ones; the building and maintenance of relationships simply cannot be separated from other business at hand' (ibid: 63). Holmes (2000a: 33) in a similar vein states 'It is not generally possible to parcel out meaning into neat packages of referential on the one hand and social or affective on the other. Talk is inherently multifunctional.' In a later paper on relational sequences, Koester states that 'relational episodes, involving a temporary interruption of the task being performed, are sometimes embedded within

workplace interactions with a clear transactional focus.' (2004: 1407/08) If 'focus' is seen as a synonym for goal, then this is equivalent to the argument proposed in the present study.

Iacobucci (1990: 97) has also proposed that, in service encounters, 'ostensibly relational talk may have a use, a purpose for accomplishing a task goal', and this is because customers and representatives in service encounters in her data have but one overarching transactional goal. The interlocutors, interpreted from a multiple goals perspective, employ relational talk to achieve transactional goals. Within the field of marketing, research has been conducted by Iacobucci (1996) and others (Paulin, Ferguson and Payaud, 2000; Paulin, Perrien and Ferguson, 1997; Sharma and Pillai, 2003) to discuss the related notion of transactional/relational approaches in terms of company philosophy or corporate culture. Some companies have a far more relational culture in terms of practice, for example spending time with individual customers and not using automated answering machines. This approach is seen to boost business, particularly with existing customers i.e. accomplish the transactional goal.

Tracy and Coupland (1990: 7) provide a thorough description of possible types and levels of goals. They state:

- The lowest level is the speech act level, e.g. to praise, to command, and 'is likely to reflect goals that emerge for interactants as they talk rather than being held for talk *a priori*'
- A higher level is that of interactional outcomes e.g. win an argument, comfort a friend. 'Goals at this level are probably the easiest to specify pre-interactionally...How goals at this level relate to talk, though, is likely to be more complex.' There may well be a combination of the task goal with the identity goal, which may in turn involve some conflict

- 'At the highest level are quite globally operative goals that embrace notions of enduring socio-emotional needs and priorities', e.g. group level processes relevant to social identity
- There is also the dimension of whether the goal is framed positively or negatively e.g. honestly or dishonestly
- If we accept the notion of multiple goals, then goals-conflict is inevitable, both between participants and within the individual.

They also argue that, in relation to intergroup encounters involving representatives from social institutions (of which external meetings would be an example), goal conflict may well be characteristic of the encounter. This would undoubtedly be true of many business meetings, although this conflict may not necessarily be apparent at the level of language: speakers may either defer discussing possible conflict, or use euphemism, or lie. It is also prudent to bear in mind Watson's reality-check when he states 'We should not underestimate the "play" element that comes into organisational decision-making events. It is far from unknown for people to pursue a certain line in a meeting to amuse themselves.'(2002: 340).

In any discussion of empirical studies which aim to shed light on speaker goals, as does the present investigation, it should be categorically stated that these goals 'are often elusive to the observer and that situated, ongoing discourse is often enigmatically or indeterminately related to abstract theoretical notions of goal.' (Craig, 1990: 169). Indeed, this notion of indeterminacy has been cited as a characteristic factor of much institutional discourse, and can be deliberately employed (Sarangi & Roberts 1999: 36). From a cognitive perspective, Waldron et al (1990: 114) ask whether relational goals are actually less accessible, and there is evidence to

suggest that speakers in transactional tasks use relational language unconsciously (Ragan, 1990). This finding raises the issue of reliability when conducting emic interpretations of data: sometimes the researcher may offer a more plausible account of the discourse than the participants themselves. Participants certainly view relational goals as being of less importance than transactional goals in workplace encounters (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Hopper and Drummond argue that 'it seems unlikely that goals-in-talk are as clear-cut as may have been anticipated' (1990: 58), proposing that while some goals are pre-planned, many goals actually *emerge* during communication. This notion of emergence will be applied in analysing the data and in developing a generic framework of the business meeting.*

## 2.6 The Characteristics of Spoken Business English

The possibility of providing a working definition of spoken business English is not universally accepted. St. John (1996: 5) has argued that, unlike other fields such as Science or Maths, there is no 'common core' of language items, and therefore spoken business English lacks its own vocabulary. Given the proposed relationship between lexico-grammatical features, register, discourse features and genre, if this is the case then the chances of developing a linguistically-informed genre-based account of the business meeting seem remote.

Nelson's (2000, 2006) findings do challenge this, in that he argues for corpus-informed understanding of business lexis: while there may be words in Business

*It should briefly be mentioned that I am not suggesting that relational language does not serve relational goals. Small talk is arguably the least transactional form of social language, and as Holmes and Stubbe state 'people may dispense with small talk when they are not concerned to nurture or develop the social relationship. ' (op cit: 56). The relationship between power and interpersonal language is of course relevant too: managers may use interpersonal language to break down the power differential, but at other times to achieve organisational goals (Holmes and Stubbe, ibid)

English which are formally the same as in everyday English, for example *partner*, they are semantically different in that the business-English meaning will tend to be more restricted: the word or lexical item will have a business-specific meaning. From a pragmatic perspective there is an obvious, yet possibly tautological, difference: the business English meaning will tend to be used in business settings. Nelson delves further into the lexical aspects of business English, applying Sinclair's (1996b) concepts of semantic preference (which describes the semantic features of collocations) and semantic prosody (the pragmatic element of the lexical item, somewhat akin to its function, to be further explored in chapter five). He also highlights the crucial difference between language used *about* business and language used *in* business, showing that there are considerable differences in language choice. A further distinction is drawn between spoken business English and written business English. Based on these findings it seems logical to assume that there is a separate, but related, area of English which we can term spoken business English. The work of Nelson (2000; 2006), given that it is a corpus-informed analysis of business English, is highly relevant to the present study and will be referred to throughout the thesis.

While we may argue that there is such a concept or reality which we can call spoken business English, defining it is not necessarily possible. As Akar states (2002: 320), 'Given the wide variety of language used in corporate settings, it seems impossible to come up with a definition...of business language.' While this highlights the dangers of attempting to find an inclusive definition, Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson's definition below suffers from the tautological charge of circularity, when they propose that business discourse performs 'the purpose of doing business' (2002:274).

They also state (ibid) that business discourse tends to take place in a physical or virtual corporate setting. One aspect of business that seems to be truly cross-cultural, however, is the amount of business that gets done out of the corporate setting (Koester, 2006), for example in the pub, on the golf course and at dinner. At this point in time it appears that accepting the notion of spoken business English as a working concept which contains explanatory depth may be more prudent than attempting a tight definition, tied to a specific physical setting (see Nelson, 2000 for further discussion). It should be noted that the present study will not attempt to define spoken business English, but instead will outline certain key linguistic features that reoccur in business meetings.

### 2.6.1 Business English and business communication

The term business communication is used to denote the range of communication studies in business settings, and as such Business English has been described as a subset of business communication (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2002). It is also possible to see business English and business communication as related but separate fields, with different aims. Whereas the former is primarily descriptive and aims to discover what is going on within a particular genre, the latter is primarily prescriptive and aims to enhance communication through finding out what effective communication is, and thereby enabling stakeholders to achieve their goals and optimise their value (Reinsch 2001). The two fields tend to have different 'Institutional Homes' (Charles, 2003), with Business English being taught in Arts and Humanities faculties on courses like Applied Linguistics, Business Communication tends to be taught in Business and Management schools and departments. The present study's home is in the former.

Business discourse is different from professional discourse in that the latter involves a layperson, who is typically receiving some kind of specialist advice or information from a professional person, for example a doctor and a patient (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2002). Business discourse involves people involved in the speech event who are present in their institutional, not lay, capacities or identities. As such, there are no transcripts involving individuals in their lay-capacity. As the present study is of naturally-occurring speech, data used in this study comprises spontaneous i.e. non-scripted spoken language. Emails, facsimiles and written reports are therefore not included in the corpus. There is a wide range of research on written business discourse, e.g. Christie and Martin, (1997); Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson, (1999); Rutherford, (2005); Gillerts and Gotti, (2005); Trosberg and Jorgensen, (2005).

### 2.6.2 Institutional language and everyday English

Drew and Heritage, in line with their conversation analysis position, state that ordinary conversation is the 'benchmark' against which other types of discourse, for example institutional discourse, can be recognised and compared. (1992: 19). Comparisons will, they argue, throw up systematic differences. They cite (1992:25) three factors that evidence 'distinctly institutional orientations at talk at work' in comparison to ordinary conversation:

1. orientations to the tasks and functions
2. restrictions in kinds of contributions that can be made
3. distinctive features of interactional inferences.

The first orientation concerns goals which would be related to the institution, for example a manager outlining how stakeholders' benefits could be achieved.

Discriminatory language could be an example of the second category, and the third might involve the improbability of a lawyer expressing shock towards his or her client.

They then go on to argue that there are five dimensions of interactional conduct relevant to the analysis of institutional talk: lexical choice, turn design, sequence organisation, overall structure organisation, and social epistemology and social relations (ibid: 28-53). 'Overall structure organisation'* is related but not equivalent to the notion of genre discussed in the present study, and the latter category involves areas such as power and knowledge asymmetries, and 'cautiousness' in institutional talk. According to Heritage (1997: 179), 'lexical choice is part of turn design; turn design is part of sequence organisation; sequence organisation is part of overall structural organisation'.

Whereas previous studies of the business meeting have tended to analyse particular aspects from the five dimensions listed above, the present study is unique in that it explores all of these factors in detail. In the quantitative sections of this study, statistical comparisons will be made between CANBEC and a corpus of everyday English (CANCODE). Because both corpora only comprise naturally-occurring data of everyday English and of business meetings, this comparison is probably the most rigorous corpus-based analysis of the differences between the two discourses yet conducted. In the qualitative chapters, the high degree of contextual knowledge allows for a fine-grained description of the various areas explored, such as the specific turn-taking designs apparent in business meetings.

*This definition of overall structure organisation by Heritage (1997: 168) reflects one key aspect of genre which the present study will explore: 'Overall structure organisation, in short, is not a framework – fixed once and for all – to fit data into. Rather it is something that we're looking for and looking at only to the extent that the parties orient to it in organising their talk.'

Kasper (2000:318) states that a comparison with ordinary conversation can provide the following insights on institutional discourse:

- The interrelation of text and context in institutional discourse, e.g. how institutional structures affect and are reproduced by communicative action
- The relationship between communicative action and social power.

More specifically, we can see that:

- Institutional talk is more highly structured, routinised and recurrent
- It has a clear purpose to the interaction
- It has clear role distribution between actors, and actors' goals
- There are specific linguistic constraints such as particular turn-taking mechanisms.

Another difference between everyday English and any type of institutional discourse, for example, spoken business English, is that business discourse can be seen as easier to analyse because there are less variables. Whereas within the sphere of spoken discourse everyday English is relatively unstructured, unpredictable, lacking in routines and opaque in terms of identity, institutional discourse displays the above 'advantages' (ibid) for the analyst. Heritage (1997) also notes that institutional discourse is often asymmetrical, whereas everyday English is not so, although, as Koester, notes, this is only true of everyday English at 'a certain level of idealisation' (2001: 14).

## 2.7 Meetings

'Most organisations exist and will continue to exist in so far as individuals come together to talk them into being during meetings.'

Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997: 6

It has been argued that attempting to define what a meeting is is redundant, given our intuitive grasp of the genre (Cuff and Sharrock, 1985). This view does seem a little insouciant, and there have been at least differences in emphasis when defining a meeting (see below). Nevertheless, meetings are undeniably varied, and one key variable relates to the participants involved: we can have a rugby club meeting, a teachers' meeting, PTA meeting, a lawyers' meeting, a lawyer and client meeting, a lawyer and accountant meeting, a book group meeting, a church meeting, or an Alcoholics' Anonymous meeting. The list seems potentially endless, but one constant is that there is a, not necessarily permanent, set of participants. Another constant concerns the idea of agenda or topic, although this can be formal or informal, planned or spontaneous, written or spoken, fixed or flexible. Closely tied to this is the idea of purpose or reason (Boden, 1994: 84) for the meeting. A meeting can therefore vary in terms of formality, individual members, how fixed the agenda is, whether it is about money, the future, the past, and whether it is personal, or professional. A further aspect that may enable us to recognise a stretch of discourse as a meeting as opposed to a conversation is the turn-taking modes employed (Boden, 1994: 89). This is often most evident in exchanges between the Chair and the group (ibid). Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 208) refer to this relationship in business meetings when they state, 'In all business meetings, the achievement of specific organisational goals depends on accomplishing the main task through the discussion of the agenda by the chair and the group.' The present study, while agreeing with this assertion up to a point, will also deconstruct the notion of 'Chair' in respect to external meetings.

### 2.7.1 Business meetings vs. service encounters

Considerable research has been done on service encounters (Mitchell, 1957; Hasan, 1985; Iacobucci, 1990; Ventola, 1987; Ylanne-McEwan, 1997; McCarthy, 2000), one reason being that they strongly display the features outlined by Kasper (ibid) above. While service encounters and business meetings are both instances of institutional discourse, there are clear differences:

1. The language of meetings is much less ritualised and constrained than service encounters
2. Roles in meetings are less defined and more fluid and more dependent on participants' interests
3. The notion of agenda is much broader in meetings, involving hidden and explicit agendas
4. Service encounters lack the 'ideological framework which underpins and influences almost all linguistic behaviour in organisational settings'
5. Meetings involve decision-making processes and organisational consequences.

Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997:206).

When comparing service encounters with external (as opposed to internal) meetings, there are certain similarities:

1. Both service encounters and external meetings involve two separate entities, whereas in an internal meeting all participants belong to the same company or institution
2. Both external meetings and service encounters occur because of some transaction, either present, possible, future or past. Internal meetings may occur for other reasons such as staff appraisal

3. The power position of individuals which is foregrounded in internal meetings is often not directly relevant, or can be actively downplayed, in external meetings or in service encounters
4. Relational language may be employed with transactional goals in external meetings and service encounters, but for power-related goals in internal meetings.

These and other aspects of external meetings will be explored at different stages of the thesis.

### 2.7.2 The genre of the business meeting

One of the most thorough accounts of the business-meeting genre, which will be discussed, modified and applied later, is that of Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997. They state that the following tenets underlie all meetings: they are goal and task oriented, they involve decision-making, the two parties of Chair and group work cooperatively, and there is a hierarchical structure within the meeting itself. They also state that meetings, in the UK at least, are usually preceded by informal, role suspended small talk, an area explored by Mirivel and Tracy (2005), and then the meeting itself can be broken down into three distinct but related phases. The opening and closing phases are the most rule-governed and the responsibility and prerogative of the Chair. The middle phase is much more fluid, and therefore more difficult to categorize in terms of fixed generic features. Holmes (2000a: 43) states that parallel features are apparent in her data. However, she goes on to state that:

> *Within meetings, people regularly digressed from the topic, and sometimes social discourse displaced task-oriented or work discourse...People often move very skilfully and subtly from discourse which is clearly 'core business' to talk which is social in its motivation, and back again.*

Such fluidity is also found in CANBEC, which in terms of the wider cultural context is mainly comprised of data from British locations and participants (see next chapter for a detailed breakdown), although it is questionable whether such talk in indeed social in terms of its motivation.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored a wide range of literature in order to position the present study. The relevance of concepts such as face, context and discourse communities to a corpus of spoken business English has been shown. What spoken business English is, and how the English used in meetings differs from, say, service encounters was also discussed in order to clarify the area of research in this thesis. In addition, concepts such as genre, register and speaker goals have been introduced which will form a considerable part of the arguments developed throughout the following chapters.

In order to both sum up some of the key points raised in this chapter and to indicate areas of further exploration in other chapters, Table 2.1 below, based on O'Keeffe 2006: 4-5, summarises some of the differing interactional conditions of casual conversation (from O'Keeffe, ibid), a stereotypical business meeting, and the meetings in CANBEC. As can be seen, meetings in CANBEC are far more complex than what I have termed the stereotypical meeting, which is in reality a description of an internal, multiparty meeting with a powerful Chair, as in Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris's description of 'the meeting' (1997). Some meetings in CANBEC are external, some are dyadic, and some have passive, challenged or even dynamic Chairs who alter their stance according to the stages and requirements of the meeting. Some external meetings, I argue in chapter eight, have no Chair at all.

Table 2.1 Comparison of differing interactional conditions

| | *CASUAL CONVERSATION* | *THE STEREOTYPICAL MEETING* | *CANBEC MEETINGS* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Power relationship** | symmetrical | Asymmetrical | Can be both |
| **Turns** | Not pre-allocated<br>Usually short and often overlapping | Pre-allocated,<br>Directed by the Chair | Can be either pre-allocated or not<br>Can be long or short |
| **Roles** | Non-institutionalised; tied into socio-relational identities (e.g. mother, best friend) | Institutionalised and exogenous | Institutionalised but sometimes negotiated |
| **Goals** | Emergent within conversation, mostly relational in nature | Institutionalised, pre-planned<br>Mostly transactional<br>Relational goals irrelevant | Both pre-planned and emergent<br>Mostly transactional, with relational language addressing transactional goals |
| **Ritual brackets** (e.g. greetings, partings) | Collaboratively negotiated and orchestrated | Planned and orchestrated by the Chair | Often orchestrated by the Chair, but can be jointly negotiated in some meetings |
| **Topics** | Collaboratively negotiated | Pre-planned<br>Written on agenda | Often pre-planned, but sometimes collaboratively or conflictually negotiated |

Not all the literature relevant to this study had been examined here. In each chapter appropriate issues and concepts will be introduced or expanded on in order to build a cogent and comprehensive description of the data, exploration of the hypotheses and development of the analytical framework. The next chapter outlines how the data was collected and organised, and discusses issues such as transcription, anonymisation as well as generalisability.

# Chapter 3: Description of the Corpus: Data Collection and Organisation

## Introduction

The creation of CANBEC involved a considerable investment of time and money. As a brief glace at the main database will attest (see CD-Rom in Appendix), the corpus comprises a significant amount of information relating to the recorded texts. In order to facilitate understanding of the transcribed data itself, a knowledge of the background to the data will be of benefit to the reader. This chapter therefore outlines how various companies were approached with varying degrees of success, the recording of the data itself, and the way it has subsequently been organised. The final section discusses the issues of transcription and anonymisation, and the chapter is concluded with a discussion of representativeness. To start, however, I will briefly give the background to CANBEC as a research project.

## 3.1 Data Collection

CANBEC, like CANCODE, was conceived, proposed and jointly directed by professors Carter and McCarthy at the University of Nottingham. Both corpora form part of the CIC, which at the time of writing totals more than a billion words. CANCODE was an unique corpus at the time of its creation because it was to contain only spoken data from a range of mostly informal contexts, and the intention with CANBEC was to develop a smaller corpus of purely spoken business discourse. Whereas CANCODE totals five million words, the target number of words for CANBEC was set at one million. Both projects were generously funded by Cambridge University Press, with whom sole copyright for

the data resides. Nottingham University is guaranteed sole research rights, under the directorship of professors Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy. I was employed as the sole corpus compiler, however, and was responsible for arranging and collecting the appropriate amount and type of data, organising and carrying out transcription and conducting anonymisation, developing a categorised database (see CR-Rom) and sending off the completed corpus to CUP by the agreed deadline. In total, I recorded or organised recordings of over 900,000 words of business discourse, and built the whole corpus.

### 3.1.1 CUP guidelines

The deadline for submitting one million words of fully anonymised, transcribed data, the anonymisation keys, the original tapes and a comprehensive database was set at December 15th, 2003. CUP stated they wanted recordings of business discourse, which should not include any data from publishing companies, non-business related academic discourse, and any other public-sector discourse, such as doctor/client sessions or police meetings. As most of the previously collected data was from CUP itself and academic 'meetings' and sessions, this meant it could not be used. There was also some appropriate data from a private telecommunications company, but as the participants had not signed the permission sheet handing over copyright to CUP, this could not be used either.

CUP gave the following guidelines for what would be appropriate:

- Recordings should be from a range of different private companies in terms of size and type of business
- Recordings should involve a range of speakers in terms of position, job, age and background

- The majority of speakers should be British native speakers, but up to 20% could be non-native employees of companies
- Recordings should mainly be from the UK, but should not be predominantly from the Midlands, as this was a criticism of CANCODE
- Up to 20% of the data could be from academic business contexts e.g. business lectures in a university business department
- Relevant background information about the speakers and their companies should be collected
- Recordings must be carefully transcribed according to CUP transcription codes, fully anonymised so as to protect the speaker and the institution's identity.

### 3.1.2 Speaker information sheet

The initial speaker information sheet was very similar to that used in CANCODE; it recorded personal information such as age, birthplace, profession and place of recording. Following meetings with Anne Fiddes from CUP and Dr. Svenja Adolphs, I altered the CANBEC sheet to include other business-related factors, such as the following:

- Position in company, on a scale of one to five: one being a top executive, five being a junior secretary. Generally the employees themselves graded their positions. If in doubt, the lower option was chosen. This system was more appropriate for larger companies.
- Type of communication e.g. meeting, lecture, business dinner
- Purpose of communication e.g. strategy meeting, sales presentation
- Topic of communication e.g. sales, logistics, procedure

- Size of company.

The information collected comprised the data for the database I created (see CD-Rom), and will be discussed further below. A copy of the speaker information sheet is in Appendix 4.

### 3.1.3 Approaching companies

In preparation for approaching companies I prepared a brochure which could be given or sent to a particular company or individual after some initial interest was shown. This brochure outlined the aims and processes of the project, and was intended to alleviate any fears the individual concerned may have. As it turned out there were a lot of fears, with roughly 19 out of 20 companies I approached being unwilling to be recorded. The most common reason was the issue of confidentiality. Despite written assurances from CUP guaranteeing confidentiality through thorough, systematic anonymisation, most companies refused to allow microphones in their buildings for this reason. Other reasons included the 'what's in it for us' reply, and the offer of a training session on effective communication did not seem a worthwhile exchange. Occasionally after recordings had been made, the company asked to have the tapes back because it was felt the conversations were too sensitive, or involved potentially illegal advice or decisions.

In order to obtain the one million words of data, I explored various avenues. These included several Chambers of Commerce and local business organisations; semi-professional organisations such as the Rotary Club; strangers on trains, and cold-calling. Very few of these avenues provided any contacts. Much more productive were contacts made through friends and family, or friends of friends, or profession contacts including

contemporary or previous colleagues. The deadline was reached to CUP's satisfaction and in accordance with their initial guidelines, although it should be noted that the one type of data that proved impossible to obtain was from large accountancy companies, despite many promising leads and contacts in companies such as Arthur Andersen.

### 3.1.4 Choosing equipment

After some discussion, it was decided that recordings would be made using analogue tape recorders with battery-powered microphones rather than digital recorders because this was the preference of the main transcriber, Debbie Swift, and the School of English Studies already possessed several analogue transcribing machines. This also allowed for the option of converting the data to a digital format at a later date. Several Marantz and Sony tape recorders and Sony microphones were purchased from the CUP budget.

### 3.1.5 The role of the researcher

One of the thorniest issues concerning the actual recording procedure was whether the person making the recording, usually me, should be present in the place of the recording, or whether the equipment should be handed over to the participants who would then switch the machine on and turn over the tapes themselves. The latter approach was the one adopted by the team for the *Language in the Workplace corpus* project in New Zealand, which provided the data for Holmes and Stubbe's (2003) book *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*. The approach we chose was to have the researcher present in the room, looking after the equipment while trying to be as anonymous as possible, as acknowledged by the Chair in one meeting:

**[Extract 3.1. #40001. IM in ISP Provider, between three managers (peer). ]**

<$1> Right. So obviously we've got four attendees but one's <$=> n= <\$=> probably not supposed to be here+

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> +or is <$=> or is in= <\$=> invisible to us.

The Observer's Paradox (Labov, 1972) reasons that the presence of a researcher constrains the production of language being researched, yet it is necessary for the researcher to systematically observe the unfolding discourse in order to fully understand it. As the above example shows, having the researcher present did at times affect the discourse. Occasionally participants would try to actively involve the researcher in the discussion, and in more than one meeting I gave the following instruction:

<$M> <$G?> if you can ignore me as much as you possibly can.

However, unlike Labov's research during CANBEC recordings the researcher was not actively involved in the discourse, and the presence of a microphone on the table during a meeting 'is not likely to cause much consternation' (Farr, 2005: 134) in our technological world. Furthermore, it was reasoned that having the researcher present would secure data which was more complete because in all likelihood the actual participants may not turn the equipment on until a meeting had formally started, thereby missing any crucial pre-meeting discourse (Tracy and Mirivel, 2005), or they may forget to turn the tape over, or they may turn it off if some delicate topic was to be discussed. These problems did actually arise on the few occasions when the researcher was not present and responsibility for the recording was handed over to the employees of the

company, and have been reported as systematic issues of the approach of the LWP research project (Stubbe, 2001). As has been reported by Duranti (1997), on asking participants about the effect of having an observer present, all responded that they forgot after a few minutes that he or she was present. It may be the case that this is a feature of observing goal-driven (Heritage 1997) institutional discourse, in that the participants focus on achieving their goals, and therefore the presence of the researcher becomes irrelevant to their task in hand.

Probably the greatest advantage of having a silent witness present was that any points of interest or possible confusion for the analyst which arose in the course of the real-time dialogue, during which time I would make notes while listening carefully, could be addressed in a subsequent follow-up session with an available and suitable participant. While it was also possible to contact participants via email after having listened to the recordings or having read their transcripts, the danger here was that there was sometimes a considerable time-lag. Therefore the point in question may have been forgotten by the participants. Such points included specialised terms, most often nouns that were industry or company-specific, and also what seemed to be deliberately non-specific, highly deictic uses of language, for example this turn by the Chair:

**[Extract 3.2. #61001. IM in investment bank in Tokyo. Some disagreement about the proposed course of action between the Chair and the most senior person present.]**

<$1> We just find it very hard to you know agree that that's possible with the people in this room so why don't have a chat afterwards with with you know who and er we'll sort that out.

By asking follow-up questions it was possible to clarify such details, but confidentiality, a respect for the individual's and the company's privacy, and the possibility of being seen to be prying also had to be borne in mind.

A related issue concerned obtaining background information on the company and the speech activity itself, for example agendas and company management structures. Some companies were happy to provide such information whereas others were less willing. While such documents cannot be shown in this thesis because of confidentiality, when received they have provided clues and pointers which allow for a less thin description of the data. Obtaining speaker information in terms of age, position, first language, etc. was not difficult, and generally the participants filled the sheets out themselves or jointly with the researcher. In terms of company topic, purpose and speaker position in the company, the participants were also encouraged to decide, thereby ensuring a level of emic-categorisation, providing an insider's view of what's happening, which would not have occurred had the researcher chosen the categories (Davis, 1995). While time constraints on the part of the participants sometimes prevented this level of contextual research, and notwithstanding the size of the corpus itself, it is hoped that CANBEC embodies a level of contextual information that is both in-depth and accurate. Such contextual information allows for a level of interpretation that a purely quantitative approach to data collection would not allow; in the field of business communication, solely quantitative approaches have been seen as inadequate in accounting for what is going on (Murphy, 1998). Flowerdew (2005: 329) also argues that an advantage of many smaller, specialised corpora like CANBEC is that there is often 'an analyst who is also probably the compiler and does have familiarity with the wider socio-cultural context in

which the text was created, or else has access to specialist informants in the area. The compiler-cum-analyst can therefore act as a kind of mediating ethnographic specialist informant to shed light on the corpus.' For a large majority of the recordings in CANBEC I was able to play that wordy role. This certainly permitted a high degree of reliable interpretation when conducting qualitative analysis.

Kasper (2000:318), in discussing this area of text and context, states 'Institutional discourse for example business negotiations...lends itself well to demonstrating the interrelation of text and context, for instance, how institutional structures influence communicative action and are reproduced by it.' Conversely, without sufficient contextual knowledge any meaningful reading of the data would have been very difficult. While this is arguably the case for any data, and is therefore a powerful criticism of many larger corpora (see Flowerdew, 2005) which can tend to lack contextual information and are therefore restricted to analysis at the quantitative lexicogrammatical level, it seems especially so for business discourse which can be esoteric to the outside observer. Kasper also warns against the 'get-your-data-and-run' method of data collection (ibid: 320), which in terms of CANBEC was avoided whenever possible. It needs to be stated however that the level of contextual information for all recordings in CANBEC is not consistent, not least because at times the employees who were recorded were of the 'get your data and please run' attitude, usually because of other work commitments. How the contextual information was sorted into the database is the topic of the next section.

## 3.2 The Database

### 3.2.1 Designing the database

The design of the database involved interpretation of the context of the data and the contextual information that had also been collected in the form of follow-up sessions with the participants, company information, the speaker information sheets and my own insights. In designing the database, and in general when interpreting the data, I tried to follow Swales' (1990: 39/40) guidelines for the genre analyst:

> *It can be argued that the investigator's role in genre analysis is neither to follow slavishly the nomenclatures of groups, nor is it to provide his or her own deductive and introspective categorial system. Rather the procedure should be to develop sets of a posteriori categories, ones based on empirical investigation and observation, within which eliciting the community's category-labels plays a central role.*

Swales' position touches on many of the themes in qualitative research. While some of the issues related to qualitative and quantitative analysis will be discussed in the next chapter, it is worth noting here that certain difficulties are present for the analyst when dealing with contextual information, of which the database is in essence a store. Farr (2005: 142) states that there is 'a difficulty in getting into the minds of the speakers, and when inside in identifying what their priorities were at the time of speaking.' In addition, Lazaraton argues that 'truth is filtered through the lenses of the judge, the context and purpose of the inquiry, and the audience' (Lazaraton 2003: 9). What this means is that the challenge to accurately and plausibly represent the contextual information is multi-layered: it is difficult to find out from the speakers themselves why they said what they did, and in truth we cannot always rely on their answers, and we and others will interpret

the data and the speakers' responses through the prism of our consciousnesses. Nevertheless, it is still desirable to entice clues from the participants themselves, and what we can end up with is a synthesis of emic input, and etic interpretations. The discussion in the previous chapter on speaker goals is also relevant here.

A case in point concerns negotiations. None of the participants chose to describe any of their meetings as negotiations, even though some of the meetings clearly had a negotiation focus. In such cases I have labelled the meeting as negotiation under the heading *Purpose*. An example of this will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.2.2 Database categories

As the subject-matter for this thesis is business meetings, all speech activities which are not meetings, for example lectures, have been separated from the data to be analysed, and references to them in the database have been removed. The finalised database (see CD-Rom) contains the following categories:

1. Relationship of speakers

- Peers (within one level of each other)
- Manager(s) – subordinate(s) (at least two levels' difference)
- Colleagues from different departments
- Colleagues from the same department
- Employees from different companies (further developed in chapter seven)

2. Topic*

- Sales
- Marketing
- Technical
- Production

3. Meeting Purpose, Internal/External

- Internal/External
- Reviewing
- Planning
- Negotiation
- Task-oriented (further discussed in chapter eight)
- Buying, selling and promoting a product
- Giving and receiving advice
- Procedure

*Definitions:
*Sales*: sales meetings were either EM with the companies discussing buying and selling products, usually in the form of one company trying to sell something to another company, or IM with workers discussing some aspect of sales, e.g. a new salesperson being given an introductory talk about clients' needs.
*Marketing*: related to sales, marketing meetings involved some aspect of product or service promotion.
*Technical*: the meeting involved communication about some technical aspect of the business, for example the IT systems. Possible in both IM and EM.
*Production*: the meeting involved some discussion of the product produced by the company. Product could also mean a service as well as a manufactured object.
*Procedure*: put most simply, the way things are done. In contrast to strategy, procedural meetings usually involve short-term goals.
*Strategy*: The long-term goals or objectives of the company. Therefore usually IM, and usually involving the CEO or MD and an executive team.
*HRM*: Human Resource Management, sometimes known as personnel. Concerned with the effective management of human resources (apparently).
*Logistics*: The management of the physical distribution side of the business, which controls the goods flow.

- Strategy (long-term planning)
- HRM (Human Resource Management)
- Logistics (inbound and outbound)
- Other

4. Speaker information

- Age
- Title
- Level within company
- Department
- First language

The remaining categories are:

5. Company type
6. Company size
7. Department where recording made
8. Date of recording
9. Spontaneous/Scheduled meeting
10. Proximity
11. Number of speakers
12. Number of words

- IM: 675,317
- EM: 237,417
- Combined total: 912,734*

When actually allocating some of the categories, it was difficult to place several meetings e.g. 141001, which will be discussed in depth in the qualitative chapters. Initially this meeting was described as a negotiation because the two participants from different companies are talking about the details of a contract between them, and what these details mean in practice. In defining a negotiation Charles and Charles say it is 'a situation where the power relationship is symmetrical in that both negotiators have every right to control the situation and influence the other party.'(1990: 80). While the early stages of the meeting give the impression that it might therefore be a negotiation, as the following extract from later on in this meeting demonstrates this is not the case:

**[Extract 3.3. #141001. EM. $1 is the pub chain operations controller, $2 is the brewery estates manager who has come to inform the pub chain of certain contractually-binding aspects of their relationship.]**

<$1> And is there literally no leeway you've got on this whatsoever?

<$2> No.

..... (several turns later)

<$2> <$=> So it seems <$E> 1 sec <\$E> and <$E> 5 secs <\$E> er <\$=> <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> It seems as if I'm here not to offer you any erm any negotiation way out of this at all.

<$1> Yeah. <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$2> And <$=> that would be <\$=> that would be correct. <$=> Er we're not really looking to <\$=>

*When counting the actual number of words there was some confusion. At Nottingham we counted the number of words according to the Word Count option in Word's Tools. This also counted the transcription codes e.g. <$1>, and this was also the way the transcribers counted the number of words and were paid according to this total. After sending the textfiles to CUP to be checked, it was reported back that we were approximately 10% under the total of one million words. After some negotiation it was agreed that the <$G?> code, which refers to something unclear that was said, could be included as a word as it does refer to speech. This misunderstanding did cause considerable consternation as it meant almost an extra 10% of new data had to be recorded, transcribed and anonymised and paid for within the deadline, and within the original budget which had not accounted for this discrepancy. References to word totals in this thesis follow the CUP method, as it does more accurately reflect the number of words spoken.

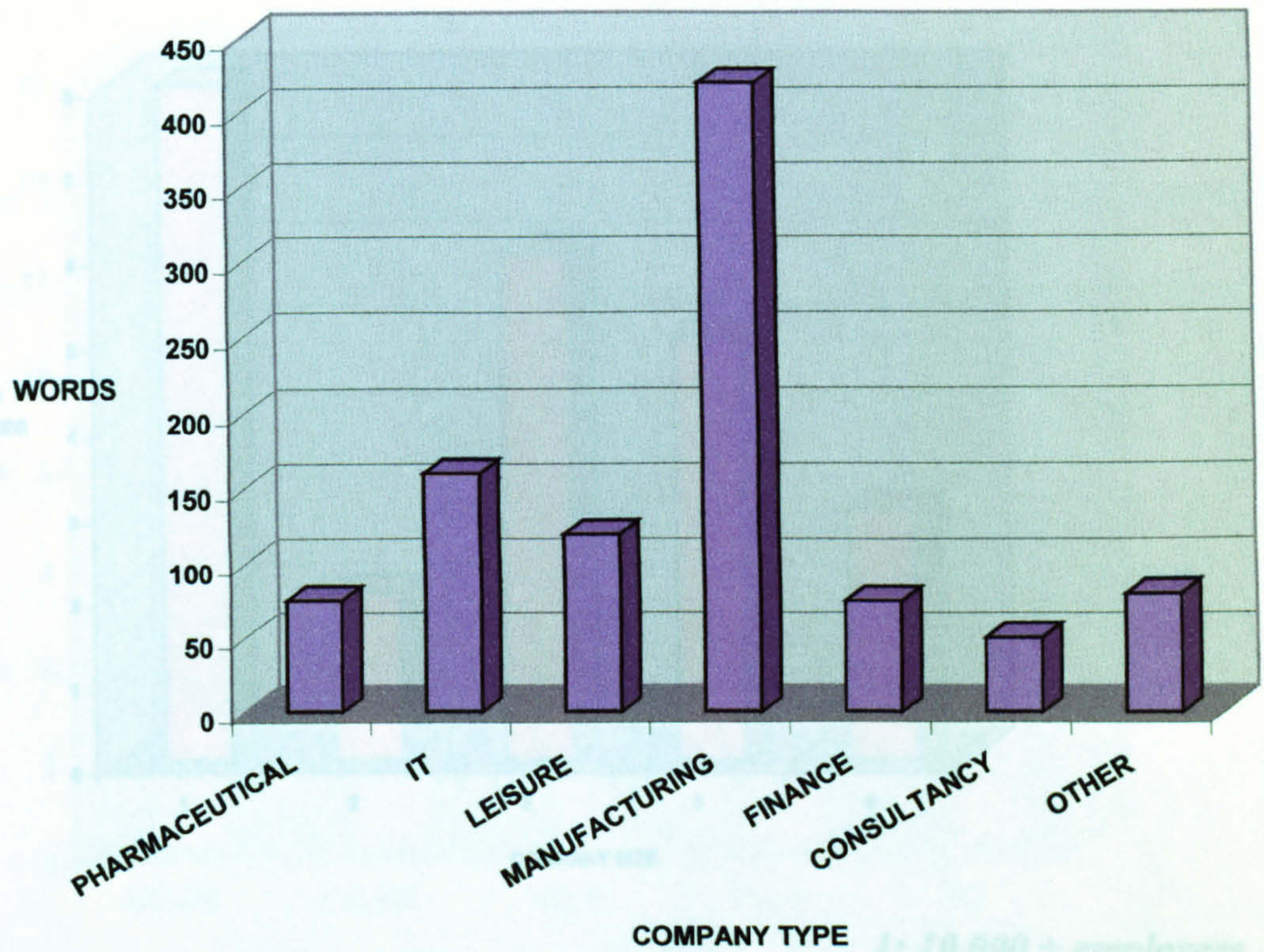
<$E> 1 sec <\$E> Well <$E> 1 sec <\$E> we aren't going to vary the <$E> 1 sec <\$E> proposal that we've given to you.

Here we have the brewery representative explicitly stating that there is nothing negotiable about this 'proposal'. As I was unsure how to categorise the meeting, I contacted speaker one, and he replied 'I don't know what you'd call that'. Given that there was a clear transfer of information, eventually this meeting was described as having a task-oriented (i.e. information exchange, Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 64) purpose.

### 3.2.3. Database graphs

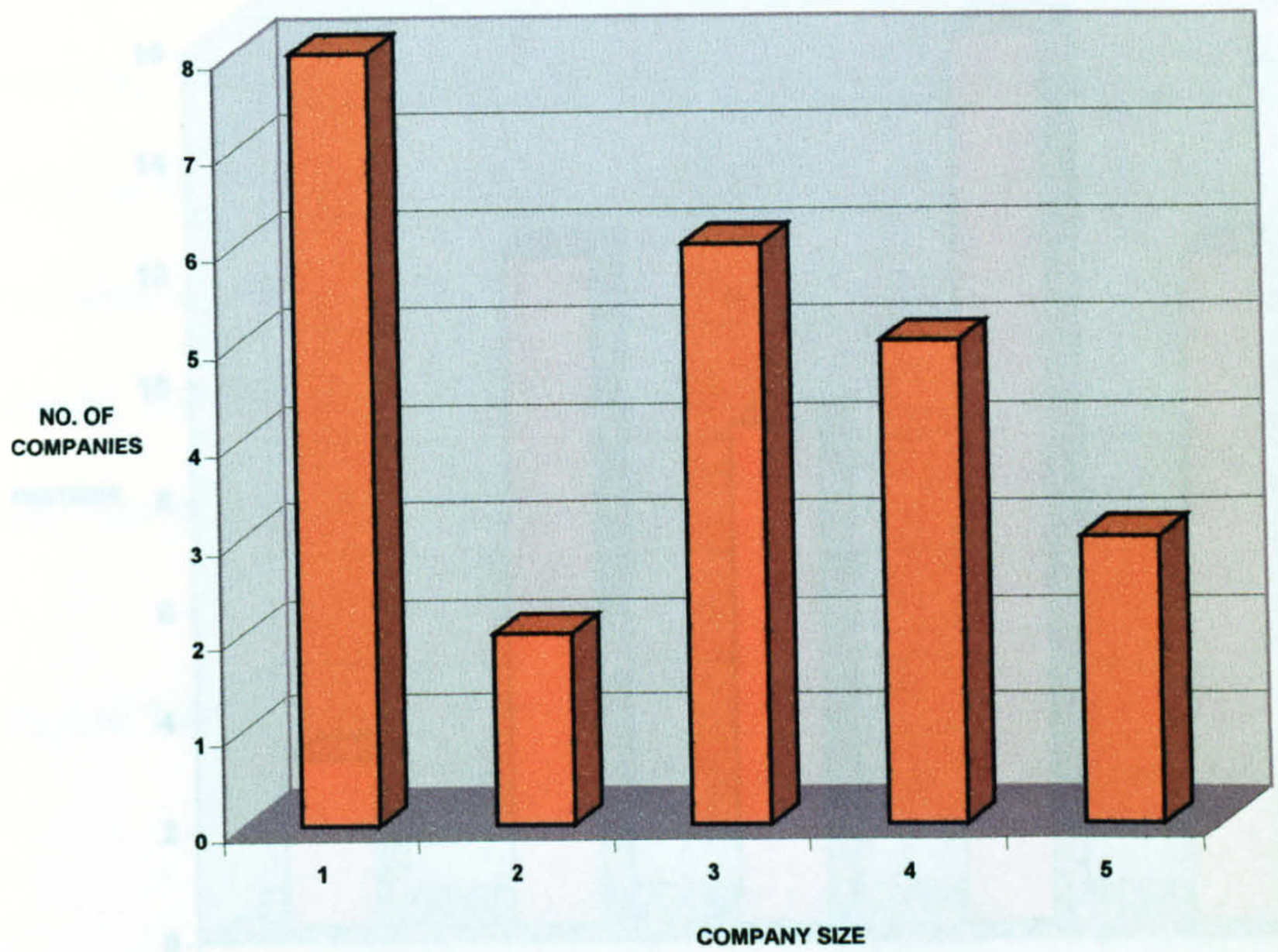
This section contains a selection of graphs and which illuminate the breakdown of the meeting data in CANBEC. These include information about the companies that provided the data, such as their type and size, the employees within the companies in terms of their relationships, as well as graphic breakdowns of the meeting purposes and topics. Finally a group of pie charts show how the relationship of the speakers and the meeting purpose interrelate.

**Figure 3.1:** ***Company type*** (words are in 1,000s)




This graph shows how many words were recorded in different types of companies. As can be seen, there is a wide range of different company types, but *manufacturing* industries account for nearly half the word total. These industries include hydraulics companies, vehicle manufacturers, foam manufacturers and companies that promote manufacturers. *Leisure* included pubs and hotel chains and brewers. This graph is unlike the others in that it shows the number of words whereas the remaining ones indicate the number of meetings. This is because it is possible to gain a clearer picture of the amount and breakdown of the whole data collection by referring to both number of words and meetings.

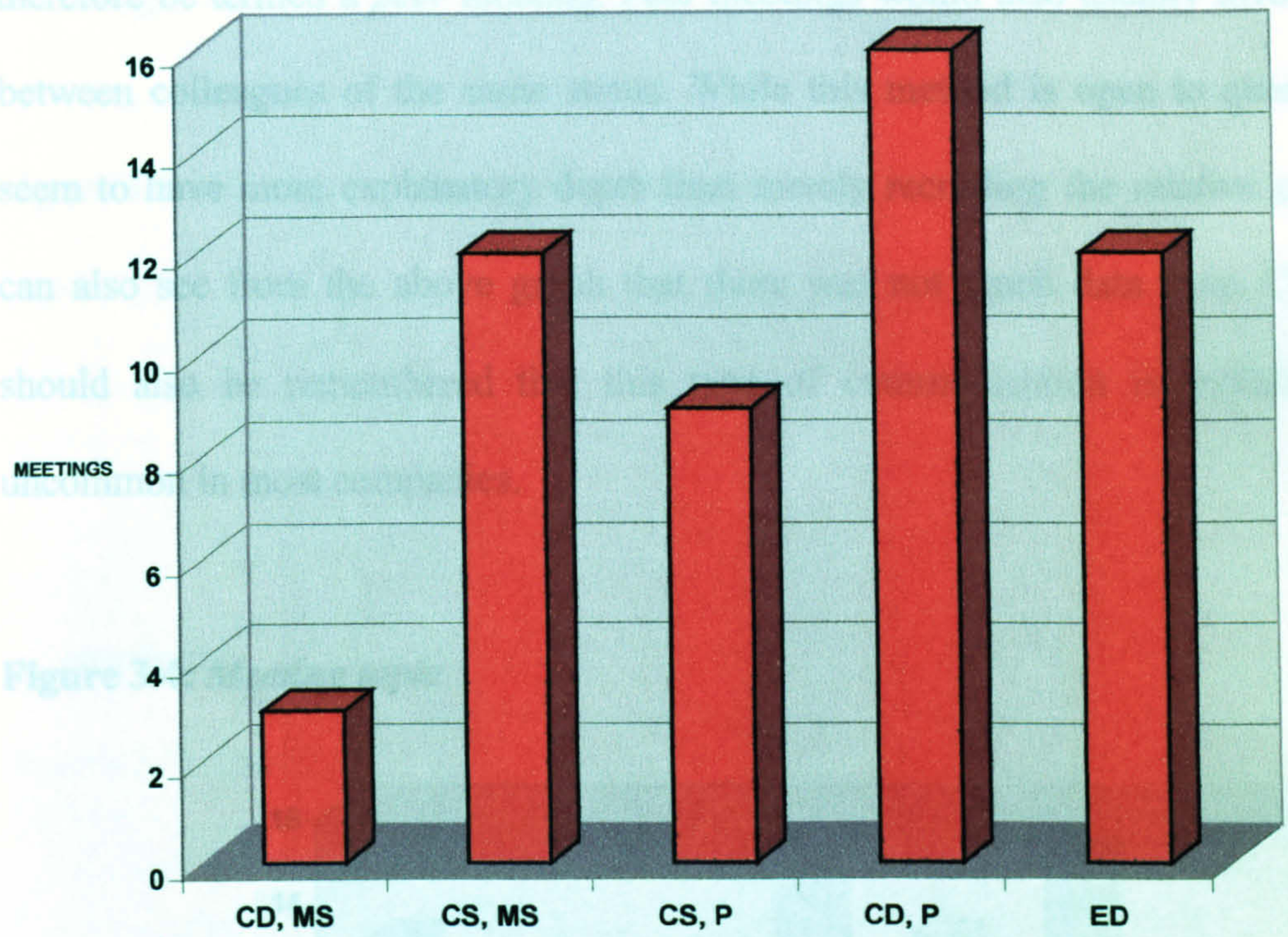
**Figure 3.2:** ***Size of company***




***1: 10,000 + employees***
***2: 1001-9999 employees***
***3: 101-1000 employees***
***4: 11-100 employees***
***5: >11 employees***

The system for dividing companies by number of employees was taken from the Chamber of Commerce Website (http://www.chamberonline.co.uk/, accessed March 2003). The graph shows that a wide range of companies were successfully approached, and that data were obtained from several very large, multinational companies. These included pharmaceutical companies, a brewer, a vehicle manufacturer, an investment bank and a hotel chain.

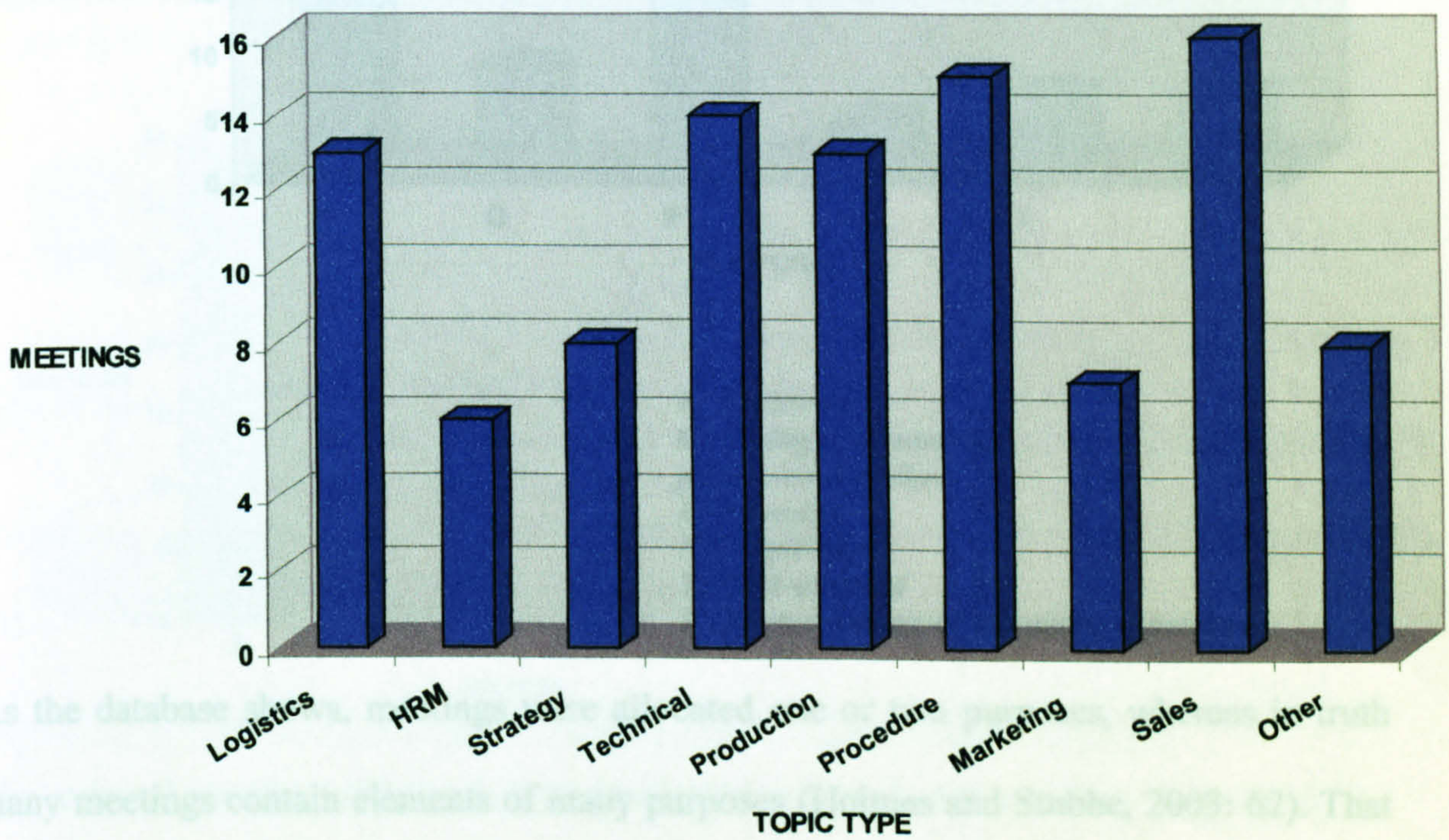
**Figure 3.3:** ***Relationship of speakers***




The speaker information sheet on which contextual information was recorded has a category for speaker position within company. While this is important information and could be used to compare the relationship between speakers on one level, it failed to account for the dynamic relational reality in many meetings. For example, the MD may be having a meeting with a technical manager within the company. Without looking at the data we may assume that this is a manager/subordinate relationship. However, what may be happening is that the MD is asking advice from the technical expert, and therefore their official positions within the company are not as relevant as might be initially expected. As well as the positions or titles of the speakers, it was also necessary

to consider other factors such as the goal of the meeting. A meeting like this one would therefore be termed a *peer* meeting. Peer meetings would also usually involve meetings between colleagues of the same status. While this method is open to question, it does seem to have more explanatory depth than merely recording the relative positions. We can also see from the above graph that there was not much data from CD\MS, but it should also be remembered that this type of communication is probably relatively uncommon in most companies.

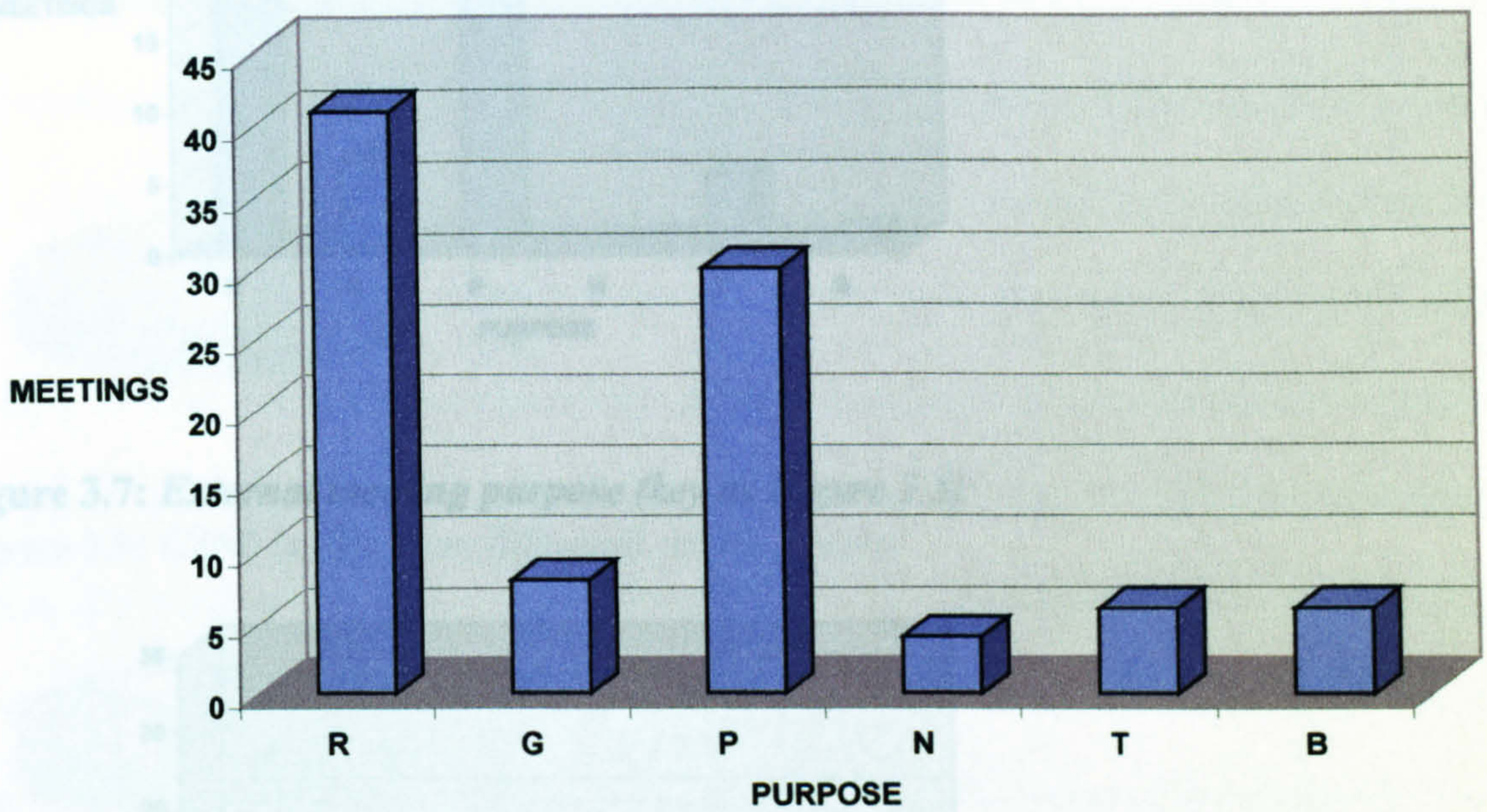
**Figure 3.4:** ***Meeting topic***




This graph shows the number of recordings that were made according to meeting topic. Deciding on the topic was done whenever possible by the participants themselves. The reason why the total number of recordings as stated on the graph is greater than the actual

number of recordings is that many meetings involved more than one topic, e.g. sales and marketing.

**Figure 3.5:** ***Meeting purpose*** (All meetings)




***R: Reviewing***
***G: Giving and receiving professional advice***
***P: Planning***
***N: Negotiation***
***T: Task-oriented***
***B: Buying, selling or promoting a product***

As the database shows, meetings were allocated one or two purposes, whereas in truth many meetings contain elements of many purposes (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 62). That one meeting may have been given more than one purpose also explains why the total number of purposes above is greater than the total number of meetings. Reviewing and planning are by far the two most common meeting purposes in CANBEC, although as the graphs below show this is only true in internal meetings.

**Figure 3.6:** ***Internal meeting purpose*** *(key as Figure 3.5)*

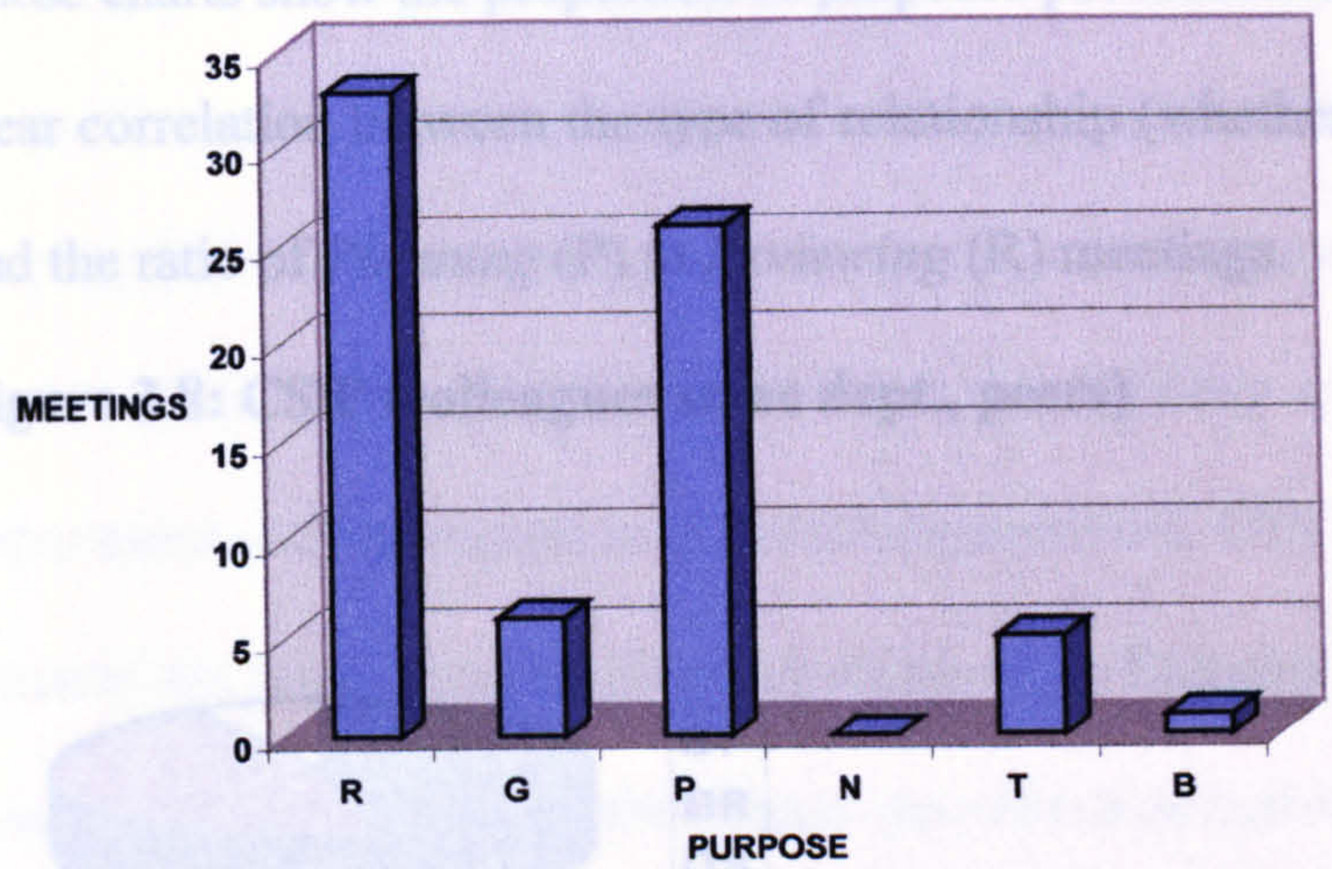
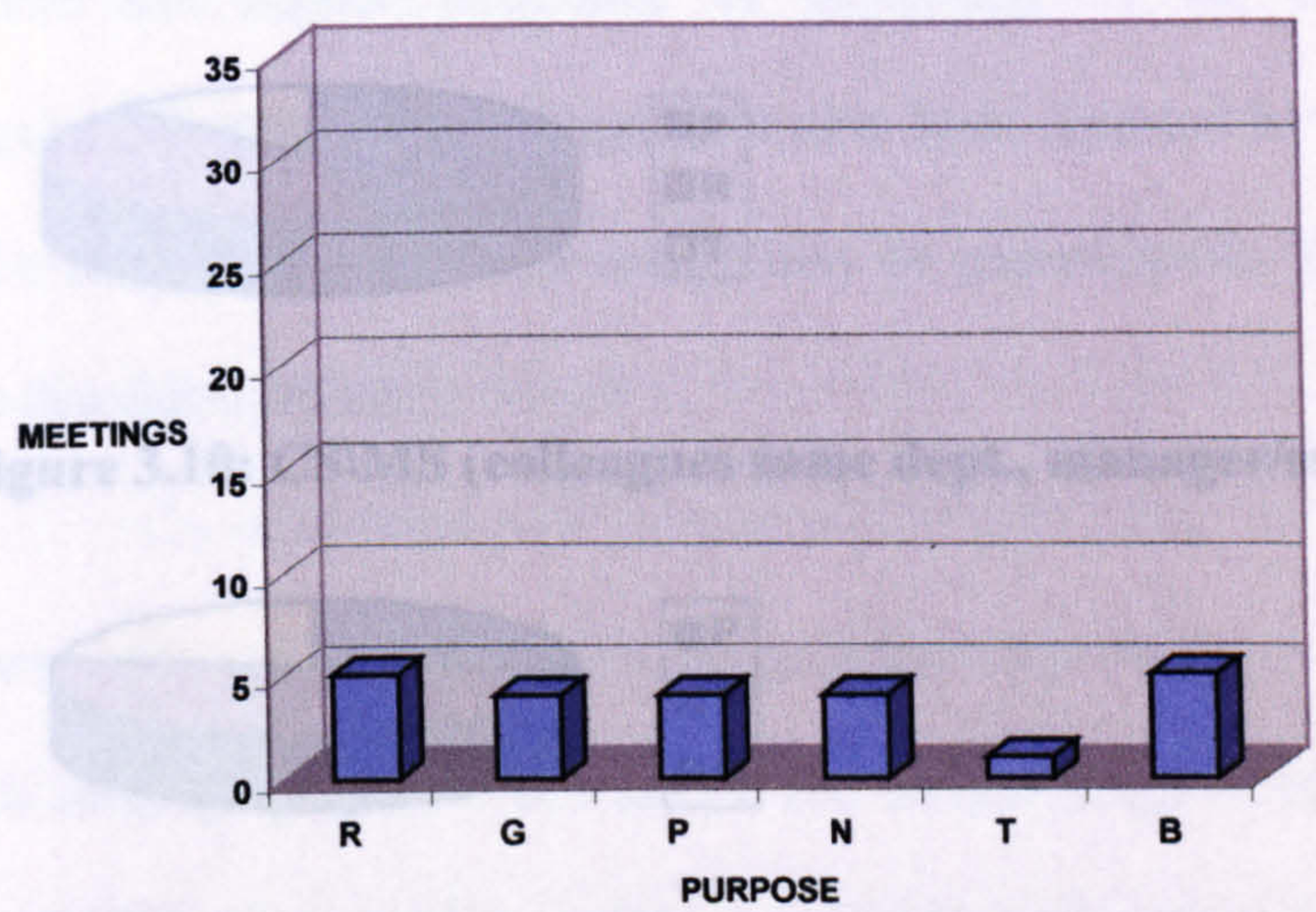



**Figure 3.7:** ***External meeting purpose*** *(key as Figure 3.5)*




The external meetings (Figure 3.7) feature a wider spread of the various purposes in the database, whereas the internal data (Figure 3.6) has a more spiky profile. These results are an indication of the differences that exist between internal and external meetings, an area that will be explored throughout the thesis. In order to more fully understand the breakdown in the internal data, below are four pie charts that show the proportion of different meeting purposes according to speaker relationship.

*Relationship of speakers and meeting purpose*

These charts show the proportion of purposes per relationship, and indicate how there is a clear correlation between the type of relationship (whether *peer* or *manager/subordinate*) and the ratio of *Planning* (P) to *Reviewing* (R) meetings.

**Figure 3.8: CS\P (colleagues same dept., peers)**

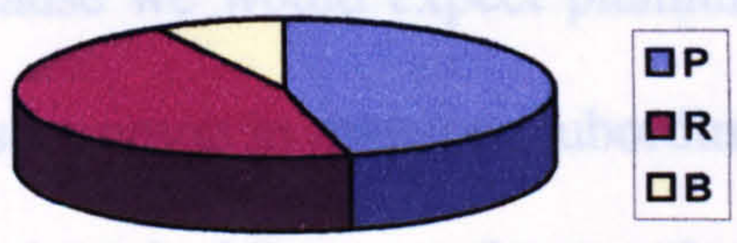



**Figure 3.9: CD\P (colleagues different depts., peers)**

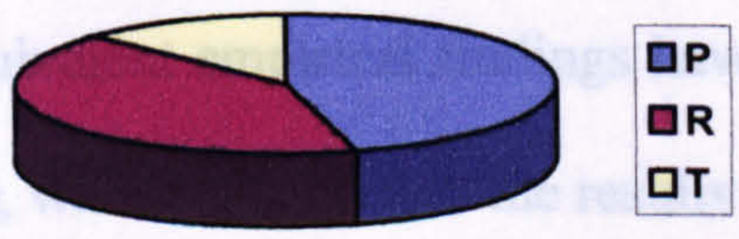



**Figure 3.10: CS\MS (colleagues same dept., manager/subordinate)**

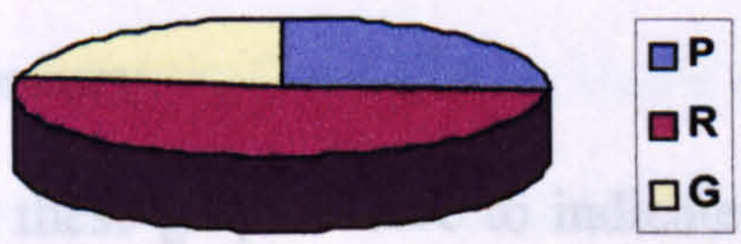
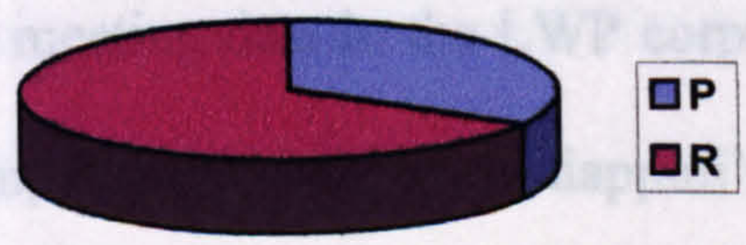



**Figure 3.11: CD\MS (colleagues different depts., manager/subordinate)**




***R: Reviewing. P: Planning***
***T: Task-oriented***
***B: Buying, selling or promoting a product***
***G: Giving and receiving professional advice***

Although a number of meetings do contain both purposes, we can see how in peer meetings involving colleagues from the same or from different departments the proportion of planning and reviewing purposes is about equal, whereas in manager/subordinate meetings the frequency of the purpose reviewing is double that of planning, and once again this is the same for meetings involving colleagues in the same department and colleagues in different departments. This finding makes sense intuitively, because we would expect planning to be more frequent among upper management and less common in manager/subordinate-type communication, given that planning will often involve deciding on future directions of the company or department in question. Managers often review what subordinates have done as part of their job description, hence the higher frequency of reviewing in the manager/subordinate meetings. Equivalent empirical findings have also been reported by Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 68-70), which suggest that the results may be generalisable. The issue of generalisability will be discussed below.

*Summary*

All these graphs serve to indicate the unique range of meeting data that is contained in CANBEC compared to other prominent corpus-based studies of business meetings. Merely in terms of number of words, CANBEC is approximately three times larger than the meeting data in the LWP corpus (Holmes, 2000b), five times larger than the corpora compiled for Bargiela-Chiappini's 1997 book *Managing Discourse: the Language of Corporate Meetings* (1997) (McCarthy and Handford, 2004), four times larger than Nelson's BEC corpus meeting data (2000), and almost thirty times larger than Koester's

ABOT corpus or workplace discourse (2001; 2006). The range of data sources in CANBEC is also considerable, for example the data for the whole of the LWP was taken from 14 workplaces (Stubbe, 2001), including government offices, from two companies for the Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris corpus and from five companies for the ABOT corpus. CANBEC contains data from twenty-three companies, eight of which are multinational. While most of the speakers in CANBEC are British (226 British and 35 non-British), it still contains speakers from sixteen other countries, representing each continent of the globe. Most significantly, CANBEC is the only corpus to contain data of external meetings. It also appears to contain a degree of systematicity in terms of contextual information that is not apparent in the other studies, for example in terms of the relationship of the speakers or meeting purpose.

## 3.3 Data-Specific Issues

### 3.3.1 Transcription

According to Cook (1990: 1), the problem of capturing relevant contextual information in transcription is twofold in that 'it is infinitely delicate and infinitely expandable'. For example, the extent to which we interpret and acknowledge prosodic changes in our recording of the data relates to the delicacy of the transcription. While the participants position in a company will often be relevant to their use of language, so might be what they had for breakfast or some childhood experience. However, as Maxwell (1992) states, it is not possible to include everything which might be relevant, and furthermore a

discourse-analysis based interpretation is in reality a reinterpretation (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

Despite these problems, 'spoken language is tied to its context for meaning and authenticity' (Farr, 2005: 135), and as such it was necessary to decide on which finite number of factors would be documented for CANBEC. In terms of the intra-discoursal features such as length of silence or interruptions, the codes which the transcribers had to follow were provided by CUP (see Appendix 4). These codes were essentially the same as those used in CANCODE, and allow for CANBEC to form part of CUP's extensive Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). While allowing for a certain level of prosodic information, this falls somewhat below that of a strict conversation analysis approach to transcription, and as such some information on suprasegmental features e.g. intonation is lacking. It also means that applying insights from Gumperz's (1982) contextualisation cues becomes somewhat unworkable.

While having the codes prescribed by CUP meant debate about which codes to use was unnecessary, there were issues of application. Many of the meetings in CANBEC involve multiparty talk, which has the advantage of providing rich data for research as many empirical studies focus on the dyad, but creates the problems of 'identifying different voices and disambiguating overlaps' (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1996). This extract from meeting 61001 illustrates these two problems:

**[Extract 3.4. #61001. IM in the IT division of an investment bank. $1 is the Chair.]**

<$1> And ex-hosting helps us because <$=> er we could cons= <\$=>+

<$7> <$G?>+

<$1> +we could potentially consolidate. So yeah.

<$7> +<$G?>

<$M> So that's why I say we get a <$G?> full of these <$G?> and throw them to <$=> a a a s= a a LAN <\$=> local LAN.

<$1> Yeah.

<$M> And actually I'm happy to get everybody <$H> Unix <\$H> machine on on on the front you know.

<$1> Yeah.

<$M> On a desk top.

<$1> Yeah.

<$M> And then no keyboard no nothing. <$=> And then <\$=>

<$1> But we'd need a broadcast LAN that that still has kind of rooting from broadcast to multicast.

<$2?> Well you you put it on the same segment as the server <$=> and you know+

<$1> Okay.

<$2?> +er <\$=> and then we're restricted <$=> to <\$=> down to ex-hosting.

Here we can see that the transcriber found it very difficult to distinguish between the speakers, and although it was at times possible to make a reasonable guess, e.g. <$1?>, sometimes it was not possible to speculate at all, e.g. <$M>. When more than one speaker spoke at the same time, the usual result was that at least one participants' contribution to the discourse was recorded as <$G?>, and as such was lost. Further issues related to the practicalities of transcribing the data included the quality of the recording itself and the experience and ability of the transcriber. One company which described itself as a transcribing company in a full-page advertisement in the Yellow Pages managed to provide a memorable, although at the time highly disconcerting, consummation of both these problems with the following transcriber's comment, which was indicative of the general standard of their work:

<$E> to feint two here </E>.

Following some rancorous negotiations this company was paid half of the original fee.

### 3.3.2 Anonymisation

Once the recording had been transcribed, the sensitive job of anonymisation could be started. Once again CUP provided the guidelines from the CANCODE project in the form of a document written by Hudson and Finell (2000), two of the original team from the CANCODE project. They define anonymisation as the 'systematic alteration of the original text with an aim to protect all parties involved: speakers, people referred to, corpus compilers and researchers' (ibid: 1). As they immediately acknowledge, however, this is not a sufficient definition when faced with the actual task of anonymising. This is arguably even more so when confronted with the task of anonymising a corpus of business, given the confidential and sensitive nature of many conversations and the desire to leave the original dialogue as unchanged as possible.

Following Rock (1999) and Hudson and Finell (2000) as well as instructions directly from CUP, it was decided that each text would be manually read through by two different analysts. The names of all speakers were changed for another which had the same number of syllables and was of similar tone e.g. *John* became *James*, not *Jeremiah*. Company names were also all changed to another similar in size and within the same field e.g. *Audi* might become *BMW*. When this was not possible, for example when there were only two companies with the field of business, or where the company in question was a very well known market-leader, the company name was replaced with *company name* within transcriber's brackets. While this option hinders the flow of the text, the primary objective of protecting the identities of those involved was upheld. The same

principles were applied to various products, although with specific, lesser-known products more creativity was exercised in replacing names.

Dealing with potentially libellous, illegal or scandalous utterances proved to be much more challenging than dealing with proper nouns. For example, one speaker said something equivalent to *(this carmaker) are crap*. As all texts in CANBEC could potentially be used in teaching materials, such a comment was unacceptable and the name of the carmaker was removed and replaced with *carmaker's name* in transcriber's brackets. In a series of meetings the MD was criticised by name, so in this case his name was changed. From the text itself it is not possible to ascertain who is being referred to, therefore merely changing the name was deemed sufficient. As a last resort, however, replacing the offending language with the code <$G?> was used. CUP also requested that any references to the recording itself or directed at the researcher should be removed. While Hudson and Finell (ibid) calculated that approximately 4,500 words of CANCODE could be anonymised per hour, with CANBEC the figure was probably closer to 3,000 per hour.

## 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has described the background to the inception of CANBEC, the ordeal of persuading companies to let us record their conversations, the process of data collection, and its subsequent organisation in terms of the creation of a database. As can be seen from the graphs and the database, the original requirements of CUP were all met. Recordings were made in a range of companies, the majority of which were not based in the East Midlands. Well over ten per cent of the data was recorded in multinationals in

countries where English is used as a foreign language. Approximately 20 per cent of the speakers are 'non-native', and there is a good level of variety in terms of age, job and background. Far less than the 20% limit of academic business language was recorded, meaning that we could obtain more 'business' business language. It should be noted that I have not distinguished between native and non-native speakers in the thesis, except when there is statistical evidence for doing so (e.g. section 6.2.2.7).

From an interpretive qualitative research perspective, the range of data and speakers and types of meetings contained in CANBEC suggests that the corpus may be representative of 'the business meeting', or at the very least, more confidently generalisable than previous studies. Erickson (1986) argues that for the reporting of research findings to be credible, the following three criteria must be met: a sufficient richness of detail, generalisability of findings contained in the study, and accounting for the behaviour of the participants which involves their perspectives. It is argued here that all three requirements are met in the course of the study. Many of the quantitative and qualitative findings here have been replicated in other empirical studies of business discourse, which lends weight to the claim of representativeness. Furthermore, the data is authentic, and even though the corpus could be bigger, this means that it must be more accurate than invented data. There is certainly a richness of detail relative to other empirical studies of business discourse, and as the main compiler and analyst of the data I have been able to utilise my relationships with the participants in order to shed a significant amount of light on what they were doing at the time of recording through post-meeting interviews, feedback sessions and email.

In the next chapter the hypotheses and research questions of the thesis will be outlined, and the framework for analysing the data will be proposed and applied to a mini-corpus of recordings. The rationale for this is that by generating sets of features observable in a small, manageable corpus, they can then be tested against a larger body of data in the subsequent chapters. This will involve quantitative methods involving corpus tools, and qualitative methods which build up to a description of the business meeting. This description is incremental, starting at the lexicogrammatical level, then moving up to the turn level, as well as the strategic and structural levels, and finally combining these insights to build a picture of the genre.

# Chapter 4: Framework Development

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to tentatively test the hypotheses outlined below with a small representative sample of the data, and in so doing develop a framework which will be applied in the subsequent chapters. This chapter and the full study combine quantitative and qualitative methods taken from corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and genre analysis. In this way a thorough examination of CANBEC and a plausible construction of the proposed generic framework should be achieved.

## 4.1. Outline, Rationale and Hypotheses

### 4.1.1 Outline

This chapter, and the thesis as a whole, are concerned with accounting for the paradoxical constants of recurrence and dynamism within business meetings. The chapter will specifically involve the following:

- Quantitative and qualitative analyses of a selection of meetings which comprises roughly 10% of the total corpus, and roughly reflects the balance of the whole corpus in terms of internal and external meetings
- Recurrence is first discussed at the lexicogrammatical level, then these recurrent features are analysed in context at the turn and sequence level. The notion of recurrence is also applied to meeting-specific turn-taking* mechanisms and

*It is important to note that, while the present study will analyse turn-taking and will employ conversation analysis methods, in particular the insight that each text is a local event which has unfolded in real time and as such is an ongoing 'work in progress', this is not a conversation analysis study. By definition, conversation analysis focuses on

exchanges, and finally recurrence is studied at the genre level in relation to the business meeting. For example, what stages of a meeting we can expect to occur, and what participants of a meeting we can expect to attend, or how we can know a meeting has begun.

- Pragmatic concepts such as context, face, power, and speaker goals, as outlined in chapter two, will be referred to as they can offer powerful explanations as to why certain linguistic features are realized.
- Dynamism is accounted for by employing a broad concept of context which combines text-external factors such as location, with fine-level analysis focusing on the local event. The notion of emergence in terms of goals, and strategies, also helps to account for the dynamism and apparent messiness within the data.
- As with many other empirical studies of institutional discourse, comparison with everyday English, at the lexicogrammatical level in the form of, for example, frequency counts and keyness (Scott, 1999), will occur. These comparisons intend to show what is distinctive about the texts in question, and will help illuminate the features of the business register which is used in business meetings.

the local specific aspects of language use, and in so doing attempts to eschew any a priori aims or assumptions (Sacks et al 1974; Schegloff 1997). Therefore extracting generalisable features arguably neither sit well within a conversation analysis framework given its professed aim to discover the local, nor are such findings actually generalisable in an objective or practical sense (Biber, Conrad and Reppin, 1994: 106). Also, see Billig (1999) for a critique of the professed assumptions of conversation analysis. The present study, in contrast, very much intends to discover recurrent features of business meetings, and is based on the assumptions that such features do exist within the practices of institutions and they are generalisable. Indeed, the recurrent is what allows us to recognise a particular genre. Nevertheless, in line with conversation analysis, I am not proposing to develop a fixed framework into which I can fit CANBEC data. Instead, the notion of overall structure is one aspect of genre, and is relevant 'only to the extent that the parties orient to it in organizing their talk' (Heritage, 1997: 168).

### 4.1.2 Rationale: quantitative and qualitative approaches

Within recent studies of authentic business discourse* there is a trend to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini, 1997; Koester, 2001, 2006; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; McCarthy and Handford, 2004) in the analysis of data. The present study also follows this direction, because these two approaches can provide appropriate answers to different questions (Davis, 1995). While both methodologies are diverse in terms of technique and theoretical assumptions (Davis, ibid; Lazaraton, 2000), their application in this thesis is briefly outlined here. The quantitative approach is very much a *corpus-based* (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001) corpus linguistic approach, looking at the most frequent and key words and chunks. This approach has been contrasted with a *corpus-driven* approach (Tognini-Bonelli, ibid; McCarthy, 1998; Butler, 2002), which assumes no predispositions or frameworks before approaching the data. The corpus-based approach here, however, does interpret the corpus 'as an adjunct to the development of theoretical positions' (Butler, 2002: 2), not least discourse analysis and genre analysis. The reasons for this are twofold: my aim in this thesis is to test my hypotheses and answer the research questions outlined above, for example *Can we classify the business meeting as a genre?*, not merely to blankly explore the corpus; the second reason is that purely quantitative methods cannot illuminate the finer distinctions which are contained in a varied collection of principled, complete texts in a corpus like CANBEC (see McEnery and Wilson 1996: 62-63). To do this, qualitative methods are needed.

*However, whereas much of the work on business discourse (Bargiela and Harris 1997, Bargiela and Nickerson 1999) employs a multidisciplinary approach which combines both description and prescription of business practices, and in so doing shares much in common with *Business Communication*-type approaches common in the US (see Bargiela and Nickerson 2002 for an overview), the present study does not directly attempt to illuminate good as opposed to bad business practice.

The qualitative approach involves asking initially how these key lexicogrammatical features occur in longer, contextualised extracts, and thereby understand, or at least infer, the role they play and the goals of the speakers. This involves combining appropriate discourse analysis, conversation analysis and genre analysis techniques to build a plausible picture of the genre of the business meeting and the linguistic behaviour of the participants. The qualitative approach, while not being a fully emic one, does involve insights from the participants when deemed appropriate. The justification for the combination of these two approaches acknowledges that 'neither the quantitative data of a corpus alone nor the one-off analysis of conversational fragments is sufficient, and that much extra insight can be gained by working from the former to the latter and vice-versa, keeping both in constant dialectal relationship' (McCarthy and Handford 2004:187). Through combining both approaches it is hoped that the charge of overgeneralisation, which a reliance on purely qualitative analysis often entails (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999), can be avoided.

### 4.1.3 Hypotheses

The section outlines the main hypothesis of this thesis and the two related sub-hypotheses. For each of the sub-hypotheses there are several research questions which will be addressed at various stages of this chapter, and then throughout the remaining chapters.

1. **Business meetings can be characterised as a distinct genre.**

Koester (2006: 35) states that 'the term "meeting" is not particularly useful as a genre label, as meetings can have a variety of goals'. I will attempt to show that

business meetings can in fact be shown to be a distinct genre. This will involve a discussion of relevant lexicogrammatical items, the functions they fulfill, and the strategies the speakers are carrying out. The strategies in turn reflect the goals which the participants are attempting to achieve, as well as provide evidence that the they are aware of their involvement within the said genre. I will also analyse turn-taking, and propose an overall structure which accounts for the repeated and the dynamic aspects of meetings.

**1.a The language used in business meetings displays consistent differences when compared to everyday English, which characterises it as an independent register.**

Register is defined here as constrained lexical and syntactic style, complementary to but distinct from genre (Couture, 1986, see Chapter two of this thesis). Applying a bottom up approach, I will first apply quantitative corpus techniques and then look at some selected items in context to clarify the following:

- Which lexicogrammatical items are frequent and 'key' to (or statistically more likely to occur in) business meetings?
- What conclusions can we draw about pragmatic markers, such as vague expressions, deontic modality, idioms and certain evaluative nouns which have been shown to serve conventionalised functions in other domains of discourse?
- What is the nature and extent of the influence of certain contextual factors e.g. speaker relationship?
- What relevance do speaker goals have?
- How are issues of face manifested in meetings?
- Do business meetings have a distinct turn taking style?

**1.b There are considerable differences between internal meetings and external meetings.**

In previous research on business meetings, there has been a tendency, particularly among empirical studies, to make assertions about business meetings based purely on *internal* business meetings. This may be largely down to the difficulty in obtaining external data. Given that a large and crucial number of meetings in any company will be 'external' or 'interorganisational' i.e. with another company, the present study will analyse how internal and external meetings compare. For instance:

- What linguistic differences occur e.g. in terms of keyword and chunks?
- What differences occur in lexicogrammatical usage, and can these differences be categorised?
- Is the expression of conflict and convergence different?
- What are the differences in terms of speaker relationships, and how do they affect the discourse?
- What is the comparative role of the chairperson?
- Do participants' goals and strategies differ?
- Are there differences in turn taking organisation?

## 4.2 The Data

The genre of the business meeting will be developed incrementally, starting with word frequencies and keyword comparisons of the framework data and CANCODE, provided through Wordsmith Tools©. Comparisons are conducted firstly between CANCODE and the whole of the framework data, and then between CANCODE and the internal meetings (IM) and the external meetings (EM) data. CANCODE was chosen because it

is a corpus of everyday spoken English, and therefore enables us to address the hypothesis that business English differs from everyday English. Further automated searches will then be conducted, looking at multi-word clusters, and concordance lines of key words.

### 4.2.1 Rationale for choice of data

It would have been possible to choose the data for this framework study from a variety of different companies, thereby providing a more accurate reflection of the range of data within the corpus as a whole. By limiting the number of situational and professional variables, however, it was felt that, for the purposes of a framework study, a clearer picture of the aims of the thesis could be developed, i.e. to develop a notion of the genre of the business meeting which accounts for differences and similarities between internal meetings (IM) and external meetings (EM), and indicates how the language used in business meetings differs from everyday English. Not all of the meeting topics and purposes which are contained in the full corpus are evident in the framework chapter, which means that the framework chapter does not fully represent the corpus. Because of these factors any generalisations based on findings from this small sample must be strongly tempered. It will also be shown in the following chapters that some of the findings in this framework chapter are not replicated in the full study.

### 4.2.2 Topics and purposes of data

In attempting to reflect the breakdown of the corpus in terms of topic and purpose as fully as possible, a wide variety of meetings have been chosen. These include, in terms of topic, meetings involving:

- Sales
- Marketing
- Logistics
- Human resource management
- Technical matters
- Procedural matters.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the pilot data includes all possible meeting topics except for production and strategy. Figures 2 and 3 show topic breakdown according to whether the meetings are internal and external. In the full study all topics will be examined.

**Figure 4.1: Pilot meeting topic.**

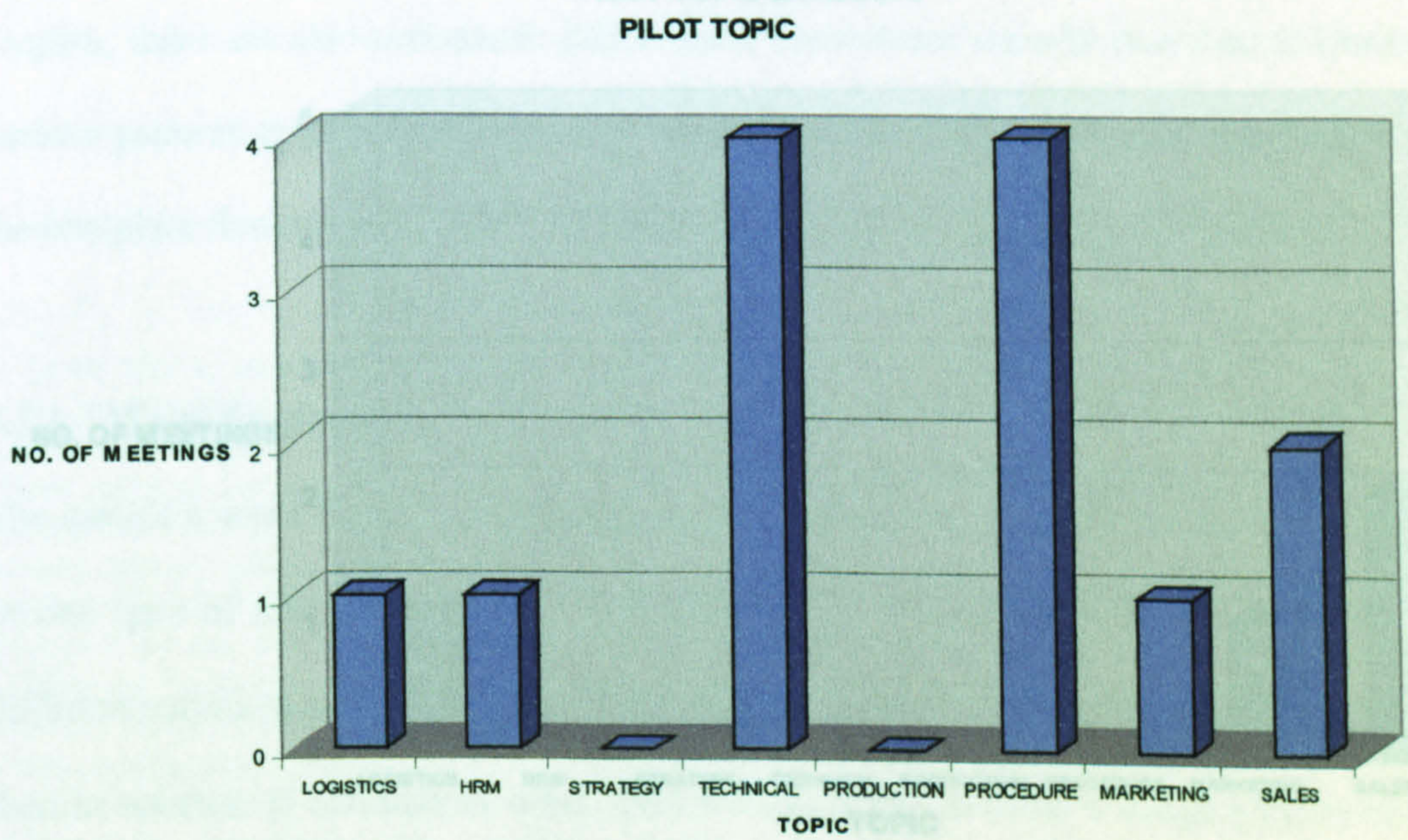


**Figure 4.2: Pilot internal meeting topic.**

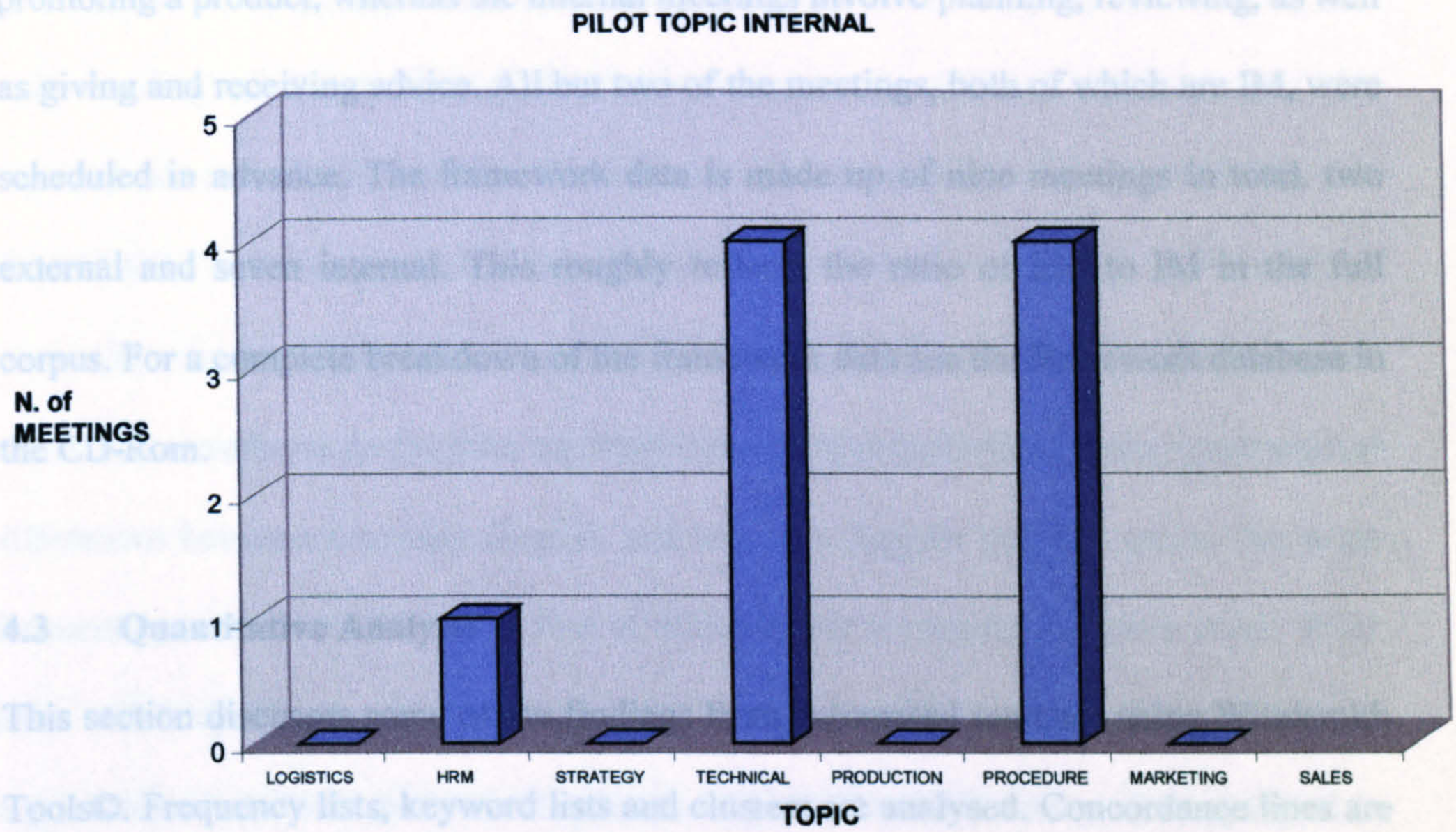
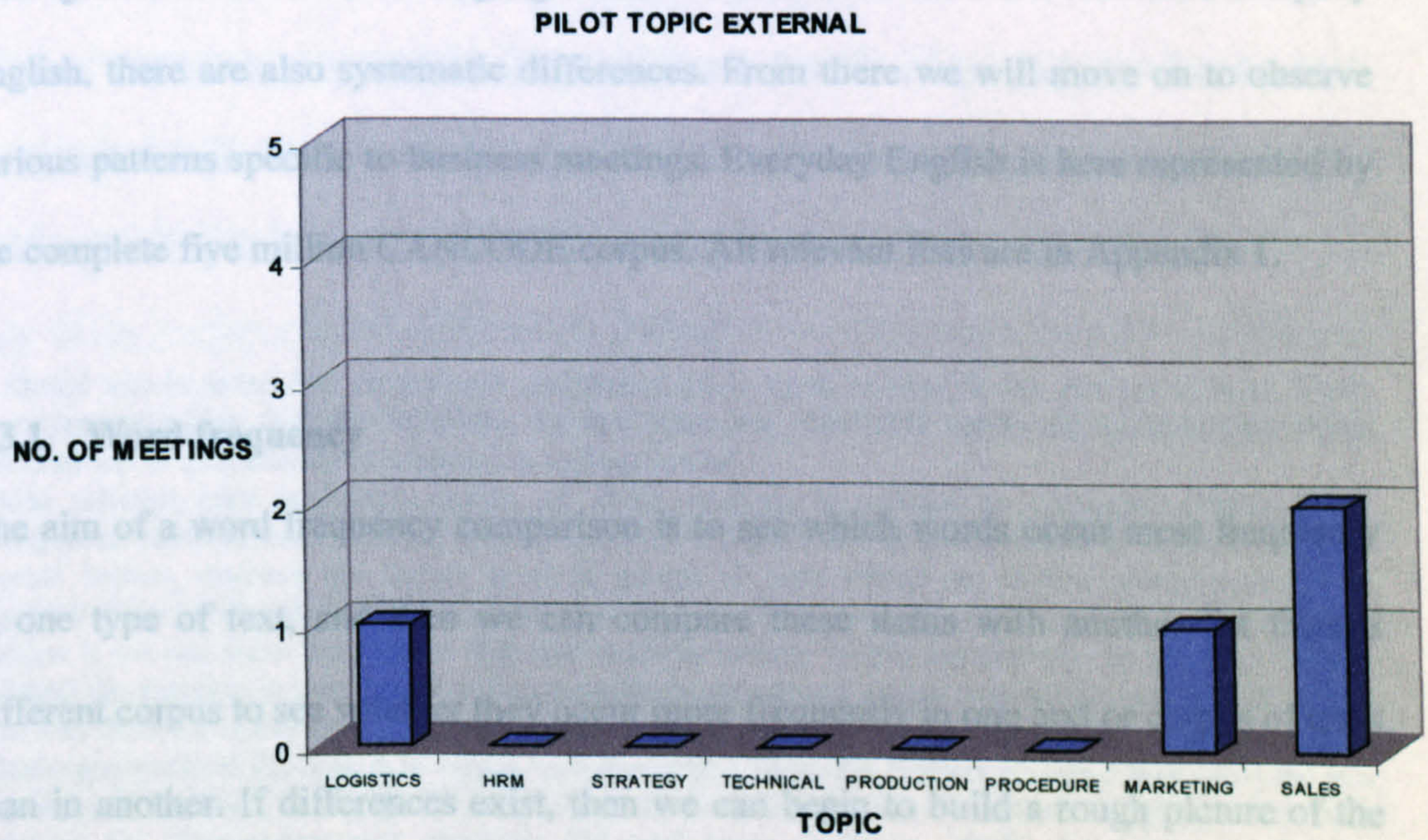



**Figure 4.3: Pilot External meeting topic.**



In terms of purpose, the external meetings are both concerned with buying, selling and promoting a product, whereas the internal meetings involve planning, reviewing, as well as giving and receiving advice. All but two of the meetings, both of which are IM, were scheduled in advance. The framework data is made up of nine meetings in total, two external and seven internal. This roughly reflects the ratio of EM to IM in the full corpus. For a complete breakdown of the framework data see the framework database in the CD-Rom.

## 4.3 Quantitative Analysis

This section discusses some of the findings from automated searches using Wordsmith Tools©. Frequency lists, keyword lists and clusters are analysed. Concordance lines are also provided to allow for a more co-textual and therefore contextual understanding of the features in question. The initial aim is to test the hypothesis that while, at the lexicogrammatical level, the language used in the framework data is similar to everyday English, there are also systematic differences. From there we will move on to observe various patterns specific to business meetings. Everyday English is here represented by the complete five million CANCODE corpus. All relevant lists are in Appendix 1.

### 4.3.1 Word frequency

The aim of a word frequency comparison is to see which words occur most frequently in one type of text, and then we can compare these items with another list from a different corpus to see whether they occur more frequently in one text or corpus of texts than in another. If differences exist, then we can begin to build a rough picture of the text or corpus in question. The initial frequency comparison is between the most

frequent word forms of the framework data (Appendix 1) and the most frequent words of CANCODE (Appendix 1). As the purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the notion of the business meeting, and not to understand the nomenclature used in specific industries, all specialised terms, numbers and abbreviations have been removed from lists.*

The most striking initial feature between the two lists is their similarity, which offers some credence to St. John's (1996) concern that significant lexico-grammatical differences between everyday English and business English may not exist. The most frequent ten words are the same, five of which occur in exactly the same order. Forty three of the top fifty words are in both lists. Another possible interpretation, to be argued here, is that this initial finding lends weight to Nelson's notion of everyday English being the 'mother' of business English (Nelson, 2000).**

It is immediately obvious that there are very few business-specific words. Indeed, there are none in the top 50. Parallel results are to be found in Nelson's corpus (op cit). Unlike the key word lists, discussed below, the vast majority are function words and delexicalised verbs, as opposed to lexical items with some semantic weight. A closer reading does throw up some interesting differences: the relatively higher

*It should also be noted that the analyses undertaken are in terms of word forms, and not lemmas. There is no presupposition that the frequency of one form e.g. *said* will enable an extrapolation either quantitatively or qualitatively to another e.g. saying, or said.

**Also relevant here is Biber's notion of factor analysis in relation to text-types (1988). Biber distinguishes between text-types and genres, the latter being defined as such because of reference to text-external factors, whereas the former involves groups of texts which are similar purely in terms of linguistic features. He asserts that we can assume a particular text-type has a certain communicative function if we can show that certain linguistic features reoccur within the text-type in question, thereby fulfilling the function in question. It is thus possible to objectively define a particular text type if we can show that there are correlations, or inverse correlations, between the text in question and frequency counts of lexicogrammatical features. It is argued here that certain linguistic features do occur both more and less frequently in business meetings in comparison to everyday English. While this approach has been criticized for disregarding text structure and goal types (Adolphs, 2002), the argument that the reoccurrence of lexicogrammatical features can be shown to objectively correspond to text-type is a powerful and relevant one.

frequency in the framework texts of certain fillers *er, erm*, back channels and markers *mm, right, okay* conjunctions *if, coz, or*, the modal *can*, the verb *say* and the pronoun *we*. Conversely, words which occur more frequently in CANCODE include the pronouns *he* and *she*, as well as to a lesser extent *I*; *oh* and *like* are also more frequent in CANCODE, as is the past tense of the verb *be*, *was*. As will be seen when we look at keyness and then at longer extracts, these single differences are replicated throughout the data and can help us discover meaningful patterns within business English in general and in business meetings in particular.

### 4.3.2 Keywords

Keywords are those single words which occur with significantly high frequency in comparison to some norm (Scott, 1999). They are a useful method for characterising a text or genre (Scott, ibid), and the related notion of lexical choice indicates how speakers relate to and create the specific institutional context (Drew and Heritage, 1992). As has been argued by Nelson (2000), keywords offer more insight than basic frequency counts because, as can be seen from the framework data, high frequency words show considerable overlap between business English and general English and may fail to capture crucial differences. Through keyword comparisons we can begin to see the business lexicon (ibid). As has been powerfully argued by Nelson (ibid), business English is distinct from general English in that it is comprised of a limited set of semantic fields which reflect the institutional nature of the business world in terms of activities and relationships. An example is that of the word *partner*. While it has a range of possible meanings in everyday English including lover, team-member (tennis partner) and fellow criminal (partner in crime), if it is used in a business context it has a

limited, specific meaning of a person or company with whom we are involved in a relationship, the purpose of which is to make profit.

One finding from Nelson's study is that key words for business exist and they tend to be lexical and meaning-carrying in content (ibid). This is also true of the framework lists here especially in terms of keyness, but that is only part of the picture. The interest here is not in replicating the findings from his corpus and in so developing a framework for business lexis, but rather to develop a notion of the genre of the business meeting, and to compare IM with EM as a way of achieving this aim. In so doing, attention will also be paid to the delexicalised and functional words which are also a feature of the quantitative findings, which in turn will shed light on speaker goals, the choices speakers make in attempting to achieve their goals, and the relational/transactional distinction.

There are three keyword comparisons in this framework study: CANCODE vs. all framework data, CANCODE vs. the internal framework meeting data, and CANCODE vs. the external framework meeting data, (all in Appendix 1).

A perfunctory glance at the full framework keyword list shows that the majority of keywords are business-related nouns, such as *meeting, paperwork* and *sales*. This is both unsurprising and not overly informative, given that business is by definition concerned with the transaction of goods, services or information. As Linkline is an ISP provider, it is also to be expected that there are many words which are related to that type of business e.g. *Internet, connect.*

Certain conjunctions and interpersonal forms are noticeable in all three keyword lists. The pronomials *we, we've, our, us* are notable, as are the pronouns *I* and *you* by their relative infrequency in the data compared to everyday English. This shows the

value of keyword searches when compared to basic frequency counts. In the framework frequency list (Appendix 1) we saw that *you* is the third most common word in the framework study, and *I* the sixth. This is not so dissimilar to the CANCODE frequency list (Appendix 1), from which we might, erroneously, infer that their usage in business meetings and in everyday communication is also not dissimilar. The keyword comparison, however, suggests that, in comparative terms, there are significant differences. These differences will become clearer when we look at longer extracts in context.

As already noted in comparisons with the frequency lists, the 'key' interpersonal forms include back channels and discourse markers, particularly fillers, as well as certain (semi-) modal forms and conjunctions. For example, *hmm, okay, sure, erm, need, gonna, wanna, may, guess, kind, so* and *if* all appear on at least one of the three keyword lists. These will be discussed below. Also of interest are certain nouns: *issue, problem, customer(s), manager, sales*, especially when analysed in terms of the IM/EM distinction. This corpus will provide evidence for the contention that there exist notable differences between IM and EM in terms of lexico-grammar, and these lexico-grammatical choices reflect differences in topic, degrees of obligation, speaker goals and relationships. Some of these will make intuitive sense, for example the fact that *problem* occurs frequently in meetings, but some findings may not e.g. the word *problem* can serve in EM as a focus for closing the social distance between the different parties (see below).

The notion of negative keyness is also fruitful in developing an understanding of the genre of the business meeting and the educational implications of such findings. Negative keyness shows us which words tend not to occur in a particular text-type. A

cursory glace over the keyword lists shows that these words tend to be Anglo-Saxon in etymological root, and refer to concepts related to home, family and religion. We can thus surmise that workers tend to keep these topics out of meetings, at least within this British company. Such an insight is of obvious pedagogical value for the student of business English when choosing appropriate and inappropriate topics in a meeting situation.*

### 4.3.3 Concordances

Through studying concordances, where chosen words and phrases can be displayed along with their surrounding co-text in the KWIC (key word in context) format, we can see how our keywords and clusters actually occur in the data. Concordances are arguably a bridge between quantitative and qualitative approaches in that they provide more co-text and therefore context than frequency lists, but the degree of co-text is still very limited. Concordances were generated for a limited range of keywords, selected to capture a cross-section of lexico-grammatical types from IM and EM. These are then discussed in the next, qualitative analysis section.

### Summary

The above section has described some of the recurrent lexicogrammatical items in the framework study which can be found using automated corpus tools. From these we have begun to see some of the themes which will be further discussed in this chapter, for

*Alex Gilmore (personal communication) raises the point that this is very culture dependent: in Saudi Arabia a business meeting would typically start with questions about the health of your family.

example differences between everyday English and the language of meetings, face and communicative choice, differences between IM and EM, and how these issues can relate to genre. The results also suggest what a register of spoken business English might look like. The next part of the study will apply qualitative techniques, involving contextualised extracts, to these and other lexicogrammatical features.

## 4.4. Qualitative Analysis of Selected Features

This section will further explore some of the findings thrown up by the quantitative analysis through looking at longer extracts. Interpersonal features will be analysed, including personal pronouns, deontic and epistemic modality, hedges and vague language, metaphors and back channels. As stated in the introduction, such features have been shown in studies of other domains of discourse to fulfill conventionalised roles and can be seen as generic 'fingerprints' which help us pinpoint particular genres. Some of these features have also been explored in workplace discourse, e.g. Boden (1994), Koester (2001; 2006), Poncini (2002), and Holmes and Stubbe (2003), although the present study, as argued in chapters two and three, is significant in systematically exploring such features across such a broad range of meetings. Through this analysis of language choices at the lemma and extract level, the notion of the genre of the business meeting will be further developed by showing how participants steer through the communicative act in which they are involved. The penultimate section will apply conversation analysis techniques to discuss meetings at the turn level, and the final part will propose a matrix for analysing complete meetings.

### 4.4.1 Personal pronouns

Choice of pronouns in business communication, as with other types of communication, is tied closely with concepts of identity, face, responsibility and action (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), as this adjacency pair between a manager and his subordinate implies:

**[Extract 4.1. #17302. IM\MS]**

<$1> Okay. <$=> Who <\$=> Has anyone reviewed that?

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$2> <$=> Yes you we're <\$=> I'm just putting it together now.

Here the manager ($1) wants to know whether *it* has been reviewed yet i.e. completed, and by whom. He changes the original question from an arguably negative face-threatening *who* to a less direct *anyone*, and the subordinate offers the convoluted response, eventually acknowledging that it is his responsibility. The exchange is also interesting from the point of view of tenses and veracity: Speaker two ($2) answers *yes* to the question, whereas in truth it has not been reviewed yet. For a further discussion of this adjacency pair, see below.

One of the most striking results in the keyword comparisons is the keyness of *we*. If we look at the keyword list (Appendix 1), we can see that *we*, *we've* and *we're* occur far more frequently in our framework than in CANCODE. The ubiquity of *we* in business and other forms of institutional communication has been noted elsewhere in empirical studies (Maynard, 1984; Drew and Heritage, 1992; Nelson, 2000). Also of interest is the relative non-keyness of *you* and *I* i.e. these two pronouns occur less frequently in business English than in everyday English, whereas in business, the pronoun *we* is perhaps being used as a replacement for *I* and *you*: *we* instead of *you* acts

as a softening device (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 38), and using *we* instead of *I* can emphasise, for example, collaboration (ibid: 41) thereby de-emphasising individual agency.

Another use of *we*, that is specific to business and other forms of professional communication, is corporate *we*. This is used by speakers to foreground the identity of the company rather than the speaker's personal identity, often in terms of perception, agency and collective responsibility (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 30; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997:121). For example:

**[Extract 4.2. #39001 EM between the host ISP company, and the MD of an IT sales company ($2)]**

<$2> We'll put this through our model now+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +that we've got it properly.

Speaker two ($2) is actually the MD of this company, and if we replace *we* with *I*, then we can see that the tone changes. If she were to say:

<$2> *I*'ll put this through our model now+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +that *I*'ve got it properly.

Then we might infer that her company is a very small one (which it is), and one in which she does pretty much everything. By using *we*, the implication is that the action will be carried out within her company, probably but not necessarily by her or even under her direction, and it will part of an organisational process. The level of communication is therefore kept at an organisational level, and her company appears more impressive. This extract is from an EM, and such a use of *we* to foreground the corporate identity of the agents is typical in such types of meetings.

Another related use of corporate *we* is not so much to foreground the company's identity, but to lessen that of the individual, and therefore the speaker's responsibility for the action of decision in question (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 30). Such a use might be seen as providing an air of officialdom, and in one sense thereby objectifying the decision or course of action in question. The following extract is between the technical director (speaker two) and one the technicians. They are discussing possible legal pitfalls caused by changes in the law.

**[Extract 4.3. #173002. IM\MS, in technical department.]**

$2> Yeah. <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> Erm could we put that <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> as a disclaimer somewhere? That if er we have complaints about er <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> improper <$G?>. We reserve the right to <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$=> Erm <\$=>

This disclaimer, which is something of a cliché, informs the other party of the corporate, impersonal nature of the agent organisation. Recourse on a personal level thus becomes far more challenging.

Another aspect of *we* that is common in the data relates to the notion of inclusiveness/exclusiveness. In the extract below between Linkline ($2, $5) and a potential client ($1), Mouse productions, we find clear examples of this.

**[Extract 4.4. #46001 EM. The potential client is a kind of IT broker, not a reseller as was assumed by Linkline]**

<$2> Thank you very much. Erm okay before we sort of plunge into the technical aspects of this is is there any commercial issues that you still have outstanding at the moment?

<$1> Well no other than the fact that erm <$E> 2 secs <\$E> when we spoke last+

<$2> Mhm.

<$1> +<$=> I t= I <\$=> I gave you a brief outline of what we are looking to put together.

<$5> Yeah.

<$1> And had a look at the resell agreement et cetera.

<$2> Mhm.

<$1> Erm bearing in mind that we're not a reseller. We're <$G?>.

<$5> Yeah. Yeah.

<$1> Different model.

<$5> Yeah.

<$1> So have a look at that.

<$5> Okay.

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> I think it's all there.

<$2> Okay.

<$1> Erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> that's really what we're looking to <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> work around.

The first *we* is arguably an inclusive *we*, in that it refers to both sets of participants from the two companies. The second *we* is undoubtedly inclusive. The next three *we*'s are clearly exclusive, in that they refer to the potential client and not the host company. They are also examples of corporate, rather than personal *we*. Compare speaker one talking at the beginning of the meeting:

$1> The only thing is we actually would have been here half an hour earlier.

Here *we* obviously refers to the particular participants who came for the meeting to Linkline. While it is still exclusive *we*, their corporate identity is relatively unimportant: their personal identity is the one that is being referred to.

Ellipsis in terms of not vocalising the subject also occurs. The utterance

<$1> So have a look at that.

could feasibly be an imperative, and a traditional grammatical reading of this as a clause would by definition categorise it as such as there is no subject. What seems more likely,

given the overall tenor of the discourse (Halliday 1985) is that this is a case of ellipsis, where the subject may be *we*, followed by the auxiliary contraction *'ll*. Ellipsis often occurs when the subject is obvious to the participants and therefore by dropping it, a sense of collaboration is created: the act of ellipsis reflects and reinforces a shared understanding. Ellipsis also of course saves time.

If we compare the keyword lists involving the internal and external comparisons, then a similar pattern emerges (Appendix 1). In both tables *we* occurs very frequently, suggesting that *we* is used far more frequently in both internal and external meetings than in everyday English. Similarly, *I* and *you* are much less 'key' (although in terms of pure frequency they are both still very common). There are, however, illuminating differences. *We* occurs almost twice as frequently in EM compared to IM, as is shown on Figure 4.4 below. This begs the question, how do speakers use *we* differently in IM and EM?

The notion of corporate identity may well be more prevalent in the majority of EM. In IM, corporate identity is referred to, often in terms of the direction or position of the company (see extract 4.3, above). It is inclusive. However, where a manager may well use the pronoun *I* in IM, the subject of the clause outlining the same, say, decision, plan or position in EM would very probably be the corporate *we*, for the reasons outlined above.

It is worth noting that Zupnik (1994) when analysing one type of institutional discourse, political discourse, found that shifts in the personal deixis are power-enhancing in the context of political discourse: speakers can shift in and out of various roles and display multiple identities in particular situations, thus displaying and enacting

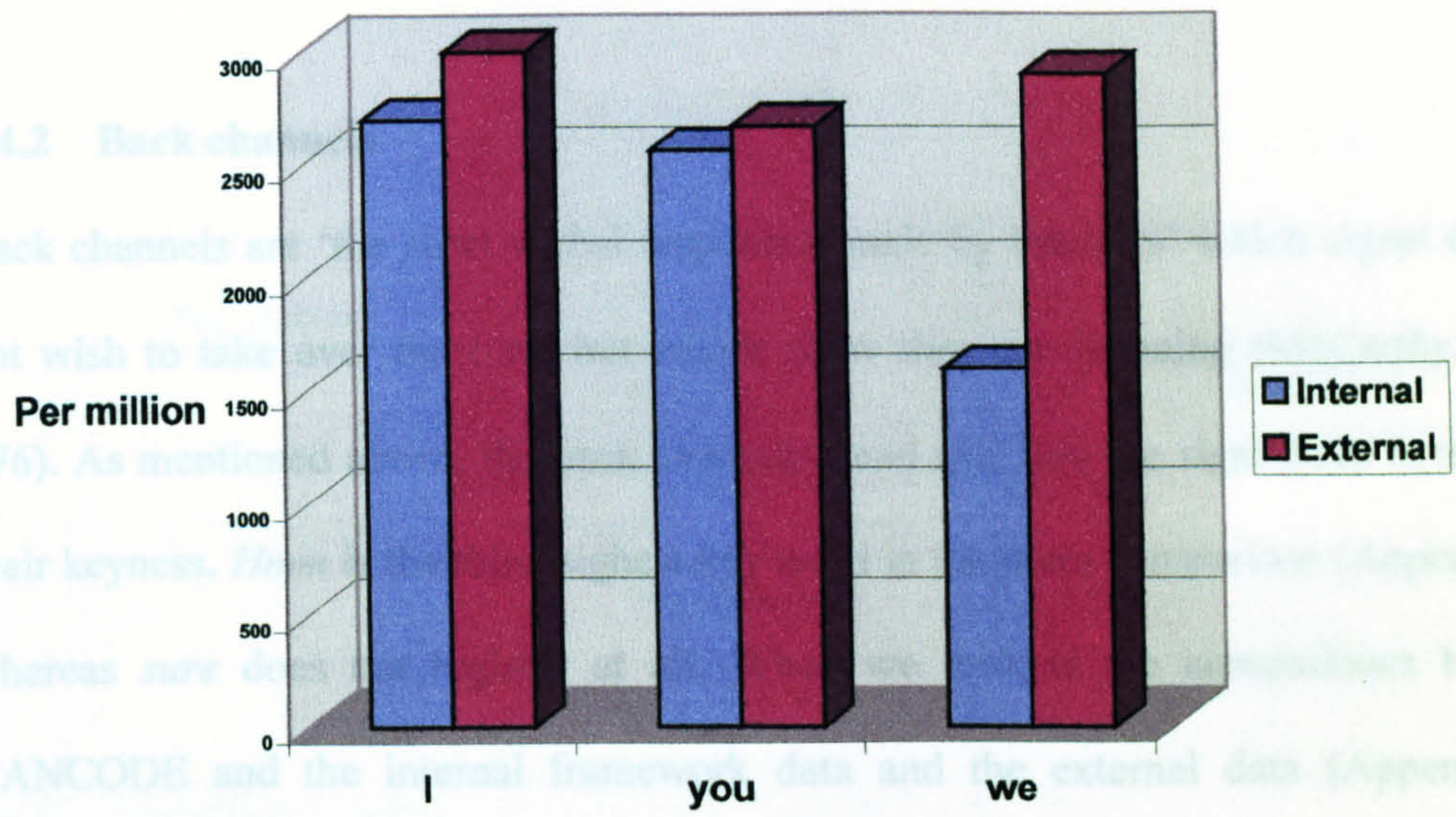
their power status. *We* in business English certainly seems to operate with similar flexibility, vagueness, and power enhancement.

The inclusive/exclusive distinction seems more pertinent in EM than in IM, in the sense that from the institutional perspective everyone in IM is by definition included. Of course, factions, in-groups and out-groups and separate layers and departments do exist within the same company or organisation (see below), but as Figure 4.4 shows, *we* occurs almost twice as frequently in EM compared to IM. *I* and *you*, however, occur only slightly more often in EM. As is the case in the above 46001 extract, the use of the exclusive, corporate *we* accounts for this difference in frequency.*

If it can be shown that *we* plays a core role in business meetings, then one possible implication of this is that that notion of 'coreness' or prototypicality (Rosch, 1975) is found more in EM than in IM, at least in relation to pronoun use. However, this argument becomes more problematic when we consider modal forms, particularly in the case of the semi-modal verb *need* (see below). *I* and *you*, also occur more frequently in EM than in IM. The fact that there are more personal pronouns in EM than IM overall suggests that interpersonal communication is a more prevalent factor in EM than in IM.

*Although it is beyond the remit of the present study, given that the corpus is not a longitudinal one, it would be worthwhile analysing whether exclusive *we* occurs more often at the early stages of a business relationship while the two companies are 'setting out their stalls', and at the end, when a breakdown of the relationship is taking place, compared to periods of comity when occurrences of inclusive *we* are far more frequent.

**Figure 4.4: Distribution of personal pronouns**




Different types of *we* in the framework study, and where they tend* to occur

- Inclusive personal, referring to all those present at time of speaking: IM, EM
- Exclusive personal, referring to one in-group present: IM, EM
- Inclusive corporate, referring to both (or more) companies: EM
- Exclusive corporate, referring to the speaker's company: EM
- Intra-organisational, referring to all employees within a company: IM

Within other, more conflictual registers (Halliday, 1978) of institutional discourse, there would also be other possible uses of *we* e.g. inclusive peer-non corporate (comrades), which refers to the group's work identity, but usually from a critical stance. It is also

*It is possible to conceive of exceptions e.g. inclusive corporate *we* in an IM, where the speakers are referring to a relationship, but this use is far from usual.

possible to conceive of an exclusive managerial, corporate, *we*, in political contrast to the above.

### 4.4.2 Back channels

Back channels are 'the short verbal responses made by listeners' which signal they do not wish to take over the turn, but which show they are listening (McCarthy, 1998: 176). As mentioned above, the back channels *hmm* and *sure* are significant in terms of their keyness. *Hmm* is the third highest key word in the main comparison (Appendix 1), whereas *sure* does not register at all. When we look at the comparisons between CANCODE and the internal framework data and the external data (Appendix 1), however, we notice some interesting differences: *hmm* again comes third on the internal comparison, meaning that it is an extremely frequent back channel in IM when compared to everyday English. However, it does not register at all in the external keyword list. *Sure*, on the other hand, is the #52$^{nd}$ key word in the external keyword comparison, but does not occur in the internal. Figure 4.5 below shows the relative frequency when extrapolated to one million words.

**Figure 4.5: Distribution of *hmm* and *sure***

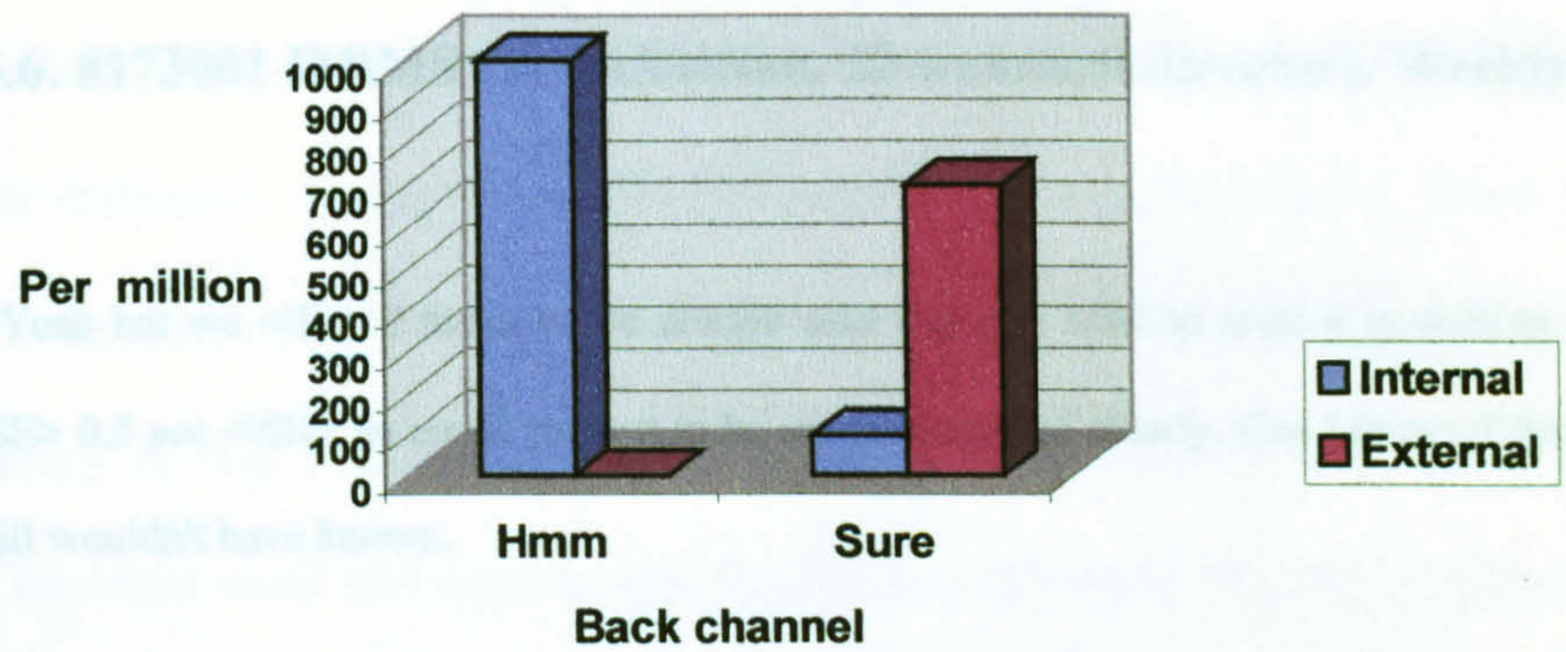



Figure 4.5 highlights the difference in usage when comparing IM with EM. As has been discussed already, one of the apparent trends in EM is to create a sense of collaboration. Another trend is that of paying attention to positive face. *Sure* is a far more enthusiastic back channel than *hmm*, and this would help to explain why it is so frequent in EM when compared to IM and CANCODE (see Appendix 1). *Hmm*, in comparison sounds non-committal, which in EM could threaten the interlocutor's sense of positive face. This might explain why it does not occur at all in the framework EM data. It is also interesting to note that within EM in the framework data, *sure* is used fairly equally by the hosts and the guests, for example:

**[Extract 4.5. #39001. EM ($1 is the host and $2 is the guest)]**

<$1> And then you know we've got a couple of questions to ask you and maybe <$=> some <\$=>+

<$2> Sure.

<$1> +er you know just a few things for you to think about.

In IM, where much of the back channelling is done by the superior, because he or she is asking the questions and directing the discourse, the neither encouraging nor discouraging *hmm* is far more common:

**[Extract 4.6. #173001 IM\MS ($1 technician, $2 technical director). Weekly update meeting.]**

<$1> <$=> Yeah but we <\$=> I mean we've always said that you have to send it in writing and we've also got a <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> an email request to be satisfactory and clearly. Cos I mean if they'd sent in a fax we'd still wouldn't have known.

<$2> Hmm.

### 4.4.3 Deontic modality

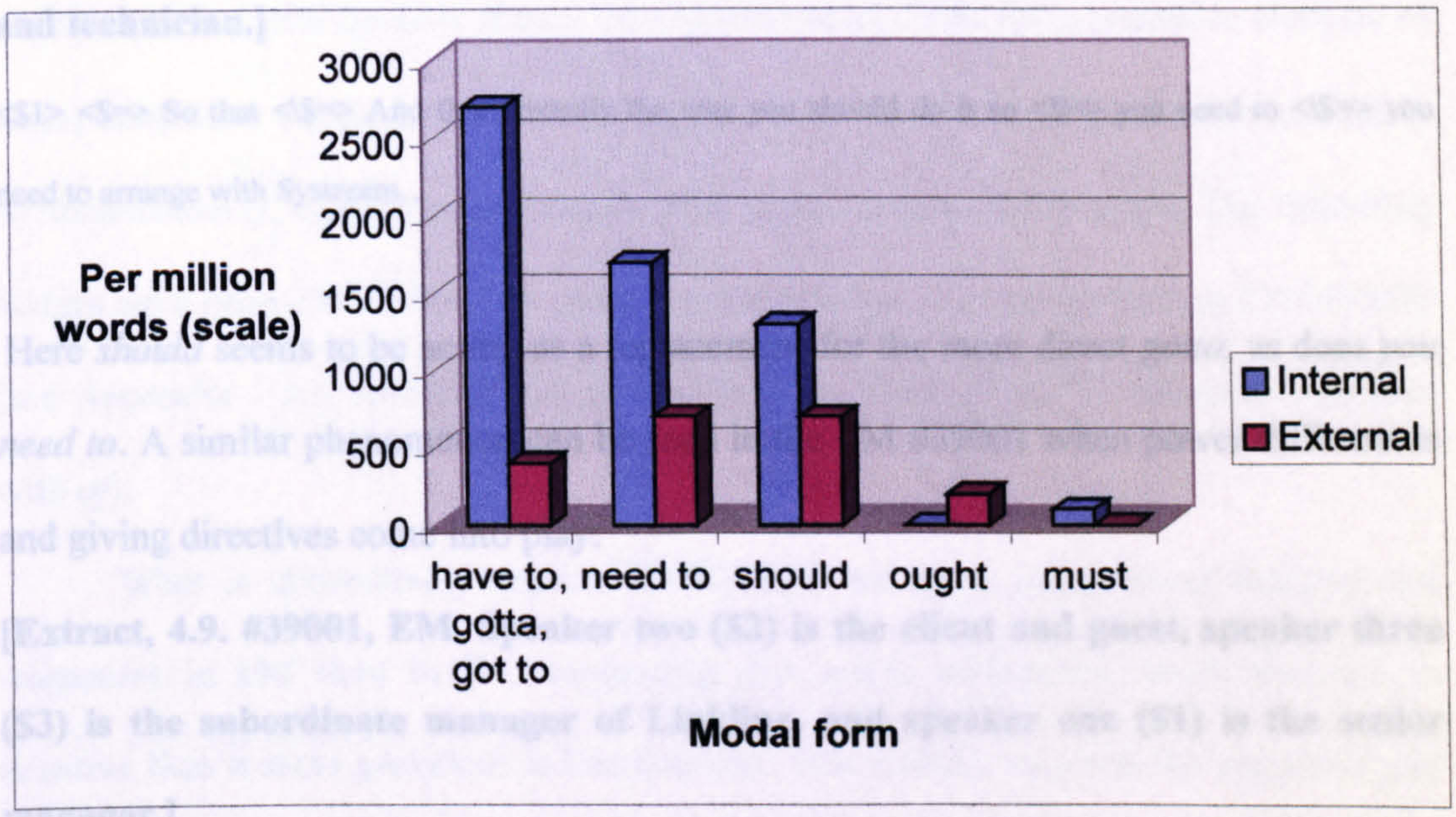
Modality features highly in the framework study, particularly if we can see it `in its broadest sense as the speaker/writer's stance to the message communicated` (McCarthy and Carter, 1994: 102). Modality is concerned with `the speaker`s judgement of the probabilities, or obligations, involved in what he is saying.` (Halliday, 1985: 75), and is central to the Hallidayan sense of interpersonal macro-function, present in each clause, which expresses 'relations among participants in the situation, and the speaker's own intrusion into it.' (1978: 46). This distinction can be further broken down: probability can refer to the perception of likelihood and/or frequency of something happening or existing, also referred to as epistemic modality, examples of which will be discussed later; and the obligation and/or desirability of a given proposition, otherwise known as deontic modality (Lyons, 1977; Eggins, 1994), and will be discussed in this section.

*Need* is the fifteenth highest key word on the main framework keyword list, and the most frequent verb expressing obligation. It also collocates extremely frequently with *we*. In fact, *we need to* is by far the most frequent three word cluster in the framework study, and is one of the most frequent in CANBEC overall (466 instances, fourth most frequent). Nelson's (2000) BEC corpus also provided the same result in terms of the ubiquitousness of *we need to. Must*, another modal of obligation, occurs far less frequently in the framework study (see Figure 4.6 below). One key pragmatic difference between *need* and *must* is that the latter is far more forceful in English. This suggests that in business, speakers move towards more indirect expressions of obligation, which indicates how important the preservation of face is, even in a context characterized by urgency, power differences, and pressure.

While *we need to* is undoubtedly a frequently occurring cluster in spoken business English, one perhaps surprising finding is that it occurs more than twice as frequently in IM than in EM (see Appendix 1). In fact, when we look at the occurrence of (semi-) modal verbs of obligation (see Figure 4.6 below), we see that as a group they occur more than twice as often in IM than in EM. This suggests that the notion of obligation is more prevalent in the sample IM than the EM. In the EM, participants may skirt around the issue of obligation because of its perceived threat to face. Another reason might be that obligation is more of an immediate concern in IM, where the topic of the agenda tends to focus on issues like the solving or prevention of certain problems, and related personal and institutional obligations and duties. Also, the two EM in the framework study are meetings between the host company and one potential client, and an existing client who is considering buying more `stock`. As such, they are very much sales-oriented meetings. In the main thesis I will analyse EM, some of which are less

sales-focused, and see whether marked obligation is more prevalent in other types of EM.

**Figure 4.6: Distribution of selected deontic modals**




Within the IM framework data, a noticeable feature is how sensitive interlocutors are to the face needs of their subordinates (manager-subordinate: MS). In the IM #40001 between three managers, peers (P), there are 37 occurrences of *have (got) to/gotta*, where the managers discuss necessary actions and goals. Here the finance manager is telling the technical manager that his division's attitude is unacceptable:

**[Extract 4.7. #40001 IM\P.]**

<$2> It's got to stop, their attitude has got to change.

Among this group of peers, there is no face-threat perceived in the use of these rather direct forms, or the threat is outweighed by the importance of conveying the message as clearly as possible. However, when these goals and actions are communicated to

subordinates, the frequency drops dramatically (there are only 12 occurrences of *have (got) to/gotta* in two IM\MS), and in one of the IM\MS, there are 40 instances of *should*, for example:

**[Extract 4.8. #43001, IM\MS, weekly update meeting between technical manager and technician.]**

<$1> <$=> So that <\$=> And that's exactly the way you should do it so <$=> you need to <\$=> you need to arrange with Systream...

Here *should* seems to be acting as a replacement for the more direct *gotta,* as does *you need to*. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the EM #39001 when power differences and giving directives come into play:

**[Extract, 4.9. #39001, EM. Speaker two ($2) is the client and guest, speaker three ($3) is the subordinate manager of Linkline, and speaker one ($1) is the senior manager.]**

<$2> Okay. Will he have costings on that service? <$G?>

<$3> Er he can get them.

<$1> Erm well yeah I think you should probably do that Steve. <$G?>

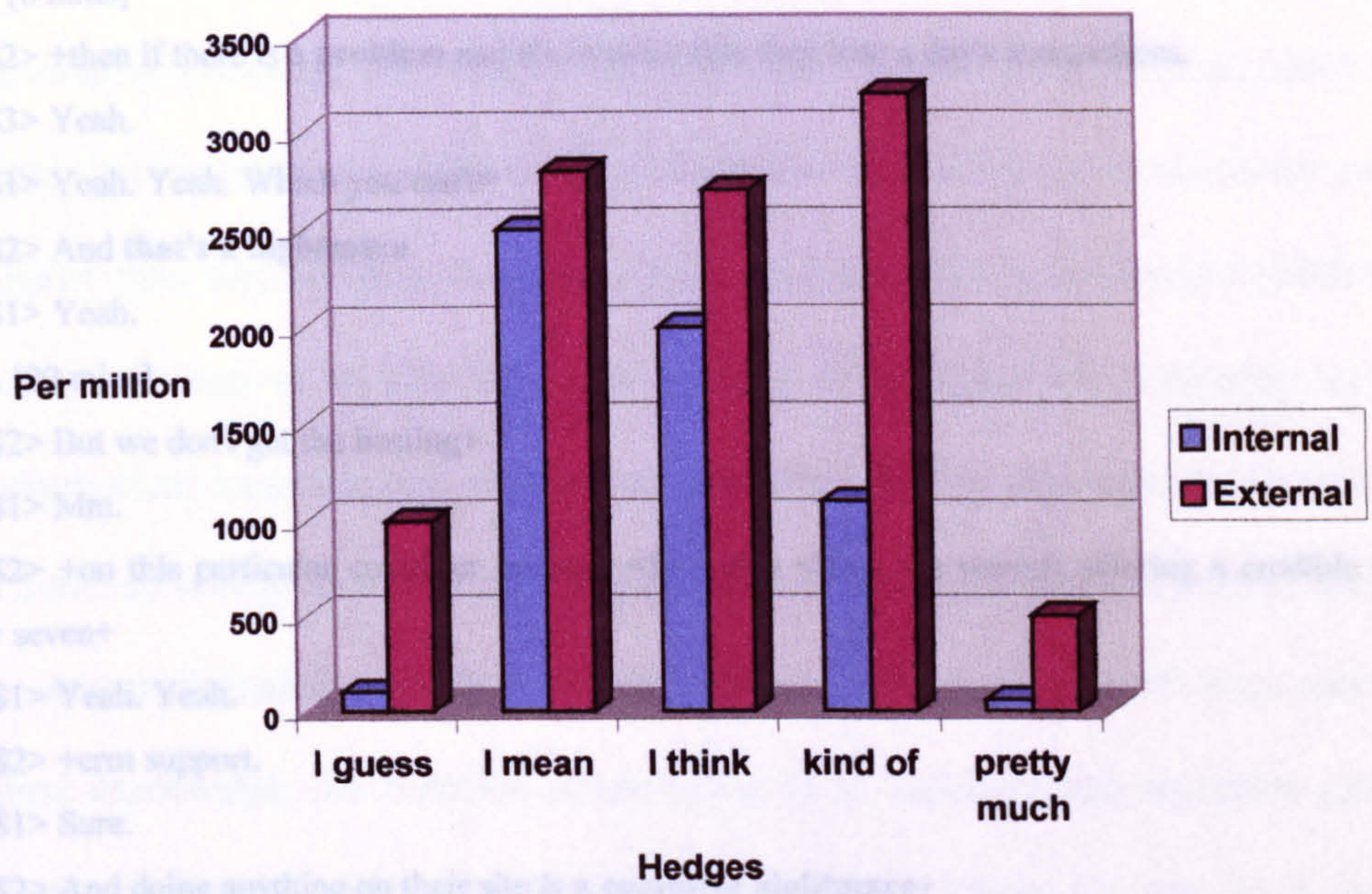
Through a combination of interpersonal strategies (Koester, 2006) (indirectness, hedging and ascribing responsibility through modal verbs and forms) as well as nomination, *Steve*, the director clearly assigns the task to his subordinate without threatening his sense of face. At least in Linkline, face-protection and indirectness are key concerns in order to maintain good interpersonal relations and to achieve a sense of collaboration and individual worth, while directing and making requests to employees (see McCarthy and Handford, 2004).

### 4.4.4 Hedging discourse markers

The graph below (Figure 4.7) shows that there are considerable differences in frequency between the IM and EM in terms of hedging. While the purposive nature of such hedges is debatable, and often seems to depend on whether the analyst takes a cognitive or a sociolinguistic stance (see Greene et al, 1990 for a cognitive analysis of such phenomena which denies their purposive role), I assume that speakers, consciously or unconsciously, employ such features with goals somewhere in mind. The following hedges have been chosen because of their relative keyness in comparison to CANCODE (see Appendix 1 for concordances of *kind* in EM, of which all 83 instances collocate with *of*).

What is immediately evident is that there are more instances of hedging and vagueness in EM than in IM, suggesting that unlike obligation, overt attention to negative face is more prevalent in EM than IM. This statistic supports the argument that hedges can be purposively employed. It also makes intuitive sense, in that when dealing with clients and potential clients we will be far more wary of imposing on them, or threatening their sense of positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). While other hedges such as *like* and *sort of* play a comparable role, they feature less frequently in the framework data.

**Figure 4.7: Distribution of hedges**




### 4.4.5 Metaphor/idiom

The following extract is from an EM, and involves a discussion of computer server problems. Speaker one is the host, the sales director, and speaker two is the client. The extract highlights some key issues related to metaphor and communication which will be discussed below.

**[Extract, 4.10. #39001, EM. Speaker two ($2) is the client and guest, speaker three ($3) is the subordinate manager of Linkline, and speaker one ($1) is the senior manager.]**

<$1> Erm as you know with application **problems** you just it it's+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +it' s it's <\$=>

<$2> **It's a nightmare.**

<$1> Yeah. [sighs]

<$2> Sometimes the experts don't know.

[laughter]

<$1> Yeah exactly. But **it can be a real**+

<$2> Okay.

<$1> +er **can of worms.** So. [inhales]

... [6 mins]

<$2> +then if there is a **problem** and it's irretrievable they lose a day's transactions.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> Yeah. Yeah. Which you can't=

<$2> And **that's a nightmare.**

<$1> Yeah.

... [20 mins]

<$2> But we don't get the hosting+

<$1> Mm.

<$2> +on this particular customer because <$=> they <\$=> we weren't offering a credible twenty four by seven+

<$1> Yeah. Yeah.

<$2> +erm support.

<$1> Sure.

<$2> And doing anything on their site **is a complete nightmare+**

<$1> Mm.

**... [20 secs]**

<$2> Because they're running something like sixty sites on one machine.

<$1> Yeah.

<$3> Wow.

<$2> But but it **it just is a nightmare.**

This extract is pertinent for a variety of reasons. It is concerned with problems, and therefore typifies business meetings which 'mostly exist to discuss and promote solutions to problems' (McCarthy and Handford, 2004: 184) and in so doing involve some aspect of decision-making (the other major function of meetings is often seen as the transfer of information (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003)). The stance taken by participants in relation to problems tends to reflect their agendas (McCarthy and Handford, op cit), and the way problems are framed affects the way they are evaluated and solved (Boden, 1995). The word *problem* itself is one of the most frequent

keywords in the framework comparison (#71), and can be seen here as the lynchpin around which various metaphorical synonyms are hung. In terms of transactional or informative meaning, this extract is rather light: speaker one, the host sales manager, states that application problems are problematic and offers some anecdotal evidence to support this, and speaker two, the client, agrees. Gibbs and Gerrig (1989) offer one possible answer as to why they take so long over saying this, and why they employ metaphorical language e.g. *nightmare*, *can of worms*, by arguing that metaphor is used to foster intimacy between interlocutors: as understanding metaphor relies more heavily on shared mutual knowledge or conversational common ground than understanding literal knowledge, the function of metaphor is to highlight this common ground. This common ground could further be interpreted on two levels. On one level the speakers share a deep understanding of ISP application related issues, which highlights their membership of a specific discourse community; they also share common ground in terms of their business relationship – through their acknowledgement of the problems they, and the client in particular, are also signalling their understanding and appreciation of their relationship. It is also worth noting that the metaphors used here are 'classic' or 'dead' metaphors, and as such are very safe in that they will not challenge the other participants or risk creating the wrong impression.

Within the EM in the framework study such highlighting of common ground is frequent, and a purely 'business as transaction' approach cannot account for such linguistic behaviour (Koester, 2004). Attention to face and the notion of collaboration combined with an emphasis on the closeness of the relationship (through linguistic features such metaphors, hedging and pronoun choice) can help to explain the amount of time spent producing and encouraging apparently non-transactional language. In

more conflictual EM it seems reasonable to expect there to be minimal use of metaphors (this will be discussed in the later qualitative chapters).

### 4.4.6 Irrealis and possibility

While it has been argued that creative *language* is less common in professional discourse compared to, say, intimate (Carter, 2004, Carter and McCarthy, 2004), a striking factor of the data is the amount of time spent discussing unreal or possible situations. Two key words which collocate are *if* and *say*. They combine to form the recurring semi-fixed expression is *if (you) (were to) say 'Well... '*.* For example:

**[Extract, 4.11. #39001, EM. Speaker two ($2) is the client and guest and speaker one ($1) is the senior manager.]**

<$1> ... 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+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +by er April".

Here the chunk outlines a possible, desirable, future situation. Similar forms are also found throughout the data, and can be broken down into the following colligation:

*(If) (personal pronoun) + verb relating to speech + "Well+ clause"*

In terms of semantic prosody (Sinclair: 1996b), this chunk is used to speculate, or to create a notion of irrealis. In IM in particular the chunk can be employed to highlight an

*For example the cluster *if you say*, which occurs twelve times in the internal keyword list: see Appendix 1.

undesirable possibility, as in the following brief extract:

**[Extract 4.11. #40001, IM\P.]**

<$2> Can I also say that <$=> it it's also that I you know <\$=> I've got also the point that **they might say** ``**Well** you can <$H> fuck off <\$H> then I'm not placing the deal".

<$3> Mm.

Or in EM to show why a mutual relationship would be beneficial through an imagined scenario in which the two companies are collaborating:

**[Extract 4.12. #46001. EM. $4 is the guest, explaining what his company's business involves.]**

<$4> So **if** someone calls up and asks for a particular solution **I'll** sort of draw down and **say** ``**Well** why why are you actually going for that?" and+

<$5> Okay.

<$4> +erm ``<$E> company name <\$E>'s the place to be for that sort of system" or whatever.

These two examples are indicative of a general trend which seem to occur when comparing IM and EM: in the former speculation and irrealis are employed to predict and therefore prevent possible or actual problems mushrooming, whereas in the latter the same language forms, for example the above chunk, can be used to visualise a better future situation between the two companies. We could argue that at the level of semantic prosody, there is a strong contrast when the same colligation is used in IM (generally negative possibility) compared to EM (positive possibility).*

*As this is a framework study the data is limited, and the EM are both sales oriented to some degree. In the full study it will be interesting to see whether this finding is borne out when we look at a wider range of EM meetings e.g. logistics, and a more conflictual EM.

The extract below from an IM further highlights this, with the manager $1 explaining the possible problems involved with the proposed procedure, even though the chunk has become fragmented:

**[Extract 4.13. #173002, IM\MS.]**

<$1> But **I** still don't wanna go to John and **say** ``John. Here's a purchase requisition for eighteen thousand pounds". In a month when we know we will not do well in sales+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +er and also what it means is that **he** will then **raise** ``**Well** hang on. You told me <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> we were gonna get <$G?> on a per user basis so start charging users". Which is a massive project. I don't think he is aware of <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> how much is involved. And also the amount of aggro it will cause with customers **if you say** ``**Right** we're taking this away from you now".

Modal verbs of possibility, for example *may* and *might*, also serve to create an irrealis context, for example in the extract below from 39001. (*May* is particularly key in EM, #62 on the EM keyword list, Appendix 1.) In the following EM they occur alongside other hypothetical expressions e.g. maybe, and as seems typical in EM, work towards developing a collaborative and convergent enterprise of consensus-making. Face-protection both for those who speculate and those who respond is addressed through hedges, vague expressions, metaphors and positive back channels.

**[Extract 4.14. #39001, EM. $1 is the sales director of Linkline and $2 is the MD of the client company. Here the sales director is summarising the meeting.]**

<$1> **I guess** you'll have to speak to Bob and and and to to James and and and **kind of** look at what you think you **may** have coming up.

<$2> **Yeah.**

<$1> And then we **can** get together again and actually **you know** finalize **something** and and and **move forward.**

<$2> Okay.

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> So it may well be that it's it's it makes financial sense to go with a rack and a half and put all of your existing servers into a rack. It may be better that erm you keep those ones and maybe just a half rack for the future. Or it may be a bit better just to keep buying individual collocations as and when you need them.

<$2> Right okay.

<$1> So I think that's probably the three+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +different ways that it can go.

### Summary

This section has further explored some of the lexicogrammatical areas which have been shown to have a high level of statistical frequency, and how these linguistic choices can be interpreted to reflect underlying trends and issues in the register of business meetings, such as face, obligation, politeness strategies, collaboration and convergence. While the previous two sections have made reference to differences between EM and IM, this distinction at the turn level will be discussed in more detail next.

## 4.5 Turn-Taking

There are significant differences in turn-taking when we compare everyday English to institutional discourse, which have been widely discussed in the literature (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew and Heritage, 1992; Schegloff, 1992; Heritage, 1997). Turns are constrained to varying and differing degrees in institutional discourse, depending on

factors such as the institutional goals and roles. The particular institution itself, coupled with the type of enterprise it is involved in, will also heavily influence the chosen turn-type. Turns in a police interview of a witness would be very different from turns in an IM between managers of the same grade (peers). The importance and the institution-specific nature of turns are reflected in the notion of communities of practice, in that that there are a shared repertoire of negotiable resources which accumulate over time in such communities (Wenger, 1998), of which specific turn-taking norms would be one example.

Within business meetings there is also considerable variation in turn-taking depending on whether it is an IM or EM, but other factors influence turn-taking as well. Whether the discourse is unidirectional vs. collaborative will also influence the normative turn-taking patterns, as will speaker status (Koester, 2001; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). As Drew and Heritage state, 'Issues of turn design are highly sensitive to issues of institutional incumbency' (1992: 36). Clifton (forthcoming) argues that in collaborative (which are internal) business meetings, turn-taking superficially appears to resemble conversation in that self-selection at transition-relevancy places (TRPs) is widely used, but in reality the opportunity to take up the next turn is dependent on power relations. Certain actions achieved through turns, such as initiating and carrying out repair, are the prerogative of only the director. Other participants only self-select at TRPs when somebody apart from the director is taking a turn. Features such as these reinforce the organisational reality (ibid), and therefore even in a collaborative meeting the senior manager has the strongest influence on the direction of the meeting (ibid).

### 4.5.1 Internal meetings (IM) turns

Within IM, the purpose of the meeting strongly constrains the turn-type (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Regularity of meeting among the same set of participants may also be a factor, which a longitudinal study would show us. Of considerable importance is the relationship and roles of the participants, and therefore, the following two sub-sections discuss IM involving manager-subordinate-type communication, and IM involving peers.

#### 4.5.1.1 IM manager-subordinate (MS) turns

Extract 173002 below is a regular weekly meeting between the technical director, speaker one, and one of the technical support staff.

**[Extract 4.15. #173002, IM\MS.]**

<$1> So let's start with current technical problems.

<$E> 2 sec <\$E>

<$2> No other than er <$G?> <$E> speech obscured by creaking of a chair <\$E> working the <$G?>.

<$1> Okay.

<$2> <$G?>.

<$1> What what <$H> status <\$H> is that?

<$2> <$=> Well he's erm <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> er Matt's currently got it moved over onto <\$=> Or have got <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> portions of it moved on to <$H> M R T G <\$H> <$=> It's a matter of getting all of the <$G3> <$E> 1 sec <\$E> erm <\$=> <$E> 2 sec <\$E> Getting everything <$E> 1 sec <\$E> to report the way it should be.

<$1> Right.

<$2> <$=> All <\$=> And one of them being able to add delete or <$G3>+

<$1> U - uh.

<$2> +<$=> so <\$=>

<$1> Okay. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Er current feature work?

This exchange is typical of such (IM\MS) meetings:

- The manager asks the questions, her subordinate tends not to
- The length of turns taken by the manager are much shorter than the subordinate
- Back channels tend to be produced by the manager
- The manager decides when the next item on the agenda e.g. *current feature work* is to be addressed, and can typically be interpreted as an example of topic shift (Brown and Yule, 1983), recognisable through typical markers e.g. *Okay. Silence. Er...*
- There is virtually no topic conflict
- Interruptions are rare, but when they do occur they are the prerogative of the manager (although, as Gilmore (personal communication) points out, it is difficult to interrupt somebody who is asking questions. Also, Bargiela and Harris (1996) found that subordinates in British meetings tend not to be interrupted very much. )
- Dispreferred seconds are unusual and unwelcome because they tend to signify some problem, often caused by someone i.e. the subordinate, apparently not having done his/her job and having to admit as much, as in the below example.

The adjacency pair below from a later stage of the same meeting highlights typical elements of a dispreffered second (pause, token agreement, hesitation, self-editing in terms of pronoun choice (Levinson, 1983)).

<$1> Okay. <$=> Who <\$=> Has anyone reviewed that?

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$2> <$=> Yes you we're <\$=> I'm just putting it together now.

The tenses are also indicative: the manager uses present perfect which reflects his opinion that it should have been completed, and the subordinate uses the present progressive signalling that it is being done i.e. not yet completed.

The underlying principle is that the preferred response to a question concerning completion of work from a manager is an affirmative. This helps explain the apparent dispreferred response (marker, pause, hesitation, self-editing) to the seemingly innocuous question *<$1> What what <$H> status <\$H> is that?* in the longer extract from *173002, IM\MS* above in this section.

#### 4.5.1.2 IM Peers

When we compare the above to IM between peers, there are substantial differences. The following extract is between the technical director ($1), the finance director ($2) and the sales director ($3), and they are discussing changes to administrative procedures which have been made by the MD John (not present).

**[Extract 4.16. #40001, IM\P]**

$1> Yeah. It's gotta be all or nothing hasn't it.

<$3> Mm.

<$2> And I don't agree with the trial period. We either do it or we don't do it. <$=> Cos I

<\$=>

<$1> <$=> Tri= <\$=>

<$2> We don't have time for trials.

<$1> What's the trial period?

<$3> Erm.

<$2> That's the only problem I've got. I've gotta be frank.

<$3> Mm. <$=> My <\$=>

<$2> Cos I'm reorganising my department.

<$3> Well basically John's insisted on two things.

<$1> Yeah.

<$3> One one is that we don't do all these changes all at once.

<$1> All right. Okay well that's+

<$3> And that that that that+

<$1> +probably a reasonable sensible <$G?>.

<$3> +that we phase them in over time.

<$1> Yeah. Yeah.

<$3> Which which yeah I I think's probably a sensible thing.

<$1> Yeah.

<$3> And the second thing is that we do it on on a trial basis.

<$1> Oh I don' t think that'll work. I mean if you're gonna do it you might as well+

<$2> Can't muck people about.

<$1> +get on with it and and live with it. Yeah.

Dispreferred seconds are more common, particularly in question/answer pairs where there is no meaningful answer e.g.:

<$1> What's the trial period?

<$3> Erm.

This can be seen in other IM\P meetings, e.g. the peer sales meeting below:

**[Extract 4.17 #17701, IM\P]**

<$1> How do you view the report?

<$2> Yeah.

The following can also be seen:

- Questions and opinions are not the prerogative of the Chair, in this meeting speaker three, but can be asked by any of the participants with no apparent threat to face
- Lengths of turns is more similar
- Interruptions are more acceptable
- Overlaps are more common
- Topic management is more collaborative
- Open disagreement is more acceptable

### 4.5.2 EM turns vs. IM turns

When we compare IM and EM at the level of turns we can see certain differences. EM in the framework study, which significantly in terms of topic do not deal with any major problems or disagreements, tend to feature more:

- Preferred seconds
- Overlaps
- Attention to face e.g. supportive back channeling (*sure*)
- Diversion from the predetermined topics i.e. agenda
- Elaborate opening and closing sequences
- Fluidity in topic management

And less

- Interruption
- Topic conflict, at least in comparison to IM\MS
- FTAs, both positive and negative

In chapter eight there will be a fuller analysis of turn taking in both IM and EM.

**Summary**

Turn-taking patterns in terms of IM and EM have been discussed in this section. It has been shown that power and accountability also play significant roles in turn design and speaker uptake, and this is evidenced through preference. In the following section a framework will be proposed which explicates the genre of the business meeting. EM will be paid far greater attention than in this section.

## 4.6 The Meeting Matrix

A tendency in traditional approaches to genre is to concentrate on the formal aspects of the given genre. Hasan (1985) and Ventola (1987), for example, attempt to outline the obligatory and therefore predictive elements of service encounters. These approaches, despite their inclusion of optional elements which allow for a certain degree of dynamic embedding, have been criticised for constructing an idealised framework which does not account for the variety and dynamism evident in manifestations of the said genres (Lakoff, G. 1987; Lee, 1992; Koester, 2001).

The challenge of developing a genre-based notion of the business meeting is therefore to account for the 'dynamism, fluidity, variability, mixing and negotiation' (McCarthy, 1998: 30) that is apparent in this and other spoken genres, while simultaneously describing the recurrent components and boundaries which allow us to recognise our particular genre as a prototypical form of interaction (Bargiela and Harris, 1997: 209), as opposed to related but different forms of institutional communication. The solution proposed here is to combine the structural elements outlined by Bargiela-

Chiappini and Harris (1997) and discussed below with McCarthy's four 'generic strands' (1998:33-35).

### 4.6.1 Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris's (1997) British Meeting Model.

**Figure 4.8: Bargiela and Harris's (1997) British meeting**

**MEETING**

| **Opening** | **Debating** | **Closing** |
|---|---|---|
| **Phase** | **Phase** | **Phase** |
| Exchanges | Exchanges | Exchanges |
| Moves | Moves | Moves |
| Transitional Move | Transitional Move | |

On recognising the above Phases, Exchanges and Moves (Bargiela & Harris, 1997: 210):

- In formal meetings the Transitional Moves are marked by intervention by the Chair, and thereby delineate the different Phases
- The Transitional Move between first and second Phase signals the beginning of the debate, where the group are encouraged to participate more actively than in the opening phase
- Phases are macro-units which make up the three parts of a meeting

- Moves create a shift in the discourse
- Business meetings can be seen as comprising Moves which deal with 'claims' (e.g. present, support or explain a claim) and managing 'topics'
- Exchanges are formed by collections of Moves, and are self-contained units of discourse.
- Three types of exchange in business meetings are: group to group, group to chair, and chair to group. (According to their data, only in the middle phase is the group allowed to initiate exchanges.)

### 4.6.2 Genre-specific strategies: *Expectations, Recollections, Instantiations*, and *Formulations*

The rigidity of the Bargiela-Harris framework is arguably its simultaneous strength and weakness. While the model does allow us to immediately recognise it as a representation of a meeting, it cannot account for the messiness, fluidity and variation present in many meetings. The first phase is often a far more collaborative event than they indicate (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), especially in EM and in peer IM. Also, even in formal meetings in CANBEC there are instances where the transition moves are far more fluid and recursive than is allowed for in this framework. Phatic communication also occurs at places other than just before and just after the meeting proper. In relation to terminology, referring to the three main stages of a meeting as 'phases' will not be followed here, as in particularly the middle section of many meetings there can be several 'phases'.

In accounting for such messiness, some notion of dynamism needs to be included in our generic framework otherwise the description will be at best an idealisation of the

reality, bearing varying degrees of similarity to the empirical data. Because of this, I propose combining this framework with McCarthy's four "linguistic traces of genre-oriented behaviour which may be found in texts...expectations, recollections, instantiations, and formulations"(1998:33). As McCarthy's four strands, or strategies* (McCarthy, personal communication), are not specific to business, I have combined them with Holmes and Stubbe's strategies for 'Managing interaction in meetings' (2003: 71-78), namely setting the agenda, summarising progress, keeping the discussion on track, and reaching a decision.

The emphasis of McCarthy's four strands is on the participants within the genre. He attempts to show how participants enter into a genre and acknowledge that they understand what is going on (McCarthy, private correspondence). As such, his position is close to that of Levinson (1992) who stresses the importance of the context-dependent

*Levinson (1992) provides the following definition of strategies: '(they are) optimal or self-maximising patterns of behaviour available to participants in particular roles, under the specific constraints of the relevant activity' (1992: 100). This definition is particularly relevant to this study because of the emphasis of activity or genre-specific constraints, which have been noted above in relation to meetings. In terms of the relationship between goals and strategies, he states that 'our understanding of what is going on requires reference to the underlying strategies or plans employed by both parties, which in turn are derived from the nature of the activity and the goals that it assigns the various participants' (ibid: 86). While the notion of goals implied here seems to be higher level and predetermined, even emergent goals (Hopper and Drummond, 1990) would, it can be argued, still give rise to strategies. The top down relationship could be seen as Genre: Goals: Strategies: Functions/Speech Acts: Lexicogrammatical Realisation. The boundaries are fuzzy, for example 'summarising progress' can be a goal or a strategy or a function or a lexicogrammatical realisation, either simultaneously or in isolation (the Chair may say 'Right, I'm summarising the progress', which would be a lexicogrammatical realisation but the function may be to cut the other speaker off).

meaning of utterances for those taking part:

> *Because there are strict constraints on contributions to any particular activity, there are corresponding strong expectations about the functions that any utterances at a certain point in the proceedings can be fulfilling. (1992: 79)*

This highlights the jointly shared knowledge without which the activity in question cannot occur. The linguistic strands, I argue, refer to 'the necessary prerequisites of the activity in question, thereby making a knowledge of those prerequisites essential for the understanding of their function' (ibid: 73), with the activity in question here being business meetings. Though ultimately impossible to verify (McCarthy, 1998), this emphasis on the participants' strategies is intended to develop a more dynamic, fluid yet tentative and therefore less improbable account of the unfolding genre.

#### 4.6.2.1 Expectations

The purpose of expectations is '(to) signal expectations regarding the kind of generic activity that is to be negotiated prior to or in the course of realising social compacts' (McCarthy, 1998:33). In business meetings this often includes 'setting the agenda' (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 72) which although often done previous to the meeting itself, is expressed at the beginning of the meeting, usually by the Chair. It can also occur during the meeting itself, especially by less powerful speakers (ibid). While linguistic realisations of expectations, as with the other four strands, can in theory occur at any stage of a meeting, they are to be found most frequently in the transition moves between the phases and during the initial exchange in each phase.

#### 4.6.2.2 Recollections

Recollections are 'participants' past experiences of social activities', which may be "ritualised expressions" (did I tell you the one about), or in meetings the 'as **usual** we'll start the meeting by...'. Recollections mark the context e.g. recurrent situation, and in the example it is the words 'usual' and 'meeting' which marks this most overtly. This chunk could also be interpreted as an expectation: the next section demonstrates and discusses such possible overlaps in relation to the data.

#### 4.6.2.3 Formulations

These 'comment on the current, ongoing activity in terms of its present progress, with speakers periodically summing up where they think the discourse is' (McCarthy, 1998: 36). They are often employed by speakers to check their understanding of the discourse (Koester 2002). Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 73) in discussing strategies employed by managers in business meetings, outline the equivalent 'summarising progress'. Such summarising, verifying or reformulating understanding is a means of, for example, making decisions explicit at regular points through the meeting. In terms of power, this is one way that managers control the development of the interaction (ibid).

#### 4.6.2.4 Instantiations

Instantiations allow for speakers to direct the discourse in order to move toward a new goal or set of goals, and are the most frequent and important method for recreating genres (McCarthy, 1998). They may be transactionally or relationally-oriented, or both, and they account for the fluidity that is a defining feature of genre in general, but which problematises defining specific genres (McCarthy, 1998: 37). In meetings instantiations

may involve, among other goals, cutting somebody off, complimenting, bringing meeting or exchange or topic to a close, or changing topic*, or joking. Following a digression, 'Keeping the discussion on track' (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 73) is an instantiation strategy employed by managers in meetings. Another meeting-particular related strategy is 'reaching a decision' (ibid: 75), which can be achieved unilaterally by the Chair, or collaboratively.

These traces or strategies are local events, to be distinguished from speech acts, that provide evidence that the participants in a given genre are aware that they are participating in the genre in question, and are bringing that genre into existence through the very act of participation. Underlying this is the tenet that participants in all genres are not primarily concerned with the recreation of the genre in question, but rather are concerned with achieving their goals and they thereby create and recreate the genre in question through the pursuit of their goals**. As Swales argues, 'Established members of discourse communities employ genres to realise communicatively the goals of their communities' (1990: 52), the point being that they do not employ communication to

*As noted by Adolphs, McCarthy's (1998: 32) formulations refer to summaries of previous talk, but not subsequent talk (2002: 49). Levinson (1983) has referred to such subsequent linguistic strategies as pre-sequences, and elsewhere they have been described as metastatements (Adolphs, ibid). While it would be possible to create a new category, instead such references will be included in instantiations. From a conversation analysis perspective the terms metastatement and pre-sequence are patterns, and not strictly strategies (though of course according to Gumperz (1982) they would all be examples of strategies: the definition of strategy taken here is comparatively stricter). Pre-sequences are either turns or a type of sequence containing such a turn (Levinson, 1983: 345) and as such are textually-focussed concepts. Instantiations which refer to subsequent talk are, in contrast, strategies which may be manifested at the turn or sequence level.

**The work of Hopper (1987, 1990) is relevant here: he argues that grammar emerges rather than is, and which 'like speech itself must be viewed as a real-time, social phenomenon, and therefore is temporal; its structure is always deferred, always in a process but never arriving, and therefore emergent' (1987: 3). In a later paper (1990) Hopper and Drummond argue that the same principle of emergence can be applied to goals, with interlocutors' goals emerging during as well as being applied to the discourse. This is not to deny the idea of prototypical features (Rosch, 1975) of the meeting which can differ in degrees of typicality. These features include communicative purpose, form, structure, and audience expectations (Swales, 1990: 52). To which we could also add participants.

realise specific genres.

These four strands of generic evidence are different from speech acts in that they may be simultaneously present in the same move (e.g. *right* at the beginning of an exchange), or one of them may be realised over several turns e.g. the instantiation of closing the meeting. A distinction between *moves* in the Bargiela-Chiappini/Harris model and these five strands also needs to be drawn, in that *moves* according to Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris tend to be the equivalent of speech acts (1997: 210), whereas these strands do not necessarily correlate so simplistically with single utterances. It should also be noted that Sinclair and Coulthard's descriptions of *moves* and *acts* seem to have been conflated into *moves* by Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (ibid).

### 4.6.3 Applying the framework to external meetings

These traces or strategies will be discussed through reference to examples in the beginning of the external meeting #46001.

**[Extract 4.18. #46001, EM. Linkline staff are $2, $5 (Chair) and a potential client ($1), Mouse productions.]**

<$E> 2 secs <\$E>

<$5> Right have you started at all? Or+

<$2> Not really.

<$5> + not yet?

<$2> No. Just <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> talking about <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> workmen having+

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$2> +<$H> fun <\$H>.

<$E> laughter <\$E>

<$E> briefly unintelligible <\$E>

<$1> <$G?> it was just a pain getting down here. <$=> There was two <\$=>

<$5> Oh was it?

<$1> <$=> A lane <\$=> A lane had been closed off and no one's doing anything. All gone home.

<$5> Really?

<$1> <$=> At least you must have s= <\$=> Must have been <$H> a half an hour we were <\$H> waiting.

<$5> Oh it's infuriating isn't it.

<$1> <$G?>

<$M> Yeah.

<$5> Infuriating. Okay. Erm yeah. What we're gonna do is I've got an non-disclosure agreement+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +here+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +which I'm I'm gonna need you to sign+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +before we can start disclosing information+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +on our network obviously.

<$1> Yeah.

<$5> Er Baz is here to talk to you about the network+

<$1> Yeah.

<$5> +itself and+

<$1> Sure.

<$5> +to explain why why it's good.

<$1> Yeah.

<$5> Erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> er so I'm just gonna come in for about the first sort of+

<$1> Fine.

<$5> +half an hour of this meeting+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +then leave you guys to it.

<$1> Yeah. No worries. <$H> Yeah. <\$H>

As stated, recollections make reference to speakers' past experiences of the social compact in question and through recollections, and other traces, the perception of a new meeting is created. Just after entering speaker five, the Chair/Host asks:

<$5> Right have you started at all? Or+

<$2> Not really.

<$5> + not yet?

We could interpret this as a recollection because there is an implied reference to previous meetings: the speaker does not need to state *what* has been started, and that the thing in question has a beginning as such, unlike say a conversation. Speaker two who is his colleague says *Not really* in reference to the fact that, while a brief outline of today's meeting has been mentioned, they have not started discussing details. This is largely due to not everyone having been present.

Formulations check that things are happening as you expect at the time of speaking. The above adjacency pair could also be interpreted as a formulation: speaker five seems to assume that they probably haven't started, evidenced by *at all? Or not yet?* Given that he is the Chair it would be highly unconventional to start without him, and speaker two's reassurance allows the participants to progress from a common understanding of where the discourse is at at the time of speaking. If we view the adjacency pair in terms of speaker goals, then it could also be interpreted as an instantiation (see below).

Expectations are prospective signals which imply what type of social compact the participants are or will be involved in. During the turn below the highlighted discourse markers are significant:

<$5> Infuriating. **Okay. Erm yeah.** What we're gonna do is I've got an non-disclosure agreement+

They could arguably be seen as a transitional move (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997). It signals that the meeting is moving from a less formal to a more formal stage. In contrast to Bargiela-Chiappini-Harris's generic model, however, not all meetings in the framework data follow such a structured and categorical transition. This is particularly true of EM and peer IM. In this meeting, and others, we find references to what will be discussed precede and succeed this transition. A transition is however taking place, fluid though it may be, and these discourse markers are a means for the interlocutors to signal and to acknowledge their expectation of such.

The discourse markers signal that a new topic is to be introduced, that of the non-disclosure agreement, which can also be interpreted as a type of expectation: this will now be a formal meeting between representatives of two companies, and the host company will be disclosing information which is confidential; it is expected that the guest company will sign the agreement prohibiting them from discussing any such details with third parties. The notion of emergence (Hopper, 1987; Hopper and Drummond, 1990) is particularly apposite here as the text at the time of production is in the process of becoming a meeting, and it is through attending to and realising such expectations that the participants mould the compact into a meeting.

*What we're gonna do* is evidence of an instantiation. It refers to subsequent talk, and prepares the participants for the next action, that of signing the agreement and a

shift towards more explicitly transactional business. The choice of words in this instantiation is telling: the pronoun *we* when in reality it is *you*, and the framing of a request as a declarative. As further discussed below, these choices may signal attempts to mitigate the FTAs involved in the request.

Other instantiations are evident in this extract. As noted, speaker five, who is the Chair/Host, steers the discourse from a more interpersonal to a more transactional or agenda-related topic. There are at least three further examples of instantiations in this extract: closing the discussion on waiting, putting the meeting on a more formal footing (Goffman, 1981), covering the reasons for the non-disclosure agreement and gaining the signatures, and preparing the ground for Baz to give his technical presentation.

Instantiations are goal-directed (Kelly Hall, 1995), and this extract provides evidence for various goals: speaker five, the Chair/Host, is on one level addressing interpersonal goals by sympathising about the guests being stuck in traffic, even though the host company was made to wait - *Oh it's infuriating isn't it...Infuriating.* Repetition is a central means for speakers to create a relationship (Tannen, 1989). The use of the tag question *isn't it* also serves to close the social distance between the speakers. We could interpret this goal of addressing the visitor's positive face through such enthusiastic agreement as an emergent goal (Hopper and Drummond, 1990) in that it would not have been specified pre-interactionally (Tracy and Coupland, 1990: 7). That is, he would not have able to predict that the visitor would discuss this topic*. We could therefore argue that the goal arises during the discourse. This is unlike the following

* On another level, such an interpersonal goal could be seen as very much one that was in existence pre-interactionally: it is a higher level socio-emotional goal of cooperation (Tracy and Coupland, 1990). See literature review for a discussion.

move:

<$5> Infuriating. Okay. Erm yeah. What we're gonna do is I've got an non-disclosure agreement+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +here+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +which I'm I'm gonna need you to sign+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +before we can start disclosing information+

<$1> Yep.

<$5> +on our network obviously.

Here the Chair/Host is attending to the transactional goals of getting the visitors' signatures, a threat to both their positive (in that by being required to sign the paper their probity is being addressed) and negative face (they have to physically sign the paper). An assumed goal is the smooth-running of the meeting, which helps to explain why he prefaces his FTA with *I'm gonna need you to sign*, which mitigates the threat through the use of the modal forms *gonna need*, rather than the more direct *have to* or *gotta*, or indeed the very rare *must*. The choice of the pronoun *I* combined with an active rather than a passive form might be seen to lend the FTA a less officious and more interpersonal tone. The use of *obviously* also serves to lessen the threat through creating a sense of mutual understanding, thereby working towards the ultimate business goal of successful collaboration. It also implies that this is standard procedure, and therefore is not a reflection on the guest company.

The next phase, signalled by the discourse marker *Er*, is oriented towards at least two goals, one being the introduction of the next speaker and his topic, and another the

goal of persuading the guest company of the value of LinkLine. The choice of an indirect speech act, a representative acting as an expressive, *Er Baz is here to talk to you about the network itself and to explain why why it's good* serves this purpose through presenting this evaluation of the company (as good) as a statement of fact. It is possible to speculate on other possible goals which may be more personal, for example the speaker's possible desire to further his own career within the company through attracting this potential customer or to score points against Baz in some company power-struggle, but from this data alone there is no evidence of such motives. This could be seen as a criticism of such corpus-based studies. For a discussion of such goals, see Watson 2002.

### 4.6.4 Transactional goals and interpersonal language

From a goals perspective we can also see certain tendencies: the transactional/interpersonal distinction, while evident at the level of topic and in terms of lexicogrammatical choice, is questionable in EM at the goals level. When speaker five is sympathising with the visitors about their delay in extract 4.18, describing this in terms of achieving a primarily interpersonal goal seems at best simplistic. What seems more likely is that he is using interpersonal communication to achieve or move closer towards a transactional goal. If we accept that nurturing and maintaining relationships is central to the success of business relationships (Iacobucci, 1996), then it becomes possible a priori to view interpersonal language, most explicitly in EM, as serving transactional, corporate goals. Iacobucci (1990) has argued in a similar vein in relation to service encounters. Even in IM it has been shown that apparent small talk

immediately preceding a meeting can also be transactional in orientation (Mirivel and Tracy, 2005).

What is being suggested here should not be confused with the insightful work of Holmes on small talk, when she says that 'Small talk tends to ... serve as a brief social intermission in a 'full-on' work session' (2000a: 56/7). While such apparent small talk is indeed found at places other than the beginning and endings of meetings, it may be fulfilling a more transactional goal than is implied here. Such apparently phatic communication may not be providing an intermission at all, but could very well be central to the efficacious achievement of transactional, corporate goals. In terms of the transactional goals of speaker five in extract 4.18, such small talk may very well be 'full-on work'.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) outline various strategies which I have aligned with instantiations, including 'keeping the discussion on track', but they do not mention 'taking the discussion off track'. This may be because their data is purely from IM, whereas this instantiation tends to occur in EM. The relational sequence (Koester, 2004; 2006) below shows how the client (speaker two) and the hosts (speakers one and three) collaborate in taking the discussion away from the main topic to comment on the laborious nature of the task under discussion.

**[Extract 4.19. #39001, EM]**

<$2> So+

<$3> Right okay. <$=> That <\$=>

<$2> +what we did in terms of estimating our total traffic was to take our logs per site and add them up.

<$3> Wow.

<$2> Which was quite a job.

<$3> Yeah <$E> laughs <\$E> I was gonna say.

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$3> <$=> That must have taken you <\$=>

<$1> Boring too. Yeah.

<$2> Well <$=> it's it's you know <\$=> it's quite interesting to do.

<$1> Mm. Mm.

<$2> Erm but it's not something we do on a regular basis and it would be great if if there+

<$3> Okay.

<$2> +was an easy way to have it on a regular basis.

This sequence occurs when the MD (speaker two) from the guest company is attempting to persuade the host ISP provider company (speakers one and three) to incorporate the job of counting the logs per site into her new package. As such, it seems very unlikely that the MD is just having a quick relational chat. Her disagreeing with the comment about the *boring* nature of the task suggests she has a clear transactional goal in mind when she states *which was quite a job*, followed by laughter. Koester (2006: 58) argues that such relational sequences 'are task related, but do not actually contribute to getting the task done...they have an evaluative function closely linked to the speakers' relational and identity goals'. Here however the relational sequence seems to be employed more as a negotiation strategy, and as such is very much concerned with getting the task done.

As has been already noted, many previous studies of institutional discourse have somewhat tended to underplay or at times deny the importance of interpersonal talk. This is no doubt due to the fact that interpersonal language does not add to the discourse in the sense that information-rich typical transactional language does, and many

interpersonal features lack semantic value, for example discourse markers, back channels, or the metaphorisation of certain concepts like *problem*. From a pragmatic perspective, however, they have much value best appreciated through a contemplation of their absence: imagine a meeting where the host did not back channel, or stuck rigidly to only to the printed agenda. The impression on the client would probably not be positive, bearing in mind issues of face (Goffman, 1967; Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Given each business is reliant on successful partnerships with other companies and individuals, such an approach could very well threaten the financial success of the company in question i.e. it may not achieve its primary transactional goal of making money.

## 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed a sample of the corpus data and proposed a provisional framework which will be explored and further developed in the next five chapters. Each of these chapters will contain a summary of the results from this chapter as a touchstone for the more detailed analyses and discussion the remaining chapters will involve. However, here is a brief summary of the main findings from this framework chapter:

- In terms of frequency, there were very few business-specific words among the most frequent 200 words in the sample. The list comprised mainly function words and delexicalised verbs, and it was very similar to CANCODE.
- The most important keywords were: the pronoun *we*, the modal forms *need, wanna, may*, the conjunctions *if* and *so*, plus certain nouns, e.g. *issue, problem*. There were some interesting differences between IM and EM.

- Certain clusters involving areas such as idiomatic language, modality, hypothesizing, and hedging occur frequently in the framework data.
- In terms of turn-taking, IM\MS meetings, which were all dyadic, tend to be directed by the Chair. IM\P meetings, unlike MS meetings seemed to have more equal length of turns, with more disagreement, overlapping and interruptions. EM, compared to IM, featured more attention to face, overlapping, diversion from the agenda, elaborate opening and closing sequences, and less interruption and conflict.
- Meetings can be seen as having clear beginnings and endings, as well as different stages within the meeting. There is evidence for various strategies and goals. These findings suggest that business meetings are categorisable as a genre.

In the next two chapters a thorough quantitative analysis of the full corpus will be conducted. This will involve a more detailed and extensive analysis than was possible in this chapter, and will allow for a comparison with the findings here. The chapters will specifically address the issue of the register of spoken business English used in meetings. In chapters seven, eight and nine, qualitative analyses of a sample corpus will take place, allowing for a more thorough exploration of certain lexicogrammatical items (e.g. modals and idioms), turn taking, and the generic structure of the business meeting. In so doing, all of the hypotheses will be addressed and a more fine-grained description of the linguistic properties of business meetings will be achieved.

# Chapter 5: Quantitative Analysis I

## 5.1 Overview and Rationale

The purpose of this chapter and the next is to discover and investigate the frequent, important words and groups of words in the data, and whenever possible to categorise them. This will involve conducting quantitative analyses on the full business meeting corpus, which totals over 900,000 words. The analysis will be at the lexicogrammatical level, and will allow us to see whether the initial claims made in the framework study are borne out in a much larger corpus. The findings will shed light on the notion of a register of spoken business English, and is a first step in realising the genre of the business meeting. Once again, the study will involve frequency lists and keyword comparisons of single words, as well as clusters and to a lesser extent looser collocations and colligations*.

Items and areas of import will be identified, categorised, and will be further analysed in this and the following chapters. I will use two programs for accessing and compiling the data lists: WordSmith Tools ©, and in the following chapter CIC Tools©. The former allows for a top-down method of analysis, whereby the software runs frequency counts and keyword searches of groups of texts or single texts, whereas the latter allows for a more bottom-up approach where we can start with a particular lexical item and see how it occurs in different contexts e.g. relationship of speakers. One of the areas to be explored in this chapter and through the whole thesis is the effect that the context can have on the occurrence of a particular lexical item. For example, does a

*'Colligation can be defined as 'the grammatical company a word keeps and the positions it prefers'; in other words, a word's colligations describe what it *typically* does *grammatically*' (Hoey 2000:234 – author's stress), although the term can be traced back to Mitchell (1956).

particular word or chunk feature differently in different types of meetings? As this chapter involves an automated quantitative study, the extent of the analysed item will remain at the lexicogrammatical level, but where areas of interest are found these will be further analysed and discussed in the succeeding chapters. Using both programs therefore permits us to gain an understanding of frequent and key items in the corpus, and allows for insight into the effect context e.g. meeting topic, or relationship of speakers, can play in their distribution.

The first part of this chapter will therefore involve a discussion of concepts and arguments relevant to lexicogrammar and corpus linguistics. Sinclair's 'idiom principle' (1991) will be discussed, as will the arguments for the importance of collocation, colligation and clusters. Following a brief review of the findings from the framework chapter to provide the basis for this chapter and to allow for comparisons between the mini-corpus and the total data, various automated searches will be conducted.

These two quantitative chapters will address the hypothesis that the English used in business meetings can be characterised as a register distinct from everyday English. In relation to the research questions outlined in the framework chapter, the two quantitative chapters will focus specifically on the following:

- Which lexicogrammatical items are frequent and 'key' to (or statistically more likely to occur in) business meetings?
- What is the nature and extent of the influence of certain contextual factors e.g. speaker relationship?
- What linguistic differences between EM and IM occur e.g. in terms of keyword and chunks?

## 5.2 Lexicogrammatical Theoretical Considerations

The following section provides a brief overview of some of the issues and concepts relevant to an understanding of the relationship between lexis and grammar, and how the relationship between the two can be interpreted as being much closer than traditional approaches would allow.

### 5.2.1 The open choice principle and the idiom principle

Traditional approaches to vocabulary and grammar have viewed them as separate entitities. Grammar is seen as consisting of patterns which are generative in that they provide the framework of language, while grammatically and semantically appropriate vocabulary can be inserted into these patterns. Words have synonyms, for example, that can be inserted without changing the overall meaning of the text. It is through this 'slot and filler' (Cook, 1998) approach that meaning is constructed. Dictionaries and grammars have been designed on this paradigm, as have various English language teaching materials. In its strongest form, grammar and meaning are seen as autonomous (Chomsky, 1957).

This approach has been termed by Sinclair the 'open-choice principle' (1991: 109), which he contrasts with the 'idiom principle'. He argues (1996b: 82) that while the former exhibits a 'terminological tendency' in that words have a fixed meaning in reference to the world, the latter exhibits a 'phraseological tendency': words tend to go together to form a phrase, and make meanings by their combinations. Idioms, fixed and semi-fixed phrases and collocations are evidence of the idiom principle and Sinclair (ibid) argues that examples of the open choice principle are relatively uncommon. They

would only occur when describing something rare, and because of this rarity the word would not have formed any collocations with other words or phrases.

A similar position is posited by Lewis (1993: vi) who states: 'the grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid; much language consists of multi-word 'chunks'.' In its place he proposes a 'Spectrum of Generative Power': some words are precise, semantically weighty and yet totally ungenerative in that they cannot combine with other words to create new meanings, whereas at the other end of the spectrum are words that are meaningless in isolation but combine freely with other words to create meaning.

The kernel of the Sinclair/Lewis argument is that words follow and create patterns. A word, once it appears in a text, has been affected by and in turn affects the other words and structures around it. This entails that form and meaning share a degree of interdependence that cannot be accounted for in the traditional 'slot and filler' approach. This has obvious implications for synonymy, and work by Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998: 100) shows how 'the actual patterns of use (of apparent synonyms) are strikingly different'. This area will be further explored below, and I will show how words which may appear synomymous at the semantic, collocational and even colligational level may display marked differences at the contextual level.

In a similar vein Sinclair (1996a:115) states, 'words enter into meaningful relations with other words'. The open choice principle does occur in that some words e.g. *haemoglobin* are found at the ungenerative end of the generative spectrum, but the findings of corpus linguistics call into question the way lexical and semantic studies have been dominated by single words (Sinclair, ibid). In a paper that strongly supports this

interpretation of language and provides empirical evidence based on their findings from the Bank of English corpus, Hunston, Francis and Manning (1997: 209) state 'all words can be described in terms of patterns; secondly, that words which share patterns also share meanings'. The role of corpora is that, from an empirical perspective, they can provide the quantitative evidence from which conclusions can be drawn (Stubbs, 2001).* Sinclair also points out that 'It is clear that words do not occur at random in a text, and that the open-choice principle does not provide for substantial enough restraints on consecutive choices.' (Sinclair 1991:110). He therefore discusses the role played by register in constraining such choices: see below.

### 5.2.2 Clusters

There is a wide range of terms which are roughly synonymous with the word clusters, including *chunks* (Lewis, 1993; De Cock, 2000), *lexical phrases* (Nattinger and deCarrico, 1992), *formulaic sequences* (Wray, 2002) and *lexical bundles* (Biber et al, 1999). Other synonyms include *prefabs*, *multi-word units*, *phrases*, and sometimes *idioms*. In this study the words clusters and chunks will be used interchangeably to mean any fixed or semi-fixed phrases which reoccur.

Fixed expressions and multi-word sentence frames seem to form a central component of real-time speech and fluency (see Wray 2002). Biber et al (1999) show how such chunks are extremely frequent in texts of all kinds, even though many such clusterings are not 'idiomatic' in the usual sense of the word i.e. syntactically fixed and semantically opaque. As mentioned above, Biber et al (1999) refer to these chunks as

*Although these conclusions have been questioned: see Widdowson (2000) for a discussion of why the lack of first person involvement in corpus data weakens its claims to shed light on meaning.

'lexical bundles' (see also Biber and Conrad 1999), and propose that these bundles can be seen as significant if they reoccur at least ten times per million words across a variety of texts (or 20 times according to Cortes, 2002. McCarthy and Carter, 2002, in analyzing longer 6 or 7 word chunks lower the limit to 4).

In these quantitative chapters considerable attention will be paid to clusters. This is because, like collocations and colligations, they are ubiquitous, and help to shed light on various higher level aspects of the genre in question. They are central to an understanding of the idiom principle:

> *The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments.* (Sinclair 1991:110)

Sinclair (1991) argues that while the idiom principle can help account for lexical choices at the collocational and colligational level, we need to take a more global view if we are to begin to account for the fact that there is considerable lexical constraint in authentic language use. Nelson (2000) argues that in terms of collocations in business English, there is much evidence of such constraints or limitations. A parallel position is proposed by Alejo & McGinity (1997), who argue that when we choose vocabulary we

> *... use the idiom principle, that is, we severely limit the choice of what comes next. This tendency is very important where business English is concerned, for in this discipline concordance and collocation are considerably limited.* (Alejo & McGinity 1997:216)

Nelson (2000) and Alejo & McGinity (op cit.) therefore conclude that one of the characteristics of Business English may be the constraints of collocations. That is, certain

collocations will be highly unlikely in a business context, whereas others may be far more frequent than in other registers or genres. This position will be further explored in relation to business meetings.

### 5.2.3 Frequency clusters vs. key clusters

Both Nelson's corpus study and this study regard keywords (single items which occur with statistical significance in one corpus rather than another) as more telling than raw frequency counts, as this shows which words and their collocations are more significant in the field of business English compared to everyday English, even though their overall frequency may not be particularly high. This is not to argue that pure frequency is uninformative: if we accept that the genre constrains language choices, and that within a particular genre words can have constrained uses or meanings specific to that genre e.g. *partner* as used in business, then frequent single words and frequent clusters in particular should not be assumed to either have the same meaning or, more significantly for this study, the same use in a different context.

This argument is in contrast to that proposed by Simpson (2004), who analyses those chunks in spoken academic discourse which occur more frequently than in her reference corpora*.She reasons that by excluding those chunks which are shared across many registers, we can gain a deeper pragmatic understanding of the register under scrutiny by looking only at those chunks which occur more frequently. If we accept that the frequency of such clusters can be explained by the fact that they are key structuring devices which are genre-sensitive (Oakey 2002), then, I argue, their frequency in other

*These corpora are: The Corpus of Spoken Professional American English, the Bank of English National Public radio subcorpus and the Switchboard Corpus. She states that 'in order to find which expressions are

genres is somewhat irrelevant. If a cluster occurs frequently in our genre, then it can help us understand that genre. We should not assume that it fulfils the same function in a different genre.* Pure frequency lists rather than comparative frequency lists of clusters will therefore be analysed in this study.

Oakey (ibid.), in comparing the three separate genres of social, medical and technical writing, shows how frequently recurring clusters such as *it has been (shown/observed/argued/etc) that*, which are used to bring in outside evidence in written texts, are distributed differently according to the genre in question. It is therefore something of the character of the business meeting as a distinct genre, and also whether generic differences exist in relation to the IM/EM distinction. Clusters may also help us shed light on the notion of Communities of Practice (Wenger 1998) by reflecting the institutionalised wordings and frames that have become at least to a degree pragmatically specialised within the genre in question. Clearly though, clusters, like keywords and frequency lists, can only take us so far in developing an understanding of the points in question, and to see further we need to apply qualitative techniques such as analyses of extended extracts (McCarthy and Handford, 2004).

typical of academic speech in particular, and not just high frequency expressions in any speech genre, I first looked for the expressions which were significantly more frequent in MICASE than in all three of the comparison corpora' (2004: 44). Her reference to 'any speech genre' is somewhat questionable, given that the three corpora are rather specialized and cannot be regarded as representative of, say, everyday speech (indeed she herself acknowledges that the rationale for choosing these reference corpora was that they were the only ones available at the time).

*The point here is, while a formulaic sequence may be syntactically the same in different genres, it may well serve a different pragmatic function. For example, McCarthy and Carter (2002) in their study of clusters in CANCODE state that *at the end of the day* performs the discourse marking function of summarising, whereas *to be honest with you* performs a hedging function. In CANBEC however the two clusters seem to be often largely synonymous, with *at the end of the day* also frequently performing a hedging/indirectness function, coming before or after potential FTAs.

### 5.2.4 Semantic prosody

Another concept which will help unearth the pragmatic uses of particular items is semantic prosody. It expresses something close to the function of the item, is attitudinal, falls on the pragmatic side of the semantic/pragmatic continuum, and links meaning to purpose (Sinclair, 1996b). One way to understand semantic prosody is to imagine that items have emotional or attitudinal collocations. *To be honest* often precedes something negative, for example *To be honest I don't like her. To be honest I think it's great* would be far more unusual, except if we were disagreeing with what our interlocutor had just said, and if we accept that disagreements are dispreferred (Sacks et al, 1974), then at the local level such a negative notion still applies. Sinclair (op cit.) argues that once we arrive at the semantic prosody of an item, we have probably come to its lexical boundary. This concept will become more fruitful once we look at the items in question in context, for instance concordance lines and longer extracts.

## 5.3 The Quantitative Data.

A review of the framework chapter findings, followed by frequency, keyword* and

*Some words have been deleted from these keyword lists, in particular certain groups of nouns. The main reason for this is that this study is primarily concerned with the linguistic choices speakers make. Where there is no alternative, as in the case of proper nouns, these have been removed. Examples include names of products, people's names and company names. Names of months however have not been removed because they indicate that specific timeframe references are more common in business than in everyday English. Other nouns to have been removed are nouns which have a general, everyday meaning but which have a constrained, industry-specific meaning, for example 'prop' (as in mechanical prop), and 'rack' (as in computer rack for electronically storing memory). This second category is somewhat fuzzier than the first in that there are many words which would fit this description, but which I have left on the lists. 'Servers' are an example. The reasoning here is that words like 'servers' are no longer specific to one type of industry despite having a business, in this case IT, meaning. Computers are so commonplace now that this word appears in virtually any type of industry or organisation. In contrast, the removed words have usually appeared on the lists because of their repeated use in one particular business. The categorisation is fuzzy and is open to question. It would be more accurate to view these words on a cline rather than as either/or choices. Therefore the original keyword lists have been included in the Appendix 2.

cluster lists of CANBEC, produced using Wordsmith Tools, will be outlined and then analysed in this section. Because of practical constraints not all the potentially interesting items can be discussed, and therefore in this thesis items are selected on the basis of either having been discussed in other domains of discourse but not sufficiently in business-meeting literature, or of being key or frequent and potentially categorisable, particularly in terms of pragmatic function.

### 5.3.1 Summary of quantitative findings from framework study

#### 5.3.1.1 Contextual factors of meetings

In the framework study all the data (approximately 100,000 words) were recorded in one company (ISP Provider), and of the nine meetings, two were with other companies (one ISP Reseller and one IT Sales company). The nine meetings covered the following topics: sales, marketing, logistics, HRM (Human resource management), technical and procedural. In the main study all the topics from the database are covered. All meetings from the framework study are with the Sales, Technical or Upper Management departments. Meetings involve between two and five participants. All speakers except one are British English native speakers (the other is from Canada, English native speaker). In relation to company size: the host company was size 3 (with between 100 and 1000 employees), and both guest companies were 4 (with between 11 and 99 employees). In this quantitative study all sizes of company are analysed.

Seventeen of the 27 speakers are of level one within their respective companies (i.e. director level/equivalent). In the main study, there is a much wider range of levels within from the companies. It should be re-emphasised, however, that meetings do

usually involve the upper levels of management (Boden, 1994). IM are either CD\P (colleagues from different departments, peer) or CS\MS (colleagues from the same department, manager/subordinate). There are no CD\MS (colleagues from different departments, manager/subordinate) or CS\P (colleagues from the same department, peers). The main study includes all categories.

In short, there is a relatively small amount of variation in company type and size, relationship of speakers and meeting topic in the framework study, but in the main study there is considerable variation. One question which will be addressed in part over the next two chapters is to what extent the greater range of data and of contextual variables affects the findings in comparison to the framework study.

#### 5.3.1.2 Linguistic features: *keywords, frequency lists* and *clusters*

The keyword comparisons used the whole of CANCODE as a reference corpus. In the main study I will use only the combined Socialising and Intimate subcorpora (SOCINT) as a reference corpus (about 2.7million words). The former involves 'social or cultural activities entered upon by participants but not in professional or intimate settings' whereas the latter involves 'family members or close friends in private, nonprofessional settings.' (McCarthy, 1998: 10). As such, the reference corpus does not now include the Pedagogical, Professional or Transactional categories from CANCODE (see McCarthy 1998: 9-10 for a fuller explication of the CANCODE corpus). This is because these three categories share much in common with business meetings in terms of their all being examples of institutional and or overtly 'transactional' discourse, and therefore strictly speaking not instances of everyday English. SOCINT however is arguably the most

representative corpus in existence of what could be considered conversational English. This change to the reference corpus should allow for a clearer description of the differences between everyday English and business English at the single-word level.

Below is a list of the main framework keyword findings:

- Pronouns: *we* is key, *I you* are not
- Backchannels: *hmm, sure, okay,*
- Modals and semi-modals: *gonna, need, wanna*
- Conjunctions: *so, if*
- Nouns: unsurprisingly a high level of business-related nouns
- Fillers: *erm*
- Hedges: *guess, kind (of)*
- IM/EM differences (such as pronouns, backchannels, modals of obligation, nouns)
- Negative keyness: mainly Anglo-saxon in origin, relating to home, family and religion
- Word frequency: framework list was very similar to CANCODE, with 43 out of the 50 top items the same.
- Clusters: many interpersonal features, involving the keywords e.g. *we need to, I mean I,* as well as more usual everyday chunks - *a lot of.*

The main findings of the framework chapter at the lexicogrammatical level were as follows. In terms of pure frequency, there were very few business-specific words among the most frequent 200 words. The list comprised mainly function words and delexicalised verbs, and it was strikingly similar to CANCODE. The most important keywords were:

the pronoun *we*, the modal forms *need, wanna, may*, the conjunctions *if* and *so*, plus certain nouns, e.g. *issue, problem*. There were some striking differences between IM and EM. Certain clusters involving areas such as idiomatic language, modality, hypothesizing, and hedging occur frequently in the framework data.

## 5.5 Wordsmith Tools Quantitative Results

This section will outline and briefly discuss the frequency, keyword and cluster lists produced using Wordsmith Tools. At the end of the section some of the items are placed in a wider context by looking at, for example, comparative frequencies of clusters and single words in the form of graphs.

### 5.5.1 Frequencies

This subsection looks at the most frequent words in CANBEC, and the most frequent words in the reference corpus SOCINT, initially in rank order lists. 'Frequency' refers to the total number of occurrences in the corpus, and percentage refers to the proportion of the corpus the item in question represents. For example, *the* accounts for 3.76% of all the words in CANBEC, and it occurs 32,032 times.

**Table 5.1: All meetings frequency list**

| N | Word | Freq. | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | THE | 32,032 | 3.76 |
| 2 | AND | 19,650 | 2.31 |
| 3 | TO | 18,403 | 2.16 |
| 4 | I | 16,494 | 1.94 |
| 5 | A | 16,318 | 1.92 |
| 6 | YOU | 15,869 | 1.86 |
| 7 | IT | 15,553 | 1.83 |
| 8 | YEAH | 14,927 | 1.75 |
| 9 | THAT | 14,290 | 1.68 |
| 10 | WE | 12,078 | 1.42 |
| 11 | OF | 11,479 | 1.35 |
| 12 | IN | 9,011 | 1.06 |
| 13 | IS | 8,660 | 1.02 |
| 14 | ER | 8,059 | 0.95 |
| 15 | SO | 7,983 | 0.94 |
| 16 | IT'S | 7,655 | 0.90 |
| 17 | BUT | 6,882 | 0.81 |
| 18 | ON | 6,867 | 0.81 |
| 19 | FOR | 6,210 | 0.73 |
| 20 | HAVE | 5,905 | 0.69 |
| 21 | ERM | 5,731 | 0.67 |
| 22 | KNOW | 5,697 | 0.67 |
| 23 | BE | 5,541 | 0.65 |
| 24 | THEY | 5,484 | 0.64 |
| 25 | IF | 5,362 | 0.63 |
| 26 | DO | 5,153 | 0.61 |
| 27 | WELL | 4,958 | 0.58 |
| 28 | THAT'S | 4,826 | 0.57 |
| 29 | JUST | 4,806 | 0.56 |
| 30 | WHAT | 4,631 | 0.54 |
| 31 | GOT | 4,586 | 0.54 |
| 32 | THIS | 4,305 | 0.51 |
| 33 | ONE | 4,300 | 0.51 |
| 34 | WITH | 4,291 | 0.50 |
| 35 | NO | 4,168 | 0.49 |
| 36 | AT | 4,091 | 0.48 |
| 37 | NOT | 4,029 | 0.47 |
| 38 | RIGHT | 3,990 | 0.47 |
| 39 | ALL | 3,987 | 0.47 |
| 40 | WAS | 3,813 | 0.45 |
| 41 | THERE | 3,745 | 0.44 |
| 42 | THINK | 3,736 | 0.44 |
| 43 | CAN | 3,686 | 0.43 |
| 44 | ARE | 3,497 | 0.41 |
| 45 | AS | 3,409 | 0.40 |
| 46 | THEN | 3,229 | 0.38 |
| 47 | OR | 3,193 | 0.38 |
| 48 | GET | 3,186 | 0.37 |
| 49 | DON'T | 3,151 | 0.37 |
| 50 | THEM | 3,080 | 0.36 |

**Table 5.2: SOCINT frequency list**

| N | Word | Freq. | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I | 85,005 | 3.16 |
| 2 | THE | 78,837 | 2.93 |
| 3 | AND | 74,619 | 2.78 |
| 4 | YOU | 72,542 | 2.70 |
| 5 | IT | 59,328 | 2.21 |
| 6 | YEAH | 54,976 | 2.05 |
| 7 | A | 52,843 | 1.97 |
| 8 | TO | 49,615 | 1.85 |
| 9 | THAT | 40,123 | 1.49 |
| 10 | OF | 34,487 | 1.28 |
| 11 | WAS | 31,884 | 1.19 |
| 12 | IN | 31,465 | 1.17 |
| 13 | LAUGHS | 26,316 | 0.98 |
| 14 | OH | 26,047 | 0.97 |
| 15 | IT'S | 25,934 | 0.96 |
| 16 | KNOW | 25,300 | 0.94 |
| 17 | MM | 24,116 | 0.90 |
| 18 | NO | 22,026 | 0.82 |
| 19 | BUT | 21,710 | 0.81 |
| 20 | LIKE | 21,185 | 0.79 |
| 21 | THEY | 20,608 | 0.77 |
| 22 | HE | 20,416 | 0.76 |
| 23 | WELL | 20,172 | 0.75 |
| 24 | IS | 20,101 | 0.75 |
| 25 | ER | 19,490 | 0.73 |
| 26 | SO | 19,054 | 0.71 |
| 27 | ON | 18,411 | 0.69 |
| 28 | HAVE | 18,127 | 0.67 |
| 29 | WE | 17,804 | 0.66 |
| 30 | JUST | 17,488 | 0.65 |
| 31 | WHAT | 17,029 | 0.63 |
| 32 | DO | 16,588 | 0.62 |
| 33 | RIGHT | 15,408 | 0.57 |
| 34 | ALL | 15,363 | 0.57 |
| 35 | ERM | 15,138 | 0.56 |

| 36 | THERE | 14,943 | 0.56 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 37 | DON'T | 14,511 | 0.54 |
| 38 | GOT | 14,475 | 0.54 |
| 39 | FOR | 14,084 | 0.52 |
| 40 | SHE | 13,968 | 0.52 |
| 41 | THIS | 13,784 | 0.51 |
| 42 | THAT'S | 13,498 | 0.50 |
| 43 | BE | 13,155 | 0.49 |

| 44 | NOT | 13,138 | 0.49 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 45 | ONE | 12,667 | 0.47 |
| 46 | THINK | 11,863 | 0.44 |
| 47 | THEN | 11,807 | 0.44 |
| 48 | WITH | 11,253 | 0.42 |
| 49 | AT | 10,901 | 0.41 |
| 50 | IF | 10,756 | 0.40 |

The top fifty words of both the CANBEC* and SOCINT lists, and indeed the top 100, are all delexicalised words**. This can be explained in terms of the idiom principle: the most frequent words in language have virtually no meaning or semantic weight but many collocates, whereas the least frequent words have considerable semantic weight but few collocations. The two lists up to the 150 word point are very similar, and 44 of the top 50 are the same. If we look further down the list past this artificial cutoff point we can see that of these six words, three are found in the top 60. As was stated in the framework chapter, this lends credence to Nelson's (2000) assertion that general English is akin to the 'Mother' of business English.

While the two lists are very similar, a closer examination reveals certain differences in position. *She* is the 40th most frequent word in SOCINT, but is only rank 176 in CANBEC. An obvious interpretation of this suggests that women do not feature in

*It should also be noted that the frequency lists for the framework chapter and the main study virtually replicate each other.

**Also, the top ten most frequent words account for around 20% (20.63) of the whole word count. In other words, one out of every five words in the corpus will be accounted for by one of the following: *the, and, to, I, a, it, you, it, that, we*. This figure is slightly less than the SOCINT corpus (22.42).

meetings which typically involve upper and middle management compared to in everyday life, although it does not require a corpus to tell us that. Although *he* is also less frequent in CANBEC than in SOCINT, the difference is not so stark (22: 55). The top end of the lists also show differences: whereas *I* is the most frequent word in SOCINT, it does not occur until fourth place in CANBEC. *You* and *We* also occupy different places. Pronouns will be discussed further below.

*I* is the most frequent word in SOCINT, but *the* occupies first place in CANBEC, which is unsurprising when we consider that meetings are called to discuss things i.e. nouns. The first noun, *time* (which frequently occurs in chunks, O'Keeffe et al, in press), does not actually occur however until #84 (although *one* occurs at #33, it is usually a number). There are more nouns in the top 200 of CANBEC compared to SOCINT (10: 7), and the type of nouns are also different. Whereas SOCINT includes vague nouns (*things, stuff, people*), the nouns in CANBEC are more specific and concrete as we might expect (*year, week, meeting*). These differences will be discussed further in the keyness section.

Another interesting difference concerns *really* and *actually*. In SOCINT *really* is at #51, while *actually* is at #111, and is over twice as frequent. In CANBEC, however, *actually* is slightly more common than *really* and they do not occur until #100 and #103 respectively. This suggests that the *actually*, which tends to collocate with more formal, Latin-based words, unlike *really* which collocates with more Anglo-Saxon words (Handford, unpublished manuscript), has a relatively more formal semantic prosody. Such differences show how participants frame a more formal atmosphere in business

meetings compared to everyday speech. This etymological tendency is also noticeable in terms of negative keyness (see framework chapter).

### 5.5.2 Keywords

We will now look at a rank order keyword list* to see what are the keywords of CANBEC (using SOCINT as a reference corpus). As mentioned in the framework chapter, keyword searches are a sharper instrument compared to frequency lists, and can provide greater insights into a corpus. They are also indicative of a particular genre (Scott 1999). Whereas frequency lists can show us the relative order of frequency and statistical frequency within a single corpus, keyword searches can show us which words are unusually high in comparison to some norm. In the present study the 'norm' is the SOCINT corpus. We can then see which words characterise CANBEC, in that we can see which items are more significant in the corpus compared to everyday English. This can be a first step in characterising the genre of the business meeting.

*WordSmithTools computes the keyness of an item by comparing its frequency in the smaller of the word lists (in this case CANBEC) with its frequency in the larger, reference corpus (SOCINT), and cross-tabulates these results in terms of predicted occurrences versus actual occurrences.

**Table 5.3: All meetings keywords**

| N | WORD | FREQ. | MEET.LST % | FREQ. | SOCINTIM.LST % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | WE | 12,078 | 1.42 | 17,804 | 0.66 |
| 2 | WE'VE | 2,752 | 0.32 | 2,039 | 0.08 |
| 3 | OKAY | 2,951 | 0.35 | 3,296 | 0.12 |
| 4 | WE'RE | 2,376 | 0.28 | 2,313 | 0.09 |
| 5 | HMM | 527 | 0.06 | 0 | |
| 6 | THE | 32,032 | 3.76 | 78,837 | 2.93 |
| 7 | CRANE | 460 | 0.05 | 10 | |
| 8 | CUSTOMER | 495 | 0.06 | 29 | |
| 9 | LIFT | 653 | 0.08 | 164 | |
| 10 | NEED | 1,812 | 0.21 | 1,851 | 0.07 |
| 11 | CRANES | 377 | 0.04 | 1 | |
| 12 | ORDER | 560 | 0.07 | 189 | |
| 13 | MEETING | 594 | 0.07 | 234 | |
| 14 | SALES | 380 | 0.04 | 42 | |
| 15 | THOUSAND | 731 | 0.09 | 417 | 0.02 |
| 16 | HUNDRED | 944 | 0.11 | 776 | 0.03 |
| 17 | ORDERS | 345 | 0.04 | 42 | |
| 18 | IF | 5,362 | 0.63 | 10,756 | 0.40 |
| 19 | WHICH | 2,101 | 0.25 | 3,099 | 0.12 |
| 20 | WILL | 1,776 | 0.21 | 2,454 | 0.09 |
| 21 | CUSTOMERS | 307 | 0.04 | 40 | |
| 22 | PER | 452 | 0.05 | 188 | |
| 23 | PRICE | 395 | 0.05 | 139 | |
| 24 | MAIL | 281 | 0.03 | 38 | |
| 25 | BUSINESS | 522 | 0.06 | 298 | 0.01 |
| 26 | LIFTS | 239 | 0.03 | 16 | |
| 27 | IS | 8,660 | 1.02 | 20,101 | 0.75 |
| 28 | MONTH | 503 | 0.06 | 303 | 0.01 |
| 29 | WE'LL | 1,085 | 0.13 | 1,286 | 0.05 |
| 30 | STOCK | 289 | 0.03 | 67 | |
| 31 | ISSUE | 287 | 0.03 | 73 | |
| 32 | PRODUCT | 224 | 0.03 | 26 | |
| 33 | CENT | 329 | 0.04 | 131 | |
| 34 | PROBLEM | 660 | 0.08 | 611 | 0.02 |
| 35 | FOR | 6,210 | 0.73 | 14,084 | 0.52 |
| 36 | US | 1,418 | 0.17 | 2,126 | 0.08 |
| 37 | SERVER | 161 | 0.02 | 3 | |
| 38 | SO | 7,983 | 0.94 | 19,054 | 0.71 |
| 39 | VEHICLE | 191 | 0.02 | 23 | |
| 40 | ER | 8,059 | 0.95 | 19,490 | 0.73 |
| 41 | POINT | 738 | 0.09 | 838 | 0.03 |
| 42 | TYRE | 159 | 0.02 | 10 | |
| 43 | LIST | 344 | 0.04 | 199 | |
| 44 | COMPANY | 527 | 0.06 | 487 | 0.02 |
| 45 | INFORMATION | 339 | 0.04 | 204 | |
| 46 | SYSTEM | 272 | 0.03 | 124 | |
| 47 | TERMS | 277 | 0.03 | 131 | |
| 48 | CELLAR | 144 | 0.02 | 9 | |
| 49 | TWO | 2,366 | 0.28 | 4,642 | 0.17 |
| 50 | TO | 18,403 | 2.16 | 49,615 | 1.85 |

Compared to the frequency list for CANBEC, we can see some considerable differences. I have categorized the nouns in the list as follows:

- business-specific nouns: customer, meeting, sales, business
- nouns with constrained business meaning (i.e. they have a general, wider meaning outside of the business context): service, support, team, stock
- nouns with industry or departmental-specific constrained meaning: Web, servers, install
- time nouns: January, month, moment
- functional business nouns*: problem, solution, issue, process, point

Certain Interpersonal features:

- (semi-) modal verbs: will, need, can, gonna, gotta
- pronoun: we, they
- backchannels: okay, hmm, yep
- fillers: er, erm
- unlike the framework data - no noticeable hedges (but see external keylist below)

Other grammatical categories

- Conjunctions: So, if, which, whatever
- Determiners: the, which, whatever

As might be expected, this list is similar to the framework keyword list. As will be shown below, many of these single keywords form chunks, as well as strong collocations and

*These are nouns whose meanings are not dissimilar to those in everyday use. However, their collocations, semantic prosody and use may be different.

colligations, so their semantic and pragmatic value will be better understood from this lexicogrammatical perspective.

### 5.5.2.1 Analysis of *Issue* and *Problem*

'Issue' and 'problem' occur very high on the keyword list (#31 and 34 respectively), and as such play a far more frequent role than they do in everyday speech. They can be described as (near-) synonyms (e.g. the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). This section will explore in what respects they may or may not be regarded as such from a lexicogrammatical perspective.

Most frequent collocates of *issue* (contents of brackets indicate position of collocate in relation to the node e.g. L1 is the word immediately preceding the keyword):

the (L1)

that (L4)

and (R1)

not (L2)

yeah (R2)

it's (L3)

that's (L2)

but (L5)

with (R1)

you (R4)

Collocates of problem:

the (L1)

that(L4)

with (R1)

it's (L3)

yeah (R2)

you (R4)

have (L2)

that's (L2)

not (L2)

and (L4)

As can be seen, the two lists of collocates are strikingly similar, not just in that nine of the ten words are shared (only *have* – problem, and *but* – issue are different), but also the positions of the collocations. Both nouns form the following patterns:

*Collocations:*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| It's | not | the | issue/problem |
| the | issue/problem | with | |
| that's | the | issue/problem | |
| that's | not | the | issue/problem |

Yeah (backchannel)

Colligation:

Speaker one: anaphoric deictic pronoun + (negative adverb *not*) + definite article + node

Speaker two: affirmative informal response token *yeah*

Hunston (2002: 48) states 'words with similar meanings tend to share patterns.' This lends strong weight to the argument that these two words are in fact synonymous because at the colligational and collocational levels they are virtually identical, apart from the verb *have* which competes for position L2 among the collocates of *problem*. If we take a formal, decontextualised view of language and argue that meaning is contained within the words themselves then it would be reasonable to expect that these words their collocations and colligations would occur in a similar fashion across different business contexts. This seems logical if we accept that their meanings are essentially the same. Their similar positions on the keyword list also suggests that within a business context they share much in common.

However, when these two words are compared in terms of specific contexts, most interestingly the power relationship of the speakers and the actual topic of the meeting, we see that there are significant differences in their use. This will be further explored below.

### 5.5.2.2 Analysis of *If*

*If* also occurs very high on the keyword list (#18), and will be shown to fulfill a variety of functions in business meetings. This section looks at the collocations, colligations and some of the most frequent clusters involving *if*.

Collocates of *if*:

you (R1)

the (R4)

and (L1)

that (L1)

yeah (L2)

it's (R1)

they (R1)

but (L1)

know (L1)

can (R2)

Collocations:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yeah | and/but | if | you/they/it's |
| | that | if | you |

Top 10 verb forms that take R2/3 positions after *if*:

can

have

get

got

want

say

look

could

are

gonna

Typical collocations are:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yeah | and | if | you | can/could | have/get/want/say | the |
| | | | | have/get/want/got | the | |

Colligations:

(affirmative informal response token) + conjunction + node + pronoun + verb

relative pronoun + node + pronoun + verb

*Yeah* can be a back channel from the other speaker, the speaker taking up the turn, or the speaker using it within a turn. *We* also frequently collocates with *if*. Grammatically this is interesting because eight out of the ten verbs are in the present tense, further reinforcing the notion that much business talk involves present and particularly future situations (which the high frequency of simple past forms in the negative keyword list would also suggest – see Appendix 2). By hypothesizing about possible future problems,

businesspeople hope to prevent them through the creation of irrealis modes (McCarthy and Handford, 2004). These and other functions of *if* also performed in business communication will be discussed below and in subsequent chapters.

**Clusters of *If***

Below is a table of the top four-word clusters involving *if*, which provide a snapshot of those in the corpus. On the left half there are the results from IM, with the total number of occurrences and the calculated density figures (calculated by multiplying the number of occurrences by 1000 and then dividing that number by the total in the relevant corpus or sub-corpus). On the right half are the equivalent results for EM.

**Table 5.4: Four-word clusters of *If***

| Chunk | IM total | Density | EM total | Density |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I don't know if | 81 | 0.12 | 11 | 0.046 |
| If we can get | 49 | 0.073 | 17 | 0.072 |
| If you look at | 45 | 0.07 | 9 | 0.038 |
| You know if you | 29 | 0.04 | 10 | 0.042 |
| I think if we | 28 | 0.041 | 10 | 0.042 |
| If you want to | 26 | 0.039 | 10 | 0.042 |
| I mean if you | 24 | 0.035 | 7 | 0.03 |
| See if we can | 24 | 0.035 | 8 | 0.034 |
| If we look at | 21 | 0.0031 | 9 | 0.0037 |

Following Biber and Conrad's (1999) proposal that 10 occurrences per million words is significant, we can see that all of these clusters are very significant: the least frequent chunk *I mean if you* in EM occurs 30 times per million words, and the most frequent *I don't know if* in IM occurs 120 times. As the figures show, many of these chunks occur fairly equally in EM and IM. Exceptions are *I don't know if* and *if you look at,* which are more than twice as frequent in IM. Interestingly, *if we look at* is more frequent in EM, which again is explicable in terms of the display of collaboration and convergence. These three chunks, along with the fragment *see if we can* are often not strictly conditionals, but instead are employed to issue face-protecting 'politeness directives' (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 757), for example pointing participants to some aspect of the agenda or presentation. In the single item keyword lists *if* ranks #18 in EM and 19 in IM.

### 4.2.2 Internal and external keywords

**Table 5.5 Internal meeting keywords**

| N | WORD | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | WE | 1.31 |
| 2 | WE'VE | 0.30 |
| 3 | HMM | 0.07 |
| 4 | CUSTOMER | 0.06 |
| 5 | WE'RE | 0.26 |
| 6 | OKAY | 0.32 |
| 7 | SALES | 0.05 |
| 8 | THE | 3.65 |
| 9 | MEETING | 0.08 |
| 10 | THOUSAND | 0.09 |
| 11 | NEED | 0.19 |
| 12 | WHICH | 0.26 |
| 13 | MAIL | 0.04 |
| 14 | HUNDRED | 0.11 |
| 15 | PER | 0.06 |
| 16 | PRICE | 0.05 |
| 17 | CUSTOMERS | 0.04 |
| 18 | BUSINESS | 0.07 |
| 19 | IF | 0.61 |
| 20 | CENT | 0.05 |
| 21 | ORDER | 0.05 |
| 22 | ISSUE | 0.04 |
| 23 | MONTH | 0.06 |
| 24 | SERVER | 0.02 |
| 25 | WILL | 0.19 |
| 26 | PROBLEM | 0.08 |
| 27 | WE'LL | 0.12 |
| 28 | STOCK | 0.03 |
| 29 | IS | 1.00 |
| 30 | LIST | 0.04 |
| 31 | ORDERS | 0.03 |
| 32 | STEP | 0.03 |
| 33 | ER | 0.95 |
| 34 | INSTALL | 0.02 |
| 35 | INFORMATION | 0.04 |
| 36 | US | 0.16 |
| 37 | PRODUCT | 0.02 |
| 38 | CLIENT | 0.02 |
| 39 | CONTRACT | 0.03 |
| 40 | JANUARY | 0.03 |
| 41 | COST | 0.04 |
| 42 | FOR | 0.70 |
| 43 | SUPPORT | 0.02 |
| 44 | SO | 0.91 |
| 45 | DATABASE | 0.01 |
| 46 | WEB | 0.02 |
| 47 | SERVICE | 0.03 |
| 48 | MARKETING | 0.02 |
| 49 | NETWORK | 0.02 |
| 50 | BE | 0.65 |
| | | |

**Table 5.6 External meeting keywords**

| N | WORD | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | WE | 1.76 |
| 2 | WE'VE | 0.41 |
| 3 | THE | 4.13 |
| 4 | OKAY | 0.42 |
| 5 | WE'RE | 0.34 |
| 6 | ORDERS | 0.09 |
| 7 | NEED | 0.28 |
| 8 | ORDER | 0.11 |
| 9 | COMPANY | 0.11 |
| 10 | CUSTOMER | 0.05 |
| 11 | WILL | 0.26 |
| 12 | PRODUCT | 0.04 |
| 13 | TERMS | 0.06 |
| 14 | HMM | 0.03 |
| 15 | MARKETS | 0.03 |
| 16 | SYSTEM | 0.06 |
| 17 | KILOS | 0.03 |
| 18 | IF | 0.68 |
| 19 | PROCESS | 0.04 |
| 20 | BATCH | 0.03 |
| 21 | TEST | 0.06 |
| 22 | BULK | 0.03 |
| 23 | FOR | 0.82 |
| 24 | CUSTOMERS | 0.04 |
| 25 | STOCK | 0.04 |
| 26 | HUNDRED | 0.11 |
| 27 | IS | 1.08 |
| 28 | SO | 1.03 |
| 29 | DATE | 0.05 |
| 30 | STAINLESS | 0.02 |
| 31 | OUR | 0.18 |
| 32 | MATERIAL | 0.04 |
| 33 | SUPPLY | 0.03 |
| 34 | AUGUST | 0.04 |
| 35 | CAN | 0.52 |
| 36 | WE'LL | 0.14 |
| 37 | THOUSAND | 0.07 |
| 38 | US | 0.19 |
| 39 | PACKS | 0.02 |
| 40 | TWO | 0.32 |
| 41 | MHM | 0.15 |
| 42 | PRODUCTION | 0.03 |
| 43 | SERVERS | 0.02 |
| 44 | PRESSES | 0.02 |
| 45 | MONTH | 0.06 |
| 46 | THREE | 0.23 |
| 47 | GUESS | 0.05 |
| 48 | COMPANIES | 0.03 |
| 49 | BASED | 0.03 |
| 50 | COVER | 0.04 |

One of the central hypotheses of this thesis is that there are significant and consistent differences between EM and IM. This position is supported by the results of the above keyword comparisons between the reference corpus (SOCINT) and the two subcorpora of IM and EM. While many of the words are the same in the top 50 of each list as should be expected, almost half are not (23 are different). There are also some interesting contrasts in terms of relative frequency. By seeing which words occur more commonly in IM compared to EM in relation to everyday English, we can take the first steps in building a picture of how differences between external and internal business meetings manifest themselves linguistically.

*We* is the top keyword on both lists. However, as was the case in the framework study, *we*, *we've* and *we're* are relatively more frequent in EM than IM, with *we* being over 0.4% more frequent in EM. This can be explained by the use of corporate *we*. This includes inclusive corporate *we*, but more importantly exclusive corporate *we*, where one representative of a company is talking about his or her own company and excluding the representatives of the other company in the meeting. Such a reference is by definition not possible in IM.

Differences in the relative frequency of some of the nouns reflect, unsurprisingly, what topics tend to be discussed in IM compared to EM: *sales* (#7: #145 respectively); *mail* (#13: 177); *business* (#18: #88); *information* (#35: #102), and *client* (#38: not in top 200). We could say that in EM, people do the topics that are discussed in IM. Some other differences in terms of business nouns may be less obvious: *issue* (#22: #65); *problem* (#26: #94), and *price* (#16: #90). One obvious explanation is that these words have potentially negative connotations, and EM often involve more attention to the relational

aspects of communication than IM. This means that employees are more likely to talk about and label things as *problems* in IM than in EM. These items will be discussed further below.

In the framework study it was noted that *hmm* was very frequent in IM, and did not occur at all in the framework EM. Here, as we should expect with ten times as much data with a much greater variety of contextual factors, the results are more complex: while *hmm* does feature quite highly in EM (#14), it is relatively more than twice as frequent in IM, and is #4. This suggests that it is still much more common in IM than EM, but as will be shown below, the type of IM is also a key factor.

In terms of modal forms there are some interesting results. Unlike the framework study, *need* is actually slightly more key in EM (#7: #11). Once again, when we look at the contextual factors below we will see that various factors also influence the results and the illocutionary force of the item in question. While *we need to* is more frequent in EM, *you need to* is far less frequent in EM. *Can* is more common in EM than IM (#35: # 126), as is *will* (#12: #25), although *we'll* is slightly more common in IM. Further down the lists *gonna* is at # 88 in EM, but at #101 in IM. Perhaps more surprisingly *gotta* is at #136 in EM, but does not feature in the top 200 words in IM at all.

As has been mentioned, the keyness of *if* is roughly equivalent in both lists. Another conjunction, *so*, is also equivalent in terms of keyness, featuring at #28 on both lists, although it can also be an intensifier. 'Which' however is much more key in IM (#73: #12), of which 57%, compared to 63% for EM, form non-restrictive relative clauses (Tao and McCarthy, 2001). When we look at the longer lists (Appendix 2), the most striking feature of both lists is that most items are business-related nouns, for example

*machine*, *invoice*, *packaging*, or items that can be nouns or verbs *copy*, *lead*, *cost* and *check*. In terms of hedging and intensifying adverbs there are some differences: *basically* is less key in EM (#199: #170), but *obviously* is more key (#103: #157). *Effectively* is at # 76 in EM, but does not feature in the IM list.

### 5.5.3 Clusters

This section includes the most frequent two, three, four, five, six and seven word chunks in CANBEC. All repetitions signaling hesitations e.g. *if you if you* have been removed.

**Table 5.7: Two-word chunks**

| Rank | Cluster | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | YOU KNOW | 3,494 | 0.41 |
| 2 | I THINK | 2,675 | 0.31 |
| 3 | OF THE | 2,150 | 0.25 |
| 4 | I MEAN | 1,983 | 0.23 |
| 5 | IN THE | 1,878 | 0.22 |
| 6 | ON THE | 1,864 | 0.22 |
| 7 | AT THE | 1,437 | 0.17 |
| 8 | TO BE | 1,412 | 0.17 |
| 9 | I DON'T | 1,387 | 0.16 |
| 10 | TO DO | 1,355 | 0.16 |
| 11 | IF YOU | 1,309 | 0.15 |
| 12 | AND THEN | 1,237 | 0.15 |
| 13 | HAVE TO | 1,134 | 0.13 |
| 14 | WE'VE GOT | 1,100 | 0.13 |
| 15 | TO THE | 1,095 | 0.13 |
| 16 | FOR THE | 1,073 | 0.13 |
| 17 | NEED TO | 1,043 | 0.12 |
| 18 | WE CAN | 1,041 | 0.12 |
| 19 | IT WAS | 946 | 0.11 |
| 20 | AND THE | 944 | 0.11 |
| 21 | AND I | 939 | 0.11 |
| 22 | YOU CAN | 919 | 0.11 |
| 23 | SEC AND | 912 | 0.11 |
| 24 | SORT OF | 912 | 0.11 |
| 25 | HAVE A | 885 | 0.10 |
| 26 | IF WE | 823 | 0.10 |
| 27 | AS WELL | 808 | 0.09 |
| 28 | ALL THE | 807 | 0.09 |
| 29 | THIS IS | 781 | 0.09 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | DON'T KNOW | 780 | 0.09 |
| 31 | THAT WE | 757 | 0.09 |
| 32 | IT'S NOT | 756 | 0.09 |
| 33 | GOT A | 743 | 0.09 |
| 34 | IT'S A | 735 | 0.09 |
| 35 | TO GET | 724 | 0.09 |
| 36 | WHICH IS | 719 | 0.08 |
| 37 | WITH THE | 719 | 0.08 |
| 38 | WE HAVE | 704 | 0.08 |
| 39 | ISN'T IT | 703 | 0.08 |
| 40 | BUT I | 702 | 0.08 |
| 41 | A LOT | 701 | 0.08 |
| 42 | IS THAT | 692 | 0.08 |
| 43 | WE NEED | 680 | 0.08 |
| 44 | IT IS | 656 | 0.08 |
| 45 | DO IT | 649 | 0.08 |
| 46 | DO YOU | 640 | 0.08 |
| 47 | A BIT | 636 | 0.07 |
| 48 | IS IT | 632 | 0.07 |
| 49 | GOING TO | 630 | 0.07 |
| 50 | THE OTHER | 622 | 0.07 |

**Table 5.8: Three-word clusters**

| Rank | Cluster | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I DON'T KNOW | 578 | 0.07 |
| 2 | A LOT OF | 478 | 0.06 |
| 3 | AT THE MOMENT | 472 | 0.06 |
| 4 | WE NEED TO | 427 | 0.05 |
| 5 | I DON'T THINK | 349 | 0.04 |
| 6 | THE END OF | 341 | 0.04 |
| 7 | I MEAN I | 245 | 0.03 |
| 8 | A BIT OF | 220 | 0.03 |
| 9 | AND I THINK | 217 | 0.03 |
| 10 | BE ABLE TO | 217 | 0.03 |
| 11 | IN TERMS OF | 217 | 0.03 |
| 12 | ONE OF THE | 216 | 0.03 |
| 13 | TO DO IT | 216 | 0.03 |
| 14 | AT THE END | 207 | 0.02 |
| 15 | I THINK IT'S | 207 | 0.02 |
| 16 | WE HAVE TO | 207 | 0.02 |
| 17 | END OF THE | 206 | 0.02 |
| 18 | I THINK WE | 185 | 0.02 |
| 19 | YOU KNOW THE | 181 | 0.02 |
| 20 | HAVE A LOOK | 174 | 0.02 |
| 21 | WE'VE GOT A | 174 | 0.02 |
| 22 | BUT I THINK | 166 | 0.02 |
| 23 | I THINK THE | 166 | 0.02 |
| 24 | AND A HALF | 165 | 0.02 |
| 25 | A COUPLE OF | 153 | 0.02 |
| 26 | YOU NEED TO | 152 | 0.02 |
| 27 | THIS IS THE | 147 | 0.02 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | GOING TO BE | 141 | 0.02 |
| 29 | TO DO THAT | 141 | 0.02 |
| 30 | TO HAVE A | 140 | 0.02 |
| 31 | THE FACT THAT | 139 | 0.02 |
| 32 | I THINK THAT'S | 134 | 0.02 |
| 33 | I THINK IT | 132 | 0.02 |
| 34 | YOU HAVE TO | 132 | 0.02 |
| 35 | YOU KNOW I | 132 | 0.02 |
| 36 | LOOK AT IT | 130 | 0.02 |
| 37 | A LOOK AT | 129 | 0.02 |
| 38 | TO LOOK AT | 129 | 0.02 |
| 39 | IF WE CAN | 128 | 0.02 |
| 40 | THE OTHER THING | 127 | 0.01 |
| 41 | I NEED TO | 126 | 0.01 |
| 42 | YOU KNOW WE | 123 | 0.01 |
| 43 | IT WOULD BE | 120 | 0.01 |
| 44 | OUT OF THE | 119 | 0.01 |
| 45 | SO I THINK | 119 | 0.01 |
| 46 | THERE IS A | 119 | 0.01 |
| 47 | YOU KNOW IT'S | 118 | 0.01 |
| 48 | A LITTLE BIT | 117 | 0.01 |
| 49 | IT WAS A | 117 | 0.01 |
| 50 | ER YOU KNOW | 116 | 0.01 |

**Table 5.9: Four-word clusters**

| Rank | Cluster | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | AT THE END OF | 178 |
| 2 | THE END OF THE | 177 |
| 3 | HAVE A LOOK AT | 98 |
| 4 | END OF THE DAY | 97 |
| 5 | A BIT OF A | 83 |
| 6 | I DON'T KNOW IF | 77 |
| 7 | AT THE SAME TIME | 68 |
| 8 | I DON'T KNOW WHAT | 64 |
| 9 | TO BE ABLE TO | 58 |
| 10 | TWO AND A HALF | 58 |
| 11 | A LOT OF THE | 53 |
| 12 | WE NEED TO DO | 51 |
| 13 | THANK YOU VERY MUCH | 50 |
| 14 | I DON'T KNOW WHETHER | 49 |
| 15 | THE OTHER THING IS | 48 |
| 16 | IF WE CAN GET | 47 |
| 17 | IN TERMS OF THE | 47 |
| 18 | I DON'T KNOW HOW | 44 |
| 19 | TO MAKE SURE THAT | 43 |
| 20 | IF YOU LOOK AT | 41 |
| 21 | THAT AND THE OTHER | 40 |
| 22 | THAT WE NEED TO | 40 |
| 23 | THIS THAT AND THE | 40 |
| 24 | BY THE END OF | 39 |
| 25 | YOU WANT ME TO | 39 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 26 | A LOOK AT IT | 38 |
| 27 | AND HAVE A LOOK | 38 |
| 28 | DO YOU WANT ME | 38 |
| 29 | WE NEED TO GET | 38 |
| 30 | BE ABLE TO DO | 37 |
| 31 | THE END OF THIS | 37 |
| 32 | WE NEED TO BE | 37 |
| 33 | I THINK YOU KNOW | 36 |
| 34 | THERE'S A LOT OF | 36 |
| 35 | I DON'T THINK WE | 35 |
| 36 | AND WHAT HAVE YOU | 34 |
| 37 | I MEAN I DON'T | 34 |
| 38 | TO HAVE A LOOK | 34 |
| 39 | AND THIS THAT AND | 33 |
| 40 | I WOULD LIKE TO | 33 |
| 41 | SO THAT WE CAN | 33 |
| 42 | THE BACK OF THE | 33 |
| 43 | I DON'T WANT TO | 32 |
| 44 | I THOUGHT IT WAS | 32 |
| 45 | ONE OF THE THINGS | 32 |
| 46 | THAT SORT OF THING | 32 |
| 47 | I MEAN I THINK | 31 |
| 48 | I THINK WE'VE GOT | 31 |
| 49 | QUITE A LOT OF | 31 |
| 50 | THE REST OF THE | 31 |

**Table 5.10: Five-word clusters**

| Rank | Cluster | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | AT THE END OF THE | 116 |
| 2 | THE END OF THE DAY | 88 |
| 3 | THIS THAT AND THE OTHER | 40 |
| 4 | AND THIS THAT AND THE | 33 |
| 5 | DO YOU WANT ME TO | 32 |
| 6 | HAVE A LOOK AT IT | 30 |
| 7 | AND A HALF PER CENT | 27 |
| 8 | TO HAVE A LOOK AT | 23 |
| 9 | TWO AND A HALF PER | 23 |
| 10 | YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN | 22 |
| 11 | I THINK WE NEED TO | 21 |
| 12 | THE END OF THE YEAR | 20 |
| 13 | AND HAVE A LOOK AT | 18 |
| 14 | I MEAN I DON'T KNOW | 17 |
| 15 | THE END OF THE MONTH | 17 |
| 16 | AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME | 16 |
| 17 | I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE | 16 |
| 18 | FROM MY POINT OF VIEW | 15 |
| 19 | FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW | 15 |
| 20 | I DON'T KNOW IF YOU | 15 |
| 21 | IF YOU LOOK AT THE | 15 |
| 22 | THERE ARE A LOT OF | 15 |
| 23 | WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO | 15 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 24 | GO AND HAVE A LOOK | 14 |
| 25 | HAVE A LOOK AT THAT | 14 |
| 26 | I THINK IT WOULD BE | 14 |
| 27 | I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU | 14 |
| 28 | TO BE HONEST WITH YOU | 14 |
| 29 | AND THAT SORT OF THING | 13 |
| 30 | BE ABLE TO DO IT | 13 |
| 31 | BUT AT THE SAME TIME | 13 |
| 32 | BY THE END OF THE | 13 |
| 33 | BY THE END OF THIS | 13 |
| 34 | NO NO NO NO NO | 13 |
| 35 | ONE OF THE THINGS THAT | 13 |
| 36 | THE END OF THE WEEK | 13 |
| 37 | AND A HALF THOUSAND POUNDS | 12 |
| 38 | AND ALL THAT SORT OF | 12 |
| 39 | HAVE A LOOK AT THE | 12 |
| 40 | IT'S JUST A CASE OF | 12 |
| 41 | NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT | 12 |
| 42 | TO BE ABLE TO DO | 12 |
| 43 | WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO | 12 |
| 44 | WHAT WE NEED TO DO | 12 |
| 45 | ALL THAT SORT OF STUFF | 11 |
| 46 | AN HOUR AND A HALF | 11 |
| 47 | AS FAR AS I KNOW | 11 |
| 48 | AT THE BEGINNING OF THE | 11 |
| 49 | BUT AT THE END OF | 11 |
| 50 | I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S | 11 |

**Table 5.11: Six-word clusters**

| Rank | Cluster | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | AT THE END OF THE DAY | 86 |
| 2 | AND THIS THAT AND THE OTHER | 33 |
| 3 | TWO AND A HALF PER CENT | 23 |
| 4 | BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF | 10 |
| 5 | A HELL OF A LOT OF | 9 |
| 6 | BUT AT THE END OF THE | 9 |
| 7 | DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN | 9 |

**Figure 5.1: Number of clusters at or above 10 per million**

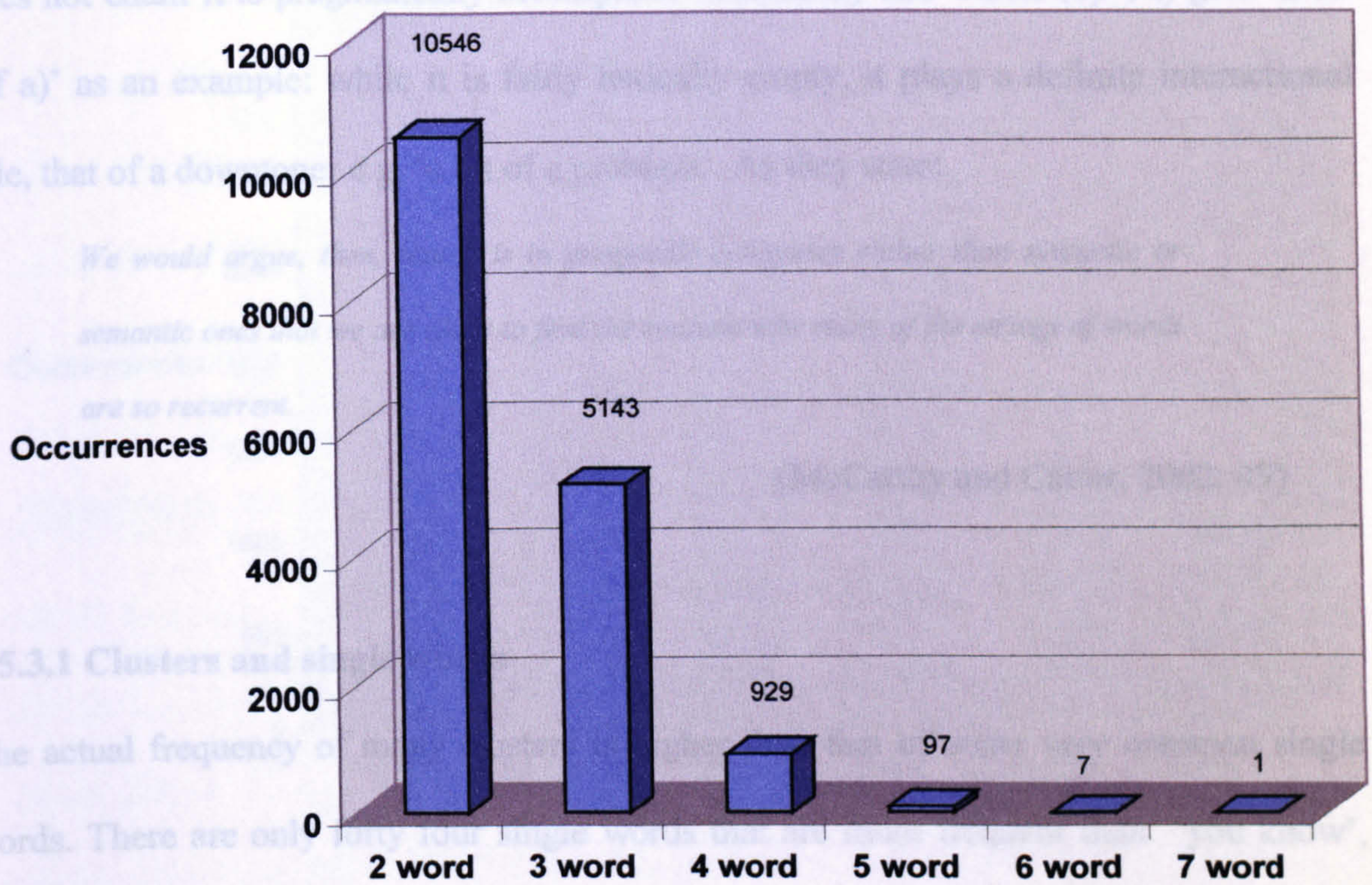



Figure 5.1 shows the total number of clusters of a certain length which occur ten times or more in a million words: this means that there are only seven 6-word clusters which do so. As the graph shows, the frequency of these clusters reduces considerably in relation to the number of words in the cluster. While this is partly because there are many frequent two-word clusters e.g. *you know, I think* that display semantic and syntactic integrity, a glance at the list shows that many so-called two-word clusters are both semantically and syntactically fragmented i.e. they 'they do not constitute complete syntactic elements at phrasal or clausal levels' (McCarthy and Carter, 2002: 10), or they form part of the

longer clusters. Examples include *and then*, and *sort of* and *of the*. As McCarthy and Carter (ibid.) argue, however, a chunk being semantically or syntactically incomplete does not entail it is pragmatically incomplete.* McCarthy and Carter (op cit) give 'a bit (of a)' as an example: while it is fairly lexically empty, it plays a definite interactional role, that of a downtoner e.g. 'a bit of a problem'. As they state:

> *We would argue, then, that it is in pragmatic categories rather than syntactic or semantic ones that we are likely to find the reasons why many of the strings of words are so recurrent.*
>
> (McCarthy and Carter, 2002: 49)

### 5.5.3.1 Clusters and single words

The actual frequency of many clusters is higher than that of some very common single words. There are only forty four single words that are more frequent than 'you know', and Figure 5.2 compares some two word clusters with some everyday words.

*Indeed, Hopper (1998) argues that from an emergent grammar viewpoint, incomplete lexical fragments can help show us how meaning is created in real time. This position is coherent with a CA perspective of how meaning unfolds in the local context. It also begs the question should repetitions in the form of hesitations be analysed in their own right as pragmatically meaningful clusters. I have decided to not to, but it is noticeable that chunks containing certain words seem to involve a lot of hesitations e.g. *if* (*you if you*).

**Figure 5.2: Two-word clusters and single words**

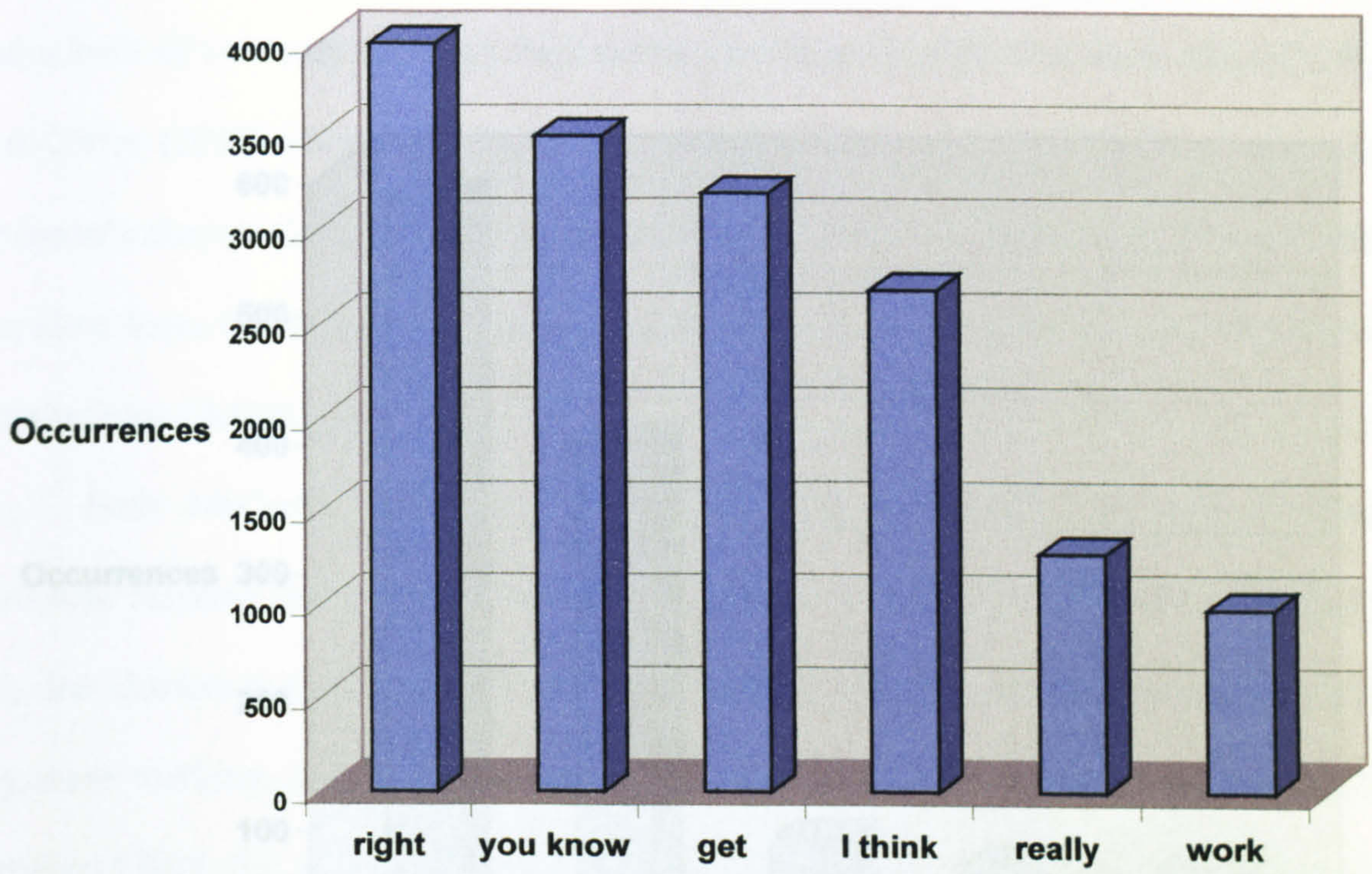
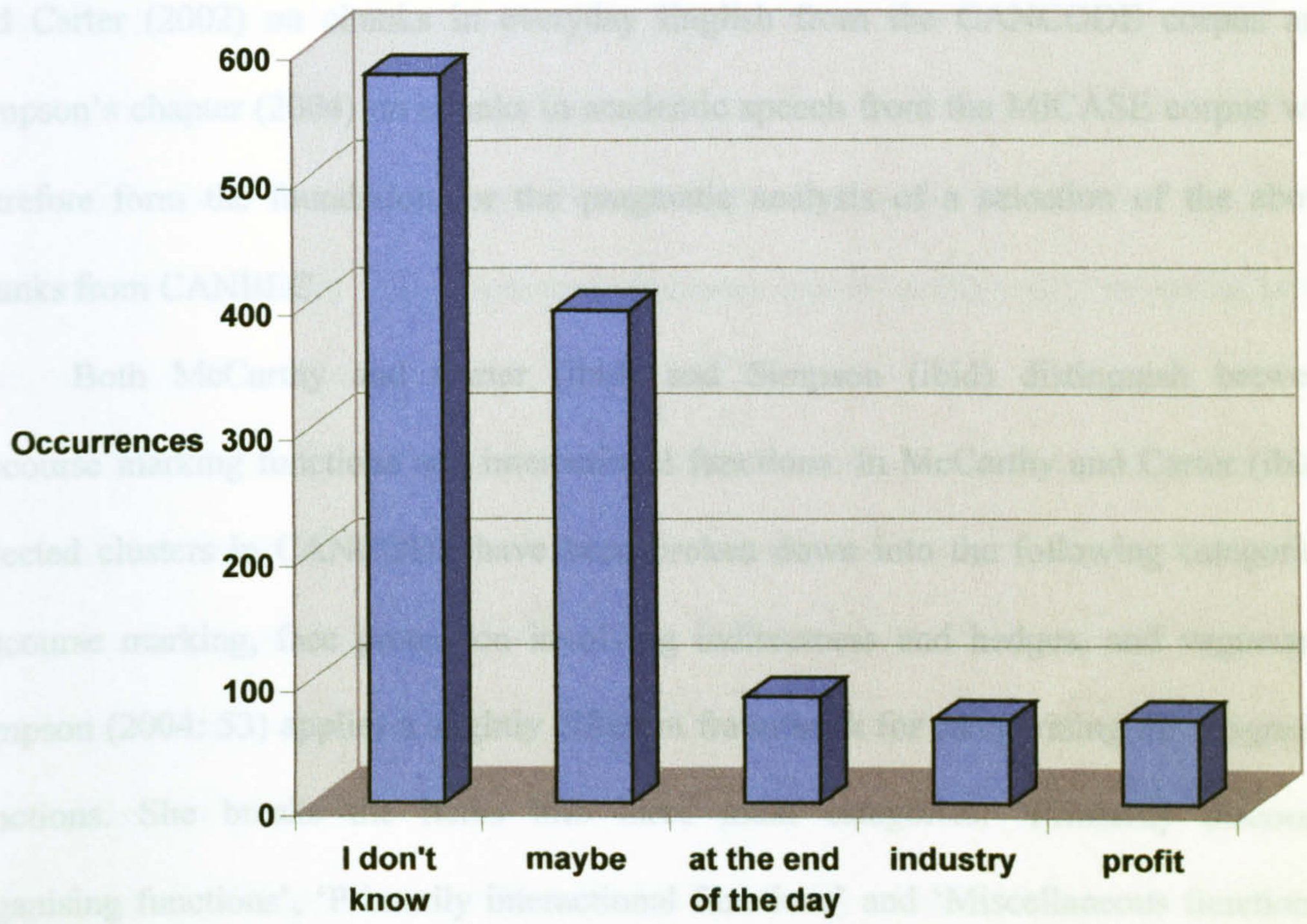



Figure 5.3 below compares some longer clusters with some high frequency words and some common business words, and from these graphs we can see that clusters form a central part in the makeup of our lexicon. A pragmatic interpretation of many of these features explains their frequency and their role in discourse (McCarthy and Carter, 2002; Simpson, 2004).

**Figure 5.3: Longer chunks and single words**




### 5.5.4 Analysis of clusters

#### 5.5.4.1 Categorisation methodology

McCarthy and Handford (2004) posit that spoken business English may have certain features in common and display key differences with everyday English and with spoken academic English. As in everyday English, in spoken business English interlocutors pay close attention to face needs, and spoken business English is an example of institutional

discourse of which spoken academic English is an example. In relation to the latter, we can expect similarities in terms of transactional speaker goals, differences in hierarchy and a level of formality different from that in everyday English. The work of McCarthy and Carter (2002) on chunks in everyday English from the CANCODE corpus and Simpson's chapter (2004) on chunks in academic speech from the MICASE corpus will therefore form the foundation for the pragmatic analysis of a selection of the above chunks from CANBEC.

Both McCarthy and Carter (ibid) and Simpson (ibid) distinguish between discourse marking functions and interactional functions. In McCarthy and Carter (ibid), selected clusters in CANCODE have been broken down into the following categories: discourse marking, face protection involving indirectness and hedges, and vagueness. Simpson (2004: 53) applies a slightly different framework for categorizing the pragmatic functions. She breaks the items into three main categories: 'Primarily discourse organising functions', 'Primarily interactional functions' and 'Miscellaneous functions'. The last category includes spatial organizers such as *on the left* (which McCarthy and Carter (ibid) do not include as pragmatic markers), and hedges. The exclusion of hedges in the interactional category is noticeable, because in spoken business English (McCarthy and Handford op cit) and in everyday English (Carter and McCarthy, 1995; McCarthy, 1998; McCarthy and Carter, 2002) hedges are interpreted as a fulfilling an interactional function. Perhaps the reason for Simpson's categorization is that what tends to be hedged in academic speech is the accuracy or certainty of the information/academic topic in question, rather than the downplaying of an FTA. In spoken business English, for example, we often see expressions like *it's a bit of a problem*, and this can be explained

in terms of the face needs of the interlocutor, whereas in academic speech hedges like *this record seems more or less accurate* cannot be explained in terms of face needs (unless the author of the record was present at the time of speaking). Thus such a hedge may not be fulfilling an interactional function, unless perhaps the speaker is protecting him/herself against possible challenge. She also includes vagueness markers such as *and stuff like that* in the miscellaneous category, whereas it can be argued (Evison and Handford, 2006) that such markers in business and academic speech usually play an interactional role.

While McCarthy and Carter (ibid) include the category of face and politeness, I have not included it as a functional category because such a category is, it could be argued, is of a pragmatically 'higher' level e.g. the level of speaker goals, and can help to explain justification for using various pragmatic markers such as indirectness or hedging expressions, or the choice of a modal expression, or a vague marker. Some categorisation, which accounts for chunks involving modals forms of obligation, necessity and possibility, is required given their frequency in CANBEC. The frequency of such verbs was signalled in the keyword comparisons, and when we remember that the world of work and meetings in particular often involve managers and staff discussing responsibilities and tasks and decisions, the need for such a category becomes apparent. This category is referred to as 'deontic modality'. As there are also a number of chunks relating to epistemic modality, I have included another category under that name.

Another interpersonal category which I have added is 'hypothesising/speculating'. *If* is one of the most important words in CANBEC, and it forms many chunks. While the more specific functions of *if* will be discussed in the following chapters, a broad category

will allow for an insight into the pervasiveness and power of the word in meetings. One final category called 'marking future communication' has been added, as some clusters seem to fulfill this function e.g. *...come back and see us (next week).* In adding these categories I have attempted to account as comprehensively as possible for the raw quantitative results from CANBEC itself. Undoubtedly other possible categorisations of the chunks would be feasible, and it is also highly likely that I have neglected to categorise more items through oversight or ignorance. Notwithstanding this, the categorisation as it stands is still more comprehensive than any other in the relevant literature.

McCarthy and Carter also refer to chunks which describe the content world, which are also present in CANBEC. These chunks 'are less pragmatically motivated' (ibid: 19) in that they are referential in function rather than being interactive, and often refer to time (at the end of the month), or to amount (two and a half thousand), or very occasionally to noun-phrases e.g. in CANBEC *Health and Safety*, or *single wheel lift.* The infrequency of chunks involving nouns is noticeable and telling, lending strong support to the notion that formulaic sequences provide the 'glue' to our communication, and make fluent speech possible: if we regard nouns as tending to represent the content of the inner world of thought and the outer world of empirical reality, such chunks may organize this content and reflect our attitudes to the content and to our interlocutors. A further group of chunks which appear in CANCODE and CANBEC are those which are best understood propositionally rather than pragmatically e.g. *there is a.*

Whereas McCarthy and Carter (ibid) have one large category for discourse markers, Simpson further breaks this category down into: focusers, introducing examples;

meta-discourse expressions; enumerators; temporal sequencers; contrast and comparison, linking; contrast and comparison, linking; cause-effect markers; and summarizers. In my model, I have removed introducing examples, and contrast and comparison markers. This is because these functions are not as central to business communication as they are to spoken academic English, hence there is a lack of clusters in CANBEC which fulfill these functions. In addition, I have created the following new categories: reformulators; clarifying own stance; checking/showing shared knowledge/understanding; seeking clarification; evaluating, and marking future communication.

These new categories containing a selection of clusters account for many of the pragmatic functions in the corpus. Both Simpson and McCarthy and Carter acknowledge that many features can be seen to fulfill many functions, and the same appears true of business chunks. For the categorization I have adopted Simpson's 'Primarily discourse marking functions' while making the alterations outlined above, and McCarthy and Carter's interactional pragmatic functions, again with the discussed changes. This approach seems to effectively account for the range and systematicity of the chunks in CANBEC. While chunks can show us what functions are being conducted in specific contexts, it is essential to remember that there are many functions and strategies in communication that do not fit so neatly into a phrase containing a few words. Many functions are carried out and realised over longer stretches of dialogue, and sometimes over many turns (McCarthy, 1998).

#### 5.5.4.2 Categories

Below is a selection of the most frequent clusters which have been placed in the categories discussed above.

***Primarily discourse marking functions***

**Focusers**

The problem is (49)

In terms of (217)

The fact that (139)

One of the things that (13)

**Enumerators, temporal sequencers**

And then (1,237)

In the first place (14)

To begin with (11)

**Linking**

But at the same time (9)

The other thing is (48)

And then (1,237)

The only other thing (9)

**Cause-effect markers**

The reason why (17)

And that's why (17)

**Summarisers, reformulators**

In other words (10)

So I think (119)

So I mean (49)

***Primarily interactional functions***

**Clarifying own position**

From my point of view (19)

From our point of view (19)

I guess for me (18)

What we're trying to do (17)

I mean (2,675)

That's what I'm saying (14)

I'm not saying that (9)

But what I'm saying (9)

**Checking/showing shared knowledge/understanding**

You know what I mean (22)

Do you know what I mean (9)

You know (3,494)

What you're saying is (13)

**Seeking clarification**

What do you think (16)

What do you mean (13)

Do you mean (18)

**Explaining/demonstrating**

As you can see (10)

I can tell you (16)

If you look at (45)

**Indirectness**

Do you want (me) (to) (107)

I don't know if/whether (77)

I don't know what (64)

I don't know how (44)

What do you think (15)

I was just thinking (9)

But I think (166)

**Hedging**

From my point of view (19)

From our point of view (19)

I think (2,675)

I Guess (151)

Sort of (912)

A bit (of a) (636)

I don't know (578)

I don't think (349)

To be honest with you (14)

I'll be honest with you (14)

I'll be straight up (10)

As far as I know (11)

**Vagueness**

A couple of (19)

And things like that (18)

Or something like that (25)

A lot of (35)

And this that and the other (33)

Et cetera (54)

And everything else (15 EM)

And so forth (32)

The rest of it (9)

The other thing (127)

All that sort of stuff (11)

That type of thing (11)

**Deontic modality**

We can (1041)

You can (919)

We need (680)

We should (257)

We need to (427)

We have to (207)

You need to (152)

You have to (132)

I need to know (12)

I think you should (9)

We could do with (18)

**Epistemic modality**

You could (341)

We could do that (9)

We can't do that (9)

We might be able to (11)

We should be able to (12)

**Hypothesising/Speculating**

If we can (128)

If you (1309)

If I (284)

So if (254)

But if (273)

**Evaluating**

A waste of time (9)

one of those things (9)

a hell of a lot of (9)

That's the other thing (9)

**Marking future communication**

Sit down and (21)

Sit down with (13)

Come back to me (13)

Come back to us (9)

## 5.6 Summary

In comparison to the framework chapter, while there is a lot of overlap with the main corpus in terms of frequencies, keyword lists and differences between EM and IM, as expected the full corpus displays greater variety and allows for conclusions that are simultaneously more qualified and yet more forceful. In the next quantitative chapter, a selection of the items shown in this chapter to be particularly interesting e.g. *problem* and *issue, we/you need to* and *if* will be explored. The extent to which various contextual factors, for example the relationship of the speakers or meeting topic, influence the use of the item in question will be explored. At the end of the chapter there is an extensive summary which ties together the findings of both the quantitative chapters.

# Chapter 6: Quantitative Analysis II

## Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight the role that context plays in determining the occurrence, meaning and use of a lexicogrammatical feature. Using CIC Tools ©, it is possible to analyse the dispersal of a particular item according to some of the database categories e.g. the relative frequency of *we* or *we need to* according to the type of company, the power relationship of the speakers in the meeting in question, or the topic of the meeting. While still utilizing quantitative techniques, this allows for a far more contextual and fine-grained level of analysis than is possible with Wordsmith Tools. While one of my primary foci is still comparing external and internal meetings, these statistics should further narrow the description, and highlight areas which can be further explored in the following qualitative chapters. The specific research questions addressed here are set out at the beginning of the last chapter.

Items have been chosen from both the keyword lists and the cluster lists. They include pronouns, modal forms, hedges, vague terms, key nouns, and back channels. Items have been chosen which promise to illuminate the corpus, while remaining within the boundaries imposed by the fact that this chapter is quantitative, and therefore analysis will not go beyond the lexicogrammatical level. Some items have been chosen because they are key and are obviously central to communication in meetings e.g. *if* and *we*, others because their keyness or comparative keyness is not straightforward e.g. *hmm* and *sure, problem* and *issue.* In the previous chapter I developed a framework for categorising a selection of some the most frequent clusters in the corpus, and in the second half of this chapter seven chunks will be further explored. In the next chapter

some of the features studied here will be categorised and explored in longer extracts, for instance *problem, issue,* and *need,* thereby connecting the quantitative results with more fine-grained qualitative analyses. In order to save space, explanations and discussions of the individual items in this chapter are very succinct, and at the end of the chapter there is a full summary and discussion of the findings.

## 6.1 Calculation of the items in CIC Tools

CIC Tools computes the occurrence of a particular item, by calculating its projected frequency per million words. In other words, if the category in question (say 'marketing') is made up of 50,000 words in total and the said item appears once, then the calculated frequency per million words will be 20.This is calculated in accordance with the following equation:

$$A \times \frac{1{,}000{,}0000}{Y} = \text{calculated frequency}$$

Where A = the actual number of occurrences of the item in the particular category (e.g. the word *we* occurs 2868 in EM), and Y = the total number of words in the particular category.

Unfortunately, because of the way the header information was entered into the CIC database, there was some duplication of categories. For example, in the 'Relationship of Speakers' category, there are separate 'calculated frequency' results for CS\MS and MS\CS even though they refer to the same category. These two sets of results therefore needed combining to develop an accurate picture. This was achieved by

breaking the figures down in the following way, by firstly calculating each category's 'Y' value (i.e. the total number of words in the particular category):

$$Y = \frac{A \times 1{,}000{,}000}{\text{calculated frequency}}$$

Once this had been calculated for each of the replicated categories, their 'calculated frequency' could be worked out. This involved adding the two 'Y' scores together, the two A scores together, and then recalculating the 'calculated frequency':

$$(A + A') \times \frac{1{,}000{,}0000}{Y + Y'} = \text{calculated frequency}$$

## 6.2 Analysis of Items

A variety of items will now be analysed by looking at their frequency according to the relationship of the speakers, the topic of the meeting, and the company to which the employee who used the item belonged. While the 'relationship of speakers' category is felt to be a valid one, it should be remembered that the distinctions are not as absolute as the categorisation suggests. There is often overlap within the same meeting, for example while the majority of communication may appear to be on a peer level, if the interlocutors are actually of a different hierarchical level within the company then there may be shifts to a more manager/subordinate-type communication at certain stages or when discussing certain topics. As discussed in the data chapter, however, this method of distinguishing between speakers appears to be more meaningful than merely reporting the speakers' relative rank in the company.

In relation to the topic, this usually overlaps with the department to which the speakers belong. However this is not the case in terms of, say, strategy as there is usually no strategy department within a company (strategic meetings usually comprise the CEO/MD and a group of executives), and in EM where there is often a mix of representatives from different departments. As noted before, most meetings do not involve only one topic, but may for example involve sales and marketing, or technical and procedure. In terms of EM, when analyzing the company category, CIC Tools is able to distinguish whether the item in question is used by the host company or the guest company. Also, in meetings between colleagues from different departments (CD) it would not be possible by definition to list one department.

### 6.2.1 Selected keywords

#### 6.2.1.1 *We*

*We* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of Speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| EM | 28682 |
| CD\P | 22911 |
| CS\P | 22344 |
| CS\MS | 17805 |
| CD\MS | 17709 |

(EM = external meetings; CD\P = colleagues from different departments, peers; CS\P = colleagues from the same department, peers; CS\MS = colleagues from same department, manager/subordinate; CD\MS = colleagues from different departments, manager subordinate. All categories apart from the first are internal meetings.)

*We* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Logistics | 27249 |
| Strategic | 26931 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 25918 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Production | 25362 |
| Sales | 21750 |
| Procedure | 20884 |
| Marketing | 19757 |
| Technical | 18295 |
| HRM (Human Resource Management) | 12788 |

*We* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| ISP reseller | 34445 |
| Pharmaceutical | 33041 |
| Magazine | 29302 |
| Bicycle manufacturers | 29001 |
| Telecommunications | 27179 |
| Banking | 26760 |
| Hotel | 24136 |
| Foam manufacturers | 24024 |
| Vehicle manufacturers | 23938 |
| Hydraulics manufacturers | 22551 |
| Tyre manufactures | 22377 |
| IT sales | 21140 |
| Brewer | 20787 |
| Pub chain | 20710 |
| Museum | 20536 |
| ISP provider | 15912 |
| Accountant | 13476 |
| Financial adviser | 11476 |

As noted earlier, *we* is more frequent in EM than IM. Interestingly, within IM it occurs more frequently in meetings with peer communication (P) rather than in those involving manager/subordinate communication (MS). It makes intuitive sense that in P-type meetings *we* would be used more, as these meetings often involve decision-making and problem-solving, and as such may require a high level of collaboration and perhaps convergence. MS in contrast would tend to involve more information exchange about

technical or procedural matters. It is noticeable that these two topics involve less use of *we* than, say, strategic or logistics meetings which would by definition entail a high level of cooperation.

There is an interesting clustering of manufacturing businesses, which also occurs with some other items (see below). The one that is different is the bicycle manufacturer, but this company's data is all from EM. The same is true of the magazine and the ISP reseller data. Similarly a lot of the pharmaceutical data is from EM, in which they discuss logistics. The ISP provider data in contrast has many internal CS/MS meetings, involving technical matters. A possible reason for the low frequency in the accountant's and the financial adviser may be that they are both very small companies, with less than five employees each, and that they are in meetings with long-term partners or clients. In such contexts, using corporate *we* may sound slightly absurd. This interpretation is supported by the frequency figures for *I*: the financial adviser has the highest frequency out of all the companies (38,613), and the accountant's is fifth highest on the list, with a frequency of 31934. Therefore we can infer that in the smallest companies, *I* may be more appropriate than *we* in some circumstances, although more research on this is necessary.

#### 6.2.1.2 *Hmm*

*Hmm* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of Speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| CS\MS | 161 |
| CS\P | 94 |
| EM | 37 |
| CD\P | 16 |
| CD\MS | O |

*Hmm* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| ISP provider | 209 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 85 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 83 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 82 |
| Hotel | 63 |
| Foam manufacturer | 56 |

*Hmm* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Technical | 147 |
| Procedural | 138 |
| HRM | 113 |
| Marketing | 77 |
| Sales | 70 |
| Strategic | 49 |
| Production | 13 |

In the framework study *hmm* was found to occur very frequently in IM and not at all in EM. This led me to suggest that the backchannel *hmm*, in comparison to *sure* is far more noncommittal, and therefore within EM where we can expect more attention to face needs (given the importance of the relationship in such 'front office' communication) the less involved *hmm* would be often inappropriate. This finding was apparently questioned by the keyword results from the main study, where even though *hmm* occurred more in IM(#3), it was still at #14 on the EM keyword list. The contextual data above, however, manages to clarify the picture somewhat.

*Hmm* occurs far more frequently in IM involving CS than either EM or CD. Where *hmm* does occur in EM, it only occurs in the same three manufacturing companies. In other EM involving pharmaceutical, IT, consultancy, magazine, pub chain, brewer and other manufacturing companies, it does not occur at all. The ISP provider is

the host company which provided the data for the framework study, and is the company which has by far the highest frequency of *hmm*, which helps explain what now appears to be the skewed high frequency of *hmm* in the framework chapter. Interestingly though, EM involving this company do not feature the use of *hmm* at all.

#### 6.2.1.3 *Sure*

*Sure* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| EM | 227 |
| CD\MS | 155 |
| MS\CS | 110 |
| CD\P | 55 |
| CS\P | 34 |

*Sure* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| IT sales | 1547 |
| ISP reseller | 1233 |
| Travel | 1082 |
| Financial adviser | 278 |
| Banking | 238 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 227 |
| Museum | 217 |
| Hotel | 126 |
| Vehicle manufacturers | 99 |
| ISP provider | 55 |
| Pharmaceutical | 38 |
| Business support consultancy | 37 |
| Pub chain | 28 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 23 |

*Sure* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Logistics | 280 |
| Sales | 149 |
| HRM(assessment review) | 129 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Strategic | 103 |
| Marketing | 99 |
| Technical | 97 |
| Production | 61 |
| Procedure | 54 |

*Sure*, as noted earlier, is markedly more frequent as a back channel in EM than IM. It also features more frequently in MS than in P, which at first may appear somewhat counterintuitive. One explanation may be that, while P require more actual convergence than MS in order to come to a group decision, this does not entail a concomitant level of attention to face. We can find that when managers are communicating to their subordinates, they may display more attention to face needs than when communicating to their peers about the same topic (McCarthy and Handford, 2004; Koester, 2006). If we view *sure* as an instance of attention to positive-face needs, then the reason for this difference becomes clear.

When comparing *hmm* and *sure* we can see some differences in terms of topic: whereas *sure* often occurs in technical and procedure meetings, the opposite is true of *hmm*. Also, in logistics meetings *hmm* does not occur at all; *sure*, in contrast, occurs most frequently in such meetings. The two back channels also occur in different companies, with *sure* being much less frequent in manufacturing companies than *hmm*, but occurring in a wider range of companies. This is despite the relative infrequency of *sure* compared to *hmm*. These findings show the value of contextual information in understanding the patterned linguistic behaviour of pragmatic markers, such as these minimal response tokens.

#### 6.2.1.4 *If*

*If* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| EM | 7246 |
| CS\MS | 7152 |
| CS\P | 6744 |
| CD\P | 6216 |
| CD\MS | 5487 |

*If* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Technical | 7510 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 7302 |
| Strategic | 7003 |
| Production | 6986 |
| HRM | 6759 |
| Procedure | 6700 |
| Marketing | 6564 |
| Sales | 6342 |
| Accounts | 6162 |
| Logistics | 6072 |

*If* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| IT sales | 8735 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 8272 |
| Financial adviser | 7903 |
| ISP provider | 7859 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 7558 |
| Hotel | 7479 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 6644 |
| Museum | 6608 |
| Pharmaceutical | 6535 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 6263 |
| Telecommunications | 6179 |
| Banking | 6051 |
| Foam manufacturer | 6027 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 5778 |
| ISP reseller | 5570 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Magazine | 4541 |
| Pub chain | 4539 |
| Brewer | 4294 |

As noted in keyword lists, *if* in EM is more frequent than in IM, and it is interesting that it is more frequent in communication in the same department than in different departments, regardless of the hierarchy. Compared to other items, it is noticeable that frequency differences involving *if* are not very large. It seems to be used across a broad range of companies and with different topics reasonably consistently. For example, *sure* is used 67 times more often by an IT sales company than an hydraulics company, but the greatest difference in use of *if* in terms of company is slightly over double (IT sales: 8735; Brewer: 4294). The multifunctional *if* is found in many clusters, as was seen in the last chapter, and it will also be discussed in co-text in the qualitative chapters.

#### 6.2.1.5 *Problem*

*Problem* Relationship of Speakers

| **Relationship of speakers** | **Calculated frequency per million words** |
|---|---|
| CD\P | 859 |
| CS\P | 823 |
| EM | 721 |
| CS\MS | 757 |
| CD\MS | 622 |

*Problem* Topic

| **Meeting topic** | **Calculated frequency per million words** |
|---|---|
| Procedure | 1031 |
| Technical | 969 |
| Sales | 834 |
| Production | 749 |
| Marketing | 725 |
| Strategic | 713 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Logistics | 616 |
| HRM | 579 |
| Accounts | 472 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 421 |

*Problem* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Tyre manufacturer | 1466 |
| Banking | 1429 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 1364 |
| Brewer | 1141 |
| ISP provider | 1064 |
| IT sales | 967 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 918 |
| Telecommunications | 895 |
| Foam manufacturer | 879 |
| Museum | 780 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 732 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 595 |
| Pharmaceutical | 566 |
| Financial adviser | 560 |
| Hotel | 442 |
| Accountant | 329 |
| Pub chain | 305 |
| Business support consultancy | 293 |
| ISP reseller | 164 |
| Magazine | 134 |

In terms of the relationship of speakers, we see that there is a clear difference between P and MS, with EM in the middle. This is because *problem* is a word that relates to decision-making (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), may often occur at the beginning of decision-making processes (Hoey, 1983), and in peer meetings decision-making is often the focus. This does not necessarily mean that a decision is the actual outcome, as noted by Boden (1994).

Using CIC Tools, it is also possible to analyse an item according to a particular topic. Studying the use of *problem* by the tyre manufacturer's, over half (just under 60%) of the instances of *problem* form the chunk *not a problem*, and most of the others are hedged, e.g. *that's our only problem.* There was the same finding with the banking company. In contrast, uses by the brewer include *extreme problem.* The meeting involving the brewer is very conflictual, and will be analysed further in the qualitative chapters.

The meeting involving the IT sales company is an EM with the participants talking about finding solutions to possible future technical problems. In contrast the EM involving the magazine company is very much a 'hard sell' meeting, and the salesperson only uses the word once in the meeting. Similarly, the ISP reseller meeting (also EM) has a selling* focus, which, unsurprisingly, suggests that *problem* has a negative semantic prosody in some contexts. This suggests the extent to which language can be context dependent. As with other studies of authentic texts in context (e.g. Carter and McCarthy, 1988: chapter 5) we can see how the context determines the meaning of an item, and not vice versa.

### 6.2.1.6 *Issue*

*Issue* Relationship of Speakers

| **Relationship of speakers** | **Calculated frequency per million words** |
|---|---|
| CD\MS | 1244 |
| CS\MS | 427 |
| CS\P | 358 |
| EM | 272 |
| CD\P | 247 |

*Note the deliberate use of 'selling' as opposed to 'sales': in internal sales meetings *problem* is far more frequent, hence the relatively high occurrence in terms of topic.

*Issue* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Museum | 1214 |
| Pharmaceutical | 836 |
| Magazine | 804 |
| Banking | 675 |
| ISP provider | 600 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 446 |
| Telecommunications | 398 |
| Foam manufacturer | 378 |
| Business support consultancy | 333 |
| Pub chain | 194 |
| IT sales | 193 |
| Hotel | 189 |
| ISP reseller | 164 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 114 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 113 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 875 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 40 |

*Issue* Topic

| Topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| HRM (assessment review) | 257 |
| HRM | 206 |
| Marketing | 188 |
| Sales | 133 |
| Accounts | 29 |

In terms of the relationship of the speakers, it is immediately noticeable that *issue* occurs far more frequently in CD/MS than in any other category. As was noted in chapter three, there is less CD/MS data than the other categories, and the meetings from the museum are of this type. Hence the high correlation in frequency between CD/MS and 'museum'. While conclusions based on this result should be tentative therefore, it is still fair to assume that this is an accurate reflection of the use of the word in this type of relationship. *Issue* is least used in CD/P, followed by EM. Also it is interesting to note

that, in general, it is found more frequently in MS rather than P or EM type communication.

Earlier in this chapter I compared *problem* and *issue*, outlining how similar they are in terms of keyness and collocations. Thus from the lexicogrammatical level we could strongly argue that they are synonyms. It seems reasonable to infer that, if they are synonyms at the collocational and colligational level, we can assume they would behave similarly at a higher generic level. A comparison of the two sets of results shows that this is very much not the case. In terms of the relationship of speakers, while the occurrence of the two items is similar in EM, it could not be more different in the IM categories: whereas *problem* occurs more in P communication, *issue* occurs more in MS-type communication. The two lists are almost reversed. The same situation is found in terms of company. *Problem* is found most in manufacturing companies (hydraulics and tyre), but a reciprocal result appears with *issue*. Similar differences are apparent in the pharmaceutical data.* Even similarities in position are not reflected when we compare projected frequencies: *problem* is twice as frequent as *issue* in banking, and almost twice as frequent in the ISP provider data.

Equally significant are the topic results. While *problem* occurs most frequently in procedure and technical meetings, *issue* does not occur at all in these meetings. While both occur in sales and marketing meetings, *issue* is approximately four times as likely. While *issue* is most likely to be found in HRM (assessment review), accounts, and HRM,

*While magazine is also different, this is because of the frequency of the term *magazine issue*, which has a different meaning. This meaning accounts for half the occurrences of *issue* in the magazine result, and the appropriate recalculation gives us a reduced frequency of 402 per million words. All of the remaining occurrences form the collocation *not an issue*.

these three topics occur at the bottom of the respective *problem* list.* To sum up, the differences in the occurrence in these two apparent 'synonyms' are extremely noticeable when we remember the similarity between them at the lexicogrammatical level. They will be further analysed in the qualitative chapters to help us further understand this paradoxical set of results.

### 6.2.2 Selected clusters

In this section I will outline and analyse seven clusters that were categorised in the previous chapter. They are taken from both the 'primarily discourse marking' and 'primarily interactional' categories, and represent a selection of different functions including hedges, vagueness, signaling obligation and summarizing. As with the selected keywords, these chunks will be analysed according to 'relationship of speakers', 'company' and 'topic'. These different functions will also be further explored in the qualitative chapters.

#### 6.2.2.1 *You know*

*You know* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| MS\CS | 4208 |
| CS\P | 3448 |
| EM | 3352 |
| CD\P | 2635 |
| CD\MS | 2514 |

*Although it should be noted that the comparable frequencies are closer than those for sales and marketing.

*You know* Topic

| Topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| HRM | 4165 |
| Procedure | 3784 |
| Sales | 3612 |
| Strategic | 3609 |
| Marketing | 3573 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 3345 |
| Technical | 3076 |
| Production | 2337 |
| Logistics | 1855 |
| Accounts | 1221 |

*You know* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Magazine | 9015 |
| Hotel | 8974 |
| IT sales | 6002 |
| Telecommunications | 5144 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 4411 |
| ISP provider | 4024 |
| Business support | 3737 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 3689 |
| ISP reseller | 3614 |
| Foam manufacturer | 3573 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 3398 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 3034 |
| Banking | 2978 |
| Brewer | 1967 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 1895 |
| Museum | 1794 |
| Pharmaceutical | 1730 |
| Pub chain | 1649 |

*You know* fulfills two main roles which help explain its frequency: it is a topic launcher, but more frequently it is a marker of projected shared knowledge (Östman, 1981; Erman, 1987). Despite its ubiquity, the above results show how its use is very context-dependent. In terms of the relationship of the speakers, it is almost twice as frequent in CS/MS as

CD/MS, and considerably more frequent in CS in general. This may be because employees in the same department assume that they share more knowledge than those in different departments.

To assume that *you know* is employed only to mark actual shared knowledge would be misleading: it is often employed to mark perceived or desired perceived shared knowledge or understanding. By understanding I mean something akin to tacit concord, which is related to perceived convergent positions. This would help to explain why *you know* is more frequent in EM than in IM CD. This assertion is further supported by the fact that the item is used most in the meeting involving the magazine company, which I noted earlier was a 'hard sell' meeting. This meeting will be further analysed in the qualitative chapters, and it will be shown how the salesperson attempts to create a sense of understanding between himself and the potential buyer.

#### 6.2.2.2 *I think*

*I think* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| CS\P | 3812 |
| CD\MS | 3771 |
| CD\P | 3558 |
| EM | 3305 |
| CS\MS | 2394 |

*I think* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Logistics | 4181 |
| Accounts | 3656 |
| Production | 3520 |
| Strategy | 3257 |
| Sales | 3210 |
| Procedure | 3107 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Marketing | 2824 |
| Technical | 2777 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 2553 |
| HRM | 2002 |

*I think* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Museum | 6074 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 5208 |
| Pub chain | 5080 |
| Pharmaceutical | 5060 |
| IT sales | 4950 |
| Magazine | 3973 |
| Accountant | 3543 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 3262 |
| Telecommunications | 3215 |
| Banking | 3218 |
| Business support consultancy | 3195 |
| Foam manufacturer | 2707 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 2538 |
| Financial adviser | 2452 |
| ISP provider | 2451 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 2349 |
| ISP reseller | 1550 |

*I think** is a very frequent hedging device. The above results show that it is used fairly evenly across the different categories for the relationship of speakers, although it is less frequent in CS\MS. While there are some differences in terms of topic, for example *I think* features most frequently in logistics meetings and least frequently in HRM and technical meetings, these differences are not as large as for some of the other items. In terms of company, it is interesting that this hedging device is least favoured by the manufacturing companies.

*The *I think* totals include the *So I think* and other cluster totals.

### 6.2.2.3 *So I think*

*So I think* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| EM | 234 |
| CD\P | 122 |
| CS\MS | 117 |
| CD\MS | 117 |
| CS\P | 107 |

*So I think* Topic

| Topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Logistics | 252 |
| Accounts | 236 |
| Production | 204 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 129 |
| Technical | 123 |
| Procedure | 115 |
| Strategic | 114 |
| Sales | 96 |
| Marketing | 78 |
| HRM | 21 |

*So I think* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Pharmaceutical | 463 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 455 |
| Magazine | 268 |
| Foam manufacturer | 251 |
| Banking | 198 |
| IT sales | 193 |
| Museum | 173 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 122 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 74 |
| Pub chain | 55 |
| ISP provider | 55 |

*So I think* is commonly used to summarise what the speaker or what others have said before. Summarising, as has been stated before, is a core management strategy in

meetings (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). From the above results we can see that this chunk is far more frequent in EM than in IM. Within IM, it seems to be used with fairly equal frequency across the four criteria. This consistency is not reflected in terms of topic or company however. It is over eight times more frequent in the pharmaceutical data than in the ISP provider. It is far less common in sales and marketing than in logistics and production, and it is used in technical, procedure and strategic meetings approximately half as often as the latter. The reasons for these differences will become clearer in the following chapters, when this chunk will be further analysed, as will its function.

#### 6.2.2.4 *We need to*

*We need to* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| EM | 714 |
| CD\P | 525 |
| CD\MS | 505 |
| CS\MS | 450 |
| CS\P | 377 |

*We need to* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Strategic | 909 |
| Logistics | 678 |
| Production | 667 |
| Technical | 607 |
| HRM (assessment review) | 646 |
| Procedure | 608 |
| Sales | 360 |
| Marketing | 276 |
| HRM | 144 |
| Accounts | 59 |

*We need to* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Magazine | 1474 |
| Banking | 1349 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 1070 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 1023 |
| Pharmaceutical | 887 |
| Museum | 650 |
| Hotel | 631 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 570 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 555 |
| Foam manufacturer | 439 |
| ISP provider | 437 |
| Pub chain | 416 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 381 |
| Business consultancy | 333 |
| Financial adviser | 300 |
| Telecommunications | 199 |
| IT sales | 193 |
| ISP reseller | 164 |
| Accountant | 82 |

In the framework data, it appeared that modals of obligation are generally more frequent in IM than EM. Here, however, we see that the chunk *we need to* is actually more frequent in EM. In relation to *we need* to here, although the frequency figures are not very different, *we need to* is more frequent in CD than in CS.

Bearing in mind that both strategic and logistic meetings require the participants to cooperate for the meeting to be successful, it is perhaps unsurprising that these two topics should feature this item most heavily. It is worth noting that the two topic lists for *we* and *we need to* are very similar, with the position of technical being the only marked difference. In terms of company, the hard-selling magazine is top of the list again; manufacturing companies also seem to favour this item, although it does seem fairly

ubiquitous. In the next chapter this and other deontic modal forms will be explored in greater detail.

#### 6.2.2.5 *You need to*

*You need to* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| MS\CS | 400 |
| CD\P | 161 |
| CD\MS | 155 |
| EM | 145 |
| CS\P | 119 |

*You need to* Topic

| Meeting topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| HRM (assessment review) | 905 |
| Technical | 440 |
| Procedure | 317 |
| Strategic | 248 |
| HRM | 227 |
| Logistics | 134 |
| Production | 130 |
| Accounts | 118 |
| Marketing | 115 |
| Sales | 104 |

*You need to* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Bicycle manufacturer | 568 |
| ISP Provider | 473 |
| Business support consultancy | 407 |
| Hotel | 378 |
| IT sales | 290 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 282 |
| Financial adviser | 280 |
| Museum | 217 |
| Pharmaceutical | 193 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Accountant | 164 |
| Banking | 159 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 158 |
| Telecommunications | 99 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 90 |
| ISP reseller | 82 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 80 |
| Foam manufacturer | 63 |
| Pub chain | 28 |

As may be expected, *you need to* is far more common in CS\MS than in any other speaker relationship category. Obligation and responsibility form defining aspects of the workplace, and would be delegated, checked and reiterated in CS\MS. In the next chapter we will look at concordance lines from different relationship categories containing this chunk to gain a clearer understanding of how it is used in this, and in contrast, other types of relationship where such direct expressions of obligation may not be as expected or welcome.

In terms of topic, it is also unsurprising that the cluster should feature so highly in an assessment review; it is more than twice as frequent here than in the following topic, technical. It is relatively rare in marketing and sales meetings. In terms of company, the bicycle manufacturing data involves the company in part giving instructions and an update to their consultancy company. The ISP provider has a lot of CS\MS meetings, with the manager giving instructions. It is interesting that there is something of a cluster of manufacturing companies at the lower end of the table.

When we compare *you need to* with *we need to*, we find some considerable differences. CS\MS and EM are reversed. That is, *we need to* is far more frequent than *you need to* in EM, whereas in CS\MS the opposite holds. When we consider that *we need to* can be an indirect way of telling somebody to do something, as was shown in the

framework chapter, and therefore the two chunks in question can have the same pragmatic force, such differences highlight the need for a pragmatic interpretation to explain such language choices.

While sales, marketing and accounts are low on both lists, the upper orders of the topic lists are very different. Whereas *we need to* features most highly in strategic and logistics meetings, *you need to* occurs far less often; it occurs more in technical and procedure meetings instead. In terms of company there are strong contrasts too, the most striking being magazine: while *we need to* occurs most frequently in that company, *you need to* is not said once. The ISP provider and IT sales results are quite different, and the manufacturing industries have tended to cluster in the center in relation to *we need to*.

#### 6.2.2.6 *At the end of the day*

*At the end of the day* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| EM | 207 |
| CS\P | 145 |
| CD\P | 70 |
| CS\MS | 23 |
| CD\MS | 0 |

*At the end of the day* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Magazine | 938 |
| Tyre manufacturer | 436 |
| Bicycle manufacturer | 227 |
| Vehicle manufacturer | 172 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 129 |
| Pharmaceutical | 90 |
| Pub chain | 83 |
| Accountant | 82 |
| Financial adviser | 70 |

| ISP provider | 45 |
|---|---|

*At the end of the day* Topic

| Topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Marketing | 156 |
| Sales | 152 |
| Accounts | 118 |
| Strategic | 114 |
| Logistics | 67 |
| Procedure | 61 |
| Technical | 44 |
| HRM | 41 |

*At the end of the day* is the most frequent six-word chunk in the corpus. It is also the second most frequent six-word chunk in the CANCODE corpus (McCarthy and Carter, 2002). The above results show, however, that it is not used in CD\MS and rarely used in CS\MS. It is also very much a manufacturing chunk (the magazine is a manufacturing magazine). Even though it is very frequent in EM, it does not occur at all in EM involving IT companies, and is very infrequent in pharmaceutical EM. These manufacturing companies in the corpus are very male, and British. CIC Tools can show speaker birthplace, and it is interesting to note that this chunk is used overwhelmingly by British English speakers (unlike, say, *we need to*, which is used by many nationalities). This adds support to Carter's view that 'many of the most fixed of fixed expressions are, of course, culture-bound' (1998: 49).

### 6.2.2.7 *And this that and the other*

*And this that and the other* Relationship of Speakers

| Relationship of speakers | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| CS\P | 101 |
| CD\P | 47 |
| EM | 13 |

*And this that and the other* Topic

| Topic | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Marketing | 83 |
| Sales | 76 |
| Production | 33 |
| Procedure | 27 |
| Logistics | 6 |

*And this that and the other* Company

| Company | Calculated frequency per million words |
|---|---|
| Tyre manufacturer | 100 |
| Hydraulics manufacturer | 80 |

*And this that and the other* is the second highest six-word cluster. It occurs thirty three times in the corpus, which means it is very frequent, especially considering its length (Biber et al, 1999). O'Keeffe (2003) defines this type of chunk as a vague category marker (VCM), which tends to be found in clause-final positions and is often made up of a conjunction and a noun phrase (e.g. *and/or everything else*). VCMs are often used to reflect shared knowledge (ibid). Evison, McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2006) analysed various VCMs in selected corpora, and found that *this that and the other* occurred eleven times in a one million corpus of social English, and not at all in a much smaller corpus of academic speech (both subcorpora of the CANCODE corpus). We can therefore say that this cluster appears to be more frequent in business English than in everyday social English.

Once again, however, pure frequency figures can be somewhat misleading. As the above figures show, this cluster is used in specific contextual situations: it is used overwhelmingly by CS\P, occasionally by CD\P, very rarely in EM, and never in any type of manager/subordinate-type meeting. The number of topics is also limited, with it occurring most frequently in sales and marketing meetings (although it should be noted that the chunk occurs overwhelmingly in internal sales and marketing meetings). But arguably most striking of all is the finding that it is only used by two companies, both of which are manufacturers. Using the 'speaker birthplace' checker, I found that this chunk is used solely by British English-speaking males. We can conclude that this chunk tends to be used by a clearly defined group of speakers in only a selected set of circumstances: usually in internal meetings between British males mainly from the sales and marketing departments of manufacturing companies. This supports the Vygotskian-informed assertion that 'Within a socially defined group, vague category markers become a tool for creating short-cuts when referring to sets, prototypes and categories.' (Evison et al: 2006). This position will be further explored in the following chapter.

## 6.3 Summary

In the two quantitative chapters the occurrence and behaviour of various key items at the lexicogrammatical level have been explored. These have included nouns, pronouns, deontic verbs, back channels and hedging and vague expressions, and selected collocations and colligations. From investigating what is frequent and 'key' across a wide range of texts, we can begin to build a plausible picture of the register of the business meeting. While this register is not completely distinct from everyday, casual English,

because the lexicogrammatical items which make up this register come from everyday English, it does demonstrate consistent, probabilistic differences. Therefore, while it is difficult to argue that business English is distinct from the benchmark of everyday English, it is easier to argue that it is different from other registers, for example academic spoken English (McCarthy and Handford, 2004).These findings will provide the foundations and foci for the following qualitative chapter, where items can be explored in detail in individual texts and selected extracts, in order to work towards addressing the main hypothesis concerning the classification of the business meeting as a distinct genre.

A comparison with the results from the framework chapter has shown that in the full corpus there is more need of a detailed explanation in terms of context to account for the various single words and chunks which are either frequent or 'key'. For example, whereas the behaviour of *hmm* and *sure* was straightforward in the framework study, the greater amount of data in the whole corpus and the greater variety in terms of speakers, speaker relationships, company type and size and meeting topic allows us to grasp a more complex yet richer picture of the items in question.

When considering the nature and extent of the influence of these contextual factors, providing a comprehensive summary is difficult. While the influence of context in the case of, for example, *problem* and *issue* is statistically clear, explaining the possible reasons for such clear differences is very conjectural. Thus we need to examine the items in longer extracts of text so that more confident inferences can be made. Nevertheless, certain specific conclusions can be drawn.

In terms of the influence of the relationship of the speakers on the discourse, there were some interesting findings. Within IM, differences were noted between

manager/subordinate and peer communication: *we* was found to be more frequent in meetings involving peer-type communication. *Sure*, in contrast was more frequent in CS\MS meetings, as was the chunk *you need to*, the conclusion being drawn that there may be more face work going on in CS\MS meetings than in P meetings, but there may be more need for cooperation in P given the decision-making focus on many of such meetings. These insights concerning decision-making have direct relevance to the notion of speaker goals. They will be explored further in the next chapter with reference to *problem* and *issue*, two keywords which were found to have starkly different MS versus P results.

The behaviour of the two longer clusters *at the end of the day* and *and this that and the other* was also illuminated by reference to the contextual features. They were found to be far more common in P than MS meetings, and were also found to be largely the prerogative of British male speakers. They were also found to be heavily favoured by manufacturing companies.

In terms of the possible role the company plays in influencing the language produced, it seemed that there was occasionally a tendency for certain items to be preferred by either manufacturing companies, as with the two longer clusters above, or by IT/ISP or pharmaceutical companies, as with *issue*. This was not a consistent finding, although the figures concerning the manufacturing companies were often found to cluster. Overall, it was more difficult to see any distinct trends in this category.

One fairly clear tendency in relation to topic was for the pairs *technical* and *procedure*, and *strategic* and *logistics* to group together. This was the case for *if, sure,*

*hmm, we,* and to a lesser extent *you need to* and *we need to.* Even though some other items did not follow this pattern e.g. *you know* and *so I think,* the conclusion is that comparatively, strategic and logistics meetings involve a higher level of cooperation because they tend to be more decision-focused. Technical and procedure meetings in contrast often involve information exchange or directive-type communication between MS.

The results concerning the comparison between IM and EM strongly suggest that this is a worthwhile distinction. In the previous quantitative chapter considerable differences were noted at the keyword level, for example 23 of the top 50 words were not the same. Certain items which displayed intriguing differences included *problem, issue, we, you/we need to,* hence they have been explored here from a more contextual perspective and will be further analysed and discussed in the following qualitative chapter. Face needs and speaker goals will be two areas seen as relevant to this distinction.

While the findings produced in these two chapters help illuminate the corpus, many questions are raised which cannot be answered by quantitative methods. For example, how can we confidently interpret the paradoxical results concerning *problem* and *issue?* At the lexicogrammatical level they could hardly be more synonymous, and yet contextually their occurrence is markedly different. Also, while quantitative results can help us gain an understanding of single features and their occurrence below the clause level, it is very difficult to make coherent arguments about tendencies at the function, turn or genre level. McCarthy's (1998: 27) comment that registers allow us to see 'the different factors that influence linguistic choice' but register cannot account for

'the way a speech activity is organised, or how the participants demonstrate their awareness of being engaged in a chosen generic activity' is relevant here. We have seen how various contextual factors have influenced linguistic choice, and the issues of understanding the underlying organisation of speech and the orientation of participants towards speech events will be addressed in the following qualitative chapters.

# Chapter 7: Qualitative Analysis I

## Introduction

This is the first of three qualitative analysis chapters. In this chapter selected items will be viewed in either longer extracts or concordance lines. The next chapter will look at language at the level of turns and turn taking, while the final qualitative chapter will look at language choices at the level of genre. To allow for a more detailed level of analysis involving manual searches, a sample has been selected from the whole corpus. Underlying all three chapters is the notion, explored in chapter 2, that communication in business meetings is markedly different from everyday English, and these differences can be explored at the lexicogrammatical, turn and genre level.

## 7.1 Review of Findings from Framework Chapter

In the framework chapter, various lexicogrammatical items were analysed, and the way in which these linguistic choices could be interpreted to reflect underlying trends and issues in business meetings, such as face, obligation, politeness strategies, collaboration and convergence was discussed. Comparisons were drawn between EM and IM.

In terms of personal pronoun use, the following points were raised: the keyness of *we*, its inclusive/exclusive uses, and its functions. These functions include corporate *we*, obfuscating responsibility, pushing the official line, and creating convergence. The comparatively high keyness of *we* in EM was also noted. The different types of *we* in the pilot study, and where they tend to occur were:

- Inclusive personal, referring to all those present at time of speaking: IM, EM
- Exclusive personal, referring to one in-group present: IM, EM

- Inclusive corporate, referring to both (or more) companies: EM
- Exclusive corporate, referring to the speaker's company: EM
- Intra-organisational, referring to all employees within a company: IM

When comparing the back channels *hmm* and *sure, hmm* was found to not occur at all in EM in the framework data, whereas it was very frequent in IM. *Sure*, in marked contrast, rarely occurred in IM but was very frequent in EM. The general tendency for modals of obligation was to be markedly more frequent in IM, especially *have to, need to* and *should. Must* follows the same pattern, but was very infrequent in both IM and EM. Discourse markers, in contrast, tended to occur more frequently in EM, especially *I guess, I think.* This suggests that there is more hedging in EM, which could be accounted for by invoking the notion of face: in interorganisational discourse regular attention to face may be more appropriate given the relative distance between the speakers, and the considerable risks involved in damaging such a relationship.

The role that metaphors and idioms can play in highlighting common ground was noted. Within the EM framework data, there were examples of classic or 'dead' metaphors, which are 'safe' from a face-needs perspective because their meaning is very easy to grasp and therefore will not pose any risk to the relationship. Metaphors and idioms are often described as devices for creating a sense of convergence (McCarthy, 1998; Moon, 1998; Koester, 2000; Carter, 2004). It was therefore suggested that there would be fewer idioms and metaphors in meetings involving conflict and disagreement. Certain keywords were discussed e.g. *problem.*

## 7.2 Methodology and Rationale for this Chapter

There is a close mapping of the areas of analysis from the framework chapter and this chapter, although the structure is different. Pronouns will not be discussed again as a separate category because they have received sufficient attention already, and back channels will be discussed in the turn-taking chapter. 'Decision making' becomes a separate category, the main focus of which will be *problem* and *issue*, as does 'Creativity', which involves an analysis of metaphors and idioms. The two remaining areas of investigation are vagueness and deontic modality in the form of modal and semi-modal verbs of obligation.

One reason for these four categories having been chosen is that they have received some attention in the literature on institutional discourse: decision-making has been widely discussed, e.g. Boden (1994), Watson (2002), Holmes and Stubbe (2003), Koester (2006), and it has received specific attention in terms of problem-solving within business meetings from Willing (1992) and McCarthy and Handford (2004). Decision-making can be quite difficult to actually locate within a meeting (Boden, 1994), hence the keywords *problem* and *issue,* which are evaluative and as such reflects speaker stance in a comparable way to the other pragmatic categories (Poncini, 2002) in this chapter, are seen to illuminate aspects of the decision-making process. Vague language has been analysed by McCarthy and Handford (2004), Adolphs et al (2006), Koester (2006) and O'Keeffe (2006). Deontic modality is a vast topic that has received attention in institutional contexts from Weiyun He (1993), Iedema (1997), McCarthy and Handford (2004) and Koester (2006). The analysis of creativity and in particular the use of idioms and metaphors in institutional discourse is comparatively more sparse, exceptions

including Martin (1997), Koester (2001; 2006), McCarthy and Handford (2004) and Carter (2004).

Another reason for choosing these categories is that they are, it is argued, among those which can mark the genre in question, and the attention given to them in the literature does not sufficiently account for their occurrence in internal and external business meetings. Keyword and cluster lists have thrown up some of the words directly related to these categories (e.g. *problem, issue, need, have to, and this that and the other, and so forth*), and a manual reading of the texts has shown that creativity is perhaps surprisingly widespread in business meetings. This conclusion is further supported by statistical evidence (see section 7.3.4). In chapter five I proposed a categorisation of various pragmatic clusters according to either discourse marking or interactional functions. The four categories chosen here could also be subsumed under such functional headings: metaphors are employed to fulfill for example the discourse-marking function of summarising and the interactional function of checking shared knowledge, the words *problem* and *issue* are often used to clarify the speaker's stance, and vagueness and deontic modality form two of the subcategories under interactional functions. The generic strands (McCarthy, 1998) or strategies referred to in chapter four will be further developed in chapter nine, thereby accounting for the way certain lexicogrammatical features fulfill certain functions which embody certain strategies which create a particular genre. While other categories could also have been chosen e.g. epistemic modality or narratives, space as ever constrains the options, and such choices have to be made on practical as well as academic grounds. As argued in chapters one and two, underlying the

argument developed here is the proposition that interpersonal and interactional linguistic features, such as vagueness (Koester, 2006), can be shown to fulfill transactional goals.

## 7.3 Data Analysis Aims

The main focus for this chapter is analysing selected lexicogrammatical items in context, which I argue are important elements of the register of spoken business English. Through focusing specifically on these four areas outlined above, this chapter will address the following research questions:

- What conclusions can we draw about pragmatic markers, such as vague expressions, deontic modality, idioms and certain evaluative nouns which have been shown to serve conventionalised functions in other domains of discourse?
- What is the nature and extent of the influence of certain contextual factors e.g. speaker relationship?
- What evidence is there for the importance of speaker goals?
- What are the types of goals?
- What strategies do speakers employ?
- How are issues of face manifested in meetings?

And in relation to a comparison between EM and IM:

- Is the expression of conflict and convergence different?
- What are the differences in terms of speaker relationships, and how do they affect the discourse?

### 7.3.1 Breakdown of sample data

The data for the next three qualitative analysis chapters will mostly be taken from a representative sample, totalling eight meetings. All but one of the meetings are 'complete', in that they have clear beginnings and endings. Only the first 11,000 words from the external meeting 151001 have been included because the whole meeting consists of over 50,000 words and as such is too long for present purposes. The total sample contains 72092 words, of which 24,433 are EM and 47,659 are IM.

Meetings have been chosen to provide a representation of CANBEC. As such, there is a variety of company types, company sizes, meeting topics and relationships of speakers. In terms of the latter two categories, the range of differences found in the larger corpus is reflected here. The one exception is the topic 'accounts', of which there is very little explicit data in the whole corpus, although financial matters are frequently mentioned in many meetings. All meetings are preplanned.

**Table 7.1: Sample Meetings**

| File | Company Type | Total Words | Com-pany Size | Topic | Purpose | Number of speakers (total present) | Relation-ship of Speakers* IM/EM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 169001 | Foam Manufacturer | 12192 | 3 | Sales | Reviewing | 5 | CS\MS, IM |
| 167001 | Foam Manufacturer | 5772 | 3 | Strategy, Product-ion | Planning | 4 | CD\P, IM |
| 61001 | Bank | 11276 | 1 | Technic-al, Proced-ure | Planning/ Task-oriented | 6 (11) | CD\P, IM |
| 139001 | Consultant's | 11089 | 4 | HRM | Planning/ Reviewing/ Giving advice | 2 | CD\MS, IM |
| 73001 | Museum | 7330 | 4 | Marketin g Product-ion | Reviewing | 4 | CS\P, IM |
| 151001 | Pharmaceutical company and their supplier | 11007 | 1 and 1 | Logistics, Product-ion | Planning/ Reviewing | 5 | EM |
| 141001 | Pub chain and Brewer | 3250 | 2 and 1 | Proced-ure Logist-ics | Task (informatio n ex-change) | 2 | EM |
| 75001 | Hydraulics manufacturer and Magazine | 10176 | 3 and 2 | Market-ing Sales | Negotiat-ion | 3 | EM |

*MS=manager/subordinate; P=peer; CS=colleagues same dept.; CD=colleagues different dept.

*Alteration to Framework*

In order to create a parallel distinction between EM and IM, and to systematically account for the qualitative findings from the next three chapters, a new subcategory will be added to the EM *Relationship of speakers* category. This distinction divides the data into either contractually bound (CB) or non-contractually bound (NCB) relationships.

CB relationships involve (a minimum of and usually) two organisations which have a formal, legally binding agreement concerning the nature of their business. NCB meetings again involve a minimum of two organisations, but in this relationship there is no legally binding contract. Instead, their business may be on a one-off or ad-hoc basis, or the meeting may be exploratory, with one or both businesses looking to check the viability of starting a formal CB relationship. Both relationships may take the form of a partnership or alliance, in which the individual parties are joint principles in the business, or it may be a client/vendor-type, in which the client will tend to direct or make requests to the vendor.

A related distinction is that of Charles' (1996) analysis of sales negotiations, between old relationship negotiations and new relationship negotiations. The latter could be subsumed under NCB meetings, in that Charles' distinction refers solely to negotiations whereas CANBEC involves other meeting purposes as well e.g. planning or reviewing. There is rough equivalence at the level of the relationship, with Charles (1996: 24) stating the aim of new relationship negotiations as 'to create a totally new business relationship with a company with whom no business has been done previously, or to put together pieces of haphazard business between the two companies into a business relationship that has shape or form with relative permanence and regularity.' We could

argue that 'relative permanence and regularity' is found or at least expected in a CB relationship.

Old relationship negotiations must meet one of the following two conditions: the negotiators have a long-term professional involvement with each other, and the two companies are in a long-term mutually beneficial relationship. While my definition does not talk about length of time, the implication of being in a CB relationship is that it will not be short term. As many EM include purposes other than negotiation, the first condition is not always relevant. Within the sample data, meetings 141001 and 151001 are CB, and meeting 75001 is NCB.

### 7.3.2 Vague language

Zanotto and Moura (2000), in discussing indeterminacy, argue that 'Vague words create a fuzzy border zone of application' (2000: 2). While a semantic perspective may lead us to regard vague language and other types of indeterminacy as performance-based deficits, from an interactional perspective such language at the lexical, discourse and illocutionary levels is essential and inevitable. This seems particularly pertinent in business communication, because it helps to explain choices made by speakers. For example, the chunk *we might be able to* is significant (12 occurrences) and it seems to be used with the intention of being purposively vague. The speaker is not committing to a set course of action, but is showing that such a course is possible, depending on other factors. These other factors are related to the hearer. As Leech (1983: 23) argues:

> *The indeterminacy of conversational utterances also shows itself in the NEGOTIABILITY of pragmatic forces, that is, by leaving force unclear, speaker may*

*leave hearer the opportunity to choose between one force and another, and thus leaves part of the responsibility of the meaning to hearer.*

Channell (1994) argues that, given the commonness of vague language, it should not be regarded as a marginal form, and Koester (2001) further develops this by arguing that within cooperative workplace encounters vague language, including hedges, tentative modality and a lack of explicit or metalinguistic performatives, is actually the unmarked norm. It is in conflictual situations where a lack of such vagueness can be found, and McCarthy and Carter (1997: 417) argue that overly precise language infers a high level of assertion and control on the part of the speaker. In EM 141001, which is characterised by a high degree of conflict, the following exchange typifies a lack of vagueness or hedging, and a high degree of precision:

**[Extract 7.1. #141001. CB\EM. $2 is informing $1 of certain contractual obligations.]**

<$1> So what else can we get out of you other than this?

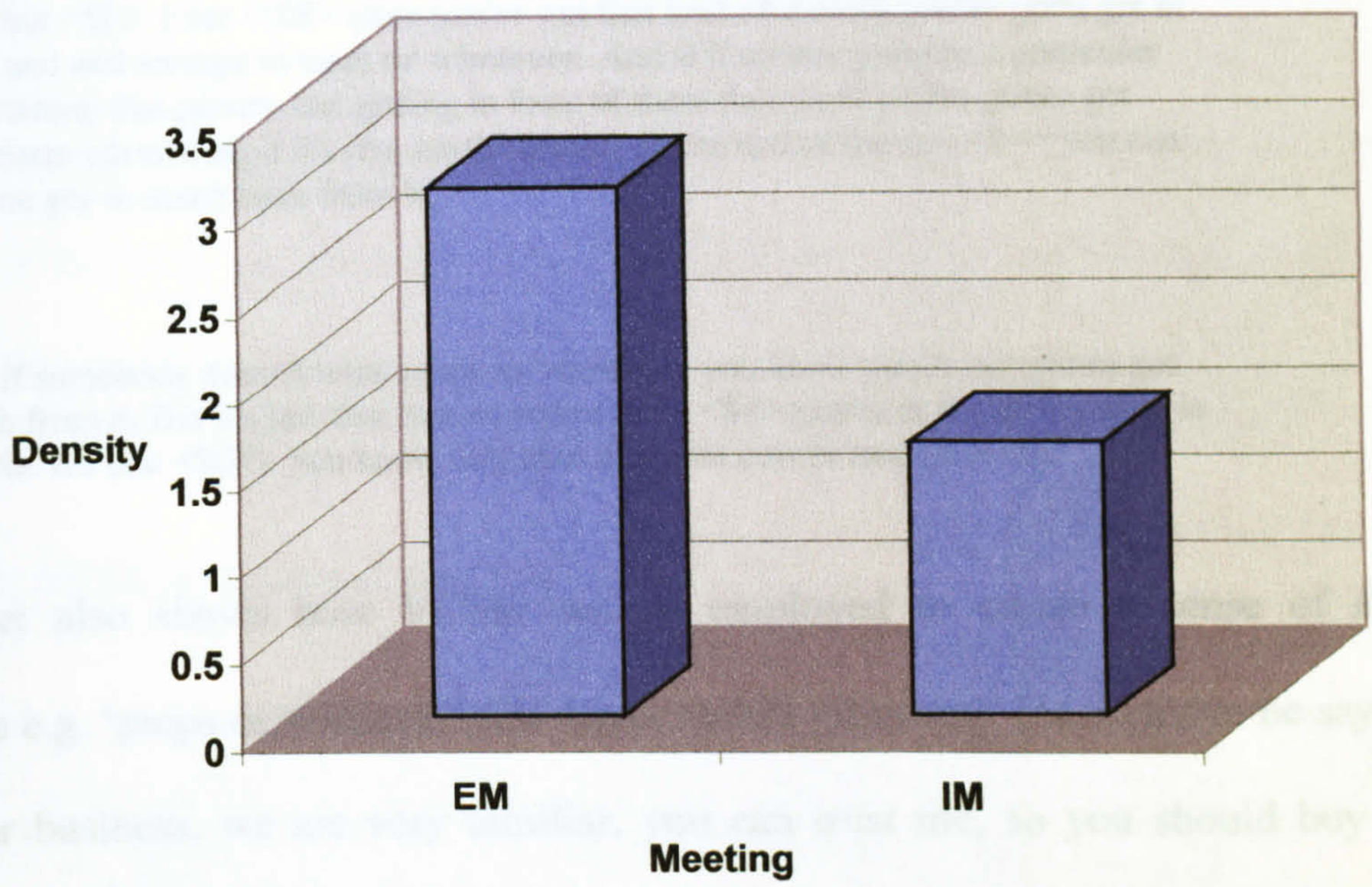
<$2> Absolutely nothing. The erm the retail link scheme ends at the end of this year erm and<$H> these are our <\$H> proposals to kick in at the end of September this year for the rest of your lease. <$E> 2 secs <\$E> That's what I've gotta be clear on telling you.

Here, speaker 2's stark, unqualified response *absolutely nothing*, and the subsequent metalinguistic performative *That's what I've gotta be clear on telling you* are the marked form in business encounters, particularly in EM. Such a lack of vagueness combined with precise references to the contract indicate that the normal rules of politeness have been suspended, attention to face is not being paid, or face may even be being aggravated (Kotthoff, 1993; Mungtigl and Turnbull 1998). Koester (2001) argues that the occurrence of such performatives also indicates a high degree of conflict. This shows that, even in

transactional activities like a business meeting, issues of politeness and face are highly relevant.

We can see there are two good reasons for using vague language in business communication: it allows for effective negotiation through the consideration of different options in that it enables the speaker to convey at least part of the responsibility for the decision or interpretation of the issue in question to the listener, and it addresses the face needs of the listener(s), working towards a perception of convergence and relaxed, mutual understanding. This seems particularly pertinent in EM, where negotiation is common and where the precarious nature of the business relationship tends to accord a high degree of attention to face. Koester (2006: 89) outlines three types of vague language: vague nouns, e.g. *things*, vague approximators, e.g. *about*, and vague category markers e.g. *and things like that*. For practical reasons it is not possible to analyse all three types of vagueness. Through manually counting all the VCMs (vague category markers, as defined in chapter six), which indicate a high level of shared knowledge (Evison, McCarthy and O'Keeffe, 2006), I found that they are virtually twice as common in EM (see Figure 7.1) in the sample corpus. This is somewhat counterintuitive as we could expect there to be more shared knowledge among colleagues from the same company than between workers from different companies. The exception is meeting 141001, which has one of the lowest densities from the sample meetings (1.2%: see Appendix 4). The conflictual extract above is from this meeting, and it will be further analysed in the following sections of this chapter.

**Figure 7.1: Density of VCMs**




### 7.3.2.1 External meetings

One explanation as to why VCMs are so much more frequent in EM is that they are used strategically: whereas in IM, VCMs reflect assumed shared knowledge, in non-conflictual EM VCMs are, it is argued here, used intentionally to create a sense of shared knowledge and therefore convergence (Evison and Handford, 2006). The extract below is the meeting with the highest density from the whole sample. VCMs tend to used frequently by the salesman ($1), who, for example, says *and so forth** 18 times, as the following

*This could also be down to the speaker's idiolect, and it could be argued that this high frequency of **and so forth** actually has little to do with issues of face. As this is the only meeting involving the salesman in the corpus, it is not possible to categorical. However, even after removing all instances of **and so forth**, the meeting still has a density of over 2.7.

extract demonstrates shows:

**[Extract 7.2. #75001. EM\NCB sales negotiation in hydraulics company]**

<$1> Do you know what I mean? <$=> I think <\$=> I think when you initially come down I mean Oliver spoke to you **and so forth** and I weren't involved so much <$E> inhales <\$E> but <$E> 1 sec <\$E> what Kevin's saying okay he's had some leads from Coal P L C **and so forth** but <$E> 1 sec <\$E> once you've got that lead obviously you've gotta get in front of them and and arrange to meet **or whatever.** And if it means going to a particular country and visiting that person and getting in front of them then yeah you're gonna get business. Because advertising it it's like anything else. At the end of the day <$=> you can only <\$=> you get so much back from it.

<$2> Mm.

<$1> And if if somebody doesn't want props **or whatever** you know you're not gonna get anything back from it. But it's just that instant you're there <$=> you're in it <\$=> you're in front of people. It's like <$G?> you know they take the front covers **and so forth.**

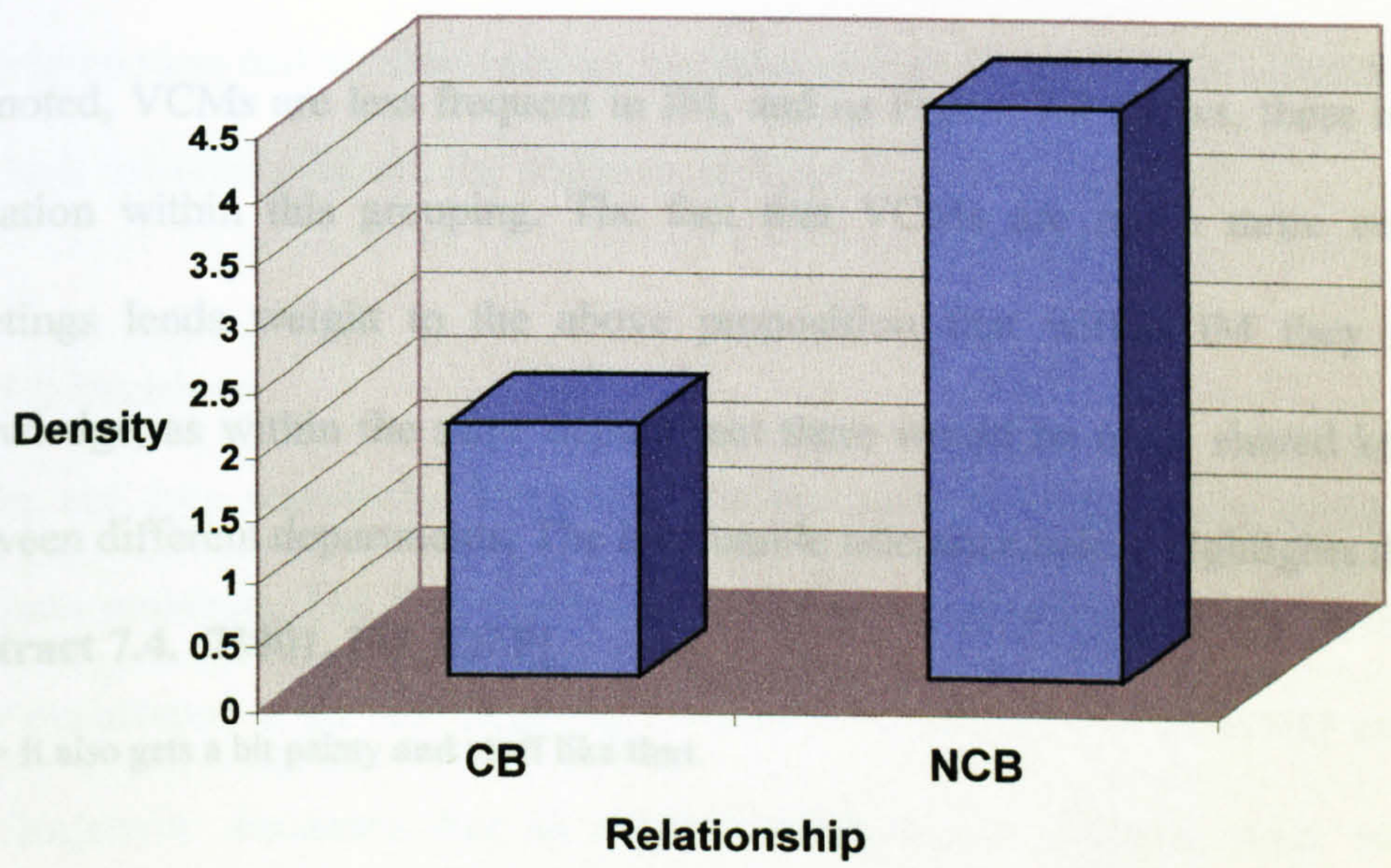
The extract also shows how VCMs can be employed to create a sense of shared knowledge e.g. 'props or whatever' (the buyer makes pit props). He seems to be saying 'I know your business, we are very familiar, you can trust me, so you should buy more copy...'. It is in this sense that the use of VCMs is strategic and deliberate – through attempting to create a sense of 'common ground and familiarity' (Koester, 2006: 91) even when in truth the level of shared knowledge is actually relatively low. In addition, the very high frequency in this meeting of the marker of shared knowledge *you know* was noted in the last chapter. The actual lack of shared familiarity is implicitly recognised by the salesman, who is on only his second visit to the buyer, when he refers to his predecessor Oliver and appears to distance himself from the lack of return the buyer has gained from advertising in the salesman's magazine Coal PLC. Even so, this does not prevent him from sprinkling his advice with VCMs. This would also explain why VCMs are more common in the NCB than CB data (see Figure 7.2), given that we could expect actual shared knowledge to be greater among CB than NCB companies.

VCMs can also be used to soften requirements or obligations:

**[Extract 7.3. #151001. EM\CB. $1 is Chair/Head Host]**
<$1> I don't know whether we should be flagging it in the description field <$=> so when we do <\$=> so it's obvious to everyone. Because I guess people people might change and <$=> I I g= <\$=> I guess I I'm keen that the knowledge is reta= retained within <$=> the erm you know <\$=> the visibility of the production schedules **or whatever**.

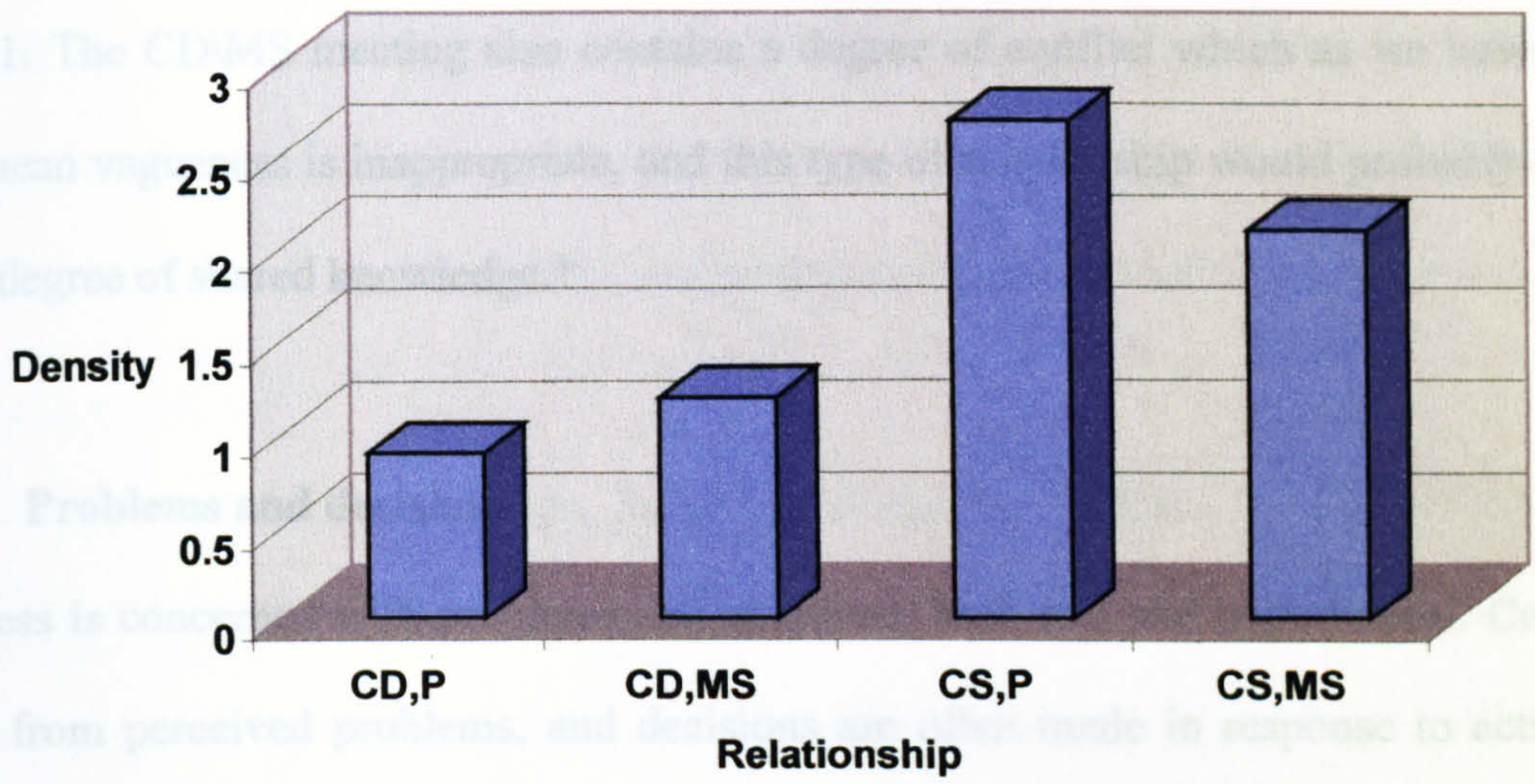
Here the head host is explaining what is required of the supplier. He softens this request by the use of the VCM *or whatever*, as well as the hedge *I guess* and the marker of shared knowledge *you know*.

**Figure 7.2: VCMs in external meetings**



### 7.3.2.2 Internal meetings

**Figure 7.3: VCMs in internal meetings**




As noted, VCMs are less frequent in IM, and as Figure 7.3 shows, there is considerable variation within this grouping. The fact that VCMs are much more common in CS meetings lends weight to the above proposition that within IM they reflect shared knowledge, as within the same department there would be more shared knowledge than between different departments. The inscrutable utterance below highlights this point:

**[Extract 7.4. 73001, IM, CS\P]**

<$3> It also gets a bit painty **and stuff like that**.

The notion of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) may also help to explain why VCMs should be more frequent in CS\P than CS\MS: CS\P tend to be among those in higher positions with a company, and such people tend to have been in business and probably in the particular company longer. CS\MS in contrast involve workers lower down the hierarchy as well as managers, and as such they may not have developed an

equivalent level of shared knowledge. As for the low density in CD\P this can be partly explained by the level of conflict within meeting 61001; as such, it resembles the EM 141001. The CD\MS meeting also contains a degree of conflict which as we have seen may mean vagueness is inappropriate, and this type of relationship would probably entail a low degree of shared knowledge.*

### 7.3.3 Problems and decisions

Business is concerned with problems and solutions, both real and hypothetical. Conflict arises from perceived problems, and decisions are often made in response to actual or potential problems. The purpose of this section is to describe how decisions, the decision-making process and conflict (and its avoidance) find linguistic realisation in IM and EM, and how speakers evaluate the situation and thus reflect their stance.

#### 7.3.3.1 Decisions

There are two seemingly mutually-exclusive positions regarding decision-making in business meetings. The first posits that, while decisions are eventually made in meetings, their occurrence is far less frequent, obvious or causal than is generally assumed. Issues are frequently discussed, but an explicit, recognisable decision made in relation to a specific issue is rare. The second position is more in accordance with the common-sense view of decision-making, in that decisions are frequently made in meetings and follow a

*These findings are in contrast to those of Koester (2006: 90-94). She found that vague language in general was more common in unidirectional discourse where one of the speakers is dominant, which is roughly equivalent to the MS category, than in collaborative discourse. She also explains this in terms of reference to shared knowledge, in that MS-type communication vague language is used to refer to previously mentioned specific facts and figures.

clear causal chain of problem – discussion – decision (compare Hoey's, 1983 sequence of problem – response – evaluation). The former position is well outlined by Boden (1994), and work by Watson (2002) on causality in decision-making in organisational behaviour supports her stance, as does research by Mirivel and Tracy (2005). The latter position is upheld by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), and underpins Koester's definition of genre (2001, 2006).

Boden argues that in large, formal meetings the purpose is often information oriented, but in smaller meetings, 'the focus is 'at least in spirit' on decision-making. This is not to say that many decisions are actually *made* in most meetings' (1994: 84). She states:

> *Actual decisions in organisations are virtually invisible, yet they are the "quanta" out of which pivotal choices are made, undesirable strategies avoided, and critical paths taken...decisions, as identifiable items, become clear only after their constitution.* (1994: 183)

Holmes and Stubbe (ibid) argue that the type of workplace will affect the type of decision-making: in hierarchical establishments a contentious decision will merely require the ratification of the chair, but in more egalitarian companies such decisions will be approached collaboratively and with much negotiation. Decision-making is often 'the primary function of the meeting' (2003: 75). While the purpose of this section is not to evaluate these two contrasting positions, it is important to note that decision-making may not be as clear and obvious as we might expect. As such, if we accept that the word *problem* is often tied to decision-making (Hoey, 1983), and that *issue* is closely related

semantically and in terms of collocation, then these two major keywords may help to shed light on this process. In the next extract the relationship is clearly articulated:

**[Extract 7.5. #151001. EM\CB. $1 is the Head Host from the pharmaceutical company and $3 is the representative from the supply company.]**

<$1> ...Oliver Steffi is there anything else you want to sort of add to the agenda?

<$3> Yeah. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> I would like to use the option to talk about the file which we created in regard to the last <$G?>.

<$E> drink being poured <\$E>

<$3> So in general this would show you <$E> 1 sec <\$E> erm the **problems** which we have to to know **the information** which is **behind** all the different+

<$5?> <$E> clears throat <\$E>

<$3> +er **decisions.**

We could summarise this reasoning as: problem - collect information – make decision.

In the internal sales meeting below we can see a further aspect of the relationship between *issue,* information and decisions:

**[Extract 7.6. #169001. IM\MS sales review meeting. $1 is the MD.]**

<$4> <$=> Erm and internally we've <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> sp= sp= <\$=> Sports mats has raised an **issue** that we could do with covering at this meeting.

<$1> Okay.

<$4> If possible.

<$E> 3 sec <\$E>

<$4> <$=> Erm it's <\$=>

<$1> <$G?> I have to make another bloody **decision.**

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$4> <$=> It's not it's <\$=> It's **confirmation of the decision** you took a month ago+

<$1> Yeah.

<$4> +the <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> **information** didn't **get down to** the production floor. <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> We're currently still making sports mats with <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> bonded edges.

Here, we have the pattern *issue – make decision – transmit information – action*, which can be combined with the previous pattern:

1. raise *issue/problem* (often worded as such)
2. collect relevant information
3. make decision
4. transmit information
5. carry out decided action.

Goals can also be seen to be directly related to this process: both in terms of achieving higher level goals e.g. making a profit, but also more local goals such as improving the efficiency of a specific aspect of the company's operation.

### 7.3.3.2 *Problem* and *issue*

In the quantitative chapters we saw how these two apparent synonyms behaved very similarly at the lexicogrammatical level and very differently at the contextual level. Occurrences varied considerably depending on topic, relationship of speakers and company type, and yet in terms of collocation and colligation they were largely equivalent. The following extract shows how these two nouns can occur together, but with slightly different functions:

**[Extract 7.7. #73001. IM, CS\P. Participants are discussing computer-related topics.]**

<$3> I mean there are two issues. The first is c= can you access that information off Leon's computer.

<$E> 2.5 secs </$E>

<$1> Erm <$E> 4 secs </$E> yeah. Theoretically. Yeah. It depends where it is.

<$3> <$=> Cos the other thi= </$=>

<$E> laughs </$E>

<$3> Well I <$=> I thi= </$=> think that's another **issue.** <$=> And the other the and and another **issue** which comes on= onto that is that erm I'm still waiting he s= that cos </$=> <$E> 1.5 secs </$E> Apparently one of the **problems** with getting some of the information off the computer is the fact that <$=> erm that particular <$E> 1 sec </$E> the s= </$=> the software is not as powerful as the stuff we've got on the the new computer that he's got. <$E> 3 secs </$E>There was an **issue** about getting the stuff off+

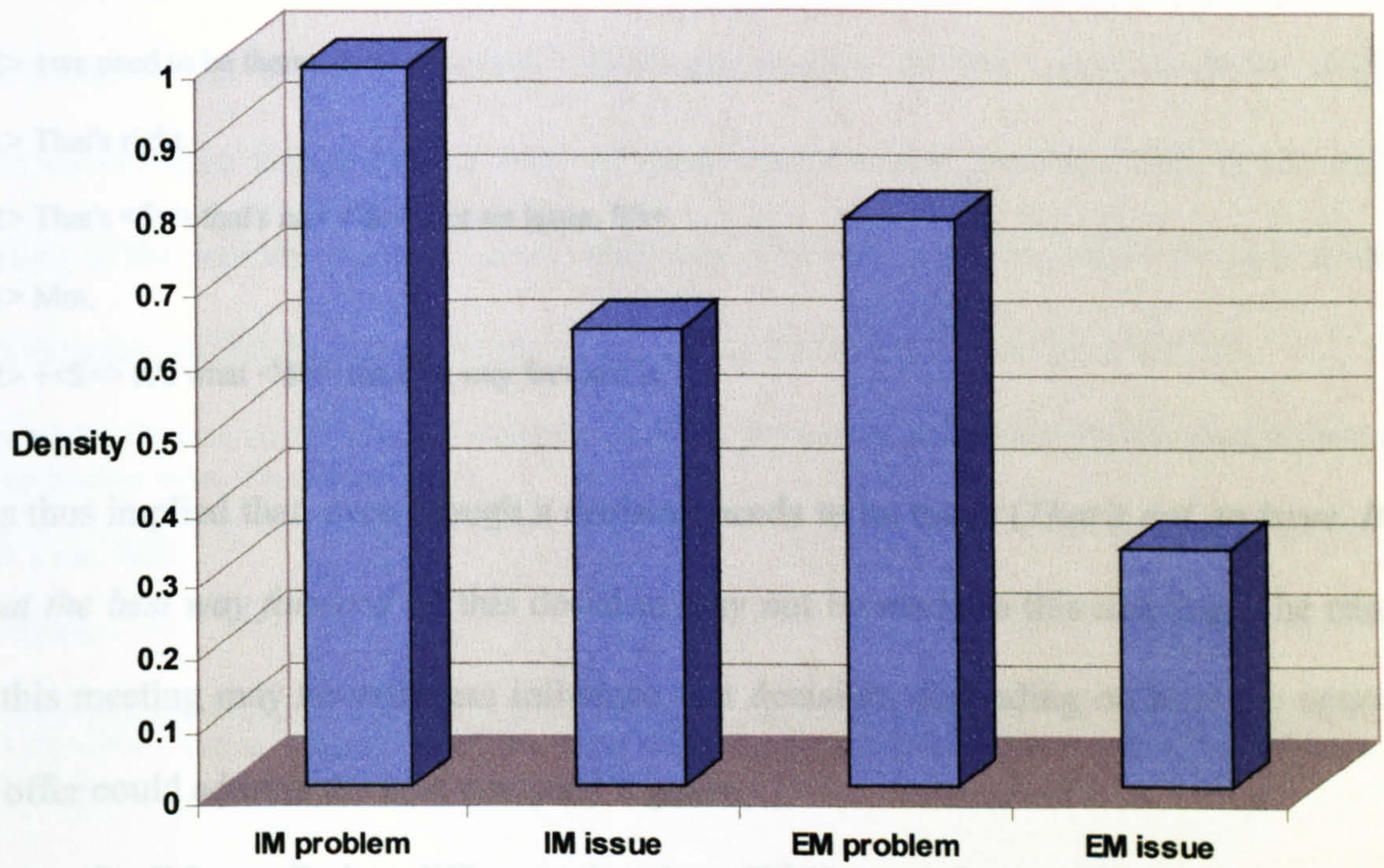
<$4> No. He's got the same+

<$3> +in the format.

Here we can see that, while the two are closely related, they are not necessarily interchangeable. While both here have a semantic prosody of difficulty, *problem* is more similar to an obstacle or something that should be solved, whereas *issue* may be perceived as being more nebulous, perhaps broader, and requiring consideration and discussion. *Problem* may also be more categorical, which would help to explain why we found in the previous chapter that it is more frequent in peer than MS communication: concerns (or issues) over face tend to be less in peer meetings (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), so we may find *issue* being used euphemistically rather than the more face-threatening *problem.*

Figure 7.4 below based on a manual search through the sample shows that both words are more likely to occur in IM than EM, and that *problem* is more likely to occur than *issue.* The EM which has a higher density (combined total of 2.1) is the contractually bound logistics and procedure meeting (151001), which is unsurprising given the decision-making focus of such meetings. The other CB meeting, 141001, features a lower combined density of these two keywords (0.9), and much of this meeting is concerned with the representative from the brewery aggressively informing the pub chain of decisions already made. For a breakdown of the occurrence of these two keywords per meeting, see Appendix 4.

**Figure 7.4: Density of *Problem* and *Issue***




The above findings suggest that considerable differences exist in the decision-making process when we compare IM and EM e.g. between larger companies, decisions are often not made in EM: instead, EM provide a platform for explaining or informing about decisions already made, or rejecting or agreeing to decisions already made, or signalling content or discontent with decisions made, or discussing or hinting at the possible implications of decisions made. (The exception is EM concerned with logistics and procedures, as stated above.) In the sales meeting below, the MD of the host company ($2) is explaining why his company has not decided whether to buy more copy from the salesman's ($1) magazine:

**[Extract 7.8. #75001. EM\NCB]**

<$2> <$=> We di= <\$=> Yeah Obviously if we get leads <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$=> erm <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> if the if <\$=> we need to be wherever it is. We need to be in+

<$1> Mm.

<$2> +China in <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Korea or wherever+

<$1> Wherever.

<$2> +we need to be there.

<$1> That's right.

<$2> That's <$=> that's na= <\$=> not an issue. It's+

<$1> Mm.

<$2> +<$=> it's what <\$=> the best way forward is.

It is thus implied that, even though a decision needs to be made (*That's not an issue. It's what the best way forward is*) this decision may not be made in this meeting. The result of this meeting may nevertheless influence that decision, depending on how the options on offer could address the host company's goals.

In IM we find a different situation. Within top-down information-provision manager-subordinate IM*, the purpose of the meeting may be to convey information concerning decisions made by upper management, whereas within peer IM the purpose might be to discuss problems, and this may lead to a decision or two. Strategic meetings would be the clearest example of this, which by definition are decision focused.

In the strategy meeting below, we see the upper management foregrounding problems that require solutions via appropriate decisions:

**[Extract 7.9. #167001. CD\P. $1 is the MD, $2 is the technical director.]**

<$2> <$=> And these <\$=> And remember this is where there's been a problem so you've got an imbalance of your <$H> chemicals <\$H>.

*As noted by Holmes and Stubbe (2003) above, the size of the meeting can also help indicate the degree of likely decision making.

<$1> Okay so right. <$=> So there maybe some= <\$=>

<$2> So these are the ones that we need to get out of the building quickly.

Interestingly, this meeting features more occurrences of the word *decision* (eight occurrences) than the combined total of *issue* and *problem* (seven). This is the only meeting in the sample to exhibit such behaviour. The use of *decision* here is more in line with Holmes and Stubbe's (2003) more explicit description of decision making:

<$1> Right. <$=> So in fact there's e= th= the <\$=> There's actions outstanding for this week still which we can finalise when when Derek's here.

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> I've got a feeling he'll bottle out <$E> 1 sec <\$E> of **decision making.** <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> <$=> But I I'll <\$=> I wanna make that **decision.** Harry said we could make that **decision** providing we've got er a refund clause.

It is also worth noting that while *issue* and *problem* are keywords in the full corpus, and in both the EM and IM subcorpora, indicating that they are used more frequently in internal and external meetings than in everyday social and intimate conversations, the word *decision* is not. This finding supports Nelson's (2000) distinction between the language *of* business and language *about* business: *problem* and *issue* evidently belong to the former category in that they are words businesspeople use when doing business, whereas *decision* belongs to the latter category and would be more frequent when people talk about doing business. Such findings have considerable pedagogical implications.

### 7.3.4 Deontic modality

This section will look primarily at obligation through the occurrence of seven selected deontic modal and semi-modal verbs in the sample corpus: *need to, should, have to,*

*gotta, have got to, and must.** Deontic modals are of interest here because they occur in various workplace discourses (Koester, 2006), and from the keyword lists we saw that *need* is one of the most key keywords in the corpus (*should* and *gotta* also appear lower down on the main keyword list at #406 and #430 respectively). Figure 7.5 shows their frequency** across the whole of CANBEC. The results are slightly different from those in the framework study, as *have to* is more frequent than *need to*, but otherwise they are fairly consistent. Once again, *must* is noticeable because of its relative infrequency, which indicates the explanatory limits of a purely semantic or formal view of language. Apart from the strong face threat embodied in *must*, another reason for its infrequency may be that it is more personal than *have to*, in that the latter is used to convey obligation from 'outside' (Swan, 1995: 352) or 'objective obligation' (Simpson, 1997: 137), whereas the former is used to convey the opinion of the speaker (ibid). In an institutional environment, *have to* would usually be seen as more appropriate.

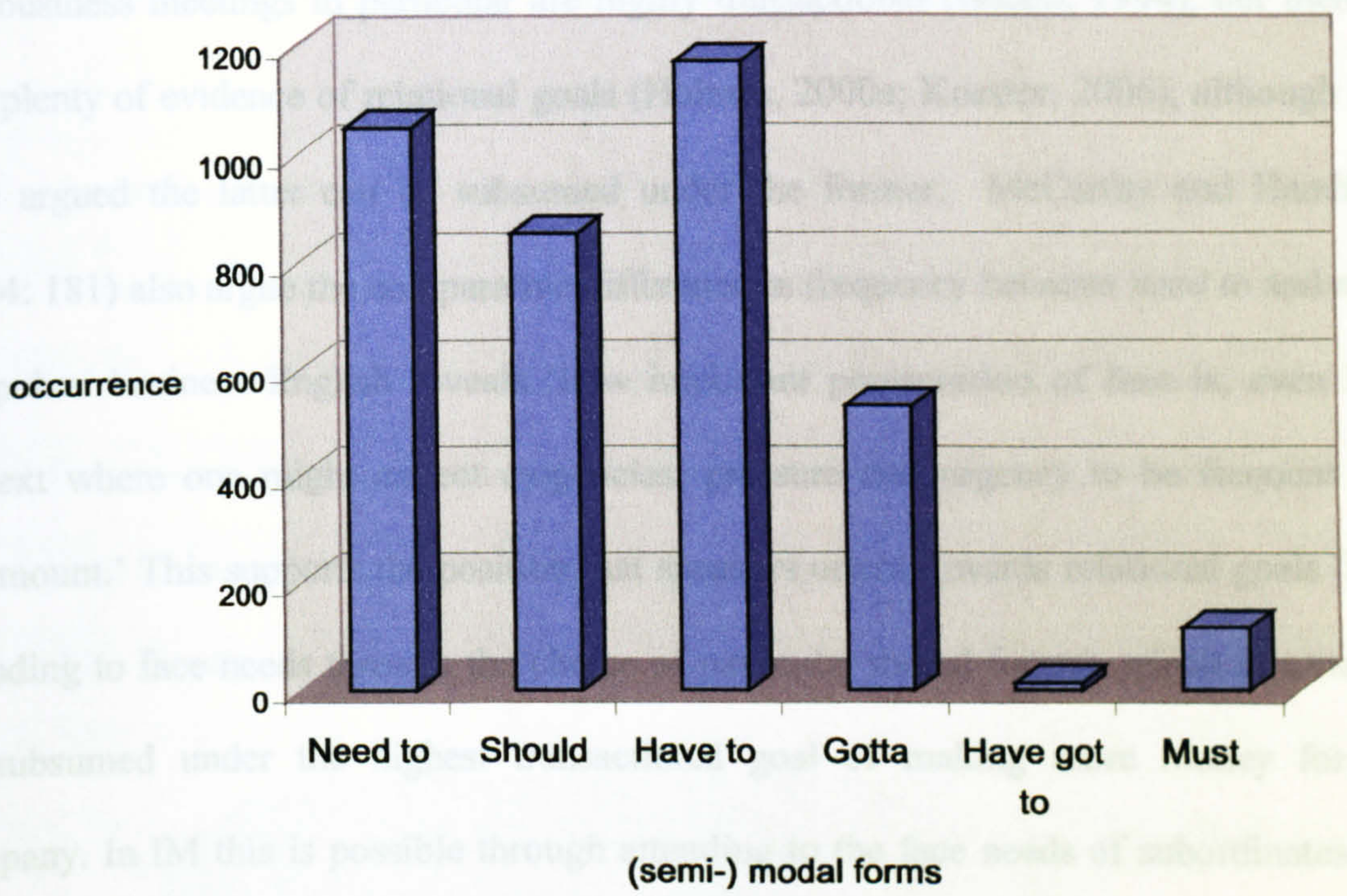
These forms have been chosen because they are all 'strong' modals of obligation (Weiyun He, 1993). The discussing, giving, receiving, rejecting and reiterating of directives and requests is a feature of every workplace, and this section will show how the relationship of the speakers can affect the frequency and the illocutionary force of the

*There are other possible modal forms which have not been included here because of their relative infrequency and because of space constraints. 'Ought to' occurs slightly over 100 times in the whole corpus, and "d better' less than 20).'Want to', while being a deontic modal, primarily expresses desire or inclination (Koester 2006: 85), although its use as a modal expressing obligation is briefly explored below. This section is concerned with deontics which express obligation or necessity.

**The figures in the graph have been calculated following Biber et al (1999): as not all instances of these modal forms are deontic, a random set of concordance lines is analysed and the percentage of remaining deontic modals is then multiplied by the total in the whole corpus, giving a fraction of the original total. For example, examples of must such as 'there must be', 'I must admit', 'you must know' or of should 'we should be able', 'it should last forever shouldn't it' do not involve any notion of obligation, and are not included in the final total. While this inductive method is not 100% accurate, it is sufficient for present purposes and is applied consistently.

relevant modal forms.

**Figure 7.5: Frequency of deontic modals**




Once again, issues of face are relevant, as obligation is tied to the notion of threats to negative face: directing or requesting is by definition an imposition. There is also the possibility of threatening positive face, for example by telling somebody to do something which she considers beneath his or her position, or by forcefully reminding a subordinate to do something which she or he had neglected to do. Therefore the choices that speakers make, and the options they reject, when discussing obligation provide a window into the issues behind the words.

In relation to the relevance of modality to communication in general, Weiyun He argues that it identifies problems and possible solutions as well as goals and how to reach

them (ibid: 518). In the case of *need*, for example, she states that it is often used to identify goals. This would partly explain its high frequency in the corpus, in that much business discourse is clearly goal directed. As has been argue earlier, business English and business meetings in particular are highly transactional (Boden, 1994), but there is also plenty of evidence of relational goals (Holmes, 2000a; Koester, 2006), although as I have argued the latter can be subsumed under the former. McCarthy and Handford (2004: 181) also argue the comparative difference in frequency between *need to* and *must* in spoken business English reveals 'how important preservation of face is, even in a context where one might expect exigencies, pressure and urgency to be frequent and paramount.' This supports the position that speakers orient towards relational goals (here attending to face needs through the choice of particular modal forms), which in turn can be subsumed under the highest transactional goal of making more money for the company. In IM this is possible through attending to the face needs of subordinates and thereby motivating them by making them feel valued (or not making them feel unvalued), and in EM through showing respect for the other company's representative and thereby developing the relationship.

#### 7.3.4.1 Relationship of speakers

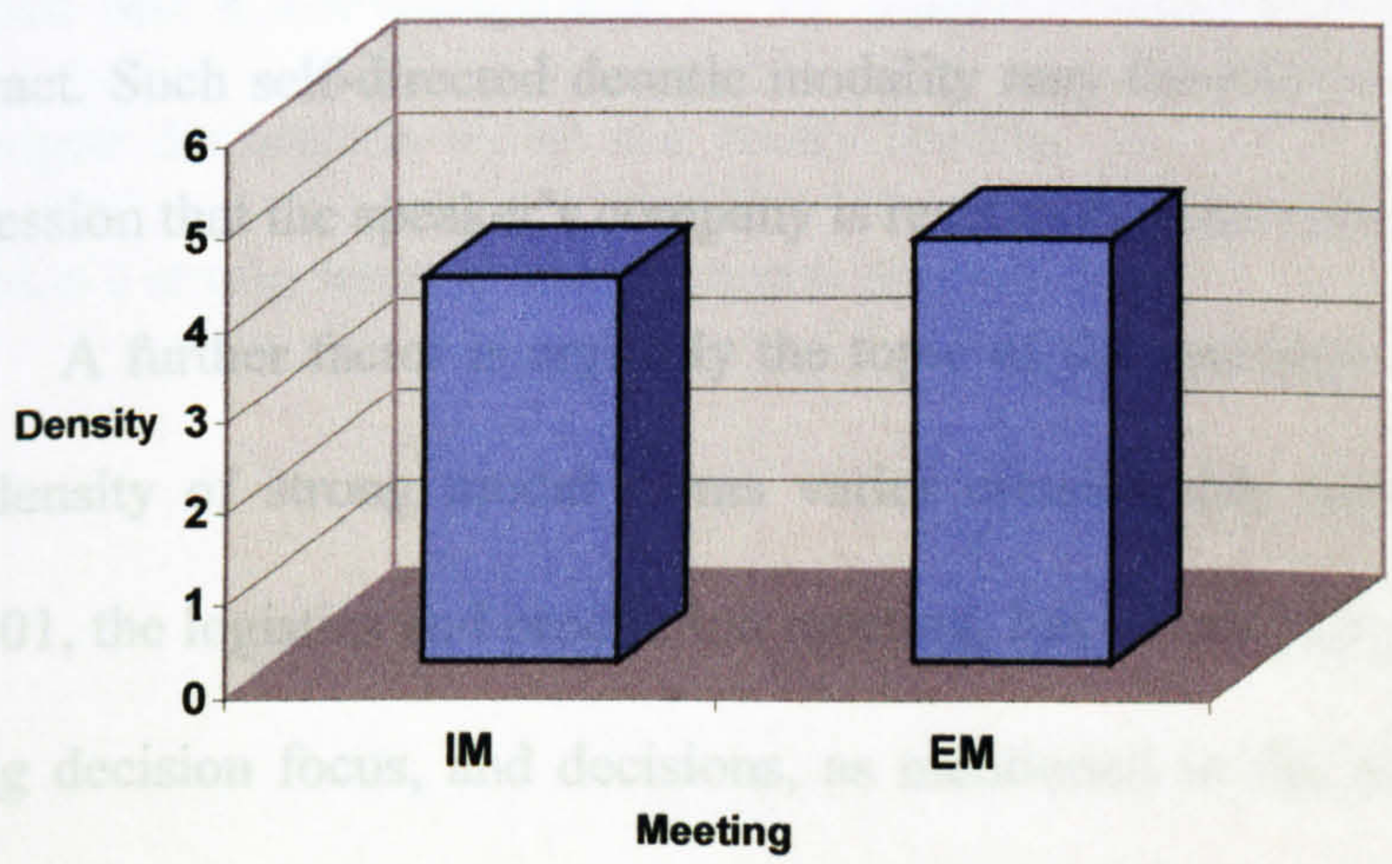
In terms of speaker status and the negotiation of that status, Weiyun He states that 'Participants' relative discourse statuses shape their use of modality; their use of modality at varying interactional moments in turn constitutes their statuses' (ibid: 509). To evaluate the relationship between modality and status, she proposes the following equation:

*Modality value = perceived truth value of utterance + perceived discourse status of speaker*

The stronger the modality, the more certain, determined and higher perceived truth value of the utterance, and the higher the discourse status of the speaker. The validity of this equation will be judged in relation to the relationship of the speakers within the sample corpus.

According to this, MS-type meetings should feature more instances of strong modal forms than P-type meetings, and in meetings where status is less foregrounded e.g. many EM, there should be fewer instances. What we find, however, is that these strong modal forms are slightly more frequent in EM than IM (Figure 7.6), and that within IM they feature more in P than MS meetings (Figure 7.7).

**Figure 7.6: Density of deontic modals**




### 7.3.4.2 Strong Modal Forms in EM

In understanding why strong modal forms are frequent in EM, the inclusive/exclusive distinction is relevant. In the same way that it is possible to refer to your own company in EM through *we*, it appears that participants can also direct the

strong modal form towards themselves. In the sales negotiation 75001 there are eleven instances of *we need to* (see Appendix 4), but a close analysis reveals that of these, ten are what we could call self-directed modals, for example:

**[Extract 7.10. #75001. EM\NCB.]**

<$2> <$=> We di= <\$=> Yeah Obviously if we get leads <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$=> erm<$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> if the if <\$=> we need to be wherever it is.

From the three EM in the sample, over 70% of all instances of *we need to* are self-directed. Such self-directed modality is a feature largely specific to EM, as only in IM involving clear departmental divisions could the equivalent occur. The extremely high percentage of the self directed chunk *we need to* (over 90%) in meeting 75001 is accountable for by the fact that this is a NCB meeting. In NCB meetings it is logical to assume there is as yet less actual obligation, as the two parties have not formed a binding contract. Such self-directed deontic modality may therefore be a strategy for creating an impression that the speaker's company is responsible and competitive.

A further factor is arguably the topic of the meeting. As Table 7.2 below shows, the density of strong modal forms varies considerably across the different meetings. 151001, the logistics and production meeting, has a very high density. This meeting has a strong decision focus, and decisions, as mentioned in the previous section, are closely tied to goals: we make decisions to achieve our goals. In meeting 141001, the density is relatively low, despite this meeting being centrally concerned with the directives given from the brewer ($2) to the pub chain ($1). Here, however, the directives are delivered using categorical and un-negotiable stative verbs, which helps to add to the conflictual flavour of this meeting:

**[Extract 7.11. #141001. EM\CB.]**

<$2> <$=> So it seems <$E> 1 sec <\$E> and <$E> 5 secs <\$E> er <\$=> <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> It seems as if I'm here not to offer you any erm any negotiation way out of this at all.

<$1> Yeah. <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$2> And <$=> that would be <\$=> that would be correct. <$=> Er we're not really looking to <\$=> <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Well <$E> 1 sec <\$E> we aren't going to vary the <$E> 1 sec <\$E> proposal that we've given to you.

<$1> Uh huh.

<$2> Erm <$E> 3.5 secs <\$E> but then it would be u= up to you to have a look into er the alternatives if you decide that you don't wanna play. <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> Erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> so he says again clearly <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> the retail link scheme ends at the end of this year.

<$1> Uh huh.

It is also worth noting how this conflict is further reinforced by the extremely face-threatening (Koester 2001, 2006) explicit performative *so he says again clearly*. By communicating the message in such a non-ambiguous way, the listener is effectively coerced into acknowledgement of the course of action. Combined with the reworded, unhedged declaration *we're not really looking to ...we aren't going to*, this meeting contains a strong sense of assertion and aggravation.

**Table 7.2: Breakdown of strong modal forms per meeting**

| **Density of Strong Modal Forms** |
|---|
| **EM** |
| 75001: 3.7 |
| 141001: 3.4 |
| 151001: 5.7 |
| **IM** |
| 169001: 3.2 |
| 167001: 5.7 |
| 139001: 2.3 |
| 73001: 2.9 |
| 61001: 7.2 |

The following extract shows how modality is employed to address the speaker's and his company's goals. Ylanne-McEwan's (1996) notion of identity goals seems relevant here, as speaker one (the Head Host) is activating his professional, senior role through the force of his argument and length of his turn in order to explicitly orient to the transactional goals he deems necessary. He initially talks about a report that one of his colleagues, who is presently on holiday, passed on to him for the meeting. He then goes on to highlight the changes that he sees as necessary:

**[Extract 7.12. #151001. EM\CB. $1 represents the pharmaceutical company.]**

<$1> ... I guess I can photocopy this but I think w= what's more important is <$E> swallows <\$E> we actually discuss this information in terms of what **we need to** do with it. Because <$=> you mean f= <\$=> for instance we're assuming everything's five days so if we built a ninety eight day lead time into our system for the standard five day markets <$E> inhales <\$E> we know therefore that your aim is to have everything ready and passed eight days before despatch. So you've got o= o= one day for for getting the despatch ready two days for the invoicing and five days for the distribution.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> <$=> If we're <\$=> If we're looking at some markets that are suddenly now fifteen days obviously what **we want to** do is build that into the firming up lead time. <$=> And <\$=> But **we also want you to** <$=> have i= <$E> 1 sec <\$E> h= <\$=> have erm that information upfront. <$=> So you know what mar= <\$=> **You need to** almost flag those markets to say+

<$2?> Yeah.

<$1> +this is a legalization market+

<$2?> Yeah. Yeah.

<$1> +and therefore it's not just five days. **We've gotta** have it ready fifteen days before.

<$5?> Mm.

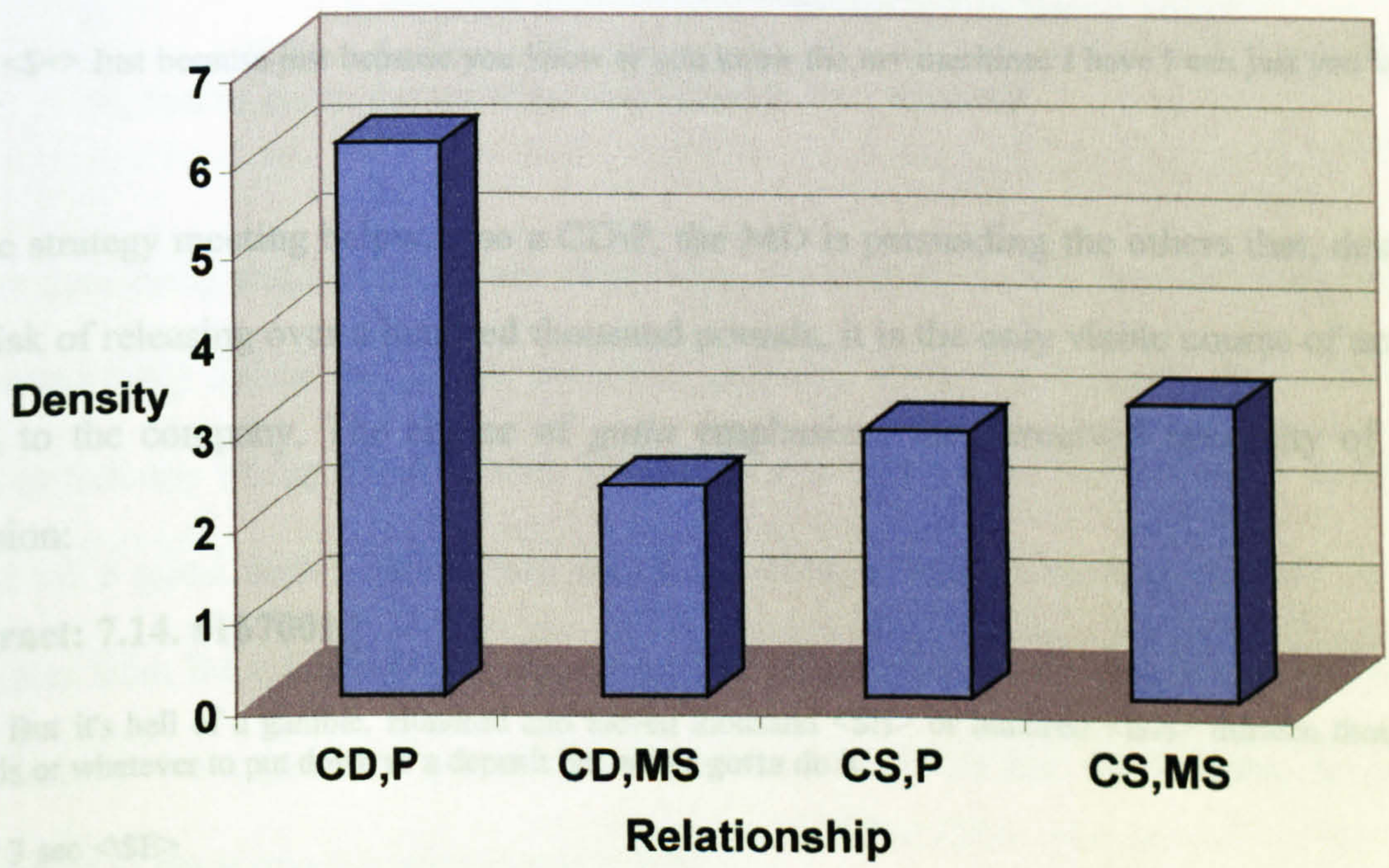
We can see how the force of the request builds up over the course of the turn: *we need to – we want to – we want you to – you need to – we gotta have it ready*. Whereas *we need to* refers to both companies and is essentially inclusive, the following modal forms of obligation become progressively stronger and are directed at the other company i.e. it is the other company that is obliged to make the changes. Despite the use of *we* in the final *we gotta*, there is no doubt as to where the responsibility lies. This meeting also has six instances of *must* (see Appendix 4), and as such is very unusual, however five of these are self-directed towards the supply company.

### 7.3.4.3 Strong Modal Forms in IM

As can be seen in Table 7.2, strong modal forms are considerably more frequent in the two CD\P (169001 and 61001) meetings than in the other IM. This finding runs counter

to Weiyun He's hypothesis that the greater the power differential between the speakers, the stronger the modality, given that these two meetings are peer meetings. While other factors, for example topic, would also affect the degree of obligation, McCarthy and Handford (2004) show that in different meetings of the same topic, involving the same managers, the strength of modality decreases in rough inverse proportion to the difference in status of the participants. Managers in peer meetings use stronger modal forms than managers talking to subordinates about the same topic. They state 'Face-protecting and indirect forms for issuing directives are preferred in order to maintain good interpersonal relations and to promote the comity, motivation and stability so necessary in business institutions' (Ibid: 182).

**Figure 7.7: Deontic modals in IM**



A further reason why strong modal forms feature so strongly in CD\P may be that such meetings, like the EM logistics and procedure meeting, feature a high incidence of decision-making. Colleagues attempt to decide on the most appropriate procedure or strategy for the company or division concerned to take, and this inevitably involves persuasion and claims of necessity. In the extract below we see that the speakers are negotiating the course of action, with each arguing his case. Modality intensifies over interrupted turns, with the Chair (speaker one), who is actually subordinate to speaker four in rank or status, finally baldly stating *you gotta work on that code today.*

**[Extract 7.13. #61001. IT division of investment bank.]**

<$1> And if at that point it doesn't work I suggest we postpone the rollout. But if it does work then we continue. And then **we don't have to** <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> throw something together tonight that may or may not represent the actual <$H> production advance <\$H>.

<$4> <$=> Well I mean you're you're not gi= giving me any luxury to er to verify the things that this is not <\$=> This is the kind of bug **I have to** work around right. <$=> So I don't I don't have a luxury to <\$=>

<$1> Yeah. <$=> **You've gotta** work on that code today and give us a <\$=>

<$4> <$=> Just because just because you know er you know the m= machines I have I can just you know <\$=>

In the strategy meeting below, also a CD\P, the MD is persuading the others that, despite the risk of releasing over a hundred thousand pounds, it is the only viable course of action open to the company. The choice of *gotta* emphasizes the perceived necessity of this decision:

**[Extract: 7.14. #167001.]**

<$1> But it's hell of a gamble. Hundred and eleven thousand <$H> or hundred <\$H> thirteen thousand pounds or whatever to put down as a deposit but **we've gotta** do it.

<$E> 3 sec <\$E>

<$2> Yep.

It seems therefore that there is a strong relationship between decision making and the strength of modals of obligation. This can be explained from a goals perspective, with decisions being made to achieve the goals, and strong modals being employed to persuade the other participants of the efficacy or necessity of the proposed solution or course of action. The relatively higher occurrence of strong modal forms in EM can be partly explained by the notion of self-direction in EM, partly by decision making, and the following concordance lines show how strong modal forms in EM can be employed devoid of their obligatory and therefore face-threatening nuances.

1. <$1> If **you need to** replace it.
2. may not be something that **you need to** go ahead with now.
3. +but **you need to** keep telling people.
4. how much money do **you need to** do this.
5. But there again do **you need to** test it physically on a rig?
6. ged </$H> It's Donald really **you need to** talk to.
7. the proposals are and whether **you need to** support it I suggest you
8. Lau=launch support **you need to** talk to Sarah about.
9. <$E> 1.5 secs </$E>Do **you need to** give a summary of of how that
10. five to reach the six kilos **you need to** be delivered.

Rather than being employed to issue directives, *you need to* is used to make suggestions and seems fairly conditional. It also occurs in questions involving suggestions. As such, it tends to lack any strong threat to face, and means something like 'if you want to do this it might be a good idea'. These uses are in contrast to the obligation inherent in the examples from IM CS\MS below, where we find we find the most straightforward use of *you need to* – a supervisor giving direction fairly to his or her subordinate, in effect delegating or clarifying the subordinate's duties.

1. self this is the information **you need to** home in on.
2. on the outside of the box **you need to** write <$E> 1 sec </$E>
3. So **you need to** make your comments now.

4. every two </$=> Well yeah **you need to** do a stock check every once
5. The the the only th= but **you need to** make your team aware cos you
6. So in that sense **you need to** be a bit a= smart as well th
7. <$2> You know **you need to** distinguish if John Bruce or
8. 2 sec </$E>Er but **you need to** come back to me and say ``Yes
9. So <$E> 0.5 sec </$E> **you need to** k= be a bit stricter on him
10. +so **you need to** make sure that there's no room

### 7.3.5 Creativity and idioms

Creativity can involve linguistic forms such as idioms, metaphors, repetition, relexicalisation, metonymy, meronymy, hyperbole and litotes (Low, 1988; Tannen, 1989; Gibbs, 1994; McCarthy, 1998; Carter, 2004; McCarthy and Carter, 2004; O'Keeffe, Carter and McCarthy, in press). The hypothesis that the main focus of creative language use in business meetings, as in general language use, is on convergence, will be evaluated in this section, with a particular focus on idiomatic language use. There will be an analysis of the type and use of idioms within the sample corpus, and I will then compare the types and functions of idioms in IM and EM. As there is not, as yet, any method for automatically finding language which could be categorised as idiomatic, searches have been done manually. As such, I may have inadvertently overlooked some items.

#### 7.3.5.1 Definition and categorisation of idiomatic language

The framework I will use is based on that of Koester (2001), which is itself derived from Moon's study of fixed expressions (1998). Koester (ibid) defines idiomatic language as being figurative and non-literal to some degree. Therefore 'idioms' and 'idiomatic language' as used here also include instances of metaphorical language. Conversational routines such as *excuse me*, and discourse-organising clusters such as *the point is* are

deleted, as these tend not to have any figurative meaning. Another defining feature is that idiomatic language also draws attention to itself, or is 'marked' (Moon, ibid). Unlike Moon, Koester also includes single words if they have non-literal meaning, and provided they are conventionalized to some degree. I have followed Koester's approach. This is in contrast to McCarthy who defines idioms as 'strings of more than one word' (1998: 130). The notion of idioms being 'fixed' in terms of syntactic form, and semantic and pragmatic functions, is key (McCarthy, ibid; Moon, ibid; Koester, ibid). Whereas Koester and Moon have a subcategory for frozen similes, I have deleted this, as they are extremely infrequent in my data (only two in the whole sample corpus). I have also combined the categories for 'ill formed and defective collocations' and 'irreversible binominal and trinomials' under the heading 'anomalous collocations' as there seemed to be a very high level of overlap.

The boundaries of this categorization are fuzzy (Koester, ibid), and there is considerable overlap: 25% of Moon's items can be placed in two categories, and 1% in three (Moon, ibid). Moon also discusses the inevitability of disagreement over categorization, due to idiolect and idiosyncrasy (ibid: 23). While I have attempted to be consistent in deciding on and categorizing the lexical items, it seems likely that this is much scope for disagreement. The full list of idiomatic language and its breakdown from the meetings' sample is in the Appendix 3. The idioms are categorized as follows.

**Categories of idioms, based on Moon (1998)/Koester (2001):**

I *Metaphors*

1 Extended opaque frozen metaphors ('classic' idioms)

2 Extended spatial/motion metaphors

3 Other metaphors and metaphorical collocations:

II *Formulae*

1 Cultural allusions: proverbs, maxims, catch phrases

2 Idiomatic prefabricated phrases or clauses

III *Anomalous collocations*

IV *Idiomatic phrasal verbs*

### 7.3.5.2 Findings

**Table 7.3: breakdown of idioms**

**All meetings:**

| *Category* | *Amount/density* |
|---|---|
| **Metaphor** | **780/ 10.8** |
| Extended opaque 'frozen' metaphor | 94/ 1.3 |
| Extended spatial/temporal metaphor | 248/3.4 |
| Other metaphors/metaphorical collocations | 438/ 6.1 |
| **Formulae** | **190/ 2.6** |
| Cultural allusions | 60/ 0.8 |
| Idiomatic prefabricated phrases/clauses | 130/ 1.8 |
| **Anomalous collocations** | **179/ 2.5** |
| **Idiomatic phrasal verbs** | **270/ 3.7** |

*Overall density: 19.7*

The above Table shows that an idiom occurs almost every fifty words, which is almost three times higher than in Koester's workplace corpus. This suggests that idiomatic language may be more frequent in business meetings than in other types of institutional

discourse, as Koester's corpus* embodies a wide range of workplace genres. As business meetings are arguably the most transactional form of business discourse (Boden, 1994), this finding that runs counter to Carter (2004: 79), who argues that the more transactional a speech event, the less likely we are to find instances of linguistic creativity.

As can be seen, the most frequent type of idiomatic language is metaphor, which totals more than the other three categories combined and accounts for slightly over 1 per cent of the corpus. Metaphors, sometimes involving single words, and metaphorical collocations account for the largest number of examples from this category. Cultural allusions, for instance proverbs and maxims, are fewest overall. When they do occur, they are uttered overwhelmingly by the most senior person present, as are frozen metaphors. Cultural allusions and metaphors also tend to be highly evaluative, a finding duplicated in Koester's study (2001). Spatial and temporal metaphors are often employed to outline or review, and evaluate, processes or plans. The remaining categories are found to fulfil a variety of functions, which will be discussed below and in chapter 8. The ratio of each type of idiom is virtually the same throughout each individual meeting (see Appendix 3).

**Functions of idioms**

The main functions of idioms are as follows: summarising a stretch of discourse or closing a topic; signalling devices in problem-solution patterns; subjective** stance;

*Koester's (2001) corpus is less than half the size of this sample, however, and therefore strong conclusions based on two such small corpora should be tempered.

**Subjective stance is to do with the closeness an individual shows towards a particular proposition, evidenced through items such as modality (Koester, 2001: 279-298).

politeness/face-saving, and negotiating discursive role/identities (Koester, 2001; Simpson, 2004). Koester (ibid) focuses heavily on the positive, convergent role played by idiomatic language, which is also noted by Carter: 'Creativity in common speech often seems to be connected with the construction of a relationship and of interpersonal convergence' (2004:9).

Gibbs and Gerrig (1989) also propose that metaphor is used to foster intimacy between interlocutors, as understanding metaphor relies more heavily on shared mutual knowledge or conversational common ground than understanding literal knowledge, the function of metaphor is to highlight this common ground. The three meetings in the sample corpus with high levels of disagreement or conflict, however, have the highest density of idioms. The EM with a high level of conflict (141001) contains almost twice as many idioms as the other two EM in the sample, and these idioms are often face threatening. In the extract below, the estates manager from the brewery (speaker two) is discussing the previous problems in their relationship. The brewer sells Fosters lager, and one of its competitors sells Tennant's:

**[Extract 7.15. #141001. EM\CB. $1 is the host.]**

<$2> Erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> and <$E> 1 sec <\$E> I don't know <$=> how to <\$=> how to **break that down** erm not if I'm honest that I care that much. But <$=> the erm <\$=> <$E> 1 sec <\$E> our commercial *bod* <$=> would certainly er <\$=> should **welcome the opportunity** to talk to you **sensibly.** But I know him and I'm sure he's tried before. <$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$1> Right.

<$2> And he's been **blanked** because you know you just sort of say "Right. You want us to **push Fosters.** Where do we get Tennant's from?" It's that sort of er+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +antipathy that doesn't actually help. <$=> Erm <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> six of <\$=> **Six and half a dozen it is.** That's what it is. <$E> laughs <\$E>

In view of the level of explicit antipathy between the speakers, this meeting is very unusual, especially given that it is an EM. Even though it is unusual, it clearly indicates that idioms can be powerfully employed to create a sense of divergence and highlight the lack of common ground.

**EM/IM findings**

When we compare IM and EM, the most striking finding is the relative frequency of idioms in IM* compared to EM, with densities of 22.6 and 13.6 respectively (see Tables 7.4 and 7.5 below). The overall ratio of different types of idiom remains fairly constant, however, with metaphors totalling more than the other three categories combined in both IM and EM (the relative ratio for both EM and IM is approximately 16: 4: 4: 6). The relative difference in density per type is also fairly uniform across the sample (see Appendix 3).

The topic of the meeting does not seem to have equal bearing on the occurrence of idioms. Whereas the internal sales meeting has a density of 18.3, the external sales meeting has a density of 13.7. An even greater difference is found between the internal and external production meetings (IM: 19.6 and 20.8; EM: 10.8). While both the internal and external procedure meetings have high densities (IM: 26.3; EM: 23.1), these two meetings also have a high level of disagreement. The relationship between disagreement

* The concepts of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and Swales' (1990) discourse communities, and 'shared expertise and terminology' are of value in explaining the language used in business meetings through the shared repertoire of linguistic tools, of which metaphor would be an example. It goes some of the way in explaining why metaphors are more common in IM than EM, because in all likelihood the community within a particular company would have more shared linguistic tools than would two separate companies.

and idiomatic language use will be further explored below. Company size does not appear to influence the density either, with the highest (26.3) and the lowest (10.8) figures coming from companies with over 10,000 employees. Nor does the type of company seem to be relevant.

The relationship of speakers does appear relevant: as noted above, idioms are much more frequent in IM than EM, and idiomatic language is more frequent in meetings involving colleagues from different departments, and most frequent in

**Table 7.4: Breakdown of idioms in IM**

| *Category* | *Amount/Density* |
|---|---|
| **Metaphor** | **592/ 12.4** |
| Extended opaque 'frozen' metaphor | 67/ 1.4 |
| Extended spatial/temporal metaphor | 192/ 4 |
| Other metaphors/metaphorical collocations | 333/ 7 |
| **Formulae** | **144/ 3** |
| Cultural allusions | 43/ 0.9 |
| Idiomatic prefabricated phrases/clauses | 101/ 2.1 |
| **Anomalous collocations** | **136/ 2.9** |
| **Idiomatic phrasal verbs** | **204/ 4.3** |

*Overall density: 22.6*

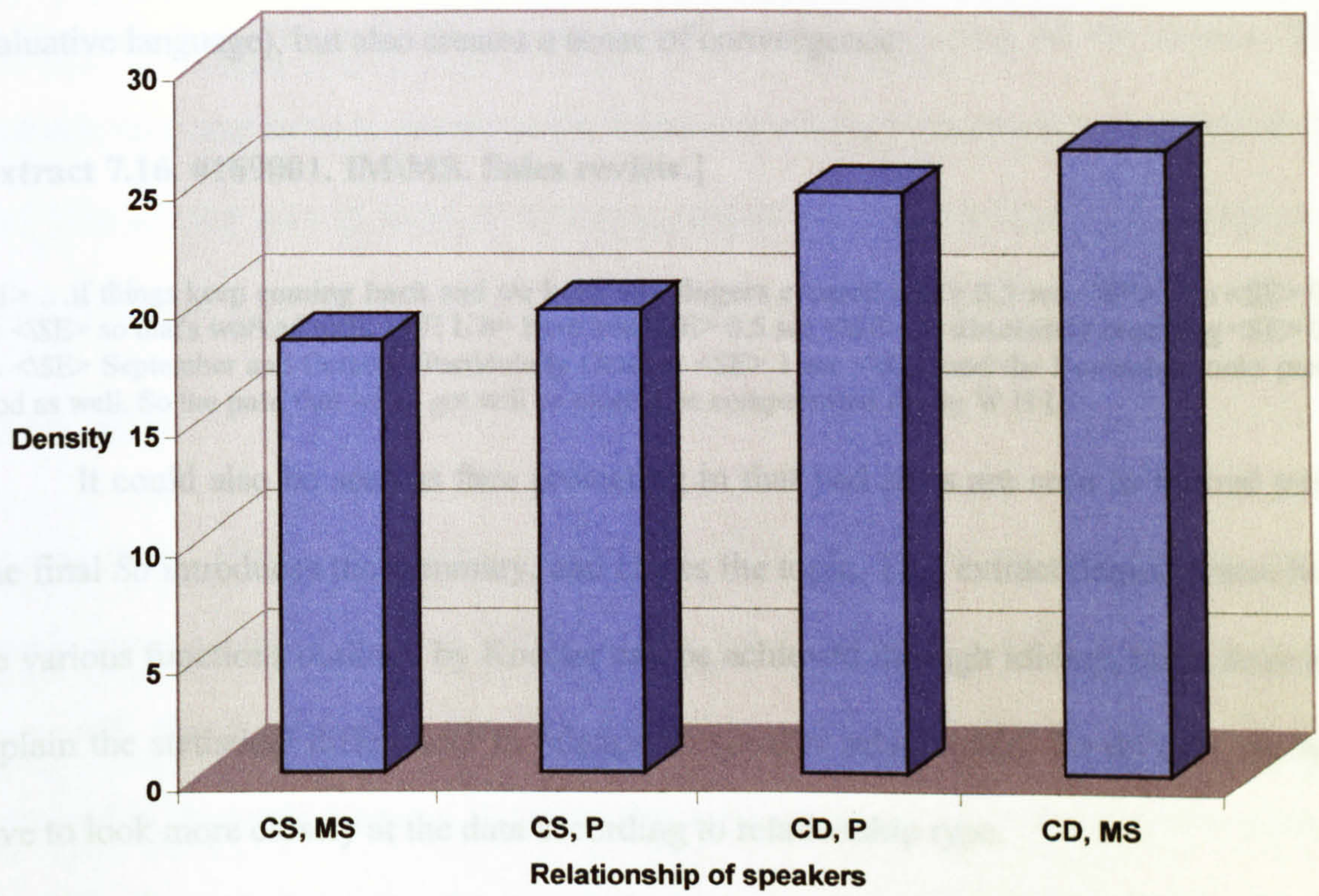
**Table 7.5: Breakdown of idioms in EM**

| *Category* | *Amount/ Density* |
|---|---|
| *Metaphor* | **178/ 7.3** |
| Extended opaque 'frozen' metaphor | 27/ 1.1 |
| Extended spatial/temporal metaphor | 56/ 2.3 |
| Other metaphors/metaphorical collocations | 95/ 3.9 |
| *Formulae* | **46/ 1.9** |
| Cultural allusions | 17/ 0.7 |
| Idiomatic prefabricated phrases/clauses | 29/ 1.9 |
| *Anomalous collocations* | **43/ 1.8** |
| **Idiomatic phrasal verbs** | **66/ 2.7** |

*Overall density: 13.6*

manager/subordinate type meetings across different departments (see Figure 7.8 below).

**Figure 7.8: IM Idioms**




**IM Meetings**

The beginning of meetings, i.e. where the participants have actually started talking about the agenda, can feature a high degree of idiomatic language. The first 844 words of meeting 169001, involving a monologue by the MD reviewing poor sales over the past few months and the recent, better, results (see Appendix 3), have a density of 35.5. This is extremely high, and almost double the density across the whole meeting. Over a third are extended frozen metaphors, and as such strongly evaluative: *cut back to the bone...diabolical month...crawl back out of the woodwork.* According to Low (1988:

128), metaphor can 'compel attention by positively or negatively dramatizing' something, and such graphic metaphors achieve this. In terms of Koester's five main functions we can say that this monologue reflects and reinforces (negotiates) the power role of the MD (it would be inappropriate for one of the sales staff to address the MD in such baldly evaluative language), but also creates a sense of convergence:

**[Extract 7.16. #169001. IM\MS. Sales review.]**

<$1> ...if things keep **coming back** and we **keep our fingers crossed** <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> erm <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> so that's worked well. W H L h= have had <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> an **absolutely cracking** <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> September and October. Particularly October <$E> 1 sec <\$E> and the November looks pretty good as well. So the **pain** that we've got will be more than compensated for by W H L.

It could also be seen as face protecting in that bad sales are seen as mutual *pain*. The final *So* introduces the summary, and closes the topic. This extract demonstrates how the various functions outlined by Koester can be achieved through idioms, but it does not explain the statistical differences in relation to speaker relationship. To do this, we will have to look more closely at the data according to relationship type.

Just before the participants start discussing the agenda we often find small talk. In meeting 40001 (discussed in the framework chapter) speaker one is the technical director and speaker two is the finance director, and are waiting for the sales director to arrive:

**[Extract 7.17. #40001, CD\P.]**

<$1> <$=> But er <\$=> Oh. Cos there's **inter-manager bickering going on** at the moment.

<$2> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> <$G?>

<$2> Erm yeah I met quite a few customers this morning. Erm anyway **cut a long story short** <$H> Doyle Grant <\$H> who are an accountants <$=> in <\$=> said would we be prepared to do a talk.

(...five turns...)

<$2> Then <$H> about three press <\$H> came up to me. Really stroppy big **sort of lady** came up to me and said ''Why don't we ever get any copy from you?" you know in a sort of South African accent. And I said ''<$H> **Darling** <\$H> who are you?" <$E> laughs <\$E> And I was talking to the <$H> Doyle Grant <\$H> lady+

Here the story creates a sense of convergence, which may be highly purposive in light of the apparent bickering referred to half-jokingly at the beginning of the extract. The idiomatic language helps to introduce the frame (*cut a long story short*) and embellish the story (*big stroppy sort of lady).* It is also a vehicle for humour (*Darling),* which is 'a useful means for creating solidarity' (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003:134).

**CD Meetings**

Meeting 61001 (IM) is interesting because the chair ($1) is not the most senior person there in terms of status* (Goode, 1960), and the most senior person ($4) does not want to agree with the proposals of the chair. There is much disagreement, and it is often expressed in idiomatic language. It seems that both speakers seek to assert power through idiom. In the extract below, the two have been discussing the time schedule for the proposed changeover. Lee ($4) is proposing changing the Chair's ($1) plan, but the Chair is not keen on his idea:

**[Extract 7.18. #61001. IM, CD\P.]**

<$1> I think *it's* **quite late in the day** Lee <$=> to erm <\$=> <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> for us to set up a+

<$4> Okay.

<$1> +server to test. <$=> I mean it's just can we is it is it possible <\$=>

<$4> No I mean I probably have a machine that er+

*Because of this, and because it becomes very much a decision-making meeting, which means that the speakers are discursively on an equal footing (Koester 2001) I have classified it as CD\P.

<$1> Yeah.

<$4> +only have er two connection and just repatch one of them to <$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$G?>.

<$1> I think **you're blazing a trail.** So we might have to just try it. <$=> And <\$=>

<$4> Well **we're blazing a trail** but we do that anyway. <$=> I mean this is+

Speaker 1 attempts to dissuade Lee by using the extended frozen metaphors *late in the day* and *blazing a trail.* As noted by Koester (2001), such metaphors, along with cultural allusions, tend to be the most evaluative form of idiom, so these metaphors emphasise the Chair's lack of enthusiasm for the proposals. Lee also employs what Kotthoff (1993: 202) terms an 'opposition format' i.e. when a 'rhetorically important word of the previous utterance is picked up and builds the centre of the countermove' by adopting the *blazing a trail* metaphor to support his position. His choice of pronoun is also significant, lending the collaborative weight of *we* to his position: in this meeting that involves six speakers and eleven participants he is the only one to make this proposal to change the schedule; moreover, despite his high position, he is the only employee in his section.

Although it is peer, the positions are ever-present. This is evident in the following phatic interlude towards the end of the meeting when the Chair (John, speaker one) has managed to persuade Lee (speaker four) to agree with the proposed course of action:

**[Extract 7.19. #61001. IM, CD\P.]**

<$4> So John you gonna **take us out** when this <$G?>?

<$E> 2 secs <\$E>

<$1> Er yeah I'm sure the network team will be **taking you all out** when we're all on their new network.

<$4> No I want you. You.

<$E> laughter <\$E>

<$4> You. <$G?>

<$1> It's it's still not my project. <$E> inhales <\$E> It never was.

<$4> Oh it's not your project? Oh I thought it was your project.

<$1> No **I've just got the biggest mouth.**

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> Erm.

<$4> **He's backing off now** so that's good. <$H> It's okay. <\$H>

<$1> You have to disassociate yourself <$G?>.

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

It would be arguably inconceivable for a subordinate of John to utter the metastatement *He's backing off now so that's good*, as well as the face threatening *I want you. You.* Even the request to be taken out might be seen as inappropriate. This demonstrates that even in a phatic exchange with a socialising topic that it is not related to the agenda, the status of the speakers is still relevant and is evident in their choice of language. It also supports the hypothesis that interpersonal language can be used to achieve instrumental goals, the goal here being to reinforce speaker four's power position despite having had his proposal rejected. Once again, Ylanne-McEwan's notion of identity goals is relevant as speaker four subtly, or not so subtly, reminds the Chair and the other participants of his seniority. John could be seen as employing a negative politeness strategy by self-deprecatingly saying *I've just got the biggest mouth*, which may be politic given that he has not allowed his senior to direct the course of action. The choice of pronoun in *He's backing off now* can also be seen to be a power token in that Lee is addressing the other participants and commenting on the Chair's stance. The alternative *You're backing off now* appears, comparatively, less divergent, less evaluative and less dominant.

139001 is an assessment/performance review between a business manager (speaker one) who is being assessed and the marketing director. The tone taken by the appraiser is, nevertheless, not very evaluative and he attempts to create a cooperative mood. The business manager is being assessed, but she turns the meeting into an opportunity to complain about the owner's son and to say why she deserves a big raise. There is much evidence of her negotiating roles, even though this is a CD\MS meeting and she is officially in the subordinate position. In this extract she complains about the neglect of the database which she initially created, and manages to negotiate a position of dominance in the meeting:

**[Extract 7.20. #139001. IM, CD\MS.]**

<$2> That's right.

<$1> +now we couldn't look at that and accurately **pull off** any figures about the contract at all and we should be able to look at it+

<$2> Instantly.

<$1> +any moment instantly and **know exactly where we are.**

<$2> Mm.

## CS Meetings

The equivalent level of negotiation of role is not present in CS meetings, perhaps because the roles are more fixed and ratified because of the more regular interaction between people within the same department. What is evident in CS\MS meetings is the exercising of the evaluative prerogative of the senior employee, for example in the extract above from 169001. This meeting is a monthly sales review meeting, with each member of the

sales team reporting on his or her progress over the past month. Every salesperson finishes the update with an idiomatic choice of language:

**[Extract 7.21. #169001]**

<$4> So we've gotta sort of **sit tight** with that. <$=> But no it's it's <\$=> **It is moving forward** but it is <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> still a little bit slow.

which is consistently followed by a positive idiomatic evaluation by the MD, for example:

<$1> **Magic.** <$E> 1 sec <\$E> **Looking good.** Thanks Phil. Eddie what you got?

The choice of such idiomatic language by the staff can be seen to fulfil both discourse and pragmatic functions: it allows the other participants to realise that the speaker has come to the end of the turn, and the choice of evaluative, power-invested idiomatic language helps create a sense of cooperative autonomy. The salesperson is displaying control over his or her area of work and therefore worth to the group. By positively evaluating each update through idiom, the MD addresses the face needs of his staff, which should further motivate them, and he signals that it is someone else's turn. He also re-emphasises his power position: it would be inappropriate for one of the salesperson's peers to comment as markedly as he does.

As mentioned above, evaluation and evaluative language tends to be the prerogative of the most senior person present, which would help to explain why this meeting has the lowest density of all the IM in the sample (18.3).In the CS\P meeting, which is from a museum and is concerned with marketing and production (73001), the density is higher at 19.6. This meeting featured noticeably more figurative hyperbole e.g.

*I was shattered, it's horrendous, appalling weather,** and such expressions are used by all speakers present, and are not the prerogative of the Chair. There is also a lot of positive evaluation reflecting the overall collaborative mood of the meeting:

**[Extract 7.22. #73001.]**

<$2> <$=> Cos direc= it's <\$=> I mean I don't know what you call that whether that's direct marketing or not but it's sort of <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> certainly **hitting the spot** isn't it.

**EM**

The CB meeting 151001, which is between the logistics teams of a multinational pharmaceutical company and their multinational supplier, occurs every month with the same participants. A lot of time is spent discussing ongoing and developing projects, which involve many spatial/motion metaphors: *moving from the project into the operational phase, ensure things are in place.* Such metaphors also indicate the positive progress being made, as well as the worth and efficacy of the relationship: *we've got a way ahead, we are on the same level, I can see where you're coming from.* Where problems do exist, they are downplayed through metaphor: *you've got a lot of conversations backwards and forwards* (meaning that the communication channels are inefficient). Compared to IM, an individual's status is not negotiated through idiom in this meeting, although the head host does use more idioms than the other speakers. This partly explains the low density of this meeting (10.8). The meeting also involves three non-native speakers, which could also be a factor in the ability and/or willingness of

*The relative lack of hyperbole within meetings is apparent, whereas the negation of hyperbole e.g. *not a huge amount* being quite common.

participants to use metaphorical language.

The sales meeting 75001 also has a low density (13.7), which is somewhat surprising given that we could expect a lot of effort expended on convergence on the part of the seller. Idioms are employed to cast a positive gloss on the benefits of the product (in this case advertising and publishing in a magazine):

**[Extract 7.23. #75001. EM\NCB. Sales negotiation. $1 is the salesperson.]**

<$1> ...we'll update our database and you know I'll put them on the specials list and make sure that they receive copies of our magazine. Which there again it'll **put a feather in your bonnet** when you speak to them. 'Oh by the way have you bee= been receiving copies of our <$E> 1 sec <\$E> magazine?'

<$2> Mm.

<$1> <$=> Where we <\$=> Bom bom bom. 'I organized to send you them through+

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +Coal P L C.' And <$=> it <\$=> <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> something like that can **go a long way+**

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> **+at the end of the day*** with the mine director.

<$2> Mm. <$G?>

This attempt to address the positive face needs of the client is in contrast with the use of idioms by the client. Charles states that in sales negotiations 'it befits the buyer to put on a disinterested façade' (1996: 25). Here, speakers 2 and 3, the clients, are explaining why

*It is debatable whether *at the end of the day* can be seen as figurative. As argued in chapters five and six, it often fulfils a hedging function in business meetings, but here it clearly does not. The chunk here seems to be reinforcing the preceding one, but with a nuance of the passing of time, and is therefore highlighted.

they have not bought more space in the magazine yet:

**[Extract 7.24. #75001.]**

<$2> That's <$=> that's na= <\$=> not an issue. It's+

<$1> Mm.

<$2> +<$=> it's what <\$=> the best way forward is.

<$1> <$G?>

<$2> But I think it needs to be a mixture of things. We're still finding our feet a bit with it aren't we.

<$3> Yeah. I think so.

The choice of idiomatic language here means that their stance remains vague enough for the seller to offer more in order to obtain their business, while at the same time not threatening the seller's face. As with the previous EM, roles are fixed and not negotiated.

In general, EM in CANBEC do not feature explicit conflict. As mentioned above, meeting 141001 is an exception, with the two participants attempting to assert superiority and aggressively threaten each other's personal and professional (Charles, ibid) sense of face. This is consistently achieved through idiomatic language: *it's not rocket science, the rent's stupid, you must be welcomed up and down the country.* The density of idioms as stated earlier is very high, even compared to IM (density: 23.1), and is accounted for by the consistent movement towards divergence throughout the meeting. How this is achieved over turns and how repetition can be employed as a divergent strategy will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 7.4 Summary

The speaker relationship has been seen among the various contextual factors to have a constraining influence on the discourse. While some of the results were unsurprising e.g. colleagues in the same department use more vague knowledge than colleagues in different departments, other results were not as expected, e.g. VCMs are most frequent in the non-contractually bound discourse, as is deontic modality. A closer analysis of the data revealed that these modal forms tended to be self-directed in such discourse however, unlike meetings within the same company or within contractually bound external meetings.

We have also seen evidence for speaker goals. It was noted how both higher and local level transactional goals can be oriented towards in the decision-making process, and also how decisions are made to achieve goals. We also saw how relational language can be employed to achieve instrumental goals through idiomatic language use in relational sequences (Koester, 2004), and how speaker roles and relationships can be negotiated. How the choice of modal forms may reflect speaker goals was also discussed, as was the relationship between relational and transactional goals. The notion of identity goals (Ylanne-McEwan, 1996) was also invoked to account for the rhetorical use of modals by powerful speakers, and to show how they persuade others to agree to their proposed solutions. This was seen in both IM and EM.

In terms of the strategic use of certain pragmatic markers, I argued that VCMs can be used deliberately by speakers to not only reflect existing shared knowledge, but also to create a sense of perceived familiarity and closeness in EM. It was also proposed that self-directed deontic modals can be used strategically to create a positive impression on

the other company. The use of politeness strategies such as self-deprecation was also discussed.

Evidence of convergence was seen in the use of VCMs and it was noted that VCMs were least frequent in meetings where there was a high level of conflict, but most of the discussion of convergence and conflict concerned idiomatic language. While there is evidence to support the position that idioms are markers of convergence, the opposite is also seen to hold in meetings featuring conflict and disagreement. When comparing EM and IM, it was seen that there are significant statistical differences, with idioms being far more common in the latter. The overall proportional breakdown of types of idioms was seen, however, to be highly consistent across all meetings. Also, idioms featured most highly in IM involving participants from different departments, which can partly be explained by the lack of ingrained power positions and subsequent attempts to assert control over the direction of the discourse and the decision-making process.

Face is a concept which seems highly relevant in explaining linguistic choices in meetings. Vagueness helps to address the face needs of the listeners, but a lack of vagueness can be seen as highly face threatening. Similarly, the choice of deontic modal forms can be explained through reference to face, as certain infrequent verbs e.g. *must* are generally accepted as very face threatening. It has been argued that obligation, which inhabits every workplace, is communicated through reference to either positive or negative face. The notion that the strength of a deontic modal form reflected the combination of the relative power of the speaker and the degree of certainty was also seen to be questionable in a business context. Whether the meeting was internal or external was seen to be relevant to issues of face and the illocutionary force of the chunk

*you need to*, and face helps explain the choices made in manager/subordinate compared to peer meetings, for example idioms.

In the next chapter turn taking will be explored. Once again this will involve the analysis of the sample meetings outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Issues such as external meetings and the Chair, and conflict and turn design will be discussed.

# Chapter 8: Qualitative Analysis II (Turn Taking)

## 8.1 Rationale

In the limited analysis of turn taking in the framework chapter, the following findings were tentatively proposed. IM\MS meetings, which were all dyadic in the framework data, tend to be chair-directed, with the chair/manager asking the questions. He or she provided most of the back channelling, takes much shorter turns and controls the topic. IM\P meetings, in contrast seemed to have more equal length of turns, with more disagreement, overlapping and interruptions. EM, in comparison to IM, featured more attention to face, overlapping, diversion from the agenda, elaborate opening and closing sequences, and less interruption and conflict. This chapter will explore how reliable these initial propositions were, and more specifically will address how the areas outlined below relate to turn taking, which are drawn from the main hypothesis of the thesis and related research questions.

The areas to be addressed are:

- the turn-taking style in business meetings
- differences between EM and IM turn organisation
- the nature and extent of the influence of certain contextual factors e.g. speaker relationship, meeting purpose, and topic on turn taking
- face
- the role of the chairperson
- participants' goals and strategies
- the expression and avoidance of conflict, and convergence.

The understanding of the nature of the turn in business meetings allows for a bridge between the lexicogrammatical units explored in detail so far, which are usually below the turn level (exceptions include, of course, back channels) and the next chapter which develops the notion of the genre of the meeting, including its overall structure. By combining these three structural elements a more plausible interpretation of speaker strategies and goals is achieved.

Because many of the meetings in the sample data are multiparty, I have been able to count the number of turns taken by individual speakers (see Appendix 4) and compare them according to the relationship of the speakers, internal vs. external data, or any other contextual variables. While making such quantitative statements about turn-taking is eschewed in conversation analysis, it is argued here that such a novel approach can shed considerable light on the implications of turn-taking practices.

## 8.2 Turn Taking in Institutional Discourse

The central question addressed in this chapter is: Is there a specific 'turn-taking organisation' (Heritage 1997: 164) for business meetings? It is seen as important because particular turn-taking systems 'have the potential to alter the parties' opportunities for action, and to recalibrate the interpretation of almost every aspect of the activities they structure'(ibid). This means that if we can understand the underlying system, we can then see when it is appropriate for a worker to enter the discussion, and how his or her interlocutors are likely to construe what is communicated.

When discussing turn-taking organisation in different types of institutional talk, Heritage also distinguishes between differences in restrictions in turn organisation. He

contrasts those where departures from the organisation can be explicitly sanctioned, e.g. a courtroom, and those where the turn organisation is a product of the task the participants are involved in or 'some other feature of the interaction' (1997: 165). Business meetings would tend to be found in the latter category.

One such 'feature of the interaction' could be the power or status of the participants. Hutchby and Wooffitt define power as 'the structurally provided ability to constrain the actions of others' (1998: 170), and such a definition suggests that the greater the organisationally-sanctioned power difference between the speakers, the greater the opportunity for constraint. They are careful to clarify nevertheless that a conversation analysis approach to such contextual features does not entail a causal link between the relationship of the speakers and the possible actions of those involved:

> *...the participants could conceivably make things different; although obviously departures from the normative conventions, though possible, would be treated by other participants as accountable and open to challenge...(therefore) the exercise of powerful discursive resources can always be resisted by a recipient.* (ibid)

As stated earlier in chapter two, Heritage (1997) outlines the following six categories for analysing the institutionality of interaction:

1. turn-taking organisation
2. overall structural organisation of the interaction
3. sequence organisation
4. turn design
5. lexical choice
6. (epistemological and other) forms of asymmetry.

He states that the first and the last categories are wild cards: while a distinct turn taking system has a strong influence on various levels of the organisation of interaction, asymmetry actually pervades all the other levels of the interaction's organisation. The relationship of these two factors will be one theme explored in this chapter.

In defining asymmetry, Heritage (1997: 175-179 outlines 4 types:

1. participation
2. 'knowhow' about the interaction and the institution in which it is imbedded
3. knowledge
4. rights to knowledge.

Participation here means the relative status of the participants. It is easy to see how the categories are related to one another e.g. the depth of knowledge held by a participant will be dictated by his or her rights to knowledge, which in turn will be affected by the level of participation. In periods of 'normal' business i.e. when there are no major shifts in business practice such as takeovers, it seems likely that the 'knowhow' of an individual will also be related to the participation: the longer you work in a company, the more senior you would generally expect to become. You may therefore become more adept at manoeuvring within the institution and its interactional sites as you develop in your community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) show how greater expertise and status allow for greater control over the turn-taking style within the institution's meetings. While all four asymmetries are relevant, it is the first which will receive most attention in this chapter.

## 8.3 Turn-Taking Organisation in Meetings

Holmes & Stubbe (2003) state that meetings involve a tripartite structure: the opening or introductory section, the central development section, and the closing section. Each meeting can be seen to have this overall structure, but they also argue that these three stages also occur at the local level. At both these macro and micro levels, the first and last sections are the prerogative of those in power, as in this closing of the CS\MS meeting by the MD:

**[Extract 8.1. #169001.]**

<$1> Very very <$G?>. Facts and then decisions. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Okay folks <$E> 3 sec <\$E> <$G?> looking looking a bit more cheerful <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> which is good. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Thank you.

By providing a summarising, positive evaluation of the sales reports he both addresses the face needs of his workers and embodies his position. While it is possible for anybody else to utter this closing move, to do so would be highly inappropriate. It would, according to Bargiela and Harris, be a 'noticeable breach of convention' (1997: 209).

The central section of a phase and of a meeting tends to be less overtly controlled by powerful speakers (ibid), although we shall see that the degree will vary according to the context, for example the relationship of the speakers, the topic under discussion and the purpose of the meeting. The behaviour of the Chair will also be shown to be central to the level of control exerted over turn organisation, and will provide a focus for exploring turn activities throughout this chapter.

Holmes and Stubbe also (2003: 70) argue that the following are interrelated:

1. function of meeting
2. relationship of speakers
3. predominant structural pattern

Meeting function, or purpose, is described as being either planning, reporting, or task-oriented (ibid: 63-4), but this categorisation belies the fact that the data for their corpus does not include any EM. While all of these three functions, or 'purposes' as they are referred to in this thesis, are found in EM, negotiation is a major purpose which is not covered in this categorisation and yet is evident in CANBEC e.g. 75001, and in the literature (Lampi, 1986; Firth, 1995a; Charles, 1996; Charles and Charles, 1999).

Therefore this fourth category is added.* Even though each meeting has generally been allocated one purpose, in reality many meetings involve different purposes at different stages.

For point 2, the present study's breakdown of relationship of speakers into peer (CS\P, CD\P), and manager/subordinate (CD\MS, CS\MS) for IM, and CB, NCB for EM seems adequate. Point 3 refers to both the general level of organisation and linear and spiral patterns of turns, with linear patterns following a more traditional, on-topic, incremental structure, as in the MS meetings outlined in the framework chapter, and which tend to be 'driven by the manager's agenda' (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 70). Spiral patterns of turns are where speakers may return to an unfinished topic after several turns, and shift topic very frequently. Holmes and Stubbe point out that while peer-type meetings often involve spiral patterning, most meetings in their data are a mixture of both spiral and linear patterns. In addition, the specific topic as in subject under discussion also affects the precise pattern (ibid).

In addition to the the purpose of the meeting, the relationship of the speakers, and

*Two other functions which are included as meeting purposes in the main database are *buying, selling and promoting a product,* and *giving and receiving advice.* These also tend to be found in EM.

the predominant structural pattern as outlined by Holmes and Stubbe, this chapter will demonstrate how a fourth factor, the role of the Chair, is also interrelated:

1. purpose of meeting
2. relationship of speakers
3. predominant structural pattern
4. role of Chair

The dynamic role the Chair can play in the same meeting and the direct effect this has on the turn organisation in both EM and IM will be discussed below.

## 8.4 Turn Taking in External Meetings

The notion of 'Chair' in EM compared to IM will be examined in this section, followed by a discussion of how conflict can arise and is expressed over turns in contractually bound EM. The results will strongly question the proposal in the framework that convergence consistently occurs in EM, and that face needs are often addressed.

### 8.4.1 The Chair in external meetings

The role played by the Chair in business meetings has direct relevance to the turn organisation (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Boden, 1994; Bargiela and Harris, 1996, 1997). In dyadic but also in multiparty discourse, where there is more potential variety in interaction, the Chair can symbolise the agenda, rather like the agenda made flesh. Alternatively the Chair can encourage 'off-topic' discussion by either engaging with or withdrawing from the interaction, or by doing both as we shall see in the next section in a CS\MS meeting.

The relationship between the transactional goals of the institution, the meeting itself and the importance of the Chair is outlined by Bargiela and Harris (1997: 208): 'In all business meetings, the achievement of specific organisational goals depends on accomplishing the main task through the discussion of the agenda by the Chair and the Group.' They argue (ibid) that within meetings there are three possible directions for exchanges. They are:

- Chair to participants
- Participant(s) to Chair
- Participant(s) to participant(s)

While this is true for IM, it may not be the case for EM. As Bargiela and Harris's (1997) data was all from internal meetings, references to the Chair and the participants are from an internal perspective, which I argue can be substantially different from EM in that EM do not always have a Chair as such.

What we have instead is a Host. The Host is a representative of the company where the meeting is being held. The Host will often be the employee with the highest seniority, though this is not necessarily the case: if the meeting is of a very technical nature, for example, the host technical manager may chair the meeting even though a more senior representative from another section, or even the MD, may be present. It is also possible for the guest employee to act as a Chair, and they may have brought their own agenda (either overt or covert). It also seems feasible for there to be two people acting as Chairs in an EM, one representing each company and each with their own or mutually-agreed agendas and rights to lead the discussion.

That the meeting is being held in the Host's company does not mean he or she has either called the meeting, or has knowledge as to the reason for the meeting. This seems to be the case in the beginning of 141001, where the Host is speaker one:

**[Extract 8.2. #141001: EM, CB, between pub chain (<$1>) and brewer (<$2>). Brewer is outlining certain contractual obligations.]**

<$1> Dive in. Grab a chair.

<$2> Thank you.

<$1> Er right now erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> John I <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> I er I have to say I'm er a little bit erm in the dark as to+

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$2> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> +as as to what we're doing exactly.

Here the visitor (speaker two) then goes on to explain the purpose of his visit, which could possibly qualify him as the Chair, but the meeting is brought towards an abrupt close by the Host:

**[Extract 8.3. #141001.]**

<$2> You didn't let me finish the sentence. <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> Pause. <$=> If you have any <\$=> <$E> laughs <\$E> If you've got an extreme problem with it <$E> 1 sec <\$E> then we can pay it.

<$1> Good. <$E> 3.5 secs <\$E> You can say that about the rent.

<$E> 1.5 secs <\$E>

<$2> No. <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> <$E> laughs <\$E> Mm. Okay. Well thank you for your time John.

According to Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997: 209) the Chair 'becomes invested with the unconditional power of opening and closing the meeting', and yet here we have one participant opening the meeting by setting out the agenda and another closing it.

Another EM where none of the participants seems to be consistently fulfilling the role of Chair is the NCB sales negotiation 75001. Typically the Chair takes the most turns in meetings (see Figure 8.1 below), whereas in this meeting the MD takes the least number of turns (22%, compared to 32% for his colleague the sales manager and 43% for the guest salesperson, Appendix 4). While this does not prove that the MD is not the Chair, when we also consider that the salesperson has requested this meeting, and that he sets out the agenda at the opening stage of the meeting, it seems that the salesperson best fits the description for Chair according to Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (ibid) and Holmes and Stubbe's (op cit) description of the role:

**[Extract 8. 4. #75001. $1 is the salesperson.]**

<$1> <$=> What I said George <\$=> I don't know how much sort of Kevin's spoke to you and so forth. I mean what what we're trying to do we're doing it more and more. <$=> I mean obviously sort of Kevin like <\$=> I suppose he gets fed up of me phoning them up and so forth. But what what we're trying to do with most companies is sort <$E> inhales <\$E> like a package out.

Bearing in mind the considerable unequal status of a seller in a new relationship like this one and the fact that a buyer 'is expected to exert a degree of control over a seller and the situation' (Charles, 1996: 23), to describe a visiting salesperson as Chair is not a valid proposition and arguably slightly ludicrous.

The degree of negative politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987) such as hesitation, indirectness, hedging, vagueness and self-deprecation in this extract is also pertinent. Here we have the salesperson very cautiously justifying his visit, thereby implicitly acknowledging the imposition caused by the meeting. Such linguistic behaviour is typical of speakers who are in subordinate power positions (Holmes and

Stubbe, 2003). This is in stark contrast to the language used in the CB meeting 141001 by the guest, which will be analysed in the next section.

Where the relationship is CB and where there are regular meetings, the senior person from the host company may act very much like a Chair in an internal meeting. This is evident in meeting 151001, where the Host takes 46% of the turns in a meeting with six participants, which is a higher proportion than any of the IM in the sample (2.77. See below for results from IM). The extract below shows how the Host (speaker one) is attempting to address the issue of the guest company's internal communication:

**[Extract 8.5. #151001. EM\CB.]**

<$3> So this will be a double work for us to to say okay we have to cancel one order and er
<$E> 1 sec <\$E> increase the the next order. Because they are on a different different erm
<$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> time line.

<$1> You mean at the moment you've got probably three packing orders.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> <$=> You <\$=> It's probably all from the same bulk. Yeah?

<$3> <$G?>

<$1> It's all from the same bulk yeah?

<$3> <$=> But they have different <\$=>

<$1> **They're different packing order numbers yeah** so they're in the packaging plan as three different orders at three different time points.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> **The question is** <$=> do <\$=> can you go into that first one and increase it to two thousand and then cancel the next two. **That's a question. Don't want an answer.**

<$3> Yeah. Yeah.

<$1> **In terms of what that means yes it means** extra work up front in terms of doing that.

<$3> Yeah.

The lexicogrammatical choices made by speaker one mark him as a speaker exerting his power, for example the interruption followed by the perfunctory agreement *They're different packing order numbers yeah,* and the face-threatening metastatements (Lakoff, 1973) *The question is, That's a question, Don't want an answer,* and *In terms of what that means yes it means.* He also opens and closes the meeting, sets the agenda and controls the turn taking and topic as the extract from the same meeting at the beginning of chapter one shows. He is therefore clearly equivalent to a Chair.

In terms of accounting for possible directions of exchanges, in two-person external meetings the following are possible:

- Host to guest
- Guest to host

If we have more members then the following are possible:

- Host to colleague
- Colleague to Host
- Host to guest
- Host's colleague to guest
- Guest to Host
- Guest to Host's colleague
- Guest to guest

### 8.4.2 Conflict in external meetings

In the framework chapter, it was suggested that there was more attention to face, overlapping, diversion from the agenda, elaborate opening and closing sequences, and

less interruption and conflict in EM compared to IM. While these features are evident in many NCB meetings where the participants are by definition in the early stages of a relationship, as the following section demonstrates CB EM can involve more threats to face and conflict than was proposed in the framework.

Heritage (1984: 265) talks of the 'bias intrinsic to many aspects of the organisation of talk which is generally favourable to the maintenance of the bonds of solidarity between actors and which promotes the avoidance of conflict.' Even when disagreement does occur, according to Greatbatch (1991: 277) we tend to find sequences through which the disagreements 'are routinely exited through a process in which the speakers deescalate their disputes by moderating their positions.' At other times the conflictual topic will be ignored or postponed (Boden, 1994) because 'Deferring disagreement or debate is not a casual or random matter; it is central ...to the smooth and practical everyday enactment of the organisation.' (1994: 155). One of the key factors in understanding why conflict is unwelcome is face, as disagreement will often involve threats to positive and negative face (Brown and Levison, 1987).

The importance of attending to face needs in EM has been discussed several times in this thesis, but as the extract from the CB, EM 151001 about the guest company's inefficiency in the previous section demonstrates, face is not attended to consistently throughout such meetings. Indeed in the CB meeting 141001, face seems to be positively aggravated (Mungtial and Turnbull, 1998) as the following extract shows. Speaker one is the operations controller of a pub chain, and speaker two is the estates manager from a brewer. The brewer has a contract which means they can decide which beers are sold by three pubs they own, even though the pubs are managed by the pub chain.

## [Extract 8.6. #141001. EM\CB.]

<$1> And the rent's <$E> 1 sec <\$E> stupid. So.

<$2> Not as stupid as I was trying to make it.

<$1> It's ridiculous already. The the the amount you were trying to make it was absolutely erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> beyond any business sense whatsoever.

<$2> <$E> inhales <\$E>

<$1> <$=> And if it was <\$=>

<$2> That <$G?>.

<$1> Any kind of independent operator <$X> would've | would have <\$X> probably thrown the keys back at you.

<$2> Ah yeah.

<$1> So.

<$2> But we <$X> wouldn'ta | wouldn't have <\$X> caught them because you're not allowed to do that.

<$E> 2.5 secs <\$E>

<$1> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$1> So what else can we get out of you other than this?

<$2> Absolutely nothing. The erm the retail link scheme ends at the end of this year erm and <$H> these are our <\$H> proposals to kick in at the end of September this year for the rest of your lease. <$E> 2 secs <\$E> That's what I've gotta be clear on telling you. <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> There is a however however. <$=> The however is that on each of your pubs...

The relationship of the speakers in terms of how each speaker's role is negotiated is fascinating. As this meeting involves speakers from different companies, the actual status of the two participants is not as relevant as it might be in an internal setting. It should be noted, nevertheless, that speaker one has a more senior post than speaker two. In the course of the encounter, however, this is not evident with both men trading insults and speaker one not having any power to negotiate the impositions outlined by speaker two, apart from the legal fees.

The use of repetition combined with idiomatic and metaphorical language is one way the roles are negotiated, at times with the communication resembling verbal jousting, particularly, but not solely, on the part of the more junior speaker two. McCarthy and

Carter (2004: 66), state that the main purpose of repetition is often 'to co-construct interpersonal convergence and to creatively adapt to the other speaker(s)', and McCarthy (1998: 143) shows how idioms and metaphors, through their indirect semantics, can help speakers work towards convergence. The repetition of the metaphorical *stupid*, and the relexicalisation to *ridiculous* are clearly not markers of convergence here. Instead, what seems to be happening is an example of an 'opposition format' (Kotthoff, 1993: 201-3), where 'there is no preference for agreement any more', and where a speaker uses a term of the other speaker in his or her own argument 'in such a way that the claim loses the power to influence'. Another instance of an opposition format is the beautifully dexterous metaphorical exchange:

<$1> Any kind of independent operator <$X> would've | would have <\$X> probably thrown the keys back at you.

<$2> Ah yeah.

<$1> So.

<$2> But we <$X> wouldn'ta | wouldn't have <\$X> caught them because you're not allowed to do that.

While there are various other features that signal the level of divergence in this meeting (the emphatic markers of 'subjective stance' (Koester, 2001; 2006) *beyond any...whatsoever, absolutely* which is later repeated; the idiom *kick in* which has a suitably aggressive undertone; the repetition of *however*; the metapragmatic act (Thomas, 1984: 227) *That's what I've gotta be clear on telling you*, which according to Lakoff are 'incontrovertibly rude' (1973: 304) because they only allow for the one interpretation and therefore dictate the response), the final adjacency pair seems particularly telling:

<$1> So what else can we get out of you other than this?

<$2> Absolutely nothing.

Refusals or disagreements in the second part of adjacency pairs tend to be 'dispreferred' (Levinson, 1983, Pomerantz, 1984), and as such are the turn shape tends to be more

complex than a 'preferred' or expected response. What we find here though is a completely unhedged refusal. Indeed, the refusal is accentuated by the emphatic marker *absolutely*. According to Kotthoff (1993: 201), disagreement can become the preferred context and is 'stressed and oriented to', and this seems to be the case here. Again, face needs are far from being addressed, and this extract shows how the negotiation of power issues such as assertion in CB EM can be aggressively enacted through divergence.

## 8.5 Turn taking in Internal Meetings

This section will analyse how the meeting purpose, for example reporting, and the relationship of the speakers involved in the meeting influence the turn taking organisation. As already noted, other contextual factors such as the topic being addressed can also influence the turn-taking behaviour, and these will be foregrounded when appropriate.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 70) argue that meetings involving participants who are 'equal in status' i.e. P tend to be more cyclical in structure with speakers tending to 'engage in more extended exploratory talk', whereas those between managers and subordinates are more linear with more requests for action and clear directives. In terms of meeting purpose, they state that information gathering or reporting (here called 'Reviewing') meetings will tend to follow a more linear structure too, following the manager's agenda. The analysis of the following extracts will explore and evaluate these claims.

Six of the eight meetings in the sample involve more than two speakers, which allows for a comparative study of the number of turns taken by each speaker. In dyads, the

proportion will obviously be 50: 50. In a study of British meetings, Bargiela and Harris (1996) state that the most senior speakers speak the most, so it seems logical that they will take the most number of turns. Even though not all of the sample meetings are recorded in Britain (151001, EM CB, was recorded in Germany in a British multinational pharmaceutical company with an American multinational pharmaceutical supplier; 151001, IM CD\P, was recorded in Japan in the IT division of an American multinational bank), the Chairs of both meetings happen to be British.

In formal meetings, the role played by the Chair is explicit, and this is often the case in MS-type meetings (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). In such meetings we could expect the discourse, therefore, to be controlled by and through the Chair, with him or her taking up a high proportion of the turns. In P meetings, in contrast, we could expect the Chair to take a lower proportion of turns.

### 8.5.1 Turn taking in manager/subordinate meetings

In the CS\MS sales meeting (purpose: reviewing, and some planning) in a foam manufacturer there are four speakers present apart from the MD: two sales executives and two sales administrators, who are reporting on recent sales. According to Holmes and Stubbe (op cit), this meeting should be very linear in turn organisation because the relationship of the speakers is MS, the MD is chairing the weekly sales review meeting because the sales director is absent, and the purpose is primarily reviewing. In addition, we can expect the proportion of turns taken by the Chair to be higher than in P meetings as the Chair may play a more controlling role. There is an extra constraint in this meeting

which would also reduce the likelihood of an open, exploratory event, and that is time. The MD (speaker one) refers to this explicitly at the beginning by saying:

**[Extract 8.7. #169001.]**

<$1> We've gotta rattle through quickly today. Wanna get finished by <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> eleven if we can. <$=> E= e= in plus or y= <\$=> Plus or minus five or ten minutes so we'll just <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> really rattle through the key points.

He continues by explicitly allocating the next speaker:

<$1> ...So Julie since you are immediately there can you just <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> c= go through yours?

<$2> Yeah. We didn't actually get a set of <$X> em | them <\$X> so <$G1> <$H> this time <\$H>.

<$1> Haven't you?

<$3> No.

<$1> Can you not remember what you wrote? <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$2> I know sorry <$E> laughs <\$E> I've got mine but not everybody else's.

<$1> Right. Oh right. Okay.

<$2> <$=> So <\$=>

<$1> Well we we can share around okay. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> I mean just pick out any key points.

<$2> Erm <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$H> Just Imagine <\$H> order some mats for use with that inflatable play area. It's self-explanatory on there.

<$1> Right.

<$2> Henley's have ordered a new <$H> tool <\$H> which G N E R it are actually paying for so they've finally committed to this. It's+

<$1> Excellent.

Speaker two, the sales executive Julie, has not made enough copies of her sales report for this meeting, and the MD is directing her to explain her results anyway. There seems to be some misunderstanding early on when the MD appears to think she has completely forgotten to bring the report, whereas in reality she has made insufficient copies. This explains his laughter, which can be seen to soften the FTA (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003)

embodied in the direct question <$1> Can you not remember what you wrote? <$E> laughs <\$E>, which is face threatening because it seems more accusatory than the affirmative alternative: *can you remember what you wrote,* or than the more informal contracted negative form (Carter and McCarthy, 2006: 539). Following the repair he goes on to give the directive again to deliver a report with an imperative form *I mean just pick out any key points* but in a very hedged manner, using *I mean, just, any.* This combination of imperative forms combined with hedges in manager/subordinate directive discourse has also been described by Koester (2006: 45).

This short extract is typical of the reviewing stages of this meeting in that the Chair takes up a large proportion of the turns. In fact, overall he takes up 38% of all the turns in the meeting, which considering there are five speakers present is a high proportion (see graph below). Once Julie is reporting on recent sales, the MD regularly back channels, which are often positive e.g. *excellent*, thereby attending to the sales executive's positive face needs and encouraging her to continue talking. As the relationship between satisfied workers and motivation had been acknowledged since Herzberg et al. (1959), having a motivated sales staff would no doubt facilitate the MD's primary transactional goal of making as much profit as possible.

Even though most of this meeting is taken up with reviewing recent sales results, there are also some problem-solving/planning phases. When the topic changes, the style of turn taking also changes with the Chair (speaker one) playing a less active role. In the extract below the participants are discussing a problem with a foam-exercise mat they produce and market.

**[Extract 8.8. #169001. All participants except $1 are salespeople.]**

<$1> The orange peel. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$=> Th= <\$=> We still don't know why that happens do we.

<$4> No.

<$2> <$=> I think it's where the p= <\$=> It tends to be the ones I've seen say I was sitting on an ab <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> cradle when <$G2> did it and Eddie. Where you're actually sitting and you're just doing it. I don't know if it's cos <$E> 1 sec <\$E> where the pressure's been applied in that <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> particular bit. <$=> It seems <\$=> So I don't know whether the erm <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> adhesive comes away from the foam. <$X> D'ya | do you <\$X> know. I don't know.

<$4?> <$G?>.

<$2> <$=> If you like punch s= <\$=> <$X> D'ya | do you <\$X> know like imagine you per= you punch something for long enough. <$=> That's <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> <\$=> It's where the impact is+

<$3> <$=> Cos the <$G?> does <\$=>

<$2> +even just by sitting on it by impact I mean just where your <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> backside is.

<$5> How's the foam underneath? <$=> Is it like <\$=> Does it crumble or is it <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E>?

<$2> It's just like bubbly.

<$4?> I don't know if it's+

<$5> <$=> U= un= <\$=> Underneath the er the vinyl?

<$4?> +under the vinyl. I don't think anyone's cut one up to look at it.

<$5> Hmm.

<$2> That's what we maybe should do.

Compared to the previous extract, the difference in turn taking is immediately noticeable: each of the participants speaks, and the Chair only takes one turn i.e. less than any other speaker. He introduces the problem-solving frame with the tag *do we*, and then allows his staff to come to a decision about the problem.

The lexicogrammatical choices in this extract also indicate that the topic is concerned with problem solving, and that the staff are searching for consensus. Willing (1992) and Koester (2006) demonstrate that hypothesizing language is frequent in problem solving, and McCarthy and Handford (2004) show how convergence and consensus are reached in meetings through the use of modals, hedges and the conjunction *if*, and how such features

are face-protecting both for those who respond and those who speculate. This extract is replete with such features: *I think, it tends, it seems, I don't know, do you know, if you like (punch...), just, I mean just, just, is it like, I don't know if, I don't think, maybe.*

The extract also highlights an important aspect of the relationship between turn taking and speaker goals. Holmes and Stubbe argue that apparent digressions can facilitate 'the achievement of other goals, such as a greater involvement from the group in the decision-making process' (2003: 69). The non-involvement by the MD in this non-agenda related discussion can be interpreted in this way, as his overt presence in the discussion would, rather like a heavy object in relativity theory, draw the other participants towards him. By not involving himself he provides an opportunity for the sales staff to freely talk about the problem without having an overt gate-keeping or leading presence.

### 8.5.2 Turn taking in peer meetings

The CD\P strategy meeting (purpose: planning) is from the same foam manufacturer, and speaker one is the same MD, who is also chairing this meeting. We could expect the proportion and length of the turns by the Chair to be lower given that it is P. As it is a planning, and peer, meeting we could expect to be more exploratory in approach to topic (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003) which would also suggest a more cyclical turn organisation.

The meeting's topic is strategy, and strategy involves making decisions. According to Koester (2006: 35), 'Decision-making always focuses on a problem of some kind which needs to be resolved.' This interpretation appears, however, too stringent in relation to this data. While much of this meeting is concerned with decisions, they do not always follow a problem–solution pattern. As in the extract below, there is no clear *problem* as

such, but there is incremental progress towards a consensus. In this extract, the MD is explaining why they should make a decision despite the absent Harry's probable unwillingness to so.

**[Extract 8.9. #167001. CD\P.]**

<$1> I've got a feeling he'll bottle out <$E> 1 sec <\$E> of decision making. <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> <$=> But I I'll <\$=> I wanna make that decision. Harry said we could make that decision providing we've got er a refund clause.

(11 turns)

<$2> All depends how him= important that start date is. W= whenever it is+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +<$=> never sure which month it is but <\$=>

<$3> <$=> W= ar= are we= we're all <\$=> We were talking first of all is to start production aren't we.

<$E> 2 sec <\$E>

<$2> <$=> All we're saying is <\$=> We're saying twenty four weeks right?

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> He's committed to twenty-four weeks+

<$1> Yep.

<$2> +as soon as he gets the <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> cheque.

<$1> Yeah.

<$3> <$G?>. But if we don't get the cheque to him by Christmas then he might revisit that.

<$1> Yeah. Well it makes you <$G?>. Yeah.

<$2> <$=> And now <\$=>

(9 turns)

<$4> Erm so <$G?> <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> <$H> gotta <\$H> <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> take the risk.

<$1> Yeah. <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> I think we've got to.

<$4> Especially cos they've got that clause saying that+

<$2> Yeah.

<$4> +wherever possible they would+

<$1> <$=> Th= they'll refund <\$=>

<$4> +<$G?> what they could.

<$E> 2 sec <\$E>

<$1> But it's hell of a gamble. Hundred and eleven thousand <$H> or hundred <\$H> thirteen thousand pounds or whatever to put down as a deposit but we've gotta do it.

<$E> 3 sec <\$E>

<$2> Yep.

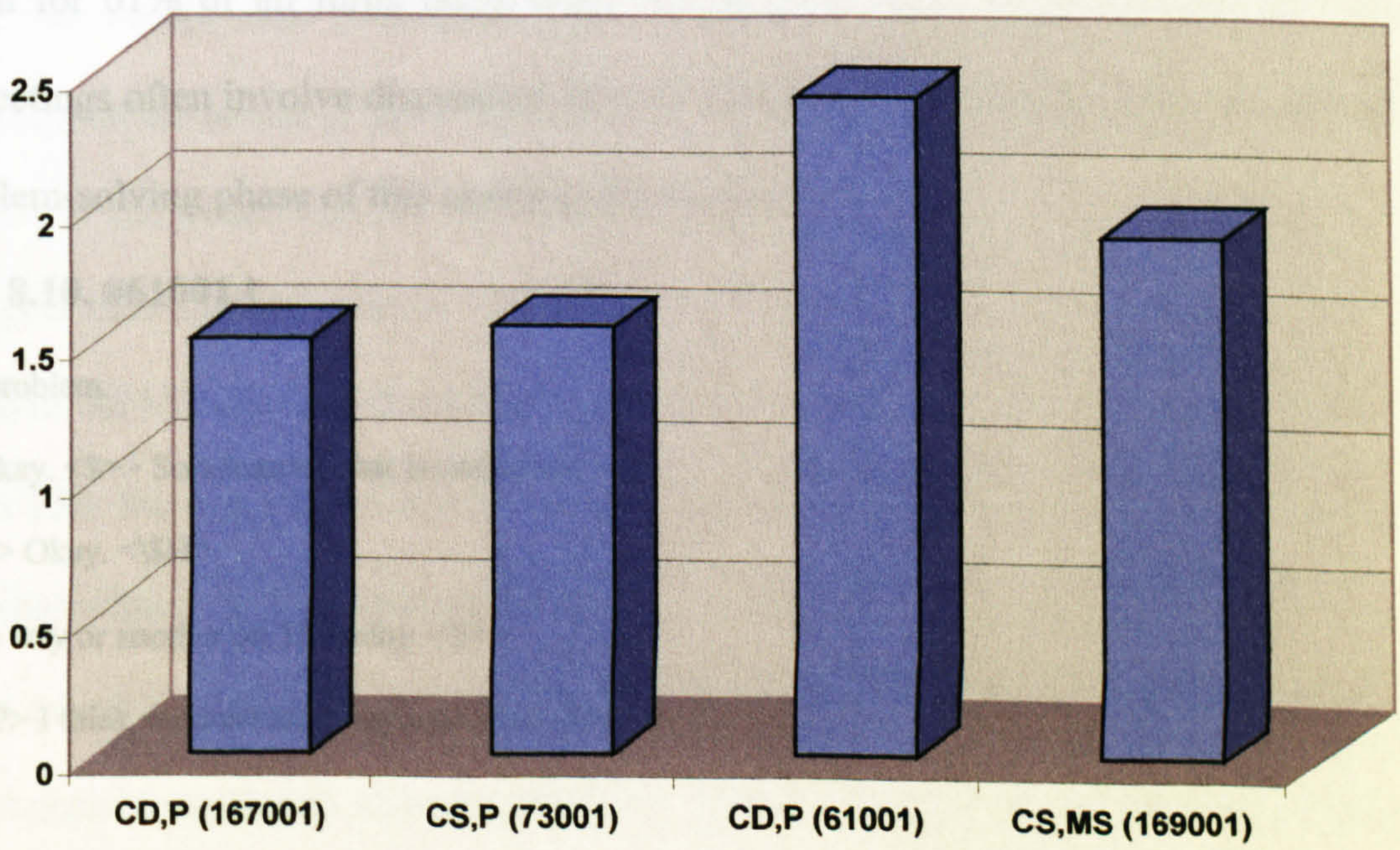
As with the decision-making sequence in the MS meeting, we find there are multiple turns and there does not seem to be a fixed order of speakers. The participants gradually come to a consensual decision through tying together a series of related issues. In describing this process Boden states (1994: 164):

> *People build layers of discussion, debate and eventual decision on a given topic or activity, diffusing possible disagreement while moulding decision through multiple occasions of interaction. Their conversational collusion is a matter of weaving, turn by turn, one agenda into another.*

In this extract the following issues are weaved into the final decision: Harry's procrastination, the refund clause, the importance of the production start date, the initial time period, the possible repercussions of not paying by Christmas, the issue of the refund clause again, the size of the deposit and therefore the size of the risk, and finally the necessity of relating to that risk. This extract demonstrates how a decision-making strategy, an example of an instantiation (McCarthy, 1998), can be collaboratively employed by participants in a peer relationship. Instantiations and other strategies will be further analysed in the next chapter.

While the proportion of turns taken by the Chair is lower than in CS\MS, the total number of words is higher in this CD\P meeting: 45%, compared to 38% in the MS (proportionally there is little difference: 1.8 and 2.0 respectively). If power is a relative concept (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 3) and is dynamically related to the positions of the other participants as Hutchby and Wooffitt's above definition suggests, then the MD would have less power in a P, but here he actually talks more. This finding, combined with the result of the extremely high turn proportion result in another P meeting 61001 (see graph below) where the Chair is not even the most senior participant, questions Bargiela and Harris's (1996) assertion that powerful speakers speak more.

**Figure 8.1: Proportion of turns by Chair**



The above graph outlines the proportion of turns taken by the Chair in IM multiparty meetings. The figure was arrived at by manually counting the number of turns taken by the Chair and then subtracting that from the total number taken by all participants in the meeting. This was then worked out as a percentage (e.g. in CD\P 61001, the Chair took 357 turns which were 33% of all turns taken), and then the ratio was calculated by dividing this percentage by the average number of turns according to the number of speakers present. In 61001 there were seven speakers present, so the average number of turns is 14%. By dividing 33 by 14 we arrive at a ratio of 2.3, that is this Chair took 2.3 times the average number of turns.

Apart from the findings referred to in above, another interesting result is that in all the multiparty talk two speakers always took up over 50% of the turns: in 61001, for example, the Chair (speaker one) and speaker 4, who was more senior than the Chair, accounted for 61% of all turns taken even though there were seven speakers present. These meetings often involve discussion directly between the two participants, as the end of a problem-solving phase of this meeting demonstrates:

**[Extract 8.10. #61001.]**

<$4> No problem.

<$1> So okay. <$=> So assuming that is sorted out+

<$4> <$H> Okay. <\$H>

<$1> +one way or another on Thursday <\$=>

<$4> <$G?> I think we don't have any more problems. I think <$G?>+

<$1> So+

<$4> +<$G?>,

<$1> +so let's let's assume it's approaching Thursday+

<$4> Mm.

<$1> +six o'clock.

<$4> Mm.

<$1> <$=> The process the sequence of events is about six o'clock <\$=>

<$4> I give a call to whoever it is. Command centre you call it.

<$M> <$E> laughs <\$E>

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored turn taking in business meetings. As stated by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), in IM the relationship of speakers and the meeting purpose were shown to be key factors in determining the turn organisation, but so was the role played by the Chair. Depending on the Chair's level of involvement the turn organisation was shown to vary greatly within the same meeting, and this involvement or non-involvement of the Chair was interpreted from a speaker-goals perspective.

If we accept that a speaker's power is related to the status of the other participant(s) in the meeting, there were some interesting findings concerning number of turns taken by the Chair. The IM with the highest proportion of turns taken by the Chair was in a peer meeting, and even in a P meeting where the Chair took proportionally fewer turns than in the MS meeting, the actual amount he spoke was not found to greatly differ.

In EM, the role played by the Chair was seen to be highly variable: in a regular CB multiparty meeting the Host was equivalent to a Chair, but in the dyadic CB meeting it was not possible to pinpoint one of the speakers as the Chair. In the NCB sales meeting it was not possible to decide who was the Chair, and it was therefore proposed that within EM the notion of Chair is highly problematic. The position of 'Host' was suggested instead.

In terms of conflict, convergence and face, the findings from this chapter were in contrast with those of the framework chapter. In both the contractually bound EM, rather than paying constant attention to the face needs of the interlocutor as was suggested to be the case in the framework chapter, we found considerable threats to face and seemingly deliberate divergence. This involved various linguistic forms including, somewhat surprisingly, metaphors and idioms. The findings support the position of Holmes and Stubbe who argue that conflict 'may occasionally arise through miscommunication, but power issues, relationships and people's potentially competing face needs are much more likely to give rise to problematic talk' (2003: 162). In meetings where conflict had become contextualised, it was found that turn length and complexity was also affected, with disagreement becoming the 'preferred' response. In the NCB meeting, in contrast, the negative face needs of the buyer were addressed by the seller. As the data from EM in the framework chapter involved NCB meetings which also contained considerable evidence of participants addressing face needs, it seems that attention to face is more expected in NCB meetings, whereas in CB meetings this is not necessarily the case.

The next chapter reviews the generic framework outlined in chapter four, then further develops and applies it to the sample data analysed in this and the previous chapter. In so doing it brings together many of the themes discussed so far, for example speaker goals and strategies and their linguistic realisation.

# Chapter 9: Qualitative Analysis III (Genre)

## Introduction

The purpose of this final qualitative chapter is not to prove that business meetings exist, because they most evidently do. Instead, the aim is to explicitly address the main hypothesis of this thesis, that *Business meetings can be characterised as a distinct genre.* The specific findings from the previous chapters have also addressed this hypothesis in incremental stages. This chapter, however, develops and applies an original, holistic model, initially outlined in chapter four. The model can be described as a matrix because it combines an abstract description of the overall structure of the business meeting which participants tend to orient towards, with evidence for meeting-specific manifestations of speaker strategies which indicate how participants demonstrate their understanding of and participation in the specific genre. The originality and power of the model lies in its ability to account for the repetition and the variety which typify the genre.

The first part of the chapter deals with Koester's (2006) assertion that meetings are unsuitable for genre-based analysis. I then propose a six-part framework for meetings. There follows a brief review of McCarthy's four strategies (1998). The novel combination of these strategies with the new six-part overall structural organisation is then applied to a selection of internal- and external-meeting data. By applying the model to both internal and external meetings, the overall genre of the meeting is explained.

## 9.1 Meeting as Genre?

When outlining the hypotheses for this thesis, Koester's (2006) claim that meetings are not appropriate for genre analysis because they can contain a variety of goals was quoted.

Given that the position taken here concerning the appropriacy of the business meeting as a genre contrasts strongly with that of Koester on this point, some discussion is warranted.

Both Koester's and the present description of genre are tied to that of Swales (1990) in that we both argue for the primacy of speaker goals in understanding genre. However, Koester's position is more extreme in that she divides stretches of talk into distinct genres 'in terms of the overall goal of the encounter' (2006: 32). Hence she proposes generic labels such as 'decision-making' and 'directive discourse'. It could be argued that in doing so there is a possibility of conflating goals and genres, and that such a categorisation insufficiently addresses one of the central issues in genre analysis: how do we recognise the beginning and endings of particular genres (Couture, 1986: 82). For example, if we look at 'decision-making', she argues that this 'genre' follows a problem-solution pattern. Boden (1994: 183), as discussed in chapter 7, has powerfully argued that evidence of the decision-making process is very difficult to find in business discourse, describing them as 'invisible', and that when decisions are made it is usually quite a long time after the initial problem was flagged. Such a reality would make for clarifying the beginning and ending of the decision-making process extremely difficult. This is not to say that the *expectation* of reaching a decision is not present in meetings. Indeed, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris cite this as one of the advantages of a genre approach to meetings, because meetings are task-oriented and constrained by the topic and the expectation that decisions will be reached and acted upon. Speakers need to cooperate because 'they have to work together interactively to produce a collective outcome' (1996: 274).

Pinpointing when directive discourse begins and ends can also be highly problematic, given that directives are often ongoing, may not be carried out at the time of speaking, and may require some follow-up over time. The following exchange between the appraiser (speaker two) and the appraisee (speaker one) of a performance review (139001) demonstrates this. Here we have the appraisee appraising the appraiser's approach* to following up on directives:

**[Extract 9.1. #139001. CD\MS in consultancy company.]**

<$1> No. <$=> Er and and <\$=> But you also don't think ``Right. <$=> I have to <\$=> I have to make a mental note to myself to actually go back and check that's done"+

<$2> Mm.

<$1> +because you you shouldn't+

<$2> <$=> I I <\$=>

<$1> +have to.

<$2> No. No. If I've asked somebody to do it+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +it should get done. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> <$E> extends following syllable <\$E> Erm and and I move on myself.

By tying goals so exclusively to genre, Koester's position on meetings and genre can be seen as coherent: if meetings do involve various goals, then categorising this speech activity based only on goals becomes very difficult. If we accept, however, that goals are probably the most important issue, but not the only defining key issue, in identifying a genre, i.e. a necessary but not sufficient condition for defining a genre, and

*This extract is also interesting in terms of how the roles are negotiated, as here we seem to have something of a role reversal.

that in fact multiple goals *typify* institutional discourse (Tracy and Coupland, 1990), then Koester's criticism carries less weight.*

## 9.2 Meeting Structure

### 9.2.1 Beginnings and endings

Indeed, one of the advantages of categorising business meetings as a genre is that they do tend to have relatively clear beginnings and endings (Bargiela and Harris, 1996). The beginnings and endings of meetings, like other genres, should be clearly recognisable because 'speakers need to know just what sort of language event they are involved in' (McCarthy, 1998: 62). These stages may be highly conventionalised and give rise to formulaic language (ibid) such as the instantiation 'Right, that just about wraps things up for today'. Boden (1994: 87) states that even the most informal workplace meetings have 'noticeable and analysable openings and closings'. While this position is borne out in the data, it is also necessary to reiterate that there are various degrees of messiness at these stages of meetings, particularly in relation to small talk.

Bargiela and Harris (1997: 209-211) report that in their English data there was a clear distinction between the pre-meeting and the opening phase, with the former involving much phatic communication and the latter being the prerogative of the Chair. While this is sometimes the case, CANBEC indicates that the reality is more complex: in meetings where the Chair does not exercise his or her power overtly the beginning of the

*Also, while meetings are rejected as inappropriate, service encounters are described as a genre by Koester, yet service encounters and business meetings share many parallel features – see chapter two, and seem also capable of embodying many goals. Koester also supports the view that institutional discourse can contain multiple transactional and relational goals (2006), a position which sits awkwardly with her stance on meetings and genre. Despite these points, the difference between our two positions is one of degree.

meeting and the shift from small talk to on topic is far more recursive. It is proposed here that meetings often have 'fuzzy boundaries', and the occurrence of small talk is very fluid. These points will be explored further in the following sections.

### 9.2.2 The stages of meetings

As noted, meetings have traditionally been broken down into three stages. While such a framework provides a reasonable abstraction of the genre, it is also necessary to recognise the turn-by turn nature of meetings, and how 'global generic structures are subject to interruption, incompletion, variation and even subversion, depending on the exigencies of the moment and on the individual goals of the speakers involved' (Koester, 2006: 25). Another danger of such a three-part structure is that it can give the impression that meetings exist in a vacuum. With these issues in mind, in this chapter I propose a new generic structure with six stages and transition moves, which includes meeting preparation and post-meeting stages. These two stages are not strictly part of the analysed meeting, but feed into and flow from the meeting itself. While the linguistic analysis of meetings within this thesis involves the middle four stages, the relevance of these two outer 'stages' to the occurrence and consequences of the meeting in question should be recognised. This extended framework accounts for the intertextual (Kristeva, 1980) nature of business meetings: as a form of social activity, meetings require social ratification through communication, and one meeting is preceded and succeeded by other meetings.

*Stage pre-2: Meeting preparation*

This 'stage' is optional, as some meetings are spontaneous. It involves any preceding work done which is directly relevant to the meeting, and as such is related to Firth's 'tyings' (1995a). This may include previous meetings dealing with the same issues, sending out the agenda, and any decisions made concerning the meeting by the concerned parties and which will be discussed in this meeting. This stage tends to be finished some time, e.g. an hour, a day or a month, before the next stage. The following extract from a sales meeting shows how the sales director (speaker one) pinpoints the need for a subsequent detail-oriented meeting, to which the present meeting can thus be regarded as a precursor:

**[Extract 9.2 #39001]**

<$1> I think next time we'll just get together and we'll we'll thrash it out and then+

<$2> Lovely.

<$1> +get something together.

*Stage pre-1: Pre meeting*

Here, some of the participants discuss the topic or some aspect related to the meeting just before the meeting actually starts, or pay attention to the face needs of participants through small talk (Holmes, 2000a), or possibly even to their own face needs through small talk. This may be between members of the same company, or members from the different companies. Once again this stage is optional. In terms of topic, Mirivel and Tracy (2005: 1) say 'premeeting talk' can include 'work talk, meeting preparatory talk and shop talk' as well as small talk, where 'work talk' involves some topic related to the job, 'meeting preparatory talk' is specifically about some aspect of the meeting e.g. a

point on the agenda or the refreshments, and 'shop talk' would be akin to work-related gossip.

*Transition move*: Cuff and Sharrock (1985: 154) state that 'The fact that a meeting is about to start is made visible to potential participants'.

*Stage 1: Meeting coheres*

This stage is necessary. The meeting begins when a quorum of participants are present, and then the issue or issues to be discussed are highlighted, often in terms of an agenda or proposal or fax or letter or email (see Firth, 1995a). If this is the first external meeting between the companies or the participants, then the addressing of the issue(s) will be explicit. If the meetings are more frequent and or regular, then such references may be less explicit. Usually this stage is signalled by the Head Host in EM, but not necessarily.

In external meetings, it is noticeable that stages pre-1 and 1 may be rather fluid. Even when the meeting seems to have formally started, there may be some return to small talk. This seems to be the case when the meeting may not have 'got off on the right foot', or the participants may be getting ahead of themselves too early in terms of either the agenda or the fine detail of the first point, as was noted in the introductory chapter. The Head Host usually directs this, as in the extract in the introduction.

In regular IM this stage may be little more than perfunctory, for example in weekly dyadic CS\MS. While there are no such meetings in the sample, meeting 43001 from the framework data demonstrates this. The technical director opens the meeting with:

**[Extract 9.3. #43001.]**

<$1> Right. Okay. So current technical problems?

Any small talk or addressing of face issues is clearly lacking, with the emphasis being on the efficient transfer of information. In P meetings we may see a similar situation to EM, with attention to face needs as in the framework chapter in less regular meetings.

*Transition move*: Bargiela and Harris (1997: 210) state that this move ' signals the beginning of the discussion, when the Group (as opposed to the Chair) is allowed and encouraged to play a more active role.'

*Stage 2: Discussion of the agenda/topic*

This stage is necessary and can be broken down into several phases, or may be made up of only one phase. In institutional discourse, 'clusters of activity' Heritage (1997: 167) or phases can be recognised in overall structural organisation, each of which involves the 'pursuit of a specific sub-goal' in talk which is task-focussed. This stage and its possible phases can be categorised as such task-focussed, goal-driven talk.

In terms of how these phases may be organised, Holmes and Stubbe's (2003: 68) linear/spiral distinction is relevant, and the same contextual factors will affect the particular patterning for that phase of the meeting e.g. relationship of speakers, role of Chair/Host, and meeting purpose and topic. In dyadic CS\MS meetings the phase or phases will usually involve addressing a series of points in a linear pattern, and the phases themselves will progress methodically. As shown in the previous chapter, IM peer meetings may be more spiral in turn structure, and the same cyclical patterning can be

observed over phases in such meetings. In the next section we will see how transitions between phases can vary in terms of the level of clarity.

Not all meetings have the phase structures outlined above, for example negotiations can follow a different pattern. Graham (1983) outlines four related phases, each of which builds on the previous one:

1. Non-task sounding
2. Task-related exchange of information
3. Persuasion
4. Concessions and agreement

The first stage involves small talk and building rapport. The second is concerned with positioning and communicating about needs. The third involves participants trying to lead the others to accept their position and intentions, and in the last stage there is movement towards agreement. Unlike, say, an IM CS\MS review meeting where the order of phases could probably be rearranged without any considerable loss in the coherence of the meeting, it would not be possible to reorder negotiation phases. This overall structure is observed in the sales negotiation 75001.

*Transition move*: 'The Chair's dominant role is re-established, and the Group's role proportionally restricted' (Bargiela and Harris, 1997: 210)

*Stage 3: Closing of meeting*

This is a necessary stage and can be sudden or circuitous. In regular meetings this will tend to occur quite quickly, especially in CS\MS meetings as in this extract:

**[Extract 9.4. # 169001. IM, CS\MS Sales review meeting. $1 is the Chair.]**

<$4> Well I've been told it is but+

<$1> Yeah.

<$4> +y= you never know.

<$E> 4 sec <\$E>

<$1> Very very <$G?>. Facts and then decisions. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Okay folks <$E> 3 sec <\$E> <$G?> looking looking a bit more cheerful <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> which is good. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Thank you.

<$E> 13 sec various incoherent murmurings and rustle of papers <\$E>

<$E> cassette ends <\$E>

Particularly in NCB, EM and often in CB, EM and IM, P we can expect this stage to be more drawn out, as the beginnings of such meetings tend to be, with more phatic communication and attention to face being woven into the final transactional turns. However, as the very ending of the 141001 demonstrates, this is not necessarily the case:

**[Extract 9.5. # 141001. CB EM. $2 is the brewery representative, $1 is the pub chain operations controller.]**

<$2> +and now we've got a chance to do <$X> summink | something <\$X> about it and and this is the time that we're doing something about it really.

<$1> Yes. <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> Clearly.

<$2> Yeah.

<$E> 2 secs <\$E>

<$1> John. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> I don't envy you. You must be welcomed up and down the country.

<$2> Well yeah. <$=> Most people are <\$=> Most people are kinder than you are but there you go.

<$1> <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$2> So. <$E> laughs <\$E>

<$E> meeting ends </$E>

*Stage 4: Post-meeting effects*

This 'stage' concerns the effects and repercussions of the meeting e.g. another meeting at a later date, a change (not) implemented following the meeting, or a cancelling of the relationship between two companies. This is obviously not a stage in the same way as the previous stages, nevertheless it is important to recognise that the end of the meeting in question does not entail the end of the topics, themes or issues related to that meeting.

This section has built on and made alterations to previous research concerning the stages of business meetings by amongst others Bargiela and Harris (1996, 1997), and Holmes and Stubbe (2003). The overall structure proposed here is an abstraction which participants may orient towards but may also subvert, and the next section will explore how participants ratify, bring into being and manoeuvre within and across these phases.

## 9.3. Generic Strands: McCarthy's (1998) strategies applied to business meetings

The framework chapter contains a reasonably detailed analysis and application of McCarthy's (1998) four strands or strategies, namely expectations, recollections, formulations and instantiations. McCarthy (1998: 38) states that the strategies are not necessarily discrete, 'but they do offer a suggestive classification of different orientations towards generic activity. Such orientations are ever-present, but only manifest themselves overtly at particular points in the discourse when the goals require it.' Thus we can see how these strands bind together some of the central themes of this thesis: genre, speaker goals and their linguistic manifestation.

As stated in the framework chapter, expectations are prospective strands that allow participants to flag the type of activity in which they are or will be involved. Recollections make evident the speakers' experience of relevant past events. Formulations involve summaries of where the speaker sees the conversation having arrived at. In the framework chapter, I said that formulations also include verifying understanding, and this could be achieved through attempting to clarify what has been said, through *re*-formulating what was said. Summarising and clarifying are very common in the data. Instantiations involve the speakers directing the discourse in order to address a new goal or set of goals, and are the most frequent, important and protean method for recreating genres. It is important to note that these goals may be higher level and related to the agenda, or they may be emergent (Hopper and Drummond, 1990) in the course of the meeting. Below is a selection of what I argue are meeting-specific instances of the four strategies. While it is not an exhaustive list, it should demonstrate how a close reading of the data has allowed me to interpret the speakers' intentions plausibly and coherently. This categorisation, which gives meeting-specific instances of how participants (re)create the business meeting genre can also be linked to the categorisation of certain pragmatic clusters in chapter five, thereby showing the patterned lexicogrammatical realisation of these genetic 'fingerprints', although this potential marriage of the various aspects of the framework will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

### 9.3.1 Instances of the strategies

**Expectations**

*-setting the agenda*

*-opening the meeting*

**Formulations**

*-summarising progress*

*-summarising information*

*-seeking clarification*

*-checking shared understanding*

*emphasizing shared understanding*

**Recollections**

*-orienting to past events*

*-orienting to related events*

*-orienting to recurrent events*

**Instantiations**

*-operationalising topic shift*

*-keeping discussion on track*

*-cutting speaker off*

*-bringing topic to a close*

*-bringing meeting to a close*

*-taking discussion 'off track'*

*-reaching a decision*

*-blocking a decision*

*-postponing a decision*

These examples of the strategies show that expectations signal the kind of activity the speakers are involved in and the use of the resources of the genre in question (Kelly, 1995) for example the agenda, whereas instantiations alter the direction of the discourse within the genre while it is in progress. Recollections mark the present context as a recurrent one, and formulations mark the point the present ongoing activity has reached. It is immediately clear that some of these examples of the strategies tend to regularly appear in certain moves or points in phases e.g. the instantiation *bringing a meeting to a close* or the expectation *opening the meeting.* Some of the others are clearly related to stages of a discussion e.g. the formulations *summarising progress* and *checking shared understanding* or the instantiations *keeping discussion on track* or *reaching a decision.* A selection of these strategies will be explored below in longer extracts, with explicit reference to possible goals they allow the speakers to focus on or move towards.

## 3.2 Applying the strategies

This section applies the proposed strategies and their specific business-meeting manifestations to the sample data. In so doing, the plausibility and appropriacy of the generic framework will be explored. At first extracts from IM, MS meetings are discussed, followed by an extract from a IM, P meeting. There then follows some analysis of extracts from two EM meetings, one CB and the other NCB. As such, all the major relationship of speaker categories are covered.

### 9.3.2.1 Internal Meetings

*CS\MS #169001*

This extract is from an internal sales meeting. Speaker one is the MD/Chair of the meeting, and the other speakers are sales staff. The extract occurs towards the end of a relational sequence about credit cards, during which the MD/Chair is joking about dishonest websites that purport to offer a service but in truth fraudulently receive payments from unsuspecting 'customers'. This sequence occurs towards the end of a long phase of the meeting which has been focusing on how problems can be prevented.

**[Extract 9.6. #169001. IM, CS\MS.]**

<$1> Send your credit card details. Whoopee there's another one.

<$E> short laughter <\$E>

<$2> No most of <$X> em | them <\$X> are information sites I think where you can't find their address rather than you <$G?>.

<$3> Eddie's hol= holiday appeal.

<$E> short burst of laughter <\$E>

<$1> Yeah. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Okay Jimmy on these mats. <$=> Get the updated get the e= or <\$=> Get Brian to give us final costs <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> for the heavy-duty stuff.

<$4> Uh- huh.

<$1> Non edge sealed. <$E> 4 sec <\$E> and then we need to <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> I mean can you give Barnsley a ring Phil? <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> Or i= you know. <$G?> do them whenever and say "Look how are those mats performing?"

<$3> Yeah yeah yeah.

<$E> 3 sec <\$E>

<$1> <$=> We we we've gotta keep <\$=> We've gotta get off the fence here.

The extract demonstrates the end of one instantiation and the beginning of another. The relational sequence involved the MD taking the discussion 'off track', before he takes it back 'on track' through the silence and discourse markers *Yeah.(1 second) Okay.* The vocative *Jimmy* and the metastatement-type preposition *on (these mats)* explicitly clarify who is being addressed and what the topic is. The use of the imperative *get* signals the speech act as a bald directive. Further instructions are then given, somewhat more indirectly, to Phil, with the sequence being concluded with the strong modal of obligation *gotta,* the exclusive pronoun *we* (exclusive because it does not include the MD), the creative metaphor *get off the fence,* and the emphatic deictic marker *here. We've gotta get off the fence here* indicates the rationale for the preceding directives: the sales staff need to be more proactive. Idiomatic language can often occur at the end of a sequence, as it does here, to summarise and assess the previous points (Drew and Holt, 1998). As such, the metaphor could also be interpreted as a formulation.

The timing of this instantiation through these directives and criticism has arguably more force because it was sequentially immediately preceded by a relational interlude. The sudden topic shift to a highly transactional frame is in stark contrast to the lighthearted mood of the discourse a few seconds previous, which again indicates the possibility of relational language being used to further transactional goals. While it is impossible to say whether the MD deliberately instigated the relational sequence in order to create such a contrast, the suddenness of the topic shift does seem to indicate some degree of intention.

*CD\MS #139001*

The following two extracts are from a biannual performance review meeting between the appraisee, the business development manager (speaker one), and the appraiser, the marketing director (speaker two). At the very beginning of the meeting, the director outlines the approach to the performance review.

**[Extract 9.7. # 139001]**

<$2> Right. <$=> It's erm <\$=> <$E> 3 secs <\$E> Well let's go through it step by step as we did before.

This involves an expectation *let's go through it step by step* and a recollection *as we did before*. This turn demonstrates how these strategies can sometimes be easily identified; in other extracts below we will see how their occurrence has to be teased out more carefully. We can expect a linear pattern in terms of the phases of the meeting and the turn-taking style, with each point being addressed before moving on to the next one.* The extract below from the middle of the meeting demonstrates this approach:

**[Extract 9.8. # 139001]**

<$1> But I will have done some things. Erm.

<$2> That's right. <$E> 2 secs <\$E> But then between the next <$E> 1 sec <\$E> review in January and the one after that in June it'll be complete and finished with.

<$1> I hope so yeah.

<$2> Mm. Mm.

<$1> I hope that we can push for the assessment.

<$2> So at the next review we could set that as a goal+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +for+

<$1> Yeah.

<$2> +for June. That's okay. <$E> inhales <\$E> <$E> extends following syllable <\$E> Erm national standards. S= choo choo choo choo. Well. Now then. <$E> 3.5 secs <\$E> Erm <$E> 2.5 secs <\$E> well at least we've got that moving now haven't we.

<$1> Yeah. I'm committed to achieving them.

Here we see the appraiser gradually working through the points on the agenda, and

*The meeting does not consistently display such a smooth progression, however, with the appraisee negotiating her role in the meeting, as in extract 9.1 above.

employing instantiations to address the agenda and therefore achieve his goal of covering the relevant points. We see the first instantiation with *So at the next review we could set that as a goal for June*: he is making a decision to postpone setting the skill in question as a goal until the next performance review. There is another instantiation in introducing the next topic for discussion, national standards. The new topic is signalled by the use of the discourse markers *Erm...Well. Now then.* Erm and two long silences. As usual, the strategy is applied by the most powerful speaker, but he encourages her active positive involvement in the appraisal of this new topic by positively evaluating the situation through the use of an idiom* *we've got that moving* suggesting progress, and the tag *haven't we.* The appraisee responds in a positive, forthright manner by showing her commitment to achieving the national standards.

There is a lot of facework evident in this exchange: the vague expression *Choo choo choo choo* which, like the frequent chunk *Der der der der* is 'used to project a high degree of shared knowledge' (McCarthy and Handford, 2004: 177); the appraiser's response *That's right* which shows he fully agrees that she will have made much progress by then; the unquestioning postponement of the goal till June, rather than threatening the appraisee's negative face by eliciting an explanation as to why this has not yet been

achieved, and the positive metaphor combined with an inclusive tag *moving haven't we.* Once again it could be argued that relational goals are being addressed, with the transactional goal of developing a satisfied and productive employee the primary goal.

*Koester (2004) in her discussion of relational sequences, shows how by using idioms to summarise and positively evaluate the task in question, 'the speakers can bring the encounter to a mutually satisfactory conclusion; thus such sequences perform a function very similar to encounter-final phatic communion – ritual small talk at the end of an encounter. ' 1418 What we see here is a topic *introduced* with a positive idiom which opens the encounter in a mutually encouraging way.

*CD\P #167001*

In the last chapter an extract from this meeting which highlighted group decision-making was analysed. It was also noted how, as decision-making can be classified as an instantiation, these strategies are not only the prerogative of the Chair or most powerful speaker, but can also be collaboratively enacted by peers. As a similar collaborative decision-making process was noted in the CS\MS 169001, we can also conclude that even in MS-type communication the subordinate(s) can still apply certain strategies, depending on the topic and the stage of the meeting.

This extract from the peer meeting 167001 shows how the MD/Chair operationalises topic shift and then attempts to drive the group towards making the decision which the extract in the previous chapter exhibits.

**[Extract 9.9. #167001. CD\P]**

<$1> Bloody Government departments <$H> are a <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> pain <\$H>.

<$E> 2 sec <\$E>

<$2?> <$E> exhales loudly <\$E>

<$1> Right. We'll have to review this when Derek comes in anyhow but I mean we've gotta get all <$H> our ducks in a row <\$H> on what we're doing and what happens next week and so on. So+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +okay right we'll <$G1> that. <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> But essentially w= the I P P C and the t= t= t= planning permission a= with the nods and winks we've had from the planners <$E> 1 sec <\$E> what I wanna do is get that <$H> ruddy <\$H> cheque sent today+

<$2> Yeah.

<$1> +or get that order placed. <$=> And the cheque y= the cheques in the pos= <\$=> Just the ultimate <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> er.

<$2> Yeah but <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> they won't be interested in proceeding it till they have a cheque so <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> there's no point+

<$1> <$=> Yeah there's no <\$=> Yeah there's no point <$G?>.

<$2> +<$G?> unless unless there is one.

<$1> No. Absolutely. <$=> But there <\$=> Yes there will be a cheque in the post. Yeah if we do it.

<$3> Just bear it in mind that we need to make that decision before one o' clock.

<$1> Indeed.

At the beginning of this extract we can see the Chair making a negative judgement towards government departments, before the instantiation where he initiates the next phase of the meeting. This phase is concerned with reaching a consensus about a new joint business venture, which initially involves sending a large cheque to their future partner. What is interesting is how the Chair clearly states his desire in terms of possible decisions, but his colleagues raise possible problems with his proposal through recollections. They make reference to previously-gained information e.g. *<$2> Yeah but <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> they won't be interested in proceeding it till they have a cheque* which has direct relevance to the decision of whether they place the order or send the cheque. Such a categorical, unhedged reaction would seem highly unlikely in an MS-type relationship, as would the caveat by speaker three *<$3> Just bear it in mind that we need to make that decision before one o' clock.* While the sequence is the beginning of a long

decision-making process, and as such is an instantiation, it is important to recognise the relationship between the roles of the speakers and the lexicogrammatical choices they make.

### 9.3.2.2 External meetings

*CB #151001*

This extract is from the CB EM 151001, with the Host (speaker one) addressing what he sees as the biggest problem in the two companies' current working relationship, that is the supply company does not allow the pharmaceutical company to change their order at short notice, even when the order change is relatively small. In a post-meeting interview speaker one from the pharmaceutical company stated that he suspected the problem was caused by the inefficiency of the communication within the supply company. This extract is from the third discussion phase of the meeting, as in point three on the agenda. The participants have been discussing the issue for approximately ten minutes already, and seem no nearer an agreement. Speaker three is the representative from the supply company.

**[Extract 9.10. #151001. EM\CB.]**

<$1> But <$=> but but that <\$=> what you're saying there differs from what you said to begin with because what you're saying there is it depends on production capacity and I totally agree. <$=> We might say <\$=> We might not be talking about the difference between eight hundred packs and two thousand which is very very small. We might be talking about <$E> inhales <\$E> eight thousand packs and twenty thousand and in which case you're saying "Look+

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> +you know that additional twelve thousand packs <$=> is ano= <\$=> is an extra day's work".

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> And I can imagine why you're saying ``No".

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> ``We're not prepared to firm that up." So I think we've got to look at production capacities.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> We've got to look at component availability. But I'm worried when I hear <$E> 2 secs <\$E> <$=> we ha= we <\$=> we can't logistically increase one order <$=> by er <\$=> from eight hundred to two thousand <$E> 0.5 sec <\$E> which I would have thought would be two minutes' work and cancel two orders that might be five minutes' work. I might be

exaggerating the timescales but that really worries me if we're doing that because we've got a list of twenty two orders where we're saying bring forward increase quantity you know put date back. If you're saying we haven't got the staff or we haven't got the systems that can cope with that I think we've got a resource issue. <$E> 1 sec <\$E> Or a systems or way of working issue.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> <$=> Because what we're gonna hear is we're gonna put all these requ= <\$=> There are gonna be requests that come through to to combine orders to whatever. If we haven't got things in place there <$=> we're gonna <\$=> we're gonna put this list together and you're just gonna say <$E> 2.5 secs <\$E> rejected. Rejected.

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> Rejected. Rejected. Rejected. <$=> And <\$=>

<$E> 1.5 secs <\$E>

<$3> Rupert I will tell you <$G?> our er <$G?> we should talk about the routine process and the routine process should not go ahead with this way of working. <$=> We talk <\$=> We don't talk about ten materials we talk about six hundred material numbers.

One of the main realisations of formulations are summaries. Charles and Charles (1999: 77) distinguish between 'procedural' summaries (referenced to the agenda and usually happen at the end of a certain session, showing for everyone's benefit the

progress made so far, or in previous sessions), 'topical' summaries (related to a specific item on the agenda, and occur just after a discussion on that topic), and 'tactical' summaries (referenced to the hidden agenda of the party in question, and allow the speaker to wrestle for tactical control, putting 'his own gloss on events'). While the first two are common in all meetings, 'tactical' summaries tend to occur in negotiation meetings (ibid) or arguably negotiation phases.

The first turn by speaker one contains a formulation: he clarifies what he sees as a contradiction in speaker three's argument, and then chooses which line of argument he agrees with, *and I totally agree*. This seems to bear a strong similarity to Charles and Charles (1999: 77) tactical summary, and it could be called a tactical clarifier.* By developing this interpretation of the other company's position, speaker one is addressing his ' hidden agenda', which allows him 'to wrestle for tactical control, putting 'his own gloss on events'. The discourse then changes from a formulation into an instantiation, as he builds his argument through strong deontic modals (*we've got to look at),* exaggeration, the highly personal *I'm worried* and *that really worries me,* and the aggressive repetition of *rejected* in an attempt to persuade the supply company to come to agreement.

The chunk *if you're saying we* could also be seen as evidence of an instantiation because through placing the responsibility for the intractable problem with the supply company, he is again trying to coerce speaker three into coming to a decision which will benefit the pharmaceutical company. Speaker three does not directly respond to his line of argument, but instead returns to the issue of *routine working*, which he had begun to discuss at the very opening of this phase of the meeting.

*It could be argued that the difference between a summary and a clarifier is that whereas a summary is a semantic category based on the meanings in the text, a clarifier is a pragmatic category because it attempts to interpret the speaker's intended meaning.

*NCB #75001*

This is an extract from the sales negotiation meeting between the MD (speaker two) and the marketing manager (speaker three) of an hydraulics manufacturer (speaker two), and the salesperson from a magazine. This extract occurs approximately three quarters of the way through the meeting, and is from the beginning of the persuasion phase (Graham, 1983), with the salesperson trying to persuade the buyer to sign a one-year contract which involves a bigger package and a financial outlay than they have paid previously.

**[Extract 9.11. #75001.]**

<$1> ...What I was thinking is if <\$=> And you spent two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds with us. <$E> inhales <\$E> <$=> I mean what what I was thinking is if I could do you <$E> 2 secs <\$E> erm <\$=> <$E> 4 secs <\$E> See <$E> sighs <\$E> I don't know if you could sort of planning on going up to around about sort of three thousand pounds <$E> 1 sec <\$E> with us. Cos what I was thinking about doing is is doing like <$E> 2 secs <\$E> a little package deal and doing you six insertions of any one...

<$3> And that includes <$=> one in the <\$=> one in the directory.

<$1> One in the guide. On in the guide to the coalfields <$E> 1.5 secs <\$E> and then I'll do you another five of your choice out of Coal P L C. <$E> 2 secs <\$E> So all right you're you're upping your budget by two hundred and thirty quid over t' year. But you're

getting an extra two adverts to try and help you out. Er well obviously+

<$3> Mm.

<$1> +we're getting a commitment from you for the full year <$E> 1 sec <\$E> er in agreement.

<$E> 6 secs <\$E>

<$2> <$=> What are <\$=> What your feelings are Kevin? <$=> I mean it's you you're the

<\$=>

<$3> Yeah.

<$2> You're the marketing bod.

<$3> Yeah.

<$2> <$E> laughs <\$E> <$G?> <$E> 2 secs <\$E> You feel that <$=> that if <\$=> if we do this this'll be the only th= place we advertise won't it.

<$E> 1 sec <\$E>

<$3> Yeah.

<$1> Mm.

<$3> Yeah.

<$E> 3 secs <\$E>

<$2> See <$=> we've already <\$=> we've already paid for the website. The website has cost us three fifty.

<$3> Yeah.

<$2> So we've got that there anyway.

It is possible to break this exchange into two parts: the sales pitch and the response. The two are separated by the extremely long silence of six seconds, during which time the buyers are considering the proposal. In meetings in CANBEC talk tends to be continuous, and silences are very rarely longer than three seconds. It is interesting that the salesperson does not attempt to fill the silence, and this could be a strategic approach to force a response from the buyer, given that silence can be employed to fulfill a variety of speech acts (Saville-Troike, 1985; Jaworski, 1993).

The use of *if* in this extract is also of note, with the salesperson employing it to hedge his proposal, combined with other indirect forms such as *what I was thinking (if) I could...I don't know (if) you could sort of.* By downtoning the force of his offer, he is addressing the negative face needs of his interlocutors. He also admits that they will have

to pay more but then concentrates on the benefits through the pattern(?) *So all right...But you're getting....* He also positions his argument so that it is the buyer who will benefit, and who is in a needy condition *...to try to help you out.* All of these factors combined indicate that this is an instantiation: he introduces the topic of the package and tactically combines negative politeness strategies with positive and necessary benefits in order to encourage the hydraulics company to decide to invest.

Following the six-second silence, the buyers respond with an indirect negotiating move: by talking to Kevin directly and interpreting his reticence, and clarifying their position, the MD is tactically exerting pressure (see Charles 1996) on the seller to make a better deal because their budget is tight and they already have a website.

This response could also be described as an 'account' (Levinson, 1983: 306). Accounts, which can involve an excuse or a justification are used in negotiations 'as linguistic objects that seek to effect substantive change' (Firth, 1995b: 201), for example to initiate a problem-solving phase (ibid: 212), which would be an instantiation. The above response by the MD is a justification of the marketing manager's silence on one level, but is also a tactic to gain a better position in the negotiation. Firth (ibid: 205) states that accounts allow the negotiation to progress from a conflictual situation to one where there is agreement, and are achieved sequentially over turns: 'an account is not randomly produced in the negotiation...(but) is sensitive to contextual contingencies, not least discourse sequencing and the perceived 'stance' of the other party'. This strategy is evidence of goal-driven behaviour, as the negotiator employs an account when it is perceived to diffuse disagreement without damaging his or her position.

## 9.4 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together the major themes of this thesis, under the single question *what is the genre of the business meeting?* The combination of an overall structure which describes the intertextuality (Bhatia, 1999) of meetings (i.e. the means by which they relate to previous and succeeding meetings), their possible stages and their potential fuzziness at the edges with strategies that indicate the goal-driven activity of the participants, accounts for the dynamism and recurrence of this genre. In so doing, an original generic model has been created and applied to the data. The model has been shown to have explanatory depth in accounting for internal and external meetings. The effect of the relationship of the speakers, their goals and the agenda has also been discussed, as has the lexicogrammatical realisation of the combination of the above factors. For example, once again we saw the power of metaphors, and, rather like *if*, their multifunctionality.

An important question in relation to the relationship of the speakers is: Are strategies the prerogative of powerful speakers? Often the answer seems to be *yes* (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 71), especially at certain stages of the meeting e.g. expectations at the beginning of the meeting, but factors such the topic can influence this: in the previous chapter we saw how in MS meetings the subordinate staff can come to a decision together very much as managers did in a peer meeting i.e. collaboratively. Such a collaborative instantiation demonstrates that the strategies are not purely in the domain of the most powerful speakers, or single speakers, but can be jointly constructed. When the meeting topic was reviewing, as in the extract from 139001 above, the strategies then

seem to be much more in the hands of the manager. However even in this meeting the negotiation of roles was noted.

Another area explored in this chapter was the tactical nature of many strategies. Building on the work of Charles and Charles (1999) and Firth (1995b), the purposeful employment of particularly instantiations and formulations to address the speakers' company goals and improve their bargaining position in negotiation phases and meetings was discussed. This is a topic that would warrant further study.

On a final note, the probabilistic as opposed to deterministic nature of genres and their linguistic realisation was discussed in chapter two and it is worth reiterating here. Certain lexicogrammatical features and various strategies are commonly found in business meetings, but we should not induce from this that they will always be found in that particular type of meeting. Notwithstanding this qualification, it is possible to link various categories and features that have been proposed and analysed in this thesis. For example, we can see that many recurrent lexicogrammatical units can be categorised in terms of their function, e.g. the chunks *in other words* and *so I think* can be seen as the discourse marking function of summarising. Summarising is an example of the strategy of formulations, which has been shown to play an integral part of the genre of the meeting and therefore provides strong evidence for participants actively 'doing' the genre. However, in view of the fact that many strategies and functions are achieved over turns, and often not as simply as the above example suggests in that they do not always provide such neat lexicogrammatical substantiation, I have shied away from such an integrated synthesis of the various features analysed in this thesis.

# Chapter 10 Summary and Conclusion

## *Summary of thesis and results*

The overall aim of this thesis was to explore whether business meetings could be categorised as a distinct genre. Two related hypotheses, that the language used in business meetings displays consistent differences when compared to everyday English which characterise it as a distinct register, and that there are significant differences between EM and IM were discussed. Related to each of these hypotheses were a set of research questions which were explored in detail in relevant chapters. These research questions concerned speaker goals, speaker strategies, speaker relationships and other contextual factors, face, lexicogrammatical keyness and frequency, a selection of pragmatic markers, turn taking, overall meeting organisation, conflict and convergence, and the role of the Chair. One overriding theme running throughout the whole thesis is the way the recurrent and the dynamic interplay.

In order to answer these questions and test the hypotheses, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used. The rationale for this was that a multidisciplinary approach, through the application of different perspectives to relevant features, such as conversation analysis to turn taking, would allow for a more comprehensive yet fine-grained description of the data. Such a combination of approaches, it was reasoned, would also permit an incremental, cumulative and coherent development of the framework, and would thus mark the method and level of analysis of business-meeting discourse reached as unique.

In addressing the hypothesis concerning the comparison of IM and EM, many differences were found. As this specific area has not been investigated before, these

findings are an original contribution to the field. Differences were noted in terms of lexicogrammatical keyness, with almost half of the top fifty keywords from the IM and EM lists differing. In relation to individual words and chunks *we* was found to be more likely to occur in EM, as was *we need to*. This finding was arguably counterintuitive, but closer observation revealed that 70% of the occurrences of the chunk in the EM sample data were what has been termed 'self-referential' deontic modals. In the sales negotiation this percentage was around 90. Conditional statements involving *if* were also found to be more common in EM. Idioms were far more likely to occur in IM, which can be partly explained by reference to Wenger's concept of communities of practice (1998).

In the qualitative chapters, a further distinction in the area of speaker relationship was developed and applied, that of contractually bound and non-contractually bound relationships. This helped to explain some of the results that appeared in these chapters, for example the occurrence of vague category markers in EM. Vague category markers were found to be most frequent in NCB\EM, which again initially appeared counterintuitive given that they are markers of projected shared knowledge. I argued that these markers were being used strategically in order to create a sense of shared knowledge and therefore closeness in what in reality was a highly conditional relationship. The CB/NCB distinction also helped account for the role or lack of it by the Chair in meetings, as well as differences in attention to the face needs of the participants. Related to this are the issues of conflict and convergence. It can be suggested that in terms of power differences, there was an affinity between the CB\EM and IM\MS, and also NCB\EM and IM\P.

At the speaker goals level clear differences were noted between participants in EM and IM. This was argued to have a direct bearing on phatic communication. Similarly, differences in speaker strategies were also noticed, such as 'taking a discussion off-track' in an EM, in order to achieve a transactional goal. This further supports the argument that relational language can be employed to address an instrumental goal. In the final chapter the fluidity of the early and final stages of EM, in particular NCB\EM was pointed out, but it was also noted that IM\P can share the same characteristic. Many of the strategies explored in the final chapter were also seen to occur in both IM and EM, and the two types of meeting were seen to share the same overall structure. While internal and external meetings do share these higher-level similarities, thus enabling them to be categorised as a single genre, given the considerable range of results briefly summarised here, I strongly believe that the hypothesis that there are significant differences between IM and EM has been proven.

As for the hypothesis that the language used in business meetings is a distinct register, the result is not as clear. This is partly because the notion of a distinct register is difficult to clarify (McCarthy and Carter, 1994), particularly when the comparison is with everyday English, because as Nelson shows (2000), business language is drawn from this source. Hutchinson and Waters, (1987: 31) state, 'even if particular registers favour certain forms, they are not distinctive forms', therefore the question rests on how we define 'distinct'. The hypothesis that business English is completely different from everyday English cannot be proved. Register here was, however, defined as constrained lexical and syntactic style, complementary to but distinct from genre, following Couture (1986). While comparative word frequencies were very similar between CANBEC and

SOCINT, certain consistent tendencies at the lexicogrammatical level were observed in keyword searches, which does add weight to the argument in favour of a register of business English.

Some of these tendencies have been described above, such as the issue of pronoun use and selected deontic forms. As well as *need to*, *gotta* was also seen to be particularly 'key' and therefore more likely in business English than in everyday English. Other results showed the keyness of various conjunctions and back channels, as well as the expected business-related nouns. In order to fully explore this question of the register of business English, the nouns in the corpus would have required far more systematic attention, which they did not receive. What was evident was the way in which speakers can use such interpersonal linguistic features to address transactional goals.

The negative keyword list proved to be quite illuminating in showing what participants tended not to say. Words which referred to the family, the home or religion were seen to be much less common in business than in everyday English. Few past tense forms also appeared, which may imply that, overall, speakers in business refer to the past less often than they do outside of work. This would obviously be highly dependent on topic, for example a review meeting could hardly avoid reference to the past, whereas a strategy meeting would involve far more use of the future tenses. This is another area that requires more research before any credible conclusions can be drawn.

If we accept, as has been argued throughout this thesis, that speaker goals and context have a powerful influence on the language speakers use then the case for a register of business English as used in meetings becomes stronger. Various contextual factors such as the relationship of the speakers and their goals were shown to affect the frequency of

certain pragmatic lexicogrammatical features, for example the use of idiomatic language, vagueness and the apparent synonyms *problem* and *issue* and their collocations and colligations. While these findings do add credence to the notion of constrained lexical and syntactic style, in terms of proving this hypothesis it might be concluded that it was beyond the scope of this thesis given the requirements of the other hypotheses.

The main hypothesis concerned characterising the business meeting as a distinct genre. In so doing, it was necessary to address the paradoxical duality of dynamism and recurrence. In order to account for the dynamism present in meetings, a selection of methods were employed. These included insights from conversation analysis on turn taking and the unfolding nature of discourse. Reading a transcript not as a finalised product but as a creative process occurring in real time of speaking helped achieve this. Inferences made concerning speaker goals and strategies, as described for example in the work of Hopper and Drummond (1990) on emergence, also accounted for the dynamism, as did the strategy of instantiation. In terms of the recurrent factors in meetings, describing a valid overall structure was required, and therefore a less rigid framework than the traditional tripartite one was proposed. Eggins and Slade state, 'A generic structure description is therefore an account of the ideal type. It is not interpreted as a fixed or rigid schema: it is a description of the underlying abstract structure which participants orient to' (1997: 311), and it is hoped that the temptation of describing a structure which participants *follow* has been resisted.

The importance of strategies that participants employ to achieve their goals in meetings was demonstrated in the final chapter. The four generic - strands, formulations, recollections, expectations and instantiations - were given substance in terms of specific,

meeting-related strategies which speakers employ at different stages of a meeting. The linguistic realisation of these strategies was, it is hoped, plausibly inferred within the overall structural framework. In so doing, an innovative explanatory model which accounts for the recurrence and dynamism of the generic reality was achieved. This is arguably one of the greatest achievements of this thesis. For example, various instantiations allow the participants to be creative in manouevring through the genre in question (McCarthy, 1998). This model is also an original contribution to the field, and it is argued here that it accounts for the dynamism and recurrence which make up the authentic business meeting more thoroughly than any previous models. One possible criticism of this model is that it was based on data from only seven meetings, and therefore further application of the matrix is warranted. When we remember that it was also explored in the eight meetings of the framework chapter, bringing the total to over 160,000 words of manually analysed data, this criticism may carry less weight.

As stated in chapter eight, analysing turn-taking created a bridge between the lexicogrammatical units explored in the preceding chapters and the final generic framework. Understanding specific turn-taking mechanisms in business meetings further clarifies how business meetings differ from everyday English. Turn taking was seen to show considerable variety in meetings, with one of the most influential factors being the relationship of the speakers. As well as the CB/NCB distinction mentioned above, the peer/manager-subordinate colleagues and the same/different department distinctions also proved credible in understanding the dynamics of meetings. Comparisons between these different relationships may, it could be argued, warrant a more systematic approach than

was the case in this thesis. Underlying the relationship of the speakers are the issues of power and constraint, which could also be explored more explicitly.

In grouping the factors that combine to create and influence the genre of the business meeting, three main categories can be proposed: surface linguistic evidence, contextual factors, and what I term 'inferred factors'. Surface linguistic evidence includes lexicogrammatical units, such as deontic modals and significant collocations; turn organisation; clusters of activities, and the overall structure. Contextual factors include whether the meeting is internal or external; the size and type of the company; the role of the Chair; the relationship of the speakers; meeting purpose; meeting topic; the number of speakers; the department(s) being represented, and the agenda. Inferred factors are the goals of the speakers, which include higher level goals which would usually be formed or existent prior to the meeting, and lower level, spontaneous, local goals which may emerge through the course of the meeting; functions, and strategies. These three sets of factors characterise the genre of the business meeting, although all factors do not interact equally. For example, the link between the agenda and the higher level goals would tend to be a very strong one, but the relationship between the company type and the turn organisation may not prove to be as important as other factors such as the meeting topic. One link which has been explored, and which warrants further study, is that of significant lexicogrammatical clusters and genre: recurrent clusters provide 'fingerprints' of genres.

In conclusion, given the explanatory power of the proposed model, I think that the main hypothesis that business meetings can be described as a distinct genre was confirmed. One possible criticism of the thesis as a whole, however, might be that the various elements of the framework do not 'hang together' sufficiently. As discussed in

the conclusion of chapter nine, I have deliberately not attempted to bind the various findings together too tightly, as this may have led readers to infer that the business meeting is more uniform and more causal than the data suggests; this is not meant to suggest, though, that the business meeting is not a recognizable genre, just that it is not a rigid or formulaic one. Further possible criticisms of the model are discussed in the following section.

In terms of what the thesis has achieved in terms of originality, I think there are four main areas. The first is the detailed and coherent exploration of the relationship between the recurrent and the dynamic in business meetings at the level of genre, strategies and also lexicogrammatical features such as the pragmatic markers metaphors and idioms. The second is the extent to which the frequency, function and even semantic prosody of an item can be context-dependent, for example *you need to* and *problem*, and also how such items, particularly clusters, create the context. The comparison between IM and EM is unique, as are the findings on EM. The value and rarity of this 25% of CANBEC cannot be overstated. The final area concerns the surprising degree to which business discourse is creative. We can see this in terms of metaphors and idioms, but also in speakers' use of vague and hypothetical language. Interlocutors thus create a shared social space in which the action of business is carried out.

### *Limitations*

In terms of limitations of the corpus CANBEC, the first might be that it is limited in size. In the world of corpora it is very small, and therefore the representativeness of the findings could be questioned. Nevertheless, CANBEC appears to be the largest corpus of

business meetings in existence, as demonstrated in chapter three. Comparative findings have, in addition, been reported in these other 'small' business corpora of business language e.g. Nelson (2000), Holmes and Stubbes (2003), Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), and the findings from CANBEC do provide a high level of description. Furthermore, the larger the corpus, the more challenging it is to record sufficient contextual information. As mentioned above, however, the framework proposed here would undoubtedly benefit from being applied and tested against more meetings.

Furthermore, CANBEC is UK-centric. The majority of the speakers are from the UK (80%), and the vast majority of the language is produced by UK speakers (around 90%). The danger is therefore to overgeneralise Anglocentric *language* and *practices* (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2004) and infer that such practices are more widespread than is the case internationally. It should be emphasised that the findings reported here are descriptive, and largely descriptive of a particular socio-cultural set of speakers. It would be impolitic and ethnocentric to assume that the specific features described here are found everywhere. It is not possible to extrapolate from this set of data and say 'this is the norm in all business environments'. Nevertheless, the results produced in this thesis would warrant further testing in other environment to ascertain their generalisabilty, for example the differences between IM and EM and the proposed generic matrix.

Another issue concerns the way the data was recorded and transcribed. As all recordings were audio, it was not possible to comment on paralinguistic features including body language or gestures. Also, the transcription could have been more fine-grained, in that there could have been a greater level of transcription of prosodic features

such as rising intonation. As these decisions were made by the funding body, CUP, no practical solution was possible.

One basic premise of the study, and of corpus linguistics in general, is that the recurrent item is important. Undoubtedly though, there are many important words that are not frequent, and some crucial issues may not be labelled at all. This would seem to be very likely in a discourse community such as a workplace where people meet regularly and have a high level of shared knowledge. Despite this, we cannot analyse words that are not in the text. What we should do is err on the side of caution when drawing conclusions from quantitative results.

Other issues include the following. This is not a longitudinal study, and therefore the findings may potentially be outdated already. Language practices can change quickly, so there is a danger that speakers no longer use the language as it is described here. Approximately 50% of the data was recorded in only two companies. Within these two companies there were a lot of external meetings, however. There is not a 50–50 gender breakdown: the speakers are approximately 75% male. This may however be representative of business in general, in middle and upper management positions. It is interesting that *she* is the word with the lowest negative keyness. Certain issues such as gender, humour, silence have not been analysed because of practical constraints, whereas others, such as non-verbal communication could not be discussed because the recordings were audio.

In terms of what I would do differently were the study to be started now, there could be more exploration and discussion of whether goals are conscious or unconscious, and to what extent goals are pre-planned or emergent. This would involve changes to the

follow-up interviews, and in practice would require much more time with the participants which they may not be willing or able to commit. As mentioned above, it would be possible to apply a more systematic approach to the relationship-of-speakers category, and this could become the main focus of a new study. Two areas that were not touched upon in detail but which seemed interesting were silence, both intra- and inter-turn, and repetition of certain chunks e.g. *if you*.

### *Implications/directions for future research*

CANBEC is a resource which warrants more attention than it has received so far. The issue of gender and language use could be explored using the database, and the School of English Studies in Nottingham University is starting to conduct such research. The corpus would lend itself well to studies of native and 'non-native' speech, as was discussed briefly in relation to longer chunks and certain modal forms. Not all of the non-native speakers are in subordinate positions, so the issue of power and language can be explored from this perspective. The use of English as an international business language is a related area that could be studied, and the data in CANBEC may lend weight to the deconstruction of the native/non-native distinction. As so much business English occurs between speakers whose mother-tongue is not English, and as so many 'non-natives' communicate and do business successfully in international environments, this is an area that will be increasingly discussed over the coming years. Indeed, the creation of a comparable corpus made up of business communication between people of different nationalities would be highly worthwhile.

Undoubtedly the potential value of CANBEC as source of information for developing teaching materials is enormous. As has been shown by Williams (1988) and Nelson (2000), business teaching materials do not necessarily reflect what goes on in real business. Many materials are *about* business, whereas business people *do* business. CANBEC is a record of people doing business in many different contexts; the challenge is to develop a successful format for providing learner-friendly materials based on this record. For example, learning certain pragmatic clusters would be of obvious benefit to business professionals, as would a working knowledge of the key functions and strategies that recur in meetings.

I think frequently recurring clusters are extremely important in understanding business discourse. Fixed expressions and multi-word sentence frames are important because they seem to form a central component of real-time speech and fluency (Wray 2002). They are also important because they are statistically significant, play specialised pragmatic roles, and may be a central part of our mental lexicon. Even though they have been shown to play key roles in other institutional and everyday spoken and written genres, they are under-researched in business English.

Also, the huge importance of clusters has only really been realised since the advent of computerised corpora. As CANBEC is arguably the most representative corpus of business meetings to date, it makes sense to use it to see what is going on in business. Not only can we see what chunks are frequent, but because of the contextual information compiled during and after the recordings, it is possible to see what the participants are doing in terms of functions and speaker strategies. Working from quantitative findings to qualitative interpretations is thus achievable: objective results can be explored in context.

This is a distinct advantage of a corpus of this size (Flowerdew, 2005), and of having a single researcher who has considerable contextual knowledge of the data, as well as access to the recordees (ibid).

A core theme of this thesis is how the words create the genre, and how the genre constrains the words and their meaning. O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter argue that 'clusters in the CANBEC business data ... may show us something of the character of SBE (spoken business English) distinct genres.' (2007: 284). In this thesis, a big step has been taken in clarifying some of the most recurrent features of the business meeting genre. Recurrent aspects of a genre allow us and the participants to recognise it as such. Institutionalised chunks with pragmatically specialised meanings can also shed light on the specific characteristics of a Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998): they demonstrate the particular approach to problems and the common communicative tools probabilistically preferred (Adolphs, 2002) by the community in question (McCarthy and Handford, 2004).

One key issue for the language classroom concerns prescribing 'native-speaker' language norms to the 'non-native speaker' learner. While, as a practising English language teacher, I wholeheartedly believe in the importance of learners finding their own voices and developing critical thinking abilities, denying learners of business English access to efficient language tools tried and tested in authentic communication on the grounds that they have been used by speakers whose first language is English is akin to demanding learners to reinvent the wheel when there's a nice one under the teacher's desk. I am certainly not suggesting that native speaker language should be the norm in international business communication, but nor am I suggesting that English used by

British or Australian or Singaporean businesspeople is only suitable for use in those countries and by those speakers. Nickerson (2003: 82) raises the important point that 'extensive knowledge of grammar could never compete with 20 years experience in successfully closing a deal' in business. This is undoubtedly true; but it may also be true that a working knowledge of function-specific chunks may allow the businessperson who lacks either an extensive grammar or 20 years of experience to short wire the system and be a more effective communicator.

# Bibliography


Adolphs, S. (2001). *Linking Lexico-grammar and Speech Acts: A Corpus-based Approach.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

Adolphs, S. (2002). Genre and spoken discourse: Probabilities and predictions. *Nottingham Linguistic Circular,* 17: 47-60.

Adolphs, S., Atkins, S. & Harvey, K. (2006). Caught between Professional Requirements and Interpersonal Needs: Vague Language in Health Care Contexts. In J. Cutting (Ed.) *Vague Language Explored.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Akar (2002). The macro contextual factors shaping business discourse: The Turkish case. *International Review of Applied Linguistics,* 40: 305 – 322.

Alejo, R. & McGinity, M. (1997). Terminological Loans and the Teaching/Learning of Technical Vocabulary: The Use of Economic Anglicisms in the Business Classroom. In Piqué, J. & Viera, D.J. (Eds.) *Applied Languages: Theory and Practice in ESP.* Valencia: Universidad de Valencia.

Arminen, I. (2000). On the context sensitivity of institutional interaction. *Discourse and Society,* 11/4: 435-458

Askehave, I. & Swales, J. (2001). Genre: identification and communicative purpose: A problem and a possible solution. *Applied Linguistics,* 22/2: 195-212.

Atkinson, J. & Drew, P. (1979). *Order in Court.* London: Macmillan.

Auer, P. (1995). *Context and Contextualisation.* Handbook of Pragmatics. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Austin, J. (1962). *How To Do things With Words.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* In Emerson, C. & Holquist, M. (Eds.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bargiela-Chiappini, F. (2003). Face and politeness: new (insights)for old (concepts). *Journal of Pragmatics,* 35: 1453-1469.

Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, S. (1996). Interruptive strategies in British and Italian management meetings. *Text,*16/3: 269-297.

Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Harris, S. (Eds.), (1997). *Managing Language: The Discourse of Corporate Meetings*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Nickerson, C. (1999). *Writing Business: Genres, Media and Discourses.* London and New York: Longman.

Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Nickerson, C. (2002). Business discourse: Old debates, new horizons. *International Review of Applied Linguistics,* 40: 273-286.

Benson J. & Greaves, W. (Eds.) (1985). *Systemic Perspectives on Discourse.* Norwood: Ablex.

Bhatia, V. (1993). *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings.* Harlow: Longman.

Bhatia, V. (1999). Integrating products, processes purposes and participants in professional writing. In Candlin, C. & Hyland, K. (Eds.), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices.* London: Longman: 21-39.

Biber, D. (1988). *Variation Across Speech and Writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, D. (1995). Dimensions of Register Variation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, D., Conrad, S. & Reppen, R. (1994). Corpus-based approaches to issues in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 15/2: 169-189.

Biber, D., Conrad, S. & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, D. & Conrad, S. (1999). "Lexical bundles in conversation and academic prose." In H. Hasselgard and S. Oksefjell (Eds.), *Out of Corpora: Studies in Honor of Stig Johansson.* Amsterdam: Rodopi: 181-190.

Biber, D. & Finnegan, E. (1986). 'An initial typology of English text types', in J. Aarts and W. Mejis (Eds.), Corpus Linguistics II. Amsterdam: Rodopi: 19-46.

Biber, D. Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S.& Finnegan, E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English.* London: Longman.

Billig, M. (1999). Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in Conversation Analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 10/4: 543-582.

Boden, D. (1994). *The Business of Talk: Organizations in Action.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boden, D. (1995). 'Agendas and arrangements: Everyday negotiations in meetings'. In A. Firth (Ed.), *The Discourse of Negotiation: Studies of Language in the Workplace.* Oxford: Pergamon: : 83-99.

Boden, D. & Zimmerman, E. (Eds.) (1991) *Talk and Social Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* London: Cambridge University Press. (First published 1978 in E.N. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and politeness*)

Brown, T. & Lewis, M. (2002). An ESP project: Analysis of an authentic workplace conversation. *English for Specific Purposes,* 22/1: 93-98.

Brown, P. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, C. (2002). 'Corpus linguistics as work'. A review. *System,* 31/1: 128-132.

Candlin, C. (2000). Preface, in Coupland J. (Ed.), *Smalltalk.* Harlow: Pearson Education.

Carter, R. (1998). Orders of reality: CANCODE, communication, and culture. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 52/1: 43-55.

Carter, R. (2004). *Language and Creativity: the Art of Common Talk.* London: Routledge.

Carter, R. & McCarthy, M. (1988). *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. London: Longman.

Carter, R. & McCarthy, M. (1995). Grammar and the spoken language. *Applied Linguistics,* 16/2: 141-158.

Carter, R. & McCarthy, M. (2004). Talking, creating: Interactional language, creativity and context. *Applied Linguistics*, 25/1:62-88.

Carter, R. & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge Grammar of English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Channell, J. (1994). *Vague Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Charles, M. (1996). Business negotiations: Interdependence between discourse and the business relationship, *English for Specific Purposes*, 15: 19-36.

Charles, M. (2003). *Business Communication Research and the Real World: New Directions, New Challenges*. Keynote speech given at ABC Conference, Lugano, June 2003.

Charles, M. & Charles, D. (1999). Sales Negotiations: Bargaining through Tactical Summaries, in Hewings, M. & Nickerson, C. (Eds.), *Business English: Research into Practice.* London: Longman.

Christie, F. & Martin, J. R. (1997). *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School.* London: Continuum.

Cicourel, A. (1991). Semantics, Pragmatics and Situated Meaning. In Verschueren, J. (Ed.) *Pragmatics at Issue.* Amsterdam: Benjamins: 27-66.

Clifton, J. (forthcoming). The interactional construction of organizational reality: Turn-taking, power and influence in management teams.

Cook, G. (1990). Transcribing infinity: Problems of context presentation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 15: 1-24.

Cook, G. (1998). The uses of reality: A reply to Ron Carter. *English Language Teaching Journal,* 1: 57-63.

Cortes, V. (2002). Lexical bundles in freshman composition. In R. Reppen, S. Fitzmaurice & D.Biber (Eds.), *Using Corpora to Explore Linguistic Variation.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 131-145.

Coupland, J. (Ed.) (2000). *Small Talk.* Harlow: Pearson Education.

Couture, B. (1986). *Functional Approaches to Writing: Research Perspectives.* Norwood: Ablex.

Craig, R. (1990). Multiple goals in discourse: an epilogue. In K. Tracy and N. Coupland (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse*: 163-170.

Crystal, D. (1995). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of English Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cuff, E. & Sharrock, W. (1985). Meetings. In van Dijk, T., (Ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 3: 95-117

Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25: 349-367.

Davis, K. (1995). Qualitative theory and methods in applied linguistics research. *Tesol Quarterly*, 29/3: 427-453.

De Cock, S. (2000). Repetitive phrasal chunkiness and advanced EFL speech and writing. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory. Papers from ICAME 20 1999*, Christian Mair & Marianne Hundt (Eds.), 51-68. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (Eds.) (1992). *Talk at Work.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (1992) Analysing Talk at Work: an Introduction. In Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (Eds.) (1992). *Talk at Work.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 3-65.

Drew, P. & Holt, E. (1998). Figures of speech: figurative expressions and the management of topic transition in conversation. *Language in Society*, 27: 495-522.

Duranti, A.(1983). Samoan speechmaking across social events: one genre in and out of a 'fono'. *Language in Society,* 12/1: 1-22

Duranti, A. (1997) Universal and culture-specific properties of greetings. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology,* 7: 63-97.

Eggins, S. (1994). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics.* London: Pinter.

Eggins, S. & Slade, D. (1997). *Analysing Casual Conversation.* London: Cassell.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods on research in teaching. In Wittrock, M. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching.* New York: Collier-Macmillan: 119-161.

Erman, B. (1987). *Pragmatic expressions in English: A study of "you know," "you see," and "I mean" in face-to-face conversation.* Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Evison, J. & Handford, M. (2006). Deliberate vagueness in institutional discourse (and stuff like that), paper presented at the biannual conference of *Inter-Varietal Applied Corpus Studies*, Nottingham, June, 2006.

Evison, J. McCarthy, M. & O'Keeffe, A. (2006). Looking out for love and all the rest of it: vague category markers as shared social space. In J. Cutting (Ed.) *Vague Language Explored.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Fairclough, N. (1995a). *Critical Discourse Analysis.* London:Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1995b). *Media Discourse.* London: Arnold.

Farr, F. (2005). *Reflecting on Reflections: a Corpus-Based Analysis of Spoken Post Teaching Practice Interactions in an English Language Teaching Academic Environment.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Limerick.

Firth, A (Ed.). (1995a). *The Discourse of Negotiation: Studies of Language in the Workplace*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Firth, A (1995b). Accounts in negotiation discourse: A single-case analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 23: 199-226.

Flowerdew, L. (2005). An integration of corpus-based and genre-based approaches to text analysis in EAP/ESP: Countering criticisms against corpus-based methodologies. *English for Specific Purposes,* 24: 321-332.

Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on Politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 14: 219-236.

Fukushima, S. (2000). *Requests and Culture: Politeness in British English and Japanese.* Bern: Peter Lang.

Gee, J. (2000). New people in new worlds: Networks, the new capitalism, and schools. In B. Cope & Kalantizis, M. (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures.* London: Routledge: 92-105.

George, S. (1988). Postscript: Discourse Descriptions and Pedagogic Proposals. In G. Aston, (Ed.), *Negotiating Service. Studies in the Discourse of Bookshop Encounters. The PIXI Project.* Bologna: Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria Editrice Bologna: 303-331.

Gibbs, R. W. (1994). *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language and Understanding.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gibbs, R. W. & Gerrig, J. R. (1989). How context makes metaphor comprehension seem 'special'. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity,* 4: 145-158.

Gillaerts, P., & Gotti, M. (Eds.). (2005). *Genre Variation in Business Letters.* Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to Face Behaviour*. New York: Anchor Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goode, W. (1960). Norm commitment and conformity to role-status obligations. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66: 246-258.

Goodwin, C. & Duranti, A. (1992). *Rethinking Context: an Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graham, J. (1983). Brazilian, Japanese and American business negotiations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 14: 47-61.

Greatbatch, (1991). On the management of disagreement between news interviewees In P. Drew & Heritage, J. (Eds.) *Talk at Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 268-301.

Greene, J., Lindsey, A. & Hawn, J. (1990). Social goals and speech production: Effects of multiple goals on pausal phenomena. In K. Tracy. & Coupland, N. (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse*: 119-134.

Gu, Y. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14: 237-257.

Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1989). *Language, Text and Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Handford, M. (unpublished document) *Lexicogrammar: a Corpus-Based Analysis.*

Hasan, R. (1985). The structure of a text. In Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. (Eds.), *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 52-69.

Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Heritage, J. (1997). Conversation analysis and institutional talk. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice.* London: Sage: 161-182.

Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The Motivation to Work* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Hoey, M. (1983). *On the Surface of Discourse.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Hoey, M. (2000). A World Beyond Collocation: New Perspectives on Vocabulary Teaching. In Lewis, M. (Ed) *Teaching Collocations*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications.

Holmes, J. (2000a). Doing collegiality and keeping control at work: Small talk in government departments. In J. Coupland (Ed.), *Smalltalk*: 32-61.

Holmes, J. (2000b). Victoria University's Language in the Workplace Project: An overview. *Language in the Workplace Occasional Papers 1.*

Holmes, J. & M. Meyerhoff (1999). The community of practice: theories and methodologies in language and gender research. *Language in Society*, 28/2: 173-183.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003). *Power and Politeness in the Workplace.* London: Longman.

Hopper, P. (1987). Emergent Grammar. *Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 13: 139-157.

Hopper, P. (1998). Emergent Grammar. In Michael Tomasello (Ed.), *The New Psychology of Language*. Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: 155-175.

Hopper, P. & Drummond, K. (1990). Emergent goals and relational turning point: The case of Gordon and Denise. In K Tracy. & Coupland, N. (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse.* Avon: Multilingual Matters: 39-65.

Hudson, J. and Finell, A. (2000) *The anonymisation of CANCODE – general principles and guidelines*. Unpublished document. School of English Studies, University of Nottingham.

Hunston, S. Francis, G. & Manning, E. (1997). Grammar and vocabulary: Showing the connections. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 3: 208-216.

Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in Applied Linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hutchby, I. and Woofitt, R. (Eds.) (1998). *Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hutchinson, T, & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and Second Language Writing*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Iacobucci, C. (1990). Accounts, formulations and goal attainment strategies in service encounters. In K Tracy. & Coupland, (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse.* Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters: 85-99.

Iacobucci, C. (1996). Commercial and interpersonal relationships; Using the structure of interpersonal relationships to understand individual-to-individual, individual-to-firm, and firm-to-firm relationships in commerce. *International Journal of Marketing,* 13: 53-72

Iedema, R. (1997). The language of administration: organising human activity in formal institutions. In Christie, F. & Martin, J. R. (Eds.) *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School.* London: Continuum: 40-72.

Janney, R. & Arndt, H. (1993). Universality and relativity in cross-cultural politeness research: A historical perspective. *Multilingua,* 12: 13-50.

Jaworski, A. (1993). *The Power of Silence.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Jaworski, A., & Coupland, N. (1999). Introduction: perspectives on discourse analysis. In: Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N. (Eds.), *The Discourse Reader.* London: Routledge: 1-44.

Kasper (2000). Data collection in pragmatics research. In Spencer-Oatey, H. (Ed.) *Culturally Speaking: Management Rapport through Talk across Cultures.* London: Continuum: 316-341.

Kelly Hall, J. (1995). (Re)creating our worlds with words: A sociohistorical perspective of face to face interaction. *Applied Linguistics*, 16/2: 206-32.

Koester, A. (2001). *Interpersonal Markers in Workplace Genres: Pursuing Transactional and Relational Goals in Office Talk.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

Koester, A. (2002). The performance of speech acts in workplace conversations and the teaching of communicative functions. *System,* 30: 167-184.

Koester, A. (2004). Relational sequences in workplace genres. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36: 1405-1428.

Koester, A. (2006). *Investigating Workplace Discourse.* Routledge: London.

Kotthoff, H. (1993). Disagreement and concession in disputes: On the context sensitivity of preference structures. *Language in Society*, 22: 193-216.

Kress, G. (1988). *Linguistic Processes in Sociocultural Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kristeva, J. (1980). Word, dialogue and novel. In Kristeva, J. *Desire in Language.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Labov, W. (1972). Sociolinguistic Patterns. Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press.

Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness; or minding your p's and q's. *Papers from the 9th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society: 292-305.

Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, R. (1990). *Talking Power*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lampi, M. (1986). Linguistic Components of Strategy in Business Communication. *Helsinki School of Economics. Studies B-85*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Laver, J. (1975). Communicative functions of phatic communion. In Kendon, A. Harris R. & Key, M. (Eds.), *The Organization of Behaviour in Face-to-Face Interaction*. The Hague: Mouton: 215-238.

Lazaraton, A. (2000) Current trends in research methodology and statistics in applied linguistics. *Tesol Quarterly*, 34/1: 175-181.

Lazaraton, A. (2003). Evaluative criteria for qualitative research in applied linguistics: whose criteria and whose research. *Modern Language Journal*, 87/1: 1-12.

Lee, D. (1992). *Competing Discourses: Perspectives and Ideology in Language*. London: Longman.

Lee, D. (2001). Genres, registers, text types, domains, and styles: Clarifying the concepts and navigating a path through the BNC jungle. *Language Learning and Technology*, 5/3: 37-72.

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.

Lerner, G. (1991). On the syntax of sentences in progress. *Language in Society*, 20: 441-458.

Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S. (1992). Activity types and language. In P. Drew & Heritage, J. (Eds.) *Talk at Work.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 66-100.

Lewis, M. (1993). *The Lexical Approach.* Hove: Language Teaching Publications.

*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1991). London: Longman.

Low, G. (1988). On teaching metaphor. *Applied Linguistics,* 9/2: 125-147.

Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Malinowski, B. (1923/1972). Phatic communion. In J. Laver & Hutcheson, S. (Eds.), *Communication in Face to Face Interaction.* Harmondsworth: Penguin: 146-152.

Martin J. (1997). Analysing genre: functional parameters. In Christie F. and Martin J. (Eds.) *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School.* London: Continuum: 3-39.

Martin, J. (1992). *English Text: System and Structure.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 12: 403-426.

Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research. *Harvard Educational Review,* 62/3: 279-300.

Maynard, D. (1984). *Inside Plea Bargaining: the Language of Negotiation.* New York: Plenun.

Maynard, D. (1992). 'On clinicians co-implicating recipients' perspective in the delivery of diagnostic news'. In Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (Eds.) (1992). *Talk at Work.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 331-358.

McCarthy, M. (1998). *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, M. (2000). Captive audiences: small talk and close contact service encounters. In Coupland, J. (Ed.) *Smalltalk*. Harlow: Pearson Education: 84-109.

McCarthy, M. & Carter, R. (1994). *Language as Discourse*. London: Longman.

McCarthy, M. & Carter, R. (1997). Grammar, tails and affect: Constructing expressive choices in discourse. *Text*, 17/3: 405-429.

McCarthy & Carter, R. (2002). This that and the other: Multi-word clusters in spoken English as visible patterns of interaction. *Teanga* (Yearbook of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics), 2: 30-52.

McCarthy, M. & Carter, R. (2004). 'There's millions of them: hyperbole in everyday conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36/2: 149-184.

McCarthy, M. & Handford, M. (2004). 'Invisible to us': a preliminary corpus-based study of spoken business English. In: U. Connor, & Upton, T. (Eds.), *Discourse in the Professions: Perspectives from Corpus Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 167-201.

McCarthy, M. J. & O'Keeffe, A. (2003). 'What's in a name?' - vocatives in casual conversations and radio phone-in calls', in Meyer, C. & Leistyna, P. (Eds.), *Corpus Analysis: Language Structure and Language Use*. Amsterdam: Rodopi: 153-185.

McEnery, T. & Wilson, A. (1996). *Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mey, J. L., (1987) .Poet and peasant. A pragmatic comedy in five acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11: 281-297.

Mirivel, J. & Tracy, K. (2005). Premeeting talk: An organizationally crucial form of talk. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*: 38/1: 1-34.

Mitchell, T.F. (1956). Some English phrasal types, in Bazell, C., Catford, J., Halliday, M.A.K. & Robins, R. (Eds.) *In Memory of J.R. Firth*, London: Longman.

Mitchell, T.F. (1975). The language of buying and selling in Cyrenaica: A situational statement. In T.F. Mitchell (Ed.), *Principles of Firthian Linguistics.* London: Longman: 167-200. (First published 1957 in *Hésperis* XLIV: 31-71.)

Moon, R. (1998). *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Muntigl, P. & Turnbull, W. (1998). Conversational structure and facework in arguing. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 29: 225-256.

Murphy, M. (1998). Re-viewing business communication: A response to Carmichael, White-Mills and Rogers, and Krapels and Arnold. *Journal of Business Communication.* 35/1: 128-137.

Nattinger, J. & deCarrico, J. (1992). *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nelson, M. (2000). *A Corpus-based Study of Business English and Business English Teaching Materials.* Unpublished PhD Thesis. Manchester: University of Manchester.

Nelson, M. (2006). Semantic associations in business English: A corpus-based analysis. *English for Specific Purposes,* 25: 217-234.

Nunan, D. (1993). *Introducing Discourse Analysis.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Oakey, D. (2002). "Formulaic language in English academic writing." In Reppen, R., Fitzmaurice, S. & Biber, D. (Eds.), *Using Corpora to Explore Linguistic Variation.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 111-129.

O'Keeffe, A. (2003) 'Like the wise virgins and all that jazz' – using a corpus to examine vague language and shared knowledge. In Connor, U. and Upton, T. A. (Eds.) *Applied Corpus Linguistics: A Multidimensional Perspective.* Amsterdam: Rodopi: 1-20.

O'Keeffe, A. (2006). *Investigating Media Discourse.* London: Routledge.

O'Keeffe, A., McCarthy, M. J. & Carter, R. A. (2007). *From Corpus to Classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Östman, J-O. (1981). *You Know: A Discourse Functional Approach.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pan, Y. Scollon, S. W. & Scollon, R. (1998). *Professional Communication in International Settings.* Oxford: Blackwells.

Paulin, M., Ferguson, R. & Payaud, M. (2000). Effectiveness of relational and transactional cultures in commercial banking: Putting client-value into the competing values model. *International Journal of Bank Marketing.* 18/7: 328-337.

Paulin, M., Perrien, J., & Ferguson, R. (1997). Relational norms and the effectiveness ocommercial banking relationships. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*: 8/5: 435-452.

Penman, R.(1990). Facework and politeness: Multiple goals in courtroom discourse. In K Tracy. & N. Coupland (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse*: 15-38. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes, in J.M Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.) *Structures of Social Action*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 57-102.

Poncini, G. (2002). Investigating discourse at business meetings with multicultural participation. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 40: 345-373.

Ragan, S. (1990). Verbal play and multiple goals in the gynaecological exam interaction. In Tracy, K. & Coupland, N. (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse.* Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters: 67-84.

Rampton, B. (1998). Speech community. *Handbook of Pragmatics.* Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Reinsch, N. (1996). Business communication: Present, past and future. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 10/1: 27-49.

Reppen, R. & Simpson, R. (2002). Corpus Linguistics, in Schmitt, N. (Ed.) *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics.* New York: Oxford University Press: 93-111.

Rock, F. (1999). *Policy and Practice in the Anonymisation of Linguistic Data.* Unpublished Report, Department of Linguistics, University of Birmingham, UK.

Rosch, E. (1975). Ellipsis and the structure of expectation. *San Jose State Occasional Papers in Linguistics*, 1: 183-91.

Rose, D. (1997). 'Science, technology and technical literacies'. In Christie, F. & Martin, J. R. (1997). *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School.* London: Continuum: 40-72.

Rutherford, B. (2005). Genre analysis of corporate annual report narratives: A corpus Linguistics-Based Approach. *Journal of Business Communication,* 42: 349-378.

Sacks (1972). An initial investigation of the usability of conversational data for doing sociology. In Sudnow, D. (Ed.), *Studies in Social Interaction.* New York: The Free Press.

Sacks, H., Schegloff. E. A. & Jeffersen, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn-taking for conversation. *Language,* 50/4: 696-735.

Sarangi, S. & Roberts, C. (Eds.) (1999). *Talk, Work and Institutional Order.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Saville-Troike, M. (1985). The place of silence in an integrated theory of communication. In Tannen, D. & Savile-Troike, M. (Eds.), *Perspectives on Silence.* New Jersey: Ablex: 3-18.

Schegloff, E. (1992). On Talk and its institutional occasions. In Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (Eds.) *Talk at Work*: 101-134.

Schegloff, E. (1996). Turn organisation: One intersection of grammar and interaction, in Ochs, Schegloff and Thomas (eds.) *Interaction and Grammar.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schegloff, E. (1997). Whose text? Whose context? *Discourse and Society*, 8/2: 165-187

Schmitt, N. (Ed.) (2002). *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Scollon R (1998). *Mediated Discourse as Social Interaction: A Study of News Discourse.* London: Longman.

Scollon, R. & Wong Scollon, S. (1998). *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Scott, M. (1999) Wordsmith Tools, software. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Searle, J. (1965). What is a speech act? In: Davis, M. (Ed.) *Pragmatics: A Reader.* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 254-264.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharma, A. & Pillai, K. G. (2003). The impact of transactional and relational strategies in business markets: An agenda for inquiry. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 32: 623-626.

Simpson, P. (1997). *Language Through Literature*. London: Routledge.

Simpson R (2004). Formulaic Expressions in Academic Speech in Discourse. In: U. Connor, & Upton, T. (Eds.), *Discourse in the Professions: Perspectives from Corpus Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 37-64.

Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sinclair, J. (1992) Priorities in discourse analysis. In Coulthard, M. (Ed.) *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge: 79-88.

Sinclair, J. (1996a). The empty lexicon. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 1/1: 99-119.

Sinclair, J. (1996b). The search for units of meaning. *Textus*: IX: 75-106.

Sinclair, J. M. & Coulthard, M. (1975). *Towards an Analysis of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). *Culturally Speaking: Management Rapport through Talk across Cultures*. London: Continuum.

St John, M.-J. (1996). Business is Booming: 1990s Business English. In *English For Specific Purposes,* 15/1: 3-18.

Stubbs, M. (2001). Texts, Corpora and problems of interpretation: A response to Widdowson', *Applied Linguistics* 22/2: 149-172

Stubbe, M. (2001). From office to production line: Collecting data for the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project. *Language in the Workplace Occasional Papers 2.*

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swan, M. (1995). *Practical English Usage.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (1989). *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery in Conversational Discourse.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tannen, D. (1994). *Talking from 9 to 5*. New York: William and Morrow Company.

Tannen, D. & Wallat, C. (1993). 'Interactive frames and knowledge schemas in interaction: examples from a medical examination/interview'. In Tannen (Ed.) *Framing in Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tao, H. & M. McCarthy (2001). Understanding non-restrictive *which*-clauses in spoken English, which is not an easy thing. *Language Sciences*, 23: 651-677.

ten Have, P. (1995) 'Talk and institution: a reconsideration of the "asymmetry" of doctor-patient interaction'. In Boden D. and Zimmerman, D (Eds.), *Talk and Social Structure.* Cambridge: Polity Press: 138-163.

Thomas, J. (1984). Cross-cultural discourse as 'unequal encounter': Towards a pragmatic analysis. *Applied Linguistics,* 5/3: 226-235.

Threadgold, T. (1989). Talking about genre: Ideologies and incompatible discourses, *Cultural Studies*, 3/1: 101-127.

Tognini-Bonelli, E. (2001). *Corpus Linguistics at Work*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Tracey, K. & Coupland, N. (Eds.) (1990). *Multiple Goals in Discourse*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Tracy, K. & Naughton, J. (2000). Institutional identity-work: A better lens. In Coupland, J. (Ed.), *Small Talk*. Harlow: Pearson: 62-83.

Trompenaars, F. & Hampden-Turner, C. (1998). *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Trosborg, A., & Jørgensen, P. E. F. (Eds.) (2005). *Business discourse: Texts and contexts*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Ventola, E. (1984). Orientation to social semiotics in foreign language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 5: 275-86.

Ventola, E. (1987). *The Structure of Social Interaction. A Systemic Approach to the Semiotics of Service Encounters*. London: Frances Pinter.

Verschueren, J. (1999). *Understanding Pragmatics*. London: Arnold.

Vygotsky. L. (1987). (Rieber, R. & Carton, A., Eds.) *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky*. New York: Plenum Press.

Waldron, V., Cegala, D., Sharkey, W. & Teboul, B. (1990). Cognitive and tactical dimensions of conversational goal management. In Tracy, K. and Coupland, N. (Eds.), *Multiple Goals in Discourse*. Avon: Multilingual Matters: 101-118.

Walsh, S. (2006). *Investigating Classroom Discourse*. London: Routledge.

Watson, D.(1992). Ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and education: An overview. *International Review of Education*, 38/3: 257–74.

Watson, T. (2002). *Organising and Managing Work.* London: Prentice-Hall.

Weiyun, He A. (1993). Exploring modality in institutional interactions: Cases from academic counseling encounters. *Text,* 13/4: 503-528.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. & Snyder, W. (2001). Communities of practice: The organisational frontier. Harvard Business Press *(Ed.). Harvard Business Review on Organisational Learning: 1-20.*

Widdowson, H. (1998). Context, community and authentic language. *TESOL Quarterly,* 32/4: 705-716.

Widdowson, H. (2000). On the limitations of linguistics applied. *Applied Linguistics,* 21/1: 3-25.

Williams, M. (1988). Language taught for meetings and language used in meetings: Is there anything in common? *Applied Linguistics,* 9/1: 45-58.

Williams, A. (1998). Negotiating in Chunks. In Grundy, P. (Ed.) *IATEFL Manchester Conference Selections.* Kent: IATEFL: 86-87.

Willing, K. (1992). Problem-solving discourse in professional work. *Prospect,* 7/2: 57-65.

Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ylänne-McEwen, V.T . (1996). *Relational processes within a transactional setting: An investigation of travel agency discourse.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff.

Zachry, M; Bargiela-Chiappini, F.; Bulow-Moeller, A; Nickerson, C.; Poncini, G.; Zhu, X. (2003) Five perspectives on intercultural business comunication. *Business Communication Quarterly,* 66: 73-96.

Zanotto, M. and H. Moura (2000). Indeterminacy and Negotiation. *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Zupnik, Y. (1994). A pragmatic analysis of the use of person deixis in political discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 21: 339-383.