EASY ACCESS ENGLISH

Trade Union

Activity One – watch the video and answer the questions.

You tube - Ikea workers strike in Paris

1. Which union do we see at the beginning?
2. How long has the first person interviewed been working for IKEA?
3. What does he say about the working conditions?
4. What are the employees asking for?
5. What are they threatening?
6. What is Ikea offering?
7. What do the unions think?
8. What do we see at the end of the video?



Activity Two – Read the information about intonation.

Intonation and Pitch.

In English speech there is a combination of stressed (strong) and unstressed (weak) syllables.

o It was the **best** car for them to **buy**.

The syllable which is stressed the most is called the nuclear syllable.

o It was the best car for them to buy. (Buy is the nuclear syllable.)

The nuclear syllable carries the main focus of information. It also carries any new information.

o We looked at the **hatchback**. (Hatchback is new information.)

o The hatchback was **old**. (Hatchback is given information. Old is new information.)

The nuclear syllable sounds louder than the other stressed syllables. It also has a change of pitch.

The two most common pitch movements are:

rising pitch yés
falling pitch yès

Compare these replies:

o Q: When would it suit you to come?

A: Nów? (The intonation expresses a question: would it be OK if I came now?)

o Q: When would it suit you to come?

A: Nòw. (The intonation expresses a statement: I'll come now.)

A falling tone is used to show completeness. A rising tone can indicate incompleteness.
A falling tone is normally used when a person is about to stop talking.

If they finish the tone group with a rising tone, we are likely to understand that they wish to continue speaking and are seeking feedback, by word or gesture.

A falling tone is used at the end of a list to show that the list is complete.

o Would you like tea / coffee / fruit juice / or lemonade / (That's all I'm offering.)

o Would you like tea / coffee / fruit juice / lemonade / (There might be other drinks as well that I haven't named.)

* Intonation shows the speaker's attitude. It is by changing the pitch that we

can indicate certainty, uncertainty, enthusiasm, boredom, and so on. We can say "yes" so that it almost means "no". As listeners, we become skilled at detecting fine shades of meaning in other people's speech. We can say they sounded unhappy, tired, sneering, self-satisfied, sarcastic, and so on. These attitudes are picked up from very fine variations in pitch and loudness.

Although intonation is an important feature of spoken English, it is represented in written English only rather crudely by the use of such punctuation devices as full stops, commas, question marks, and exclamation marks. Skilful writers can convey shades of meaning in various ways. Some resort to a simple method of adverbials.

"How are you today?" he asked cheerfully.

Activity Three – Read the article paying attention to your intonation.

In membership terms the French trade union movement is one of the weakest in Europe with only 8% of employees in unions. It is divided into a number of rival confederations, competing for membership. (The main confederations are the CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC and CFE-CGC.) But despite low membership and apparent division French trade unions have strong support in elections for employee representatives and are able to mobilise French workers to great effect.

Official figures from the national household survey show that there are some 1.8 million trade unionists in employment in France. This means that 8.1% of all employees in France are in unions.

Historically, there have been five main union confederations with membership across the whole of the economy. They are the CGT, CFDT, CGT-FO (better known as FO), the CFTC and the CFE-CGC, which primarily represents professional and managerial employees.

Among the three largest confederations, the CGT has generally taken the most militant positions on political and industrial issues, although it does not oppose everything. The policy document approved at its congress in 2006 stated that trade unions need “to act and to demand, to propose and to negotiate, to resist and to construct”. The CGT is also no longer as close to its traditional political ally, the Communist Party.

The CFDT, while working with the CGT and other unions on some issues, has in the past shown that it is more willing to make compromises with the government. This was most obvious over the protests on pensions in 2003 when the CFDT signed an agreement with the government, which the other main union confederations, except CFE-CGC condemned. The confederation defended this position with its general secretary Francois Chérèque arguing that the CFDT is at the centre of a reformist group of unions, which “fights to get results”. The CFDT was fully involved with other unions in the national campaign of protest, which forced the government to give way on its plans for a new employment contract for young workers in 2006.

The FO includes a wide range of opinions including the socialist party, Trotskyist groupings and Gaullists, although it has consistently taken a vigorous anti-Communist line. In the past the FO was seen as the most moderate of the three main confederations. But in recent years, facing pressure from some FO members and increased competition from the CFDT, it has taken a more militant stand.

The CFTC describes itself as inspired by Christian social teaching and at its congress in 2005 adopted a resolution which identified one of its key objectives as being to ally “economic performance and social justice”.

The CFE-CGC sees its specific role as representing the interests of higher-grade employees, such as senior technicians and middle management.

Using the unions’ own figures on membership, the CFDT is in the lead. It states that it had 814,000 members at the end of 2008. The CGT states it had 711,000 in 2006, and it goes on to break them down between 565,000 employed, 6,000 unemployed and 140,000 retired members. FO is estimated to have some 300,000. An academic study published in 2007, suggested that the figures were lower and that the CGT, with 540,000

members, had more than the CFDT, with 450,000 members.[4] however, the CFDT has rejected these figures as incorrect.

The decline in overall trade union membership, which was continuous between the mid 1970s and the early 1990s, appears to have been stemmed, with the proportion of employees in unions estimated at an average of 8.1% in the period 2001 to 2005, compared with 8.0% in the period 1996 to 2000.

French trade unionism is much stronger in the public sector, where around 15% of employees are in unions (15.2% among those employed directly by the state and 14.7% in state-owned companies and social security provision), than in the private sector, where the figure is only 5.0%.

Despite their weakness in terms of membership, French trade unions have been able to mobilise their members for mass action, and, on occasion, change government policy. A recent example was forcing the government to withdraw its plans for a new employment contract for young workers in 2006, while demonstrations in 2009 led to a number of changes in government policy.

Activity Four – Answer the questions about the text using the expressions to present your answers.

- **I read that**
- **Research has proved that**
- **This research proved that**
- **It has been found that**
- **It has been proved that**
- **It is clear that**
- **It seems obvious that**
- **Findings prove that**
- **Obviously**
- **Clearly**
- **What these results show is that**
- **According to this research**
- **According to recent data**
- **These statistics prove that**
- **The statistics show that**

QUESTIONS:

1. How big is the union movement in France compared to other European countries?
2. What are the different political standpoints of the unions in France?
3. What are the most popular unions in France?
4. Is union popularity on the increase?
5. Why do the Unions have power in France?

Activity Five – Answer the following discussion questions:

- **Which Unions are represented among IKEA co-workers?**
- **What is the relationship like between IKEA management and the union representatives?**
- **How much influence do the Unions have on the various decisions made in the stores?**
- **In what ways do Human Resources managers have to come into contact with Unions?**
- **Do Union reps contribute to life in the store in a positive way?**