

EPISODE 17: YOU'VE HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD

C: Okay, one of the things that often in activities, maybe even some speaking exams, is where you have to talk to a partner, something, and come to some sort of an agreement.

A: Sure. Especially anything related to the Cambridge structure for speakings, for certificate, etcetera.

C: and many other exams, as well as collaborative task between the two of us, very rarely do we agree.

A: I mean, I think in real life, people don't actually spend much effort to finally reach an agreement. So, sure.

C: But I do love some of the expressions, especially when you know that they've kind of been taught to students when you see eye to eye.

A: Yeah, sure. I do, in despite of what you may think of my teaching method, I actually don't **threaten** my students all that often with failure, but I do threaten to fail them. I do tell them really early on, though, that in the speaking exam, if I hear I'm agree or I am disagree, I will 100% give them a zero. And I can tell you I think I have, first of all, I've absolutely never failed anyone for saying that. But I would say I have like a 98% success rate in getting them to never say I'm agree, I'm disagree. It makes sense because in Spanish, it's "estar de acuerdo". So that's why when **giris**, when foreigners learn Spanish, they say, "yo acuerdo contigo, yo desacuerdo". So, of course, it's natural for people here to make the opposite mistake. If you come from Spanish, you're thinking "estar de acuerdo", I agree.

C: The same in Catalan as well.

A: Yeah, exactly. So, it goes both ways. But I tell them, like, I promise you, children, that if I hear I'm agree, and they'll laugh because they love when you make fun of their accent, also, or I'm disagree, you will fail. And almost all of them never say that which makes me question everything we studied about teaching methodology.

C: I remember one year, I got quite **adamant** about this as well, and I told them all at the start of the year, okay, put your hands on the table, put your hands on the table. And I

A: did you get out the ruler?

C: No, I threatened them that I had the tables were electric and that they would get electrocuted if they said I am agreed. And so, they actually learned it pretty quick. They weren't using it, but the best bit was like, in the middle of the year, sometimes we get these, what we call "incorporacion". One girl came in, it was her first day, and she suddenly said, "oh, I am agree". And the whole class jumped up going like, "Save her", she's gone.



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A: That's hilarious. I like that.

C: Can you think of any other expressions to say? I agree? I would say something you're spotted.

A: Okay, I guess I agree. I don't ever agree with anyone it's hard for me to say.

C: If you don't agree, what would you say?

A: Am I still allowed to swear on this podcast?

C: No.

A: Has that been eliminated? I say you're full of bull poop.

C: Exactly.

A: People do say, actually, you're full of it, but that's more than just when someone says one thing that's more of a personality character, like, he's full of it.

C: Meaning he's **baloney**, isn't it?

A: Baloney. Yeah! That must be a substitute for for bull poop. Like here, like "ostras" instead of "ostia", you know?

C: Sure.

A: Like you don't know what you're talking about. That's a great one. It's so **accusatory**.

C: I always think we're more polite, in a way, and just say, well, I can see what you're saying, but...

A: my favourite one from our teaching materials for Cambridge is let's agree to disagree.

C: Yeah.

A: Nobody's ever said that's. Right.

C: I also like the expression "you've hit the nail on the head".

A: Okay. You hit the nail on the head. Hit the nail on the head.

C: I think we really do use I mean; people do use it. It's just that people don't really deliver it effectively.

A: You got to sell that one.



C: You got to know what you're saying.

A: "vender la moto"

C: You've hit the nail on the head. It's a nice expression, but whenever someone tries that and then examine those conditions, they always hit the head on the nail.

A: Hit your thumb with a hammer. Although I think you got it. You got it is definitely an affirmation of agreeing with someone. Oh, yeah, you got it.

C: Sure. Just as simple as that. And what I do then is, having taught some of these little expressions and to practice them, I'll get students who would stand up, move to the back of the room. I say, I'm going to give you some beliefs that I have. They're not really, but I sell it that way. I say, I believe very strongly that and if you agree with me, you move to one side and say you move right, and if you disagree, move left. And then they've got to face off and kind of argue.

A: and it's fun to give them things that are really out of character of your beliefs and see if they catch it or not.

C: The first thing I say is, I believe very strongly that street drinking, as they would say here's, wrong, it's terrible. It should be banned.

A: It's wrong. It's terrible. Okay. Do students usually care about it one way or the other?

C: They usually disagree, yeah... because they start then arguing about prices, that bars are too expensive...

A: But I bet if you have adults who live in the centre of the city, they hate it.

C: Exactly. The noise. Exactly. So, it gets a nice little argument going, and then the younger ones tend to say, but when you were younger, did you used to do it?

A: Of course, they...

C: of course, we did. Yeah.

A: But we're not young anymore, so that's why we hate it.

C: One I do actually, then to get their reaction, because more and more we see in the city cycle lanes, fewer cars.

A: Yeah, thankfully.

C: I think cyclists should be obliged to wear helmets.



A: Legally, they are.

C: Really?

A: I think so. The electric scooters are... you're required to have a light and a helmet. And I think the law is for bicycles to be required to wear... **cyclists** to wear a helmet, I think. They are required to stop at red lights, despite what they do.

C: If you're using the how do we pronounce bicyng? Bicing?

A: Yeah, I guess they say Bicing. In English, it's unpronounceable.

C: Yeah

A: I guess it can't be a law because they're not carrying around helmets. That's true. That's a good one. People are definitely split on the bicycle question a lot, because people who have cars hate cyclists. People who have bicycles hate cars. People who don't have either one hate everybody.

C: And then what happens? Some people are in the middle, so they actually move to the middle instead of right or left. They say neither one way or another, and that's 50 50. Then I ask them for, like, having a pet, maybe a dog. Having a dog as a pet in the city is just not fair on the animal.

A: Okay

C: to see what their reaction is.

A: Yeah, that makes sense. I would think most people don't agree with that, probably. No, because I don't know, maybe people would qualify it more and say, well, big dogs are not fair. But a small dog in a medium sized apartment, it seems like a big apartment because it's a small dog.

C: Well, I do say immediately a guide dog is fair.

A: Service animal is allowed.

C: Service animals? Is that what you...

A: I think we call them service animal, yeah

C: Sounds very...

A: emotional support animal.

C: Okay



A: that's different. That's different than a service animal, I think those are the ones that are still allowed on planes. Like, I have an emotional support guitar that I need it on the airplane.

C: And then I start to get a little riskier and I go, okay, I believe, I reckon, and people's eyebrows are raised. The younger sibling has an easier life than the older sibling.

A: That's funny.

C: This one is good now. Yeah, do you agree or disagree?

A: I'm a terrible student. I need more information. I mean, what does that mean? Easier life? Maybe they have more freedom because assuming that the first sibling was raised in a decent fashion, the parents are sometimes a little more hands off with the second one.

C: Right.

A: Does that mean better? I don't know. It depends on the child. Some people need more guidance.

C: Okay.

A: Are you an only child or no...?

C: I've got an older brother.

A: Okay. I'm an older son.

C: I had such an easier life. Definitely.

A: Why?

C: My brother was always just, can I do it? No, I want to go to a disco. No. They always had to break down the barriers and then the moment he went to a disco and survived. I don't know what my parents were expecting. He came home alive, so they were like okay and the younger one, he went at 16, I could go at twelve.

A: It's kind of like, well, he loosened the pickle jar for you, and they came in and opened it quite easily. Interesting.

C: The best one. another kind of little **controversial** one, which I enjoy, is that in a relationship, romantic relationship, if one person is much taller than the other person, if there's a big height difference, that relationship is going nowhere.

A: I would bet that. We had talked about this, not in this podcast, but I think a couple of years ago when talking about maybe I'd ask you for the speaking activities, you had given me this



activity, and you mentioned this question. I think that the students tend to agree, if it's a taller woman and a shorter man, that they agree that that relationship is doomed to fail. But the opposite way, I don't think they feel as strongly.

C: right. Yeah. I just stand back and let them fight it out and fight it out and argue it. Another one, for example, I said that attractive people find it easier to get jobs.

A: Oh, I think that that's backed up. I don't know if they find it easier, but I think that it's backed up by statistics. I know that men, I think a six foot one, six-foot two man, you know, inches, right?

C: Yeah

A: right. Okay. I don't know what that is in centimetres.

C: I don't know.

A: I'm not sure. But it's a relatively tall man, but not like a person who walks down. Oh, my God.

C: Like 2 metres

A: No, 2 meters is six foot seven.

C: Oh, really?

A: Yeah, because that was Scottie Pippen's height on the Chicago Bulls. Michael Jordan was six foot six. Like 198.

C: Tiny. Tiny.

A: But so, six foot two, the average income is way above that of someone who is five foot ten. And that this is like the optimal height that, I guess, exudes confidence, but doesn't make people think that you're so tall that it's, quote unquote, weird. I'm not saying it's weird to be supertall, but that's the way people see it.

C: Yeah. And then to finish the activity, what's really nice but actually really risky, really, really risky is, okay, now people get into little groups, and we're going to turn the tables. So, you think of a really controversial statement and ask me my opinion and guess what kind of things they ask me.

A: I have a favourite student in the class.

C: Oh, no, they go much worse than that.

A: I don't know.



C: Some of the things would not be repeatable here.

A: Really?

C: No. But some of the things they do kind of really go for it. One time, I remember

A: you take a step in each direction?

C: Yeah. Obviously, living in Barcelona, often the political question comes up, which is I find really interesting that as a teacher, teachers, we try to avoid certain topics.

A: Well, in class, I don't know if I've mentioned this on any of our podcast. Whenever possible, I don't say Spanish or Catalan, I say Iberian, because it is undeniable that everyone who lives in the Iberian **Peninsula** in some way or another is Iberian, either because they're living here or because they're from here.

C: But I do find that they asked me about politics, for example, which I would never ask them, but they feel is fair game. And also, they've asked me very often they'll ask me about kind of romantic relationships or something along the lines.

A: Well, that's because they want to see if you're available or not, obviously.

C: Or they ask. One I do remember very clearly was saying that a gay couple should not be allowed to adopt a child. I would never ask them something like that, but they found it fair game to come back to get my reaction.

A: interesting. I'm surprised that that would be a hot topic here. In the US, this activity in the US would be a disaster. I would not want to do this in the slightest bit. I would not want to know any of the opinions of my students, because people are just a lot more extreme, I think, in the US. Even on the Catalan-Spanish political question, which is definitely a touchy subject, I think it's still way safer than talking about Democrats and Republicans in the US.

C: Okay, well try it out.

Vocabulary bank

threaten= to indicate that you will harm them or cause them distress if they do not comply with your wishes or demands.

adamant= about something, they are firm and unyielding in their position, refusing to be persuaded or swayed.

controversial= refers to something that is the subject of intense disagreement or debate, often due to conflicting opinions or perspectives.

cyclists= are people who ride bicycles for transportation, recreation, or sport.



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accusatory= is an adjective used to describe language or behavior that suggests someone is being blamed or accused of wrongdoing.

baloney= is a slang term for nonsense or foolish talk.

peninsula= is a geographical feature that is surrounded by water on three sides and connected to a larger landmass on one side. It often has a distinctive shape, such as a narrow strip of land that juts out into the sea.



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