



## ESL Podcast 79 – Disagreeing Politely in a Business Setting

### GLOSSARY

**to work** – to have the desired result; to do the task that is expected or wanted

\* The music box was supposed to play music, but it was broken and did not work.

**to call for** – to require; to say that something must happen or must be

\* The recipe called for flour, eggs, and milk, and Celena could not make the dish without those ingredients.

**ambitious** – demanding goals or accomplishments that require more work than what is commonly done

\* Kurt's dreams were ambitious and would require him to stay in school for many years.

**groundwork** – foundation; the basic work that must be done before more complicated or detailed work can be done

\* Once the groundwork was done, the company was able to hire more workers for the project and buy materials for later parts of the project.

**to rush** – to do something faster than usual; to do an action faster than it should be done

\* Winona needed to get home early that day, so she rushed through her remaining work.

**cost projection** – the amount of money that a project or task is expected to need before that project is completed

\* The cost projection for the new section of the library was \$8,000, but it actually cost \$8,500 to build.

**that may be, but** – that is true, but; a phrase used when a statement someone else made is true, but that there is other information that causes a conflict or problem with that statement

\* When Mr. Mauch told his daughter that she was late coming home last night, she explained, "That may be, but I had a good reason to be late."

**to scrap** – to destroy; to reject or throw something away

\* The weather was bad that day, so Arianne scrapped her plan to go to the park.

**to see** – to have an opinion about a situation; to view

\* The way Dwight sees it, the argument was his friend's fault because his friend was the one who borrowed Dwight's bike without asking.



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**timing** – the speed at which an action is done; the time chosen to do a certain action

\* Harvey asked Simona to watch a movie with him, but his timing was bad because she had a busy day and could not go.

**to agree** – to have the same opinion as someone else

\* Phillip agreed with his coworkers about the way their employer treated them, and he was happy to know that there were others with the same opinion.

**extras** – anything that is part of a project or plan, but not the main part; something that is added to the main part

\* The cost of the main project was \$500, but with all the extras added onto it, the total cost became \$720.

**to go back to the drawing board** – to begin planning again; to discard old plans that will not work and try to create better plans

\* When Kiana saw that her business plan would not work, she decided it was time to go back to the drawing board and think of a different plan.

**to disagree** – to have an opinion that differs from someone else's opinion

\* Juan disagreed with his wife about how to spend his paycheck, and the two started arguing.

**to not see eye to eye** – to not share the same opinion; a phrase used when two people have different opinions

\* Chau and her sister don't see eye to eye on many topics, causing them to argue often.

**to call a meeting** – to organize a meeting; to have a meeting

\* Mr. Demery called a meeting for the whole company to talk to his employees about how to improve the company's sales.



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### CULTURE NOTE

#### Don't Trust Your Gut

“To trust your gut” means to believe and follow your instincts, that internal voice that speaks to you about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad. “Anatomically” (as related to the body), the word “gut” refers informally to the area below your lungs – your stomach and intestines – but we use it in expressions such as “gut instinct” to mean our deep feelings and emotions.

The advice of trusting your gut is often used and recommended by people when it comes to making decisions about things both large and small. One area where you see this belief is at school. According to one recent book, 75% of college students believe that it is better “to stick with” (to keep; not to change) the first answer they write down for a question on a test instead of changing it later. “Surveys” (polls; questionnaires) of college professors show a similar attitude among teachers. Only 16% of college professors think that changing an answer will improve a student’s “score” (mark; grade) on a test. Even people in the test-preparation or “test-prep” (getting ready to take an exam) business believe this is true.

But all of this may be wrong, at least when it is related to taking tests. More than 70 years of research on test taking shows that most of the time a student changes his or her answer, the change is from a wrong answer to a right one. It doesn't matter what kind of test you are taking – “multiple-choice” (where you are given three or four possible correct answers) or “true/false” (where you say whether a “statement” (sentence) is right or wrong), “timed” (where you are given only a certain number of minutes) or “untimed” (where you can take as long as you want to finish). One review of 33 studies on the issue found that in every study, students typically did better when they decided to change their answer for difficult questions, when they did not trust their guts.



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 79: Disagreeing Politely in a Business Setting.

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast episode 79: Disagreeing Politely in a Business Setting. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development located in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Today's podcast is about disagreeing with people you work with. Let's get started!

[start of dialogue]

Lucy: I don't think this is going to work. This plan calls for the new office to open by July and I think that's too ambitious. I don't see how the groundwork can be done any earlier than September.

Jeff: I understand your concern. I don't want to rush the opening of the new office either. But, as I see it, a lot of the preparations were made last year when we considered opening an office in Miami. Even though the site is different, a lot of the cost projections are the same.

Lucy: That may be, but remember that one of the reasons we scrapped the Miami plan was because the budget was too big.

Jeff: That's not how I saw it. I think the major reason we didn't go ahead with the Miami plan was a problem with timing but I know that the budget was a concern, too. As you can see, though, this plan has a lower budget than the Miami plan.

Lucy: I don't agree. If you add in all of the extras, the budget is the same, if not higher. I think we need to go back to the drawing board on this.

Jeff: I have to disagree. This plan is the best we've come up with and is workable.

Lucy: I'm afraid we just don't see eye to eye on this. Let's call a meeting with the rest of the team and see what they think.

Jeff: Okay, let's do that.



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[end of dialogue]

We're talking about disagreements at work in this podcast. We start off by having Lucy say that she doesn't think "this plan is going to work." When we say something is "going to work" or "it works," we mean that it functions properly or it does what it's supposed to do. You can talk about a plan or a proposal to do something as "working" or "not working" you can also talk about a computer as "working" or "not working" or any machine as "working," meaning it's functioning, it's doing what it's supposed to do.

Lucy said that the plan that they are talking about "calls for" the new office. When we say something "calls for" we mean that that's what it says, that's what it says should happen. We often use this expression when we are talking about a plan for something or a policy for something. "The policy calls for everyone to meet with their boss once a year," meaning that's what it tells people to do. This plan calls for opening a new office and Lucy thinks that it's "too ambitious." The plan is "too ambitious." "Ambitious" is an adjective which means that you are trying to do a lot, probably in this case, according to Lucy, too much. When someone is "ambitious" – a person is "ambitious," that means that they want to be successful, they want to do better, they want to be the best in whatever it is that they do. For a plan to be "ambitious" we mean that it's trying to do a lot and perhaps too much.

Lucy says she doesn't see how the "groundwork" can be done. The "groundwork," all one word, "ground" and "work" together, the "groundwork" for anything is the foundation. It's the work that has to be done before anything else can be done. So, if you are going to, for example, take a trip, to do the "groundwork" or to – we often use the verb "to lay." "To lay the groundwork" means that you do all the things required before you start on your trip. You buy your tickets, you investigate, you know, hotels and that sort of thing. So, you can "lay the groundwork" for a project, a plan, or any sort of event.

This podcast is about expressing disagreement politely and you'll notice that we start off very polite and then we become a little less polite, never becoming the opposite of polite, which is "rude." We're not rude to each other. We're very polite and then we're somewhat polite. We start off being very polite. I say to Lucy, "I understand your concern." "Your concern" is something that you are worried about. It's what you are trying to discuss in our conversation. And this expression, "I understand your concern," is often used when the person doesn't necessarily agree with you but they want to be nice about it and they want to say that they understand what the other person's point of view is or opinion is.



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I mentioned that the plans that call for the new office were based upon another plan in Miami and I said that the “cost projections” are the same. “Cost projections” is a noun that we use in business to talk about the amount of money that we have to spend for a certain product, service, or project. So, the “cost projections” are like the predictions. A “projection” is your best guess about what something is going to be, and “cost projections” are your estimate of how much things are going to cost you, how much money you’re going to have to spend. Lucy then, again, disagrees with me politely. She says, “That may be, but remember,” and gives me her opinion. The expression, “That may be,” means that she is saying that what I just said is correct but she has something else that supports her opinion. So, when you say to someone “Well, that maybe but,” you’re disagreeing with them. You’re saying that what they are saying is correct but that’s not the most important thing, that what you have to say more important or is more appropriate.

Lucy said that one of the reasons we “scrapped” the Miami plan was because the budget was too big. “To scrap something” means to get rid of it, to cancel it, to decide not to do something. We often talk about our plans being “scrapped.” “I scrapped my plans to go to New York this week because it’s too cold,” or “I scrapped an idea.” We scrap that idea, we decided not to use it. I disagree with Lucy again, and now we’re becoming a little less formal, a little less polite here. I say, “That’s not how I saw it.” The expression, “This is how I see it,” or “That’s not how I see it,” means that’s not my opinion or that is my opinion. “To see something,” here, means to understand it. “How do you understand it?” or “What is your opinion about this topic?” I say that the problem with the Miami plan was with “timing.” “Timing” (timing) refers to or means the schedule, when you were going to do something. So, “timing” has to do with when something gets done.

Lucy then disagrees with me in the most direct way possible. She says, “I don’t agree.” And when you say to someone in a business setting, “I don’t agree,” often you know that person well enough because it’s a very direct way of disagreeing with someone. “I don’t agree.” She says that when you add in all the “extras” for the plan, the budget for this plan is still the same. The “extras” are things that are additional. We say that “I’m going to throw in some extras” – means I’m going to give you some additional things.

Lucy says that she thinks we need to “go back to the drawing board” on this. The expression, “to go back to the drawing board,” means that you have to start over. A “drawing board” is literally the table or the desk where an artist or an architect draws plans for a building, for example. I then also am very direct in my disagreement. I say to Lucy, “I have to disagree.” This is basically the same as “I disagree.” It has a little bit more politeness to it. “I have to disagree,” That’s a little



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more polite in English but I'm still being fairly direct. Lucy says to me that we just "don't see eye to eye" on this. "Eye" (eye) like your eye in your head, "eye to eye" means that we agree, or in this case, we don't agree. When you say to someone, "We see eye to eye on this," that means we agree and, of course, if you don't "see eye to eye," you don't agree.

Lucy suggests that we "call a meeting." "To call a meeting" means that we're going to have a meeting – announce the meeting to everyone who has to come. So, that verb we use – "to call" – is very common with meetings or other types of gatherings when people get together.

Okay. Now let's listen to the story or dialogue again, this time at a native rate of speech.

[start of dialogue]

Lucy: I don't think this is going to work. This plan calls for the new office to open by July and I think that's too ambitious. I don't see how the groundwork can be done any earlier than September.

Jeff: I understand your concern. I don't want to rush the opening of the new office either. But, as I see it, a lot of the preparations were made last year when we considered opening an office in Miami. Even though the site is different, a lot of the cost projections are the same.

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Jeff: Okay, let's do that.

[end of dialogue]

Remember that all of the scripts for our podcast are on our website. Go to [www.eslpod.com](http://www.eslpod.com).

From Los Angeles, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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