English Language Speaking Skills

13th Class
Agreement & Disagreement Expressions: partial, strong,constructive ,3 levels of Discussions ,What to Avoid

Expressing Agreement or Disagreement for Constructive Dialogue
In business, there are expressions that say:

If two people always agree, only one is doing the thinking.
Or
If two people always agree, one of them is probably not needed.

Participating constructively in controversial discussions is not easy.

It's challenging to figure out how to say what you want to say without sounding harsh, offending someone, or creating bad feelings. Most of us *have never been taught* how to express agreement or disagreement in a positive way. In fact, often, we learn early on that it is best not to disagree with others.

Discussions about complex topics can happen at three different levels, which are described below. Although we might label these levels in different ways, *the goal in academic environments (and in good stimulating dialogue anywhere)*, should be the type of dialogue described in Level 3.

Level 3 (Dialogue)
- **The goal is primarily to try and understand where each person is coming from and what makes them think the way they do**
- **People spend as much effort on really listening and probing to understand others as they do trying to explain what they think and why they think that way.**

Level 2 (Discussion)
- **The goal is primarily to get to "say your piece".**
- **People are more interested in getting a chance to speak than listening to other's perspectives and trying to understand where they are coming from.**

Level 1 (Debate)
- **The goal is to prove that you're right and the other person is wrong**
- **Things are presented as very black and white/ right or wrong**

Good dialogue, although challenging, is incredibly thought provoking and interesting. *It helps us learn about ourselves, others, and this complex world*. **The sentence starters below can help participants formulate input in dialogue.**

Agreement (and continuing the dialogue)
- **The point you made about "….." is excellent. I'd like to add that…**
- **I agree with your comment "…". What do you think about…?**

- I'm with you on that point. What I still wonder about is….
- I think what you're saying about…. is so right. What would happen though if…?
- Yes, and in fact….
- Yes, and what is more…
- Absolutely. Actually, I would go further, and say…

Partial Agreement
- I agree with……, but what about …….?
- That's a good point, but in my opinion….
- That could apply in some situations, but what about when….?
- I understand your point about…, but I don't understand…..
- It's certainly true that…, but on the other hand….
- I can see that…., but I think it's also important to consider….
- That makes sense, but could it also be true that….
- I'd agree with you if…., but not if…
- I see what you mean with…, but I also think we need to consider….

Constructive Disagreement   •
 I can appreciate your point about…, but I would disagree because….
- That's interesting, however, from my point of view….
- That may be the case, but in my experience…..
- I'm afraid I can't agree with… because …..
- I disagree. What about the situations where…?
- I don't think that's the case because ….
- I'm not so sure about that because…
- I don't think your point about…necessarily follows because…
- I don't really see it that way because….

Things to Avoid

1. Avoid using words like never and always.
This type of language can easily lead to arguments about the wrong thing, and take a discussion completely off track.

2. Avoid expressing disagreement without explaining why or supporting your point.
In a discussion, if you are going to disagree, it is only fair to explain why you disagree.

3. Avoid criticizing the person who made the comment.
Everyone is entitled to their opinion. Just because someone thinks differently doesn't make them better or worse than you. Sticking to comments about ideas keeps the dialogue interesting and avoids making it personal.

Instructions To Agree
1 Nod your head "yes," and murmur "Mmmhmm." This is the simplest way to acknowledge what someone says and that you agree in English.

Wait until is your turn to speak, and use expressions such as "I agree with. . .," "I think. . .is a good idea," and "I think you're right."

Begin by agreeing with what another person has said, but add a qualifier if you do not completely agree. For example, say "I agree with you, but. . ."; "That makes sense; however. . ."; or "It's a good idea, but. . ." (See Reference 2.) If you agree with everything that the other person says, you can say, "I completely agree," or "You're totally correct/right."

To Disagree

Remain calm. Keep any anger or disrespect in check. Calmly express your disagreement, all the while respecting the other person's opinions.

Use phrases such as "I disagree because. . ."; "The problem with that is. . ."; "The way I see it. . ."; "I'm against it because. . ."; "Instead, I think that. . ."

Say "I'm afraid. . ." before you finish your disagreement statement. For example, you could say "I'm afraid I don't agree with you," or "I'm afraid I can't agree." If you do not agree with anything the other person has said, you can say, "I am afraid I completely disagree with you."

Notice that when you disagree with someone in English, you need to give a reason why you disagree. It is not enough to simply state that you think the other person is wrong and leave it at that. Explain your thoughts and opinions fully.

Offer solutions when you disagree as well. You may not like the other person's way of looking at a situation, but, unless you can come up with a better idea, it may be better to not say anything at all. Use phrases such as "I think we should. . ."; "We could. . ."; "One solution may be. . ."

Notice that these phrases use words like "should" and "could" that indicate that there may be other solutions that are equally feasible and acceptable. This is another example of how English speakers generally try not to speak so forthrightly and assert that their opinion is the only one that is correct.

AGREEMENT

In agreeing with an unfavourable opinion, you may wish to qualify your agreement with an expression of regret, etc.

His speech was boring	/ Yes, I am afraid it was. I have to agree that it was. \ I must say I found it so.

In other cases, you can be as enthusiastic as you like in emphasizing your agreement.
It was an interesting exhibition, wasn't it? – Yes, it was superb/absolutely splendid!
A referendum will satisfy everybody. –
Yes, definitely/quite/absolutely/I absolutely agree/I couldn't agree more/I quite agree/
I agree entirely.

You can show that you agree strongly with someone's description of something by repeating the adjective they have used and using "very" in front of it. You usually use "indeed" after the adjective.
I t was very tragic, wasn't it – Very tragic indeed.

The pacing in all these performances is subtle, isn't – Oh, very subtle, indeed

Other ways of expressing agreement are:
That's just what I was thinking.
You know, that's exactly what I think.
That's a good point.

DISAGREEMENT
Notice that you need to be very polite when disagreeing with someone in English – even someone you know quite well. When you deny or contradict what someone else has stated, the effect is often impolite, unless the denial is qualified in some way. You can qualify it by an apology or by adjusting to the speaker's point of view:

English is a difficult language to learn.
-I am afraid I disagree with you: some languages are even more difficult, I think.
Or
- TRUE, but the grammar is quite easy.
Or
-Yes, but it's not so difficult as Russian.
Or
-Do you think so? Actually, I find it quite easy.

More formal ways of Disagreement
University education does divide families in a way – I cannot go along with that.

There would be less guilt which characterized societies of earlier generations. – well I think I would take issue with that