

It is the systematic exploration of these cultural differences that can help us get a better understanding of the different norms that govern interpersonal relationships in different cultures and help us go beyond the knee-jerk reactions of xenophobia and negative stereotyping.

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INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS: THE PROBLEM OF NORM DISCREPANCY

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analysis of a video tape-recorded negotiation and follow-up interviews with the Australian and Japanese business personnel in the negotiation. The findings indicate that in such intercultural situations interactants apply a variety of disparate communicative and sociocultural norms, particularly with regard to the function of an encounter, and the structuring and content of the proposal. This norm disparity sometimes results in one party evaluating the interaction of the other as inadequate. Although the analysis confirms some of the general stereotypes about Japanese business communication, others are negated.

INTRODUCTION

Within contemporary society, interaction between participants in the business domain is complex and intense, involving variation along such sociolinguistic parameters as participant, setting, channel and purpose. Business interaction occurs at the intra- and intercorporate levels as well as on intra- and international dimensions, frequently involving personnel who originate in different cultures. Despite the intensity and significance of intercultural business contact, little sociolinguistic research has been undertaken to date on such situations as "meetings", "conferences", "presentations" or "negotiations".

Even though a considerable body of literature exists on intra-national and international management, including business negotiations, this literature has incorporated minimal treatment of linguistic and sociolinguistic issues (Holden, 1987). Moreover, a considerable proportion of the literature on intercultural business interaction is unsystematic and anecdotal, and presents stereotypical perceptions and

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recommendations which have not been empirically verified. Such is the case of many popular monographs and articles dealing with Japanese and non-Japanese business interaction which are presented under the routine titles of "Doing business in Japan" or "How to negotiate with the Japanese" (Miller, 1988:40-50). Most of these lack a base in rigorous empirical data, are limited in purview, and draw upon questionable sources such as Benedict, Nakane, Doi and Lebra (Van Zandt, 1970; Deutsch, 1983; Graham and Herberger, 1983; Moran, 1984; Zimmerman, 1985; March, 1988; Crump, 1989). Nevertheless, on occasion, perceptive observations are incorporated. Work on Japanese-American negotiations by Tung (1984a, 1984b) is representative of international management research which is conducted in a systematic way, but based as it is upon questionnaires, it is largely of an attitudinal nature and is deficient in terms of in-depth analysis. Graham and Sano's (1984) monograph falls into the descriptive category, and while it is deficient in its use of data, some of the observations made on culturally specific patterns of behaviour are of interest.

Two American studies have specifically focussed upon communicative issues in Japanese and American business interaction. Miller's (1988) examination of content organization and discourse structure, listening, and cultural assumptions is based upon actual data and drew upon sociolinguistic concepts. Conversely, the study by McCreary (1986) on Japanese-American negotiations abounds with stereotypical notions and, furthermore, the analysis centres based upon a film of a dubious negotiation role-play (Business Council for International Understanding, 1976).

A questionnaire survey in 1984 of 67 Australian companies trading with Japan confirmed that serious communication problems characterized Australian-Japanese business negotiations (Owens Davies Consulting Group, 1984). Although the survey failed to nominate actual problems, it was correct in its supposition that these existed at levels other than the linguistic level. What is now clearly needed is research on intercultural business negotiations which has a theoretical basis and also empirical in nature.

Much scope remains here for sociolinguistics to contribute. Two principal ways can be identified for this purpose:

- (a) the provision of theoretical frameworks to explicate the processes and problems of interaction which characterize intercultural contact situations; and,
- (b) supply of appropriate research methodology, not generally applied in existing analyses of interaction in the business domain.

The concern of this paper is with intercultural business contact in general, and with the specialized interactional situation of Australian-Japanese negotiations in particular.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study applies the model of interaction which has been developed by Neustupný (1989). In Neustupný's model, interaction comprises two principal components — sociocultural behaviour and communicative behaviour, where communicative behaviour in turn consists of linguistic and sociolinguistic behaviour. Represented in Figure 1 below, the framework indicates that individuals require competence in communicative and sociocultural norms in order to interact in the business domain.

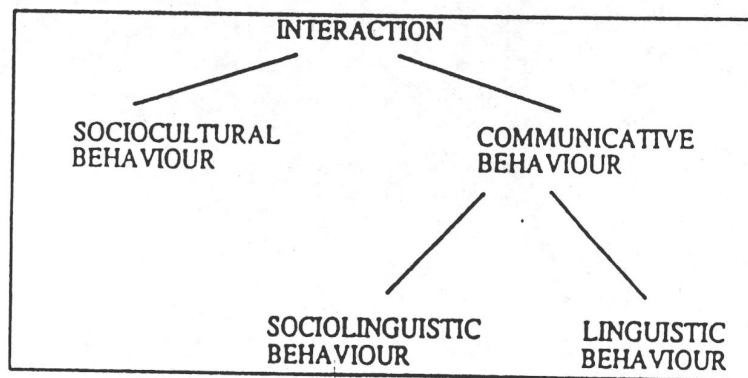


Figure 1: Neustupný's Model of Interaction.

Regardless of the domain, interaction takes place either in native (or internal) situations, or in contact (that is, external) situations (Neustupný, 1988:7). These contact situations are also commonly

referred to as intercultural situations. Since situations of intercultural contact are comprised of two (or more) different systems of norms of interaction they are decisively different from internal situations (Neustupný, 1988:7).

Neustupný has made a significant contribution to the study of intercultural contact (1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1988, 1989), partly through the importance he attaches to the processes of contact rather than to their results.

Interaction Management

One of the crucial features observable in intercultural or contact situations is that of interaction management. This management consists of a number of processes:

- (1) Deviations from what the participant or participants in the situation accept as the norm. These deviations may be noted or else remain unnoted.
- (2) If noted, deviations can be negatively, neutrally or positively evaluated.
- (3) Adjustments can occur in order to deal with the negatively evaluated features (Neustupný, 1988:3-4).

A focus upon deviations in intercultural situations leads to an interest in norm origin. Theoretical and empirical studies by Neustupný (1985a, 1985b, 1988) and others (Marriott 1988a, 1988b) indicate that in Australian-Japanese contact situations norms originate either in the Australian or Japanese cultural systems, or else are due to other processes such as pidginization or interlanguage/interculture. In this paper the focus is upon the application of Australian and Japanese norms (cf. Marriott 1988b, forthcoming a and b).

Although Australian English regularly serves as the "base linguistic norm" in Australian-Japanese negotiations, especially if the setting is an Australian one, I propose that the interaction management is characterized by many deviations from Australian communicative and sociocultural norms. As a result, discrepancies in the generative and interpretative or evaluative behaviour of participants from the two

different cultures occur, even though sometimes these discrepancies are not recognized or understood by the individuals involved in the interaction. However, at times, such norm dissonance is evaluated negatively by one or both of the parties in the contact situation. Whereas verification of discrepancies in the norms of Australian and Japanese participants in other intercultural situations has been contained in a number of studies (Murie, 1986; Neustupný, 1985a; Asaoka, 1987; Marriott, 1988a, 1988b), no study of intercultural business negotiation has systematically treated this phenomenon.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this study is of two kinds: a naturally occurring interaction, which was recorded on video-tape, and two follow-up interviews in English between myself, as interviewer, and the participants in the business interaction. During these interviews the video-tape was replayed segment by segment and all reports of the participants about the preceding negotiation was recorded on audio-tape.¹ The necessity to base the analysis of negotiations upon actual behaviour is essential, for without this type of data the dynamics of communicative interaction in business situations cannot be understood. Moreover, the follow-up interview clarified certain problems, including the avoidance of communication, and it enabled us to learn about the perceptions and interpretations of the situational participants which were not encoded in the surface structure. The development of methods of data collection which, firstly, are based on natural data, and secondly, use more than one source, represents an important advance over approaches which have relied upon a single source of data or else used such methods as role-plays, interviews or introspection.

The naturally occurring business negotiation which forms the basis of this study represented the first stage of a negotiation between two participants who met for the first time. The setting for this dyadic interaction was an office of a Japanese company in Melbourne, labelled in this paper as NOSA, which was staffed by two personnel appointed from the parent company in Japan.² The video-recorded negotiation took place between J, the senior Japanese representative who had been resident in Melbourne for two and a half months, and A, an Australian businessman who was the managing director of a small cheese company,

which will be referred to as DIF. Although this was J's first period of residence overseas he had travelled on business to the United States of America, Europe and Taiwan on four occasions. The Japanese businessman had been employed for a period of twenty years by the same company which specialized in the manufacture and processing of dairy products. He had studied some English during the period of formal education, and prior to an overseas trip four years ago he attended a three-months training course at a private institute where he intensively studied English and other technical areas relating to import and export.

The Australian businessman had worked in positions connected with the cheese industry for a long time and had established his own company twelve months ago. Even though this company was in the process of expanding into Ireland, Germany and the United States of America, the Australian did not possess extensive experience in international negotiations. His actual contact with Japanese business personnel was limited to one prior meeting with a group of visitors to his company. Participant details are summarized in Appendix I.

The Australian businessman had initiated the interaction through a telephone call to arrange a meeting at J's office in order to promote his company's product in Japan. After this appointment J invited me to video-tape the interaction in response to an earlier request. J had actually triggered the contact with A's company when he visited an exhibition of food held at the Exhibition building and left his business card at the stand of the Dairy Board where he saw cheese from A's company on display.

THE NEGOTIATION

The negotiation between the Australian and the Japanese businessman was approximately forty minutes in duration. A categorization of the entire negotiation discourse into topics and sub-topics is found in Appendix II, and will be referred to throughout the discussion. This negotiation can be divided into five principal stages: opening, introduction of proposal, expansion of proposal, agreement and closing. The grouping of topics into these five stages is depicted in Table 1.

STAGE	TOPIC
I. Opening	1. Opening frame
	2. Introductions
II. Introduction of Proposal	3. Introduction of proposal
III. Expansion of Proposal	4. Expansion of product details
	5. Review of proposal
	6. Further expansion of product details
	7. Return to proposal
	8. Return to expansion of product details
IV. Agreement	9. Agreement to proposal
V. Closing	10. Clarification of details
	11. Expansion of agreement
	12. Closing of agreement

Table 1: Negotiation Stages

As mentioned above, the purpose of the following analysis is to identify the kinds of communicative and sociocultural norms which are applied by the Australian and Japanese participants in the negotiation. Such identification will permit an evaluation of cases of deviation from the Australian norm and in this way enable us to see how norm discrepancy operates in intercultural situations. The paper will not include analysis of the many linguistic deviations which are found in the Japanese businessman's spoken English.

Function of the interaction

An examination of the discourse of the business negotiation and of the follow-up interviews revealed that the Australian and the Japanese interactants held disparate views on the function of their first dyadic interaction. The Australian's objective was clearly to introduce his product and to obtain from his Japanese addressee an indication of interest in proceeding to a further stage of the negotiation. The

objective of the Japanese, on the other hand, was to obtain information about the Australian company and of its intention relating to future cooperation.

The purpose of the Australian businessman was expressed in the two sequences where he introduced his proposal. The first preliminary move occurred early in the interaction, opening the negotiation's second stage, the Introduction of Proposal (Topic 3.1). The Australian lifted the lid of the cardboard carton which he had brought to the meeting and, after taking out seven samples of "fancy" cream cheese varieties, focussed the topic of conversation on these. A little later, he explicitly clarified the purpose of his visit (topic 5.1) following a solicitation from the Japanese interactant:

(1)

- J: And eh what your object to eh visit to me, is that eh introduce for eh this
A: We'd like to sell to Japan.
J: Sell to Japan
A: Yeh ... or make it in Japan.
J: ... uh huh
Mm ah here yes
A: Either way, whichever is the best.
J: Mm

(pp.15-16)

Here, the Australian unequivocally presented his proposal: to either export the Australian product or to manufacture it in Japan. Despite the encoding of a lucid proposition by A, only a minimal response of "mm" was given by the Japanese interactant.

The Australian businessman wished to assess the interest of his interactant so that the business negotiation could either be continued thereafter or else concluded on that occasion. There was an extensive stage in the discourse during which the proposal was expanded. Here, the talk alternated between descriptive information on details of the product and the Australian company, and upon the actual negotiation proposal itself. When presenting the proposal, A suggested a plan of action: firstly, J was to taste the samples brought to the negotiation by A, and secondly, he was to forward to Japan further samples which A would supply in the future (topic 7.1):

(2)

- A: What I would like if eh you're interested ... you try
J: ... mm
A: these products here with people you know in Australia
J: ... mm
A: and I will get you some fresh samples ... properly
J: ... mm
A: packaged to send to eh to Japan.
J: mm
selling, ah selling this is about yeh er this is February, about half half year.
(J reads from the back of a package.)

(pp.25-26)

In the above extract of the discourse (2) J again encoded a minimal response and instead of responding to the proposal, moved to a new topic by means of re-thematization of the product details: first, he raised the issue of the use-by date (topic 8.1) and then the share arrangements between the Australian company and its overseas partners (topic 8.2). By means of this boundaried topical movement which was followed by a stepwise movement, he succeeded in deferring the type of response which A desired. The negotiation finally entered the Agreement stage, which was initiated by A returning to his proposal (topic 9.1):

(3)

- A: I'd like you to try these in Australia ... and I'll I'll
J: ... mm
A: get you some more packs for to send back if you're interested
J: Mmm yes
A: I'll pack them up in the box we normally sell them in
J: Uh huh ah normal two kilogram?
A: Yeh I'll give you some brochures ... which I'll um
J: ... mm ... mm
A: get for you.
J: Yes OK. Ah as a first stage I'd like to ah introduce to our head office and (()) so that and eh I sound is it possible to market or or produce in Japan so that eh at the first stage I would like to have some sample and I will deliver to our head office ... and eh

- A: ... all right
 J: maybe one month later they they give us ah comments from our head office, right?
 A: all right mm (p.28)

It was during the above sequence that J first revealed his intention to introduce the product to his head office. It is noticeable in the last two extracts (2) and (3) quoted above, that the Australian had modified his proposition: he would prepare additional samples to be sent to Japan, if J revealed a favourable attitude toward the product. The response of the Japanese addressee is of interest: he replied positively, agreeing to introduce the samples to his head office, but whether he intended to deliver either the current or future samples was equivocal.

In the Agreement stage, the Japanese requested to visit the cheese factory (topic 11.2), another strategy which could be interpreted as representing a display of interest on his part. At first, A recommended that J provide prior notice of his intended visit, though in the Closing stage (topic 12.6), A altered the plan, agreeing to initiate the appointment himself. Prior to this however, in the opening segment of the Closing of Agreement stage (topic 12), J initiated further repetition concerning the use of samples (topic 12.1), a device which he later explained was to confirm his decoding of the message.

The Australian's interpretation of the function of the interaction was succinctly summarized during the follow-up interview when he observed the video-tape sections of the negotiation encompassing discourse on the destination of the samples:

- (4)
 Int: Your first proposition to him was that he eat this lot of cheese and that you would bring him another lot. You had to repeat that several times.
 A: I didn't want him to send those samples. They'd been out of refrigeration for half a day.
 Int: You weren't as direct as that, as to say "I don't want you to send these".
 A: Well I was only trying to emphasise the fact that I'd get him samples to send over if he decides to proceed. (p.43)

The follow-up interview quoted is (4) above incontestably revealed A's perception on the function of the interaction. However, as seen in extract (3) from the negotiation discourse, J's reaction to the proposal did not concur with A's expectation. In summary, the Australian's interpretation of the function of the interaction was one where he expected the Japanese addressee to reveal or decline any interest in the business proposal. The failure of his interactant to provide either positive or negative declaration led the Australian to place a negative evaluation upon this component of the interaction. Additional extracts from the follow-up interview with A verify this claim. In the opening section of the interview, A's dissatisfaction was mildly articulated:

- (5)
 Int: As a result then what did you expect from today's meeting? The results, were they as expected?
 A: Ah yes, there's nothing positive. I'm introducing our product.
 Int: With a non-Japanese would you have expected a different sort of result?
 A: Yes, probably with a European we would have said "yes" or "no" at the end of the meeting.
 Int: He or you would have?
 A: I would have asked him or he'd tell me.
 Int: So were you happy?
 A: Sure, we were just introducing it. He's following up on his inquiry really. (pp.41-42)

This interpretation was later strengthened:

- (6)
 A: Well basically there's no trouble spot except that I don't really know what he's going to do. It finished a little bit unconcluded. (pp.49)

Furthermore, in the closing segment of the interview his disclosure of dissatisfaction was repeated and further intensified:

- (7)
 Int: Is there anything else you'd like to bring out, either specifically or in general?

- A: No not really nothing we haven't discussed, just that there wasn't any clear conclusion to the meeting. I have to ring him up. Sure he wants to have a look at the factory. So it's not "we'll ring you". I think it's open to proceed.

(p.59)

The evidence unmistakably shows that there was a disparity of norms with regard to this crucial component of the interaction management. The Japanese response — to forward information to Japan, and to visit the Australian company — was not the type of response the Australian had expected on the basis of his own native norm, and consequently he evaluated this deviation very negatively. According to one popular stereotype certain non-Japanese strongly dislike an inconclusive ending to a business encounter, preferring to receive instead an explicit indication either of interest or disinterest (Graham and Sano, 1984:15). Such a stereotype is itself extremely culturally specific. It assumes that inconclusiveness is encoded similarly across cultures — a finding which is not verified on the basis of data presented here. During the negotiation the Japanese businessman had expressed interest in A's proposal, firstly by volunteering to send information to Japan and, secondly, by requesting to visit the Australian's factory. The above stereotype also exhibits a second problem: interactional differences in contact situations are frequently attributed to cultural variation even though the feature is not necessarily of a cultural nature (cf. Neustupný, 1988:15).

It is empirically observable that for the Japanese interactant, the function of the business meeting was of a different nature: as noted above, his aim was to obtain information about the Australian company and of its plans. The Japanese interactant clearly enunciated his perspective across a series of turns in the follow-up interview, as the extract below shows:

(8)

- Int: What sort of general result did you expect from today's meeting?
 J: Ah today's meeting result? Yes, one is that we request him to have ah for us to have sample such a many variety of such, and they agree to send this cheese, variety of cheese and another is
 Int: They agree? He agrees?
 J: Yeh he agrees yes.

Then another agreement is that he, I request to visit you their plant and they agree, the next month. And third is they call me again what's the date is suitable.

- Int: So before the meeting was that what you expected?
 J: Ah yes ah those cheese is a very unique cheese for us. But in Japan the those kind of cheese is still small market in size. So that for the first, if, so that I I wondered they have a lot of knowledge about how to make a cheese, for instance yeh propriety or
 Int: This company?
 J: Umm have a propriety or patent.
 Int: Did you find that out today?
 J: No, they they I didn't find it. They have only have a knowledge, know-how ... if yeh they have the right of patent it's very easy to report to our headoffice.
 ...
 Yes. He doesn't have it, only know-how so very difficult to introduce my so that I didn't
 Int: You didn't explain that to him. You didn't say to him it was difficult
 J: Umm no.
 Int: So what was the reason? Any particular reason for not explaining?
 J: Oh not, yes, not any particular reason I had. But I eh, today's meeting was first meeting so that I had I'd like to have just information what the company is and what sort of company and what what they intended to, so that I
 ...
 So ah as I mentioned still such like cheese market in Japan is very small so that not profitable for them so we just only information we would like to have.
 ...
 Ah yeh, if they have a patent I am very enthusiastic to have such a so expect to have a patent but
 Int: Do you think he understood that problem or not?
 J: Problem, no she don't he don't understand. I didn't explain that because just information for me and report to head office yes.

(pp.67-70)

In the above interchange (8), J emphatically declared that the purpose of this first meeting was to procure information about A's company and its plans. Simultaneously, he raised two crucial socioeconomic problems. One concerned the lack of the Australian company possessing a patent. The other related to the small size of the Japanese cheese market for such specialized cream cheese as that manufactured by A's company. The final turn, quoted above in extract (8) from the follow-up interview contained a pivotal utterance: J did not explicitly explain the difficulties of entering into a cooperative arrangement with the Australian as the purpose of that meeting was just to gather information for reporting to head office.

Although it could be argued that the Japanese businessman's behaviour was motivated by the desire to express politeness by avoiding an explicit display of disinterest, as is frequently contended in the popular literature (Zimmerman, 1985:105; March, 1988:158), there is a much stronger case for arguing that his conduct was due to different sociocultural norms concerning the function of the interaction. That is to say, the objective of the Japanese interactant was to gather information for transmission to Japan; it was not his role to make an initial decision, as was perceived by the Australian. Nevertheless, during the negotiation he consciously avoided to communicate his own interpretation that business cooperation would be difficult when the partner company did not possess a patent.

The general conception, then, that the Japanese prefer to avoid explicit negation (Van Zandt, 1970:49; Ueda, 1974; Graham and Sano, 1984:14) is partly an inaccurate deduction of the type of interactive behaviour found in my data. Such an interpretation assumes that an obligatory component of a business encounter is either acceptance or negation of proposals by those immediately involved in the interaction. However, as has been shown above, participants from different cultural communities possess different interpretations concerning the function of certain encounters such as initial negotiations. The native norm of the Japanese interactant certainly did not require him to make any commitment at this stage or even venture his own individual evaluation. The disparity of norms in this regard was particularly strong, and since it was the Australian, who, using his own native norms, noted and negatively evaluated a deviation in the conduct of the Japanese, it was he who was frustrated at the outcome of the negotiation.

Of significance is the fact that neither party was conscious of the nature of this discrepancy of norms concerning the function of the initial negotiation. Examination of the pertinent sequences in the discourse (as in [3]) reveals that the Japanese businessman had expressed his interpretation of the function of the interaction by agreeing to take follow-up action. However, this was not adequately decoded by the Australian as it did not accord with his own norm. The case is important, for it shows that adequate linguistic messages which are generated by one party are not comprehended by the other party in the contact situation when there is incongruity between the participants' communicative or sociocultural norms.

Connected with the preceding section is the perception accorded to the role of personnel at a business negotiation. Undeniably, the Australian expected his Japanese interactant to act as the initial decision-maker, after which contact could be made with his head-office if a favourable decision was initially attained. Extracts quoted above ([2] and [3]) conclusively show that A's expectation involved J making an individual assessment of the product; during the negotiation and again in the follow-up interview the Australian declared that he would deliver extra samples to forward to Japan, if the Japanese businessman was "interested". On the other hand, J had informed A of his intention to report to head office (cf. [3] above). He also supplied further supporting evidence in the follow-up interview when he justified his own move to close the meeting:

(9)

Int: Yes, so what made you finish the meeting?

J: Ah because I got enough ah information from him so that I can make a report to head office so that I finished. (p.93)

Obviously, the Japanese businessman viewed his prime role as one involving the conveyance of information to Japan. In this regard, there was strong discrepancy with the perception held by the Australian who viewed the Japanese as possessing the power of initial decision-making. The phenomenon of decision-making in Japanese and non-Japanese negotiations is a vitally important one, and previous research has invariably suggested a greater emphasis upon consensus in the Japanese cultural system (Van Zandt, 1970:47; Zimmerman, 1985:120; March, 1988:131). Tung's (1984b:67-68) study, for instance, concluded that

American negotiators perceive differences in negotiation styles of the Japanese, but she was unable to explain this variation.

The contrastive notions of individual versus consensual role participation may partly account for the difference apparent in the behaviour of the two individuals in my data. Such dissonance may not necessarily be due to sociocultural differences but rather to universal variation within the business domain. On the Australian side the company was a small, provincial manufacturing unit which attempted to deal with a large and experienced Japanese company. In the negotiation it was evident that the small manufacturer emphasized individuality while the representative of the large Japanese company did not.

Involvement by the Japanese in consensual decision-making which frequently results in the referral of issues to head office is interpreted by non-Japanese business personnel as a strategy of the Japanese to avoid positive responses (Graham and Herberger, 1983:163; Graham and Sano, 1984:12). However, this interpretation fails to distinguish the variable role in decision-making played by representatives of small companies in comparison with the limitations placed upon the right of representatives of large companies in making individualistic decisions (cf. Yoshimitsu, 1986). It is likely that such an imbalance of company size, and of the decision-making power and experience of individuals may well be a typical feature of international business situations, especially in the case of Japanese business personnel negotiating overseas.

Structure and content of the proposal

A perusal of the list of topics and sub-topics (Appendix II) revealed that the negotiation included discourse on numerous issues relating to the product and the company. In the follow-up interview the Australian disclosed his perception that during the negotiation, he would provide details of the proposal leading to a cooperative arrangement in response to specific solicitations from his Japanese interactant. In this regard, he evaluated his partner as not having solicited as many details as expected. These claims emerge in the following extract:

(10)

Int: Were there many points that you felt you had to go over more than once to get across?

A: No more than when dealing with any non-Australian. He didn't ask me many questions.

Int: He didn't ask many questions? You could have expected more?

A: I volunteered the price. I didn't think he was going to ask.

Int: Why might you have felt that?

A: That's one of the first things any buyer asks, "How much?"

Int: And he didn't?

A: No I told him half-way through. As a rule it's price first, quality second. "Is it saleable within the price range that I can operate on?"

Int: So he took a different approach then?

A: Yeh, well as you said, "Did I have to volunteer anything?", well that was one.

Int: Anything else?

A: No, he didn't ask a lot of questions. He didn't ask about the packaging, how many in a container, how we ship them and fly or ship it. A lot of things that you'd normally expect, perhaps in the second meeting.

Int: That comes up in the second meeting?

A: Well maybe with him, but with normal people, well say at a normal meeting introducing a line there's virtually a check list of things they need to know.

(pp.46-47)

It is necessary to check A's perceptions of J's questioning behaviour against his actual performance. Previous research has shown that participants' perceptions of what happens in discourse may be quite contrary to actual language use due to different situational parties holding disparate discursal sets (Candlin, Coleman and Burton, 1983). Table 2 enumerates the topics concerning product or company details which were covered during the course of the interaction.

Detail (+ topic no.)	A's initiation	J's solicitation/ initiation
Current overseas expansion (3.2)		X
Previous Japanese contact (3.3)	X	
Patent/know-how (4.1)		X
(6.2)		X
(10.1)		X
Rival companies (4.2)	X	
(6.3)	X	
A's distributor (4.3)	X	
Quantity of production (4.4)		X
New overseas expansion (4.5)	X	
Pricing policy (6.1)		X
Profitability (6.5)	X	
Sharing arrangement (6.6)		X
(8.2)		X
Equipment (6.7)		X
Ingredients (6.8)	X	
(6.1)	X	
Use of Chemicals (6.9)		X
Selling period (8.1)		X
Cheese varieties (10.2)		X
Use of a cheese variety (10.3)		X
Size availability (12.3)		X
<hr/>		
No. of individual issues raised:	6	11
<hr/>		
Total of individual and repeated issues:	8	14
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Table 2: Initiation of Product and Company Detail

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Actually, a larger number of individual issues were raised by the Japanese speaker, eleven as against six for the Australian, and these included crucial matters: overseas expansion, patent, quality, pricing, sharing arrangement, equipment, use of chemicals in the production, the range of cheese varieties, selling period, uses of the cheese and size availability. On the other hand, the Australian volunteered brief information on previous contact with another Japanese company, rival producers in Australia, the company's distributor, new international expansion, profitability and ingredients used in the production process. This analysis does not strongly support A's claim that his Japanese interactant did not solicit information. Possibly, A reacted to the tone of J which seemed to him to show that there was little interest.

It is noticeable that the issues of particular concern to J, that is, the patent and the sharing arrangements, were each recycled by him on other occasions. Also, the distribution of these topics was significant: the topic focussing upon the patent was positioned early in the discourse, and the other, a little later. The fact that Japanese business personnel engage in repetitive solicitations about significant business issues thus receives some support from this study, although the evidence is limited. Tentatively though, the claim that the interests and concerns of Japanese business personnel can be indirectly gauged on the basis of their questioning behaviour in business negotiations receives validation from the small corpus of data. As shown in extract (8) above, the discovery that A's company did not possess a patent was one of the principal causes for J's lack of enthusiastic display toward the business proposal. However, revelation of this attitude during the business negotiation with the Australian businessman was highly concealed, as the next two discourse excerpts from the negotiation reveal. The first contained J's initial solicitation:

(11)

J: Uh huh and eh do you have any eh patent in Australia or eh to produce this such a such a (J picks up a package of cheese)

A: No we don't have any patent.

J: Patent

A: No

J: But eh you have know-how of the

A: Yeh we have the know-how. We have two other

J: ... know-how yeh

- A: people making this product ... in Ja in Australia
 J: ... uh huh
 ... uh huh
 A: but their product is not as good as this one.

(pp.11-12)

The Japanese speaker re-topicalized this issue during the Expansion of Proposal stage (topic 6.2):

(12)

- J: And eh ah so you you don't have any propriety of eh the license of the or another patent but you have ah know-how ... how to
 A: ... yeh
 J: make this and
 A: ... yeh, ... There's many people who have tried to make it.

(pp.18-19)

It has been explained earlier in the analysis that despite J's identification of the failure of the Australian company to satisfy the crucial condition of patent possession, he did not explicitly convey to his Australian interactant his negative evaluation. Nor did the Australian decode any such interpretation: there was no evidence in either the business negotiation or the follow-up interview to indicate that the Australian recognized the significance of this set of sequences. The matter of possession of patents or know-how is a socioeconomic issue which may exhibit cultural patterns, or else vary across industries or industry categories rather than across cultures. As argued above, it seems that when individual, sociocultural or socioeconomic norms are different, the interpretation of linguistic messages, including those which are highly indirect, is all the more difficult.

A further fundamental socioeconomic issue which emerged in the data concerned profit margins. The Australian's extremely positive rating of the high profit margin which his product could obtain was not shared by the Japanese businessman. In fact, there was considerable dissonance in the norms of the two interactants, even to the extent that the Australian evaluated the lack of his addressee's enthusiasm in high margins as due to linguistic inadequacies in comprehension of the message. When briefly referring to his joint venture arrangements (topic 6), the Australian mentioned that his cheese was profitable

"because we can charge a high retail price". He then explained how the profits are distributed equally in Ireland between the manufacturer, the distributor and the Australian company, and appended a further example of the American arrangement of a four-way sharing of profits. The Japanese businessman later re-topicalized this important issue of sharing arrangements (topic 8.2). However, he displayed linguistic decoding problems when A introduced the term "sterling", and a long corrective sequence followed. In the follow-up interview an awareness of differences in the expectations of the size of profit margins was shown by the Australian, yet he was unsuccessful in interpreting the lack of J's interest in very high margins:

(13)

- A: He obviously had difficulty comprehending the um Irish system for the one-third, especially in pounds sterling when I tried to show him that the margins were there because normally they'd expect to give me two percent not thirty percent in a dairy produce deal. The reason I pointed out was that the margins could be good and I think he had trouble with pounds "sterling". It was probably my fault. I should have converted to Australian dollars.

(pp.42-43)

The Australian's failure to understand the acceptance of a low profit margin by a large Japanese company shows his inadequate knowledge of the Japanese socioeconomic system. There was, thus, large disparity of norms between the two businessmen at the level of sociocultural (including socioeconomic) management.

When reviewing the same section of the videotape, the Japanese businessman agreed that the re-introduction of the topic on sharing arrangements was for the purpose of correction, specifically to check whether the shared amounts referred to total of sales or only to the profit. He confirmed A's interpretation that he had experienced linguistic problems with the item "sterling". This same discourse passage provided illustration of another important contrastive feature in the interaction: the Japanese businessman, rather than the Australian, displayed greater socioeconomic knowledge, despite his problems in communicative competence in Australian English.

The follow-up interview with the Australian businessman provided evidence that apart from his expectation of receiving more solicitations

for information, he also envisaged a different ordering of the content, with a focus on the product's price being given a priority position (extract [10]). As this did not occur, A reported to volunteer the information half-way through the negotiation. Whether a prime focus on price is a sociocultural norm in A's system, or else a norm of small business personnel irrespective of cultural membership, is a matter for further investigation. Otherwise, it could be due to idiosyncratic differences, reflecting A's lack of experience in business negotiations.

There was a difference in A's and J's perceptions of their respective roles in the exchange of information. A perceived his role as that of someone providing information on business issues whilst the Japanese interactant regarded himself as the recipient of information, not so much in response to solicitations from himself but rather as the result of direct presentation by the Australian businessman. The requirement of Japanese business personnel for an immense amount of detailed data in negotiation situations has been noted in the literature (Deutsch, 1983:114, Zimmerman, 1985:112). The rather meagre provision of information delivered by the Australian in the encounter studied was seen as inadequate by the Japanese businessman. This perception was revealed in the follow-up interview:

(14)

Int: Did you ask a lot of questions today?

J: Uh huh

Int: Or did you expect that he would give you more information?

J: I expect to get ah I ask him his because eh not ah his his explanation not enough for me.

Int: Is it normal that you have to ask many questions?

J: Maybe, ah no maybe hhheh this business is his interesting he his interest not for interest maybe

Int: For your interest?

J: Uh huh maybe. Because they are producer and seller. In that case in Japan maybe the salesman speak more.

Int: And he's the salesman.

J: He is the salesman. More, more explanation about the eh his companys and the condition of the trading.

(pp.84-85)

The above example should suffice to indicate that the Japanese interactant negatively evaluated the spoken performance of the Australian speaker. To account for this feature, it could be hypothesized that the Australian's limited performance was a feature of Foreigner Talk, which led to a modification of his speech output. Alternatively, the amount and type of information which is considered adequate according to Australian norms could be quite different from the Japanese norm. This is a very important topic for further empirical study. The fact that the popular literature sometimes contains reference to the issue does actually suggest that the amount of information which business interactants consider adequate varies cross-culturally, with the Japanese requiring much more information in business interaction than Australians or Americans.

Apart from spoken communication, there was also some norm discrepancy regarding the importance of the written channel. Although a presentation of his company's brochure was made by the Japanese to the Australian at the beginning of the encounter (topic 2.1), there was no reciprocation by the Australian. It was only later during the Agreement stage that A consented to supply brochures (cf. topic 9.1 in [3] above) and then repeated this promise in the Closing of Agreement (topic 12) stage when he admitted to having exhausted his supplies.

The importance of obtaining written matter was emphasized in the follow-up interview by J, where; on two occasions, he made reference to sending his own report together with corporate brochures to Japan. Popular writers on business negotiations have recognized the Japanese sociocultural pattern of brochure presentation at the first meeting, realizing that such material is given more importance in that society (Van Zandt, 1970:52; Deutsch, 1985:122). My findings support this generalization. Conversely, the provision of written material seemed to be an ancillary matter for the Australian in this negotiating situation.

Another important communicative activity which could be observed throughout the meeting on the part of the Japanese businessman was note-taking, obviously to form the basis for his forthcoming report to Japan. The Australian did not engage in any writing activity. Although there was no necessity on this occasion, a sociocultural difference between Australians and Japanese is apparent regarding the evaluation made of such conduct in interactive situations; although writing in formal, including business, situations is positively evaluated in the Japanese cultural system, it tends to be minimized by

Australians, as to do otherwise is interpreted as reflecting negatively upon their ability to remember details. Extensive interviews which I have conducted on previous occasions show that the disparity of Australians and Japanese norms concerning the use of the written language is not generally understood by the business participants themselves.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

I have argued that in the business negotiation between an Australian and a Japanese interactant significant norm discrepancies occur at the communicative and sociocultural levels of interaction. Notably, the participants possess different norms for the function of an initial negotiation. Whereas the Australian businessman expected an explicit display of interest or disinterest of the type which accorded with his own norms, for the Japanese the purpose of the encounter was one of information-gathering. In relation to this disparity, both individuals perceived the role of the Japanese differently: the Australian expected him to possess the necessary decision-making authority, even though the Japanese clearly described his role differently.

Both participants revealed a negative evaluation of the other's presentation and organization of content. By the end of the negotiation, the Australian, on the one hand, felt uneasy about the degree of interest shown by the Japanese businessman, because apart from not providing what he regarded as an explicit expression of interest in proceeding with further interaction, the Japanese had not solicited all the details normally expected of an Australian interactant. In contrast to this, the Japanese businessman negatively evaluated the lack of explanation provided by the Australian. Further research will need to examine in detail the way in which speech acts like solicitations and explanatory frames are distributed cross-culturally in negotiations in Japanese and in Australian English. The problem of information transmission must be considered in full. On the basis of this study I can suggest that Japanese business personnel require more extensive presentation of information in initial negotiations.

Further norm disparity was discovered in the importance awarded to the written language. In particular, the presentation of written

material was regarded more positively by the Japanese who evaluated the Australian's failure to present him with brochures as a deviation.

Some generalizations about Japanese business behaviour have been confirmed on the basis of this case study. First, Japanese business personnel expect companies which initiate proposals to have written material available from the commencement of their interaction. Secondly, the fact that the Japanese require a lot of background details seems to be confirmed. Thirdly, some support was found for the claim that Japanese business personnel engage in repetition, including repetitious solicitations, during the course of a negotiation. Notably, the use of repetitions by the Japanese interactant with regard to patents and sharing arrangements signalled issues of importance to him. The fact that certain non-Japanese negatively evaluate the lack of any expression of commitment by a Japanese to a business proposal at the end of a negotiation was also confirmed, though it was shown that there was a misunderstanding of the way in which cooperation was expressed.

At the same time, my findings cast doubt on other stereotypes. In particular, the common interpretation that Japanese purposefully avoid explicit negation of a business proposal because of politeness considerations was dismissed. Evidence was advanced to show that the function of an initial negotiation is evaluated and expressed differently by Australians and Japanese. Variation in the decision-making power of individuals who represent companies of different magnitudes was also raised as being pertinent.

The stereotype that referrals to head office by the Japanese businessman occur due to the cultural pattern of consensual decision-making was queried. Certainly there were enormous differences in sizes of the companies represented in this negotiation and thus in the rights of the businessman to engage in individual decision-making. Such differences brought about by variation in the sizes of companies may be similar across cultures. Also, the experience and socioeconomic knowledge of the businessmen in this negotiation varied enormously. On one side was a businessman with little experience in intercultural business situations against another who possessed greater expertise in socioeconomic matters, including international negotiations. Japanese business personnel probably do typically negotiate overseas with small manufacturers or producers who lack the experience of negotiating with large companies. Consequently, the sample in this study may be representative of a common occurrence.

The importance of socioeconomic norms and the existence discrepancies has been noted with regard to patents, market size and profit margins. Future research on Australian-Japanese business relations cannot afford to ignore systematic research on socioeconomic issues which are pertinent to their business activities.

The distance between the Australian and Japanese systems of interaction enables us to identify instances of norm disparity with considerable clarity. Although the base linguistic norm is English, in actuality, as argued by Neustupný (1985b), the situation is comprised of norms from both the Australian and Japanese systems. Not only do individuals use their native norms for the generation of their behaviour but also in their evaluation of the conduct of their interactant. As a result, deviations from what the individual participant accepts as the norm occurs and some of those deviations in the conduct of another are negatively evaluated. The existence of various norms in the intercultural situation and the inability of members of different cultural communities to understand the behaviour of members the other side indicates the complexity of this important category of interaction.

NOTES

1. The transcription notation which is used in the data is as follows:
 - (i) Empty double parentheses are used where no hearing could be achieved for a string of talk, i.e. (()).
 - (ii) Non-verbal behaviour is given in single parentheses, i.e. ().
 - (iii) Tonal emphasis is indicated by underlining.
 - (iv) Personal and corporate names have been omitted and replaced with letters or a fictitious name:

A	=	Australian businessman
J	=	Japanese businessman
Int	=	interviewer
NOSA	=	the Japanese company
DIF	=	the Australian company
2. Currently over 120 Japanese companies are operating in Melbourne. The total number of Japanese companies in Australia is about 500.

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APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Australian	Japanese
Managing director of own small cheese manufacturing company (12 employees)	Head of Melbourne office (2 employees) of large Japanese company (dairy manufacturer/processor in Japan)
41 years of age	43 years of age
Year 11, secondary school	University graduate
Minimal contact with Japanese previously	Born in Aichi prefecture. Came to Melbourne 2 1/2 months earlier. Short overseas trips previously. Studied English at school and also intensively at a training institute in Japan.

1. OPENING FRAME

- 1.1 Greetings
- 1.2 Selection of encounter venue and seating allocation

2. INTRODUCTIONS

- 2.1 Presentation of company brochure by J to A
- 2.2 A announces familiarization with NOSA's work in Australia (Presentation of business card by A)
- 2.3 J refers to his initial contact
- 2.4 A comments upon brochure's contents
- 2.5 J presents his business card and introduces himself

3. INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Introduction of product by A
- 3.2 Comment on overseas expansion in UK and USA by A
- 3.3 A's reference to previous contact with the Japanese
 - 3.3.1 Clarification by J of Japanese corporate names
 - 3.3.2 A explains interest of Japanese party
 - 3.3.3 A's explanation of his interaction with one individual
 - 3.3.4 Mediation in Japan by friend of A for a joint venture
 - 3.3.5 Clarification and expansion of previous proposal by A
- 3.4 A's proposal to J about a cooperative agreement
- 3.5 J's expression of interest and explanation of his role

4. EXPANSION OF PRODUCT DETAILS

- 4.1 Discussion on lack of patent
- 4.2 Reference to rival companies by A
- 4.3 Description by A of A's distributor
 - 4.3.1 Background of distributor
- 4.4 Details of quantity sold by A
 - 4.4.1 Clarification by J of distributor
 - 4.4.2 Repetition by J of relationship between NOSA and its distributor
- 4.5 A briefly describes additional overseas expansion

5. REVIEW OF PROPOSAL

- 5.1 Restatement of A's proposal (solicited by J)
- 5.2 Clarification of relationship of DIF and Japanese corporation previously contacted (solicited by J)

6. FURTHER EXPANSION OF PRODUCT AND COMPANY DETAILS

- 6.1 Discussion on pricing policy (J's solicitation)
 - 6.1.1 Clarification of quantity by J
- 6.2 Re-cycling of statement on patent unavailability by J
- 6.3 Description by A of past and present competitors
- 6.4 Description by J of small Japanese market
- 6.5 Explanation by A of profitability
 - 6.5.1 A's attempt to clarify J's misunderstanding
- 6.6 A's joint venture arrangements in Ireland, USA and Holland
 - 6.6.1 Additional details on USA (solicited by J)
- 6.7 Solicitation by J on equipment requirements
- 6.8 Description by A of ingredients and their sources
- 6.9 Use of chemicals (raised by J)
- 6.10 Inclusion of alcohol in product

7. RETURN TO PROPOSAL

- 7.1 Proposal by A for use of samples

8. RETURN TO EXPANSION OF PRODUCT DETAILS

- 8.1 Confirmation of use-by date
- 8.2 Reintroduction of issue of sharing arrangement (by J)
 - 8.2.1 Exemplification by A
 - 8.2.2 Clarification by A of a communication problem

9. AGREEMENT TO PROPOSAL

- 9.1 Repetition by A of use of samples
- 9.2 J's response to A's proposal

10. CLARIFICATION OF DETAILS

- 10.1 J seeks to re-clarify background of the know-how possessed by A's company
 - 10.1.1 Repetition by A of an earlier explanation
 - 10.1.2 Amplification of A of use of brand names
- 10.2 Provision of A of detailed information on the cheese varieties (requested by J)
 - 10.2.1 Reference by A to alternative small packaging
- 10.3 Description by A on use of a cheese variety (solicited by J)

11. EXPANSION OF AGREEMENT

- 11.1 J's evaluation of eating the cheese
 - 11.1.1 Attempt by A to clarify J's prior turn
- 11.2 Arrangement for J to visit cheese factory (requested by J)

12. CLOSING OF AGREEMENT

- 12.1 Repetition by A on use of samples (solicited by J)
 - 12.1.1 J's explanation of reporting procedures
 - 12.1.2 A's repetition of offer to bring new samples
- 12.2 A's reference to his company brochure
- 12.3 J's clarification of size availability
- 12.4 Discussion on sales and popularity
- 12.5 J expresses appreciation for A's attendance
- 12.6 Closing and arrangement by A to initiate appointment
- 12.7 Repetition of closing formula
- 12.8 Repetition seeking confirmation of the use of the samples
- 12.9 Final closing