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Doing Business with a Spoken Corpus: Grammar in Action

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Investing in language

1. I don't know
2. Going forward, ...
3. We need to ...
4. Will you be (verb + -ing)?
5. You must be (+ adjective).
6. ...which is (+ adjective).
7. That's (+ adjective).
8. Want some coffee?
9. deliver the goods



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Outline

- What special grammar is there in spoken business English (BE)?
- How can we find this out?
- How can this special grammar be applied in business English materials?



Fingerprints of BE: grammar

What we need to find out is:

- (a) which features of grammar are more frequent in BE than in GE
- (b) the significance of their frequency in BE
- (c) any special meanings of BE grammar



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Corpora used

- Cambridge International Corpus (CIC; 1b+ words)
- 1m words of spoken business English (CANBEC corpus)
- 200m+ words of written business English
- 43m words learner writing (incl.BEC 42,000 scripts)



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Searching the corpus

- Frequency lists for single words
- Keywords (statistically *significant* words)
- Chunks
- Concordances and contexts



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Top 10 words: CANBEC (raw frequency)

- 1 **THE**
- 2 **AND**
- 3 **TO**
- 4 **YOU**
- 5 **A**
- 6 **I**
- 7 **IT**
- 8 **THAT**
- 9 **YEAH**
- 10 **OF**



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Top 10 keywords CANBEC

1. **WE**
2. **WE'VE**
3. **HMM**
4. **CUSTOMER**
5. **WE'RE**
6. **SALES**
7. **PRODUCT**
8. **ORDERS**
9. **NEED**
10. **EXTENDS**



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Useful Chunks in spoken BE



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Top 5 3-wd chunks in CANBEC

		per m
1	I don't know	642
2	a lot of	563
3	at the moment	485
4	we need to	438
5	I don't think	378



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Going forward in general conversation

was reversing but it wasn't it was **going forward** into a house instead.

on the court wasn't really **going forward** or anything I was just that you're playing well and **going forward** really. Okay. Good much more to that and if I'm **going forward** then obviously I'm going

Only four examples in 5m words



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Going forward = into the future

couldn't actually see our forecast **going forward** it could only see what sent day. It couldn't actually see **going forward**. So with erm the That's good. +year **going forward**. Mm. we're hoping they'll be back and **going forward** we can actually reduce d to make sure that your forecast **going forward** is actually correct I won't generate as much revenue **going forward**. It doesn't have the

Going forward has developed a pragmatic specialisation in business English



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Business talk

Future time expressions often used in business

Here are some time expressions for talking about the future which are often used in business.

Going forward and *looking ahead*

The company sees excellent opportunities in e-gaming going forward. (starting now and continuing into the future)

Looking ahead, the hotel's advance bookings for the summer are very good. (looking into the future)



Going forward is especially common in business situations but not in everyday, non-business conversations.



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British hydraulics company and an international coal company: discussing their advertising schedule.

Speaker 1: Do you know what I mean? Erm and there again it it's a case of getting in front of people when the leads are produced.

Speaker 3: It is yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1: That's what it's all about.

Speaker 2: **We** di= Yeah Obviously if **we** get leads erm if the if **we need to be wherever it is. We need to be in+**

Speaker 1: Mm.

Speaker 2: +China in Korea or wherever+

Speaker 1: Wherever.

Speaker 2: +**we need to be there.**

Speaker 1: That's right.



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Interpersonal use of grammar in BE

1. Politeness



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Internal meeting among the sales and marketing managers of a British manufacturing company. The participants are reviewing and planning sales and marketing.

We were just talking about the durability work. Erm we don't have any plans at the moment to do some tests on the assembly to the drop side body. And I think what **we need to do** is **we need to do some test work**. What I'd ask you to do then, it's good preparation for that test work, is, you've told me what you think your durability is from your calculating the er the durabi= the life of the crane.



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The future continuous

Will you be wanting someone to collect you from the station? (person expecting a visitor)

Will you be needing any further information about the product? (sales person to client)



Will you be wanting/ needing ..? are quite common especially in the travel or hospitality industries.



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Interpersonal use of grammar in BE

2. Engagement



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Business talk: responding to other people

In conversation, you can use *must be* + adjective when you respond to news or other information to show that you understand how another person feels about something.

A: *They increased our bonuses this year.* B: *You must be delighted.*

A: *Did you hear about Pete? He left his laptop on a train.* B: *His boss must be furious.*



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6 Complete these conversations using *must be* and a word from the box.


furious joking ~~nervous~~ pleased relieved surprised

1 A: I have to make a presentation to 1,000 people today.

B: You must be nervous.

A: Yes, I am. And I thought I'd lost my notes, but I've found them.

B: You _____.

 Only use *You must be joking!* with friends or colleagues you are friendly with. It is not appropriate with managers or people you only have a professional relationship with.



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Uses of 'which

You can use a relative clause with *which* to comment on something someone else has just said.

A: *We'll have to find a hotel for 50 people next month.*

B: ***Which won't be easy.***

A: *If we don't advertise now, it means we'll be short of people.*

B: ***Which is not a good thing.***

You can also use a relative clause with *which* to comment on something that you have just said.

*We've made budget for the year, ***which is excellent.****

A: *I've just made my biggest sale this year ...*

B: *Well done.*


A: ***Which I'm very pleased about.***



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That's...

B Responding positively using *That's* ...

 The ten most common words which people use after *That's* when they respond positively to what someone says are: *all right, correct, excellent, fine, good, great, interesting, OK, right* and *true*.

general positive reactions	A: <i>We've had a record year so far.</i> B: <i>That's good/great/excellent!</i>
agreeing with someone's point or opinion	A: <i>Obviously, there's more margin on some products than on others.</i> B: <i>That's right. / That's true.</i>
agreeing to an arrangement or a decision	A: <i>We're aiming for the 30th of this month for the new web pages.</i> B: <i>That's fine/OK. / That's great.</i>
confirming a fact or a piece of information	A: <i>So, that's 30,000 units by end of March?</i> B: <i>That's right. / That's correct.</i> (more formal)
saying that something is not a problem	A: <i>We may need about five days.</i> B: <i>That's OK/all right.</i>

People often use these words on their own, without *That's*.

A: *We're aiming for the 30th of this month for the new web pages.*

B: ***Fine/Great/OK.***



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Interpersonal use of grammar in BE

3. Appropriacy



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Ellipsis in spoken BE

Finished your
report yet?

Want some
coffee?

How's work?
Travelling much
these days?

Must rush.

May as well go
home now.

Depends on the
traffic.

Not sure/ Think
so.



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1 Make these questions more informal by crossing out the words that you can leave out.

- 1 ~~Are you~~ travelling anywhere exciting this year, Jo?
- 2 Are you in Hannah's team? I hear they're all going to Marrakech next month.
- 3 Are you going with them?
- 4 Do you need a personal assistant? I've always wanted to go to Morocco!!
- 5 Hi Nancy! Are you busy these days? Have you been anywhere interesting?
- 6 Do you like my new travel bag? Ryan bought it for me.
- 7 Are you the lucky person who gets all those trips to California?
- 8 Have you heard the news? Kevin's moving to the North Africa office.



Verb complementation

In BE, transitive verbs are often used intransitively:

*They couldn't **deliver the goods** on time so we had to **cancel the order**.*



These verbs include: *buy, cancel, confirm, delay, deliver, dispatch, launch, order, produce, sell, ship*



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Practice

1 Tell a colleague that you think the date for the sales conference is too soon and that it should be later. (*delay*)

..... I think the date for the sales conference is too soon. I think we should delay.

2 Tell a friend that your company makes items mostly for the international market. (*produce*)

.....

3 Tell a colleague that you and your team can be ready to send out an order tomorrow. (*dispatch*)

.....

4 Tell a customer that your company can only send items to addresses within the EU. (*deliver*)

.....

5 Tell a colleague you don't know if Kepra and Co. want to purchase some goods, because they haven't sent an order yet. (*buy, order*)

.....



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Investing in language

By using corpus information
to find out what people really say in business,
we can all be winners
and we can make sure that
our learners are too.

Thank you for listening.



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