Carmela: Forget about dictionaries and grammar books. You don’t have the time for that! You want short cuts to quick, fluent and natural-sounding English.

This week we’re looking at the language of meetings. Now, we have a lot of meetings with colleagues, with clients, in fact you might think we have too many meetings. But don’t worry, today we’ll provide you with some language for running a meeting and also some expressions that you can use when you’re taking part in one. You might want to have a pen and paper ready to write down the expressions that you hear.

Now, as usual I’m joined in the studio by business English expert David Evans. David, meetings can be difficult, especially in a foreign language, what’s your advice?

David: I think it depends on the type of meeting really. Sometimes it’s okay to just sit and listen to the boss giving you an update on various things. I think there are...
other times, when the person is having the meeting so that they can get some input and feedback from the other team members. But whatever type of meeting it is, it’s obviously always useful to have some key phrases at the ready - that way, you don’t talk for too long, you don’t struggle to find the word and obviously you can put your point across clearly, without offending anybody.

Carmela: And let’s have a listen now for some of those key phrases. We’re starting with a meeting at the employment agency Office Angels. Sarah is having a meeting with her colleague Alex.

**CLIP Office Angels**

Sarah: Right then Alex, let’s get down to business. On the agenda today for our public relations meeting are the research project, the launch of the website, the timeline for press releases, and the executor of the year award. Are you quite happy with those points?

Alex: Yeah that’s fine .. if you could **go through them in order** that’d be great.

**END OF CLIP**

Carmela: Now, have a listen to the beginning of another meeting. You’ll notice that the language is quite similar.

**CLIP Meeting**

Ok everybody **thanks for coming. Let’s keep this meeting fairly brief** really just a couple of things on the agenda. **First of all** as you can see the news on the book re-launch and **secondly** the office move and **finally** we will have a little bit of time for **any other business.**

**END OF CLIP**

Talk about English © BBC Learning English

Page 2 of 9

bbclearningenglish.com
Carmela: That expression - **thanks for coming** - that’s a really nice, friendly start to the meeting.

David: Yes, I think both of them started very well, actually. We heard the expression - let’s get down to business, which is a very clear way for the chairperson to say “OK, stop chatting and start working”. In the second meeting we heard the phrase “let’s keep the meeting fairly brief” - in other words “let’s make sure this a nice, efficient, short, meeting.

Carmela: That would be a relief to everyone there I imagine.

David: I think it probably would be. And both people in the meeting use the phrase **On the agenda** - as well, so clearly focussing everyone’s attention on the list of points which are up for discussion.

Carmela: Okay, so we’ve dealt with the start of a meeting. What about when the meeting’s underway and you don’t understand or you want to check something, so you have to interrupt. Let’s go back to our two meetings and find out what expressions they use.

**CLIP Meeting - interruption**

First of all the book re-launch I **just wanted to** remind everybody that we will be re-launching the fairy tales range with new modern covers and that this is going to happen at the beginning of next month. **It is important** that we **get this right** and there has been quite a few…

John: sh… Sean can I **just ask you, Sorry to hold the meeting up.** Can I ask you about those dates because I thought that this was going to be published the month after next and I
understand that everybody has got their dates but I do feel quite strongly that we’re bringing this out too soon.

Sean: Well, any other thoughts before I comment on that?

Carrie: I don’t think we have got any choice at all about it, if the radio programmes are going out at the beginning of next month we’ve got to launch the book at the same time if we’re going to have any sales impact.

END OF CLIP

CLIP Office Angels - interruption

F1: … the next matter under discussion is the press release time line …

I think the next press release to go out is the sound of silence in meetings. Can you give me an update on that?

F2: Yeah we sent that out the end of last week, and selling it in today, it’s embargoed until tomorrow, we’ve had a couple of enquiries from the radio…

F1: sorry to interrupt but did you say it had gone out today?

F2: Yes.

F1: … right…

F2: and ..we’ve had a couple of inquiries as I said . So hopefully that’ll take off tomorrow.

END OF CLIP

Carmela: David, we’ve just had some different ways of interrupting there. Can you pick out the expressions?

David: Yes, I think in the first meeting, the person used the phrase… Actually, could I just ask you …. Sorry to hold the meeting up.
And then, in the second meeting, we heard the expression *Sorry to interrupt but …*

Now, it’s worth noting here that both people apologise when they interrupted and that of course is the proper thing to do. It’s not polite to interrupt without apologizing. So, you always need to say “sorry to interrupt”, “sorry to hold the meeting up”. It’s also interesting that the chairperson in the first meeting after the interruption said *any other thoughts?* Now, I think he does this because - if someone has interrupted, it could be a signal that there’s some confusion or perhaps there’s some disagreement - in the rest of the meeting. And so, it’s a good idea in those cases to say “any other thoughts” or *how does everyone else feel?* - just so that these issues can be discussed.

**Carmela:** And while we’re on the subject of disagreement, let’s look at how you could express your feelings, whether they are positive ones or negative ones, actually in the meeting. Listen out for the language used in this next example.

**CLIP** Meeting

Sean: The office move *as you know*, the plans have been up by the main exit for a week now. *I just wanted* to see what kind of feedback you have got.

Tim: Yeah Sean I’m sorry but *I really strongly disagree* with the new floor plan. I think it is divisive to separate the secretaries and the assistants out from the editors and Managers, *I’d be much happier* if we could be located in teams.
Carrie: I think actually Sean is right, I have been chatting to some of the secretaries and they’re quite keen to all be sitting in the same area and speaking as an editor I think I’d like to be with other editors so that we can bounce ideas off each other and things so, I think Sean’s floor plan is right.

END OF CLIP

Carmela: Fairly typical meeting there with people agreeing and disagreeing. David, can you pick up some of the phrases that they used?

David: First of all we had a disagreement - and it was quite a forceful disagreement actually. The person used the expression - I really strongly disagree -. If you wanted to make it a little softer, a little more polite if you lie, you could say something like - I’m sorry but I don’t agree - that’s a little less confrontational.

Next, we had another person agreeing - I think she said: “No I think Sean is right …” Now if you were being asked whether you agreed or disagreed with a decision or something like that, you could also just simply say - I quite agree. That’s a nice short way of expressing it.

Carmela: And there were one or two extra bits of language that we heard there … There was one individual who used a phrase speaking as an editor … Now, why did she use that phrase …
David: I think because she wanted to make it clear that her opinion from her perspective, doing the job of an editor. Now, you can use this to indicate any kind of perspective, you can say … speaking as a newcomer … speaking as someone in the online team - speaking as someone with many years experience, any of these kind of expressions are very valid.

Carmela: Speaking as a co-presenter - we’re actually moving on to our final extract. This time the language used is to actually to bring the meeting to a close. Listen out for it - it’s really important how to end that meeting.

**CLIP Meeting**

Sean: OK. Any other business?

Will: Yes, I would like to say something, an illustrator came in last week and, I think she is very good and, it would be wise to put her on our books.

Sean: … uh…

Will: I would like to be able to show her drawings and portfolios in the next couple of days. If that’s all right.

All: … that sounds good…

Sean: …yes , of course…..We will look forward to seeing those. Right I think that’s probably about it but anybody got anything else that they desperately want to raise before we wrap up?

All: Nope.

Sean OK. We will be having another meeting but there are a couple of conflicts in the diary so I think the best thing is if I email the date of the next meeting.

**END OF CLIP**
Carmela: .. that classic phrase - any other business - that’s always used in the final stages of a meeting. Now actually on the Agenda you’d see that written down as just AOB.

David: Yes, that’s right and really AOB is simply an opportunity for people in the meeting to raise any issues or any points which they feel haven’t been covered in the meeting so far. After that we heard the chairperson then say “right, I think that’s probably about it”, it’s time to wrap up” and those are the kinds of expressions that are used very often to signal “this is the end of the meeting”

Carmela: We’ve had a lot of language today. First of all David, could you recap some of those key phrases that are used when chairing a meeting

David: We had a very good phrase to begin a meeting which was thanks for coming Then a phrase to signal the start of the meeting: right let’s get started. We also heard about the list of points which the meeting will cover - and we heard that things were “on the agenda”. We had a phrase to invite people to put forward their opinions - How does everyone else feel? And at the end of the meeting - to ask people if there are any other issues that they would like to discuss before the meeting ends - we had that phrase: any other business?
Carmela: And how about the phrases we heard for actually taking part in a meeting.

David: There was that phrase, when you want to interrupt - *Sorry can I just interrupt.*

If you agree - you could say something like - *“I quite agree”* and if you don’t agree *“I’m afraid I don’t agree”*

Carmela: Thanks David. And just to say that David Evans will be joining me next time for more *Business Language To Go.*