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**The Negotiation of Politeness in Business  
Meetings: A Study of Argentine Speakers of  
English**

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*To my husband, Federico*

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## Transcription Conventions

The recordings were transcribed using the transcription conventions outlined below:

YES	Capitals indicate emphatic stress
[laughs]	Paralinguistic features in square brackets
.../... \ ...	Simultaneous speech
.../... \ ...	
(hello)	Transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
?	Rising or question intonation
[...]	Section of transcript omitted
xxx	Unclear word

## Text Annotations

The following stylistic devices will be used to signal different text annotations:

“Double inverted commas” signal quotations.

‘Simple inverted commas’ signal authorial and non-authorial labels.

*Italics* signal examples, instances of contradictions and challenges and other text-analysis annotations.

**Abstract**

Although much has been written on the “the discursive struggle over (im)politeness” (Watts 2003: 9) by non-native *lingua franca* speakers and their native counterparts, there is still, to my knowledge, relatively little work done on the characterisation of the English spoken by Argentine business interactants. In view of this, the aim of this study is to contribute to the field of politeness research by exploring the negotiation of (im)politeness carried out by Argentine speakers of English in the discourse of disagreement in simulated business meetings. For this purpose, a corpus consisting of 20 videotaped dyadic business simulations was collected. The participants were all businesspeople with decision-making positions in international companies and with an excellent level of proficiency in English. The data was analysed from a socio-pragmatic perspective combining Watts’ discursive model of Relational Work with the notions of Graduation and Engagement from Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005). The results obtained contribute to categorising the degree of politeness and the discursive strategies used in the discourse of disagreement in the different phases of the simulated business negotiations.

*What is politeness? The crown of social values, or a convenient mask for the self-seeking individual? The cloak and agent of tyranny, or the promise, in an equal society, of equal relations between citizens? (France 1992:54, in Watts 2003:33)*

**1. Introduction**

With the rapid expansion of the global market and the spread of information technology, the position of English as a *lingua franca* in the sphere of business and commerce has become of utmost importance in today’s global world. In order to compete successfully on the overseas market and in the intercultural business arena, it is vital for internationally operating businesspeople to be able to communicate effectively in English. However, few of the interactants in an international business setting belong to English-speaking cultures. In many cases participants come from a non-English-speaking country and they use English as a *lingua franca* to establish and maintain business relationships. This plurality and diversity of linguistic backgrounds in intercultural encounters may give rise to miscommunication or to striking differences in discourse conventions, which may in turn result in failure in business negotiations.

This misunderstanding or breakdown in communication among participants in intercultural business meetings may be due to conspicuous variation in the use of politeness strategies coming from different perceptions of politeness across cultures. The past two decades have seen a rapid growth in the study of linguistic politeness in a wide range of languages and cultures.

According to Wasson (2000), research into the field of politeness theory can be encapsulated into three clear-cut phases. In her view, the first wave of contemporary studies on politeness phenomena can be traced back to the pioneering works of Lakoff (1973), and most importantly, to the 1987 publication of Brown and Levinson, wherein the first detailed theory of politeness is presented and claims for its universality are made. Their work inspired many scholars to conduct empirical studies to test the applicability of the model to gain more insights into the conceptualisation of politeness in different speech communities. However, researchers soon encountered some problems with the cross-cultural application of the theory, given that, for example, the notion of ‘face’<sup>1</sup> seemed to differ widely across diverging cultures. As a result, Brown and Levinson’s claims of the universality of this notion came in for a great deal of criticism, which gave rise to the second wave of research on politeness which intended to address some of the limitations of the original model by highlighting the role that culture plays in shaping local linguistic practices (Kienpointner 1999, in Wasson 2000:459; Mao 1994; Watts et al. 1992). Nevertheless, in laying so much emphasis on the importance of cultural differences, scholars in this line of research adopted a monolithic concept of culture, disregarding the weight of institutional, organisational and social constraints in shaping social interactions.

1. Brown and Levinson were criticised for adopting an individualistic concept of face, which is not “appropriate to ‘cultures’ in which the individual is defined by virtue of her/his membership in a social group” (Watts 2003:102). This notion would only be appropriate to individualistic societies but not to collectivist societies, which is why in the second wave of research on politeness there was a call for a return to Goffman’s conceptualisation of face, which is defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” In other words, it is “an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes” (Watts 2003: 124). As such, Watts argues that individuals are attributed face socially in accordance with the line or lines that they have adopted for the purpose of a given communicative situation. This means that individuals can be assigned different faces in the course of a verbal interaction and that face is not a “permanent aspect of our construction of the self” but rather a “socially attributed aspect of the self” that is constantly negotiated between the participants in a given verbal interaction (Watts 2003:125).

In response to this drawback, a third wave of politeness studies has recently emerged addressing these concerns by taking account of such aspects as situational and class factors (Miller 1989; Okamoto 1999, in Wasson 2000:460) as well as the notion of communities of practice, as documented in Watts' analysis of politeness in social and political settings. In brief, research into the realm of politeness, as Placencia et al. (2007:1-2) clearly point out, has experienced a shift

away from monolithic [notions] of culture [...] toward more nuanced interpretations in which more account is taken of subculture norms, away from dependency on single speech acts and the analyst's interpretation of utterances toward a reliance on sequences of talk and co-text for the interpretation of utterances [...] and away from a search for universals toward an investigation of what is culture-specific.

Due to the ever-increasing global marketplace, intercultural business communication and the growing interest in English as a *lingua franca*, a great deal of research into politeness in culture-specific contexts has been conducted in recent years, particularly in the domain of institutional and professional discourses, and especially in the discourse of business negotiations. (Firth 1990, 1995, 1996, in Poncini 2002:346; Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris 2006; Caffi 2005; House 2008). Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (2006:9) have pointed out that the study of politeness in business settings "has attracted the attention of scholars intent on applying findings from cross-cultural and intercultural analyses to the improvement of teaching and training material (e.g., Marriott 1990, 1995; van der Wijst & Ulijn 1995; Le Pair 1999)." Firth (cited in Poncini 2002:346), who has conducted research into "international trading negotiations between Danish export managers and their international clients," has stressed the importance of investigating business interactions among non-native *lingua franca* speakers with the intention of gaining a better understanding of politeness orientations across cultures. More recently, other scholars have followed suit, researching into a wide range of politeness-related topics across different cultures. Miller (2000) has focused on the manifestation of negative assessments in Japanese-American workplace interactions. Pavlidou (2000) has concluded that directness in German cultures does not encode impoliteness but rather affiliation and closeness. Gunthner (2000) has focussed on misunderstanding or breakdown in communication in her analysis of German-Chinese interactions. Locker (2004) has tackled the issue of power and politeness in multicultural business meetings. Spencer-Oatey and Xing (1998) have applied the former's model of 'rapport management' to their analysis of Chinese-British meetings. Holmes and Stubbe (2003a) have explored the relationship between power and politeness in New Zealand workplaces.

As mentioned above, much has been written on the use of (im)politeness by non-native *lingua franca* speakers and their native counterparts. However, there is still, to my knowledge, relatively little research conducted on the characterisation of the English spoken by Argentine *lingua franca* business interactants. In view of this, this study will explore the negotiation of (im)politeness among Argentine business speakers of English in the discourse of disagreement in simulated business meetings. The data will be analysed from a socio-pragmatic perspective combining Watts' discursive model of Relational Work with the notions of Graduation and Engagement from Appraisal Theory (Martin & White 2005) and the concept of Preference in Questioning as a social practice from Conversation Analysis. In doing so, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the third wave of research into politeness, by shedding some light on the way politeness is negotiated between Argentine speakers of English in business negotiations. It is also hoped that the findings of this study will provide some fruitful insights into the teaching and training of negotiation skills in ESP courses.

The study is divided into five parts. Part I presents an outline of the hypotheses to be tested along with the general and specific aims of the research work. Part II, devoted to the theoretical frameworks, is divided into four subsections. The first outlines the reasons for choosing Watts' model of relational work as the main framework underlying the study and then presents a detailed description of this model. The second provides a succinct review of the literature on politeness along with a description of the state of the art in the field. The third provides the reader with an explanation of the notions of Graduation and Engagement within Appraisal Theory. The last addresses the concept of Preference in Questioning as a social practice within Conversation Analysis. Part III addresses the methodological issues by first giving a detailed account of the research method deployed and by then giving a description of the corpus and the data collected along with an outline of the techniques and procedures followed for the analysis. Part IV reports the findings of the analysis in three subsections. The first assesses the degree of politeness of those contradicting acts<sup>2</sup> appearing in the second phase of the negotiating fragment. The second explores the range of politeness of those challenging acts occurring in the second phase of the negotiating fragment.

2. In this study, the concept of 'act' should be understood from a functional perspective.



The third reports the results of the variation in politeness between contradictions, challenges, counterclaims and counterproposals in the first and last phase of the negotiating fragment. Finally, Part V presents the conclusions reached along with their plausible implications and some possible lines of investigation for further research into the field.

## Part I. Hypothesis and objectives

### 2- Hypotheses and Objectives

#### 2.1 Hypotheses

This study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. In the setting of simulated business negotiations among Argentine business speakers of English, recurrent patterns in the distribution of discursive strategies to voice disagreement can be detected.
2. There exists variation in the degree of politeness of these discursive strategies in the different phases within the negotiating fragment.
3. This variation can be perceived through the use of different linguistic resources within each discursive strategy.
4. The occurrence of this variation can be accounted for.

#### 2.2 Objectives

In line with the hypotheses outlined above, the following objectives have been established:

##### 2.2.1 General objectives

1. To contribute to the characterisation of the English spoken by Argentine speakers in business interactions.
2. To contribute to the teaching and training of negotiation skills in ESP courses by providing insights into the use of (im)politeness strategies by Argentine speakers of English in business negotiations.

##### 2.2.2 Specific objectives

1. To identify the discursive strategies used to express disagreement in the different phases of the negotiating fragment.
2. To identify the linguistic resources through which these discursive strategies are realised.
3. To explore the degree of politeness of these discursive strategies in the different phases of the negotiating fragment.
4. To identify the causes and motivations for the range of politeness of these discursive strategies.

## Part II. Theoretical framework and state of the art

### 3. Theoretical Framework and State of the Art

#### 3.1 Watts' model of relational work

Several reasons make me believe that the analysis on Watts' model of politeness would render a fruitful exploration. In the first place, unlike the so-called classic politeness theories – e.g. Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983; Brown & Levinson 1987– which are based on the Gricean Cooperative Principle and Speech Act Theory, Watts' 'relational work' is a model that explores (im)polite behaviour in the co-construction of meaning between the interlocutors within the context of ongoing verbal interaction, rather than analysing linguistic expressions in isolation. In other words, as Locher (2004:90) clearly puts it, it is a model that studies politeness by "looking in detail at the context, the speakers, the situation and the evoked norms."

Secondly, it is a model that starts from the premise that social interaction is negotiated between the interactants and thus focuses on the discursive struggle over (im)politeness between the speaker and the hearer rather than just centring on the speaker. As Watts argues, this new approach views (im)politeness as a social, discursive practice jointly negotiated between the participants in a communicative situation.

Thirdly, it is a model that claims that linguistic structures are not *per se* inherently (im)polite and, as such, it does not rely on a *a priori* predictive or a *post-facto* descriptive model of linguistic (im)politeness (Watts 2003:142, 1992:xix), but rather attempts to "provide the means of assessing how lay participants in ongoing verbal interaction assess social behaviour that they have classified as (im)polite utterances as positive or negative" (Watts 2003:143).

Fourthly, as Watts himself argues, it is a model that claims that polite behaviour is not the norm in social interaction but rather constitutes a small part of the spectrum of 'relational work,' which views interpersonal relationships as ranging from impolite, via normal, to polite and overpolite.

Finally, it can be said that it is a model that rules out the universality of a scientific theory of politeness on the grounds that instances of social interaction across cultures and languages are culture-specific. Having accounted for the choice of the theoretical framework that will be used in this study, I will now move on to outline Watts' model of 'relational work.'

Basing his theory of politeness on Bourdieu's theory of social practice and on his own theory of emergent networks, Watts (2003) proposes a new model for the study of linguistic politeness, a model that

[...] tries to offer ways of recognizing when a linguistic utterance might be open to interpretation as '(im)polite' [...] and that] aims to provide the means of assessing how lay participants in ongoing interaction assess social behaviour that they have classified as (im)polite utterances as positive or negative (Watts 2003:143).

In this new approach to the study of politeness, he also calls for a shift from the study of what he terms 'second-order (im)politeness' or '(im)politeness<sup>2</sup>' (Eleen 2001), that is, the theoretical and scientific concept of politeness which is abstracted from ongoing social interaction, to the study of 'first-order (im)politeness' or '(im)politeness<sup>1</sup>' (Eleen 2001), that is, the way social behaviour is assessed as polite or impolite by lay members of a given cultural group. In other words, he argues for a shift in perspective away from a descriptive and explanatory model towards a more discursive one that focuses on how interactants in ongoing verbal communication assess linguistic behaviour with respect to norms of appropriateness. As Watts clearly puts it, in the discursive model of politeness there has been:

a shift in emphasis from an attempt to construct a model of politeness which can be used to predict when polite behaviour can be expected or to explain *post-factum* why it has been produced towards the need to pay closer attention to how participants in social interaction perceive politeness (Watts 1992:xix).

In order to explore how (im)politeness is assessed in ongoing verbal interaction, he starts from the premise that any instance of social interaction is what Bourdieu (1990:53, in Watts 2003:148) calls "the site of the dialectic of the *modus operandum* and the *modus operandi*," which are equivalent to what Watts calls

the 'latent network' and the 'emergent network,' respectively. The former consists of modes of behaviour acquired through previous experience or interactions, whereas the latter consists in the reproduction and renegotiation or reconstruction of these sets of behaviour in the course of ongoing interaction. This means that the *modus operandum* and the latent network comprise a number of social structures that are internalised prior to the interaction and which inform the interactant how to behave in accordance with a given communicative situation. The *modus operandi* and the emergent network, on the other hand, involve the dynamic process of the interaction during which participants renegotiate their previously internalised sets of behaviour.

Both the *modus operandum* and the *modus operandi* constitute what Bourdieu (1990:53, in Watts 2003:148-149) calls the *habitus*, which is characterised by two aspects. The first is that the *habitus* produces, out of socialization and the internalization of social structures, forms of politic behaviour, which inform the individual how to behave appropriately in a given verbal interaction. In Watts' (2003:147) words, this part of the *habitus* "gives the individual in ongoing social interaction the 'feel for the game.'" The second aspect of the *habitus* involves the generation of new practices and actions in social practice, i.e. in ongoing social interaction. Therefore, according to Watts (2003:149), the *habitus* entails both the "reproduction and change of social structure."

To provide the reader with a clear illustration of the relationship between Bourdieu's theory of practice and Watts' theory of emergent networks, Figure 1 below summarises the parallelism between the two models in a sketchy fashion.

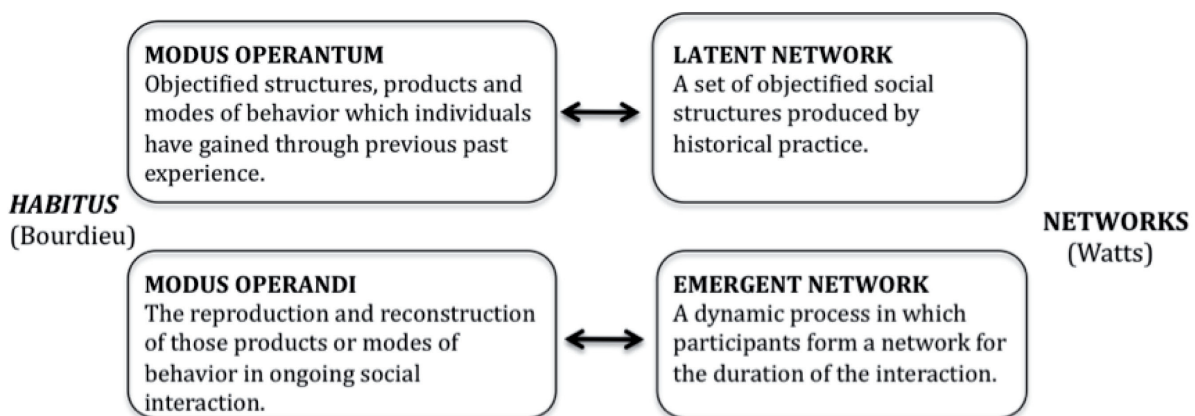


Figure 1 Comparison between Bourdieu's *habitus* and Watts' networks

Watts et al. (2005:10) claim that the discursive approach to politeness perceives polite behaviour in a socio-communicative situation as a small part of what he terms 'relational work,' i.e. "the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating [interpersonal] relationships with others." This means that unlike previous studies on linguistic politeness (Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983; Brown & Levinson 1987; Fraser 1990), this approach is "not restricted to studying merely the polite variant of the interpersonal aspect of a communication," but rather focuses on the entire spectrum of social practice encompassing from rude, impolite, via normal and appropriate to polite and overpolite social behaviour (Locher & Watts 2008:78). Watts argues that in order to analyse the level of relational work carried out in a communicative situation, the researcher needs to conduct a fine-grained analysis of the judgements interactants make with respect to (im)politeness, appropriateness and markedness. These judgements are made on the basis of the interlocutors' norms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour expected in a given situation, which individuals have acquired through their own histories of social practice. In other words, what is being evoked here is the notion of 'frame' as used by Tannen (1993, in Locher & Watts 2008:78), that is, the knowledge of norms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within a particular community of practice that individuals have gained through past experiences.

Locher and Watts (2008) argue that on the basis of the frames of appropriateness binding a particular social interaction, interlocutors might assess each other's utterances as instances of 'unmarked politic/appropriate behaviour,' 'positively marked behaviour' or 'negatively marked behaviour.' This notion of

markedness is a new element in the discursive approach given that previous studies on politeness (Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983; Brown & Levinson 1987; Fraser 1990) have only concentrated on the dichotomy between politeness and impoliteness, treating the former as the norm. Conversely, in this new perspective, what is considered to be the expected norm in a communicative situation is ‘unmarked behaviour’ or what Watts refers to as ‘politic behaviour.’

In Watts’ words (2003:19), ‘politic behaviour’ is defined as “linguistic behaviour that is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction,” and thus it is regarded as non-salient, non-polite, (non)linguistic behaviour. As such, and as stated above, politic behaviour can be said to be linked to the concept of the *habitus* in Bourdieu’s theory of practice, given that it is knowledge acquired through past experience which informs participants of which norms of appropriate social behaviour or which linguistic expressions are expected in a given speech situation.

‘Positively marked behaviour,’ on the other hand, is conceived as ‘polite’ behaviour. It is marked, (non) linguistic behaviour that is “perceived to go beyond what is expectable, i.e. salient behaviour” (Watts 2003:19). It is behaviour that is in excess of what is expected to be appropriate to the ongoing social interaction.

Both ‘unmarked behaviour’ (politic behaviour) and ‘positively marked behaviour’ (polite behaviour) form part of the ‘politic/appropriate behaviour’ expected within a communicative situation. The former is seen as the norm whereas the latter is perceived as a surplus to the expected social norm, i.e. it is “linguistic behaviour [that is] in excess of what is required by the politic behaviour of the overall interaction” (Watts 2003:162).

‘Negatively marked behaviour,’ however, is defined as linguistic behaviour that has breached the social norms of appropriateness expected in a given speech situation and as such, it is conceived as ‘non-politic/inappropriate.’ As the arrows in Figure 2 and 3 below show, non-politic behaviour seems to be located at both ends of the spectrum given that it can be interpreted as either ‘impolite’ (or rude) or ‘overpolite.’ The former is manifested through an infringement upon the expected norm, whereas the latter is evidenced through a negative excess in the expected norm. Watts (1992:x1iv) argues that the negative evaluations - rude, aggressive, insulting, sarcastic - evoked by “overpolite behaviour may seem remarkably similar to those of downright rude [or impolite] behaviour, which is why the two ends of the spectrum are shown as turning upon themselves.’

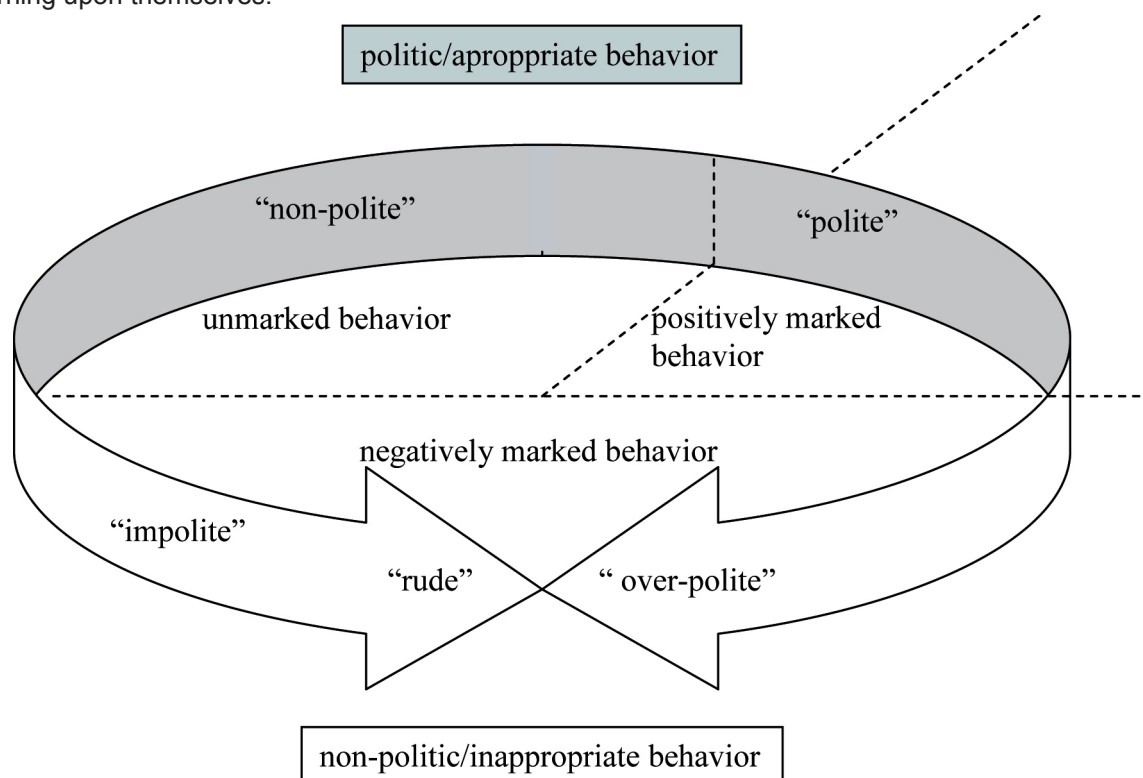


Figure 2 Relational Work (in Watts 1992:x1iii)

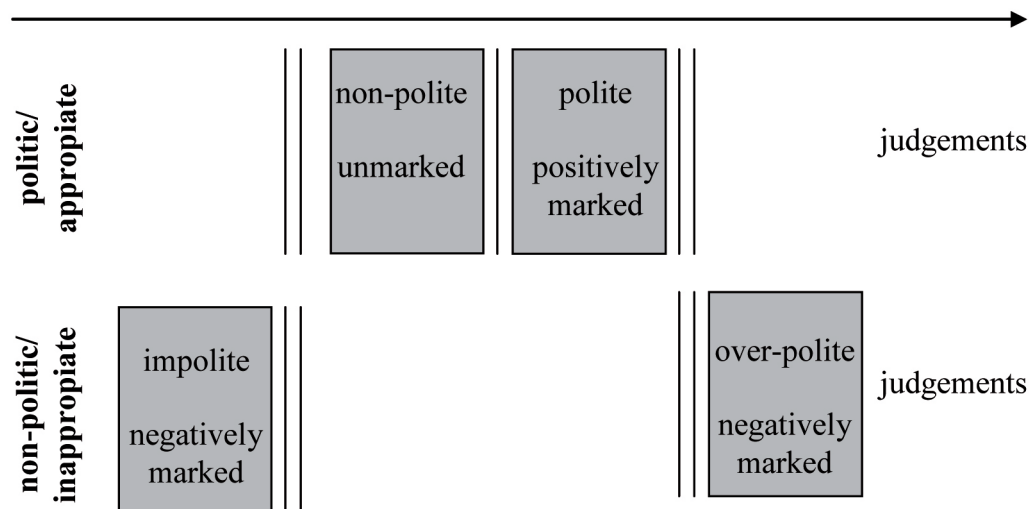


Figure 3 Aspects of judgements on relational work (in Locher 2006:258)

As the dotted lines in Figure 2 and the hatched areas in Figure 3 clearly show, the boundaries between the four categories outlined above are somewhat blurred or fuzzy, given that there seems to be some degree of variability in the way individual speakers assess social behaviour. As Watts (1992:x1iii) arguably points out, assessments or judgements on the level of relational work may:

...vary considerably from speaker to speaker, from community of practice to community of practice and even from one situational context to another in the case of individual speakers.

This variation can be attributed to the fact that the norms of appropriateness in a communicative situation are not static but seem to be constantly co-constructed and renegotiated between the co-participants. What lies at the heart of the discursive approach to politeness is this fluid, dynamic and discursive dispute over what counts as overpolite, polite, appropriate or impolite. In other words, there appears to be no linguistic behaviour that is inherently polite or impolite; this can only be interpreted as such within the context of the ongoing interaction.

In order to detect instances of the four categories mentioned above in the course of an ongoing interaction, the researcher will need to pay attention to the so-called 'expressions of procedural meaning' (hereafter called EPMs), i.e. linguistic expressions that instruct the addressee on how the utterance should be interpreted at the interpersonal level (Watts 2003:180). Watts classifies these EPMs into two categories: 'formulaic, ritualised utterances' and 'semi-ritualised utterances.' The former are defined as:

highly conventionalised utterances, containing linguistic expressions that are used in ritualised forms of verbal interaction and have been reduced from fully grammatical structures to the status of extra-sentential markers of politic behaviour. They have little or no internal syntactico-semantic structure (Watts 2003:168).

Among these, we can mention a few such as *please, thank you, excuse me, pardon, different forms of address*, and the like. However, most of the linguistic expressions that occur in verbal interaction are instances of what he calls 'semi-formulaic utterances:'

...conventionalised utterances containing linguistic expressions that carry out indirect speech acts appropriate to the politic behaviour of a social situation. They may also be used, in certain circumstances, as propositional structures in their own right (Watts 2003:169).

Some of these EPMs are composed of non-linguistic utterances such as *er, oh, mm, hmm*, among others, which function conventionally to fill pauses, indicate uptake or surprise, or to signal minimal listener responses. Others constitute discourse markers like *well, like, anyway, I mean* or solidarity markers that appeal to mutual knowledge shared by the participants or that express support such as the pragmatic marker *you know*. Others comprise what Holmes (1995, in Watts 2003:185) refers to as 'hedges' that

weaken the illocutionary force of an utterance such as *I think, simply, kind of, sort of* or 'boosters' which, on the other hand, enhance the illocutionary force of an utterance such as *of course, clearly, really, I'm sure, absolutely*. In addition to these, other EPMs constitute what Edmondson (1977, in Watts 2003:184) terms 'gambits' such as 'cajolars' and 'appealers' used to minimise the negative effect of an utterance. Cajolars are linguistic expressions that help restore harmony between the interlocutors and are represented by EPMs such as *I mean, I see, you know, actually, basically, really*, whereas appealers are used to elicit some hearer confirmation and are characterised by having a rising intonation contour, e.g. *okay, right, yeah*. Other EPMs are what House and Kasper (1981, in Watts 2003:183) refer to as 'forewarning,' which are linguistic structures that express a metacomment on an FTA –face-threatening act - e.g. *far be it from me to criticize, but ... you may find this a bit boring but ...*, among others.

According to Watts (2003:169), all these examples of EPMs are "not perceived by participants as overt expressions of politeness, even though they all make supportive contributions to the facework being negotiated among the participants." They all form part of the politic behaviour of a particular communicative situation. Therefore, once they have been detected, the researcher will need to "assess, within the context of the ongoing social interaction, what would be the minimum set of linguistic structures required to carry out the necessary politic behaviour" (Watts 2003:170). Only those linguistic expressions that are in line with the expected norms will be interpreted as 'politic' behaviour. Those linguistic expressions in excess of what is required to maintain the politic behaviour of the interaction will be open to interpretation as 'polite' or 'overpolite' depending on whether they are positively or negatively assessed by the interlocutor. Finally, any infringement of social norms or the absence of these EPMs when expected in the interaction may be interpreted as an instance of 'impolite' behaviour.

All in all, it can be concluded that Watts' theory of politeness is based on a model that aims to explore the dynamic nature of (im)politeness in ongoing verbal interaction by positing that linguistic expressions are not inherently polite, given that their illocutionary force cannot be determined prior to the interaction but can only be assessed during its development. As Watts himself claims, the so-called linguistic expressions of politeness are part of the politic behaviour expected in a given encounter. Only an in-depth analysis of these EPMs profiled against the norms expected in a given communicative situation might render a tentative interpretation of the level of relational work invested in a verbal interaction. In view of this, the present study will explore Watts' range of relational work in the discourse of disagreement in simulated business negotiations among Argentine speakers of English. This choice was made on the grounds that most of the studies on (im)politeness in the workplace have somehow followed Brown and Levinson's (1987) classical model of politeness, Spencer-Oatey's 'rapport management' model (2000, 2005), Culpeper's model of impoliteness (2008), or have examined politeness phenomena in the light of Mill's (2003) communities of practice model and Critical Discourse Analysis. To my knowledge, however, no empirical studies on (im) politeness have tested the applicability of Watts' theoretical framework in the type of business interactions analysed here.

### 3.2 Studies on Politeness

Most research into (im)politeness in the literature up to date has been somehow related to the realization of communicative acts such as orders and commands (Blum-Kulka 1990), compliments (Cordella et al. 1995; Holmes 1988), reprimands (Garcia 2004), suggestions (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1990; Koike 1994), offers and requests (Koutlaki 2002; Holtgraves & Yang 1992) as well as to cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic research on speech acts such as requests, apologies, compliments and thanks (Koike 1989, 1994; Bergman & Kasper 1993; Eisenstein & Bodman 1993; Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu 2007). Other studies have been conducted on a wide range of naturally-occurring non-institutional, institutional and 'quasi-institutional' discourses such as casual conversations (Holtgraves 1997; Muntigl & Turnbull 1998; Georgakopoulou 2001; Georgakopoulou & Patrona 2000; Spencer-Oatey 2002; Locher 2004; Edstrom 2004) political discourse (Blass Arroyo 2003; Watts 2003; Locher 2004; García-Pastor 2008; Locher & Watts 2008), family discourse (Watts 2003; Locher 2004; Locher & Watts 2005); computer-mediated discourse (Locher 2006; Lambert-Graham 2007); police discourse (Holger Limberg 2008), academic discourse (Hayashi 1996; Rees-Miller 2000) and broadcast media discourse (Culpeper 2005; Ian Hutchby 2008).

In business discourse, much of the latest research in this field has consisted of culture-specific studies (Blum-Kulka 1992; Ide et al 1992; Pavlidou 2000; Kummer 2005; Stewart Miranda 2008), cross-cultural

studies (Knapp-Potthoff 1992; Stalpers 1992; van der Wijst & Jan Ulijn 1995; Anette Villemoes 1995; Gunthner 2000; Spencer-Oatey & Xing 1998) and gender studies (Mullany 2004, 2008; Holmes & Marra 2004; Locher 2004; Holmes & Schnurr 2005). Other studies have focused on the interplay between power and (im)politeness (Holmes 2000; Holmes & Stubbe 2003a; Locher 2004; Schnurr, Marra & Holmes 2008) on the interrelationship between (im)politeness and leadership (Wasson 2000; Holmes, Schnurr, Chan & Chiles 2003; Schnurr, Marra & Holmes 2007; Schnurr & Clan 2009), and on the interface between (im) politeness and humour (Holmes 2000; Holmes & Marra 2002; Holmes & Schnurr 2005). Within business discourse, however, few data-driven studies seem to have focused on “the discursive struggle over (im) politeness” (Watts 2003:9) in the discourse of disagreement in business negotiations. Some few exceptions are Stalpers (1995), van der Wijst and Jan Ulijn (1995), Villemoes (1995), Holmes and Stubbe (2003b) and Locher (2004). In spite of the fact that they all investigate the interface between politeness and disagreement, these studies are approached from different theoretical perspectives and are based on diverse cultures. Basing their studies on Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, both Stalpers (1995) and van der Wijst et al. (1995) explore the relationship between politeness and the expression of disagreement in French/Dutch business negotiations. Following the same model, Villemoes (1995) concentrates on Danish/Spanish negotiations. Adopting the notion of communities of practice, Holmes and Stubbe (2003b) analyse the expression of disagreement in New Zealand workplaces. Finally, starting from the notion of frames, Locher (2004) studies the relationship between power and politeness in the discourse of disagreement in an intercultural business meeting at a research institution.

### 3.3 Appraisal Theory

In addition to analysing the data in the light of Watts’ theory of relational work, the linguistic strategies to voice disagreement in the discourse under analysis will also be addressed from a systemic functional perspective, in particular, taking into account Appraisal Theory (Martin & White 2005). This theory analyses the linguistic resources whereby writers/speakers express their intersubjective positions. It is concerned with the language of evaluation, which comprises a set of resources that position a writer’s/speaker’s proposals and propositions interpersonally. These evaluative resources encompass the attitudes negotiated by writers/speakers, the graduation of such attitudes and their engagement. In view of this, the Appraisal System has been divided into three semantic domains, namely Attitude, Graduation and Engagement. In this study, we shall concentrate on the notions of Engagement and Graduation, thus excluding the category of Attitude from the scope of the analysis.

The Engagement subsystem includes a set of linguistic resources whereby writers/speakers position their voice with respect to the proposals and propositions conveyed in a text. In other words, this subsystem is concerned with the resources by means of which writers/speakers either acknowledge or ignore the array of viewpoints present in a text and negotiate an interpersonal space for their own positions. These linguistic resources thus convey the writer’s/speaker’s dialogistic positioning towards other alternative positions or voices. This dialogistic positioning may present the writer/speaker as opening the dialogue to divergent viewpoints or as closing it down with the intention of suppressing and limiting such divergence. In view of this, linguistic resources can be classified as more dialogistically expansive or more dialogistically contractive. ‘Dialogistically expansive resources’ are oriented towards opening or expanding the dialogic space for diversity and difference, making allowances for the discussion of alternative viewpoints. ‘Dialogistically contractive resources,’ on the other hand, are geared towards closing, constraining or limiting the dialogic space for the negotiation of alternative positions, by either rejecting or challenging such divergence. According to Martin and White (2005), therefore, disclaims, for example, one of the engagement subcategories, would be regarded as dialogistically contractive whereas likelihood, another subcategory, would be perceived as more dialogistically expansive at a broad level. However, as White (2005)<sup>3</sup> argues, not only is there dialogistic variation across the engagement subsystems but there seems to be variation within each subsystem at a more narrow level of analysis as well.

The subsystem of Graduation is concerned with values that serve to grade and scale either in terms of the interpersonal force which the speaker attaches to the utterance or in terms of the preciseness or sharpness which is conveyed by it. These two dimensions are referred to as ‘force’ and ‘focus.’ ‘Force’ includes values which mark intensity and quantity. Intensification can modify qualities, processes and

3. White’s argument has been drawn from a website developed by White and Eldon entitled ‘The Appraisal Website: Homepage,’ retrieved from the following web address on July 10th, 2009:  
<http://www.grammatics.com/Appraisal/>

modalities of likelihood. It can be conveyed by means of adverbs of intensification such as *slightly, a bit, a little, somewhat, really, very, completely*, among others. Quantification is applicable to entities and can be signalled by means of measuring adverbs such as *small, a few, a little, many, some*, among others. 'Focus,' on the other hand, is concerned with values that either sharpen or soften the prototypicality of an item. By means of softening or hedging devices, the speaker/writer indicates minimal investment in the value position. On the other hand, by means of sharpening devices, the speaker/writer signals maximal investment in the value position.

All in all, it can be concluded that Martin and White's Appraisal Theory is based on a model that analyses the linguistic resources whereby speakers/writers express their interpersonal positioning. It is believed that the subsystems of Engagement and Graduation, within this theory, might contribute to the interpretation of polite, politic or impolite linguistic strategies.

### 3.4 Conversation Analysis

In addition to the use of Appraisal Theory for the analysis of the data, the study will draw on the field of Conversation Analysis (CA), particularly on the social practice of questioning. Questioning is conceived here as a social activity, a communicative practice whereby different specific institutional purposes are accomplished through the use of what Quirk (1985:808) refers to as 'rhetorical questions' or 'conducive questions.' These are questions that "indicate that the speaker is predisposed to the kind of answer he has wanted or expected." As Quirk himself claims, by asking *do you really want to leave now?*, the speaker orients the grammatically affirmative question towards a negative answer and by asking *hasn't the boat left yet?*, he gears the grammatically negative question towards a positive answer. According to Koshik (2002:1853), this idea of conduciveness, in a linguistic sense, can be paralleled to some extent to the notion of 'preference' in a CA sense, given that these types of questions are designed to exhibit a preference for a particular kind of response. As Koshik (2002) and Heinemann (2008) argue, such questions do not seek to invite answers but express an implied assertion and are biased towards an answer that aligns with this implied stance. They also add that these questions are used as vehicles for performing challenges given that they occur in an already-established environment of disagreement. This study will mainly focus on three types of challenging questions: Koshik's Reversed Polarity Questions (RPQs), both polar questions and wh-questions, and Heinemann's Same Polarity Questions (SPQs).

According to Koshik (2003:70), RPQs "are treated as assertions of the opposite polarity of that of the question, rather than as ordinary information-seeking questions." They are grammatically affirmative or negative yes-no questions as well as wh-questions, which are used as vehicles for conveying a speaker's negative epistemic stance or implied negative assertion. She (2003:71) also argues that these "yes/no questions and wh-questions are often used disaffiliatively to criticize or to challenge the recipient," given that they are produced in an already ongoing context of disagreement, especially after an accusation or after the questioner's position has been threatened. For example, by asking *but do you positively think that an Indian guy can establish can build a relationship a strong relationship with the customer?* (Roleplay 7:138), the speaker conveys dissent through the implied negative assertion that *An Indian guy can't build a strong relationship with the customer* and in doing so challenges the interlocutor's prior claim. Similarly, by asking *but who would control data privacy?* (Roleplay 1:124), the speaker conveys the negative epistemic stance that *nobody would*, thus challenging the grounds for the interlocutor's previous claim. Koshik (2003:71) argues that reversed polarity wh-questions are perceived as non-aligning responses challenging "the grounds for a prior claim and implying that there are no adequate grounds for it, and therefore no basis for asserting the claim." In most cases, these questions are accompanied by accounts which provide the grounds for the challenge, as observed in the following extract:

A: I see *what about the unions?* Because the unions they are not going to be happy about that for example we are gonna have just to fire a lot of people from England to hire people in India and well we are gonna have a lot of problems with the unions (Roleplay 15:156).

Here the speaker expresses disagreement through the wh-question *what about the unions?* implicating that *they are going to have problems with the trade unions if they outsource to India*. This idea is further reinforced by the 'enhancement clause of reason'<sup>4</sup> *because the unions they are not going to be happy about that*. As Koshik (2003:68) very well argues:

4. This notion and all other grammatical categories mentioned hereafter will be taken from Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Grammar (2004).



these accounts can be used as increment-like utterances, latched onto the *wh*-question, and fitted grammatically and semantically to the implied negative assertion, rather than to the question form of the utterance.

By latching accounts to the *wh*-questions, speakers may convey the idea that they are not inviting answers to the questions but rather that they are making a statement. Though *wh*-questions are difficult to refute, respondents may orient to them differently by backing down from the previous claim, by counterchallenging or eventually by aligning with the challenger.

In contrast to RPQs, Same Polarity Questions “are designed to receive a confirming answer of the same polarity as that of the question” (Heinemann 2008:57). These questions are used to convey the speaker’s implied assertion of the interlocutor’s position towards the issue under discussion. This assertion is inferred by the speaker from information provided by the interlocutor in prior talk. By saying *is business and numbers all you care about?* (Roleplay 1:122), the speaker conveys the assertion that *the interlocutor only cares about business and numbers*, an idea that can be inferred from the preceding co-text. Heinemann adds that these questions are generally produced in a sequential context of incipient disagreement. Consequently, by framing the question in such a way, the speaker forces the interlocutor towards a confirming answer, which would be heard to be in disagreement with the speaker. On the other hand, should the interlocutor express a disconfirming answer, he would be held responsible for having misled the speaker by the information provided in prior turns. In view of this, these questions are often perceived as challenges and are treated as unanswerable. That is to say, interlocutors either refrain from responding or evade a reply by providing a non-answer related to some other piece of information discussed in prior turns. Because of their challenging nature, both linguistic resources, SPQs and RPQs, will serve as useful linguistic tools for the analysis of one of the discursive strategies used to voice dissent in the corpus under study.

### 3.5 The Discourse of Disagreement

Disagreement is a term that can be understood in a narrow and in a broad sense. At the local level, it can be perceived as an “oppositional stance (verbal or non-verbal) to an antecedent verbal (or non-verbal) action” (Kakavá 1993:36, in Locher 2004: 95). This idea is further expanded by Rees-Miller (2000:1088), who defines disagreement as:

A Speaker *S* disagrees when s/he considers untrue some Proposition *P* uttered or presumed to be espoused by an Addressee *A* and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is *Not P*.

Disagreement is thus conceived as an opposing viewpoint in reaction to a speaker’s prior position. However, this oppositional statement “calls for some kind of reaction from the party disagreed with” (Locher 2004:95). This may lead to a sequence of disagreeing acts over a number of turns, which might develop into potential confrontation, ‘conflict’ (Waldron & Applegate 1994:4, in Locher 2004:93-94) or a ‘dispute or an argument’ (Muntigl & Turnbull 1998) between the interactants. As Kakavá (1993:36, in Locher 2004:95) puts it, “not only can disagreement create conflict, but it can also constitute conflict, since an argument is composed of a series of disputable opinions and disagreements.” Therefore, in its broad sense, disagreement can be said to signal a clash of interests, entail the negotiation of incompatible agendas, and call for the need to manage conflict with the ultimate goal of reaching some kind of consensus. In view of this, in this study the term should be understood not only locally but also globally. At the local level disagreement will consist of a speaker’s counterargument/proposal/claim in response to an interlocutor’s prior proposal. At the global level, it will involve the negotiation of opposing viewpoints between the interactants over an extended stretch of discourse. The analysis will be based on this oppositional sequence that unfolds from the beginning of the negotiating fragment, where the core issues are tackled, up to its end, where some consensus is reached.

## Part III. Methodology

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1 Research Methods

This study will adopt a qualitative approach to the analysis of (im)politeness in business negotiations. Unlike quantitative research, which uses a large group of participants with the aim of generalizing to a larger population, this study tends to avoid the formulation of generalisations owing to the relative small number of participants involved in it. Besides, rather than quantifying data through different measuring devices – frequencies, scores, ratings – this study provides detailed descriptions and searches for patterns and meanings in the data. In order to accomplish these goals, the study will follow “an inductive path that begins with few preconceived notions, followed by gradual fine-tuning and narrowing of focus” (Macey & Gass 2005:163). This will be achieved by analysing the participants’ behaviour in the given communicative situation and by attempting to categorise them into the patterns that seem to emerge from what has been observed, without imposing any restraints, or prior biases or assumptions on the data. In order to categorise the participants’ behaviour, the analyst will have to assess how the participants themselves might have evaluated that behaviour. This will be accomplished by analysing the data in a ‘holistic’ fashion, taking into account the ‘emic’<sup>5</sup> interpretations of the people subjected to the study. In other words, the analyst will have to interpret the interactants’ assessment of their interlocutors’ behaviour by considering a number of contextual factors such as (non)linguistic and extra linguistic features (Macy & Grass 2005).

On the whole, it can be said that this study is based on a qualitative approach, characterised by being ‘heuristic’ (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:31) due to its inductive and descriptive nature, in addition to being data-driven and process-oriented owing to the emergence of patterns from the analysis of raw data.

#### 4.2 Corpus, Data Collection and Procedures

The corpus for the study consists of video-taped recordings of 20 dyadic simulated business meetings held by 40 Argentine speakers of English from seven international and multinational companies, namely IBM, World Minerals, Franklin Templeton Investments, Accenture, Teletech, Fund-raising Consultants and Globant (see Table 1 below for further information). Each of these video recordings lasts from 8 to 10 minutes each, which amounts to an estimated average of 200 minutes of overall recording time. The participants are all decision-making businesspeople with negotiation skills and with an excellent level of proficiency in English displaying awareness of pragmatic and communicative competence. The target age group for the study ranges between 20 and 50 years old.

NAME	COMPANY	AGE	POSITION
Juan V.	IBM	41	Delivery Project Executive
Florencia A.	IBM	26	Delivery Project Executive
Fernando O.	Globant	29	Software Engineer
Gabriel R.	Globant	24	Software Engineer
Andrea F.	IBM	41	Delivery Manager
Gerardo A.	IBM	29	System Support
Verónica B.	IBM	32	Delivery Project Executive

5. According to Eelen (2001:77-78), ‘emic’ interpretations can be related in some way to the idea of politeness<sup>1</sup>, given that they refer to “on the one hand, the informant’s conscious statements about his or her notion of politeness and on the other to his or her spontaneous evaluations of (im)politeness, [...] made in the course of actual interaction.” ‘Etic’ interpretations, however, may be related to the concept of politeness<sup>2</sup>, given that these interpretations are theoretical evaluations that do not coincide with the interpretations of the participants.

Emmanuel F.	IBM	29	Delivery Project Executive
Nestor S.	World Minerals	40	IT Manager
Magdalena A.	World Minerals	27	Assistant Controller
Maria Ines S.	IBM	51	IT Specialist
Adriana F.	IBM	33	Service Delivery Manager
Carolina H.	Accenture	38	Manager
Valeria G.	Accenture	39	Manager
Javier G.	IBM	20	User ID Administrator
Noelia A.	IBM	23	User ID Administrator
Antonio T.	IBM	29	User ID Administrator
Mariela I.	IBM	23	User ID Administrator
Mariana K.	IBM	31	Business Operations manager
Eric V.	IBM	31	Gates Corporation Coordinator
Daniel D.	IBM	27	User ID Administrator
Marcela A.	IBM	32	L.A. Team Leader
Gonzalo A.	IBM	23	Deployment Specialist
Agustin D.	IBM	27	User ID Administrator
Gaston B.	IBM	26	User ID Administrator
Leandro B.	IBM	26	User ID Administrator
Yohana S.	Teletch	25	Trainer
Alejandra D.	Teletch	20	Team Leader
Maria Belen D.	IBM	22	IT Security
Elizabeth D.	IBM	26	IT Security
Lautaro S.	Teletch	22	Manager
Sebastián P.	Teletch	21	Supervisor
Sofia A.	Teletch	21	Supervisor
Luciano V.	Teletch	22	Trainer's Supervisor
Corina H.	IBM	25	User ID Administrator
Graciana G.	IBM	26	User ID Administrator
Ezequiel R.	Fund-raising Consultants	34	Sales Manager

Marcos M.	Fund-raising Consultants	36	Managing Director
Marina S.	Franklin Templeton Investments	35	Internal Wholesaler
Guillermina D.	Franklin Templeton Investments	33	Associate Product Manager

**Table 1. Information about the participants**

For the purpose of data collection, open role-plays were performed by the participants. In contrast to closed roleplays or discourse completion tasks (CDTs), which are limited to a one-turn oral response, eliciting a specific communicative act in line with the situation presented, open roleplays allow for much more freedom given that participants act out a particular situation which unfolds over a number of turns and different discourse phases. Due to their interactional nature, open roleplays are suited for addressing different interpersonal aspects of an interaction such as politeness phenomena, turn-taking rules and back channelling, among others. According to Kasper et al. (2002:87), although this type of simulations are not instances of real and authentic discourse, they can still provide insightful information for research work on politeness, given that such contextual factors as role specifications, communicative goals and power and social distance variables are clearly delineated, but “the outcome and the course of the interaction are in no way predetermined,” which allows for a great deal of conversational negotiation between the interactants.

The role-play task for the simulated business negotiation was drawn from a case study taken from a business-based book called *Market Leader Intermediate* (Cotton, Falvey & Kent 2005). The criterion for the selection of the material was based on the relevance of the task for the research purpose as well as on the participants’ familiarity with the topic. Given that the role-play task was related to the call centre business, it is worth pointing out that all the participants were fully acquainted with this business area, either because they had worked for a call centre before or because in their current jobs they were offering outsourcing call centre services to domestic and international companies. In this case in particular, the role-play activity consisted in holding a meeting between the directors of Auric Bank to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the cost-cutting proposals presented by each of them (refer to Appendix 7.1 for further information). The role-play situation proceeded as follows: First, a copy of the role-play task and the role cards were administered to the participants at their workplace. Then the roleplay task was read out by the researcher to the participants and sufficient time was given to each speaker to build up their positions. Once the participants were ready, the simulation was recorded.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Once the data had been gathered, a qualitative and data-driven socio-pragmatic analysis of the content was conducted to detect recurrent patterns in the realisation of discursive strategies to voice disagreement in the simulated business negotiations. First, the boundaries of the different phases of the business negotiation were defined. This was accomplished by conducting an analysis of the macro structure of each roleplay text, after which three macro functional fragments were identified, namely the opening, the negotiating and the concluding fragment. Only the negotiating fragment, in which the participants discuss the core issues, was analysed. The opening and the closing were not taken into account. After carrying out a deeper analysis of each roleplay text, the negotiating fragment was subdivided into three micro phases: the first introduces each participant’s stand, the second and longest consists of the actual negotiation, in which divergent viewpoints are negotiated between the participants, and the last brings the negotiating fragment to a close. Figure 4 provides a graphic representation of the macro structure of the business negotiations analysed.

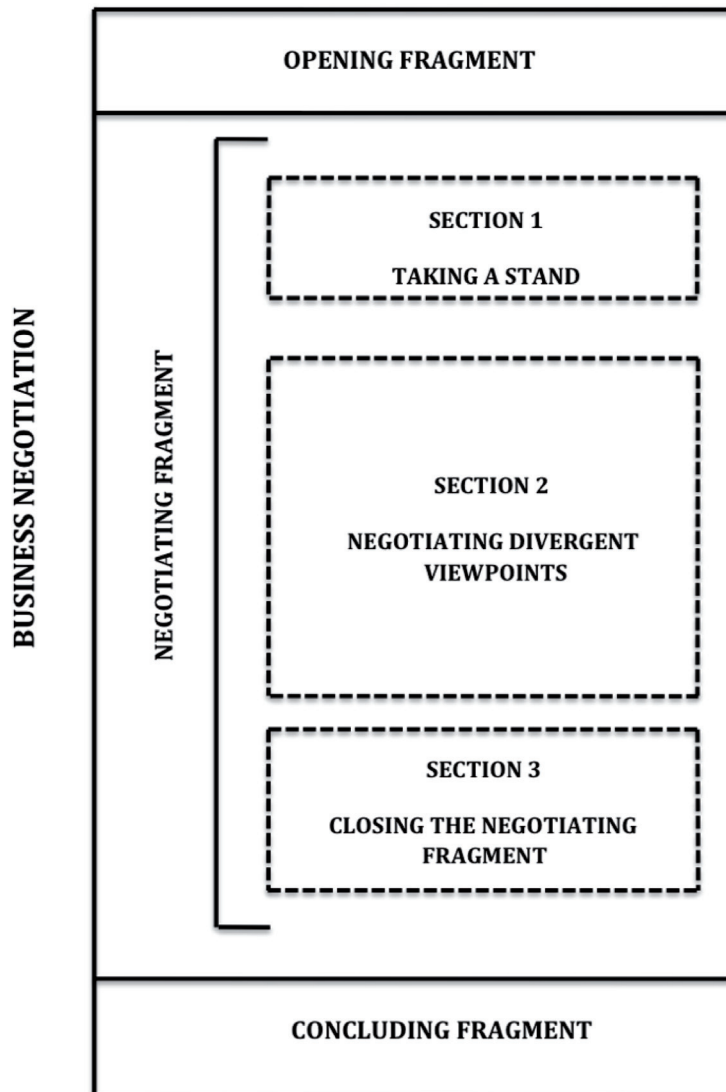


Figure 4. Structure of a business negotiation

Having defined the structure of the negotiation, the linguistic expressions of disagreement in the three phases of the negotiating fragment were then identified in each roleplay text. These were analysed taking into consideration the co-text, i.e. the surrounding sequential context. After this analysis, four recurrent patterns emerged from the data, which were encapsulated into four discursive strategies, namely contradictions, challenges, counterclaims and counterproposals. In order to ensure the interrater reliability of the strategies identified, all the expressions of disagreement were assessed two more times with the help of an external rater, until a high degree of agreement on the categorization of the four strategies formulated was reached. These subcategories were then codified according to the phase in which they occurred in the negotiating fragment (e.g. contradictions 1 (CD1), contradictions 2 (CD2), contradictions 3 (CD3), challenges 1 (CH1), challenges (CH2), challenges 3 (CH3), counterclaims 1 (CC1), counterclaims 2 (CC2), counterclaims 3 (CC3), counterproposals 1 (CP1), counterproposals 2 (CP2), counterproposals 3 (CP3)). Of these four discursive strategies, only contradictions and challenges were explored in the three phases of the negotiating fragment, whereas counterclaims and counterproposals were only analysed in the first and last phase. The criterion for this selection was due to two reasons. Firstly, it was thought that a comparison between counterclaims and counterproposals, on the one hand, and contradictions and challenges, on the other, would render a fruitful exploration for the results found in the realisation of CH and CD in the first and last phase of the negotiating fragment. Secondly, it was thought that the analysis of counterclaims and counterproposals in the second phase of the negotiating fragment would have exceeded the limitation in length of this thesis.

Once this decision was made, the manifestations of (im)politeness in the conveyance of contradictions and challenges were examined in the three phases of the negotiating fragment in the light of Watts' theory of politeness. Only those instances of impolite, politic and polite utterances drawn from Watts' entire continuum of relation work – impolite, politic, polite and overpolite - were explored in the study. This choice was made on the grounds that the data did not present any tokens of overpolite behaviour. As mentioned earlier, the assessment was carried out with the use of interpretation techniques and with the help of the notions of Graduation and Engagement from Appraisal Theory and the concept of Preference in Questioning as a social practice from Conversation Analysis. For this purpose, every linguistic realisation of a contradicting and challenging act was assessed as impolite, politic or polite, bearing in mind the local, sequential linguistic and non-linguistic (especially tone and emphatic stress) context as well as the global extra linguistic context. In the latter, the notion of frame was drawn upon to help distinguish what was appropriate or inappropriate behaviour in a business negotiation.

The analysis was divided into three parts. Firstly, those instances of contradictions in the second phase of the negotiating fragment were explored and assessed in terms of their degree of politeness as impolite, politic or polite. Secondly, those instantiations of challenges in the second phase of the negotiating fragment were analysed. A functional analysis of this discursive strategy was first conducted, dividing challenges into three functional categories: 'highly contestive,' 'contestive' and 'non-contestive.' Contestive challenges were further subdivided into 'indirect polemic challenges' and 'direct polemic challenges.' It is noteworthy here that these categories were formulated and then applied to the analysis only after agreement on their reliability had been reached by the analyst and the external rater. These categories were then assessed in terms of their range of politeness from impolite, via politic to polite. Finally, those contradictions and challenges appearing in the first and last phase of the negotiating fragment were examined. These were first compared to the use of counterclaims and counterproposals in these two phases and all of them were then explored in terms of their variation in politeness.

## Part IV. The analysis

### 5.1 The discourse of business meetings

Before proceeding with the analysis of the discourse of disagreement in simulated business meetings among Argentine speakers, some insights into this communicative activity will be provided. I will refer to the frame expected in this type of interaction by thoroughly defining what constitutes a meeting in the workplace environment. According to Boden (1994:84, in Asmub & Svennevig 2009:9), a meeting is:

A planned gathering, whether internal or external to an organization, in which the participants have some perceived (if not guaranteed) role, have some forewarning (either longstanding or quite improvisational) of the event, which has itself some purpose or "reason," time and place, and, in some general sense, an organizational function.

Schwartzman (1989:7, in Asmub & Svennevig 2009:9) further expands Boden's definition by specifying in greater detail the different purposes for which meetings are normally held in an organisation, such as "exchang[ing] ideas and opinions, solv[ing] a problem, mak[ing] a decision or negotiat[ing] an agreement, develop[ing] policy and procedures, formulat[ing] recommendations, and so forth." Housley (1999, in Asmub & Svennevig 2009:18) adds that on performing any of these functions, "meeting participants [may] contest, negotiate, and accomplish various roles." These roles are not only institutionally enacted but are also dynamically constructed and negotiated between the participants during the ongoing communicative event. Participants may then constitute themselves as leaders, experts, employees or facilitators, among others, deploying diverse discursive strategies with a view to attaining institutionally specific goals. In doing so, they do not only attend to the mere transactional goals of every workplace interaction, focusing on the achievement of concrete task-related objectives but they also pay attention to the interpersonal dimension of the communication, maintaining and fostering harmonious relations, building solidarity and doing collegiality. As Holmes and Marra (2004:379) very well argue, workplace meetings are a site where both transactional and relational goals are inextricably intertwined to meet the demands of the communicative situation. In these communicative events, participants use a varying number of discourse strategies serving as tools to solve the task at hand or as devices to perform more social and interpersonal functions geared towards enhancing workplace relationships. In view of this dual functionality of business interactions, different

discourse patterns with different pragmatic effects may be detected, depending on whether attention is paid to the transactional side of the communication or to the relational one.

## 5.2 Results and Discussion

After conducting a fine-grained analysis of the negotiating fragment, it was found that the interactants used a variety of discursive strategies to voice disagreement, which, as said before, can basically be encapsulated into four discursive strategies, namely contradictions, challenges, counterclaims and counterproposals, as illustrated in Figure 5 below:

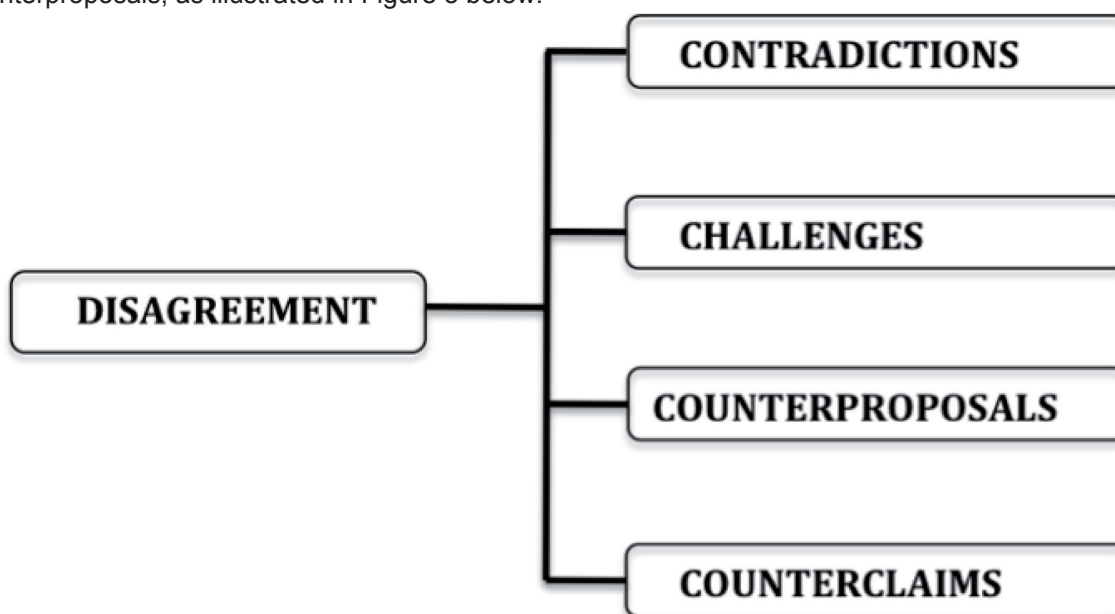


Figure 5. Classification of discursive strategies to express disagreement

Of these four discursive strategies, only contradictions and challenges were explored in the three phases of the negotiating fragment. This choice was made on the grounds that, following Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1987), both challenges and contradictions might be stigmatised as inherently face-threatening acts infringing upon the interlocutor's 'action-environment'<sup>6</sup> by posing a threat to the positive face of the hearer. As a consequence, these acts might be regarded as instantiations of impolite behaviour in quite a number of settings. However, this seemingly innate face-threatening nature in the realizations of contradictions and challenges appears to be somehow fussy. In a business context these acts may range in their degree of relational work along a continuum from impolite, via politic to polite. By the same token, in terms of their dialogistic positioning, contradictions and challenges may move along a cline from most dialogistically contractive to most dialogistically expansive. As the following analysis will attempt to demonstrate, there seems to be an intrinsic interrelationship between the categories of relational work and the subcategories of force/focus and dialogistic positioning, within Appraisal theory, which along with a number of other contextual factors will serve to determine what is polite, politic and impolite behaviour in the corpus.

In the following section, I will proceed with the analysis of contradictions in the second phase of the negotiating fragment. A succinct introduction to this discursive strategy will be provided, and the instantiations of polite, politic and impolite contradictions found in the corpus will be explored and exemplified.

### 5.2.1 Contradictions

As mentioned above, one of the discursive strategies used by the speakers to voice disagreement in the negotiating fragment of the business meeting was that of contradictions. This discursive strategy can

6. Locher (2008:9) uses the term 'action-environment' taken from Wartenberg's definition of power: "a social agent A has power over another social agent B if and only if A strategically constrains B's action-environment." Locher argues that such restrictions of an interlocutor's freedom of action may be perceived as an exercise of power through impoliteness.

be deployed by interactants to deny or reject the truth or assertability value of their interlocutor's position on the grounds that their claims or arguments may be held to be unsustainable. These manifestations of denial or rejection may be regarded as "maximally contractive in that, while the alternative position has been recognised, it is held not to apply" (Martin & White 2005:118). In other words, contradicting acts may suppress, or limit the dialogic space for divergent negotiating viewpoints, thus constraining the scope of differing alternatives in the colloquy rather than expanding it. Likewise, contradictions might as well be perceived as impolite behaviour, infringing upon the interlocutor's freedom of action by posing a threat to their face insofar as the speaker, in expressing this face-threatening act, does not seem to attend to the face needs of the addressee. As Brown and Levinson (1987:66) argue in their seminal paper, these acts make the hearer appear to be "wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval." However, the seemingly inherent face-threatening nature in the expression of contradictions seems not to be such an accurate feature in a business setting. In this context, both transactional and interpersonal goals are negotiated and constructed jointly among the interactants and the same discursive strategy could be considered (in)appropriate at different points in a negotiation, depending on what the primary focus of the interaction at that moment is -transactional or relational. In view of this, it can be said that contradicting tokens may be deemed 'polite,' 'politic' or 'impolite' depending on how the interlocutors graduate the interpersonal impact, force or volume of their utterances and on how contractive or expansive contradicting acts are assessed to be.

After analysing this discursive strategy in the three phases of the negotiating fragment, it was found that most contradictions occurred in the second phase (CD2) 29 compared to 2 and 4 contradicting acts that appeared in CD1 and CD 3, respectively, as shown in Table 2 below:

Negotiation Event	Contradicting tokens
CD 1	2
CD 2	29
CD 3	4

Of the 29 contradicting tokens that occurred in the second phase, some may be interpreted as impolite damaging the face of the addressee, others may be regarded as polite attending to the face needs of the interlocutor and the remaining may be assessed as appropriate, politic behaviour complying with the demands of the given context. Similarly, some contradicting tokens appear to be more expansive than others, opening up the space for dialogistic divergence rather than limiting or constraining it. In view of this, the following analysis of contradictions appearing in the second phase of the negotiating fragment will show the interrelationship between the concepts of politeness, force/focus and dialogistic positioning.

### 5.2.1.1 Contradictions 2

#### 5.2.1.1.1 Impolite utterances – High force

Some contradicting tokens appearing in the second phase of the negotiating fragment might be interpreted as impolite for two reasons. On the one hand, they seem to be too high in force, either using language that is considered inappropriate for the given context or maximising and polarising dissent. On the other hand, in uttering them, speakers seem to be discrediting or undermining their interlocutors by asserting that their claims are not relevant to the discussion at hand. As Turnbull et al (1998:5) argue, these assertions are in fact 'meta-dispute acts' that convey "a specific view of what is being argued about and what constitutes an allowable contribution to the argument" and as such, they are regarded as highly confrontational, given that they are oriented not only towards a monologicistic stance but also to damaging the face of the addressee.

In addition to their confrontational nature, irrelevancy claims would be deemed inappropriate in a business context among status equals, given that they would disturb the *status quo* by the exercise of power "constitut[ing] a break in the politic behaviour –the routinised forms of linguistic expression- expected in the interaction" (Watts 2003:131). In other words, dismissing the interlocutor's claims as irrelevant might be interpreted as an attempt to subvert the power relation by privileging a particular viewpoint. Among status



equals or near equals this may threaten the interlocutor's face and may be interpreted as an offence, and therefore assessed as rude or impolite behaviour. As a consequence of this imbalance in the symmetrical relation between the participants, interpersonal relationships might be hampered or jeopardised, as observed in the following fragments:

(1)

A: it's ... what I would propose to do is uh go to India for a short term period let's say go 2 years to India until we can have the finances of the bank in order/

B: /TWO YEARS?

A: for a short two years term of outsourcing the call centres then once we have all the numbers in order we come back to in-house or at least a domestic call centres location (Roleplay 1)

In (1) speaker B interrupts speaker A's action environment by echoing part of the interlocutor's prior utterance in line 2. This partial repetition serves not only to express strong disagreement with A's proposal but also attempts to undermine it by questioning the relevance of the argument. From the prosodic high pitch – used to express contrastive prosody - and the contestive overtone with which the utterance seems to be expressed, it can be inferred that B believes that moving the call centre to India for only a period of two years would not be considered an intelligent business decision. Instead of framing her contradiction in a more indirect and mitigated fashion, B attacks the interlocutor's face by maximising dissent through the use of prosody to signal procedural meaning and by highlighting the irrelevance and unfeasibility of her counterpart's proposal. In view of this, B's interruptive and contestive 'question repeat' (Pomerantz 1984) may be interpreted as highly confrontational in nature and thus assessed as impolite. As illustrated in (2) below, in the subsequent turn, speaker B, instead of backing down, reiterates her dissent in the form of a rhetorical question, thus strengthening her disagreement.

(2)

B: *Do you think it's worthy spending so much money in transferring the whole call centres over to a different country? For just a short period or term of two years? What about trying or testing out a new plan in using the people we have right now reducing the shifts reducing hours and keeping the people here let's say let's try out for a year see how it works and if it doesn't work out we can always move the call centres over to India* (Roleplay 1)

Although this may be interpreted as a polite expression of disagreement due to its indirectness, the negative focus on the interlocutor's position conveyed by the lexical items *worthy, so much, the whole*, and *just a short period* along with the contestive overtone with which the propositional content is expressed contribute to making the utterance rather face-threatening. This time, however, B attempts to mitigate the negative impact that such an act might have on the interlocutor by introducing a counterproposal *what about trying or testing out a new plan in using the people we have right now reducing the shifts reducing the hours and keeping the people here?* and thus manages to restore the harmony of the interaction.

Marked prosody and highly contemptuous and dismissive remarks also contribute to making speaker A's comment in (3) below impolite:

(3)

A: first of all I think we should start profiling them what you said about the culture in India *they are extremely smart people they are very willing to work*

B: *I'm not saying they are not smart* I'm just saying that\

A: /that they don't have the same type of CULTURE

B: the culture\

A: /THAT's what you said

B: well you don't have the same culture because you are in a different country and you have other food other weather \

A: /well of COURSE\

B: /other beliefs\

A: *but our customers are not calling to discuss about the menu for the day ok it's about business*

B: well that's that's a direct influence over the overall call

A: *NOT REALLY it's only if they are willing to make it influenced in the call*, they are calling to see the status of their accounts to see when their bills are due they are not going to call and say hey how's the weather out there

B: Come on you told me you know the call centre business

A: I DO

B: well then you should know that when a person calls is not just simply you know I want to have my account checked\

A: *No it's actually I want good service I don't care if \*

B: /Right and good service and good service implies a good personal treatment

A: of COURSE (Roleplay 9)

In line 1, speaker A contradicts speaker B by distorting his counterpart's original wording. In the previous turn, B had argued that employees in India were *not going to have the same level of culture [...], the*

same level of understanding and [...] the same level of language as employees in England. Instead of reproducing the interlocutor's utterance, A strategically distorts the original utterance into *what you said about the [Indians] they are extremely smart people they are very willing to work*. In doing so, not only is he merging the reported utterance with his own interpretation of B's prior viewpoint but he is also imposing it on the addressee. What is more, this imposition is semantically reinforced by the EPMS *extremely* and *very*, having a boosting effect, thus aggravating the disagreement. Confronted with his distorted words, B defends himself by denying A's utterance in line 2. However, when B makes an attempt to explain what he meant, A latches onto his interlocutor's defence, restricting his action-environment and forcefully imposing on the addressee his own interpretation or understanding of what the latter had said. According to Gunthner (2000:225), "this technique of distorting the quoted utterance of one's opponent by [...] simplifying and exaggerating his argument, is a strategic device suitable for building an antagonistic counter-position and antithesis by maximising contrasts." It is precisely this heightening and contradictory effect that the utterance has that renders it impolite.

After A's contestation in line 5 *THAT is what you said*, B makes an effort to expand on his argument only to be fiercely confronted and contradicted once more by A in line 9 *but our customers are not calling to discuss about the menu for the day ok, it's about business*. This non-politic and inappropriate utterance can be the result of three salient linguistic and prosodic features: the extra prominence on the negative particle *not*, the highly patronising intonation contour in the appealer *ok?* and the sarcastic reference to *the menu*, which is a reiteration of an idea that A had already dismissed as irrelevant in line 7 when he uttered, *well of COURSE* with a proclaiming intonation contour. Here prosody serves as an EPM projecting a contrastive meaning and displaying quite overtly and assertively the irrelevance of the interlocutor's viewpoint. Once again, in line 10, B tries to restore the harmony of the interaction by rendering some kind of explanation or justification for his prior argument, which is subsequently contested by A's contradictory and confrontational remark in line 11, *NOT REALLY it's only if they are willing to make it influenced in the call*. Here A not only disagrees with B over the influence or impact of the abovementioned factors on the overall call but he also maximises his dissent through the use of the EPM *really* and by means of the emphatic conjunction *if only*, both of which have a boosting effect. The confrontational frame already established between the interlocutors is further exacerbated by A's challenging remark in the same line *they are not going to call and say hey how's the weather out there*, satirizing B's prior argument and thus threatening his face.

On being constantly confronted by A either through the use of contradictions or challenges, speaker B counterattacks his interlocutor in line 12 by questioning A's expertise in the area. By the utterance *come on you told me you know the call centre business*, he implicates that A is not as conversant with the business as he should be. Challenged by this accusation, A contradicts his counterpart by stating the opposite in a rather contestive manner. This is accomplished through the use of high prosodic marking in *I do – do* is produced with a proclaiming tone, indicating that the information presented is not given and on a high key, establishing a contrast with the key of the previous utterance (Brazil 1997; Granato 2005). The speaker thus implies that contrary to B's assumption, he is fully acquainted with the business. Finally, in line 15 A latches onto B's challenging remark *then you should know that when a person calls is not just simply you know I want to have my account checked*, and signals direct, unmitigated dissent by saying, *no it's actually I want good service I don't care if*. By the use of the dissent marker *no* and the emphatic function of the contradictory particle *actually*, A manages to counterattack B once more, thus posing a threat to his face.

As this sequential confrontational frame shows, speaker A resorts to the use of direct and maximised contradictions to undermine his interlocutor's argument and consequently build support for his own position. The excessive use of this discursive strategy has been interpreted as impolite behaviour, resulting in face-aggravating confrontation. As a consequence, the symmetrical relationship between the status equals has been hampered. Blunt and heightened disagreements can become more forceful when they contain highly accusative and negative propositional content, as can be seen in fragment (4) below:

(4)

B: Somewhere else ok. Have you think about the cost of having a call centre there? Because we have I mean we have to create the bases there I mean we will have to train people we will have I mean people from England will have to travel to India in order to provide the trainings and like all the technology and the facilities that we have here we don't have there and we have to buy all these things.

A: *well that's exactly what you are wrong about* because we are, outsourcing means we are gonna make a contract with a call centre that already have the facilities that already have people that already have computers everything we need to provide the service right so the only thing that we need to do is give them the like the know-how [...] and they are going to be in charge of everything (Roleplay 18)

Speaker A's remark in line 2 *well that's exactly what you are wrong about* can be regarded as quite confrontational in nature. This is due to the negative evaluation embedded in the word *wrong*, which is pronounced with a proclaiming tone and which is attributed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun *you*. This negative attribution to the interlocutor may render the utterance highly accusative. This accusation is reinforced by the prominence given to the rheme *what you are wrong about* placing the focus on the negative connotation of the phrase. Had the speaker opted for the thematisation of this phrase by saying, *what you are wrong about is exactly that*, the focus would have fallen on *exactly that*, neutralising the effect of the negative attribution in *wrong*. In addition to this left displacement, the confrontational nature of the utterance is further reinforced by the booster *exactly* and the syntactic parallelism and repetition realised through the phrase X *that already have*, exacerbating A's dissent and helping him to keep the floor. The fact that A opted for this argumentative dissent format rather than for a more mitigated disagreement is what renders the utterance impolite. Finally, it can be said that impoliteness in the context under study - a symmetrical business meeting between two directors of a company - can be brought about by the use of a style which is not expected in such a formal exchange, as observed in fragment (5) below:

(5)

A: This is something you won't notice because you pick up the phone and you don't know if the guy is next to you or\

B: /yeah come on you can see the slang. You will notice the England slang

A: well but that is because\

B: /but ok go ahead but this is an issue

A: This is ok I'll take that concern and I'll explain how we can deal with that. These guys are specialised in providing services to different regions so they have a very highly specialised people [...] (Roleplay 7)

In (5) speaker B shows disapproval of speaker A's prior claim by saying, *yeah come on you can see the slang. They will notice the English slang* in line 2. The contradiction is signalled by the syntactic contrast between B's *you will notice the English slang* and A's *this is something you won't notice*. It is further reinforced by shifting style in the phrase *come on*, dismissing A's comment as irrelevant. This dismissive remark along with the colloquial resonance of the phrase *come on* might be interpreted as inappropriate in this context given that they might be perceived as attacks to the interlocutor's face. Face-threatening contradictions of this nature in other more informal discourses among friends or family members would have been considered politic behaviour, indexing in-group membership, solidarity or collegiality. However, in this formal encounter, such challenging comments can only be interpreted as inappropriate or even offensive, resulting in confrontation between the participants. In this case in particular, speaker A does not counterattack his interlocutor but rather attempts to restore harmony by first showing concurrence and then elaborating on his prior argument in greater detail.

### 5.2.1.1.2 Politic utterances – Mid force

We are now going to focus on those direct contradictory statements found in the second phase of the negotiating fragment that have been interpreted as politic due to the fact that their directness has been implicitly accepted by the interlocutors. On analysing the data, three recurrent patterns in the linguistic realization of politic contradictions were detected, ranging in their level of directness. The most direct pattern displays the use of negative dissent markers – *no* or *not* – or positive markers in response to negated claims in clause-initial position. The second expresses dissent in a more indirect and slightly mitigated fashion through the use what Locher (2004) calls 'partial agreement' or what Martin and White (2005) refer to as a 'concur-counter strategy.' Finally, the last pattern and the most indirect one delays and prefaces the conveyance of disagreement by means of justifications or counterproposals used as strategic, hedging discursive strategies.

These direct contradictions in the speech of the Argentine speakers of English under study cannot be interpreted as impolite behaviour but rather as unmarked politic and appropriate behaviour within the business negotiation. This may be said to be the result of two factors. On the one hand, business players<sup>7</sup> have to act in accordance with the institutional role invested in them by the institutional setting. In the conversations, the participants performed the role of two company directors who had to decide on the best course of action to reduce costs and boost the profitability of the company. As decision-making business people in managerial position, directors are expected to express their dissent quite openly and assertively given that important business decisions are at stake and the avoidance of confrontation for the sake of maintaining harmonious relations may result in taking the wrong course of action. Consequently,

7. The word 'business players' here and hereafter should be understood as meaning 'business negotiators.'

in order to comply with the institutional norms and to act in accordance with their institutional roles, managers may exhibit a preference for directness rather than indirectness as sometimes compliance with the transactional goals of the interaction – the task at hand- presides over attention to the interpersonal goals of the communicative event.

On the other hand, this directness in the conveyance of contradictions may also be attributed to what Staples refers to as “the high priority of matter-of-factness [...] and the principle of “time is money” imbedded in business talk (1992:230). The discourse of business is sometimes so constrained by tight deadlines and unexpected outcomes that directness is sometimes privileged over indirectness. I will now present the different patterns of directness found in the texts. In fragment (6) an occurrence of the most direct format to express dissent can be observed.

- (6)  
 B: a person from India answers the phone I mean how do you think of any way we are going to communicate that to?/  
 A: *no, there's no need to communicate that's something \*  
 B: /because many of them don't like the idea you know of \  
 A: /but they they\  
 B: /having the service being provided you know abroad  
 A: *but they don't have to know that it's abroad*  
 B: *yeah, they will surely know you know once the person answers the phone \*  
 A: /No there the people \  
 B: /or even if they ask let's say you are a customer\  
 A: /but this is \  
 B: /and you find something you know odd in the way that person is talking to you\  
 A: /OK *maybe maybe* we *could* send out a mailing saying that we are focusing in our main activity and outsourcing the call centre with experienced people abroad and that would be we *could* that (Roleplay 3)

In (6) speaker A signals dissent with speaker B's prior argument by rejecting the need to communicate to their customers that the call centre would be run by an outsourcing Indian company. The contradiction is indicated in line 2 by the direct, unmitigated dissent marker *no* in initial position and is reinforced by the same negative particle in the main clause. This idea is reiterated further ahead by the counterargument in line 6 *but they don't have to know that it's abroad*, reasserting A's viewpoint and strengthening the disagreement. Confronted with this repetition of dissent, B expresses disagreement in line 7 by marking the polarity between her utterance and speaker A's through the use of the positive polarity marker *yeah*, the assertive modal *will* and the boosting device *surely*. The contradiction is then followed by a number of justifications in lines 9 and 11. In view of this insistence on the part of speaker B, A finally concedes in line 12 through the use of a counterproposal hedged by the EPMs *maybe* and *could* and agrees to inform the customers about the transfer of the call centre via mail. The same kind of contrastive polarity can be observed in excerpt (7) below:

- (7)  
 B: That won't save money at first. That'll be a huge cost  
 A: *oh yes we will save money* if we put one person for every 10 Indians for every 20 people we have 21 people working for us instead of having two for the same cost. (Roleplay 17)

Here speaker A indicates dissent with speaker B's prior position by arguing that they will certainly save money if the call centre is transferred to India. As observed in line 2, the contradiction is constructed by repeating the same idea as in line 1 with a different polarity, which is signalled by the dysfluency marker *oh* and the positive marker *yes*. The disagreement is further reinforced by the use of syntactic parallelism, contrasting the negative modal *won't* in line 1 with its positive counterpart *will* in line 2. Marked polarity and syntactic parallelism are also used as linguistic resources to express disagreement in fragment (8) below:

- (8)  
 B: I don't know I don't think the service will be the same maybe if we started that initiative maybe in the next 2 or 3 years we will have been working and working and \  
 A: / that depends on us depends on the excellence of the staff  
 B: *no I don't think that depends on us*, I mean the Indians have to get into our perspective into our point of view work as we are used to I don't think it's the same the same point of view [...] (Roleplay 17)

In (8) speaker B signals disagreement with speaker A's prior argument by claiming that if the call centre were transferred to India, the quality of the service would be diminished. The contradiction is accomplished by the use of the initial negative marker *no* and the contrastive syntactic parallelism between A's utterance and B's: *that depends on us* confronted with *no I don't think that depends on us*. In addition to syntactic

means of showing contrast, dissent can be conveyed by the use of repetition as a linguistic resource, as observed in excerpts (9) and (10) below:

(9)

A: but the money that we will have to pay to them is gonna be high too because if they are coming from universities

B: *No it is not. It's cheaper*

A: It is still cheaper there?

B: *yeah actually it's cheaper* and we only have to prepare them with a profile to service as a bank not as for example a trial company. (Roleplay 15)

In (9) speaker B disagrees with speaker A over the money that they will have to spend on salaries if the call centre is transferred to India. In contrast to A's prior claim that salaries would be too high in India, B argues that wages in India would be much lower than in England. The contradiction is conveyed by the initial negative particle *no* in line 2 followed by the denial of the previous claim. This idea is reinforced by the phrase *it's cheaper* in the same line. On hearing B's opposing argument, A indirectly reasserts his scepticism through the question *it is cheaper there?* implicating that he believes it is not. This indirect assertion is contradicted by B, who reaffirms her viewpoint in line 4 by boosting the expression of dissent with the EPM *actually* and by highlighting the polarity between the lexical item *cheaper* and its antonym *high* in line 1. It is then through the use of repetition and lexical parallelism in the phrase *it's cheaper* in lines 2 and 4 that B manages to construct and express her opposing viewpoint. This combination of linguistic resources is also evident in fragment (10) below:

(10)

A: Ok I do understand that but the thing is that [...] we are going to get is anger customers because they are not getting the attention they want or they think they deserve and they actually do deserve it because the employees are stressed instead of taking 20 calls they are taking 40 so you cannot expect the mood of that person to keep the same with double the workload and the same

B: */no but with the same criteria* I mean that is going to happen here or is going to happen in India because people are going to start getting angry because people in India as I said *before they are not going to have the same level of culture they are not going to have the same level of understanding and they are not going to have the same language* so customers are going to be angry either here because our employees are stressed or there because *they are going to feel* that we are moving we are moving away from the country and *they are going to feel* like the bank has abandoned them also you need to keep in mind that you know the employees here I mean they are not going to let us just (pause)

A: I know (Roleplay 9)

In (10) speaker B indicates dissent with speaker A's prior argument by means of the direct, unmitigated dissent marker *no* in initial position and the subsequent counterargument providing a rather lengthy and forceful explanation for his initial rejection. In this account, B manages to reinforce his contradiction through the use of two linguistic devices, namely repetition and syntactic parallelism as observed in the phrases *they are not going to have the same X and they are going to feel X*. By means of these two resources, B succeeds in asserting his position and in expressing disagreement appropriately, given that there is no sign of negative assessment in the interlocutor's response.

So far it has been demonstrated that the speakers under study show a preference for expressing dissent quite directly through the use of polarity markers. The disagreement is in many cases reinforced through the use of syntactic or lexico-semantic parallelism and repetition as linguistic resources. Dissent is also introduced by polarity markers in excerpts (11) and (12) below. In these cases, however, the polarity particles are not used to contradict or disagree with the interlocutor's prior argument but are rather used to perform a corrective function.

(11)

B: yeah but money in all aspects I mean not only in the call centre if we are going to lose if we are going to gain \$5.5 m and then we are going to lose \$4 with this idea with this option

A: *No we are gonna save \$1.5* (Roleplay 4)

(12)

B: 5 years the same estimate you said

A: *No you are going to be saving \$ 3 m in 5 years* (Roleplay 9)

In (11) and (12), the direct negative dissent marker *no* is used to correct the information provided by the interlocutor in the prior line. In these two cases, the speakers do not introduce a counterargument contradicting the interlocutor but rather intend to correct a wrong assumption on his part. The speakers could have corrected their prior utterance by means of other more indirect discourse markers such as *in*

*fact, actually* or *well*. The fact that they opted for the negative marker *no* is an indication of their preference for directness.

Having explored the use of direct contradictions, I will now move onto examine the second recurrent pattern in the realization of this discursive strategy. These contradicting acts express dissent in a less direct and slightly mitigated fashion through the use of partial agreement, as observed in (13) below:

- (13)  
 B: My problem is that customers are going to think this is not an England bank any more  
 A: No!  
 B: /This is an Indian bank so they are going to go away  
 A: *yeah that's not exactly true* because we are going to keep our branches and this is how the client perceives us they recognize our logo and they recognize our houses and the client will continue to see that but the portion that they don't see we are going to move it from the South of England to/ (Roleplay 7)

In (13) speaker A indicates dissent with speaker B's claim that the bank will not be perceived by its customers as an English bank any more if its call centre is transferred to India. Unlike the use of the direct, unmitigated *no* evident in the previous excerpts, this time the contradiction is introduced by the agreement token *yeah* having a hedging effect and encoding alignment. This affiliation marker is then followed by the objecting remark *that's not exactly true*, which is also attenuated by the EPM *exactly* and by the subsequent justification, accounting for the reasons why the perception or the image of the bank will not be tarnished. Slight mitigation in the conveyance of contradictions can also be observed in fragment (14) below:

- (14)  
 B: yeah but we have to keep the client the customers I think we have to keep  
 A: *yes but this is not the way* we have customers because our  
 B: we have to find a better way that's right  
 A: *I know but this is not the way* a call centre is not our main reason because we have customers we have customers because we are AB  
 B: yeah I know (Roleplay 4)

Here disagreement with the interlocutor is prefaced by what Locher (2004) refers to as 'partial agreement' in the form of *yes but* in line 2 and *I know but* in line 4. Martin and White (2005) have termed this type of disagreement 'concur-counter pairing' given that the speaker presents himself as agreeing with the interlocutor, only to distance from this initial alignment later on by introducing a rejection with the prior proposition. These prefaces can then be perceived as solidarity markers doing facework and as such, they can be regarded as semi-formulaic EPMs attempting to mitigate the expression of dissent.

The following fragments illustrate the last recurrent pattern in the conveyance of contradictions. These contradicting acts are strategically prefaced and delayed by justifications or counterproposals, thus achieving a hedging effect and at the same time helping the interactants to keep the floor, as observed in (15) below:

- (15)  
 B: but ok go ahead but *this is an issue*  
 A: This is ok I'll take that concern and I'll explain how we can deal with that. These guys are specialised in providing services to different regions so they have a very highly specialised people. They even have language classes to at least have a reasonable accent for the country they are providing services so this is something *that is not going to be an issue*. We know American firms that are doing that and they are very happy with their services so this is something *that is not a concern for us*. And also what we can have is a better service a fast service that this is something we are looking for (Roleplay 7)

Here the contradictions are prefaced by first providing an account of why speaker A believes that speaker B's argument is not valid. In this way, disagreement is delayed and introduced by a subordinating clause at the end of the counterargument. Dissent is also delayed by an initial lengthy justification, after which disagreement with B's prior argument is signalled by contrastive prosodic marking in the negative particle *not* as well as by syntactic and lexico-semantic parallelism and substitution contrasting: B's previous claim *this is an issue* with A's *this is not going to be an issue* and its reiteration *that is not a concern for us*. The use of justifications and counterproposals as hedging discursive strategies to delay disagreement can also be observed in segment (16) below:

- (16)  
 B: /no but *with the same criteria* I mean that is going to happen here or is going to happen in India because people are going to start getting angry because people in India as I said before they are not going to have the same level of culture they are not going to have the same level of understanding [...]

also you need to keep in mind that you know the employees here I mean they are not going to let us just (pause)  
 A: I know  
 B: fire everyone and move to another country  
 A: the thing is that we can actually use part of the money that we are going to be saving by going to India with the call centre to reposition them within our banks [...] we might have to let a couple of people go but *we not talking about the same thing it's not the same criteria* (Roleplay 9)

Speaker A had argued in the previous turn that customers would be dissatisfied with the service if it were still to be provided from England due to the high strain on the employees as a result of the increase in the number of incoming calls. On hearing this, Speaker B expresses dissent in line 1 on the grounds that with the same criteria dissatisfaction is likely to occur either in England or in India. This initial disagreement is then followed by a number of justifications in the same line. Confronted with this contradiction, A disagrees with B's prior argument in line 4. This time the disagreement is prefaced and delayed by first introducing a counterproposal *we can actually use the money [...] like basically for customer service* and then a counterclaim or justification accounting for the previously proposed course of action. Only then does A signal dissent with B by introducing the refutation *but we are not talking about the same thing, it's not the same criteria*. Once again, the contradicting act is marked by two linguistic devices, namely repetition and lexico-semantic substitution or reiteration. This can be observed at the end of line 4, where A reinforces his dissent through the paraphrases *we are not talking about the same thing, it's not the same criteria*. By the same token, A succeeds in signalling disagreement with B's prior claim by confronting the lexical items *not the same thing* and *not the same criteria* with the interlocutor's wording *no but with the same criteria* in line 1.

As observed in the aforementioned cases, contradictions in the second phase of the negotiating fragment vary in their degree of directness, ranging from the most direct, unmitigated formats generally introduced by the negative dissent particle *no* to more indirect, though still forceful, disagreement prefaced by partial agreement, justifications or counterproposals. As demonstrated, in all these cases dissent is sometimes reinforced by other linguistic devices such as syntactic parallelism and lexico-semantic repetition or substitution. Apart from these politic instantiations of dissent, more polite instances were detected during the negotiating fragment, as will be shown in the following section.

### 5.2.1.1.3 Polite Utterances – Low force

Some of the contradicting tokens found in the second phase of the negotiating fragment might be interpreted as polite due to the fact that interactants attempt to mitigate the force of this discursive strategy by means of a wide range of syntactic and lexico-semantic attenuating devices. In doing so, speakers seem to be oriented towards expanding the space for dialogistic divergence, making allowances for alternative viewpoints and valuing diverging positions in the ongoing colloquy. Extract (17) below will help demonstrate the hedging effect that contradictions may have.

(17)  
 A: but we have the Board looking at us and scrutinizing every penny we spend and... uh we do really have to lower the costs in the short term we should lower the costs and I don't see any other option maybe /  
 B: It's just costs /  
 A: *I agree that it's not only costs/*  
 B: Service I mean/  
 A: as from experience it should be taken into account/  
 B: and it is  
 A: and it is and it is important  
 B: and it should be I mean what gives you long term earnings is basically that I mean trust having the customer trust you, trust your service and I know it is I mean we should be spending some pounds on it I think it's worth it  
 A: (pause) I see a point there but  
 B: Haven't you heard about all the other call centres in India in terms of people rotating there is a high number of rotation among I mean I don't think that would be  
 A: there is rotation but they have a large pool of available people with university degrees, studies with good practices as a market for these services as you may see many American firms are outsourcing call centres to India  
 B: Right but why should we follow everybody else's lead? I mean can't we be different?  
 A: *because It's extreme cost-cutting that we could achieve* you know it's we really have *could we really go below \$6m dollars \$6 m pounds per year?*  
 B: I mean you are right you are right (Roleplay 1)

In (17) speaker A argues that the main reason for moving the call centre to India is to reduce costs since they would not be able to cut costs if they kept it in-house. In doing so, he stresses the fact that cost-cutting is the main priority or concern and indirectly attributes this decision to the Board of Directors, thus distancing himself from what is being reported and opening the space for dialogistic divergence. Speaker B in line 2 accuses A of only focusing on the cost-cutting strategy by saying, *It's just costs*, implicating that the transfer of the call centre is just a matter of costs for the interlocutor, when there are other internal factors affecting the employees that should be taken into consideration. The accusation is accomplished by the use of the EPM *just*, maximising the accusatory remark. On being accused, A, instead of counterattacking, signals dissent with B over the prior claim in quite an indirect way in line 3 by saying, *I agree that it's not only costs*, taking up the interlocutor's previous comment and strategically manipulating it to his own advantage. A manages to avoid direct confrontation by means of the affirmative performative verb *agree* followed by a subordinating clause introducing the adversative viewpoint. In addition, the contradictory remark is further mitigated by means of the EPM *only*, downplaying the effect of the previous accusation. The fact that A did not phrase his comment in a more direct, though still politic, fashion by saying, *I don't agree it's just costs or no, it not just costs* is an indication of his intent to attend to the interpersonal goals of the interaction by restoring harmony and being polite.

Attention to the face needs of the interlocutor is also accomplished by displaying alignment and convergence with B's viewpoints in the subsequent turns 4-11. Along these turns, A aligns with B by acknowledging the rational basis of her argument. This affiliation is achieved by repeating part of the interlocutor's prior utterances in lines 7 and 11. Only after showing convergence and alignment, does A make another attempt to introduce his opposing argument in line 13 by saying, *because it's extreme cost-cutting that we could achieve you know*. Once again, A manages to attenuate the force of his contradiction by means of the EPMs *could* and *you know*, doing supportive facework. Mitigation is also accomplished by the semi-formulaic utterance *could we really go below 6m dollars 6m pounds per year?* in the same line, which sounds like an information-seeking request but in fact expresses disagreement by conveying the negative assertion that *they won't be able to go below 6m pounds if they remain in-house*. This implied negative assertion is evidenced by B's response in the following line *I mean you are right you are right*, aligning with A's indirect epistemic stance. A could have expressed dissent by directly expressing the adversative statement *but we won't be able to go beyond 6m pounds per year* and he would still have remained within the boundaries of the politic behaviour expected in this situation. The semi-formulaic structure is then in excess of what is minimally required and thus constitutes an extra payment to politeness. This sequential disagreement frame can be said to be an instance of what Rowthwell (2000, in Holmes & Stubbe 2003b:55-56) calls 'positive confrontation' in conflict management, i.e. a way of avoiding confrontation and negotiating with the interlocutor through the disagreement to resolve a conflict or achieve consensus among opposing viewpoints. By the repetition of this strategy throughout the disagreement sequence, speaker A has strategically managed to go beyond the politic behaviour expected in the given context, thus paying lip service to politeness. Attention to the face needs of the addressee can also be observed in fragments (18) and (19) below:

(18)

A: You know some many many American companies are relocating some not core businesses to India because they receive you know uh... much more costs and the quality of the service is really good because you are working with skilled professionals and they are graduated and well you know the quality is also important

B: yeah but in order to do that we are are gonna have to fire people

A: Uh ... *I'm not sure because we ...maybe at first not because we may have both services running at the same time and*

B: /but that would increase ... our costs

A: *at the very beginning* yes but later on we *may* move the people that currently is working for you know the call centres to another main business area that we *might* have ... we should like pay more attention to (Roleplay 2).

In (18) speaker A proposes relocating the call centre to India with the intention of cutting costs. In line 2, Speaker B introduces the counterclaim that if they outsourced the call centre, they would be compelled to dismiss some employees. In line 3, A signals dissent with his counterpart in a non-confrontational way. He mitigates the force of the seemingly face-threatening act by expressing uncertainty through the use of *I'm not sure* and by introducing a counterproposal which is linguistically hedged by the EPMs *maybe* and *may*. In doing so, he manages not only to expand the dialogic space for the negotiation of divergent viewpoints but also to contradict his addressee politely. This polite way of responding to opposing viewpoints is also evident in line 5, where A first signals alignment with the interlocutor *at the beginning* yes and then indicates dissent in the form of a counterproposal mitigated by the EPMs *may* and *might*, signalling 'low



probability<sup>8</sup> (Halliday 1981:260). Other Instances of politeness in the expression of contradictions can be observed in extract (19) below:

(19)

B: I think probably we should start I don't know with a survey with some you know the most important customers we have to see what they think not telling them that this is already a decision taken but what would they think or how would they feel if we decided to move the call centre to India for example?

A: *I'm not entirely sure that would be a good idea because it probably would backfire* just letting them know that you are no longer dealing with something that they are buying from you which they are not just buying the service they are buying the whole thing *you know* the obviously the service the safety for their goods or money the customer care in case they have problems I mean the works it's *like* the whole package so *just* letting them know *you know* what we are no longer because this is what they are going to read we are no longer doing the customer part for you *you know* the customer service I don't think that should be done (Roleplay 8).

Here speaker B proposes conducting a survey to find out whether customers would like to have the call centre services provided by an Indian outsourcing company. Speaker A does not agree with his interlocutor but instead of signalling dissent in a direct way, he manages to mitigate it by expressing uncertainty *I'm not entirely sure* in addition to resorting to a number of EPMS such as *probably, just, like* and *would*, attenuating the disagreement and to the use of the cajoler *you know*, building solidarity with the interlocutor. In addition to these downtoning linguistic resources, the lengthy counterclaim explaining the reasons for the initial contradiction helps to reinforce the hedging effect even more. Had speaker A not paid attention to facework, his contradiction would have been framed more assertively and probably more forcefully. This excess in the use of mitigating devices is what makes the contradiction be interpreted as polite, given that such extra payment goes beyond the bounds of the politic behaviour expected in the ongoing interaction.

All in all, it can be concluded that the Argentine speakers of English under study exhibited a preference for directness when voicing their contradictions during the second phase of the negotiating fragment. This may be due to the fact that contradictions in this phase tended to be expressed more directly than indirectly. Three linguistic patterns were detected ranging in their degree of directness: the first signals dissent through the use of polarity markers, the second prefaces the disagreement with partial agreement and the third delays the conveyance of dissent through the use of prior justifications or counterproposals. In some cases, these linguistic strategies were reinforced by other linguistic resources such as syntactic or lexico-semantic parallelism and repetition. This range of directness on the part of the interlocutors cannot be interpreted as impolite behaviour but rather as unmarked politic and appropriate behaviour within the given context. This is based on the grounds that in a business meeting among Argentine business players of equal status, participants do not seem to mitigate their contradictions but rather appear to express their opposing viewpoints quite openly, given that important business decisions are at stake and refraining from expressing overt opposition when necessary may result in the detriment of the company. The results obtained have revealed that during the second phase of the negotiating fragment the speakers pay more attention to the transactional goals of the interaction, concentrating on solving the task at hand, than to the interpersonal side of the communicative event.

Though direct contradictions appeared to be the norm in the second phase, there were a few instances of them that were interpreted as either impolite or polite by the analyst. Impolite contradicting acts were characterised by the use of four linguistic resources. They were high in force, signalling maximised and exaggerated dissent. They indicated disagreement with the interlocutor's prior argument by dismissing it as irrelevant to the discussion at hand. They employed highly accusative and negative propositional content and they exhibited a style that was not appropriate for the given context. In view of this, impolite contradictions were perceived as highly contractive given that they closed the space for dialogistic divergence. Polite contradicting acts, on the other hand, displayed a wide range of EPMS, attenuating the imposition on the interlocutor, helping to maintain harmonious relations, building solidarity and doing collegiality. As a consequence, they were conceived as highly expansive, given that they opened the dialogistic space for the negotiation of alternative viewpoints through the use of such linguistic resources as hedging devices, epistemic modality and attribution, among others.

The overall results obtained have revealed that the contradictions in the second phase of the negotiating fragment are not only impolite face-threatening acts but rather vary in their degree of politeness, moving along a cline from polite, via politic, to impolite. Their dialogistic positioning also ranges from more

8. The modality conveyed through *may* and *might* in this excerpt has also been referred to as 'epistemic modality,' which makes 'judgements about the probability of the truth of the proposition' (Palmer 1990:5).

dialogistically expansive to more dialogistically contractive. Figure 7 illustrates the relationship between the degrees of politeness and engagement:

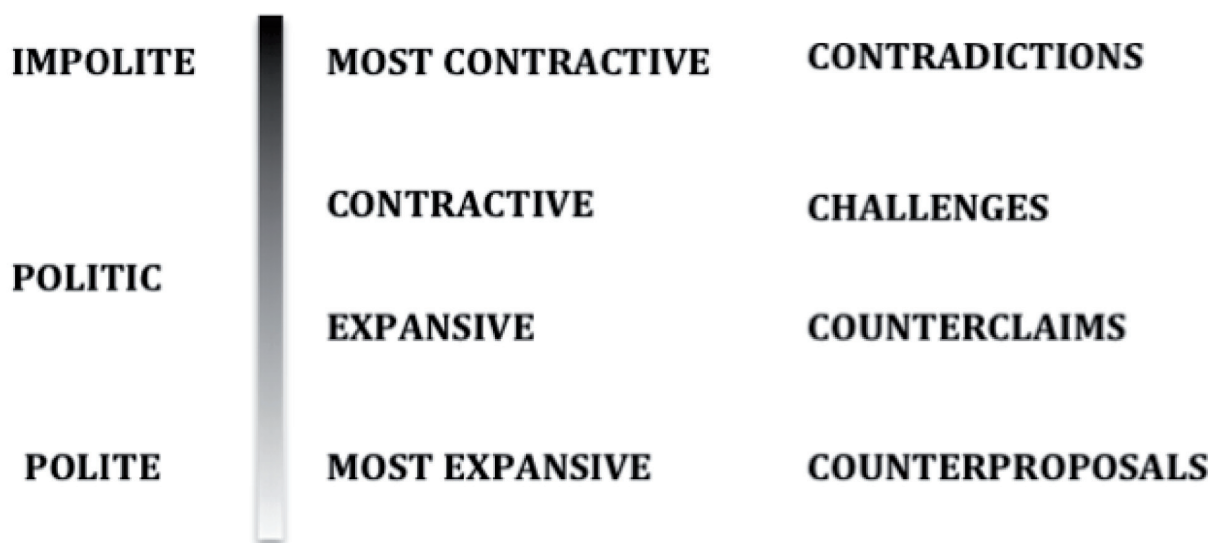


Figure 6. Degree of relational work and dialogistic positioning in contradictions

### 5.2.2 Challenges

Another discursive strategy used by interactants to voice disagreement in the second phase of the negotiating fragment of the business meeting was that of challenges. From a syntactic viewpoint, these expressions can either appear in the form of a declarative or in the form of wh-interrogatives, alternative questions, and polar questions – ye/no questions. From a pragmatic perspective, challenges may perform a number of functions such as expressing strong criticism or accusation of the interlocutor’s prior claim, raising a new point of contention in opposition to the counterpart’s prior argument or questioning the validity or truth-condition of a prior proposition by demanding some kind of explanation for the proposed course of action. This questioning nature apparently inherent in the conveyance of challenges might be regarded as face-threatening given that questions:

either predicate a future action of the addressee and in doing so put some pressure on him to do or to refrain from doing an action, hence infringing on his freedom of action; or they predicate a future action of the speaker and in so doing put some pressure on the addressee to accept or reject, hence incurring a debt or a responsibility for the action done (Tsui 1994:103, in Wang 2006:533).

As Tsui argues, questions may restrict the interlocutor’s action environment by constraining, limiting and ratifying the topic of a response. In view of this, challenges may be said to be dialogistically contractive as much as contradictions appear to be, given that they tend to limit, suppress or even close down the dialogistic space for diverging viewpoints. By the same token, they may be interpreted as impolite behaviour on the grounds that they are face-threatening acts that might hamper the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors. However, as in the case with contradictions, this seemingly inherent face-threatening nature in the expression of challenges does not always seem to be the case in a business setting. In this context, where both transactional and interpersonal goals are negotiated and constructed jointly among the interactants, the same discursive strategy might be considered (in)appropriate at different stages in the business negotiation, depending on what the main focus of the interaction is at that moment -transactional or relational. In view of this, it may be said that challenging tokens in a business setting can be located on a cline ranging from polite, via politic to impolite, depending on how the interactants evaluate the interpersonal impact, force or volume of their utterances and on how contractive or expansive challenging acts are assessed to be.

After conducting a thorough analysis of the use of challenges in the three phases of the negotiating fragment, it was found that most challenges occurred in the second phase (CH2) 69 compared to 13 and 13 challenging tokens that appeared in CH1 and CH3, respectively, as shown in Table 3 below:

Negotiation Event	Challenging tokens
CH 1	13
CH 2	69
CH 3	13

In addition to their high frequency of occurrence in the second phase, where divergent viewpoints are negotiated, challenges were found to be quite polyfunctional, given that they can be classified into three functional categories which I have termed: 'highly contestive,' 'contestive' and 'non-contestive.' Contestive challenges have been further subdivided into 'indirect polemic challenges' and 'direct polemic challenges.' Figure 8 below shows the polyfunctional dynamism found in the manifestation of challenges.

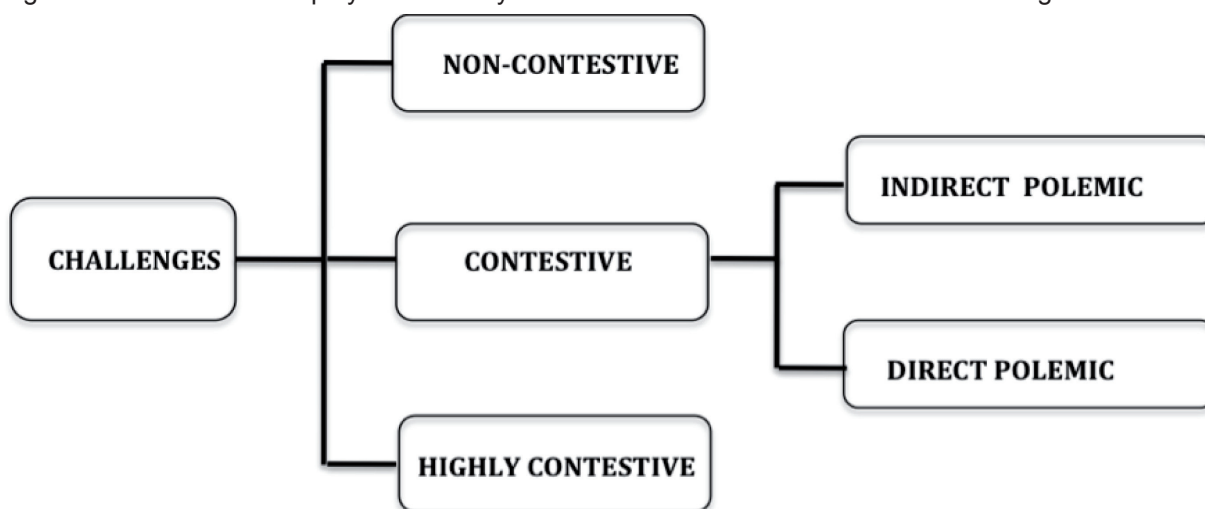


Figure 7. Functional classification of challenging acts

Of the challenging acts falling into the three functional categories mentioned above, some may be interpreted as impolite behaviour damaging the facework between the interactants, others may be regarded as polite behaviour attempting to mitigate the imposition on the interlocutor and the remaining may be assessed as appropriate, politic behaviour complying with the expected norms within the given context. Similarly, some challenging tokens may appear to be more expansive than others, opening the dialogic space for the negotiation of divergent viewpoints rather than limiting or constraining it. In view of this, it is the purpose of the following analysis to attempt to demonstrate which of the aforementioned challenges may be perceived as dialogistically contractive or expansive and which of them may be interpreted as impolite, politic or polite behaviour in the second and longest phase of the negotiating fragment.

### 5.2.2.1 Challenges 2

#### 5.2.2.1.1 Highly Contestive Challenges

Highly contestive challenges appear in an already-established environment of disagreement. These may range from direct and overt accusations or criticisms of the interlocutor's position with the intention of weakening their argument, to claims of irrelevancy with the aim of discrediting or undermining the recipient's viewpoint, to impositions on the counterpart with the aim of restricting their action environment. Accusations and irrelevancy claims are both highly confrontational in that they are geared not only towards damaging the face of the interlocutor but also towards closing the space for dialogistic divergence. In addition to their face-threatening nature, such acts would be deemed inappropriate in a business context among status equals, given that they would function as a vehicle for exerting power over the course of action, thus subverting the status quo and "constitute(ing) a break in the politic behaviour –the routinised forms of linguistic expression- expected in the interaction" (Watts 2003:131). As a consequence, these highly contestive challenges may be interpreted by the interactants as an offence or even as rude or impolite behaviour. In response to these accusatory and dismissing remarks, interlocutors may either accept the

challenge, in which case a counterattack may be launched, or downplay or ignore the challenge to restore the harmony of the communicative exchange. Excerpt (20) below serves as an illustration of a highly contestive challenge, which is interpreted as impolite due to its accusatory nature and its imposition on the interlocutor.

(20)

B: *Is bus / Is business and numbers all you care about? I mean don't you think in the long-term situation? I mean we are an English bank if we keep it at home we will still be focusing on that basis I mean even though India or xxx*

A: I agree with a 100% but we do have a real problem we lost \$1.6 m last year

B: Ok

A: Ok you may argue that the reason for the loss is not related to customer service it's ok

B: exactly

A: It's OK

B: exactly it's just 1.6 within the whole organization

A: but we have the Board looking at us and scrutinizing every penny we spend and... uh we do really have to lower the costs in the short term we should lower the costs and I don't see any other option maybe (Roleplay 1)

In (20) speaker B's rhetorical questions *is bus / is business and numbers all you care about? I mean don't you think in the long-term situation?* in line 1 may be interpreted as highly contestive and, therefore, as impolite, given that B is accusing speaker A of not thinking in the long-term situation and of only being concerned about figures. This direct attack on the interlocutor is accomplished by attributing the negative propositional content to 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun *you*. It is reinforced by the challenging conduciveness of the questions in an already-established environment of disagreement. These questions are examples of what Heinemann (2008:57) calls 'Same Polarity Questions' (SPQs), "designed to receive a confirming answer of the same polarity as that of the question." In other words, they are used to convey the speaker's assertion of the interlocutor's position towards the matter in question. This assertion is inferred by the speaker from information provided by the interlocutor in prior talk. Therefore, in saying, *is business all you care about?*, B seems to be asserting *so all you care about is business* and in *don't you think in the long term?*, the speaker is conveying the negative assertion *you don't think in the long term*. In both cases, B is not only accusing A but is also challenging him to confirm the former's stance and to account for that. In this case, confirmation of B's implied assertions is not only ratified but also highly boosted by means of the phrase *I agree with you a 100%* in line 4. This overt display of alignment on the part of speaker A might be interpreted as an attempt to restore the harmony disrupted by B's preceding accusation. Signs of affiliation can also be observed in the subsequent turns 4-7, in which A seems to be conceding and aligning with B. Only after restoring harmony, does A reassert his prior position, expressing dissent in line 8 *we do really have to lower the costs in the short term*. Owing to A's highly contestive challenge, if B had expressed his position more bluntly, without any signs of concurrence, the challenge would have been further enhanced and the interlocutors' face would have been more damaged, as observed in fragment (21) below, where two highly contestive challenges are displayed: accusations and claims of irrelevancy.

(21)

A: I think we should start profiling them first of all I think we should start profiling them what you said about the culture in India they are extremely smart people they are very willing to work

B: I'm not saying they are not smart I'm just saying that\

A: *!that they don't have the same type of CULTURE*

B: the culture\

A: *!THAT's what you said*

B: well you don't have the same culture because you are in a different country and you have other food other weather \

A: *!well of COURSE\*

B: *!other beliefs\*

A: *!but our customers are not calling to discuss about the menu for the day ok it's about business*

B: well that's that's a direct influence over the overall call

A: Not really it's only if they are willing to make it influenced in the call, they are calling to see the status of their accounts to see when their bills are due *they are not going to call and say hey how's the weather out there*

B: *Come on you told me you know the call centre business*

A: *I DO*

B: *well then you should know that when a person calls is not just simply you know I want to have my account checked\*

A: *!No it's actually I want good service I don't care if \*

B: *!Right and good service and good service implies a good personal treatment*

A: *of COURSE*

B: *so you are saying that we are moving away so there's no more personal interaction*

A: *they are calling*

B: so

A: they are not going to the source they are not going to the banks

B: so

A: so their English is something that is completely coachable again we can have someone sent there three months in advance before the trainers go just to practise English that's not the problem we'll be saving a lot of money [...] (Roleplay 9)

In (21) speaker A attacks speaker B by first contradicting his position by distorting his original wording in line 1 and then latching onto his interlocutor's defence in line 3 and rather forcefully imposing on B his own interpretation or understanding of what the latter said. In uttering, *that they don't have the same type of CULTURE, THAT is what you said*, A is not only manipulating the information so as to accuse B of having said something he actually never meant, but he is also contesting him to confirm his own stance. The highly contestive overtone of A's utterance is achieved by two prosodic features: the contrastive prosodic marking on CULTURE and the high key on the proclaiming intonation contour on THAT. Contestation is further reinforced by displacing the rheme THAT to the left, thus placing the focus on the accusation. Had the speaker opted for the thematisation of the wh-question clause by saying, *what you said is that*, the focus would have fallen on *that*, neutralising the effect of the negative attribution embedded in the accusation. After A's contestation in line 5, B makes an effort to elaborate on his argument by trying to reconstruct his original claim only to be fiercely confronted once again by A's challenge in line 7. In uttering, *well of COURSE* with a proclaiming intonation contour, A quite overtly and assertively dismisses his counterpart's prior justification *because you are in a different country and you have other food other weather* as irrelevant and inappropriate. In doing so, A seeks to undermine the interlocutor's prior claim by pointing at the triviality and superficiality of his argument. This is further accomplished by challenging the interlocutor consecutively over a stretch of discourse with the intention of weakening his position little by little to build up support for his own argument. As observed in line 9, by uttering, *our customers are not calling to discuss about the menu for the day ok?*, A once again manages to prove the irrelevance of his interlocutor's argument quite forcefully. This is achieved by the sarcastic reference to the *menu*, which is a reiteration of an idea that A had already dismissed as irrelevant in line 5, and by the highly patronising intonation contour in the appeler *ok?* Once again, in line 10 B tries to restore the harmony of the interaction by rendering some kind of explanation or justification for his prior argument, which is subsequently contested by A's confrontational remark in line 11 *they are not going to call and say hey how's the weather out there*, satirizing the interlocutor's prior argument and thus threatening his face.

On being constantly confronted by his interlocutor through the use of highly contestive challenges, B counterattacks in line 12 by criticising A for not being able to show a comprehensive understanding of what the call centre business is concerned with. By the utterance *come on you told me you know the call centre business*, B implicates that A is not as conversant with the business as he should be. This criticism is accomplished by the use of the inappropriate appeler *come on*, which poses a threat to the face of the interlocutor. Challenged by this accusation, A contradicts B by stating the opposite in a rather contestive manner through the use of high prosodic marking in *I do* in line 13 — *do* is produced with a proclaiming tone, indicating that the information presented is not given and on a high key, establishing a contrast with the key of the previous utterance (Brazil 1997; Granato 2005). A thus implies that contrary to B's assumption, he is fully acquainted with the business. Faced with this counterattack, B elaborates on his prior argument by pointing to A once more what he should already know by saying, *then you should know that when a person calls is not just simply you know I want to have my account checked* in line 14. The challenging overtone of his utterance is attained by the modal of 'modulation' *should* that expresses 'obligation'<sup>9</sup> (Halliday 1981:260), which imposes the negative propositional content of the utterance on the interlocutor. It is further exacerbated by the downplaying effect that the EPMS *just* and *simply* have in *when a person calls it is not just simply you know I want to have my account checked*, undermining the validity of the argument that A had expressed in line 11.

Further displays of challenges can be observed in line 17, in which A once more signals the triviality of his interlocutor's prior argument by the high key and termination on the proclaiming tone on *COURSE*, implicating that it is obvious that good service means good personal treatment. On being contested, B makes another attempt to prove A wrong. Therefore, in line 18 B takes up his previous argument and contrasts it with A's with the intention of highlighting the irrationality of the latter. This is accomplished by the use of what Steensig and Larsen (2008) call 'you say x questions,' objecting and challenging the grounds for the interlocutor's prior claim. In uttering, *so you are saying they are moving away, so there's no more personal interaction*, B highlights the incongruity in A's previous arguments that if they move to India, they will not be able to provide a personal service any more. In doing so, B not only questions the rationality of the argument but he also shows disalignment and disaffiliation with A (Steensig & Drew 2008). In response, A counterchallenges B by dismissing his prior argument in line 19 and by restricting his action environment, arguing that customers are not going to the bank but they are calling. B makes two attempts

9. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:618) term modulation 'the degree of imperativeness of the proposition.' The modulation conveyed through the modal *should* in this fragment has also been referred to as 'deontic modality,' which is concerned with 'influencing actions, states or events' (Palmer 1990:6).

to regain the floor in lines 20 and 22 but fails due to the fact that A restricts his action environment once more in line 23, wherein he proceeds to reinforce his prior claim by providing more sustainable grounds.

This rather lengthy excerpt representing frequent occurrences in the corpus shows that highly contestive challenges may range from criticisms or accusations of the interlocutor's prior argument to claims of irrelevancy, attempting to discredit and undermine the interlocutor's position by dismissing their contribution as irrelevant to the topic under discussion. Both accusations and claims of irrelevancy may result in attacks between the interlocutors and, therefore, in damage to one another's face. These attacks may both be interpreted as impolite behaviour given that A does not only criticise B but also calls his competence and rationality into question. These accusations may also be perceived as maximally contractive given that they are geared towards suppressing the dialogic space for the negotiation of opposing viewpoints. Similar instances of highly contestive irrelevancy claims can also be observed in fragment (22) below, in which challenges appear in a declarative and question format:

- (22)  
 B: but who would control data privacy? I don't know just in terms of control because I'm willing to keep the service for providing here I mean I don't want things to change or ...  
 A: it's even safer to have the  
 B: *how come?*  
 A: to have the call centre in India  
 B: *I'm not quite comfortable with it*  
 A: Oh you should be you know what interests  
 B: *sell me the whole idea*  
 A: what interests could an Indian guy gain in handling information from people that are millions of miles away?  
 B: *I don't know you tell me I think they would*  
 A: I think it's more interesting I don't know I see it as a more interesting for I don't know some university student  
 B: yeah but felony happens everywhere  
 A: around here  
 B: felony happens everywhere whether you are in the UK or even in India  
 A: So we are in the same place  
 B: *so?*  
 A: any choice any option we take is the same (laugh) (Roleplay 1)

In (22), by means of the contestive question *how come?* in line 3, speaker B questions the relevance and validity of speaker A's prior claim by hinting that there are no sufficient grounds for ensuring that in terms of data privacy, transferring the call centre to India would be safer than keeping it in-house. This idea is echoed by the phrase *I'm not quite comfortable with it* in line 5 and further reinforced by the following challenging remark *sell me the whole idea* in line 7, inciting A to provide sustainable evidence for his claim. Challenged by B, A makes an attempt to sustain his prior argument by posing the rhetorical question *what interest could an Indian guy gain in handling information from people that are millions of miles away?* in line 8, implying that data control would not be a problem in India. B, however, ignores A's assertion embedded in the question and treats it as an information-seeking question. In answering it, B challenges A once more by responding, *I don't know you tell me I think they would* in line 9. In this case the challenging overtone is accomplished by the contestive threat *you tell me*, daring the interlocutor to provide more solid grounds for his claims. Once the grounds for the previous argument have been introduced in line 10, B repudiates them quite assertively by reiterating her counterclaim *but felony happens everywhere* in lines 11 and 13, thus incrementing the force of her argument and weakening her interlocutor's. On being confronted with another objection, A makes another attempt to explain the logical argument behind his claim only to be challenged once more by B's contestive *so?* in line 15, hinting at the irrelevance of the argument. Finally, A unfolds the support for his argument in line 16, revealing the relevance of his viewpoint and restoring the harmony of the interaction by managing to mitigate the logical basis of his argument with an intonation contour that sounds humorous when saying, *any choice any option we take is the same*. In this case, as Holmes and Stubbe (2003a:135; Marra 2007) argue, humour serves as an excellent discursive strategy "to reduce tension, to manage potential conflict and to contribute to the management of problematic situations." A similar case of impoliteness can be observed in excerpt (23) below:

- (23)  
 A: This is ok I'll take that concern and I'll explain how we can deal with that. These guys are specialised in providing services to different regions so they have a very highly specialised people. They even have language classes [...] And also what we can have is a better service a fast service that this is something we are looking for  
 B: *How is that?*  
 A: How is that? Because you have people that is 100% educated to the call centre stuff. They are not doing any other businesses other than picking up the phone and providing the customers with the specific information they need. [...] (Roleplay 7)

In (23), by means of the highly contestive question *how's that?*, speaker B dismisses speaker A's prior justifications as irrelevant and demands more sustainable evidence for the claims made. Stunned by the challenging question, A, rather than launching a counterattack, makes an attempt to align and affiliate with B by first echoing the face-threatening act and then proceeds to reinforce his arguments by providing more solid grounds. This repetition of B's challenging remark may be interpreted as an attempt on the part of A to show affiliation or solidarity and to restore the harmony disrupted by B. A similar case can be observed in extract (24) below, exhibiting an instance of imposition on the interlocutor's action environment.

(24)

A: OK *Are you worried about the service itself or not? Because I'm not*

B: *well yes you know I mean perhaps I don't know a native speaker is more welcome than one that is not I mean you know how English customers are they want to keep things at their house and to manage everything within the same community and I believe it's a big step further on our company and we need to discuss that a little bit more* (Roleplay 6)

Here speaker A, rather than asserting her position, uses an alternative question as a vehicle for expressing her opposing viewpoint - *I'm not worried about the service* - in a more indirect fashion. However, in spite of the indirectness and mitigating effect of the alternative question, this is perceived as a challenge by speaker B. By adding the negative element *or not?* to the alternative question and by subsequently expressing the negative statement *because I'm not*, A imposes her viewpoint as the only alternative to be taken into account. Had A avoided the negative epistemic stance at the end of the question by just saying, *are you worried about the service itself?*, she would have been heard as uttering an information-seeking request, thus making allowances for the negotiation of alternative viewpoints. The fact that A decided to close this dialogistic space by imposing her viewpoint over the interlocutor's and by infringing upon B's action environment is what renders the utterance impolite. This negative assessment is further evidenced by B's highly hedged response, attempting to weaken his previous argument with the intention of restoring the harmony of the interaction. This is accomplished by the repetition and excessive use of the EMPs *well, you know, I mean, perhaps, I don't know, a little bit*, attenuating the justification for his prior claim with the aim of avoiding further confrontation. So far, we have seen instances of highly contestive challenges that have been counterattacked by the addressee as in fragment (21) or that have been toned down in an attempt to avoid confrontation and restore harmonious relations between the participants, as in examples (22), (23) and (24). Excerpt (25) below shows the use of highly contestive challenges that are ignored.

(26)

B: no I think we have to evaluate all issues but I think that if we keep the call centre in-house maybe using more part-time employees or reducing the employees here we have a personal service and we have built a relationship with the customers and we still show we are still showing that AB is an English bank

A: I know but with the current situation, with the current panorama we are making customers believe that AB is charging too much for its services and you've mentioned unions if we reduce their time or we have a great turnover of people we will have we will face the same problems keeping the call centres in England or moving to India. If you want to reduce time or to increase part-time employees

B: yeah

A: you will have to fire

B: reduce hours or

A: reducing hours

B: I don't know

A: we will face the same problems with the unions the cost is going to be the same and we'll keep uh *how do you expect to save by keeping the call centres in England?*

B: Ok

A: *How much do you expect?*

B: I think it's not a non-important thing to talk with the Human Resources area and figure that out about all the union staff. I really want to know if the quality of the service will be as good as it is here there in India (Roleplay 4)

Here speaker B proposes using more part-time employees to reduce costs and to be able to keep the call centre in-house. In line 2, speaker A expresses dissent arguing that if they reduced the employees' working hours, they would have to face problems with the trade union, given that they would be compelled to fire some people. B insists on keeping the call centre in the present location by reducing the hours of the business in line 5. Confronted with B's insistence, A once again reasserts his prior position in line 8 by saying, *we will face the same problems with the unions* and then challenges his interlocutor to provide more grounds to sustain her claim. This contestation is realised through the question *how do you expect to save by keeping the call centres in England?* in line 8 and its reinforcement in line 10 *how much do you expect?* These questions are perceived as challenges and are negatively assessed by B, who unable to defend herself, refrains from responding in line 9 and provides a non-answer in line 11, referring back to a point of contention she had raised before. In this way not only does B manage to protect her face but she also manages to avoid further confrontation.

As demonstrated by the aforementioned examples, highly contestive challenges may convey criticism or accusation of the interlocutor's viewpoint, they may undermine his/her prior claims by dismissing them as irrelevant to the discussion at hand or they may impose on the addressee by limiting or suppressing their action environment. In all these cases, these challenges have been perceived as impolite and highly contractive due to their face-threatening nature. However, not all recipients responded to them in the same way. Some launched a counterattack, and in so doing, exacerbated the confrontation between the interlocutors, leading to face loss. Others made an attempt to avoid further conflict and to restore harmonious relations by either backing down or by ignoring the challenge and treating it as non-answerable.

### 5.2.2.1.2 Contestive challenges 2

In the previous section we focused on the realization of highly contestive challenges that may be interpreted as impolite and highly contractive in a business setting due to their face-threatening and confrontational effect. This section will examine the manifestation of the second category of challenging acts, 'contestive challenges.' These challenges were all realised in the form of wh-questions or polar questions – either what Heinemann (2008) terms 'Same Polarity Questions' (hereafter called SPQs) or what Koshik (2002) refers to as 'Reversed Polarity Questions' (hereafter called RPQs) - and were most frequently found in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, where diverging viewpoints and arguments were evaluated and negotiated between the participants. Their high frequency of occurrence in this section may be due to the fact that during the negotiation event, business players are expected to raise points of contention or to question their interlocutor's position in order to be able to assess the feasibility or viability of the proposed course of action.

As Koshik (2002, 2003) argues, these questions may be perceived as challenges rather than mere information-seeking questions due to two contextual features: the questioner's strong epistemic stance and the already-established environment of disagreement in which these questions occur. However, these challenges cannot be interpreted as impolite behaviour in a business context given that they serve as vehicles for performing and accomplishing institutional goals. This is also the case of one-to-one student-teacher writing conferences, where questioning is employed for "criticis[ing] portions of a student text, diagnos[ing] problems and suggest[ing] solutions," thus serving as a vehicle for attaining pedagogical goals (Koshik 2002:1875). Koshik argues that by means of RPQs teachers manage to "[elicit] student performance and [assist] students to perform beyond their level of competence" (2002:1875). This role of questioning as an institutional practice in writing conferences forms part of what Watts calls the 'latent network,' i.e. modes of behaviour that individuals have acquired through their own histories of social practice in this kind of interaction. Questioning can then be said to be part of the objectivised forms of behaviour that are expected in this type of communicative event.

In business negotiations, questioning may also be perceived as an institutional discursive practice that interactants have incorporated to their latent network through past experience in similar situations. This practice may be regarded as an expected form of behaviour used by participants to express dissent with their interlocutor's position by either raising a point of contention in opposition to a prior argument or by conveying a veiled negative epistemic stance requesting an account for a prior claim (Tracy & Robles 2009). By questioning their interlocutors and demanding sustainable grounds for their position, managers ensure that the proposed course of action has been thoroughly evaluated and assessed, that all the potential drawbacks have been taken into consideration and that the final decision will be based on solid grounds. In other words, by the use of challenges as a discursive strategy to discuss business issues, managers comply with their institutional role of ensuring the well-being of the company. In view of this, it can be said that most of the challenges appearing in the second phase of the negotiating fragment may be interpreted as unmarked, politic, appropriate behaviour within the given context. This may be due to two reasons: the implicit acceptance of these acts as forms of expected behaviour on the part of the interactants and the institutional practice that these challenges perform. These contestive challenges can be divided into two subcategories: 'indirect polemic challenges' and 'direct polemic challenges.' In the following subsection, these occurrences will be discussed.



### 5.2.2.1.2.1 Indirect polemic challenges

'Indirect polemic challenges' are those challenges which appear in an already-established environment of disagreement and that raise a new point of contention that might have not been taken into consideration. Unlike 'direct polemic challenges,' which focus on the interlocutor's prior argument by directly challenging its grounds, indirect challenges do not problematize or question the content of the interlocutor's prior claim directly but rather introduce a new potentially polemic argument for discussion into the negotiation. In the data these challenges were realised in the form of questions prefaced by what Watts calls semi-formulaic phrases such as *what about ...?* and *have you thought about ...?* or by polar questions, including RPQs and SPQs. These questions introduce an aspect that might be perceived as a drawback if the prior proposed course of action is taken. In uttering them, speakers do not seek information or invite answers but they actually express a disguised negative assertion. In reply to the implied assertion embedded in the question, respondents may orient to these questions differently, by denying the challenge, by aligning with the challenger or by accepting the challenge but expressing their reservations. Excerpt (26) below illustrates the use of these challenges.

(26)

B: The employees are very well skilled there. As I told you they are university graduates. So I think they have the knowledge

A: but the money that we will have to pay to them is gonna be high too because if they are coming from universities

B: No it is not. It's cheaper

A: It is still cheaper there?

B: yeah actually it's cheaper and we only have to prepare them with a profile to service as a bank not as for example a trial company.

A: I see *what about the unions?* Because the unions they are not going to be happy about that for example we are gonna have just to fire a lot of people from England to hire people in India and well we are gonna have a lot of problems with the unions.

B: Well that is a risk we have to take but we have to take some risk you know. There is always a risk to take, it won't be

(Roleplay 15)

In (26) speaker B had in the previous turns argued that transferring the call centre to India would be cheaper due to the low wages they would have to pay. Speaker A, having contested that viewpoint in line 2 *yeah but the money we will have to pay to them is gonna be high* and again in line 4 *is it still cheaper there?*, raises a new point of contention in line 6. This is accomplished by the semi-formulaic question *what about the unions?* followed by the reasons for introducing such contention. By means of this indirect polemic challenge, A, rather than seeking information, conveys a veiled negative assertion that conflicts with B's original proposal. This indirect assertion is further evidenced by the enhancement clause of reason giving an account for the challenge *because the unions they are not going to be happy about that*. According to Koshik (2003:64), these accounts "fit semantically with the implied negative assertion" conveyed by the question, which means that the implied assertion in *what about the unions?* is expressed more directly by the subsequent enhancement clause of reason *the unions are not going to be happy about that*. By latching an account onto the question, A is not heard to invite answers to the question but rather asserts his viewpoint and expresses dissent in a politic way. In this case, the challenge is partially accepted by B, who expresses her reservations in line 7 by saying, *well that is a risk that we have to take*. A similar case can be observed in fragment (27) below:

(27)

B: there's one more thing we should think about which is *what about the confidentiality of our data you know?* Because I don't think you know this is a bank so all the information that we have here from the customers is really confidential and noone wants that information to go out so we would really need to think about what is going to happen with that [...] I don't know it's just information going out of the country out of the bank to a different company so who knows what can happen if that information gets in the wrong hands I don't know if people would be comfortable with that

A: In that case I would not just hire a regular call centre I think I'd have to choose a company which is which has this security levels and perhaps certified in dealing with those two areas you know [...](Roleplay 8)

Here speaker B introduces another point of contention by the semi-formulaic question *what about the confidentiality of the data?* in line 1. Once more, the speaker does not ask a real question but asserts that they might have problems with data privacy if the call centre is transferred to India. This indirect polemic challenge is further reinforced by the enhancement clause of reason following it. Only after mitigating the dissent with a prior justification, does B make an explicit reference to her counterargument by saying, *who knows what can happen if that information gets in the wrong hands I don't know if people would be comfortable with that* at the end of line 1. In response to the implicated assertion, A displays alignment with B by elaborating on the contentious point in the following line. Once again, by means of an indirect polemic challenge, B manages to express disagreement in an appropriate and politic way. Another instance of unmarked, politic challenges can be observed in extract (28) below:

(28)

B: Yes, I agree with you on that point but *have you thought about the unions?* I mean they could protest or I mean they could have some problems with I mean if they find out that we are going to give their jobs to people from a third world country that would be like a mess in that area and I don't know about you think but I don't want to deal with that\

A: /No\

B: /that situation\

A: No I don't want to deal with unions but I think that we should talk with the legal department to see (Roleplay 6)

In (28) speaker B raises a new point of contention through the indirect polemic challenge *have you thought about the unions?* in line 1. By means of this semi-formulaic question, B points out that they should take the trade unions into consideration, given that they might have problems if English people were to be replaced by Indian employees. This assertion, couched in the form of a question, is further supported by the subsequent paraphrases introduced by the discourse marker *I mean*, stating more overtly what the actual objection consists of. Finally, the expression of disagreement is explicitly realised at the end of the line through the phrase *I don't want to deal with that* (the unions), which is immediately latched by the interlocutor's alignment, acknowledging the point of contention. A similar case can be observed in fragment (29) below:

(29)

A: you know what I'm sorry sorry to interrupt. *Have you thought about data privacy?* I'm not sure India does have a disclosure agreement on data privacy. [...] I've found from some of the banks that some of the services that they provide as customer services cannot be provided from India because of data privacy issues.

B: well actually I didn't check on that. That will have to be checked but if there are a lot of external companies from many countries that are going to India and a lot of IT and financial companies and they care a lot about data privacy so I don't think we will have a problem with that [...] I'm confident that they will have some kind of data privacy program or policy or anything that could help us protect all our data and all our information. (Roleplay 13)

In (29), after discussing some issues related to the terms that should be specified in the contract if the call centre were to be outsourced, speaker A introduces his contentious argument by the indirect polemic challenge *have you thought about data privacy?* in line 1. Once again, by means of this semi-formulaic question, A indirectly expresses the negative assertion that he believes that India does not have a disclosure agreement, which might be a problem if they outsourced. This implied assertion is not only echoed by the subsequent claim *I'm not sure India does have a disclosure agreement on data privacy* but it is also reinforced by the following enhancement clause of reason, providing further grounds for the claim made. In this case, B seems to align with A at first but then expresses his dissent quite assertively by affirming, *I'm confident that they will have some kind of data privacy program* at the end of line 2.

So far we have analysed examples of indirect polemic challenges introduced by the semi-formulaic phrases *what about?* or *have you thought about?* (30) below illustrates an indirect polemic challenge in the form of SPQ.

(30)

B: *Haven't you heard about all the other call centres in India in terms of people rotating?* There is a high number of rotation among I mean I don't think that would be

A: there is rotation but they have a large pool of available people with university degrees, studies with good practices as a market for these services as you may see many American firms are outsourcing call centres to India (Roleplay 1)

Here speaker B expresses dissent through the use of the SPQ *haven't you heard about all the other call centres in India in terms of people rotating?* As Heinemann argues (2008:57), these questions "are designed to receive a confirming answer of the same polarity as that of the question." B does not pose a real question but rather indirectly asserts that speaker A has not taken into consideration the fact that there is high staff turnover in call centres in India. This assertion is expressed more directly by the subsequent declarative sentence in the same line *there is a high number of rotation*, reinforcing the previous claim. In view of the conduciveness of the challenging question towards a confirming answer of the same polarity as that of the question, A first accepts the challenge by conceding that *there is rotation* in line 2 but then introduces a counterargument prefaced by the adversative conjunction *but*. This excerpt shows that by means of an indirect polemic challenge B manages to express disagreement without damaging the face of the interlocutor, thus complying with the polite behaviour expected in the given communicative event. A similar case can be observed in (31) below, where an indirect polemic challenge in the form of a RPQ is produced.

(31)

B: and *don't you think we are going to have problems with the time zones?* Such as time differences

A: Yeah I think we might have some problems but maybe if we can have different time schedules for employees not a fixed time schedule since we may have the employees working different... you know (Roleplay 2)

In (31) speaker B expresses dissent with A's position of transferring the call centres to India. This is accomplished by means of the RPQ *don't you think we are going to have problems with the time zones?* in line 1. According to Koshik (2003:70), these questions are perceived as challenges to the interlocutor's position because they are produced in an already-established environment of disagreement. She also adds that they "are treated as assertions of the opposite polarity to that of the question, rather than as ordinary information-seeking questions." In (31) B's RPQ is used to convey the speaker's stance or implied assertion that *they are going to have problems with the time zones* if they outsource to India. This disguised assertion is confirmed by A, who first expresses concurrence with the prior argument in *yeah I think we might have some problems* and then introduces a counterproposal to provide a solution. Fragment (32) below shows a similar case.

(32)

B: But *do you positively think that an Indian guy can establish can build a relationship a strong relationship with the customer?* or it is only

A: yeah I do believe because they are highly trained people. They are trained in how to make a relationship how to build for a example if we are directing the sales account xxx in this call centre I think they can highly train they can be highly trained in the specific skill [...] so I strongly believe that this is something that can be done (Roleplay 7)

Here speaker B disagrees with A over transferring the call centre to India by means of the indirect polemic positive interrogative *do you positively think that an Indian guy can establish can build a relationship a strong relationship with the customer?* Once more, rather than seeking information, B indirectly asserts, *I think that an Indian guy can't build a strong relationship with the customer*. In this case the conducive question is accomplished by the presence of the linguistic adverb *positively*, which like *really*, is biased towards a negative response (Quirk et al. 1985)<sup>10</sup>. In this particular case, the indirect challenge is denied by A in line 2, who quite forcefully reasserts his viewpoint by affirming, *yeah I do believe* at the beginning of his turn and reinforces his claim by saying, *I strongly believe that this is something that can be done* at the end of it.

As demonstrated, the interactants in this study resort to the use of indirect polemic challenges to raise points of contention that their interlocutors might not have contemplated. By doing so, the participants not only comply with their institutional goals but also adhere to the politic behaviour expected in the business negotiation. We have also seen that these challenges can be denied, as in fragment (32), partially accepted, as in (26), (29) and (30) or acknowledged by the interlocutors, as in excerpts (27), (28) and (31).

Having explored the use of indirect polemic challenges, the following section will focus on the realisation of direct polemic challenges in the second phase of the negotiating fragment.

### Direct polemic challenges

'Direct polemic challenges' are those that appear in an already-established environment of disagreement and that focus on the interlocutor's prior position by challenging its grounds and requesting some kind of explanation or support for the prior claim. Through these challenges, speakers convey a negative epistemic stance, i.e. they produce a negative assertion, implying that the grounds provided are unsustainable. In the data, these direct challenges mostly appeared in the form of wh-questions, which were sometimes accompanied by accounts providing the grounds for the challenge. As Koshik (2003:68) argues:

These accounts can be used as increment-like utterances, latched onto the wh-question, and fitted grammatically and semantically to the implied negative assertion, rather to the question form of the utterance.

By latching accounts to the wh-questions, interactants may convey the idea that they are not inviting answers but rather that they are making a statement. In response to these implied statements, interlocutors may react differently, by accepting the challenge, denying the challenge or even by counterchallenging. Fragment (33) below will illustrate the use of direct polemic challenges.

10. According to Quirk et al., "Do you really want to leave now?," a grammatically affirmative question, is conducive towards a negative answer and "Hasn't the boat left yet?," a grammatically negative question is oriented towards a positive answer. Quirk argues that in these examples, the polarity reversal seems to be influenced by elements of the question design, being these the intensifier "really" in the former question and the positive polarity item "already" in the latter.

(33)

A: I guess that great the I mean best solution here is to reduce their shifts to improve their performance for them to take I mean as many calls as possible

B: but *how can you how can you make them improve their performance improve their English improve their customer care service their customer care*

A: *skills?*

B: *skills if you are going to reduce their shift?* It's like you are taking a lot out of them and you are not giving anything. You are even asking more from them so I don't think that that would work

A: I mean I guess this is a matter of setting up goals I mean if you set them goals such as a certain amount of calls per hour I mean

B: yes but you have to pay for that with the same if you give me the same salary the same amount of money I won't work more I don't think that I will work more

A: but less hours you will work better less hours you will get the same amount of money and you will improve your performance

B: *Where where how do we save money then?*

A: because we are reducing some other extra bonus payments such as night shifts such as overtime those fees will be totally reduced while planning or forecasting the calls. (Roleplay 16)

In (33) speaker B expresses dissent with A's prior proposal by means of the question *how can you how can you make them improve their performance improve their English improve their customer care service their customer care skills if you are going to reduce their shift?* in line 2. Through this wh-question, B not only implies the negative assertion that *employees won't improve their performance if their shifts are reduced* but she also challenges the grounds for A's prior claim. This assertion is reinforced by providing an account for the statement underlying the question in line 4 *you are taking a lot out of them and you are not giving them anything*. Confronted with the contestive question, A attempts to provide further grounds for her prior argument in lines 5 and 7, claiming that employees would work fewer hours, be paid the same amount of money and, therefore, they would improve their performance. Not still convinced, B challenges the interlocutor's claims once more in line 8 by saying, *how do we save money then?* By means of this question, B conveys the negative assertion that *they will not be able to cut costs if those measures are taken*. This challenge is once again accepted by A, who provides more solid grounds in line 9. A similar case can be observed in (34) below:

(34)

A: but you don't know how many customers we will lose because of this movement and there's no way you could know before making an extensive study about it

B: Ok let's just pretend just for a second that our studies come up and say that if you move your call centre to India you are going to lose me as a client ok so *what do you do? How do you reduce your costs in a good way in a good gap and not lose these customers?* I mean you keep the call centre here right because you are going to lose customers if it moves to India because of the accent that I understand but if you keep the call centre here *how are you going to do to reduce these costs?*

A: That's what I was talking about you know hiring part-time employees you know find a balance between stuff but you know it's to do the right thing for the bank [...] (Roleplay 10)

Here speaker B disagrees with A over keeping the call centres in-house. This is accomplished by the hypothetical scenario B creates in line 2 and by the contestive questions *what do you do? How do you reduce your costs in a good way in a good gap and not lose these customers?* and their reiteration *how are we going to do to reduce these costs?* at the end of the line. Through these wh-questions, B conveys the negative assertion that *they will not be able to cut costs if they keep the call centre in the present location* and at the same time manages to challenge A by demanding some kind of explanation. This explanation is in turn provided in line 3, where A reasserts his previous argument claiming that that solution would be for the well-being of the company. Fragment (35) below displays a similar use of direct polemic challenges.

(35)

A: there is rotation but they have a large pool of available people with university degrees, studies with good practices as a market for these services as you may see many American firms are outsourcing call centres to India

B: Right *but why should we follow everybody else's lead? I mean can't we be different?*

A: because it's extreme cost-cutting that we could achieve (Roleplay 1)

Here speaker B expresses dissent with A by means of the direct polemic questions *why should we follow everybody's lead? can't we be different?* in line 2. The second question can be said to be a continuation of the first wh-question given that it could have been framed *why can't we be different?* Through these wh-questions, B focuses on A's prior claim that *many American companies are outsourcing call centres to India* and challenges its grounds by conveying the negative assertion that *they shouldn't follow everybody's lead and that they can be different*. This assertion is reinforced by the use of the modal of modulation *should*, imposing the speaker's viewpoint over the interlocutor's. Faced with this challenge, A proceeds with a reinforcement of his prior claim in line 3 and provides further grounds by saying, *because it's extreme*

*cost-cutting that we could achieve*, thus accepting the challenge and responding to its demands.

So far we have analysed examples in which the challenges were accepted by the interlocutors, who attempted to account for their claims by providing more grounds. However, challenges can be responded with another challenge, as we can see below.

(36)

A: [...] what we need to do is to I mean to keep the business within our country. It is an English bank and we need to show that to our customers we need to show them that they can trust the same that they already have with the same employees.

B: But the problem is *where are we going to take that money from?* We know we certainly we don't have the money last year we lost a lot of money because of wrong investments and we cannot count on that money because we don't have it. We certainly should take most of the call centres out I know that the culture is different but anything can be taught and they can learn bear in mind that they are all graduates university graduates.

A: but you are talking about saving money *but do you think of how much money you will lose just because of all data protection devices that you need to get?* (Roleplay 16)

In (36) speaker B expresses dissent with A's position. The disagreement is conveyed through the direct polemic question *where are we going to take that money from?*, challenging the grounds for A's prior claim on the basis that the reduction of costs would not be sufficient if the call centre were to be kept in-house. This assertion is reinforced by the subsequent account explaining the reasons for the lack of finance and proposing the transfer of the call centre to India to reduce costs. Confronted with this challenging question, A poses another challenge to B's prior proposal by means of the reversed polarity question *do you think of how much you will lose because of all the data protection devices that you need to get?* in line 3. Through this question, A not only manages to respond accordingly but also conveys his position on the issue.

The fragments above presented challenges that not only focus directly on the content of the interlocutor's prior argument but also question its grounds, which is why they have been called direct polemic challenges. By drawing on these challenges to question and assess business proposals, the participants not only perform their institutional role but also comply with the politic behaviour expected in a business context. Having then examined instances of highly contestive challenges and contestive challenges –indirect polemic and direct polemic challenges- I will explore the use of 'non-contestive challenges' in the following section.

### 5.2.2.1.3 Non-contestive challenges

In contrast to highly contestive and contestive challenges, 'non-contestive challenges' do not question the grounds for the interlocutor's prior position in a confrontational manner but rather disguise the speaker's objection in the form of a different speech act: a request asking for the interlocutor's opinion. In doing so, speakers not only manage to mitigate or attenuate their discordant position but they also discharge responsibilities as regards the content of their request by eliciting a response from the interlocutor who will have to reconsider his prior position or give more reasons to hold it. Thus, speakers present themselves as opening or expanding the dialogic space for the negotiation of alternative viewpoints. It was found that in the second phase of the negotiating fragment these questions were generally accompanied by what Watts (2003) calls semi-ritualised prefaces such as *do you feel ...? do you think ...? or do you know ...?* inquiring about the interlocutor's belief on the matter and serving as rhetorical devices to hedge the speaker's implied assertion. In view of this, it can be said that non-contestive challenges may be interpreted as polite utterances given that by means of these hedging semi-formulaic prefaces, speakers seek not only to protect their own face but also to attend to the face needs of the interlocutor by not restricting their action-environment. This is the case of fragment (37) below.

(37)

B: and *do you think that people there in India will learn about all the bank production and things that we have here as well as we could do?*

A: Of course they can do that of course they have to learn a little bit about our culture probably but they are used to do because there's a lot of call centres in India [...] we just need to give them some training materials explain them what we do set some expectations and goals again they are going to be it's going to be better it's gonna be really cheap and the service is gonna be even faster than what we have here because we have better facilities (Roleplay 18)

In (37) speaker B expresses dissent with speaker A's proposal of transferring the call centre to India on the grounds that Indian employees might not be as well-trained as English employees. Rather than making a direct assertion, B conveys her disagreement through the question *do you think that people in*

*India will learn [...] as well as we could do?* Due to the semi-formulaic preface *do you think*, B manages to couch her dissent in the form of a request asking for an opinion. In this way, B not only protects her own face but also attends to the face needs of the interlocutor by not imposing. By the same token, B manages to distance herself from the responsibility of the content of the utterance, thus making allowances for the negotiation of divergent viewpoints. A similar case can be observed in fragments (38) and (39) below:

(38)

A: mhm I do agree with leaving it in England because of the image I think it's a good idea but I also think that India has very skilled people most of them are university flyers university graduates and *do you know if we have the same skills here as we have in India?*

B: Yes, I agree with you on that point but have you thought about the unions? I mean they could protest or I mean they could have some problems (Roleplay 6)

In (38) speaker A first aligns with B by expressing concurrence with the latter's viewpoint but then introduces the counterclaim that the workforce in India is better trained than in England. This assertion is directly expressed through the claim following the adversative conjunction *but* and is reiterated and mitigated through the non-contestive question *do you know if we have the same skills here as we have in England?* Through this utterance, A indirectly implies that *they don't*, but due to the way it is structured, it sounds as if the speaker were seeking information. The fact that the question is perceived as an assertion rather than as an information-seeking request is evidenced by B's confirming answer *yes, I agree with you* in line 2, ratifying the agreement with A's prior position. Once more, by means of the semi-formulaic rhetorical hedge *do you know*, A manages to pay lip service to politeness and to open the space for dialogistic divergence.

(39)

A: *Do you feel that the personal service is gonna be the same?* For example someone working in England they can make jokes [...] We have to focus on that relationship if they want to make a joke to an Indian guy it's not going to be the same kind of joke [...] if they want to for example ask for a loan it's not going to be the same if they are asking the loan to someone in England because maybe they don't realize the situation of their lives [...]

B: yeah but that's why we have to prepare Indians not only with the knowledge skills but also show them how is the life in Britain you know [...] (Roleplay 15)

In (39) speaker A expresses disagreement with B by framing his discordant position in the form of a request asking for the interlocutor's opinion. Through the utterance *do you feel that the personal service is gonna be the same?*, A disguises his assertion that *the service will not be the same* and discharges responsibilities as regards the content of his request by eliciting a response from the interlocutor who will have to reconsider his prior position or give more reasons to hold it. This implied assertion is supported by the subsequent account in line 1, in which reasons for the claim are given. If the speaker had presented his assertion more directly, he might have lost face if it had been denied. By mitigating his dissent in the form of a request asking for an opinion, he has managed to protect not only his face but also the interlocutor's.

All in all, it can be said that, the Argentine speakers of English in the corpus under analysis resorted to the use of challenges as a discursive strategy to voice disagreement in the second phase of the negotiating fragment. Of the three patterns found in the realisation of this discursive strategy, the speakers exhibited a preference for the use of contestive challenges in its two forms: 'indirect polemic' and 'direct polemic' challenges. 'Indirect polemic challenges' were realised in the form of questions prefaced by such semi-formulaic phrases as *what about ...?* and *have you thought about ...?* or by polar questions, including same polarity and reversed polarity questions. These were used by the interactants to raise a new point of contention that might not have been taken into account by their interlocutors. 'Direct polemic challenges,' on the other hand, were manifested in the form of wh-questions and were employed by the interactants to question the content and challenge the grounds for their interlocutors' prior claim. Both challenges, indirect polemic and direct polemic, were not perceived by the interlocutors as information-seeking questions, but rather as implied negative assertions. This may be due to the fact that they all occurred in an already-established environment of disagreement. Owing to the occurrence of potential conflict in a business negotiation, these challenges were most frequently found in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, where diverging viewpoints and arguments were evaluated and negotiated between the participants. In view of this, it can be said that contestive challenges are not perceived as impolite utterances, but rather form part of the unmarked, politic behaviour expected in a business negotiation among Argentine speakers of English. This may be due to the fact that, during the negotiating fragment, business negotiators are expected to comply with their institutional role by raising points of contention or by questioning their interlocutors' position with a view to assessing the feasibility or viability of the proposed courses of action. By doing so, the business participants may ensure that they have evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of a business solution from every possible perspective.

Though contestive challenges appeared to be the norm in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, there were a few challenging acts that were interpreted as either impolite or polite. Impolite challenges were referred to as ‘highly contestive challenges.’ By means of these, the interactants managed to criticise their interlocutors’ viewpoint, undermine their prior claims by dismissing them as irrelevant to the discussion at hand or impose by limiting or suppressing their action environment. In all these cases, these challenges have been perceived as impolite and highly contractive due to the fact that they were oriented towards closing the dialogic space for the negotiation of alternative viewpoints. Polite challenges, on the other hand, were termed ‘non-contestive challenges’ because they conveyed the speaker’s dissent with the interlocutor in the form of a request for an opinion. In doing so, the speakers did not only manage to mitigate or attenuate their discordant position through the use of a different speech act but they also succeeded in distancing themselves from the propositional content of their requests by eliciting a response from the interlocutor. By means of these semi-formulaic utterances asking for an opinion, the speakers were also able to protect their own face, to attend to the face needs of their interlocutors and to open the space for dialogic divergence, making allowances for the negotiation of alternative viewpoints.

Results have revealed that challenges in the second phase of the negotiation event are not only perceived as impolite face-threatening acts but rather vary in their degree of politeness, moving along a cline from polite, via politic, to impolite, as well as varying in their dialogistic positioning, ranging from more dialogistically expansive to more dialogistically contractive. Figure 9 below summarises these results.

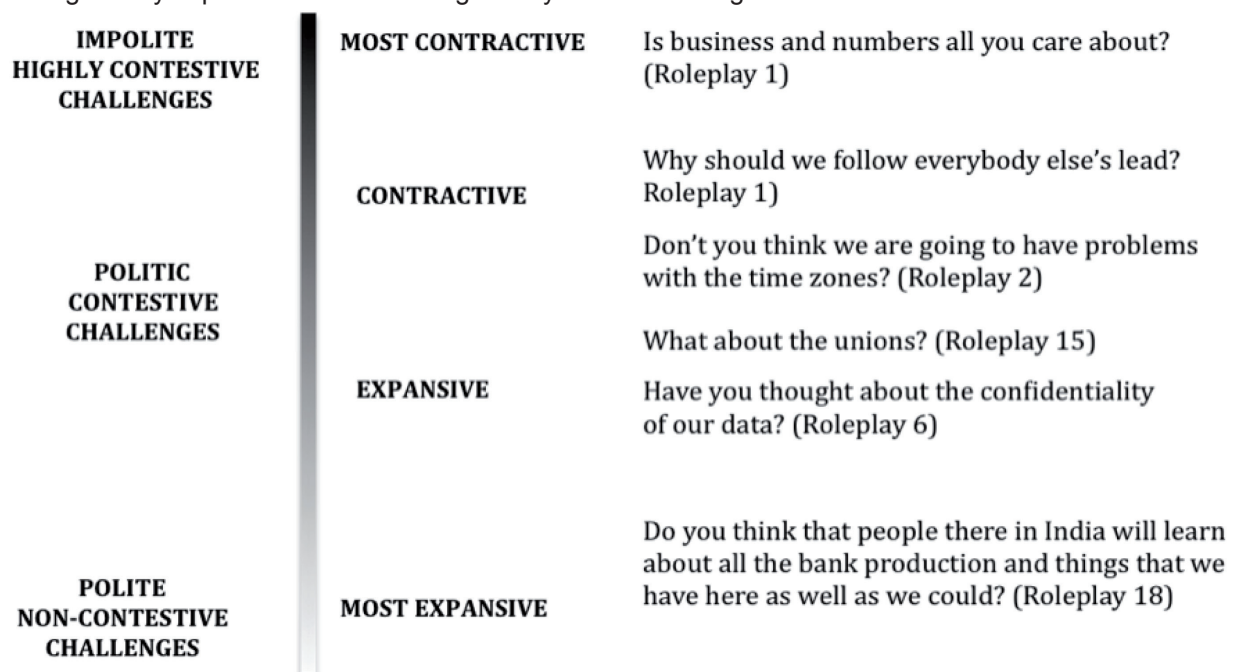


Figure 8. Degree of relational work and dialogistic positioning in challenges

### 5.2.3 Contradictions and challenges 1 and 3

So far we have focused on the use of contradictions and challenges in the second phase of the negotiating fragment and we have concluded that these discursive strategies range in their degree of politeness along a continuum from impolite, via politic to polite as well as varying in their dialogistic positioning from most contractive to most expansive. I will now examine the use of these discursive strategies in the first and last section of the negotiating fragment. I will first explore the use of contradictions and challenges in the first phase of the negotiation fragment, where participants take a stand and introduce their proposals.

In this phase of the negotiation, very few contradicting and challenging acts were detected. This may be due to the fact that interactants are very much inclined to open the space for dialogistic divergence with a view to exchanging and negotiating viewpoints to solve the task at hand. However, interlocutors may approach the beginning of a negotiation differently, depending on the participants’ personal negotiating styles, as the following fragments will attempt to demonstrate. Excerpt (40) presents the use of contradictions in the first phase of the negotiation.

(40)

A: Ok so in this case I *do* believe that the best situation would be to just get an outsource for the services for the call centre services we lost *a lot of* money in this last year and I *do* believe that just keeping the call centres right here is going to waste *a lot of* money *a lot of* time and *a lot of* resources that we could be using to improve the quality of service instead of just having to worry about a call centre that is basically a very hard thing to maintain

B: *No actually I disagree* you are saying that we are going to improve the quality of service but having the call centres moved to India or some other place is gonna lower our quality of service due to many reasons first of all the language you know the English level is gonna be different and customers are going to start you know feeling that you know that the service is not the same

A: *I don't believe that* basically if we are talking about American companies many Americans do have an issue with people that they do not have the same accent we are talking that here we have a completely different situation (Roleplay 9)

In (40) both speakers A and B voice their contradictions quite forcefully. The former conveys his contradiction with his interlocutor's position by means of the negative particle *no*, in turn-initial position, which is reinforced by the booster *actually* and the negative performative verb *disagree*. It may be argued, though, that this confrontational statement has been triggered by the imposing overtone that A exhibited when phrasing his initial proposal, leaving little space for dialogistic divergence. This imposition can be said to be the result of two factors. First, the excessive use of boosting devices such as the repetition of the auxiliary *do*, which emphasises his proposal and the reiteration of the quantifier *a lot of*, which disqualifies his interlocutor's position. The second factor is the fact that A focuses on undermining B's counterproposal rather than on developing his initial proposal. In doing so, A adopts a competitive style of conflict management. This aggressive negotiating style is assessed negatively by B, who repudiates his interlocutor quite bluntly in line 2. However, bearing in mind that this was the beginning of the negotiation, B could have attempted to restore the harmony of the interaction by avoiding the contradiction and opting for a less aggressive discursive strategy to express dissent such as a counterclaim or a counterproposal, thus reverting the confrontational tone of the exchange. This kind of reaction would have been the expected, politic behaviour at the beginning of the negotiating fragment, given that counterclaims and counterproposals occurred in this stage with a mean of 60% compared to a percentage of 5% in contradictions. The fact that B did not resort to a less aggressive negotiating style in this part of the negotiation leads to condemning his behaviour as inappropriate or impolite. This negative assessment is evidenced by A's response in line 3, who having been threatened responds accordingly by saying, *I don't believe that*. The same degree of impoliteness can be observed in (41) below:

(41)

A: we have four proposals and mine is to move our call centres to India. The main reason is [...] we are going to save lots of money, \$5.5 million and I realised that many Americans firms cut costs by outsourcing to India. The other reason is the employees will be very skilled because mostly of them are university graduates.

B: yeah but *what about the personal treatment with the client that we have here? What do you think about that?*

A: In the cost of the contract is included a training for that people [...] sending people from England to India to train all the people so they would be skilled to attend all our customers. And the other reason is that service will be fast and efficient and we are pointing towards saving costs so /

B: *What about the unions in that point you mentioned? Do you know did you know what is going to happen with the unions with the employees over there?*

In India?

B: Yeah I mean to move all the employees from here to there or to have all the employees there. *What about all the employees we have here? What's gonna happen?*

A: Uh this is kind uh this is a problem that is out of our scope. It's a Human Resources

B: yeah I think we have to talk about that with Human Resources area

A: I know but the main reason that the main boy is asking us is to save costs

B: yeah I know but if we are going to have a million dollars in...continuing

A: turnover?

B: no I mean with the lawyers and all that stuff you know I don't know we you have to take into account that problem

A: *So what is your proposal?* (Roleplay 4)

In (41), after speaker A's proposal of transferring the call centre to India, B challenges him by raising two points of contention prefaced by the semi-formulaic phrase *what about...?* in lines 2, 4 and 6. Rather than introducing and elaborating on her counterproposal, B focuses on undermining A's proposal by questioning its grounds. By the use of this sequence of challenges, B opts for a competitive negotiating style, closing the space for dialogistic divergence. However, given that this was the beginning of the negotiating fragment, B could have resorted to a more collaborative negotiating style, opting for a less aggressive discursive strategy to express dissent such as a counterclaim or a counterproposal to avoid direct confrontation. Such discursive strategies would have conformed with the unmarked, politic behaviour expected in this stage of the negotiation, given that these occurred in the data with a mean of 60% compared to a percentage of 35% in the use of challenges. Instead, by the sequence of challenges, B confronts A, making him responsible



for the proposed course of action. This excessive use of challenges is assessed negatively by A, who, after providing grounds to defend himself against the previous challenges, counterchallenges B by urging her to make a proposal by saying, *so what is your proposal?* in line 13.

As mentioned above, the study has revealed that very few interactants make use of challenges and contradictions at the beginning of the negotiation. In fact, this is a resource used by those negotiators who adopt a competitive, or aggressive negotiating style, seeking confrontation rather than collaboration. Among the speakers in our recordings, only 5% and 35% resorted to the use of contradictions and challenges respectively to voice dissent, which is why one may infer that these discursive strategies were perceived by the participants as non-politic, inappropriate behaviour in this part of the exchange. Instead, most participants adhered to the politic behaviour expected, by expressing disagreement through the use of counterproposals and counterclaims, which in this phase of the negotiation, were mostly accompanied by a number of EPMS mitigating the dissent. By means of these two discursive strategies, the interactants adopted a more collaborative negotiating style, lessening the imposition on the interlocutor, avoiding face loss and opening the space for the negotiation of divergent proposals, as observed in the fragment below:

(42)

B: I've been researching and I have found that many US companies are sending their call centres to India. They have lower costs they have a lot of experience and they are university graduates. So I think that is a good way to lower our costs for the call centres so I don't know what you have in mind if you have anything else?

A: yeah actually I thought about that option it does sound interesting but I'm much lenient to keeping these call centres in-house *I know it's a bit more expensive* but you know one of the things that the case study found was that people were a *little bit* reluctant with our service our personalised service so I think that keeping the call centres in-house *might* give them a more *like* homey feel or know that we care about them about them being our customers. Also *you know* ours is a very traditional English bank so I'm a *little bit* reluctant to move the call centres elsewhere people *might* feel that it doesn't belong to their country any more. It's easier if we work here to build *you know* strong relationships with our customers that's why I'm not very comfortable with the option to move them outside of the house *you know* people here know the bank they've been here for (Roleplay 13)

In (42), after speaker B's proposal, A conveys his dissent in line 2 by introducing a counterproposal *I'm much lenient to keeping these call centres in-house*, followed by a number of counterclaims accounting for it. In doing so, A adopts a collaborative negotiating style. This is accomplished by first acknowledging B's position *yeah I thought about that option it does sound interesting* and by then mitigating the subsequent counterclaims. This mitigating effect is achieved by the use of 'self-deprecation' (Pomerantz 1984; Brown & Levinson 1987) in *I know it's a bit more expensive*, admitting something wrong in the proposal in addition to the use of a number of EPMS such as *little*, *a bit*, *I think*, *you know*, *like* and *might*, which serve as linguistic devices to downplay the counterclaims. As a result of these hedging devices, A not only manages to avoid confrontation and to protect his and the interlocutor's face but also manages to open the dialogic space for the negotiation of opposing viewpoints at this stage in the negotiation.

Counterproposals and counterclaims were also found to be the most frequent discursive strategies in the last section of the negotiating fragment, where participants close the negotiation. Contradictions and challenges only appeared at the end of the negotiation with a mean of 10% and 30%, respectively, compared to a percentage of 60% in the use of counterproposals and counterclaims. This may be due to the fact that interactants are very much inclined to accommodate, align and compromise with a view to reaching a positive outcome rather than to diverge and display differences of opinions. Consequently, counterproposals and counterclaims were found to be part of the politic behaviour expected at this stage in the negotiation, due to their downtoning effect if compared with contradictions and challenges, as the following fragments show.

(43)

A: that *could* be a good way to improve *you know* efficiency in *some sort of way* but we won't increase our economically efficiency *that much* but if we keep our image intact we *might* have *you know* some efficiency improvement

B: *maybe* we *can* do something between both like going step by step first having some people for part-time and then starting to move *some little* pieces to India

A: yes we *could* do that or *you know* difficult time schedules working *you know* the call centres are supposed to be working 24 hours so the difficult hours here in England move them to India so that we *might* take a *little* advantage of the time zone (Roleplay 2)

In (43) speaker A expresses dissent with his interlocutor's position through the use of a mitigated counterclaim. Mitigation is accomplished by acknowledging B's prior viewpoint *that could be a way to improve efficiency in some sort of way* and by then introducing the counterargument, which is further downtoned

by the use of *that much*, the EPMS *might* and *some* and the solidarity marker *you know*. In line 2, rather than showing disaffiliation with A's prior claim, B makes an attempt to reach some kind of compromise with A by offering "a position that is between the opposing positions that define the dispute" (Vuchinich 1990:126, in Spencer-Oatey 2002). Instead of yielding to A's position, B moves to the interlocutor's viewpoint and proposes a possible 'middle ground' (Gunthner 2000:233), which is in this case highly hedged. This mitigating effect is achieved by the use of the EPMS *maybe*, *some*, *little*, *can*, all of which serve to attenuate the counterproposal. In response to the proposed compromise, A aligns with B in line 3 by concurring and elaborating on the prior proposal. Like B, A also attends to his interlocutor's face needs by downplaying his response with a number of EPMS such as the low probability modals *could* and *might*, the hedge *a little* and the solidarity marker *you know*, all doing supportive facework, achieving collegiality and expressing solidarity. In this way, the interactants manage to bring the verbal conflict to an end in a collaborative way.

However, not all the speakers adopted this collaborative negotiating style for terminating the negotiation. A few opted for a more competitive and confrontational style, challenging and contradicting each other's viewpoints until the end of the negotiation, as observed in (44) below:

(44)

B: we risked we risked we went for quality and we risked our financial bonus and here we are we have lost \$5m what *how are we going to overcome that?*

A: and *tell me where are we going to get the resources from to train all that people to move all our services or the technical staff?* we are dealing with a lot of things a lot of probably in the long run we will save some money but we need a lot of money to invest there at first.

B: *ok* I'm not quite sure that is the right solution I guess we need to deal with some other I mean we need to have a meeting with some other members of the board

A: Exactly right I totally agree with you

B: because *I don't think that moving abroad would be the solution*. I mean we have heard of several problems on several issues from American companies, haven't we?

A: *I don't think that staying here is the best option either* so I think that we should make another meeting (Roleplay 16)

Here speaker B expresses dissent with A's proposal of keeping the call centre in-house by means of the question *how are we going to overcome that?* in line 1. Through this wh-question, A not only implies the negative assertion that *they won't be able to overcome the financial crisis if they keep the call centre in the present location* but she also challenges the grounds for A's prior claim. Confronted with this challenge, A counterattacks in line 2 with another challenge by saying, *and tell me where are we going to get the resources from to train all that people to move all our services or the technical staff?*. In this case the challenging overtone is accomplished by the contestive phrase *and tell me*, which dares B to provide more solid grounds for her claims. On being challenged by A, B introduces a frame break in line 3 with a view to ending the confrontational frame. The break is marked by the conclusive overtone in the positive particle *ok* introducing the disagreement and the subsequent suggestion that they consult some other members of the board. A orients to this break by aligning with B in line 4 but this alignment is only temporary given that in lines 5 and 6 the interactants stress once more their opposing positions by contradicting each other. The contradiction is achieved by the use of syntactic parallelism through which B's *I don't think that moving abroad would be the solution* contrasts with A's *I don't think that staying here is the best option*. Thus, the negotiation of rapport fails. This is due to the fact that the interactants opted for a competitive and confrontational negotiating style, closing the dialogic space for the negotiation of opposing viewpoints, disregarding collaboration, compromise and alignment. This negotiating style might be perceived as inappropriate and non-politic at the end of the negotiation, given that most interactants attend to the interpersonal side of the interaction by showing signs of accommodation, affiliation and collegiality. This is usually done with the intention of closing the negotiation fragment on a positive note. This may be the reason why the other two contradictions that occurred in the last phase of the negotiation were slightly hedged, as the fragments below show:

(45)

B: move our call centre to third world you know it's a third world country India

A: *Well I wouldn't call a third world India but I understand what you are trying to say.* (Roleplay 7)

(46)

A: This is a test I can't remember the word but this is just gonna be a test if it doesn't work we'll just look into different opportunities and see what we can do about that

B: Is that something that could be done? I mean a three-month test?

A: I think 3 months would be a good period

B: *Is it worth training the people doing those language courses cultural courses and teaching them*

A: a month is more than enough

B: *everything that the bank and all the credits of the bank has? Do you think it's worth for a trial period of 3 months?*

A: considering the amount of benefits that we are going to get out of it I think it's worth the shot definitely  
 B: *Ok I think I would agree to a trial and then we can talk again maybe in three months to see how it worked* (Roleplay 8)

In (45) speaker A hedges his opposing viewpoint to downplay the perlocutionary force that the face-threatening act might have on the interlocutor by means of a number of EPMS such as the discourse marker *well*, the tentativeness expressed through the modal of modulation *wouldn't* that signals 'inclination'<sup>11</sup> (Halliday 1981:260) and the forewarning *I understand what you are trying to say*, attempting to restore harmony. Likewise, in (46) speaker B expresses dissent with A's proposal of transferring the call centre for a trial period of three months. The disagreement is slightly mitigated by the indirect questions *Is it worth training the people doing those language courses cultural courses and teaching them everything that the bank and all the credits of the bank has? Do you think it's worth for a trial period of 3 months?* in lines 4 and 6, attempting to avoid direct confrontation. This attenuating effect can also be observed in line 8, in which B agrees to A's proposed course of action by saying, *I think I would agree to a trial period and then we can talk again maybe in thee months to see how it worked*. Mitigation is accomplished here by means of the EPMS *would*, *can*, *I think* and *maybe*, hedging the propositional content of the utterance.

From the abovementioned evidence, it can be concluded that managers can adopt different negotiating styles when discussing opposing viewpoints at the beginning and end of the negotiating fragment. These may range from a collaborative style through the use of counterproposals or counterclaims to a more aggressive and competitive style through the use of contradictions and challenges. Results have revealed that the speakers in our corpus perceived challenges and contradictions as impolite, which is perhaps why they made use of them with a mean of 5% and 35% at the beginning of the negotiating fragment and with a percentage of 10% and 30% at the end. Instead, they exhibited a preference for the use of counterproposals and counterclaims in these two sections, given that these were used with a percentage of 60%. This may be due to the fact that at the beginning and end of a negotiating fragment counterproposals and counterclaims tend to mitigate the conveyance of dissent, thus opening the dialogic space for the negotiation of opposing viewpoints and attending to the face needs of the participants. Contradictions and challenges at the beginning and end of the negotiation, on the other hand, tend to stress disagreement, thus closing the space for dialogistic divergence and damaging the face of the interactants. This variation in the degree of politeness and dialogistic positioning between the four categories at the beginning and end of the negotiation has been represented in Figure 10 below:

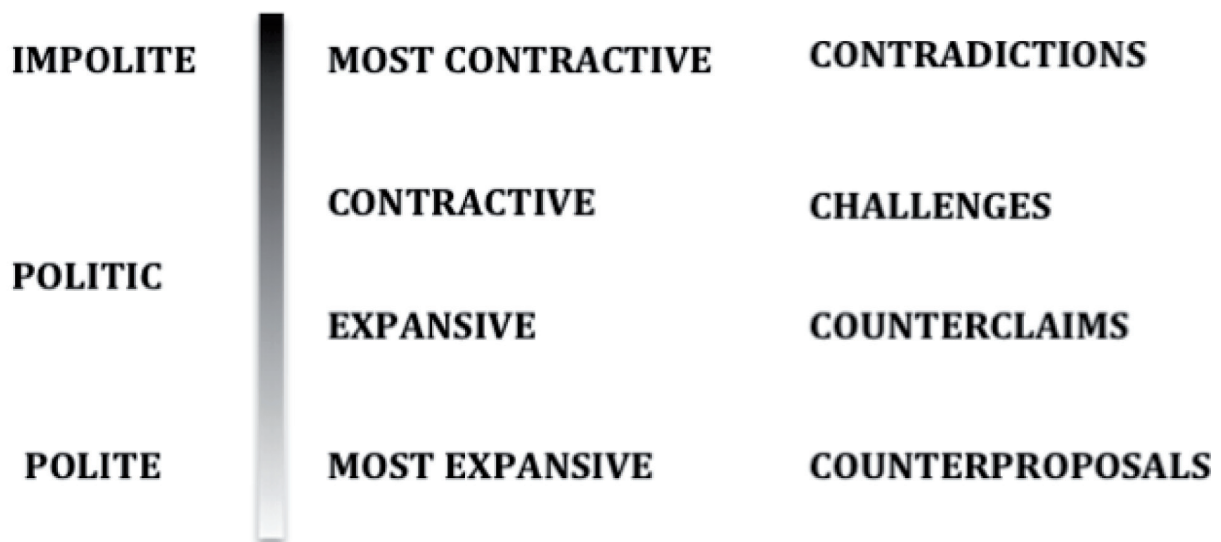


Figure 9. Degree of relational work and dialogistic positioning in the four discursive categories detected at the beginning and end of the negotiation fragment

11. According to Halliday and Mathiessen (2004:618), 'inclination' refers to a degree of certainty of a proposition.

## Part V. Conclusions

### 6.1 Conclusion

From the analysis of the corpus of this study, it can be concluded that the speakers draw on a range of different discursive strategies to voice disagreement in business negotiations. These have been encapsulated into four subfunctions, namely contradictions, challenges, counterclaims and counterproposals. The present study has mainly focused on the use of contradictions and challenges in the three phases of the negotiating fragment. This choice was based on the grounds that, following Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1987), both challenges and contradictions could *a priori* be stigmatised as inherently face-threatening acts infringing upon the interlocutor's action environment by posing a threat to the face of the addressee. As a result, in this perspective these acts might be regarded as instantiations of impolite behaviour in quite a number of settings. However, our analysis has demonstrated that in a business context the two discursive strategies discussed may vary in their degree of (im)politeness along a cline, which goes from impolite, via politic to polite. This variation depends on two main factors: on how the interactants evaluate the interpersonal impact, force or volume of their utterances and on how contractive or expansive these discursive strategies are assessed to be. As Figure 10 shows results have revealed that there seems to be an intrinsic interrelationship between the notions of politeness within Politeness Theory and the concepts of force/focus and dialogistic positioning within Appraisal Theory.

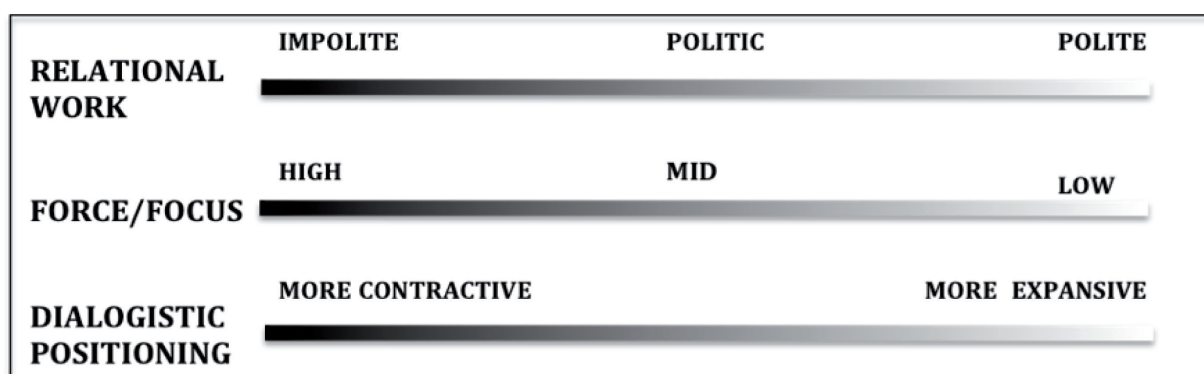


Figure 10. Interrelationship among relational work, force/focus and dialogistic positioning

This interrelationship and variation in politeness and dialogistic positioning has been observed in the two discursive strategies explored in the three phases of the negotiating fragment within the business negotiation.

As far as the use of contradictions in the second phase of the negotiating fragment is concerned, the interactants in our corpus exhibit a preference for directness when voicing their contradictions. Three linguistic patterns are used ranging in their degree of directness: the first and most frequent signals dissent through the use of polarity markers, the second prefaces the disagreement with partial agreement and the third delays the conveyance of dissent through the use of prior justifications or counterproposals. In some cases, these strategies are also reinforced by the use of other linguistic resources such as syntactic and lexico-semantic parallelism and repetition. This directness in the conveyance of contradictions has been found to pass unnoticed or to be unsanctioned by the Argentine business players, who do not seem to perceive direct contradictions as impolite behaviour but rather appear to assess them as unmarked, politic and appropriate behaviour within the given communicative event. This might be attributed to the fact that in this phase of the negotiation, wherein business players negotiate the core issues, important business decisions are to be taken and not signalling overt opposition for the sake of avoiding confrontation might lead to the detriment of the business. During this phase, participants are more oriented towards finding a solution to the current business problems than towards maintaining harmonious relations or building collegiality. As a consequence, they focus much more on transactional talk than on interpersonal communication.

The study has also shown that though direct contradictions appear to be the norm in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, there have been a few instances of them that might be interpreted as either impolite or polite. As demonstrated, impolite contradicting acts are characterised by the use of four linguistic strategies. They are high in force and signal maximised and exaggerated dissent. They indicate

disagreement with the interlocutor's prior argument by highlighting its irrelevance to the discussion at hand. Highly accusative and negative propositional content is displayed and a style that is inappropriate for the given context is exhibited. All these manifestations of contradictions have been assessed by the Argentine business players as impolite and highly contractive, given that they are oriented towards closing, suppressing and limiting the dialogic space for the negotiation of divergent viewpoints. Polite contradicting acts, on the other hand, display a wide range of EPs, attenuating the imposition on the interlocutor, helping to maintain harmonious relations, building solidarity and doing collegiality. The mitigating linguistic resources used to express contradictions have been interpreted by the business participants as polite and highly expansive, given that they are geared towards opening the dialogic space for the opposing viewpoints.

As regards the challenges in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, these have been classified into three recurrent patterns ranging in their degree of politeness: 'highly contestive,' 'contestive' and 'non-contestive.' In order to signal dissent at this stage in the negotiation, the interactants make most frequent use of contestive challenges, in its two forms 'indirect polemic' and 'direct polemic' challenges. The former appear in the form of questions prefaced by such semi-formulaic phrases as *what about ...?* and *have you thought about ...?* or by polar questions, including same polarity and reversed polarity questions. These challenges indicate dissent by raising a new point of contention that might not have been taken into account by the interlocutor. The latter, on the other hand, are expressed in the form of wh-questions and have been most frequently used by the participants to question the content and challenge the grounds for the interlocutor's prior claim. Both challenges result in unmarked, politic behaviour expected in a business negotiation because they have either passed unnoticed or been unsanctioned and therefore not considered a threat to the face of the interactants. This unmarkedness in the conveyance of challenges may be attributed to the fact that in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, wherein diverging viewpoints are evaluated and negotiated between the participants, business negotiators are expected to enact their institutional roles and to comply with the rules of the business game. By raising points of contention or by questioning their interlocutors and demanding sustainable grounds for their position, the interactants might be acting in accordance with the expected institutional norms, given that they may ensure that the proposed course of action has been assessed from all possible perspectives, that all the potential drawbacks have been covered and that the final decision will be based on solid grounds.

Though contestive challenges appear to be the norm in the second phase of the negotiating fragment, a few challenging acts might be interpreted as either impolite or polite. In the study, impolite challenges have been referred to as 'highly contestive challenges.' These are used by the interactants to criticise their interlocutors' viewpoint, to weaken their prior claims by dismissing them as irrelevant to the discussion at hand or to impose by limiting or suppressing their action environment. In all these cases, these challenges are perceived as impolite and highly contractive, given their orientation towards closing the dialogic space for the negotiation of alternative viewpoints. Polite challenges, on the other hand, have been termed 'non-contestive challenges' because they indicate dissent with the interlocutor by means of a request for an opinion. By means of these challenges, the speakers not only manage to mitigate their discordant position, but also to discharge responsibilities as regards the content of their request by eliciting a response from the interlocutor who will have to reconsider his prior position or give more reasons to hold it. In doing so, speakers also protect their own face, attend to the face needs of their addressees and open the space for dialogic divergence.

Finally, as for the use of contradictions and challenges in the first and last phase of the negotiating fragment, these two discursive strategies are perceived as impolite, which is why they are used with a mean of 5% and 35% at the beginning and 10% and 30% at the end. Instead, the interactants exhibit a preference for the use of counterproposals and counterclaims in these two phases, given that there is an occurrence of 60%. This might be attributed to the fact that at the beginning and end of the negotiating fragment counterproposals and counterclaims tend to mitigate dissent, thus opening the dialogic space for the negotiation of opposing viewpoints and paying lipservice to politeness. Contradictions and challenges, on the other hand, tend to maximise disagreement, thus closing the space for dialogistic divergence and damaging the face of the interactants. The analysis has also revealed that the choice of discursive strategies depends on the personal negotiating style that each participant adopts. Speakers who opt for a collaborative style in conflict management will most probably resort to the use of counterclaims and counterproposals at the beginning and end of the negotiating fragment, whereas those speakers who choose a more competitive, aggressive style of conflict management will draw on the use of contradictions and challenges.

In spite of the fact that I was not allowed to record authentic business interactions in English among real negotiators, due to the confidentiality of the meetings, I believe that the roleplays analysed represent quite fairly instances of 'quasi negotiations' for two reasons. Firstly, the participants were all real business negotiators at their workplace. We believe that their performance is likely to resemble that of authentic discourse in business negotiations. Secondly, the participants were all familiarised with the call centre business, either because they had worked for a call centre before or because they were currently offering outsourcing call centre services to international companies. We might say then that their background knowledge in this field also adds extra value to the 'quasi authenticity' of the verbal encounters analysed. In view of this, we think that the present study may contribute to the characterisation of the English spoken by Argentine speakers in business negotiations.

Our findings can also be applied to the teaching and training of negotiation skills in ESP courses with the intention of raising awareness of the effect that the different discursive strategies may have.

Undoubtedly, a more sophisticated understanding of the use of politeness strategies may be attained with further research into this field. For example, it would be of interest to explore the realization of disagreement in the discourse of native speakers of English and of speakers of other languages using English in business environments to compare the findings with those of the present study. Such cross-cultural comparisons would undoubtedly help to gain better insights into the way (im)politeness behaviour is perceived across different cultures. Conducting a cross-gender study to explore the different discursive strategies used by female and male speakers to voice disagreement in business interactions would also cast light on the problem approached in this thesis. In short, a search for new insights will lead to unveiling the richness of politeness phenomena.

## Appendixes

### 7.1 Appendix 1

#### **Roleplay Task (adapted from Market Leader Intermediate)**

The following roleplay task has been drawn from a business-oriented book called *Market Leader Intermediate*. Every unit in this book is followed up by the discussion of a case study based on some problems that a company has. The task is designed as a communicative activity in which students should interact with one another and perform different roles with the aim of finding solutions to different business problems. From the methodological viewpoint, the activity in each unit is intended to develop and enhance students' fluency in the language. In this particular case, the simulation is meant to enhance students' negotiating skills by encouraging them to put into practice the linguistic strategies used in negotiations presented in the previous unit. Students should perform the role of directors of Auric Bank and hold a meeting to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the cost-cutting proposals presented for improving the profitability of the company. The aim of the activity is to express dissent with the interlocutor's proposal and to use persuasion techniques, a widely used strategy in negotiations, with a view to convincing the addressee that their proposal is the most suitable for the bank. Due to the discussion of conflictive viewpoints and to the act of persuasion, the roleplay task is likely to display differences of opinion between the interactants, making it suitable for the exploration of politeness in the discourse of disagreement. After this succinct introduction to the simulation, I will now describe in depth what the roleplay task consists in.

#### **Background of Auric Bank**

'We constantly review our business in order to provide customers with excellent service at competitive prices. As part of our major reorganization, we've been looking at the cost of customer services. We have a range of options. We can make changes in-house or outsource call centres offshore to low-cost countries such as India.  
Graham Hammond, Chief Executive, Auric Bank.

The chief executive made the statement above to a group of investors three weeks ago. Auric bank (AB) lost \$1.5 billion last year because it invested in unprofitable areas of business. Since then AB has carried out a major review of its operations. It has concluded that:

1. customers believe AB is charging too much for its services
2. AB no longer has the image of a 'caring' bank, which is close to its customers and understands their needs.
3. The bank needs to reduce costs to boost profits and share price

To cut costs and increase efficiency, AB is now considering a number of options concerning the location of its call centres

### The call centres

AB has approximately 2500 employees working in three large call centres located in cities in the South of England. The company's headquarters are in London. There are two options that the directors of the bank are considering

#### Option 1: Keep the call centres in-house

Keep the call centres in their present location but try to reduce costs by:

- Using more part-time employees
- Reducing the hours of business of the centres
- Increasing the targets for the number of calls handled per hour

Estimated cost of running the centres for the next five years: \$16 million. Estimated savings by introducing changes above: \$3 million

#### Option 2: Outsource the call centres to a company based in India

Use X-source India, a company based in Bangalore

- X-source India is expanding fast
- Its has contracts with several large US companies
- It has no problem hiring staff and its costs are low

Cost of the contract with X-source India to run the call centres for the next five years: \$5.5 million

### Role Cards

#### Participant A

You want AB to keep the call centres in-house, in the South of England

You think AB staff in the call centres:

- Can give customers a personal service
- Know the bank's products and services well
- Can build relations with customers
- Will show customers that AB is still an 'English' bank

If AB chooses the other option, you feel:

- The unions will be against the move and cause trouble
- The quality of service will not be as good
- Data protection could be a problem (personal details might not be secure)

### Participant B

You want AB to use the firm in India, X-source India

You think:

- Many Americans companies cut costs by outsourcing to India
- The employees will be very skilled- mostly university graduates
- Service will be fast and efficient
- The contract will be cheap

If AB chooses the other option, you feel:

- The cost savings will not be sufficient
- AB will not be able to reduce the prices it charges its customers
- You feel running call centres is time-consuming and distracts the bank from developing its main business

## 7.2 Appendix 2

### Tapescripts of the roleplays

#### IBM Roleplay 1 ( IBM)

A: Ok so we have to decide on the what to do with the call centre

B: exactly we do have to reduce the costs of these call centres support so I think that the best idea would be just to keep it at home as it is because we do have people supporting it and they know the product and they know the customers and we know what the customers are expecting from us so the best idea the best option would be keep it here.

A: well, I don't know I'm not sure because you see we haven't done very good in the last customer service people are thinking that we don't care about them people are saying that our cost is too high that our rates they are complaining that what we charge them for our services is too expensive so we need to lower our costs and at the same time we are not feeling very well as we are now so I don't see many advantages in keeping...I would agree with you that customer service is important but I don't know if we are doing it we are not doing it very well right now as it is so maybe lowering the cost could be a priority

B: Ok it could be a priority in terms of business but let's put it on the ... let's say we are our customers ok and you need support from customer services let's say somebody from somewhere else in the country not from the country from the world gets our call and tries to handle it won't you feel some sort of ... I don't know you won't feel right somebody else from somewhere else looking into your accounts and stuff

A: they are subjects of the queen anyway so (laugh)

B: yeah you do have a point there

A: but /

B: you do have a point there (laughing)

A: but / anyway I see right now is that there is a huge priority on cost-cutting

B: Ok what about part-time? Just thinking about reducing costs but in different ways I mean not just transferring the call centres somewhere else but keeping here with the same people just reducing shifts, for example, do you think that would be a great idea? I mean...

A: It could be good but if the cost cuts is really significant. Right now we are spending around \$20m pounds per year in customer service, we should squeeze this to a real real real minimum let's say go below \$6m a year

B: Is bus / Is business and numbers all you care about? I mean don't you think in the long-term situation I mean we are xxxx back if we keep it at home we will still be focusing on that basis I mean even though India or

A: I agree with a 100% but we do have a real problem we lost \$1.6 m last year

B: Ok

A: Ok you may argue that the reason for the loss is not related to customer service it's ok



B: exactly

A: It's OK

B: exactly it's just 1.6 within the whole organization

A: but we have the Board looking at us and scrutinizing every penny we spend and... uh we do really have to lower the costs in the short term we should lower the costs and I don't see any other option maybe

B: It's just costs /

A: / I agree that it's not only costs/

B: Service I mean/

A: as from experience should be taken into account/

B: and it is

A: and it is and it is important

B: and it should be I mean what gives you long term earnings is basically that I mean trust having the customer trust you, trust your service and I know it is I mean we should be spending some pounds on it I think it's worth it

A: (pause) I see a point there but

B: Haven't you heard about all the other call centres in India in terms of people rotating there is a high number of rotation among I mean I don't think that would be

A: there is rotation but they have a large pool of available people with university degrees, studies with good practices as a market for these services as you may see many American firms are outsourcing call centres to India

B: Right but why should we follow everybody else's lead? I mean can't we be different?

A: because It's extreme cost-cutting that we could achieve you know it's we really have could we really go below \$6m dollars \$6 m pounds per year?

B: I mean you are right you are right

A: with part-time it's ... what I would propose to do is uh go to India for a short term period let's say go 2 years to India until we can have the finances of the bank in order

B: two years?

A: for a short two years term of outsourcing the call centres then once we have all the numbers in order we come back to in-house or at least a domestic call centres location

B: Do you think it's worthy spending so much money in transferring the whole call centres over to a different country? For just a short period or term of two years? What about trying or testing out a new plan in using the people we have right now reducing the shifts reducing hours and keeping the people here let's say let's try out for a year see how it works and if it doesn't work out we can always move the call centres over to India

A: how much do you think we could save?

B: we have people here I mean we already have the infrastructure built only thing that is left is propose different times

A: how much do you think it would cost?

B: There's a \$3m savings/ I know it's not much when it comes to numbers considering the losses we had last year but I think that in the long term it will be profitable in terms of building trust and gaining the confidence of the customers (pause) I mean we would keep our image as being English and staying as English and in terms of data privacy I think that people would be or feel more comfortable by having a customers representative ... just dealing with their accounts here than over in India

A: yeah well what we would not be able to reduce the charges we collect from the customers for our services

B: what about other...

A: This is a main issue in call centres

B: what about other department savings we are just looking at call centres

A: yeah well

B: can we start like reducing or focusing on different points?

A: yeah well but if you take into account that the main focus of our bank is not retail banking maybe lowering our quality in customer service for the retail segment wouldn't be such a loss if we take into account that most of our revenue comes from corporate customers that would continue to be served from the UK

B: what would be the saving if we transferred the call centre over to India?

A: Right now we are spending like \$ 19m a year and we could go as low as \$5.5 m a year

B: and transferring all the infrastructure? I mean keep in mind that we have people with jobs here and that will have to be taken care of they will have be either re-organized or relocated at somewhere else in the company or I mean there's a cost involved in this transferring as well so...



uh, ... well, I think it's... I know some people propose some things like moving our call centres to some other countries... uh I'd rather keep them in-house in England, ... uh... basically cause we are an English bank and we want to stay ...English.

A: Right

B: an English bank and... that will uh... I want to sell that image that we have on the public

A: Good but do you think that the savings are going to be enough? So that is worthwhile doing that

B: well we have estimated the savings in \$3m and ...uh... I think it's a lot of money

A: All right but I'm a little bit concerned because I believe that, you know, the call centres are not like a core they are not part of the main business of the core business so maybe if we relocated the service, you know, we might have you know, much more, savings, than having it in English, in England.

B: and have you done some research about it? Or do you have any idea where are you gonna to relocate them?

A: Yeah one of the probable countries where we might relocate it is in India

B: India

A: You know some many many American companies are relocating some not core businesses to India because they receive you know uh... much more costs and the quality of the service is really good because you are working with skilled professionals and they are graduated and well you know the quality is also important

B: yeah but in order to do that we are are gonna have to fire people

A: Uh ... I'm not sure because we ...maybe at first no because we may have both services running at the same time and

B: but that would increase ... our costs

A: at the very beginning yes but later on we may move the people that currently is working for you know the call centres to another main business area that we might have ... we should like pay more attention to

B: and do you think people will like that?

A: What moving the call centres to India?

B: Yeah

A: they might not but the idea is to cut costs and to improve our efficiency so if we dedicate our time to improve our main business and not to focus on call centres we might have uh...

B: but do you have an estimation of how much are we gonna save if we go?

A: Uh...so as far as I can tell the research we did gives us like \$5.5 m for the next 5 years

B: running... the service you mean ... is that the savings \$5m savings or...

A: so this is the cost of the contract so...

B: Ok so comparing with the \$16m I think we are running right now

A: so for the cost we are running right now

B: It's like about...

A: We are having a little pretty much difference you know so that is mainly my idea because well you know as I told you this is not our main business so we are trying to focus on the core business and try to improve our efficiency.

B: and don't you think we are going to have problems with the time zones? Such as time differences

A: Yeah I think we might have some problems but maybe if we can have different time schedules for employees not a fixed time schedule since we may have the employees working different... you know...

B: and could we do that in India?

A: I think we could

B: Ok ... we are gonna have to double-check that

A: OK

B: yeah it sounds good and it's lot of savings but I'm still not sure about the ... uh the image of the bank ... because we are gonna end up firing people... English people we might have problems with the unions we might have problems with the press

A: Yeah good

B: we have to measure that impact too

A: so ok so far it's eh... I mean mmm we agree that we are going to save much more money by relocating the service to India but we aren't sure about what will happen with the image of the bank

B: yeah

A: and what will happen in fact with the employees working right now for the call centres here in England

B: yeah Maybe we can do some ...keeping the call centres in England, start using part-time employees and I don't know reducing the hours in which we run the call centres

A: Yeah, I think...

B: and maybe it's less saving but well at the end of the day you don't damage the bank reputation or the image that we have on the people

A: that could be a good way to improve you know efficiency in some sort of way but we won't increase our economically efficiency that much but if we keep our image intact we might have you know some efficiency improvement

B: maybe we can do something between both like going step by step first having some people for part-time and then starting to move some little pieces to India

A: yes we could do that or you know difficult time schedules working you know the call centres are supposed to be working 24 hours so the difficult hours here in England move them to India so that we might take a little advantage of the time zone

B: Ok I think we are gonna have to have another meeting

A: yes I think so so lets' postpone this discussion until next week

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### Role-play 3 (IBM)

A: Ok Adriana we are in this meeting in order to get to a conclusion about the idea of the proposals of what we shall do with the call centres in AB bank

B: yeah right and I have some ideas that I would like to share with you to see if we can come to an agreement mhm I gave a lot of thought you know to this and I think the best option is to keep the call centres in-house. Uh you know we have a great amount of people working here I don't think I don't see it as a good option to outsource the call centres I'm not sure how our people is going to take this you know perhaps losing their jobs

B: yeah, yeah that's something we have to take into account but the major issue here is that we are a bank

B: yeah, I agree with you sure

A: and as a bank we don't have to get lost or lose profits to our investors and our shareholders we need to be profitable and keeping 2500 people just for the sake of not firing them is not a good business decision. I have been as you have been researching I have also done my piece of work and I have been investigating and getting information from our people about this company in India called X-source India and what they do is that they are very experienced in the call centre activity and they came with some figures of what it would mean for us to replace our 2500 people in our three call centres and I really think that we should give it a try because it's very good it's a very good option because ...

B: just you know I'm not saying that it's a bad idea but have you considered keeping them right where they are and reducing the shifts? For example that could be an excellent way you know to reduce costs we would have the same people with their current knowledge we are not going to lose any more than we are losing now and maybe reducing the shifts would allow us to have you know instead of 8 hours which is what they are currently working today shifts of let's say ....

A: yeah

B: 3 hours or 6 hours

A: but there are a lot of legal implications if they consider themselves fired or not legal implications we would be involved with attorneys and law and getting lots of cases to study because people won't want to reduce they would could consider themselves fired because of having their shifts reduced.

B: Sure I totally agree with you on that I think that is going to be one of our major problems if we outsource I mean I know the company you mention the Indian What was the name?

A: X-source India

B: X-source India right yeah I know they have great ... they work for large companies as our bank but I still think that maybe for example there could be other options like for instance why do we have to keep the call centres open until 10 pm?

A: no I....

B: We should consider I don't know till 8 or 9

A: I agree I agree and we could study also with the option of the India outsourcing but what we have to focus here is in our main activity. Which is our main activity? We are a bank we are not a call centre

B: yeah, I understand sure

A: So if we could shift as you said if we could shift these 2500 people that are working in call centres which are not our speciality and shift them with a little bit of training and do a little bit reduce our schedule to our main activity credits, accounts, analysis and all that I think we should be we should not we would not be diversifying our main activity focusing people letting them do a career in the bank and let somebody

out from our organization handle the call centre activity which you know can be held from wherever in the world because it's the same situation to have the our three call centres in the South of our the country that having them in India. It's the same.

B: but don't you it's going to cost you know a bad impression impression? You know customers you know they call the bank

A: yeah,

B: a person from India answers the phone I mean how do you think of any way we are going to communicate that to

A: no, there's no need to communicate that's something ...

B: because many of them don't like the idea you know of

A: but they they ...

B: having the service being provided you know abroad

A: but they don't have to know that it's abroad

B: yeah, they will surely know you know once the person answers the phone...

A: No there the people ...

B: or even if they ask let's say you are a customer

A: but this is

B: and you find something you know odd in the way that person is talking to you

A: OK maybe maybe we could send out a mailing saying that we are focusing in our main activity and outsourcing the call centre with experienced people abroad and that would be we could that

B: what if ...

A: we could do that

B: what if we send I don't know maybe not the 2500 people we have but what about 1000 people

A: That could be a mix a mix

B: but we have to pay for expenses

A: we could do a mix of the two solutions of the two ideas

B: yeah you know we have many experienced people working in the call centre maybe for like 10 years

A: OK

B: or even more

A: Ok

B: so I don't know how long it's going to take you know for the Indian people to take over this you know such responsibility to know all the details you know for sure we have in our bank

A: Of course

B: you know our special customers I wouldn't like you know losing that part of

A: that could be option

B: our customer service

A: that could be an option some kind of dispatcher of the call centre for example

B: Right, right

A: I think we could that but I think that both ideas are good and we need to give a little bit in-depth study but we can do a merge of them I'm totally confident that we can we can increase our decrease our losses

B: yeah because that's our ...

A: That's our main objective

B: objective

B: yeah we have that as you know our top priority stop losing money that's it I agree with you on that I don't wanna you know add a second problem to that

A: No of course not

B: having all these like you said legal problems

A: No

B: having people you know fired and losing jobs because we have many people supporting families here, which I wouldn't like to see them on the street

A: No of course not. So we can go on discussing this idea and I think we have a good approach now

B: yeah good

A: Perfect

B: good thank you

A: no, thank you

B: thank you for your time Adriana

A: No thank you thank you

B: All right

A: Bye bye

#### Roleplay 4 (World Minerals)

A: Ok our Chief executive made a statement to the investors and they realized that we spent \$1.5 billion last year

B: mhm

A: because we invested wrong in unprofitable areas of business one of them is the call centres that we kept last year here in the South of England in them with 2500 employees working in three call centers and this meeting is intended to change that call centres location or ...

B: What do you mean about change? I think we have to resolve the better way to manage this problem

A: Oh yes or to save costs

B: yeah sure

A: we have four proposals and mine is to move our call centres to India. The main reason is because moving the call centres to India is because we are going to save lots of money, \$5.5 million and I realised that many American firms cut costs by outsourcing to India. The other reason is the employees will be very skilled because mostly of them are university graduates.

B: yeah but what about the personal treatment with the client that we have here? What do you think about that?

A: In the cost of the contract is included a training for that people in both sides travelling them to England or sending people from England to India to train all the people so they would be skilled to attend all our customers. And the other reason is that service will be fast and efficient and we are pointing towards saving costs so ...

B: What about the unions in that point you mentioned? Do you know did you know what is going to happen with the unions with the employees over there?

A: In India?

B: Yeah I mean to move all the employees from here to there or to have all the employees there. What about all the employees we have here? What's gonna happen?

A: Uh this is kind uh this is a problem that is out of our scope. It's a Human Resources

B: yeah I think we have to talk about that with Human Resources area

A: I know but the main reason that the main boy is asking us is to save costs

B: yeah I know but if we are going to have a million dollars in...continuing

A: turnover?

B: no I mean with the lawyers and all that stuff you know I don't know we you have to take into account that problem

A: So what is your proposal?

B: no I think we have to evaluate all issues but I think that if we keep the call centre in house maybe using more part-time employees or reducing the employees here we have a personal service and we have built a relationship with the customer and we still show we are still showing that AB is an English bank

A: I know but with the current situation, with the current panorama we are making customers believe that AB is charging too much for its services and you've mentioned unions if we reduce their time or we have a great turnover of people we will have we will face the same problems keeping the call centres in England or moving to India. If you want to reduce time or to increase part-time employees

B: yeah

A: you will have to fire

B: reduce hours or

A: reducing hours

B: I don't know

A: we will face the same problems with the unions the cost is going to be the same and we'll keep uh how do you expect to save by keeping the call centres in England?

B: Ok

A: How much do you expect?

B: I think it's not a non-important thing to talk with the Human Resources area and figure that out about all the xxx staff. I really want to know if the quality of the service will be as good as it is here there in India

A: the services are good because big US companies are outsourcing their services in India so the quality of service is pretty very good

B: as good as here

A: I don't know if it is as good as here but we will stop charging that much to our customers

B: yeah but what about the cost of losing customers and not giving a good service?

A: These are not figures

B: Uh?

A: These are not figures. Losing customers actually we are currently losing customers

B: Why?

A: because of the reason I mention before they believe that we are charging for our services uh we have no longer that image of a caring bank which is close to its customers and understands their needs so in this panorama or in this landscape moving to India is not an issue

B: mhm OK

A: we need to save money this is our main main goal

B: yeah I know

A: and moving to India we will save / a few bucks

B: yeah your idea your idea is gonna to make make us save more money than mine but I really want to talk about this with human resources if you don't mind?

A: Ok what if you discuss this issue with Human Resources and in the meantime we move part of our customer services to India?

B: I don't think so I'd better think that we have to wait and with all the answers or issues analysed then make a decision

A: we don't necessarily

B: we are in a hurry I think

A: need to make a decision right now but human resources issues for us is not a main reason

B: yeah but

A: we have to save money

B: yeah but money in all aspects I mean not only in the call centre if we are going to lose if we are going to gain \$5.5 m and then we are going to lose \$4 with this idea with this option

A: no we are gonna save \$1.5

B: yeah but maybe staying here we are gonna save \$3m and that's it

A: and we are discussing a customer services that probably is not our main our principal...this is not our core business our core business is banking not customer service or call centres so

B: yeah but we have to keep the client the customers I think we have to keep

A: yes but this is not the way we have customers because our...

B: we have to find a better way that's right

A: I know but this is not the way a call centre is not our main reason because we have customers we have customers because we are AB

B: yeah I know

A: call centres was a consequence

B: what about the consequences or

A: not a reason

B: the problems with the clients with the customers? We have to have people

A: That's why we are moving the call centre to India

B: yeah but

A: It's the most important we are saving money we are keeping our customer services the call centres and we are saving money

B: yeah but I don't think that the Indian people would know the bank's products or services as well as here

A: That's why I told you before that the training is included in the price of the contract

B: Ok so the cost of that training that you are talking about are included in the

A: in the main contract

B: the 5...yeah

A: in the main contract

B: Ok so do you mind talking with the Human Resources manager and then decide?

A: probably it's an ongoing project so we must cover up all the stuff issues

B: Ok then let's talk with them tomorrow I'm gonna make a conference call with them and are you available tomorrow?

A: yes all the time

B: ok great then I'll e-mail you and tell you about the conference ok?

A: Ok that's it

B: that's it; Nestor

A: thank you very much

B: thank you

### Roleplay 5 (Accenture)

A: Hi good morning Valeria. Nice to see you again

B: How are you? Nice to meet you

A: How's everything?

B: Fine

A: Fine?

B: Yes

A: well, you know this meeting is about the money we lost last year

B: yeah

A: \$1,5 billion

B: yeah I know

A: ok so what we should do is try to you know maybe see between each other what can we do with the operation of the call centres if it is better to leave them where they are or maybe take them to another country a cheaper country

B: This is gonna be tough. It's not gonna be easy

A: yeah I know I know it's something that is in our culture to have the call centres you know the call centres here all very tightly under our wing or just to take them to other countries far away

B: mhm

A: but well I don't know if you want to tell me if you have any

B: Ok I know that despite the fact that we have lost quite a lot of money because of the call centres here there are other issues that are worrying me and that would be that so many customers have been complaining about the fact that this is no longer we are no longer offering a familiar service I think that if we take the call centres out of the country that will be one of the issues that will show them that ...

A: you think the customers will not be happy maybe

B: yes ,yes I think

A: Ok

B: That wouldn't be much of their approval

A: ok because I think that maybe what we need to balance is what would be the satisfaction of our customers but also the profits that the bank our bank will get leaving the call centres here in the country or take them elsewhere

B: mhm

A: what I've been studying here with my team is that taking the call centres to Bangalore it's true it's very far away but what we can get there is cheaper costs cheaper cheaper because the people all of the let's say all of the people that we can hire in Bangalore are really cheap so we can train them and then we can have people that speak English obviously we don't need to have people that speak only Indian so we will need to train them in English so that the people that call also ...

B: but anyway they don't know our customs our traditions they don't know our cities where people are calling from and I don't think it's gonna make

A: you don't even think that if we train them because we can have people from the bank here in London going to Bangalore to train all the Indian people resources that we are going to hire and maybe ...

B: but it's different building for the customers building a relationship with an English person than with an Indian person. It's not the same thing

A: yeah but all the same they don't see the people they are talking with

B: yeah but

A: or they are talking to

B: yeah but still they will show that the bank is still an English bank and not it has not become an international bank just because the call centre is somewhere else and you know that being English is important for the English people

A: mhm one of the things that I see with this having leaving the call centres here in England is that our. What is our business here? We are bank so we don't really run call centres

B: we agree on that

A: so maybe we have to think about that maybe you know we are like maybe changing or diverting what our business really you know what our business is that is banking and we are trying to manage call centres here and

B: Ok I might agree with that

A: and that's not the point /



B: yeah I might agree with that what you have not taken into account is that probably the unions will be quite against us we will be leaving 2500 people without jobs and we don't want the unions against us for sure

A: well

B: many of them are clients our clients so ...

A: yeah no what we can try and do is maybe to do a very post transition maybe start with one call centre in Bangalore and then check how that works start with one maybe for only one area or if we have three call centres we can say ok let's see one of the areas of the call centres take to a call centre in Bangalore and then we reduce costs a lot because people resources there are very very cheap compared to the people here in London and also the space the space here the space in England to have a building is really expensive compared to what you know any space in Bangalore could be so what we could do is maybe do it in phases start with one check how it goes have people going from here to train our people there and do it you know ...

B: gradually

A: gradually

B: yes but there's something else that do really worries me and we have been talking quite a lot with some of our partners and that is the problem of data protection yes personal details that might not be quite secure and people also might feel that because the call centre is somewhere else and the data might be flying around I don't know

A: well really the people that call the bank don't need to know that our call centres are in Bangalore

B: They will realize when they hear the accent that they are not that they are not in England

A: yeah we can train the people you know train them and have them that the service that they give maybe they speak like xxx you know very Indian but we can train them and have you know and have the service be very very accurate or you know very very how can we say attentive with the people and so maybe we can have a half and half ok it's not here but it's there with all the training necessary

B: yeah I understand your point but I don't think I think that in the long run it might cost us more than what we might be saving we might lose some important customers and that doesn't make me too happy

A: mhm How much money do you have as cost here if we leave them here? Do you have that number?

B: If we leave them here ok our savings would be around \$3m

A: yeah and costs?

B: well over the next 5 years \$16m with a saving of \$3m

A: yeah ok because I've been doing the numbers and the cost if we take them outside would be like \$5m so maybe in money we should you know we have to put in the weight what is if we are if we are very concerned about the people the customers or the money that we will be not spending in taking the call centres but what we can do is we can take this to our you know yeah to the board and maybe prepare some sheets excel sheets with the numbers and maybe

B: and then we talk about this

A: yes maybe some PowerPoint with the customer let's say the customer satisfaction part and

B: the pros and cons of this

A: yeah and decide all together decide what is best

B: yes that would be quite right quite good. Ok

A: OK

B: yeah

A: that's great. Fantastic

B: It was nice seeing you again

A: yeah nice seeing you again

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### Roleplay 6 (IBM)

A: Hi Gerardo Good morning

B: Hello how are you doing?

A: Fine and you?

B: I'm fine

A: Ok. I think we have lots of things to go around but I think we should focus on the call centre

B: Right

A: because I think you have several ideas and I have ones too so why don't we share them?

B: Sure I mean we know that the bank is losing money and so we need to take further action so I think the best way is to keep the call centres as they are like I mean I don't think that outsourcing would be the

best solution since I don't know I think that we can keep them here and for that sense we are not going to lose the identity of the bank it's going to be an English bank and that's mine...

A: yeah that's a good point but I also think that we are losing a lot of money and I was wondering if we could cut costs driving the call centre back to India that I think there's a company there X-source actually and they specialize in call centres

B: well our staff is I believe that is professional enough and well I think that we can save money but without compromising the image that we have as a company and also the service I think that the service would be in a way diminished if we outsourced that area into India

A: mhm and how would you say we could cut costs by leaving it here?

B: Well I believe we can for instance stress emphasis on the timing I mean on the call timing; we can train our employees with new technologies that I know that they are available and it wouldn't cost much to our department well I think that it is essential to keep the focus on our country on our idiosyncrasy and that's ...

A: mhm I do agree with leaving it in England because of the image I think it's a good idea but I also think that India has very skilled people most of them are university flyers university graduates and do you know if we have the same skills here as we have in India?

B: Yes, I agree with you on that point but have you thought about the unions? I mean they could protest or I mean they could have some problems with I mean if they find out that we are going to give their jobs to people from a third world country that would be like a mess in that area and I don't know about you but I don't want to deal with that

A: No

B: that situation

A: No I don't want to deal with unions but I think that we should talk with the legal department to see

B: Right to cover

A: what actions

B: to cover ourselves

A: yeah we have because I really don't know the legal part of the unions but I do understand that they can give us a lot of headaches.

B: Right also I don't know about data protection I mean how they would deal with the sensitive data as regards personal information from our clients I don't know if they have the same standards as we do and ...

A: Uh they do have some disclosures but working in the outsource contract that's one of the first things that we should cover the legal part ok and confidentiality uh what I have found out in the in these other outsource companies that I've seen is that the contract will really be very cheap I mean the raise in India is far less than what we have here in England and besides what we have here is very or we can hire in India very junior people that come out from the school and train them specifically with our procedures and processes and sometimes we find it hard here in England to do the same thing

B: Right but what about the training period it would like ... what should we do in the meantime? As since they enter the training and so when will they be productive?

A: well in other banks that I've seen the typical transition is 3 to 6 months for a call centre it depends on its service but for a call centre it's that way and they engage a transition team that come here and identify what our processes and procedures are what how our job is done and then they replicate it back at home ok they do find people with high levels of English and so I think that is very good and I think that it's the trend most of the banks are doing that so I think we should be covered for the legal part right? If other banks are doing it we may be safe on that side but I will enquire the legal department because I really think

B: we will need to set up a discussion on that subject

A: yeah yeah what about next week are you available?

B: Sure no problem at all

A: Ok

B: Great

A: (pause) and I do think that we may have to go a little further on your in-source on keeping it here because you may have points and maybe an option could be have half here and half there or

B: yeah I'm worried about the image of the company and I don't want to run to lose our national identity and I mean we have a history as regards we have been here for about what three decades and yeah we need to consider that

A: OK Are you worried about the service itself or not? Because I'm not

B: well yes you know I mean perhaps I don't know a native speaker is more welcome than one that is not I mean you know how English customers are they want to keep things at their house and to manage everything within the same community and I believe it's a big step further on our company and we need

to discuss that a little bit more

A: Ok but what about the investors? Shouldn't we give them better costs? I mean we've been

B: but

A: going up and up year for year

B: yeah but without compromising the service

A: for sure

B: to have a balance

A: ok I think we should be able to bring in more detail when the legal the legal department comes to us with the solution but I would I will start talking with India to see a feasibility project on having the call centres here and I would think it would be good to define all the pros and cons and the costs themselves right because I think for me it's one of the most necessary things to take into account

B: right sure

A: OK?

B: Sure no problem

A: Ok Gerardo we'll meet I'll send the secretary up there with the report

B: Ok

A: Thank you. Bye

B: you're welcome

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### Roleplay 7 (Fund-raising Consultants)

A: How are you doing Ezequiel?

B: How are you doing Marcos very well

A: Good

B: well such a problem with the bank

A: yeah exactly it's I think we need to address what the CEO asked us to do and this is related to the our call centres and this is something that we do believe that we need to relocate to a different place to do something about because we are losing money we are not directing our resources to our core business so what is your idea on this?

B: I think that call centres are a huge source of saving but in case of moving I was thinking about what about the union? Have you thought about the union?

A: Well, you know we are a bank our employees are not universal we do believe that if we cut that to 2500 employees I think that we won't have any problems

B: yes I agree with that I agree with that but make a big move if you go step by step is a thing but make a big move moving all the staff

A: well I do understand your concern

B: probably there will be problems with the government, unemployment. There are many people working there

A: yeah I do understand your concern maybe if I brief you with my proposal maybe it would be better so you can understand exactly what we are proposing to do with this call centre. We've been looking at the firm in India that are specialists in managing this type of businesses and the firm is X-source they are specialists call centres there probably at the 20% each year and they have a very good potential for increasing their businesses in India through and to the world because they are providing services to Europe, America especially Americans. Recently, many American firms moved their call centres to India so we do believe that this is a good at least track record they have we can argue that we can present that as a strength of that company. And secondly one of our conclusions of the assessment we made on the call centres we have in the South of England is that we are not caring we are perceived as a non-caring bank

B: yeah I know that

A: so this is something if we had the call centre in India we have people focused on the service

B: But don't you think that don't you think that ....?

A: Let me finish this first idea

B: Your ideas are very interesting for me.

A: Ok

B: The concern about our customers because if we move to India they are going to be far away from our customers. This is a huge problem

A: This is something you won't notice because you pick up the phone and you don't know if the guy is next to you or

B: yeah come on you can see the slang. You will notice the England slang

A: well but that is because

B: Ok go ahead but this is an issue

A: This is ok I'll take that concern and I'll explain how we can deal with that. These guys are specialised in providing services to different regions so they have a very highly specialised people. They even have language classes to at least have a reasonable accent for the country they are providing services so this is something that is not going to be an issue. We know American firms that are doing that and they are very happy with their services so this is something that is not a concern for us. And also what we can have is a better service a fast service that this is something we are looking for

B: How is that?

A: How is that? Because you have people that is 100% educated to the call centre stuff. They are not doing any other businesses other than picking up the phone and providing the customers with the specific information they need. And the third thing that I think is core is that we could have a huge savings with hiring these guys to run the call centre

B: I know

A: So I think this is a very good idea. We can improve our services. We can reduce the costs ...

B: Yeah but that is more related to the bank profitability or the economy and what about the fears there are some fears you can see very well. In terms of what people would feel about the bank receiving or calling to India instead of England. Or what about the union? What is going to be what is the future of the bank? What will happen of the government or the union is going to take some action against the bank? How is going to impact in our image you know?

A: I understand that but

B: This is my point of view

A: Imagine that ...

B: because you know the government or the union are going to say well you didn't try to improve England employees profitability you moved direct to India you didn't try to do something here you know

A: yeah but the assessment showed us that

B: I don't disagree with you but I think that the strategy is very good but the tactic is different you know

A: yeah

B: because we go step by step doing both doing something in India and doing something here

A: yeah I do understand yeah I do understand that and I think we need a practical solution to this. We need to add value to our shareholders. Our shareholders are based in England so I think that if they look that their price the share price goes up because we really had a successful reduction in our costs I think they would be very happy and the government won't argue anything because we cut this move and a lot of employees so I think we need to move forward fast and do the move quickly. I understand all your concerns but I think I have arguments to

B: shareholders are good. The problem are customers. There aren't shareholders without customers

A: Exactly. That's why we need to keep aware of

B: My problem is that customers are going to think this is not an England bank any more

A: No

B: This is an Indian bank so they are going to go away

A: yeah that's not exactly true because we are going to keep our branches and this is how the client perceives us they recognize our logo and they recognize our houses and the client will continue to see that but the portion that they don't see we are going to move it from the South of England to

B: Do you positively think that an Indian guy can establish can build a relationship a strong relationship with the customer? or it is only ...

A: yeah I do believe because they are highly trained people. They are trained in how to make a relationship how to build for a example if we are directing the sales account xxx in this call centre I think they can highly train they can be highly trained in the specific skill they need to put our product into the market and I do believe that these guys are doing a great job and they are showing that with the increasing number of customers that they are having so I strongly believe that this is something that can be done

B: In the other hand, have you thought about the IT size of the movement you know?

A: yes there is yes there is ...

B: information security clearance

A: Yes of course there is an advantage of that because India is well-known as a call centre

B: yeah I know

A: so they have a load of ...

B: hackers there. There are lots of hackers in India?

A: No, not hackers

B: Not hackers

A: what I mean they have all the infrastructure to deal with that they have programs they have back up services so this is something that we have considered and we were satisfied from the ...

B: They've been doing this since the 80s so

A: yes of course. They have an excellent track record I think it's we need to focus on the three points that our CEO asked us to do and I think India is the best option to move our call centres considering the other options. We need to have sufficient cost-savings. This is something we need to do and to do that also we need to improve our call centre services so...

B: yeah but

A: we will achieve that if we

B: move our call centre to third world you know it's a third world country India

A: Well I wouldn't call a third world India but I understand what you are trying to say. Well, I do believe that this is our best option

B: Let me think it a little bit about the case and I'm going to ....

A: Yeah something you know this time of this time I think it's we need to move quickly and so ...

B: I know I know

A: so I do appreciate if you can look at that as soon as you can

B: as soon as possible I'm going to xxx with you with the final (overlap)

A: and let me know when you xxx have (overlap) and also I do appreciate your concerns I think that you are directing your questions for the best of our ...

B: My point of view are related to be an England bank, what the union is going to do and the government, how is it going to affect our image and how are we going to be near to our customers. These are the concerns

A: well maybe something we can do is a visit to India

B: we can do that we can do that

A: to better know the resources so that you may be satisfied

B: and maybe our CEO Carlos Hermosilla can pay

A: Oh yeah exactly. They offered to buy the tickets for India if we need

B: He told me he was going to sell the borga to take us to India

A: ok ok perfect excellent. So thank you very much for asking your questions and I would appreciate if you can take a look at the documents

B: as I told I'm going to review all the information and come back to you as soon as possible

A: Thank you. Thank you very much

B: Thank you. Bye Bye

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### Roleplay 8 (IBM)

A: Come on in. Hello

B: Hi how are you?

A: I'm doing good. Have a seat for you.

B: Thank you

A: Ok now what do you think we should do? Let's discuss this situation about outsourcing which I think should be the best thing to do but ...

B: Well (pause)

A: tell me

B: I don't think I quite agree with what you say. I think I believe it's better to keep the call centres here. Why do you think that it would be better to take them away?

A: mostly I mean there's a lot of reasons and facts but mostly I think that it should be like the cheapest thing to do it would help us reduce costs

B: I know I know we have to reduce costs but I don't think that should be a first reason when you say to take the call centres abroad because I believe we do have a bigger problem right now which is customers don't feel that our bank is taking good care of them so if we do that, won't it be worse? Won't they feel that it's no longer an English bank? That it has become another

A: well I have some concerns about that but we have cases and this will not be the first company that does this I mean outsourcing just the customer service part I'm considering India mostly because we have well not we but there's an English colony there so there are people who are really skilled, Indian people

are really caring for the other so they are really polite and I think that would improve the customer service quality of the service and at the same time it would also help us reduce costs which would impact directly on the price of the service that we are offering to our customers

B: I know that Indian people are known because of are known for their skills but what about language? I know they speak English but you know it's really hard to understand what they say they have a really strong accent

A: that's true we have experienced a few incoming calls about that and people tend to complain sometimes about that such a strong accent but I don't think that

B: It's so hard to understand what they say

A: it is it is as a matter of fact it is not the only country that goes through that situation I mean we have Argentina (they laugh) and the point is that there are courses that should be talked about accent neutralization

B: well but that is money also I mean can't we just fix it other way? I mean probably reducing the number of people working in the call centre but still keep it here

A: I'm not sure that it's going to impact directly on ...

B: or maybe part-time or just I don't know we keep the call centre open not 24 hs a day but I don't know have 12 hs a day

A: perhaps not having it 24hs would be a good idea but I'm not entirely sure that it's gonna work besides there is something true that it's that if we just relinquish this thing about having our own customer service department it would just help us focus if we just outsource that part you know to a third party company it would help us really focus on what the user service is all about and that would help them you know the customers and they would feel like ok I'm confident and I like the service so I would probably just stay here

B: I'm not sure you know

A: I think that would be the thought they would have

B: I don't know because it's not only the language that you said that can be taught it's also the people here know our products they know the things that we offer the people here know how English people like to be treated they know our customs they know everything so it's really hard when you have somebody from a different culture because they don't know what you are used to so even if they are very polite it's not the same

A: that is true

B: I think people would feel the difference

A: I know that is true but from my previous experiences I have noticed that just like I mentioned before about these accent neutralization courses which would just take care of one little part of what the British culture is and there should also be some other courses like you know cultural differences what is correct to say what is not correct to say you know because it has happened many times that just in their attempt to sound polite they end up

B: they thank too much

A: they thank too much that is really annoying it's also annoying for me if I have to you know take a call or just make a complain or something or ask for a new service and they thank a lot and that's annoying but though you know it's just one item to correct but along with this accent neutralization course I would just add you know a little bit about culture

B: culture

A: and you know just to it's gonna be helpful a lot because even though you are neutralising accents because Indian has a really strong accent

B: I know

A: You can just you know like dim that a little bit that they really know how to get to the customer you know and that would help not only again to reduce costs but also to keep customers you know

B: keep customers happy

A: Exactly

B: there's one more thing we should think about which is what about the confidentiality of our data you know? Because I don't think you know this is a bank so all the information that we have here from the customers is really confidential and noone wants that information to go out so we would really need to think about what is going to happen with that because thru internet thru different calls I don't know it's just information going out of the country out of the bank to a different company so who knows what can happen if that information gets in the wrong hands I don't know if people would be comfortable with that

A: In that case I would not just hire a regular call centre I think I'd have to choose a company which has this security levels and perhaps certified in dealing with those two areas you know just keeping information confidential and having good customer care as well there's IBM for instance you know you

could just probably outsource it to India it's well-known that they have specific systems you know security systems and I think that would pretty much take care of the whole business I mean

B: I think there's a bank there's a financial company called AMEX

A: Right

B: who did that with IBM so we could check

A: yeah

B: how they are doing and if they are ok and satisfied with the service they are giving

A: if they are too picky about you know which would be the third company then that does all this outsourcing for us you can just isolate you know the team that is gonna work for that account I mean just like you mentioned AMEX does that thing I mean the client AMEX specifically asked for all the employees from IBM to just work in an isolated area

B: like a bubble

A: exactly that's right it sounds awful but that is how it works you know

B: I think probably we should start I don't know with a survey with some you know the most important customers we have to see what they think not telling them that this is already a decision taken but what would they think or how would they feel if we decided to move the call centre to India for example?

A: I'm not entirely sure that would be a good idea because it probably would backfire just letting them know that you are no longer dealing with something that they are buying from you which they are not just buying the service they are buying the whole thing you know the obviously the service the safety for their goods or money the customer care in case they have problems I mean the works it's like the whole package so just letting them know you know what we are no longer because this is what they are going to read we are no longer doing the customer part for you you know the customer service I don't think that should be done

B: and how could we communicate this to the people without them you know being affected or?

A: we are in 2008 I mean everybody knows that all single companies and there are like a huge listing of American companies that they are outsourcing everybody knows that call centres and customer care is being outsourced. The first thing they think is ok this company wants to reduce costs and that's the first thing they see but they just don't read between the lines like what is the impact for the company that is providing the service so I don't think they should know I mean as soon as they pick up the phone they will hear you know an accent and they will know well ok I'm not talking to a British service department so I don't think it is gonna a good idea to let them know just do it and see what the impact is If this don't work

B: so you mean don't say anything and it's just ok

A: yeah exactly you need to test it

B: Ok I don't know if it's gonna work

A: This is a test I can't remember the word but this is just gonna be a test if it doesn't work we'll just look into different opportunities and see what we can do about that

B: Is that something that could be done? I mean a three-month test

A: I think 3 months would be a good period

B: Is it worth training the people doing those language courses cultural courses and teaching them?

A: a month is more than enough

B: everything that the bank and all the credits of the bank has do you think it's worth for a trial period of 3 months?

A: considering the amount of benefits that we are going to get out of it I think it's worth the shot definitely

B: Ok I think I would agree to a trial and then we can talk again maybe in three months to see how it worked

A: exactly

B: and how we go on from there

A: We just need to see if we are gonna have problems and how to solve them but we need to solve things when they are broken as long as they are not broken just not think about that let's not waste time doing that let's just give a try with this three-month trial and see what happens

B: Ok

A: OK? You agree?

B: Agree

A: all right

B: great thank you

A: Nice talking to you

B: you too

A: Bye

### Roleplay 9 (IBM)

A: Ok so in this case I do believe that the best situation would be to just get an outsource for the services for the call centre services we lost a lot of money in this last year and I do believe that just keeping the call centres right here is going to waste a lot of money a lot of time and a lot of resources that we could be using to improve the quality of service instead of just having to worry about a call centre that is basically a very hard thing to maintain

B: No actually I disagree you are saying that we are going to improve the quality of service but having the call centres moved to India or some other place is gonna lower our quality of service due to many reasons first of all the language you know the English level is gonna be different and customers are going to start you know feeling that you know that the service is not the same

A: I don't believe that basically if we are talking about American companies many Americans do have an issue with people that they do not have the same accent we are talking that here we have a completely different situation most of the people in call centres in India they are university students or they actually do have a very good level of English they are very prepared we can have the trainers basically fly there we are talking about a thing that would cost us \$5.5 m in 5 years and I do believe that the cost of keeping the whole process here is going to be extremely expensive and we are talking about that we can hire many more people for the same amount of money or even less and keep going

B: (interrupts) we can keep we can get a lot of employees here with a lot of part-time employees we can increase the number of calls they are taking and we can also stop worrying about you know people thinking that we have forgotten that we are an English bank I mean if we move to another place I mean we are going to lose the identity of the bank

A: Ok I do understand that but the thing is that the matrix house is going to stay here every single like our bank every single one of them is still going to be here the only thing that we will be outsourcing would be just the calls the thing is the following if you keep hiring people here we are talking about that the salaries will have to be paid in pounds ok so the cost like for each employee that we have here we can maybe hire 5 in India the quality is the same if you increase the number of calls we are talking about that we are going to have stressed employees who will in a couple of months I don't know 3,4,5, 6 months a year if you will just start complaining because they have twice as much workload and we don't need that because I've been in the situation I've known the call centre business and if we start getting that what we are going to get is anger customers because they are not getting the attention they want or they think they deserve and they actually do deserve it because the employees are stressed instead of taking 20 calls they are taking 40 so you cannot expect the mood of that person to keep the same with double the workload and the same

B: no but with the same criteria I mean that is going to happen here or is going to happen in India because people are going to start getting angry because people in India as I said before they are not going to have the same level of culture they are not going to have the same level of understanding and they are not going to have the same language so customers are going to be angry either here because our employees are stressed or there because they are going to feel that we are moving we are moving away from the country and they are going to feel like the bank has abandoned them also you need to keep in mind that you know the employees here I mean they are not going to let us just (pause)

A: I know

B: fire everyone and move to another country

A: the thing is that we can actually use part of the money that we are going to be saving by going to India with the call centre to reposition them within our banks for customers like basically for customer service because people are also complaining that the attention when they get to the bank is not really as good as they think it should be so instead of firing them we might have to let a couple of people go but we are talking about the same thing it's not the same criteria first of all I think we should start profiling them what you said about the culture in India they are extremely smart people they are very willing to work

B: I'm not saying they are not smart I'm just saying that /

A: that they don't have the same type of culture

B: the culture /

A: that's what you said

B: well you don't have the same culture because you are in a different country and you have other food other weather

A: well of course

B: other beliefs



A: but our customers are not calling to discuss about the menu for the day ok it's about business

B: well that's that's a direct influence over the overall call

A: Not really it's only if they are willing to make it influenced in the call they are calling to see the status of their accounts to see when their bills are due they are not going to call and say hey how's the weather out there

B: Come on you told me you know the call centre business

A: I do

B: well then you should know that when a person calls is not just simply you know I want to have my account checked

A: No it's actually I want good service I don't care if

B: Right and good service and good service implies a good personal treatment

A: of course

B: so you are saying that we are moving away so there's no more personal interaction

A: they are calling

B: so

A: they are not going to the source they are not going to the banks

B: so

A: so their English is something that is completely coachable again we can have someone sent there three months in advance before the trainers go just to practise English that's not the problem we'll be saving a lot of money once that happens basically if I'm calling I don't care if someone from I don't know Argentina, India or Russia picks up the call as long as I can understand what that person is saying that person is knowledgeable and that person treats me as I deserve to be treated that's the bottom-line I mean how much is your estimated like expense for your project for keeping it here for hiring more people here instead of outsourcing

B: I guess I estimated that we are going to be saving around I don't know \$ 3.5 m

A: a year five years?

B: 5 years the same estimate you said

A: No you are going to be saving \$ 3 m in 5 years

B: yeah

A: Ok this is gonna cost us \$ 5.5 in 5 years the cost right now is about \$ 16m I think \$16m?

B: yeah something like that

A: I do believe but I haven't checked the numbers recently but I do believe that it's apparently \$15 \$16m so I'm saying it's gonna be one third of the cost with the average

B: Have you estimated have you estimated how much we are gonna have to pay the unions for not striking and not making this a lot of trouble?

A: I don't understand like I told you have

B: for newspapers for you know releasing a whole bunch of

A: Dell, Bellsouth McDonalds they all have outsourcing and you don't see in the newspapers people saying that they are taking away their jobs it's not being able to be humble here then we have to take it somewhere else we can I'm talking about saving like millions and millions of dollars we are talking about saving at least \$10m which we can use to improve the quality of service face-to-face here on our banks and keep the calls sent to in this case it would be you know like I said it would be India the thing is with the money we will be saving there we'll have quality service we can hire more people and I mean the main call centres will be shifted

B: you are always talking about money and hiring people I'm talking about the quality and the personality of the people answering the call

A: ok personality is something that you would find different ones whether you do it here in the USA or in xxx that's not the problem the quality of the service will remain the same we need to make sure that it remains the same or even better

B: well that's my point

A: the problem is the current quality of the service is not sustainable we need to have more people or more calls for those people

B: yes

A: one way or the other we are wasting a lot of money or we are making our employees very unhappy we cannot tolerate any of those situations so the best thing to do is to move to India train them if you want to be the head of training if you want to pick the people that are going to fly there and train the new employees you can do so I mean I have no problem with that we'll be saving a of money that is the main thing

B: What was the estimate again?

A: \$5.5 m it's approximately 1.1m every year each year

B: That you said was the cost?

A: that is the cost it's not the saving that is the cost that we'll have I mean if you check the numbers as I said It's not about the culture it's a matter of money the part of the culture the language we can polish that we can actually work on it that's not going to be an issue I assure you that again I'm not going to just send people there and say ok train 10000 employees and then we'll just see how it goes I have studied that I'm not saying that you haven't with your option and according to studies and some research that I've been doing many companies have outsourced their calls to India and they are having wonderful results they are going to be some people that are going to complain about the language that they have the Indian accent but that is

B: all right let's do this send me a copy of your project I'll take a look at it and I'll get in touch with you next week and we can talk a little more but let me see the numbers

A: Perfect

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### Roleplay 10 (IBM)

A: Hello Leonardo and thank you for your time again

B: Hello. How are you?

A: well we have the present situation that we have to consider if we are going to move the call centre to a low-cost country to see if we can make the company more rentable

B: yeah at present the costs are running rather high to have the call centres here is kind of high so I was thinking about India. Lately it's becoming a very good country within the outsourcing group I don't know if you thought about something else or?

A: yeah I'm concerned about the customers not feeling you know like that the bank is still an English bank and moving our call centres there could be we could lose a lot of customers

B: yeah that could that would be a good point but I think that if we focused these people these Indian people they are really high level skilled people and with the first call that they are going to get they are going to get a good service and they are going to be treated in a very good way. They are going to start feeling you know and they are not going to notice the difference also we can make certain point deep point on the English skills for these people and so that movement from country to the other they won't feel it that much the gap won't be that big. On the other hand, again, these Indian people are really prepared we are going to get we are going to hire graduated people we are going to have good people on the line

A: And can you guarantee that?

B: Of course

A: that our call centre will be as good as it was here in India?

B: well we are going to be specifying on the resumes that we are going to get from the people who want to be working with us that they are going to have to have very good English skills you know

A: yeah but still you can tell when you are talking to a native English speaker and when you are talking to an Indian

B: Of course you are always going to you always will

A: and this is the call centre we are talking about so that is a big deal

B: It is a big deal but also here in our call centre not all the people that are working for our call centre are London people or English people

A: but most of them

B: so every time you get a call you hear like a little accent. They are used to it and the outsourcing is becoming so popular today that you are not going to have it only in our bank you are having it in every single company. Every company is outsourcing the call centre it's a very common issue now

A: Still I would like to explore another option before choosing to move our call centre. Perhaps we could use more part-time employees here or reduce the hour of business

B: yeah you could tell that but I'm not quite sure if that is going to decrease the costs as much as we need. We are in deep deep trouble and we need something that really makes a difference and about costs there is nothing that the call centres here could do to equal the costs to the way that the costs would be reduced if we moved to India

A: yeah I know but I would rather do an extensive study about how our customers would react to this change because I've got this feeling that we would lose a lot of customers because of this

B: well there are several studies that we could do about that data. There are companies that handle that type of information they can go around and you know teachers go to the streets and start asking to

people what the people about about the outsourcing but still even if you get a no as an answer the numbers are talking by themselves.

A: yeah I know we are in a tight spot but I would be you know

B: to keep the call centre here your costs are going to be tripled than if you moved them to India. You are going to save about \$5.5 m pounds it's a lot of money

A: I know I know what you are saying but the cost has to go hand in hand with the income so we'll lose the income that our customers ... that won't be good either

B: yeah but

A: and besides we have all this trouble we will have all this adaptation process because it's not something so simple to move our call centre to India.

B: Of course not but our structure can do it and the customers a bank account is something very important is not something like a cell phone line that you can change it just because you don't like it. If you have your account on a bank is because you trust your money to these people you are not going to lose

A: There's a lot of people that trust our bank because they are English and we are an English bank that's what I'm talking about

B: Ok so ok that issue I'm not so sure if we are going to get to an arrangement there but again about the structure or the move of the call centre there I still believe it's a good idea.

A: I know

B: I'm not just talking about the money I'm talking about the people. Our people here our bank our structure should be thinking about the customers to give them a better service not just on the phone and you are wasting a lot of minds thinking how to put your call centre on good level and you are losing the point to give them actual good service to your customers. You don't have to think about costs that is ...

A: well, no first of all we both want the same thing for our bank it's to grow

B: customers

A: yeah xxx the customers but you are talking more about reducing costs and I'm talking more to keep the income coming you know so we have to make that study to see which one would be more rentable at the end

B: well at the end if you are talking about rents there's no questions to ask it's just xxx

A: but you don't know how many customers we will lose because of this movement and there's no way you could know before making an extensive study about it

B: Ok let's just pretend just for a second that our studies come up and say that if you move your call centre to India you are going to lose me as a client ok so what do you do? How do you reduce your costs in a good way in a good gap and not lose these customers? I mean you keep the call centre here right because you are going to lose customers if it moves to India because of the accent that I understand but if you keep the call centre here how are you going to do to reduce these costs?

A: That's what I was talking about you know hiring part-time employees you know find a balance between stuff but you know it's to do the right thing for the bank and for our customers you know because if we lose a lot of customers because of moving to India there will be more customers that will see that we don't care about the customers and will leave not because we are moving to India but because we are showing that we are not a people bank.

B: yeah I see what you see mean now although if you want to use these reduced or these part-time jobs if you take the people that you have in the call centre you go and tell hey you know what starting tomorrow we are going to reduce your hours so your salary is going to go down too they are not going to be very happy and you are not going to get very happy people on the line and our customers won't be treated as usual now we know because they have a good salary they have the hours that they need and we are very flexible on the hours and the salary so they are now giving a good service but if you go tomorrow and you say your salary will decrease well the quality of the service will also decrease I can guarantee that and you are going to lose your customers either way and you are not going to be reducing your costs if you hire new people to get the new people to be trained on the level that they have now and give a good service that is going to take time and you going to have both people working together the one that you have there with the high salaries and the ones that are going to be new so you will be paying two salaries that will increase your costs and at the end of the day the cost that you reduced firing these people that are working full-time now will not be compared to the reduce of the costs that you are going to get in India again I don't want to get too deep into the money thing I know it's important because of the level and the customer satisfaction but still the numbers are not good

A: yeah I know I understand what you are saying I'm not throwing your idea away. I'm just saying that I want to have you know hard numbers to look at this situation with a little more you know insight

B: yeah less numbers and more fields (they laugh)

A: ok so we could we are going to meet again before the study ends

B: Ok before the study ends we have a meeting and after the study xxx we will get the results and we'll see what we do let's see we are going to take it from how many customers we would lose if we move or not ok?

A: it sounds good

B: All right it sounds good

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### Roleplay 11 (IBM)

A: Well in order to discuss the call centres here of AB banks I think we should outsource to India. It's cheaper than having the call centres here on the location and it would be in terms of scale of money it would be a lot of savings for us. I don't know what is your position there and also I see that a lot of USA companies have already outsourced to India and they have been very well with it.

B: Sure I understand that basically what do you think would be the main advantages of outsourcing to India?

A: well first of all in a period of five years more or else the cost of having the call centres out there would be \$5 m and according to the statistics that we had having them here would cost approximately \$16m so that would be a lot of savings for us

B: So basically you are saying that in the long run we will have approximately \$5m savings only

A: a bit more almost \$10m savings but also I think as there are a lot of students or graduates from university we will have a lot of intellectual people there that can help us further on

B: so basically you think it would be more affordable in the case of that India would be more affordable and that we will have qualified people with the service knowledge

A: yes I think so I think it would be a great investment

B: well, personally I think we should keep the call centres in-house. We are a financial institution and I think that it's very important for our customers for the people we work with it's very important that they feel that they have a relationship with the people they talk to over the phone. They need to feel they understand them, the pronunciation the language the culture is very different I don't think you like it when you call a company and they don't speak your language to start with. Besides that, for sure the financial contract is absolutely different I don't know how things are handled in India we will have to do a lot of research on that but to start with people will feel xxx I mean they will call and they will say who am I talking to and besides that I think we can keep them in-house with a lot of savings as well we can try to reduce the hours of the service we could hire more part-time employees that would be a reduction in their salaries and besides that well we can apply some kind of policy to for them to have a target like a kind of prize for when they do take more calls that would increase the product activity and it would be affordable

A: it's only for reducing the hours of the service that would mean that the employees would have less hours so we have to pay less that is ok but if the customer needs an urgent call and the service is closed to these reductions then we would be losing a customer on a long scale I mean in India if we keep them they will have 24-7 hours to call if they have any inconvenience I think there should be no issue there.

B: Mhm well I think that it would be better to keep like a call center from 9 to 6 let's say and we can still have some kind of emergency call service with less people it's not as strict as you know regular business hours they won't be calling every single day at 2 in the morning that is something that doesn't happen often

A: Maybe you are right however if there is some kind of conflict outside the country the time zone is different so if they have to call here for any inconvenience maybe where they are it is 7pm and here it's 2 am so they would be constantly calling regarding the time zone they won't matter about it

B: You mean if they are abroad and they have some kind of emergency

A: yeah exactly

B: we do have centres abroad as well we are an international company so they will have a lot of centres to call to there's no need that they have to call to London and in hour business hours they can call the local place

A: Ok

B: I know it won't be the same in figures by the end of the year I know India would be much more affordable but I think that the quality and the service will drop in a very important way and we don't want to lose customers

A: yes, however, keeping the service here will distract the main how can I say this well actually it's very distracting and time-consuming for the bank and I mean having it abroad would be much better because here as a bank we can develop our main business on India it could only be the call centre so we don't get any kind of distraction or so

B: yeah I get your point however there is something very important we should think about and that is the trade unions it's going to be a problem for us to move part of the service to India. We will have to deal with a lot of local regulations we will need to fire a lot of people xxx only for the call centre that is going to be money as well. Besides that, we will have to invest time and people in a privacy policy especially a lot of things that we have to take into account when we have foreigners working with our personal information. It's very different there I'm not sure they will be able to deal with it. Besides that, they will have to learn a lot of new things they are not familiar with and that is going to take time so we know that maybe in the long run it's going to be a lot more affordable but at the very beginning it's going to be a problem for us until they can start working on that in the best way they can. At the very beginning they will have to get used to the financial language a lot of terms that they don't work with a lot of things that they cannot see the privacy policy they have to get used to xxx actually I think it's going to be a complication more than a benefit or something beneficial

A: I do understand all in all we've been in rough situations in the last years losing a lot of money so I think that affording to we can afford to outsource the call centre in order to retain some savings, what we could do is maybe contact some people from the USA companies that outsource ask them how did they go in the first time the first period of time first years and then on the long term how they go just to have a better view of what is going to come up against you. I don't know what you think about maybe we can reschedule a meeting here do some calls ask some people to come over or so

B: yeah I think that would be the best thing to do. I think we should do a lot research on this and yes I need to do a budget it has to be further discussed for sure

A: ok

B: I don't think this is something we can make a decision just because we are here right now no

A: I think there must be a lot of research before we do anything

B: we can meet I don't know maybe 2 or 3 weeks from now. Is that ok for you? Do you think that would be enough time?

A: yeah I can start making some calls right now to see if anyone would come and have a discussion on this

B: Great. Well done

A: Thank you

B: Talk to you

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### Roleplay 12 (IBM)

A: Thank you for coming at such short notice. As we spoke yesterday today we have a meeting about what to do about our call centre situation we need to lower our costs but I think that we can do some changes and keep our people working here

B: well I presented my ideas to another director of the bank and I think that the best would be outsourcing to India

A: yes they forwarded me that report I think that it's a very how can I explain. It's not a bad idea I think it is wrong minded I think we should keep our people maybe we can relocate them to the north of England where it is a little bit cheaper but I think it's going to be a major security problem we are talking about credit card numbers security social numbers I don't know how our customers are going to respond when someone that is not English will receive that call

B: I think that they are accustomed to that because many US companies cut their costs going to India, the Philippines, Singapore they are everywhere.

A: yes I understand you but remember that we are talking about English people I'm not so sure if they are so open-minded as the Americans

B: yes but we have to think about our profits too and the difference in the savings will be huge

A: yes you have a very good point there. I was also afraid about what the union people would say when we send I don't know 2000, 3000 telegrams saying that they are cut off. Do you know an idea of how can we manage that?

B: No actually not I think that would be maybe in charge of Human Resources

A: Yes but I don't want to have a lot of strikes in front of the bank it's not good for our image I think that we are going to ...

B: yes but business is business and we have to think about you know the bank the profits maybe if you don't want to cut that people you don't want to fire them maybe our bank would be I don't know ruined and you would be the one that loses his job

A: I was thinking that maybe we can send a part to India  
B: yes that would be  
A: maybe with the difference hours they can work in our night shift and keep the locals in a small shift, maybe we can use part-time workers and have like well we don't lose that much but we still have benefits  
B: It could be a good idea anyway I still think that the major part of the contact centre and the agents have to be in India or somewhere else. In this case India because here we have to think about the business the bank business and financial things  
A: Where is this call centre or this company that is going to outsource?  
B: it would be X-source India they told us that it would be \$5.5m to you know manage all this call centre and the people for 5 years so it would be  
A: Do we have some reference of this X-source India?  
B: Yes actually they have worked with many US companies  
A: Ok I see  
B: and companies have saved a lot of money  
A: well I'm still worried about what the unions would do us so I think that we should talk to our lawyers they have to handle the best way to get all these people cut off and maybe we can join again at the end of the week  
B: yes maybe we can keep the best the best of them the one that has the best customer service here  
A: as a link with the new Indian team  
B: yes they could be like the trainers of the Indian people  
A: Ok yes I think that that is a very good idea  
B: and maybe the ones that would stay here would be happy because maybe we can send them to India to train the others have a vocation and I don't know relax  
A: well Mariana I'll do a few calls and we'll see back on Thursday  
B: Ok that's ok

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### Roleplay 13 (IBM)

A: Nice to see you again. Shall we discuss what our chief executive wanted us to regarding the call centres?  
B: Right I have a proposal here that's about sending the call centre to India  
A: Really  
B: I've been researching and I have found out that there are a lot of professional people there that can handle the cases we have in the call centre and I have researched some and I have found that many US companies are sending their call centres to India. They have lower costs they have a lot of experience and they are university graduates so they have a lot of skills to perform that task so what I've been looking sounds real good. It has very low costs and very skilful people there. So I think that is a good way to lower our costs for the call centres so I don't know what you have in mind if you have anything else?  
A: yeah actually I thought about that option it does sound interesting but I'm much lenient to keeping these call centres in-house I know it's a bit more expensive but you know one of the things that the case study found was that people were a little bit reluctant with our service our personalised service so I think that keeping the call centres in-house might give them a more like homey feel or know that we care about them about them being our customers. Also you know ours is a very traditional English bank so I'm a little bit reluctant to move the call centres elsewhere people might feel that it doesn't belong to their country any more. It's easier if we work here to build you know strong relationships with our customers that's why I'm not very comfortable with the option to move them outside of the house you know people here know the bank they've been here for a long time and that's why you know I think it would be better it would be best to keep it in-house.  
B: Right I know that people feel that way about some foreign company taking over these call centre activities but our main concern here is the costs. We have to lower the costs with any strategy just we might come up with so I think our best option is to move it out because it would lower the costs in a significant way so I think keeping the call centre here will have a more home feel like but I don't know if that will complete our needs on the cost-saving program we have intended so ...  
A: yeah you know I do see your point but I was also thinking moving these jobs out of England and to a call centre off-shore you know we have very strong unions and with the severance pay letting go all these people might cause us a lot of problems that may end up costing a lot more you know we have very people that have been with the company a long time so what we would have to pay in severance I'm not

sure that we might outweigh the cost of

B: Sorry but we are also having a lot of work. It's time-consuming and it's a big job to work with a call centre on our side. We are now having a lot of work with that so if we have a lot of work letting people go or whatever we have to do to take the call centre somewhere else it would still be similar to the work we are having right now and in the long run we will have a call centre somewhere else being handled by another enterprise not us it will give us more time to work with the bank stuff with the bank businesses and it will also lower our costs that is our main concern so I see your point but I honestly think that this option is the best because it'll it'll in the long run it'll make a big difference for us it'll allow us to lower our costs and have our customers started to trust again with us because we are thinking of them when we try to put a better price on our services and a better service because the service is still the same even though it is out of our country it is handled by professionals and it'll help the people with their calls with their problems with anything they have to

A: you know what I'm not sure about that. I've been doing some research and I've found that the quality of especially we also have the language issue I know that the people in India do have a good language but it's not the same and they have a very marked if you will accent

B: Right

A: a very strong accent and even though they are professionals they don't know our bank so I don't I'm not sure that the quality of the service that they will provide will be the same. I know in the long run it might but because they are skilled professionals and they are graduates I'm afraid the rotation is going to be quite high. It usually happens that's what I've been investigating in this off-shore outsourcing companies. There's a lot of rotation so when they start learning what our business is like they are going to be moving onto another position and we have to start all over again so I'm not sure that the quality of the service would be better

B: well but that depends on how they handle their jobs from their side and having them been university students and professionals in every way I think they will we should require a high standard for our services and they should be providing us they should be providing their employees the training required to learn all the activities in our bank in all the problems that any person in our our customers might have so I think that I don't see that as a problem because I think they can handle those kinds of issues on their side but we must require high standards for our services and for what we are about to xxx in India

A: yeah that's also one point I wanted to make. From my research what I found is that usually the costs in India as you said they are low but usually what happens is when you start getting the services that is from other banks people that I talked to that have done this they start charging for extras that are not included in the base contract as you said what we require is high standards and they start adding things to what they are charging you

B: well but that should be stated from the beginning of the contract

A: I know

B: we should consider

A: we would have to be very careful with that because if we do

B: and that that's one of the tasks we need to complete to have people focused on because we need to have a pretty clear contract and order everything we need to in a specific way we don't have to leave any room for doubts or anything else but

A: Do you have anyone with that experience I mean it's going to require someone that knows how to offshore this kind of things that can take really take care of those xxx we don't have any experience on that

B: well not exactly on that kind of concession but we have experienced people in the call centre area right now so we

A: yeah but that's more of a contract issue, isn't it? I mean

B: that's right but we can use our lawyers with the call centre people we have working right now I don't know we can create a small department that handles the outsourcing maybe a couple of people from the call centre and a couple of lawyers to handle the transition to India so we don't have any any weak points or doubts or anything that could or might be a problem in the future so ...

A: yeah

B: I think all the people

A: you know what I'm sorry sorry to interrupt. Have you thought about data privacy? I'm not sure India does have a disclosure agreement on data privacy. I know very few countries do some of them in Europe and I know Argentina New Zealand has data privacy agreement signed. Have you checked on India because I've found from some of the banks that some of the services that they provide as customer services cannot be provided from India because of data privacy issues.

B: well actually I didn't check on that. That will have to be checked but if there are a lot of external

companies from many countries that are going to India and a lot of IT and financial companies and they care a lot about data privacy so I don't think we will have a problem with that because I think that part should be contemplated by them. Like I told I haven't done any research on that but I'm confident that they will have some kind of data privacy program or policy or anything that could help us protect all our data and all our information.

A: Ok you know what I think I would like to investigate a bit more

B: Ok

A: maybe if you can give me your research on the call centres we will have definitely need to get someone from the legal department here

B: That's right

A: because I have a lot of you know doubts with that

B: yeah I understand and I have doubts myself but what I don't doubt is that this needs to be a low cost service and we can't keep a low cost quality service from our side. That's why the low cost should be transferred to an enterprise in another country in this case India that can handle with that cost the same kind of service we are giving here so that I have clear but I have a lot of doubts that I need to clear up. So I'll get back to you with all the information and we'll see what

A: Let's meet again in a week

B: That's ok

A: Ok great

B: Great. Thanks a lot

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### Roleplay 14 (IBM)

A: I think today we are facing a huge problem with our bank due to the world financial you know situation. It's very clear that we are losing a lot of money and of course we don't want to you know close down the bank and leave a lot of people unemployed so I think we should start an action plan so as to you know avoid closing the bank and leaving all those people with no job. I think we should start by cutting down our budget not our budget but our expenses and see what we can do to try you know and make some money or make more money or try to save more money and you know keep ourselves in business.

B: well I completely agree but what would you suggest in order to do that?

A: Of course we cannot close down the physical areas I mean the locations of the banks themselves so I guess we could start by making some changes that can that will affect our call centres probably reducing the amount of people that are working right now or reducing the amount of hours they are working. What you think? What do you suggest?

B: well I was also thinking about making changes regarding the call centres but instead of making changes within the people in-house on our call centres I was thinking we can outsource this to a company in a low-cost country for example India

A: Aha well, I don't think that is a good idea because you know our bank Auric Bank is a very respectable institution in the UK especially in England and I think if we took our services off-shore, we would be in a way letting our customers down and I don't think that would be very good. That wouldn't make a very good impression to our customers.

B: Actually I have been doing some research and I have found out about a company called X-source which is located in India which has no problem in hiring new employees which would cost us a lot less money and actually they only hire people who are already university graduates and they expect a minimum level of English that can be understood so that our customers feel that they are talking to a native.

A: All right still we know that a lot of people in India speak English because it was an English colony for centuries but besides that I think that the accent is still too strong I think that our customers will feel that and it will make a huge impact on their experience as customers as people who are dealing with money because anyway it's their money so I think it will make a negative impact on you know the overall customer service that they will receive so I've been taking notes too you know and analysing the situation to see what we can do and what we shouldn't do and I think that if we reduced the amount of hours that our employees are working here at the call centres in the UK, we could probably set up more part-time shifts than you know full-timers. If we do that or if probably we reduced the amount of hours of operation that would make us save a lot of money I have the number right here. It'll be total of according to my numbers here \$3m a year which is a huge deal of money so I think that if we reduced the amount of hours and probably the amount of employees not just firing them but relocating them probably to other business positions we could start saving money I mean a lot of money by doing that and that way we would be able



to keep our call centres in-house in the UK and I think that'll keep our relationship with our customers and they could still trust us and all that.

B: I see your point but I also think that if we focused on the call centres in-house we are leaving aside some of the more important aspects of our company. We are a bank so we should be concerned about services we provide to people. Even though the call centre is a service we do provide to them I believe that by taking our call centres off-shore we could be saving a lot of money because that would only cost us \$5m a year which is a lot less than our call centres today cost. And regarding what you were saying before about the accent, let me tell you that there are many American companies that have off-shored call centres and I mean banks not just any company and they have pretty good services.

A: Well I've been around a lot you know doing research going to different companies starting the call centre outsourcing matter for a couple of years now and I can tell from my own experience that even though they may provide good service I mean the representatives the call centre representatives in India or in Latin America still customers are not a 100% satisfied because they feel that they are talking to a stranger. When they pick up the phone and they detect an accent they minute they perceive an accent they start losing confidence in the company let alone a bank we are talking about their money and their savings probably their life savings. So I think that moving our call centres off-shore would have a highly negative impact upon our customers they will not feel home they will not feel safe they will probably fear the money to be not taken care of so I believe that if like I said before if we can keep those people I mean those representatives in-house maybe reduce the amount of hours they are working maybe reduce their shifts from 8 hours to a six-hour shift we can save a lot of money there still we could keep them here in the country we could keep our customers trust on us we would be showing a lot of you know reliability and that'll make us strong as a company as a bank because that is what we are. So I think we should keep that part of our business in the country.

B: I actually see your point and I understand very well what you are talking about but I'm afraid that the service we are providing to our customers today is not the same as it was when we started the company which is why our customers chose us.

A: Are you saying it is better? Of course it should be better Auric Bank is ...

B: Actually I'm saying it's worse because we are not focusing on the primate matters that we hold I believe that we don't care as much

A: you mean we are focusing on money

B: well we haven't been providing the same services we had in the beginning. We have increased our costs and that has an impact on our customers. So what I believe is we should make a change in our calls by moving our call centres outside the UK so that we can have fewer costs there and focus more on the customer attention that we provide in-house with our locations as you said we don't need to make any changes on our physical locations because we face the people like that but if we move outside the UK

with the call centres that way we would be saving a lot of money that we could transfer into making it a lot cheaper for our customers to have to buy your services.

A: well I believe Auric bank has gained a certain reputation like you said and I do believe that our customers trust us and buy us because of the service they get whenever they come to our offices or whenever they pick up the phone and talk to somebody. I guess the best thing for us to do would be to still maintain the service at a lower cost so that our customer will not feel the difference but we will we will be spending a lot less money but still provide the same service.

B: well I believe that if we you can set up like a presentation or some chart so that not me only but other directors of the bank can see the changes I believe that would be a good idea

A: All right

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### Roleplay 15 (IBM)

A: Hi Melisa

B: Hi Charles. How are you?

A: I'm fine thanking for asking me. How are you?

B: I'm good thank you

A: So have you been thinking about these problem our bank has?

B: Yes I have studied all the numbers the papers and I still believe that the best option is to outsource the call centre service

A: Oh ok why do you think that?

B: well we have many studies that prove that for example India the personnel the people is mostly

university graduates so they are very well prepared for this kind of jobs you know that India is increasing their services for outsourcing other countries and companies and this is a fact

A: but do you ok do you feel the relationship between them between an Indian guy is not going to be the same kind of relationship that they are going to have with an England agent? because ...

B: Well this isn't something new you know because this has been increasing many years now ok so they are really prepared they are accustomed to this kind of service there. It's not something new that we are bringing to them. So they have the infrastructure already and they have the people appropriate for it.

A: What about the knowledge? They are going to have the same kind of knowledge for example the image of the bank. So people from England they are not going to feel fine when they pick up the phone and call our bank someone from India answers the phone. I don't believe that the quality of the service is going to be as good as we can provide the same kind of service in England. Maybe if we can have people working in England in different conditions try for example we can take more calls per hour in that way we can still place the call centre in England and in that way our customers they are not going to feel bad about speaking with someone in India

B: No but the main idea is to reduce the cost and if we bring people to India we will not be able to low the salaries you know so the contract in India would be cheaper with Indian people. It's not the same

A: Do you feel they are going to learn really fast about for example the xxx bank?

B: The employees are very well skilled there. As I told you they are university graduates. So I think they have the knowledge

A: but the money that we will have to pay to them is gonna be high too because if they are coming from universities

B: No it is not. It's cheaper

A: It is still cheaper there?

B: yeah actually it's cheaper and we only have to prepare them with a profile to service as a bank not as for example a trial company.

A: I see what about the unions? Because the unions they are not going to be happy about that for example we are gonna have just to fire a lot of people from England to hire people in India and well we are gonna have a lot of problems with the unions.

B: Well that is a risk we have to take but we have to take some risk you know. There is always a risk to take, it won't be ...

A: I'm also

B: yes

A: yeah I'm sorry

B: No it's ok

A: I'm also concerned about the data protection. It could be a problem we have a lot of information from our bank really important information that we cannot lose that information travelling to India. So a lot of people in India are going to have that information in India.

B: We can keep a group a security group for example from our bank and the rest of the service can be brought to India you know we can still have our group. So they have people to for example if they don't know how to do something they have someone to go to from here from our bank that has the knowledge.

A: That's a good idea. / You mean we just move the security part from our bank (overlap)

B: we can keep we can keep like (overlap) a group of three or four for each service and they can deal with this sort of problems

A: Yeah we probably are going to need more than that but it's a good idea yeah you mean just we move them

B: we move the responsible for that information that you were saying

A: well yeah

B: I think it's the best option and we have been analysing everything. I think it is the best option we have here.

A: yeah I'm still concerned about the relationships

B: I think that India is expanding very fast and there are all these companies that outsource their services to India too and they had great experience.

A: Do you feel that the personal service is gonna be the same? For example someone working in England they can make jokes the relationship for example they want to tell you something about their lives all right just to make a really strong relationship between the agent from the bank and the customer from our bank. We have to focus on that relationship if they want to make a joke to an Indian guy it's not going to be the same kind of joke if they want to tell the Indian guy for example something about their lives it's gonna be as easier like they are from India so even if they know a lot and even if they know the

product right if they want to make a casual talk right just speak casual about what they feel if they want to for example ask for a loan it's not going to be the same if they are asking the loan to someone in England because maybe they don't realize the situation of their lives there in England because they are really far away and the kind of life in England is really is not the same that in India there's a lot of differences so if they speak they ask for a loan and they give them the arguments right but the Indian guy is not going to take the same

B: yeah but that's why we have to prepare Indians not only with the knowledge skills but also show them how is the life in Britain you know so they can be more personal the attention. And it's not just someone that is just calling from another country. Try to involve them in all the tasks. Try to involve them in the history of the client and that of the country

A: so we can do the following we can start this like in a slow process really slow we cannot change everything from one day to another one

B: no of course not

A: it's gonna be a really slow process and we can make like a test scenario right with a small call centre there if they have like escalations questions everything they still can ask for the guys in England

B: yes of course we can have like let's say two months of UATs making tests and then go to the production, declare the goal life after two months of tests

A: and then we can take the results from one call centre and then the other one we can check how they work if they have the same success than the other one the money we have to focus on the money

B: I think we can try at least: for me it's the best option I have found. I don't know if there is another other better one but it's ...

A: but then we are gonna fight against time. Our bank is in a really big crisis here. So we have to do this slow but we have to do this fast at the same time because if we take a lot ...

B: yes that's why we have to send a group of people to prepare the call takers in India and to reunite the staff

A: yeah everything the culture the culture all the picture of our bank it's gonna be really hard but yeah we can try with a small call centre and then take a look at the results. Ok well

B: Ok then we can go ahead with this. Do you agree?

A: yes we can mix our arguments and try to

B: it's ok let's discuss the financial part with Tom

A: All right I'm gonna send an e-mail to him.

B: All right

A: Thank you very much

B: Thank you very much Charles. Bye bye

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### Roleplay 16 (Teletech)

A: Ok Ms Mat you know that we have this big issue with our finances so I was planning to I mean for next year to keep our call centres in our country but with some modifications. I mean we can work on our employees' shifts I mean reduce them also I mean reduce the time our call centres are open and on top of that what we could do is to deal with performance I mean to improve their performance in order to reduce the costs.

B: well yes right I mean definitely we need to reduce costs but I don't think that the best option would be to keep the call centres in-house I mean How can you reduce costs keeping the same amount the same number of employees? I mean I know you want to reduce shifts but anyway you will certainly have problems with the employees because they will complain because they are being cut out working hours so we will certainly have problems so my advice my option would be to directly move the entire call centre to India it will be definitely cheaper and more convenient for our company definitely.

A: Well the thing is that we already have issues with the services we provide to our customers you know and our employees already have the right culture it means that if we really want to improve our services what we need to do is to I mean to keep the business within our country. It is an English bank and we need to show that to our customers we need to show them that they can trust the same that they already have with the same employees.

B: But the problem is where are we going to take that money from. We know we certainly we don't have the money last year we lost a lot of money because of wrong investments and we cannot count on that money because we don't have it. We certainly should take most of the call centres out I know that the culture is different but anything can be taught and they can learn bear in mind that they are all graduates

university graduates.

A: but you are talking about saving money but do you think of how much money you will lose just because of all data protection devices that you need to get? And remember that you are talking about our customers' money. We are a bank it's not that we are any kind of customer services company so we are talking about money they need to trust on their people and on top of that just keep in mind that if you are talking about problems with the workers because of reducing their shifts imagine if we just give them the boot and we just release them and we move the company to another country the problems that we will have with the trade unions.

B: but we know that they will get a job somewhere else. They know that they are capable of dealing with that situation. I know it would be a problem but we have to move ahead and think like a bank. You told me we are a bank yes we are a bank we have to think financially. So I know that we will have problems with our employees but how can we overcome the financial crisis we are going to face in the coming months. What are we going to do?

A: but you are talking about saving money. Did you I mean did you think about the issue over I mean the cost of training all those people not only in the product in itself but the whole business culture I mean they do have a different financial service. And you need to train them on that you need to train somebody to train them you need to take people from here to train them on that I mean it's very expensive to train somebody abroad. You need to train them in the culture in the English culture. Remember that this is *the* English bank.

B: Yes I know that. Do you forget about all the American companies that have set up their own call centres in India or in different countries in Asia. They managed and they saved a lot of money. India or not it's convenient I know that training is expensive and it will be a kind of challenge for us because we have never done it but if we never do it we are missing a huge opportunity. Once we are settled there then it's a question of just once or twice a month see what is going on there but we have to start at some point as a lot of American companies did

A: Again you are risking quality for cost I mean with my proposal we are saving money

B: Last year

A: And again you are saving I mean you are risking quality you are risking quality of the call the accent of the agents I mean you need a lot of training to improve their accent. I mean remember our customers complain you are I mean you are talking about American companies and you know that their most or their biggest challenge is their accent and the agents' accent I mean how can we overcome that? I mean I guess that great the I mean best solution here is to reduce their shifts to improve their performance for them to take I mean as many calls as possible

B: but how can you how can you make them improve their performance improve their English improve their customer care service their customer care

A: skills?

B: skills if you are going to reduce their shifts it's like you are taking a lot out of them and you are not giving anything. You are even asking more from them so I don't think that that would work

A: I mean I guess this is a matter of setting up goals I mean if you set them goals such as a certain amount of calls per hour I mean

B: yes but you have to pay for that

A: but the same salary they have we will redistribute it I mean we need to ...

B: with the same if you give me the same salary the same amount of money I won't work more I don't think that I will work more

A: but less hours you will work better less hours you will get the same amount of money and you will improve your performance

B: Where where how do we save money then?

A: because we are reducing some other extra bonus payments such as night shifts such as overtime those fees will be totally reduced while planning or forecasting the calls or the type of I mean the call in itself or the business in itself and because of moving to another country is risking a lot. Remember that we are still I mean we still have problems with our customers regarding our performance or the performance in the call imagine adding to that issue agents' accent plus agents' lack of knowledge I mean we are adding a lot of things to that issue that we already have

B: Remember that last year we had the same discussion and we decided to stay in England and anyway it didn't work because we lost a lot of money

A: So you are

B: we risked we risked we went for quality and we risked our financial bonus and here we are we have lost \$5m what how are we going to overcome that?

A: and tell me where are we going to get the resources from? To train all that people to move all our services or the technical staff we we are dealing with a lot of things a lot of probably in the long run we will save some money but we need a lot of money to invest there at first.

B: as you said we will save a lot of money we will save a lot of money

A: ok I'm not quite sure that is the right solution I guess we need to deal with some other I mean we need to have a meeting with some other members of the board

B: Exactly right I totally agree with you

A: because I don't think that moving abroad would be the solution. I mean we have heard of several problems on several issues from American companies, haven't we?

B: I don't think that staying here is the best option either so I think that we should make another meeting

A: Ok let me call my secretary to set an appointment next week with the other members of the board

B: ask her to phone mine to let me know of this

A: Ok sure thank you very much

B: thank you

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### Roleplay 17 (Teletech)

A: First of all I think that the best we can do is to outsource our business onto India and the cost savings that we will be having and the impact that will have in our finance will be great and will help a lot our company at this particular moment with crisis always present with us and it's gone round and we don't know where we are going to end up next year in the next six months or next week I think that the best we can do is to start thinking of the idea of outsourcing our business as India has really great call centres and great outsourcing companies that nowadays according to US and to a lot of companies are in the UK. Not only that the associates that work on call centres in the UK are all graduates that mostly they are university graduates and they have great skills to work with our company in this case.

B: yeah but what do you think of the service they can give us? Because I know there are a lot of American companies working with India and other countries there but I don't think the English the English politics is actually the same as the American one

A: But I think that depends on our side I mean where are Auric bank and we know how to train people how to deal with our employees like if we take this company that will be outsourcing our business as part of our company we can skill everyone on the level on the level that we expect to have our employees and our associates to have so I don't think that would be a problem at all.

B: I can imagine that but but I have heard some theories and some stories about data protection or problems with identity theft which is I mean a very huge problem in the USA they've been dealing with that since they started with India and Argentina and different countries so we don't know if we are going to start having theories in India right? So I think that is problem we should discuss that before start generating business in India and

A: but that that could happen not only in India that could happen in the UK and that could happen even if we outsourced our business to the US that could happen as well so if we put the balance and we think of the idea of ok which is the most best way for us to make our costs really decrease a lot and have an efficient and an excellent service like the one that we are used to giving the one that we are always trying to have all the companies are working like that so I think that the best we can do is to outsource our business nowadays to India and also we can do it like tests we can have there are very important companies in India nowadays that have been doing call centres or outsourcing businesses not only in call centres but also in other specific businesses that have doing this for the last 20 years so they have the know-how to do this.

B: I know I'm just saying we've been working here for a long time you know how our English politics is and actually you know if we are talking about in terms of service it's not the same to hire Indian people or foreign people than hiring English people we know that/

A: think of this

B: in terms of level of service and service quality the English people will see the difference.

A: but for one English we have three Indians

B: I know that I know we will save a lot of money that is not a problem

A: so if we have from those three Indians we have two working like 70% of what an English person works and let's say only a 70% we are going to have a difference.

B: I know but but we are starting this initiative as the main problem is that people is not seeing this bank as close as it was three years ago. Many new people xxx the charge is going up so if we are doing new initiatives I don't know if it is a good one to go to India because they will see us as much more far away I mean it's

A: but what do you think about all these US and the UK companies that are doing it nowadays? Why is it that the Indian outsourcing business and the Philippines outsourcing business is that big? It's not just something that happens from night to the morning I mean something that is step by step those particular cases have taken all the businesses and they have the know-how they are really used to working with call centres and outsourcing businesses and the government gives a lot of support to those companies.

B: I know I don't think the government will be doing the same here. I mean the unions will have problems here I think there will be huge trouble with the unions here with the workers once they realize we are delegating work to India or foreign countries I don't think they would like that

A: I know but we are not going to close the bank at all we will have our let's call it boutique on the UK in which we have small businesses with great xxx of course but the idea would be to migrate everything to India to get the excellence that we are used to having here in the UK and if we have it here in the UK why we cannot have it in India

B: and what do you think about the image we need to keep here? I mean what would be your idea to keep the same image we've been having for a long time so the English people can feel they have an English bank?

A: oh we can have people from our bank from English people working in India until all the Indian people

B: That won't save money at first. That'll be a huge cost

A: oh yes we will save money if we put one person for every 10 Indians for every 20 people we have 21 people working for us instead of having two for the same cost.

B: I don't know I don't think the service will be the same maybe if we started that initiative maybe in the next 2 or 3 years we will have been working and working and

A: that depends on us depends on the excellence of the staff

B: no I don't think that depends on us the Indians have to get into our perspective into our point of view work as we are used to I don't think it's the same the same point of view and actually we don't work like the Americans

A: the quality doesn't depend on the nationality but on the service that the company wants to educate and wants to get everyone xxx

B: I'm just saying I'm just saying American companies deal with these foreign companies because they are looking for an aggressive type of business and we are not looking for we are looking for the opposite we want to catch customers back I don't think that is I mean we will save a lot of money that is right we can still reduce costs making part-time shifts with English employees.

A: We can do part-time shifts on India and we'll reduce it even more

B: Sure we will sure we will but I don't think it's the same I would keep the image with the English employees and make new ideas here with the employees. I think that is better actually in dealing with the customers in sales I think that would be a lot better if you want to catch back catch customers back so that they feel that the bank is still looking at them I think the best idea is probably not England or something like that because they would be calling customer service and the person not speaking English very well would be taking the call and I don't know I didn't have good experiences in the past.

A: I think that if we establish high standards high quality standards we establish a good training xxx to all the employees that are working with us we can have even better people that do want to work do want to develop their skills and with our help we will have a really big business there.

B: ok it's a good idea for me but let me try that I mean even in that case I would make like a mix so we can get some employees from India the best skilled but I wouldn't touch our banks here I wouldn't leave people on the street I mean I wouldn't fire people because of hiring Indian in their place. I don't think that is a good image for our customers like I said we want to have customers happy now that we are back on business and we are reducing costs so I wouldn't go to India and leave all to them I know it depends on us but it's not an easy job it's not an easy initiative

A: we would have some instead of hiring someone from another company instead of hiring a different company we can full ourselves concentrate on it we can talk about a native call centre on India that depends on us instead of hiring a third-part company and we have our own call centre and we will still be saving a lot of money and also in the near future we can start businesses I mean if we start working with a branch there An Auric branch working for us with people that are let's say nowadays working in the UK we can open a branch there next to the captive call centre and we will have really high quality standards

B: I still believe that the personal service the quality service will go down because I know we can still have some English employees here taking some I don't know some questions or concerns but it would still be the same because sooner or later we will need to tell the customer to phone India and that could be a problem for them with their society.

A: Remember they are not calling India they are calling Auric bank (they both laugh)

B: That's right. We should keep it like that then. We should make a mix, put some call centres in India and keep some here.

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### Roleplay 18 (Teletech)

A: Well Sophie you know I've been reviewing some numbers from last year and I've noticed we've lost \$1.5 because we are not focusing in what we should so what I'm planning to do is we should outsource our call centres to India. I've been doing some research and I've investigated a little bit and we are going to save a lot of money last year we lost a lot of money because of that so I think this year we have to do something else to change that and to focus our business in important things and maybe do the call centre part on another country so that we can really focus on our banking here in England which is what we really care about you know

B: yeah I totally agree with that but why have you chosen India?

A: Well actually you know there's a lot of call centres in India there's a lot of companies that have done that before our main competitors are doing that they all have call centres in India they have call centres in Argentina in India in the Philippines and I did some research and I've found that India has the best price right and they have better results right talking about performance they can sell more credit cards they have better performance than another country than the Philippines or Argentina and I think we really should do that because we are going to save a lot of money and actually let me tell you that do you know how many employees we have right now?

B: actually I'm not that sure but probably 2500 something xxx

A: Exactly we have around 2500 people working for us here in England and we are paying a lot of money for that we are paying in pounds in India let me see I'm checking and the contract for the contract for 5 years is going to be \$5.5m in India do you know how much we are paying right now for the next 5 years we will have to pay around let me check it's \$16m we would be saving a lot more right and we can focus that money on customers on giving them a better service on satisfying their needs right on giving them better loans better credit cards right so I really think we should do that you know.

B: And don't you think that probably if we reduce our if we provide the employees some part-time hours or if we can give them some uptrainings from the staff in order to reduce like the operating hours?

A: that could be that could be another choice but if you think about it we can do a lot things but we are not going to reduce costs at the same level we are going to do it if we outsourced the call centres to India right or the Philippines or Argentina right we can reduce some cost there we are going to gain in the side that well customers are talking to or speaking with English people but

B: but if we do that I mean we are going to have a better service than in India I mean the language?

A: well actually people in India English is like their second language everyone speaks English really really good they speak very good English and I've done some research I've talked with some people and the call centres that they have in India they are delivering great services to the other banks to our competitors so I think we should we really have to do this right it's going to be faster it's going to be cheaper the service is going to be better because we can have more people we can have probably we can have longer talks it doesn't matter if we have we don't need to shrink the xxx in time

B: that's a good idea

A: we are going to have a better service there right because we can have more people for the same amount of money or less a lot less money right instead of paying \$10m we are gonna pay \$5m right and we have a lot more people, people won't have to wait when they call to our service to our call centre right and we can put that money somewhere else.

B: Somewhere else ok. Have you think about the cost of having a call centre there? Because we have I mean we have to create the bases there I mean we will have to train people we will have I mean people from England will have to travel to India in order to provide the trainings and like all the technology and the facilities that we have here we don't have there and we have to buy all these things.

A: well that's exactly what you are wrong about because we are outsourcing means we are gonna make a contract with a call centre that already have the facilities that already have people that already have computers everything we need to provide the service right so the only thing that we need to do is give them the like the know-how you know just give them the information say ok guys this is our bank this is how we work this is what we want to do this is the credit cards or the loans and this is how it works and people are just gonna learn that probably what we could do is just send some trainers there which is not going to cost us it will be really low cost for us and they are going to be in charge of everything right. We

just have to tell them what to do and they'll do it for us. And we can save that time and all that people that we are hiring here in England and we can do a lot of things with that time like focus our time on things that we really care of here in England right. I think that is the most the most important ...

B: and do you think that people there in India will learn about all the bank production and things that we have here as well as we could do?

A: Of course they can do that of course they have to learn a little bit about our culture probably but they are used to do because there's a lot of call centres in India and I talked with one call centre in particular and they have already a contract with other England banks with English banks and with some other companies from England so they already know how we they know a little bit about our culture about what how we think about what we need right we just need to give them some training materials explain them what we do set some expectations and goals again they are going to be it's going to be better it's gonna be really cheap and the service is gonna be even faster than what we have here because we have better facilities

B: but it won't be the same

A: ah?

B: it's not going to be the same I mean we will have our call centre would be always better than In India even if we trained them as we were trained

A: well here is when here is when we need to see what we want to do we want to spend more money and deliver probably a slower service because we cannot hire too much more people and our service there is not that good so we need more people but we can't hire more people here in England so we really need more people and we need to do that outside England because it's really it's not really cheap to do it here right. It's really expensive to do it here and we need more people our service level every day so think about this think about how much we have grown in the last year and how much more new customers we have nowadays right? Every single day we have more calls more incoming calls and so what we need is more people to but we cannot hire any people here because we are reducing money right. We really need to do that. I think it's the best choice.

B: it could be the thing is that I'm really concerned about the image that we are getting here is no that good and probably if we if we put the call centre in India it's going to be worse than the image that we have here I mean for our customers. We are a bank I don't know if India they a call centre for a bank probably the people there is not used to that type of call centres and procedures or clients and we really need to have a better image of us here.

A: here is here is the good thing about outsourcing call centres. Here is the good thing and let me explain why because we are telling them how we are gonna do we are telling them what we want to do and how we want to do it right

B: like what?

A: everything we are gonna say ok you need to start the call this way when our customer tells you this you are gonna say this you are gonna say this way with this

B: they are not machines they are human beings

A: well but people is people there in India they are used to do that I mean the call centre is a specialized place for doing that right people know that they...

B: ok I think we can leave this as that and and we can talk about this with Brian probably he would help us next week?

A: I think Brian is going to be with me and guess why? because we are gonna save a lot money

B: I don't know it could be it could be

A: see you next week

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### Roleplay 19 (IBM)

A: According to the budget for the next five years it's obvious that we need to move our operations our call centres to India. What do you think about it?

B: Do you think that that would have to be the definite solution?

A: I think it would be the best solution. I mean the people that work there they all have the skills it has been proved we had good experience in other campaigns not this bank but other campaigns, most of the major US companies have call centres there, the costs are lower

B: uh if we outsourced the call centres maybe they won't protect our English identity as we do

A: well actually what we can and that's actually a good thing as they are university material they have English as one of those materials and they have to know English

B: they don't have the accent



A: we could train them in accent

B: that could cause problems

A: well we can train them in accent that's something that we can provide them and that may work I mean ...

B: I believe it's not the same essence

A: well course not but what the customers actually want what our customers want is less costs I mean they don't want to pay as much so you know in a balance between having them more and maybe one or two of them would be angry because of the accent I think we will lose more if we keep the services as they are the customer has to pay more

B: I believe we don't have to trust in the relationship we have built with our customers

A: the relationship will be the same

B: but I mean we have to trust that they want the same quality they want the same accent they want us to protect our identity

A: of course

B: so as well as that we have to keep the call centres in-house now we will save we can save I don't know maybe we can work with part-time employees, maybe we have other options.

A: Like what? Part-time is not actually reducing costs it would be the same thing

B: maybe we can reduce the hours of the business of the centres

A: but then the customers will be angry because we won't be there for them most of the time I mean banks already have limited hours

B: but we will be keeping the quality of the service

A: yes but I mean if you know the amount of calls that the call centres gets each day I mean there are many calls that are not taken per day because of the amount of calls that we get

B: ok but

A: if we reduced the time that the people at the phone can take calls then we would be I don't know 500 per day just a number 500 of our customers that will call and will be on-hold for hours and hours and will hang up and will say this bank sucks and we actually need to you know it's more ...

B: ok but if we outsource the bank and they work with people of India I mean maybe we will have issues with the accent with people that are working different

A: ah of course I'm absolutely I'm sure that we will have issues with that I mean I'm a 100% sure that we will have issues with that the thing is ...

B: so you want to receive more calls but not give them the same importance as we are giving them now

A: no what I'm saying is that if we give our call centres to this X-source India which is a third party company we will get that off our backs. This is very time-consuming, we need to focus on other things and this company can do the work for us. They will have their objectives and we will tell them you need to this and this and this and they will work on the accent and you know it's a win-win thing I mean we will get calls that will say you know what I don't like your accent put me with someone else I mean we will get those calls but I'd rather get the calls and not them on-hold and you know never getting them and not giving the customer any type of assessment at all.

B: (a long pause) I'm not sure about it I'm not sure I'm not sure if we have to reduce our quality of service

A: ok I understand what you say so let's do the following I have all the paperwork with all the numbers of what we will get all the numbers of the calls that we are missing already so if we reduce the time they will be more calls so I'll send those papers to you so that you can you know ...

B: and we also have to know with who we are working in India

A: well

B: I mean if they really understand our ...

A: well this X-source India has had a top priority for American companies since ten years and that's why we chose them I mean they work with General motors they work with ...

B: ok we need the results the positive results of those wok they have done so?

A: oh I have them all actually the customer satisfaction has gone up since they moved basically because they can get more calls and they are actually well-trained I mean we are underestimating these people they actually know what they are doing they just need to be trained

B: Perfect then so you'll send me those papers and the numbers

A: I'll send them right now so that you can check them

B: ok great then

### Roleplay 20 (Franklin Templeton Investments)

- A: Hi good morning Guillermina  
B: Hi good morning. How are you?  
A: I'm doing fine. I've been doing a lot of business lately and studying this case that we have in our hands  
B: yeah it's a tough call right?  
A: I know it's a very big and important decision we need to make so I guess we should go through several points in order to make a decision  
B: ok yeah you mentioned a couple of items in your e-mail but I wanted you to expand on that your opinions mainly what you think about your your point of view  
A: well you know the company has been going through a very difficult time the thing is that basically we have a plan of moving this call centre to India  
B: mhm  
A: I know you have your thoughts about that  
B: yeah  
A: I think I encourage this this to take action into this plan and and we need to decide and make a decision by the end of the month so  
B: By the end of the month?  
A: yes  
B: Oh no god no ok so what are your main points?  
A: ok first of all we you know that many many American companies are moving call centres to India and it is working and we are about to sign a very convenient and cheap contract and that is one of the main advantages and that we have that is one of the main reasons we want to move the call centres there. Doing this we think that the salaries that we will pay in India we cannot even compare to what we are paying to our current employees here in England  
B: yeah  
A: and also one of the points that one of the things that we want to emphasise is that people in India becoming part of this call centre will be graduates from universities and we will emphasise as well that their English level is very good  
B: ok  
A: and also I have some other things to go through my list but I'd I would like to have your opinion what you have in hands?  
B: I'm not frankly I'm not quite sure about the option of moving the call centres to India I don't think it would be such a good idea for our bank. You know our bank is a very traditional English bank and you know how British people are that they like to be eh that they like to talk to our English representatives and you know how the accent and the Indians although they have quite a very good level of English, it's not the same thing and you know you heard that from other colleagues from other banks it's it's not the same thing  
A: yes  
B: and on the one hand we have losing part of our image as customers are feeling that we are not such a caring bank as we used to be and I feel that if we move our, one of the points against you your your point of view is that we would lose I think we would lose terrain in that in that matter because clients will feel that we are not that caring as we are like we how do you say like we hire Indian people to take care about them like we don't we don't care about them instead of having English representatives taking care about their calls and their needs.  
A: well you know that India has been in the past an English colony so if we try to emphasise to hire people that speak English basically they speak British English how would they know that  
B: ah  
A: they are actually speaking to an Indian instead of an Englishman or woman?  
B: yeah that's a good point that's a good point but mhm  
A: and also there's a reality that the bank has been in the past year they've lost we've lost about \$1.5 billion and it's been a very tough period for the bank and there's a global crisis and I understand our clients are very traditional and they want to keep things as they are but they should be aware about the situation that if we keep the call centre in-house the service will not be good and they will not be satisfied at the end so mhm  
B: yeah I don't know I'm not so sure about that. I have made like a couple of points here like suggestions for keeping keeping the call centres in their current locations such as using more part-time employees, and then reducing the hours of the centres also we have a wide scope of business hours maybe we reduce a

bit a bit that maybe we could save some money and then we can also increase the targets of the number of calls per representative so that would make them more productive

A: mhm

B: I don't know these are the points that I have in hand for presenting to the committee next week but I don't know frankly I'm not a 100% sure about your your idea

A: but don't don't you think that running a call centre in-house is somehow time-consuming and that is not the main business of the bank? If we move the call centre to India we have this business this unit in India only doing this this job and and instead in-house we would have more people focused in the main business of of of AB bank

B: yeah that's a point but what about the 2500 employees that we have in our call centres right now? What about the unions? We'll have the unions you know on our backs. That's a strong point I mean we will have to pay a lot of money to let these workers go so I'm not sure about we would have to take a close look at the at the numbers at the figures with the committee because this is a lot of people to let go

A: well we can get a meeting we can get we can try to arrange a meeting with corporate accounting and try to analyse what the cost implications are. Probably eh if we if we pay all this extra money to all these people and comparing the very convenient and cheap contract that we have that we can have in India you know at the end it would be the same money or you know

B: yeah frankly I haven't taken a close look at the numbers but yeah maybe we should touch base with Human Resources as well to see if they can prepare I don't know a plan or something but I'm still not sure about that move I'm old-fashioned (she laughs)

A: I see

B: I'd like to keep the bank English and I think there are a lot of measures that we can take before taking such a such a definite measure as moving the call centres to India. I mean I think that once we move the call centres to India then I don't know what would happen to us I mean, anyone can do our job in any part of the world they won't need us I mean it's not only about this I mean it's about I think it xxx to other other areas of the company as well. I think we are at risk, we are we all are at risk if we take this measure I think there is no there's no returning point once we start eh

B: but we

B: taking this type of decisions

A: but we are focusing and handling here only a call centre I mean we are not discussing about other positions in the company your position or mine

B: yeah but it's just today once they start taking this type of decisions you never know where it's going to end I mean I don't know

A: ok we can try to gather more information get together with corporate accounting

B: ok

A: try to make an in-depth analysis and and and arrange a meeting sometime next week

B: ok yeah I will prepare a presentation with my points and try to organise a bit about you know

A: and I'll do the same right

B: ok

A: on my side

B: ok good

A: ok thank you

B: bye

### 7.3 Appendix 3

On the DVDs enclosed, find footage for the business simulated meetings conducted for this study. The DVDs include:

Footage for roleplays 1-10 on DVD 1

Footage for roleplays 11-20 on DVD 2

On the CD enclosed, find an electronic version of the thesis in word and pdf.

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