

8.4 Speaking Negotiations – diplomacy

Discussion

1 Read the information in the box, then with a partner discuss whether the countries and regions below are *L* (low-context) or *H* (high-context) cultures.

	Low-context cultures	High-context cultures
Focus of negotiations	problem-solving, deadlines are important	relationship-building, time is flexible
Communication style	direct, verbal, few non-verbal signals	indirect, dislike conflict, avoid saying no
Business organization	individuals more important than the group	group harmony more important than individuals



- China USA Australia N Europe
 Middle East Latin America UK Japan

What does this mean for international negotiators?

Listening for gist

2 3:33–3:35 Listen to three negotiation extracts. What went wrong in each case? Think about high- and low-context cultures, as well as the actual phrases used.

3 3:36–3:38 Listen to alternative versions of the three negotiations. How do the negotiators avoid misunderstandings?

Listening for detail

4 Listen to the alternative versions again and complete the phrases below. Phrases are numbered in the order you hear them on the recording.

	Extract 1	Extract 2	Extract 3
Checking understanding	1 Correct me if _____, but you seem to be _____ that ...	4 Have I _____ right? 5 Would I be right _____ that ... ?	8 If I've understood _____ ...
Correcting misunderstandings	2 I'm afraid there _____ a slight _____.	6 I'm sorry, that isn't _____.	9 Perhaps I haven't _____.
Reformulating	3 Let me _____ another _____.	7 What I was _____ was ...	10 Allow me _____. 11 What I _____ ...

Diplomatic language

5 Match the direct remarks 1–4 to the diplomatic forms that were used in the listening.

Direct	Diplomatic
1 I'm not ready to make a decision.	a) Perhaps we should talk again in a few days?
2 This project is totally unrealistic.	b) I think we might need more time to explore all the implications.
3 Let's finish the meeting now.	c) We would be very happy to give you the same terms as Auckland, if you were in a position to order the same volume.
4 We won't pay for shipping unless you give us a bigger order.	d) I'm afraid we feel there are still quite a large number of difficulties to face in this project.

Internet research

Search for the keywords *high low context*, *polychronic culture* to find out more about Edward T Hall's work on culture and communication.

6 Complete the summary.

Diplomatic language often uses:

- modal verbs like *could*, _____, _____, _____
- softening adverbs like *maybe* or _____
- qualifiers like *a bit*, *rather*, *a little* or _____
- introductory warnings like *I'm sorry*, *actually*, _____
- (negative) questions rather than statements.

7 'Translate' the direct remarks into diplomatic language, and vice versa.

Direct	Diplomatic
1	I'm sorry, but wouldn't it be easier for everybody if we held the meeting here rather than in Colombia?
2 If you don't want to do business, just say so!	
3	Actually, I was wondering whether you might possibly reconsider your position?
4 So you don't want to sell us your products?	
5	I'm sorry, but couldn't we start a little earlier than 11am tomorrow? We might find we would make a bit more progress.
6 That's not true. I never said that!	
7	To be perfectly honest, I'm inclined to think that business trips aren't quite as useful as everybody says they are.
8 So you don't trust us to pay?	

Negotiating

8 With a partner, take turns to choose a subject and hold short negotiations following the chart below. Be diplomatic!

- 1 buying worldwide rights to your partner's movie script
- 2 buying advertising space on your partner's car
- 3 buying worldwide rights to using your partner's name
- 4 buying equity in your partner's business

Student A

- 1 Make an offer.
- 3 Correct misunderstanding, if necessary, reformulate offer.
- 5 Accept offer, or go to 2.

Student B

- 2 Check understanding.
- 4 Make a counter offer, or go to 5.

