Pragmatic structure of bargaining in Hindi

An (im)politeness and banter-based exposition

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Abstract

Bargaining is an accepted and commonplace practice in fixing the rate of virtually any kind of item purchased in India. Taking excerpts from a corpus of Eastern Hindi, in this paper, I have explored the linguistic behaviour of Eastern Hindi speakers in bargaining context in terms of the theory of banter and discuss how it actually serves to negotiate the competing motivations of protecting ones financial interests in a bargain as well as establishing and maintaining long-term positive inter-personal relationship with each other. As in conventional banter, in bargaining also, potentially impolite linguistic behaviour is used to show the in-group identity and establish a positive inter-personal relationship. I shall further argue that a bargain interaction involves both the conventional and impoliteness mitigation banter as well as conventional (im)politeness. In general, a successful bargain depends on what kind of linguistic behaviour is employed in which phase. The study shows that conventional politeness in initiation phase, conventional solidarity banter in argumentation phase and impoliteness mitigation banter or even non-polite behaviour in settlement phase is employed in successful bargains.

Keywords: Bargaining, Eastern Hindi, Banter, Politeness, Impoliteness

1 The practice of 'bargaining'

Haggling, more commonly known as 'bargaining' , is a common and prevalent discourse practice in India. Unlike in North America and Europe, in India, bargaining is an accepted and commonplace practice in fixing the rate of virtually any kind of item purchased, ranging from low cost items like clothes and food items to extremely expensive items like gold jewellery and house.

1.1. Aims of bargaining

In general, bargaining could extend from a couple of exchanges to pretty long discussion on the price and exact nature of a transaction. And it aims to achieve could be either one or both of the following -

- **Financial Gain:** It is directly expressed during any bargain situation. For the customers, this gain could be expressed in terms of 'discount' (request to reduce the price quoted by the seller) or 'gift' (request to give some items, generally of much lower value than the item(s) being paid for, without payment). For sellers these gains could be manifested in greater sale immediately and/or over a larger period of time.
- **Inter-personal Gain:** The aim of a bargain is also to establish long-term inter-personal relationship (which may again lead to financial gains but not necessarily so).

1.2 The general structure of bargaining

The process of bargaining could be structured into three main phases -

- **Initiation phase:** It is the first expression of the interest in setting up the bargain by the buyer and the first response of the seller. It could occur very early on in the whole transaction process, even before the decision to buy the item is expressed and the original price of the commodity is quoted by the seller or it may occur towards the end of the transaction after the commodity is purchased and on rare occasion even after the payment for the item has been made.

- Argumentation phase: It is an optional phase in bargaining where the buyer and the seller try to arrive at a jointly negotiated cost of the item. This phase becomes optional in situations where either the buyer accepts the first response of the seller or the seller flatly refuses to enter into any kind of negotiation.
- Settlement phase: This is the final phase of the bargain where both the buyer and the seller arrives at the mutually acceptable price of the item.

1.3 Understanding bargaining

While bargaining has been extensively studied within the framework of different economic theories, especially game theory, there has hardly been any attempt to understand the use of language and how it plays a role in maintaining the inter-personal relationship in between the buyer and the seller in a bargain.

In discursive terms, bargaining is an aggressive activity for both the buyer and the seller, with both the parties involved trying to get the best deal in such a way that the buyer could get the most economical price and the seller could sell the maximum number of goods at the highest price. Since the aim of such negotiations in Indian context is not just to achieve it for the immediate purpose but to achieve a long-term relationship, both the parties involved in the bargaining are also trying to establish a positive inter-personal relationship with each other. Furthermore, since the stakes for both the parties involved are high, both do not resort to the conventional ways of politeness and relational work; rather they try to establish a relationship which allows for very strong argumentation and negotiation involving severe face-threatening and potentially offensive language without actually offending each other.

In short, bargaining involves two conflicting pragmatic goals and discursive needs of both the participants -

- The selfish goal: It is the need to be aggressive in order to protect their financial interests
- The inter-personal goal: It is the need to be evaluated positively in order to establish long-term, positive inter-personal relationship.

These interactional and conversational features of bargaining makes it an elusive and problematic phenomenon which is difficult to understand purely in terms of politeness and impoliteness, as we understand today. The whole discourse of bargain is not aimed *only* towards establishing or maintaining a positive inter-personal relationship – rather there are other issues at stake. But that is definitely one of the major factors conditioning the discourse. However, a lot of the discourse does not employ what may be called conventionalised politeness structures. Thus it looks like a classic case of what is known as ‘banter’ in the (im)politeness literature. However, there is still one caveat – banter, generally, refers to a discursive practice among close friends and in-group members and this condition need not necessarily hold in bargaining.

In this paper, I try to understand the phenomenon of bargaining and see how the competing goals and needs are realised and fulfilled by the speakers in language. I employ the theory of banter to understand how bargaining actually serves to establish and maintain long-term positive inter-personal relationship in between the buyers and the sellers despite the volatile and aggressive situation. And even though banter theory has been largely employed to study friendly banter among close in-group friends, the language usage in bargaining situation resembles that in a conventional banter at certain places and we will see how the whole discourse is structured to enable it to take place.

2 Theoretical foundations of (im)politeness and banter

Politeness is one of the most important aspects of human communication which could single-handedly decide the success of any human interaction, more so in a business-like situation of bargaining. Over the last few decades, different theoreticians have tried to understand politeness in different ways. Starting from the seminal works of Brown & Levinson (1978, 1987) who tried to understand politeness in terms of face-saving strategies and Leech (1983, 2007) who explains politeness in terms of conversational maxims to recent discursive approaches (Watts 1989, 2003) which understands politeness in terms of relational work which is an emergent property of the conversation and is subject to discursive struggle, politeness has remained a matter of great theoretical debate.

While each theory comes from a different philosophical perspective and different set of assumptions these theories are not contradictory in nature. And at the same time none of these could be taken as a comprehensive theory of politeness which could explain all its aspects. The way the earlier theories of politeness were conceptualised, linguistic structures played a central and almost exclusive role in the evaluation of politeness. In fact these theories hardly talk about the “evaluation” or hearer-related part of politeness; rather they focus on “production” or speaker-related part of politeness. In these theories, it was assumed that politeness is inherent in linguistic structures or speech acts and these particular structures and acts will always produce same politeness effects. Even though the role of context in production of politeness was acknowledged in principle, it was not incorporated in the theoretical framework itself. On the other hand the later discursive theories completely ruled out the possibility of any kind of inherent semantics related to politeness in the linguistic structures. Rather it is argued that any structure is evaluated as polite or impolite only within a socio-cultural context and outside of that context they do not carry any (im)politeness effects. (Im)politeness is argued to be an emergent property of human interaction in these theories.

However a closer look at the phenomenon of (im)politeness reveals that it could be best explained by taking it as a generalised conversational implicature generated out of its normative aspects (Terkourafi 2001, 2003, 2005). This implicature is generated because of the regular co-occurrence of certain linguistic structures with certain (im)politeness effects in specific contexts. However it is argued that this implicature only creates potential for (im)politeness but any given structure may not be finally evaluated as polite or impolite in an interaction because of some of the local contextual factors. Thus even though linguistic structures are not inherently (im)polite, they have the potential to be (im)polite.

Following this view (also known as the interactional approaches to politeness), (im)politeness could be understood as a loose mapping from syntactic structures to the semantic evaluations of these structures as polite or impolite which is based on the prior experience of the speakers. This could also explain the possible idiolectal nature of (im)politeness whereby individual differences in (im)politeness evaluation is found among the speakers. At the same time, quite importantly, this understanding of (im)politeness also gives a principled and theoretically valid ground for explaining evaluation of normatively polite ‘structures’ as impolite in certain contexts and vice-versa. And it also allows to incorporate an explanation of what might look like a mismatch between the linguistic structure and its pragmatic import.

In majority of conventionalised (im)politeness usage, those linguistic structures are generally used which have been regularly evaluated in a consistent way in terms of their (im)politeness implicature. However, in quite a few cases, it may not be so and the linguistic structures used to trigger certain kinds of (im)politeness evaluations may not have been used earlier at all or even used for triggering opposite kinds of evaluation. Such usage could be taken as non-conventional usage because of their extremely rare occurrence across different kinds of discourse. These non-conventional usage can be broadly divided into two categories¹-

¹This classification is inspired by (Culpeper 2011). However unlike Culpeper's classification where non-conventional impolite utterances are categorized in 3 categories, the non-conventional polite utterances could be divided into only two categories.

- Mismatched Politeness / Banter – These are the cases where a conventionally impolite expression is used in the discourse but because of certain other factors, the conventional evaluation is cancelled and the expression may trigger an opposite evaluation.
- Context-dependent Politeness - These are the cases where none of the markers / conventionalised structures are used to denote (im)politeness. However the default non-polite implicature of these expressions could be modified into polite or impolite by virtue of their appearing in certain contexts.

In this paper, I shall take a detailed look at mismatched banter and see how it is integrated into bargaining situations to achieve an impossible discursive effect.

3 Mismatched Politeness / Banter

As I have mentioned earlier, banter generally arise out of a mismatch between what is said and how it is said. In spoken communication the mismatch could occur between the contents² and prosody of the speech³ as well as in between conventional implicature of any linguistic expression / structure and the intended conversational implicature in terms of (im)politeness effects.

In general, banter (or mock politeness⁴) has been touched upon and discussed by several theoreticians in different ways. Leech (1983) states that banter is mainly used to create or maintain a familiar relationship. Kienpointner (1997) concludes that banter (or mock politeness as he calls it) is used to suggest a solidarity and strength of relationship that would remain unaffected even by the perceived rudeness. However, as has been noted by others also (Kotthoff 1996⁵; Haugh 2010b; Haugh 2011⁶) these formulations of banter being completely independent and in fact completely opposite of what is actually being stated is theoretically problematic as well as empirically inaccurate. As has been argued by others like Mills (2003), Bousfield (2007) and Haugh and Bousfield (2012) banter may be used to express the “true feelings” of the speaker in an exaggerated form. In such situations a blatant display of impoliteness is hidden inside the garb of non-seriousness and humour.

Given this dual nature of banter, wherein it could either be a genuine banter (without implying any kind of impoliteness at all) or a means of glossing over the actual impoliteness, Haugh and Bousfield (2012) has argued for the study of banter as a separate phenomenon independent of politeness and impoliteness. They argue that it should be studied as a “non-impolite” phenomenon in the sense that it is “an ‘allowable offence’ that is evaluated as neither polite nor impolite, but in being potentially open to evaluation as impolite is closer in some respects, of course, to the latter” Haugh and Bousfield (2012).

However this argument of considering banter completely independent from the phenomenon of (im)politeness actually overlooks the role banter plays in the evaluation of (im)politeness. While there is no denying the fact that banter could not be “equated” with (im)politeness, it also plays a role in (im)politeness evaluation in a lot of situations.

Thus depending on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence presented by different researchers (including Grainger (2004), Mills (2003), Haugh(2010a, 2011), Leech (1983) and several others) it could be tentatively hypothesised that banter could be classified as of two kinds which arise out of different 'intention' of the speakers as well as the 'evaluation' of the hearers. They could be loosely termed as

²The content generally has what is considered the prototypical features of an impolite conversation.

³The prosody is marked with humour and light-heartedness.

⁴They are generally considered the same but Haugh and Bousfield (2012) distinguishes between the two as banter being an 'action' while mock politeness being an 'evaluation'. Here I shall be chiefly talking about the 'action' as it is accomplished.

⁵He points out the theoretical danger of such a formulation which may lead to clubbing together of mock politeness with solidarity.

⁶He points out the empirical evidence against these formulations by bringing out the instances from Australian English where such banter is witnessed among the previously unacquainted speakers.

- Solidarity banter
- Impoliteness mitigation banter

Solidarity banter is the classical banter (as discussed by Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987)) where it is used as a means of creating or maintaining solidarity. Impoliteness mitigation banter, on the other hand, is a more complicated phenomenon where a genuinely “impolite” intention of the speaker is expressed blatantly but its effects are glossed over and mitigated through the use of humor. Thus while the former is what may be termed as 'relational' politeness strategy⁷ the latter is a face-threat mitigation strategy⁸.

4 An empirical look into banter in Hindi

In this section, I shall take a look at 2 excerpts from the corpus of computer-mediated communication in Hindi (CO3H) (Kumar 2012) and see how each of the two banter (discussed in section 3) is created and how it works in Hindi CMC.

The first example (1) is one of the classic examples of banter where the author directly criticizes and even abuses the reader of the comment. However the fact that it is meant to be taken lightly and in good spirit is indicated through several means. The most obvious is the use of a regional variety of the language instead of the formal, 'standard' variety as is common on the blogs written in Hindi and as we have seen in almost every other example from the corpus. The use of this variety is meant to assert the in-group identity of the commentator and to emphasise that they stand on the same platform. At the same time, it also hints towards the familiarity and solidarity in that both the commentator and the commentee share or, at least the commentator wants to assert that they share, a very friendly and cordial relationship. This use of language coupled with the use of smileys and a complete absence of any kind of formal relationship indicator in the comment serve to transform a face-threatening comment⁹ into very friendly banter.

1	बोक्का	हो	एकदम...	गोलघर	के	पास
IPA	bokka	ho	ekdəm..	golɡʰər	ke	pas
Gloss	fool	AUX	absolutely.	Golghar	GEN	near
	ढेला	लेके	घूमता	है	खाजा	बेचने
IPA	tʰela	leke	ɡʰumʈa	ɦe	kʰaʃa	becne
Gloss	cart	take	roam	AUX	sweet	sell
	वाला...	तुम	कभियो	देखे	भी	हो
IPA	wala...	tum	kəbʰio	dekʰe	bʰi	ho

⁷In the Wattsonian sense of politeness being 'relational work'.

⁸Face-threat mitigation here is neither intended to be polite nor does it result in politeness as is predicted by Brown and Levinson's model. However at the same time the speaker does not want to be completely impolite. Thus in such situations banter results in the mitigation (and not complete annihilation) of impoliteness that the utterance is expected to produce. At the same time it keeps the option of retracting and branding it as non-serious open for the speaker.

⁹The face-threatening nature of the comment is indicated by the use of slangs like 'bokka', the use of neutral pronominals and a negation of the positive qualities in the commentee.

Gloss	PRT	you	ever	see	PRT	AUX
	जो...	बड़का	अपने	को	पटना	का
IPA	ʒo...	bəɽka	ʌpne	ko	pətna	ka
Gloss	COMPL	big	self	ACC	Patna	GEN
	हीरो	समझते	हो...	लड़की	तुमसे	बेसी
IPA	hiro	səməʒʰt̪e	ho	ləɽki	tuṃse	besi
Gloss	hero	think	AUX	girl	you	more
	होशियार	है	:P	:D		
IPA	hoʃijar	he	:P	:D		
Gloss	clever	AUX	:P	:D		
Free Translation	You are an absolute fool.. The man selling the sweets ('khaja') roams near the Golghar with a cart...have you ever seen that you think yourself to be a big hero of Patna...the girl is more clever than you :P :D					

Let us take another example from a private chat between two friends. This chat takes place between two very close friends who are also colleagues. It takes place when one day 'Person 2' does not come to the office. It is just a casual chat without much new information being shared. 'Person 1' very well knows that 'Person 2' is in her home but even then he asks her about her whereabouts. He further goes on to enquire the particulars of the home she is talking about (Lucknow is the place 'Person 2' belongs to while she lives and earns her living in Delhi) which clearly irritates her a bit and she abuses him a little and gives the name of an imaginary place 'Masoodpur'. The very name of the place is meant to be humorous and the abuse comes out of the understanding that they are very close friends and she could scold him if she finds him irritating. But 'Person 1' does not like that very much and asks her to reply properly to which 'Person 2' just replies a smiley. This last smiley is an acceptance of the fact that she has been a little rude and also a reassertion of the fact that she did not mean it seriously. Now this is an example of the second kind of banter i.e. 'impoliteness mitigation banter' where 'Person 2' is actually irritated by the stupid questions of 'Person 1' but since she does not want to offend him she takes recourse to banter. However here it does not seem to work as 'Person 1' *is* offended. However it must be noted that his objection is also mitigated by the smileys at the end of the reply since he is also aware of the friendship that they share and the fact that 'Person 2' is irritated but at the same time she also does not want to offend him and start a quarrel. Thus we see the complex way in which banter could shape up and finally culminate in a conversation in this example.

1	person1:	:D	tum	kaha	ho
	IPA	:D	tuṃ	kəha	ho

Gloss	:D	you	where	AUX
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Free Translation :D Where are you

2	person2:	ghar	pe
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IPA	g ^h ər	pe
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Gloss	house	LOC
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Free Translation In the home

3	person1:	ok	Lucknow ?
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IPA	oke	lək ^h nəu
-----	-----	----------------------

Gloss	ok	Lucknow ?
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Free Translation Ok Lucknow?

4	person2:	dhat..	gadha..	masoodpur
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IPA	ɖ ^h əʈ...	gəɖ ^h ɑ..	məsud̪pur
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Gloss	Dhat..	donkey	Masoodpur
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Free Translation Eh..idiot Masoodpur

5	person1:	are	dhang	se	bata
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IPA	əre	d ^h əŋg	se	bəʈɑ
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Gloss	Arey...	proper	INST	tell
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na	bolna	na	ki	delhi
----	-------	----	----	-------

IPA	nə	bolna	nə	ki	ɖelhi
-----	----	-------	----	----	-------

Gloss	PRT	tell	PRT	that	delhi
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ke	ghar	me	hu	;0 :P
----	------	----	----	-------

IPA	ke	g ^h ər	me	hu
-----	----	-------------------	----	----

Gloss	GEN	house	LOC	AUX	;0 :P
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Free Translation Arrey, tell me properly, tell that you are in your home at Delhi

6 person2: :P

IPA :P

Gloss :P

Free Translation :P

In the case of bargaining, both these kinds of banter are employed. As we will see below, both these banter, however, are used in different kinds of situations.

5 Data and methodology

This study is based on the data taken from a speech corpus of Eastern Hindi spoken the state capital of Bihar, Patna. The corpus in its current form has recorded data of more than 21 hours of naturally occurring speech and conversation. It has data from a variety of sources which include

- General family discourse
- Dining table discourse
- Invitation discourse
- Shopping and other marketplace discourse

Out of this, there is a little over 6 hours of recorded data of the shopping and marketplace discourse. It has data from different sources including the discourse in cloth stores, jewellery stores, general stores, conversation with rickshaw pullers, auto-rickshaw drivers, etc. I have carried out a micro-level discourse analysis of 2 excerpts taken from the marketplace discourse in order to understand how banter and (im)politeness works in bargain and how inter-personal relationships are not only maintained and sustained but actually built and strengthened despite the aggressive nature of these discourse.

6 Bargaining and banter: The first encounter

Let us take a look at Excerpt 1 below. It takes place in a bangle and cosmetics store. This is the first visit of the buyer in the shop and buyer and seller did not have any interaction prior to this one. As such, they share no inter-personal relationship prior to this visit. And both are equally aware that subsequent visit of the buyer to the shop as well as the sales in this visit depend largely on what happens in this visit

In this case the initiation phase occurs quite early during the transaction, even before the buyer selects the item. This phase is marked with the usage of what may be called the conventionalised polite structures. These include the usage of indirect request and honorific form of the verb in stave 1. The use of negation and question gives ample option to the seller to politely turn down the request for beginning a bargain. Moreover, the use of honorific form of the verb is a conventionalised polite structure in Hindi (Kumar 2015).

The seller's response at the beginning of the argumentation phase is also marked with the use of honorific verb form as well as a very positive signal that he is open to bargain the price. What is quite noticeable is the fact that he also tries to assert an in-group identity and familiarity with the buyer. While the honorific markers serve to signal some kind of formality, the imposition on the buyer is signalled by the insistence of

the seller to first select the item that she intends to buy. Furthermore, the use of double negation combined with lexical items like 'kəsəm' is also aggressive and potentially offensive. However, in this case these are intended to serve as something which could win the trust of the buyer and establish a positive relationship with her. It is a clear case of conventionalised 'solidarity banter', where the seller indicates that he is on the buyer's side and he would go beyond the 'normal' routine to benefit her. In a remarkably similar way, the whole of argumentation phase is interspersed with the usage of honorific form as well as direct instructions / directions regarding what one wants – this is very atypical considering the fact that this is the first time the seller and the buyer are meeting. Such linguistic behaviour in some context other than that of bargaining is highly unexpected and unapproved. However, in a bargaining situations, it seems quite expected and approved of by both the participants. As the conversation moves forward, we see an increase in aggressiveness. And it reaches a climax towards the end of this phase in stave 7, where accusing the buyer of murdering the seller is highly offensive.

In the final settlement phase, the seller makes an apparent request to not 'kill' him and then makes it clear that he could not further reduce the cost. Stave 9 is an instance of 'impoliteness mitigation banter' since the seller is clearly irritated at this point by the continuous insistence of the buyer but he still could not flatly refuse to reduce the cost further as that may be offending for the buyer. So he expresses his genuine irritation garbed as a banter. And then he further mitigates his refusal through non-agentive verb usage in stave 10. The implication of stating the impossibility of further reduction is not that he is not willing to it; rather it is some external force which is not allowing him to reduce the price further despite his willingness to do so.

What is remarkable throughout this interaction is that despite this being their first encounter and both parties using what might be considered conventionally impolite utterances, neither the buyer nor the seller takes any offense which clearly indicates that such linguistic behaviour is expected during such negotiations and a successful bargain only serve to establish good inter-personal relationships.

Initiation Phase:

1 B: kəm nəhi kuc^h kijjega
less NEG some do-FUT
Will you not do anything less?

Argumentation Phase:

2 S: pəhle ɔp pəsənd̪ ʈo kijje əisa koi kəsəm
first you-HON like TOP do-HON like some oath
this
ʈ^hore na k^haje hẽ ki kəm nəhi kəreŋge
little NEG eat AUX that less NEG do-FUT
First you select something, I have not taken an oath that I shall not give you discount.

(After almost 15 minutes – the purchase is now complete)

3 B: kuc^h kəm nəhi kije hẽ kuc^h kəm kijje
some less NEG do-HON AUX some less do-HON
(Taking the bill from the buyer) You have not given any discount; please give some

4 B: je liḷije
 this take-HON
 (Handing over the cash to the seller) Take this

5 S: iṭna me kja hoga
 in this in what happen-
 FUT
 It is not sufficient

6 B: siḍḥa 2400 kiḷije
 straight 2400 do-HON
 Make it 2400 in round figures

7 S: mar hi dalijega ka
 kill PRT ECV what
 Will you kill me?

8 B: iṭna mē mar daleṅge?
 in this in kill ECV
 Will I kill you in this?

9 S: marije mətḥ hāmko hāmko b^{hi} jine ḍiḷije
 kill- NEG I-ACC I-ACC also live ECV
 HON
 Please don't kill me, please let me also live.

Settlement Phase:

10 S: isse jaḍa nāhi ho pajega
 this-ABL more NEG do ECV
 I can't do anything more

11 B: əcch^ha ṭ^hik hε
 ok fine AUX
 Ok fine.

7 Bargaining and banter: The first encounter

Let us take a look at Excerpt 2 below. It takes place in a sari shop. The situation here is in stark contrast to that of situation I discussed in previous section. The buyer is a regular visitor to this shop and so the buyer

and the seller share a healthy inter-personal relationship prior to this visit. Both of them are aware that subsequent visits to the shop or the exact sales now or later is only marginally, if at all, dependent on what happens in this visit. However, at the same time they are also aware that there is a need to maintain each other's expectations and their inter-personal relationship; otherwise, it may not be long before they face the financial repercussions of a non-cordial relationship. Furthermore, this particular interaction takes place when the buyer has gone for an exchange in the shop – so the seller is not likely to sell anything and the buyer is willing to take something else only in exchange of what she has already bought.

Unlike the previous scenario, there is no initiation phase in this interaction in the strictest sense of the term since there is no offer to start the bargain from either side. We see that there is normal conversation about the cost from staves 1 - 6 and then in staves 7 - 8 there are straight away proposals for cost without any confirmation regarding the willingness to enter into bargaining - it is a common knowledge owing to previous interactions and so there is no need to actually initiate the bargain.

The argumentation phase is the longest one and it involves the use of conventionalised banter as well as direct questions, accusations and denials throughout. Stave 8 is a direct question regarding the price that need to be paid - and that is substantially lower than the one proposed by the seller in stave 7. In staves 9 - 11, the seller tries to explain away the rationale behind the cost and effectively states that he has already proposed a discounted cost, taking into consideration the earlier discount he had given on the sari that is being exchanged now. However, this argument seems to be lost on the buyer when she again asks if she will not get a discount on this one in stave 14. The seller again tries to make his point clear that he has already quoted a price with the discount. But when the buyer refuses to agree with him, in stave 20 he asks her to consult her son (who is accompanying her), which is a highly offensive statement considering that it is a direct attack on the buyer's intelligence and ability to understand simple things. A similar conversation continues till stave 30, in which both buyer and seller engage in what might be classified as typical banter - accusing each other, directly contradicting each other and even shouting at each other. In stave 28, we see a clear case of 'solidarity banter' when the seller reminds of their being 'in-group' member on account of being an old customer - owing to this relationship he has simply taken the liberty of giving discount and doing everything that could be done without even being asked to. He has conflated everything together for her but had been some new customer (implying someone with whom he does not share this inter-personal relationship), he would have given long explanations and may be, also less discount.

Finally, the buyer hands over the money and simply ask the seller to return some back. She seems to be irritated because of the repeated refusal of the seller to offer her discount and she asks him directly to return some money in stave 31 so that she could at least go back home. However, the seller retorts back in stave 32 and 34 by asking her why she does not ask the other sellers to for some discount. Both are cases of 'impoliteness mitigation banter' as both are now genuinely irritated but since they do not want to ruin their inter-personal relationship, they vent their genuine frustration in the form of banter. However, the buyer gets a hint of this and she now tries to reassert the inter-personal relationship by resorting to the conventionalised politeness strategy of praising him over other buyers in staves 33, 35 and 37. And this has a visible impact on the seller in staves 34 and 38 when he could not respond any more. The buyer further goes on to strengthen their inter-personal relationship in stave 39 by promising that even his son and family members down the generation would visit his shop in the future. The seller and buyer then engages in further non-polite conversation in staves 40 - 41. in stave, 42 the seller also engages in slight solidarity banter when he accuses the buyer that she will force her daughter-in-law into 'bad habit' (ləṭṭ) of wearing ṭāṭṭ saris (a kind of cotton sari very popular in West Bengal and parts of Bihar). The conversation, finally, comes to a close with the seller returning some money just to honour the words of the buyer and their inter-personal relationship.

Argumentation Phase:

- 1 S: e-go ōnis sɒ
One-
CL nineteen hundred
One for nineteen hundred

- 2 B: ɖɒ-go sɑɽi ōnis sɒ
Two-
CL sari nineteen hundred
Two sarees for nineteen hundred

- 3 S: hǎ je ho gəjɑ je ho gəjɑ
yes it done ECV it done ECV
Yes, it is done

- 4 B: ritərn kije ek sɑɽi cɒɖəh ek sɑɽ^he nɒ
return did one sari fourteen one half nine
I returned one sari for fourteen and one for nine and a half

- 5 S: ek-ke sɑɽi me ɬo dip^hərens ho gəjɑ ek
One-
EMP sari in TOP difference happen ECV one
ɬo bəɾəbər ho gəjɑ
TOP equal done ECV
There is difference in only one sari; one has equivalent cost

- 6 B: hmm ek sɑɽi kɑ ɖɑm
hmm one sari of cost
The cost of one sari

- 7 S: ek sɑɽi me pɑc sɒ rupjɑ ka dip^hərens
one sari in five hundred rupees of difference
ho gəjɑ
happen ECV
There is difference of five hundred rupees in one sari

- 8 B: ɬə kiɬnɑ ɖe ɖe ɖɒ sɒ
how
TOP much give ECV two hundred
So how much should I give – two hundred?

- 9 S: əre les kər ker ke nə sɑɽ^he nɒ
arre less do do of PRT half nine
ɬo həm ɒɬnɑ hi joɽe les les-e me
Less-
TOP I that much PRT added less EMP in
nə ɛɖjəst ho gəjɑ sɑɽ^he nɒ jo les
NEG adjust happen ECV half nine COMPL less
ret t^hore nə les kəɽe
rate little NEG less do
Arre, I have adjusted the less amount in the original discounted price

10 S: p^hir is-me b^hi les sɑɽ^he nɒ kɑ ʈo
 again It-in also less half nine of TOP
 hɑm sɑɽ^he nɒ ʈo les kər səkɽe hẽ
 I half nine TOP less do ABL is
 Ūs-me
 that-in

Then again less in this also, I can reduced nine and a half in that

11 S: Ūs-me les kije ʈ^he ʈo ʊ les ka
 that-in less did was then that less of
 ret nəhi nɑ ʃor rəhe hẽ
 rate no PRT add ECV ECV

I had reduced the price in previous one and so I am not counting that one in here

12 S: sɑɽ^he nɒ sɑɽ^he nɒ
 half nine half nine
 Nine and ahalf nine and a half

13 B: hɑ
 yes
 Yes

[2 sec pause]

14 B: is is-me kɑm nəhi kije
 it It-in less no did

You didn't reduce the cost in this one

15 S: les kije
 less did
 Reduced?

16 S: ərə iɽ^hər ʃɛse ɽəs ɽo sɑ ɽije nə
 arre here like ten two hundred give PRT
 ʈəb səb sari me les hɔɑ
 then all sari in less happen

Here when you had given ten thousand two hundred then the cost for each sari was reduced

17 B: accha nəhi ʈo əb^hi keɽnɑ ɽe se bolije
 ok no then now how much give that tell
 Ok then tell me how much should I give now?

18 S: pãc sɑ
 five hundred
 Five hundred

19 B: pãc sɑ kəise ɽe
 five hundred how give
 How should I give five hundred?

20 S: ʊ səmʃʰegɑ beta ko səmʃʰ-ɑije ʊ səməjʰ ʃɑjegɑ
 he understan son to understand- he understa ECV
 d CAUS nd

Ask your son, he will understand

[Buyer discusses the situation with her son]

21 B: t̪ is-me nəhi kəmegɑ cɔd̪əh cɔd̪əh sɔ wɑlɑ
 then It-in no less fourteen fourteen hundred wala
 me sər̪iwɑ me
 in sari

Will there be no reduction in the sari costing fourteen hundred?

22 S: usko ɡʰətɑ hʊɑ ret ʃor rəhe hẽ
 that reduced ECV rate add ECV AUX
 ʊs-me kəm kije t̪ʰe nə
 That-in less do AUX PRT

I am adding the reduced rate, in which I had given a discount

23 B nə u sɑɽʰe nɔ kɑ t̪ʰɑ hi
 no that half nine of was EMP

No that was already of nine and a half

24 S: totəl me kəm nəhi kije t̪ʰe kʰɑli sɑɽʰe
 total in less no do was only half
 nɔ kɑ t̪ʰɑ hi i kɑhe nəhi ɖekʰ
 nine of was EMP it why no see
 rəhe hẽ sɑɽʰe nɔ kɑ rete həm dipʰərens
 ECV is half nine of rate i difference
 t̪o le rəhe hẽ ʃo les hɛ les
 TOP take ECV is which less is less
 me les ɛd̪əst ho ɡəjɑ cəlije nice ʃo
 in less adjust do ECV go down which
 les ɖije t̪ʰe wo les sɑre sər̪ije me
 less give was that less all sari in
 nə hogɑ
 no happen

Didn't I reduce the cost in total – the cost which was reduced from the total was done from individual saris, right and that reduction is adjusted in the discount that I would have given now

25 B: həm t̪o əbʰi les kʊcʰ nəhi milegɑ
 hmmm then now less some no get

Then I will not get any discount now?

[The seller becomes visibly irritated now]

26 S: pʰir əbʰi les ker rəhe hɛ nəhi milegɑ
 again now less do ECV is no get
 t̪əb t̪o həm pʰir les kər ke ʃor
 then then i again less do of Add

ke	p ^h ir	les	kəreŋge	leŋdi	prɔses
of	again	less	do	lengthy	process

Again you are saying that you will not get discount – then I will first reduce then add and then again reduce which is the lengthy process

27 B: həmkə bəkʔe bəkʔe əb^hi mʊhwɑ me ɖimɑg nəhi
 i speak speak now mouth in brain no
 kɑm kəʔʔɑ hɛ
 work do is

I am tired of speaking and I am also not able to think properly

28 S: ʔo je ɑp log ko bəʔʔɑ ɖene me
 then this you people to tell ECV in
 nəhiG ʔo neʃɑ grɑhək ʃo rəhegɑ ʊs-ko les
 no then new customer who live That-to less
 kɑ ret lik^hɛŋge ʃo les kije hɛ ʊs-ko
 of rate write which less do is that-to
 les əb^hi ɖik^hɑ kər ke ʔəb dip^həren s lɛŋge
 less now show do of then e differenc
 nɑk əise c^huije əise c^huije bəʔʔ bərəbre ho
 nose this way touch this way touch gist equal happen
 ʃɑʔʔɑ hɛ
 ECV is

I have told all this to you, otherwise had there been a new customer then I would have first written the rate of discount then I would subtract the discount that I had done earlier then I would have taken the difference – no matter which way you come, you will reach the same place

29 B: bəʔʔ bərəbre ho ʃɑʔʔɑ hɛ
 gist equal happen ECV is
 Indeed you reach the same place

30 S: nəhi hoʔʔɑ hɛ
 no happen is
 Isn't it so?

Settlement Phase:

[Buyer hands over Rs. 500 to the seller]

31 B: hun ek sɔ lɔtɑije kɑm se kɑm rikʃɑ
 yes one hundred return less to less ricksha
 b^hɑʔɑ rikʃɑ se ʃɑjeŋge kɛse gɑʔi se t^hore
 fare rickshaw by go how car by little
 hi ɑje hɛ rikʃɑ se ɑje hɛ həm
 EMP come is rickshaw by come is i

Please return 100 at least for rickshaw fare, how will I go back by rickshaw otherwise; I have come by rickshaw and not by car today

32 S: mət̪əb səb həm-hi ɖe ɖe ʊ səb se
 meaning all I-EMP give ECV they all from
 kəhe nəhi lije bɒmbe d̪aɪŋg rʊp bərsɑ
 why no take bombay dyeing roop varsa
 Should I be the one to give everything; why didn't you take anything from them – bombay
 dyeing, roop varsa?

33 B: ʊ səb nəj ɖet̪ɑ hɛ
 they all not give is
 They do not give

34 S: pʰlɑɪŋg masin
 flying machine
 Flying machine

35 B: ʊ səb beɪmɑn hə-ije hɛ t̪o kɑ kəre
 they all dishonest Be-EMP is then what do
 They are all dishonest, what could be done?

36 S: bei [laughs]
 dis

37 B: əb jo ɖebe nəhi kəregɑ ʊsse kitt̪ɑ m̃ɑŋge
 now those give no ECV him how much ask
 How much could I ask those who will not give?

[Addressing to the other person accompanying the buyer]

38 S: ɖekʰ rəhe ho
 see ECV is
 Do you notice?

39 B: əise nə ɑjegɑ əpnɑ biwi ko bʰi le
 like PRT come own wife to also bring
 ke ɑjegɑ
 do come
 He will come only when you will give discount; he will come with his wife also

40 S: əb biwi ɖekʰije sɑɽi pəhent̪i hɛ jɑ sut
 now wife see sari wear is or suit
 pəhent̪i hɛ
 wear is
 Now it is to be seen if his wife wears sari or suit

41 B: nəj sɑɽi kɑ sɒkʰ hɛ sɑɽi pəhent̪i hɛ
 no sari of interest is sari wear is
 No she fancies saris, she wears sari

42 S: ərə sɑɽi k̃əh̃ɑ ʊske bɑɖ sɑs t̪o t̪ɑ̃t̪
 arre sari where that after Mother-in-law TOP taant

kɑ	læt̪	ləgɑ	hi	ɖegɑ
of	habit	ECV	EMP	ECV

I wonder about sari but the mother-in-law will acculture her into wearing taant saris

43 B: ʊ əpne bʰi pəhənt̪i hɛ t̪ãt̪ kɑ
 she herself also wear is taant of
 She anyways wears taant

pəcɑs-
 44 B: go kjʊ lɔtɑje hẽ ə nəj bət̪t̪ɑ hɛ
 Fifty-CL why return is PRT not spare is
 Why have you returned fifty only – you don't save enough

45 S: bɑt̪ rəkʰe ɑpkɑ
 talk keep your
 I just kept your words

46 B: ooo
 ooo

8 How do we bargain: The general picture

Looking at the two scenarios discussed in sections 6 and 7, we could see some general trends in relation to the structure of a bargain. The first obvious observation could be made with respect to the length of the whole of bargain and that of the different phases of bargain. Depending on whether the buyer and seller share a prior inter-personal relationship (and, of course, there might be other factors involved), the length could vary. Looking at the two instances discussed in this paper, the initiation phase is completely absent in cases where there is a prior inter-personal relationship between the buyer and the seller and at the same time there is a considerably longer argumentation as well as settlement phase.

Another observation that could be made is with respect to the use of different kinds of politeness and banter strategies across different phases of bargaining - we do not get a very different picture in cases of where there is a prior inter-personal relationship and where there is not. These observations could be summarised as under

- In initiation phase, there is a greater use of conventionalised politeness structures. It could be understood as an effort to establish a quick inter-personal relationship.
- In argumentation phase, there is a predominant use of solidarity banter - however, at the same time, there is also some use of conventionalised politeness structures. It could be taken as an effort to assert in-group identity and emphasise the inter-personal relationship that they buyer and the seller share
- In the settlement phase, we have seen a greater use of impoliteness mitigation banter as well as few instances of solidarity banter and non-polite utterances. It is an effort to maintain the inter-personal relationship as well as establish long-term relationships.

Thus we could see that the participants in a bargaining situation use different kinds of pragmatics tools and means to establish and maintain inter-personal relationship with each other in a competing aggressive scenario of protecting their financial interests.

9 Summing up

In this paper, I have looked at two different instances of bargaining in Eastern Hindi and tried to understand how the participants in a bargaining situation deal with two competing motivations - protecting their financial interests (which requires one to be aggressive and imposing on the other) and also maintain long-term inter-personal relationships (which requires one to be polite to the other). The general picture that have emerged out of a close look at the two bargaining scenarios is that an overwhelming use of banter, interspersed with some conventionally polite structures, makes it possible for the speakers to negotiate their way through these competing demands.

However, I must reiterate that these findings need to be taken with a pinch of salt since the study is far from perfect and it will need further investigations and studies to confirm my hypothesis here. The first caveat is that the study is based on limited data from one kind of domain and one kind of cultural setting - so it is expected that there might be different ways of negotiating terms in bargaining across different languages and cultures and they need to be explored before we could conclude anything about bargaining in general. Related to this is the fact that there would be several other cases of bargaining which may not present as neat a structure as the ones discussed in the paper - so, obviously we need more studies with more data to confirm the findings presented here. And finally, one of the most important aspects left out in this study is that of failed bargains. The second excerpt discussed in section 7 does present a partially failed bargaining but we find that the larger structure is still the same. However, we may look at completely failed bargains and see if we could arrive at a pragmatic recommendation for bargaining successfully

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