

❖ Lesson 2

- **Business Meetings**
- **Questioning and Disagreeing**

Warm-up Questions:

Which kinds of meetings listed below do you have in your workplace? What topics do you usually talk about in the meetings?

- Information sharing meetings
- Routine meetings
- Emergency meetings
- Meetings with a client or supplier

Challenge!

Work in groups. Hold a 10-minute meeting to decide on the following topic. Try to agree / disagree with each other. Give reasons for your opinion.

Topic:

- How can you improve communication in your office / company.

Lesson 2:
Business Meetings

Useful Expressions for Meetings

■ Giving Opinions 意見を述べる

1. **Generally speaking**, customers would go for a lower price if the quality were similar.
2. **From a consumer's point of view**, I'd go for a product with a better image.
3. **It seems to me that** negative information grabs more attention from consumers.
4. **I could be wrong, but** a brand image is created by TV commercials.
5. **I think we should** simplify the delivery procedures.
6. **It might be a good idea to** get some financial advice from a professional.

Useful Expressions for Meetings

■ Agreeing / Disagreeing 同意する / 反論する

7. I **completely agree with you on** selling the product in many markets.
8. **That's exactly what I was thinking** – uniform pay systems.
9. **I agree with everything except** the cost reducing idea.
10. **What's the point of** waiting for permission to go ahead with the project?
11. **That's not how I see it.** I think it's best to focus on the renewal plan.
12. **No offense, but** have you ever seen any of the complaint reports ?

Useful Expressions for Meetings

■ Asking for or Giving explanations 説明を求める / 説明する

13. **What do you mean by** “recreating our merit-rating system?”

14. **Could you clarify** the understaffing situation?

15. **Could you go into detail on** the sales pitch you were telling us about?

16. **What I mean is that** competition brings out the best in products.

17. Motivating skilled employees **is one example.**

18. **I have to get back to you on** this since I don't have the information ready.

★ Class Work

- *Discuss one of the following topics.*
- *Try to use as many bold-faced expressions in the “Useful Expressions” section as possible.*

1. Waiting time in a crowded restaurant
2. Smoking manner
3. On-street parking
4. Japanese TV programs

Lesson 2:
Questioning and Disagreeing

Questioning and Disagreeing 「反論する」

～ 言葉の強弱を使い分ける ～

A book called “The Japan That Can Say No” attracted attention more than a decade ago. Today it is still true that many Japanese people try to avoid saying “no” or disagreeing with other people. However, it is also true that many people who speak English try not to say no or to argue strongly or directly, just like many Japanese.

Look at the three dialogs below to see how you can avoid being too strong or too direct when you say “no” or disagree with someone.

■ Dialog 1: Strongly or directly 強く又は直接的に反論する

A: If we install this system, we don't have to worry about unauthorized individuals accessing our confidential company data.

B: How can you be so sure about the effectiveness of the system? There's no 100% effective security program, especially in cyberspace.

Look at the three dialogs below to see how you can avoid being too strong or too direct when you say “no” or disagree with someone.

■ Dialog 2: Politely 相手への気遣いを示しながら反論する

A: That's how this system assures the protection of our customer data from unauthorized access from the outside world.

B: I see. It seems like a really good system, but I don't know... I mean...I'm not so sure if this will completely protect the data. Cyberspace always has uncertainties and new threats, right?

Look at the three dialogs below to see how you can avoid being too strong or too direct when you say “no” or disagree with someone.

■ Dialog 3: Indirectly 間接的に反論する

A: That's how this system automatically updates our customer data. We don't have to worry about the enormous work of retyping the data whenever it changes.

B: Well, that's good, but **there might be another way to reduce the work of retyping.** For example...

★ **Class Work**

- **Compare the three dialogs and discuss their differences.**

★ Pair Work

- *Discuss the following topics.*
- *Practice questioning and disagreeing in pairs or groups. Give reasons for your opinion.*

1. How can you increase the sales at your company?
2. What training is needed for the workers at your company?
3. Which baseball team will win this/next year?
4. Your choice

More Examples for Questioning and Disagreeing

- *Make your own sentences using the bold-faced phrases where possible.*

■ Strongly or directly

1. **That's not true.** Our project has been contributing to our earnings.
2. **I don't agree with you on** the figures you just mentioned.
3. **Do you really think** such a system will work in our office?
4. **I don't think** the production process is inefficient. The problem is the way they operate the machines.
5. **That's ridiculous. If we think logically,** it's obvious that the strategy doesn't make any sense.

More Examples for Questioning and Disagreeing

- *Make your own sentences using the bold-faced phrases where possible.*

■ Politely

1. **I'm sorry I don't see the point of** reviewing that right now.
I'd rather move on to the next topic. Is that OK?
2. **This might sound strange** because I'm a designer myself,
but **I agree with** the sales people, not the designers, on this issue.
3. **I'm afraid I have to disagree** because the data I have here says
the complete opposite of what you've just said.

More Examples for Making Forecasts

- *Make your own sentences using the bold-faced phrases.*

■ Generally

1. **Although** price in the market are trending south, **we can** maintain a profit **by moving** our production foundry to Taiwan or China.
2. **Because of** price reductions, the amount of sales won't grow even if the sales volume increases.
3. Price competition **will be** much more severe **since** the market leaders are eager to reduce their prices.

More Examples for Making Forecasts

- *Make your own sentences using the bold-faced phrases.*

■ **Unsurely**

1. **It maybe a big if, however,** current economic downturn **suggests the possibility of** them going bankrupt.
2. **We can't rule out the possibility of** products with a build-in camera taking over 80 % of the whole market in a few years or so.
3. **It's uncertain as to whether or not** they can maintain their market share in the face of increasing foreign competition.

★ Pair Work

- *Question or disagree with each statement politely or indirectly.*
1. Starbucks is more relaxing than Doutor.
 2. In order to work efficiently, you need to keep your desk organized.
 3. The only way we can survive is to cut more costs in our operations.
 4. Expanding into Asia is more important than building up domestically.

Tips for Successful Business Meetings

1 Agenda

It's important for the participants to know the objectives of the meeting and the subjects to be discussed in advance.

A good agenda should include:

- objectives of the meeting
- subjects to be discussed and the timetable
- roles of the participants in the meeting, if any are assigned
- date, time, and venue of the meeting

② Meeting opener

To open a meeting, a good chairperson will welcome everyone and state the objectives of the meeting. If all the participants don't know each other, a brief introduction will take place at this time. Here is a typical meeting opener you can refer to.

“Thank you everyone for coming today. As you can see in the agenda, the purpose of today's meeting is to brainstorm ideas in order to resolve the recent frequent miscommunication in the department.....”

③ Controlling discussions

A discussion easily slips off track when everyone goes into it with ideas and thoughts. However, it's important for the meeting to stay on track in order to peruse the objectives. Sticking to the agenda is a good way to control discussions. It's usually the chairperson's job to control discussions but other participants can also do this.

4 Summarizing

Summarizing what has been discussed is very important for the meeting to be effective. By summarizing, everyone is able to confirm what's been decided and what hasn't; plus, you can identify any misunderstandings or questions, if there are any.

5 Expressing yourself

One of the purposes of a meeting is to share ideas and thoughts. It's important that you express yourself and be active. You don't have to worry if your thoughts might be useless or you might sound stupid. You never know if what you have to say could really help the situation. Keeping quiet is the worst strategy at international business meetings.

★ Final Practice and Presentation ★

- Select one of the products or services your company makes or provides. Have a meeting to plan a TV commercial to promote the product or service.

Use the agenda below to precede the meeting.

The instructor will be the chairperson at this meeting.

- Directions for business meeting participants:
Before the meeting, take 5 minutes to individually prepare your commercial ideas for the product or service the class has chosen.
In the meeting, try to practice disagreeing with others.

★ Final Practice and Presentation ★

Agenda:

- *Fill in the blank with the name of the chosen product or service.*

TV Commercial Planning Meeting for

Date: / /

Time: : - :

Participants: all members

0:00-0:15 Brainstorm TV commercial ideas

0:15-0:20 Forecast the product-buying public and consumer response

0:20-0:25 Narrow down commercial ideas to meet the target market

0:25-0:30 Discuss the final decisions