

UNIT 9 AGREEING AND DISAGREEING

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Expressing Agreement
- 9.3 Expressing Disagreement
- 9.4 Pronunciation Practice
- 9.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to

- respond appropriately when you agree with what someone else has said,
- respond politely when you disagree with what has been said,
- stress the right words in connected speech, and
- use the right tone for statements and questions.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units we discussed several ways in which responses are made to maintain the flow of conversation. In this unit we will look at ways in which we can agree with something that has been said by somebody else or express disagreement.

The simplest way of agreeing is saying 'Yes', and we disagree using the word 'No'. But there are various expressions direct and indirect to substitute these monosyllables in conversation.

9.2 EXPRESSING AGREEMENT

Expressing agreement is fairly straightforward as there is no conflict involved in this. But the way we express it can also show the degree of agreement. Some of the words, phrases used for agreement are:

That's right!	Exactly	Correct	Absolutely
That's true	Certainly	I entirely agree	Of course.
I am in complete agreement with ...		Naturally	
Nothing could be truer		Without doubt	Undoubtedly

We will begin with a short dialogue:

- In many cases the words of agreement are clearly stated and leave no scope for doubt.

“Are you still willing to join us?”

‘**Yes, I would like to** join you.’

‘**Excellent.** Meet me this evening.’

The positive word ‘yes’ and ‘I would like to’ express willingness.

‘Excellent’ conveys a positive confirmation.

- Often agreement can be conveyed through a personal compliment.

“Fancy a walk? It’s a lovely day.”

“**Excellent idea.**”

Now let us look at this conversation between three people:

“We need to make the bookings three months in advance.”

“**Very thoughtful indeed!** Let us do it immediately. We shouldn’t be inconvenienced later.”

“**Very good idea.** Leave that to me. I will take care of the bookings.”

“**Thanks.** That saves us a lot of trouble.”

Responses that have been highlighted in the second and third statements show agreement with the first through personal compliments.

- Another very common way is to have sentences that echo the previous statement.

“**It’s real nice,** real pretty here.”

“**Yes it is,** we take these old bridges for granted around here and don’t think much of them.”

- Sometimes the agreement may not be very categorical.

“Thanks for listening. Do you agree with the decisions taken?”

‘**Yes I do, more or less. Seem quite reasonable.**’

‘I do’ shows agreement. This is qualified by ‘more or less’. There seems to be some reservation in the mind of the speaker. The word ‘quite’ also indicates a certain degree of ‘reasonableness’. The speaker wants to add something more, though he does agree with ‘the decisions taken’.

Here is another interesting example of expressing agreement:

“I didn’t know you painted.”

“Only water colours. I can’t say, I believe in my work.”

“Don’t believe in it? Then how can you do it? Work’s no use unless you believe in it!”

“**Good. It’s exactly what I’ve always said.** Bye-the bye have you ever noticed that whenever one says ‘Good’ one always adds ‘it’s exactly what I’ve always said!’”

In the last sentence in the conversation above the speaker draws attention to the sequence of words we use to show agreement.

You will see that there are no fixed formulae for expressing agreement but the responses connect to the previous statements and reinforce them.

√ Check Your Progress 1

Here are some more examples of conversation.

Underline the words/phrases that indicate agreement with what has been said before:

a. "... we are careful and we make no disturbance to these hills."

"I know."

"But now, with this, we must go. We must think much about the manner of our going".

"Clearly".

"Then", said El Sordo, "Let us eat now. I have talked much".

"Never have I heard you talk so much."...

b. ...We'll set him right, don't worry."

"I know we will, but what really worries me"

c. "I think perhaps he should be sent away. Separate him from his group, put him in a place where he'll be disciplined."

Ramdoss absorbed this in silence.

"What do you think?" Daniel demanded impatiently.

"It might work", Ramdoss said. "What did you have in mind?"

"I'm not sure, but"

9.3 EXPRESSING DISAGREEMENT

Disagreeing is not very pleasant and we need to use certain words that will tone down the negative quality of what we say.

- Disagreeing involves making contrary statements. Connectives like 'but', 'however', 'while', 'all the same', are frequently used.

Read this exchange between Dr. Shaw, a researcher and another person, John:

John raised objections.

"**But aren't you** shortening her life by giving her so much."

"**In one sense yes,**" admitted Dr. Shaw. "**But in another,** we are **actually** lengthening it."

"Of course, you can't allow people to go popping off into eternity if they have got enough serious work to do. **But** as she hasn't got any serious work...."

"**All the same**", John persisted. "**I don't believe it is right.**"

Read this short exchange during a space mission taken from a novel:

In the conversation, the exclamation '**Impossible!**' is not so much disagreement as disbelief.

'Skipper!' said Calver... 'we're rolling – look at the stars! *But I'am getting no instrument readings!*'

'Rate gyros operating?'

'Perefactly normal. I can see the zero jitter. But we're rolling several degrees a second 1' 'Impossible!'

'O course it is_but look for yoursel...'

Here is an exchange between Jane Eyre and St. John from the novel, *Jane Eyre*:

- Phrases like, “on the contrary”, “But, perhaps”, “besides”, “hardly” bring out the sense of disagreement.

“Have you found your first day’s work harder than you expected?”

“**Oh no! On the contrary**, I think in time I shall get on with my scholars very well.”

“**But perhaps your accommodation** _ your cottage _ your furniture_ have disappointed your expectations? They are, in truth scanty enough; but _”

“My cottage is clean and weather-proof; my furniture sufficient and commodious. All I see has made me thankful, not despondent. **I am not absolutely such a fool** and sensualist to regret the absence of a carpet, a sofa, and silver-plate; **besides, five weeks ago I had nothing** _ I was an outcast, a beggar, a vagrant; now I have an acquaintance, a home, a business. I wonder at the goodness of God, the generosity of my friends, the bounty of my lot. **I do not repine.**

“**But you feel solitude an oppression?** The little house there behind you is dark and empty.”

“**I have hardly had time to enjoy a sense of tranquility, much less** to grow impatient under one of loneliness.”

“**Very well;** I hope you feel the content you express...”

- Disagreement can often be very emphatic. Words of emphasis like, ‘must’, ‘will’, ‘have to’, are used to convey the intensity of the feeling.

Notice the firmness in the disagreement in the following exchange between an architect and the owner of a house:

‘Dr Dorai, **you must understand that while** this is **your** house, and **you** are paying for it, **I have to** be in complete charge of the model you approved, **or it simply won’t work.** If you want a great house, you **must** let me do things my way.’

‘**I thank you for the trouble you have taken, but** this is **my** house and I will have things done **my way.** That is **the only way** it will work.’

Although the highlighted words make the language polite, the underlying negative tone is effectively conveyed. This is an example of strong disagreement.

There is no single formula for expressing disagreement, but we can notice certain expressions that add emphasis to the negative opinions that need to be conveyed. The tone of the conversation also reflects the role relationship between the speakers.

Read this short extract from John Galsworthy's *The Man of Property* to see how strong resentment can be reflected through the language used:

Old Jolyon ran his eyes unwillingly over the letter:

'What he says is **clear enough**', he said.

'He talks about "a free hand",' replied Soames....

'**Well, if you don't trust him, why do you employ him?**'

'**It's much too late to go into that...** I only want it to be quite understood that if I give him a free hand, he **doesn't** let me in. I thought if you were to speak to him, it would carry more weight.'

'**No'...** **'I'll have nothing to do with it!'**

'**Well, I thought for June's sake, I'd tell you, that's all;** I thought you'd better know **I shan't** stand any nonsense!'

'**What is that to me?'**

'**Oh! I don't know. ... Don't say I didn't tell you.**

'Tell me,' **'I don't know what you mean.** You come worrying about a thing like this. **I don't want** to hear about your affairs. You **must** manage them yourself!'

'Very well. I will.'

'**Good morning, then,**' said old John and they parted.

In discussions or group meetings, however, certain politeness formulae will have to be adhered to. Some expressions that may be used to make the other person agree with your point of view are:

You would agree that

You must admit

You must consider

It has to be conceded that

Disagreements are usually expressed in a very tactful way. The speaker may begin by saying something that appears like agreement but then turns into a strong expression of a contrary opinion.

Some examples:

'**I very much appreciate what Dr. Susan has just said. But** I'd like to bring to your notice something that happened recently **that might make you think differently**'.

'**I see your point.** However, my experience with this set of clients tells me that they expect something **very different from what you have just suggested**'.

'**Well, that's one way of looking at it. The other is.....**

'**It seems from what you have just said that.....**.'

9.4 PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

In the last unit we looked at words that are stressed in sentences. In this unit we will look at words that are stressed in phrases.

Stress in phrases:

A. In the sentences that follow the word that is stressed in the noun compound is marked in the underlined phrases:

1. She has a new 'sewing machine.
2. His new car has 'air conditioning.
3. Ms. Bindu is our 'English professor.
4. Did you return your library book?
5. Have you seen the new post office?

● Sentences 1-3 are statements and are pronounced with a falling tone. Sentences 4 and 5 are questions which are answered with a 'yes' or 'no' and are said with a rising tone.

B. If a phrase has a noun compound followed by a preposition and a pronoun object the stress is on the first word of the noun compound:

1. His new car has `air conditioning in it.
2. She fixed my `tennis racquet for me.
3. He showed his a`ppointment book to me.
4. Did they deliver the farm equipment to him?
5. Shall I empty the waste basket for you?

C. In two-word verbs the stress is on the final adverb:

1. I think you should give `up.
2. How did this come `about
3. The light was too bright. I turned it `off
4. Here's your application form. Please fill it `out
5. It isn't true. I made it up.

D. Adverbs at the end of a sentence carry the stress of the phrase.

1. What he says is clear `enough,
2. I have talked `much.
3. We need to make the bookings three months in advance.
4. He's coming to`day.
5. They always work `hard.

E. Short adverbs like 'here', 'there', 'now', 'yet', 'ago' are not stressed even when they are in the final position. The words preceding them receive the stress.

1. I've never **`been** there.
2. What's the best time to **`get** there?
3. He hasn't started to **`study** yet.
4. We went to Japan two **`years** ago.
5. Are you ready to order **`dessert** now?

(But in imperative sentences like "Come here, Put it there, Sign here" the final adverb receives the stress.)

√ **Check Your Progress 2**

Underline the stressed words in the following lines of poetry and practise reading it aloud:

The Wind

The wind stood up, and gave a shout;
He whistled on his fingers and
Kicked the withered leaves about,
And thumped the branches with his hand,
And said he'll kill, and kill and kill;
And so he will! And so he will!

James Stephens

F. When there is an auxiliary or helping verb like 'do', 'can', 'will', 'shall', 'must' etc. with the main verb, the main verb is usually stressed.

1. I don't **be`lieve** it is right.
2. We must **`think** much about the manner of our going."
3. We'll set him right,
4. I will **`take** care of the bookings."
5. Then how can you **`do** it?

But the auxiliary verbs are stressed to show emphasis of intention as in:

1. I **`shan't** stand any nonsense!
2. You **'must** manage them yourself!
3. I **`have to** be in complete charge.
4. It **`might** work.
5. It simply **`won't** work.

9.5 LET US SUM UP

Positive and negative responses to others' opinions or statements can be expressed through various expressions. A simple 'yes' or 'no' can be expanded into short sentences or phrases. When we disagree, we need to make an extra effort to see that we are not rude and impolite. However, the degree of politeness will vary according to the relationship shared by the speakers.

We also learnt about stress in sentences.

9.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. a. "I know." "Clearly." "Never have I heard you talk so much."...
- b. ..."I know we will, but what really worries me....."
- c. Ramdoss absorbed this in silence
"It might work," Ramdoss said

2.

The wind

The wind stood up, and gave a shout;
 He whistled on his fingers and
Kicked the withered leaves about,
 And thumped the branches with his hand,
 And said he'll kill, and kill and kill;
 And so he will! And so he will!