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English – II (Advanced English)
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Question Tags in English Sentences

Welcome to the class. Today, we are going to look at one important part of English sentence. This is called question tags or tag questions; we are going to look at how it works in English sentences. It is important for me to mention it here that proper uses of tag questions while speaking, not so much while writing, but while writing as well, that is proper uses of tag questions makes our speech very impressive.

It is also important to note here that lack of this reduces us to not just ungrammaticality but also to inappropriateness. People do get the message; people do understand what we want to say. But it does not add what it should while we speak. Therefore, a very, very close look, a simple understanding of it can elevate our speech to a totally another level. Let us look at it. We know a lot about sentences. We know how sentences work. Just a small careful attention can add just a lot to while, to our speaking. Let us look at how it works.

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Declarative Sentence

Tense
A2R

• Sentence = [Subject + Predicate]

• Predicate = [Verb + Object(s) [adjuncts/adverbs]]

① Agreement
 ② Tense
 Question.



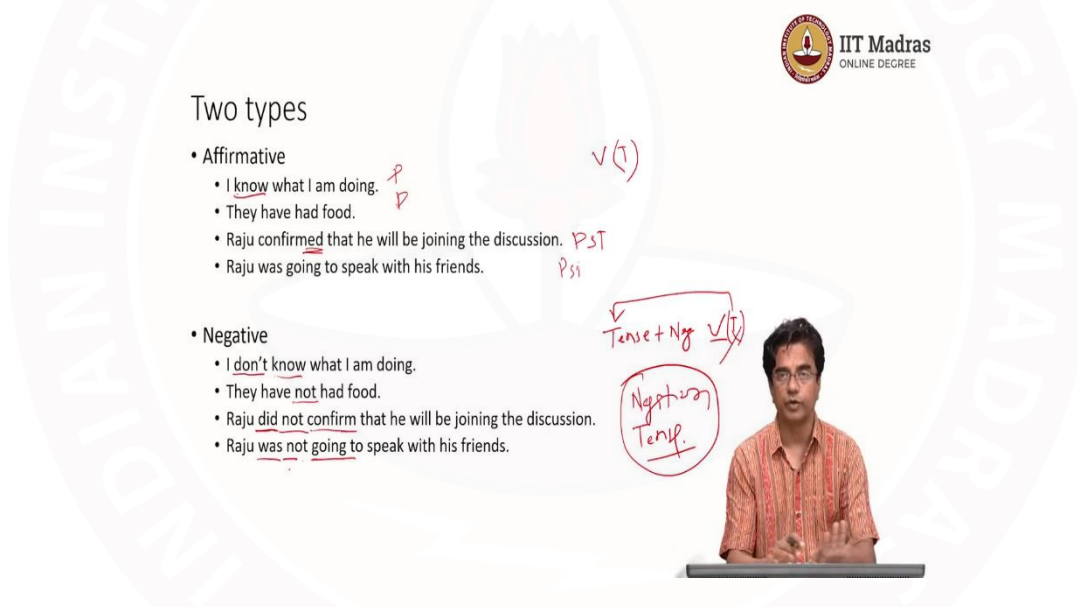
Question tags can be added to declarative sentences in English. As you know, declarative sentence simply means a simple sentence, and I am going to explain that to you. So, there are two parts of a sentence that is subject and predicate. The two things get together with what

we call agreement. And we combine them together, and we get a sentence. This is where we have tense as an important part as well.

And within the verb, we have objects and adverbs and other things. For the, for the question tags, what is important is an understanding of agreement and tense. And, of course, we need to know how we make questions. However, this is a completely different type of questions. It has different function. We are going to look at them in details.

So, two important parts right in the beginning, based on our understanding of sentence for this purpose, that is, for the purpose of forming a proper, properly designed tag questions in English, we need to pay attention to two parts. One, agreement. Two, tense. Or in the other way, round order.

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Two types

- Affirmative
 - I know what I am doing. *P*
 - They have had food. *P*
 - Raju confirmed that he will be joining the discussion. *PST*
 - Raju was going to speak with his friends. *Pst*
- Negative
 - I don't know what I am doing.
 - They have not had food.
 - Raju did not confirm that he will be joining the discussion.
 - Raju was not going to speak with his friends.

Handwritten notes on slide:
 - Above Affirmative: $\sqrt{1}$
 - Above Negative: $\sqrt{2}$
 - Between sections: Tense + Neg $\sqrt{1/2}$
 - In Negative section: Negation Temp.

Let us look at two types of declarative sentences. Some sentences are affirmative sentences. We also call them positive sentences, and some are negative sentences. They are not just two simple types. The use of negation in an affirmative sentence to make a sentence negative is also an important thing.

And use of negatives and negation also interacts very closely with tense, and I will underline these aspects too. So, let us spend a couple of minutes here understanding the differences between affirmative and negative sentences, and then see how negation works with tense, and we go to the tag questions.

So, look at this, I know what I am doing. These are, again, random, simple sentences. I know what I am doing. This is not a...what I am doing...is not a question. Rather this whole thing is the object of this work? No. That part is very clear to us. What we need to know this is an affirmative sentences sentence, these are affirmative sentences, and here the tense is present.

They have had food, present tense. Raju confirmed that he will be joining the discussion. A sentence could be as long as it can. But we need to pay attention to the tense part and the agreement part. Confirmed, past. Raju was going to speak with his friends, past. In negative now, look at how tense and negation interacts in the context of a negative sentence. I don't know what I am doing. It is a negative of the first affirmative sentence there.

Now, how does this work? When we say, I don't know, when we use negation, what happens is, in general, tense is on the verb. That is, within a verb, we have tense, infused, imbedded; in present tense, we do not see it sometimes, and in past tense, we can see that. But when negation comes, in a negative sentence, tense gets out of the verb.

So, first, you have tense, then you have negation, and then we have verb. So, the negation, the tense that was within the verb, gets out. And then verb remains without tense. This is an important part of negation and negative sentence in English. So, the reason why we have here, we do not, I don't know is tense in the form of do, is out of the verb no. They have not had food. Look at this. Not here comes in, in the sentence,

Raju did not confirm. Look at here. Here, this was past tense. So, once the past came out of the verb, then it is no more confirmed, it is confirmed, did not confirm. Look at the construction of this part. So, before the sentence becomes negative, the tense is out of the verb, that he will be joining the discussion. Raju was going to speak with his friends, Raju was not going to speak with his friend. So, here the tense was already out.

So, the tense comes in between. So, the negation comes in between the tense and the verb. That is an important part of English negative sentences. So, to say the least, but to keep in mind the least, that in a negative sentence, tense is not on the verb, tense is out of the verb, and tense precedes negation. These are two important parts that we need to know about negative sentences.

I again underline here that this is how the computation of several elements of a sentence work in our human mind, in our mind. And to understand this computation, to pay attention to this computation is important for using them in our speech. Speech would not become impressive

just by practising or without understanding these intricacies. So, once we know this subconscious computation, we always pay attention to them, and they start reflecting in our language, in our, in the use of these things when we speak, and in turn, the uses becomes grammatical accurate.

So, accuracy part is taken care of. And when this accuracy combines with confidence, we get fluency. In turn, it becomes impressive. So, see the foundation of how to get things accurate. This is what we need to know about computation of negative sentences.

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Tag Questions

- Appears at the end of the sentence.
- Appears in the form of a question.



How does our understanding of negative sentence and question help us make tag questions appropriately, properly? So, two things we need to keep in mind. Tag question appears at the end of the affirmative sentence. And it appears in the form of a question.

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Examples

- You speak English, don't you?
- You do not speak English, do you?
- Contraction of tense and negation is mandatory in tag questions.

T N
do not
don't



We will see the example in a minute, examples, a lot of examples in a minute. So, look at this. This is a declarative affirmative sentence. You speak English. And now that we are going to make it, make a tag question out of it, it is not a full stop here. We use a comma. And then this is the question, this is the sentence clause in the form of a question we put at the end of the sentence with a question mark. And that becomes a tag question.

So, we say, you speak English, don't you? When we have a negative sentence like you do not speak English, then the tag is do you? Just pay attention to these two sentences, you will do the maths after that, and you will get the answer right. So, in a affirmative sentence, tag question needs a negation; you speak English, don't you?

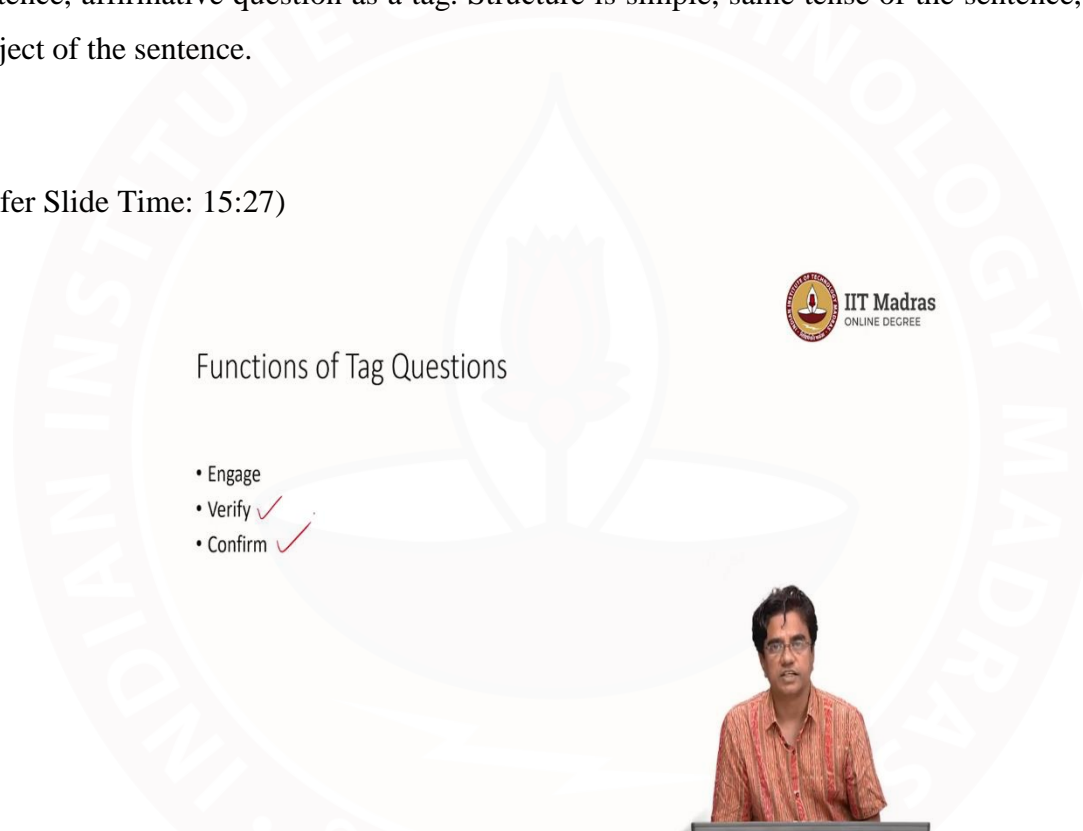
So, look at this, we make a question in the following way. We take the tense, as you remember, how we make questions; for questions, the fronting of tense is important. So, we take the tense of this sentence. What is the tense of this sentence? Present. We take this here. Then it gets fronted. And you have you still keep the same subject of this sentence, you and you make this a negative question. You say, do not, the sentence begins, do, don't you, do not you in a negative tag question. It is very important that negation and tense stay in contracted form.

So, look at this, in an affirmative sentence, contraction can be optional. Like when we say you do not speak English, we can also say you don't speak English. So, do not is regular form and don't is contracted form. Contracted means two different elements, that is, tense and negation get contracted, combined together. And that is how we get these kinds of

expressions. So, this is called contraction, and therefore I am letting you know that contraction of tense and negation is mandatory for tag questions. They cannot remain separated. We can say you speak English, do not you; we have to say, don't you.

So, subject comes from the same, from the affirmative sentence, tense comes from the affirmative sentence and the only thing that we need to keep in mind while making the question that it has to be contracted. We have to retain the same tense, and we have to retain the same subject. In affirmative sentence, the tag is negative; in negative sentences, tag is a positive question. So, in affirmative sentence, negative question as a tag and in negative sentence, affirmative question as a tag. Structure is simple, same tense of the sentence, same subject of the sentence.

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Functions of Tag Questions

- Engage
- Verify ✓
- Confirm ✓

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Look at more examples. So, but more examples of question tags. And before that, let us pay attention to why do we use tags? What are the functions of tags? There are three basic functions there could be more. And as you move, as you pay attention to them, as you pay attention to people's speech, maybe you will find more. But three basic questions are when we use tag, we try to engage, we try to, we sometimes we use tag questions to verify or confirm. These are some of the basic functions of tag questions.

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Influence of our first language

- You speak English, right?
- You speak English, isn't it?



Functions of Tag Questions

- Engage
- Verify ✓
- Confirm ✓



Examples

- You speak English, don't you?
- You do not speak English, do you?
- Contraction of tense and negation is mandatory in tag questions.

T N
do not
don't



And here is the, is an important footnote for all of us. Proper appropriate use of tag questions is very important for making our speech impressive. People will understand the content of what we want to say, what we want to convey, even without a proper tag question. But it will give a very different kind of impression.

It does not make our speech impressive. The idea is not to copy any TV speaker of English, but the idea is definitely without hesitation to get ourselves as close as possible in terms of uses, appropriateness and accuracy. These are the key points of making our language impressive. So, sometimes what happens that in our English, we see shades of tag questions from our native languages. All languages use tag questions. And at this point, I invite you to think about your own languages.

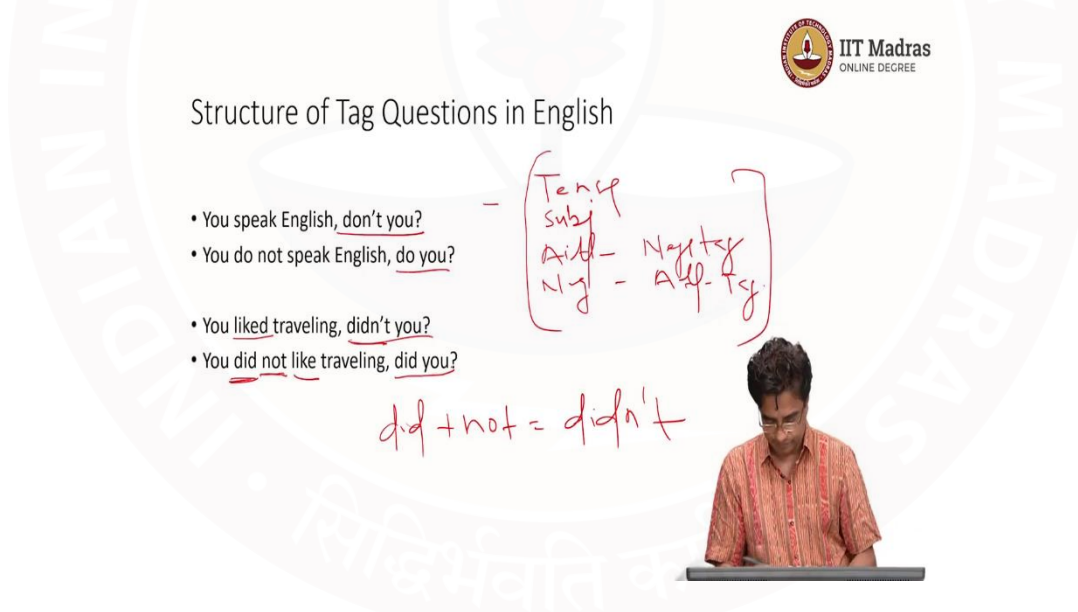
See how we make tag questions in your own language; you will find out that a lot of times, we transfer that subconscious knowledge of our first language. You know what I mean by first language. First language is the language that we effortlessly acquired as a child without much instruction, from our immediate natural society, from parents, family, friends, school, neighbours. This is what we know as first language.


And very often, we see impact of that language in a new language that we are learning. How does it show up? When we speak English, we can, we, you will hear people saying things like you speak English, right? You speak English, isn't it? Instead of saying; You speak English, don't you? This is the appropriate tag question. People use it right, isn't it and some other variations of these things.

They are okay, and this is what I mean when I say you get the sense of what people want to say. They are still trying to meet the same function to verify and confirm. They are just using the strategy that they use in their first language. And they transfer that strategy through their subconscious computation to the new languages. However, if we pay attention that we do not do such a thing, we can help improve our own language, and this is the key part of making language impressive.

So, working on the influence of our first language is a natural phenomenon. There is nothing wrong about it. It is a natural thing to happen. But to minimize it, by paying attention to subconscious process is all that we need to put in as effort in learning the new language. And that is what I am underlining for us to do so that we get out of this and we use things like this. So, how it is? It is simple. The structure of tag question is simple. The functions are very simple. The context of the use is very simple. All we need now is to pay attention for the uses.

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Structure of Tag Questions in English

- You speak English, don't you?
- You do not speak English, do you?
- You liked traveling, didn't you?
- You did not like traveling, did you?

- [Tense
Subj
Aff - Neg
Neg - Aff]

did + not = didn't


A lecturer in an orange shirt is standing at a podium, presenting the slide.

So, the, like I said, you speak English, don't you? In the tag question, we need to pay attention to same tense, same subject. And if the sentence is affirmative, then negative tag, and if the sentence is negative, then affirmative tag. That is all we need to know. And then we get things like, you don't speak English, do you? You like travelling, didn't you? Look at this. It is a past tense. Here, so we get past tense didn't and did plus not in contracted form becomes didn't, while same thing in the negative sentence and look at how what happens in negation.


So, the moment the sentence becomes negative, the tense out of this verb come, it comes out, the tense gets out of the verb. So, the sentence is you did not like travelling and in that case, the tag is affirmative, did, you did not like travelling, did you? So, we are the purpose is we are saying you, you did not like travelling, and we are giving an option to the hearer to help us understand by confirming or agreeing with us, and the method of that is to use a tag question. When we are saying you like travelling, what do we ask for them to confirm? We can only ask a negative question, didn't you?

So, the person will say no, no, no, I liked travelling or when you want to confirm the other way around, you use, we use the negative sentence, you did not like travelling. The tag has to be, did you? The person will say yes or no accordingly. So, the structure and function of this is pretty simple and clear. And we just need to be attentive to these things to make our, to make the uses of this, these, in our English, impressive.

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- ^{S P} You don't know the consequence, ^{P S} do you?
- He is devastated with the outcome, isn't he?
- He rushed as fast as he could, didn't he?
- Whenever we play chess, Raju ^{Pr} beats me, doesn't she?
- He spoke with you, didn't he? ^{Pr} do es
- She wants me to come to Chennai, doesn't she?

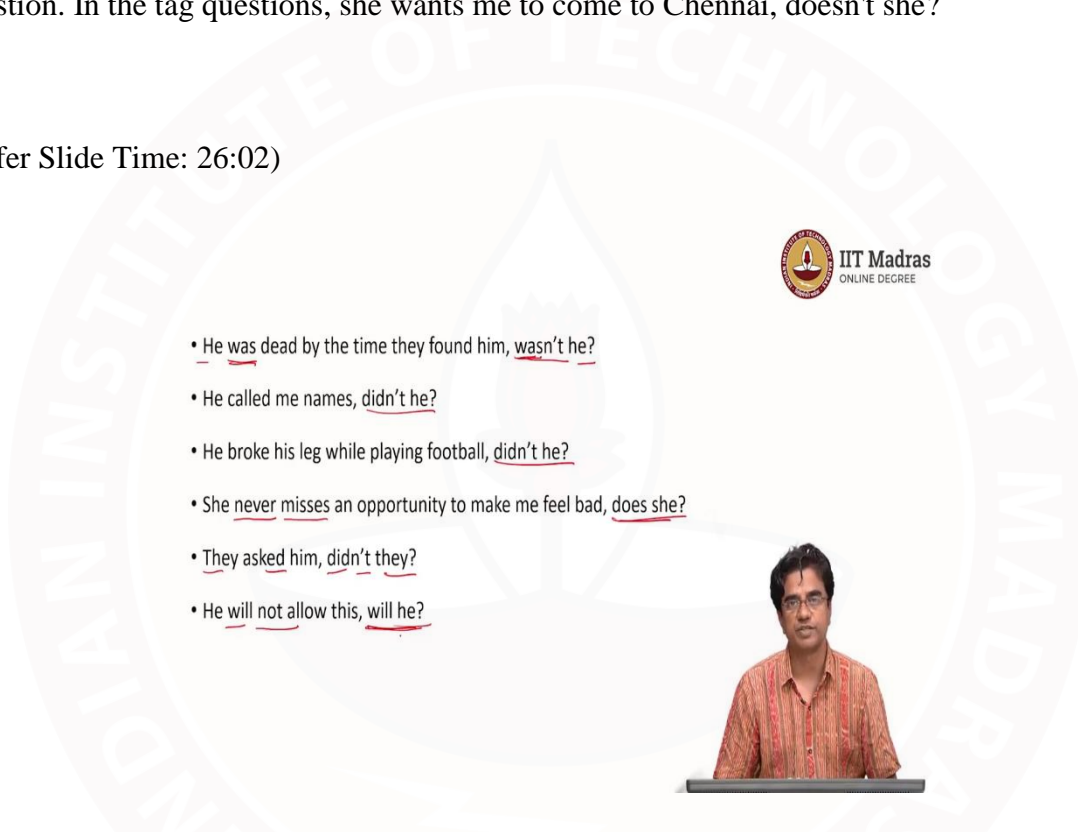



So, let us see some more examples to go through. And thus, you can check when you use. You can check when you read. You can check these things when you listen to people. You don't know the consequence, do you? Again, a negative sentence, affirmative question tag. Present, present. You as the subject, same subject. He is devastated with the outcome, isn't he? Tense, same tense here. Affirmative, negative tag. Contraction is, we do not say in tag, is not he. We have to say, isn't he? He rushed as fast as he could, didn't he? Same subject, same

thing here. Past tense, past tense here. Whenever we play chess, Raju beats me. So, look at the type of sentence. The subject is Raju, verb is beats, tense is present.

Hence, doesn't he and because this is third person, we have to use does as third person, and this is the reason why we mentioned in the beginning, that along with tense we need to pay attention to agreement part as well. Raju beats me. Raju always beats me, doesn't he? He spoke with you, didn't he? He past tense, past tense, negative contraction, same subject, affirmative sentence negative tag. So, we see the same thing happening again and again in the question. In the tag questions, she wants me to come to Chennai, doesn't she?

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- He was dead by the time they found him, wasn't he?
- He called me names, didn't he?
- He broke his leg while playing football, didn't he?
- She never misses an opportunity to make me feel bad, does she?
- They asked him, didn't they?
- He will not allow this, will he?

He was dead by the time they found him, wasn't he? He-subject, was-past tense, was-this is an affirmative sentence. So, tense, negation, contracted, same subject. He called me names, didn't he? He broke his legs while playing football, didn't he? She never misses an opportunity to make me feel bad, does she? Now here it is a negative sentence. She misses an opportunity. So, we use, does she? They asked him, didn't they? They, past tense, past tense, negative contraction same subject.

He will not allow this, will he? So, future tense, negative sentence, positive tag. So, all these examples demonstrate the same thing. All these examples confirm three functions at least. And irrespective of the total number of functions of tag questions in English, we only need to

pay attention to the structure, which helps us understand subconscious computation to improve the uses of these things and make our own language impressive.

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Things to notice ...

- Important to work on tag questions to sound impressive.
- Negation and Tense: Agreement.
- Contraction in tag questions is a requirement.



So, the few things that we keep in mind is negation, tense and when we say tense, we mean tense plus agreement. Because they are not really, they are two separate things. But anyway, they are combined together and contraction is requirement. Contraction of two elements is a requirement. That is a contraction of tense and the negation, if the sentence is affirmative for forming tag questions. Just few things and then we sound impressive. Looking forward to a discussion on these things with you. Thank you so much, until next time.