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**Ellen:** Hi everybody. Welcome to this brand new podcast. Today in this tutorial, I'm going to focus once again on task response. We call it task achievement on the band descriptors. Specifically, I'm talking about task 2, which is the essay portion of the writing exam. In the previous podcast I did, again on task response, I talked a lot of the reasons my students are not getting the score they require for task response. I gave a whole bunch of reasons as to why this is happening.

Today what I wanted to do was really just follow up on that podcast by showing you some writing samples, so you can see what some students have written. Together with me, I'll take you through some of these essays to see why these students are not getting the score they probably are hoping for.

Okay, so, we'll look at several different writing topics and several different essays, so we can see what has happened and how to fix each of these problems. Okay, so, this first essay, let's take a look first of all at the topic. The topic says, "Some cities have vehicle-free days whereby private cars, trucks, and motorcycles are banned from moving while public transport, bicycles and taxis are permitted. Do the benefits of this outweigh the disadvantages?"

We have that question-- it's not really a question, the sentence which frames the topic and then they ask us very specifically for a very specific response: do the benefits outweigh the disadvantages? Now, as I mentioned in the previous podcast on task response, band 7 in the band descriptors for task achievement says, "A clear position throughout the response." Throughout means from the beginning to the end.

Keeping that in mind, your position is going to be your answer to this question. That would mean that your answer to this question should be clear throughout the essay, meaning from

your introduction. So, let's see what this student did here. Let's take a look at her introduction to see if she, in fact, had a clear position throughout. Here's what she said.

“Experts throughout both the developing and developed world have debated whether vehicle-free days in some cities is beneficial or it has a negative impact on the society. This essay will discuss both sides using an example from the Israeli government and hypothetical situations to demonstrate points and prove arguments.”

Now, we're not going to talk about the grammar because clearly there are some grammar problems there, but instead, I want you to see if you know her answer to this question having read this introduction. The answer is no. You don't know reading that introduction if the benefits outweigh them and in fact, the only thing you know is that she's going to discuss both sides. So, it's almost as if she's keeping her response as a surprise.

That's not what you want to do. Nobody wants to be surprised in an essay where they have clearly asked for your position, okay? Do the benefits of this outweigh the disadvantages? So, the way to correct this is really quite simple. All you really need to do is say, "This essay will discuss both sides and show why the benefits of this measure outweigh the disadvantages using examples from the Israeli government and hypothetical situations to demonstrate points and prove arguments." So, really it's just the inclusion of one simple phrase to show your position on this issue.

Okay, here's what the rest of the essay looks like. I'm not going to spend time reading it through. I'm sure you can all do that on your own. Just pause the podcast if you're really interested, but there's nothing really in the body paragraphs that supports one side over the other. It's a very balanced argument.

So, we have things like, “On the one hand... on the other hand...” and then we've got statements like, "There's a case to be made in favor of private cars..." and we then have, "The largest drawback of unpermitted private vehicles in the city is this argument here..." We really don't get a feeling anywhere throughout the essay about the writer's position.

Where we see it is right here. Check it out. "Therefore, the pros of vehicle free days are greater than the cons." The last sentence in the essay is where the writer finally makes her position known. This is going to be a problem for an examiner who is looking for that position. Remember band 7 says you have to make your position clear throughout the argument. If you are presenting everything like a balanced argument throughout the body paragraphs, this is not going to help you.

Okay, so now we go on to a different topic. I'll read the topic for you. "Nowadays, most green energy is becoming ever more prevalent in both developed and developing countries. Some argue they greatly reduce costs and are better for the environment. Others believe they are a serious threat to energy security. Discuss both views and give your opinion."

Okay, so, the prompt, the command that actually tells you what to write is the same as the previous one, but let's talk about what a lot of students are getting wrong here. It's talking about green energy. So, you're supposed to discuss two things: green energy, greatly reduces costs and are better for the environment and green energy is a threat to energy security, okay?

So, let's talk about this part: greatly reduces costs and are better for the environment. Obviously, the comparison that you're making here is with fossil fuels, okay? So, it would be appropriate to make a comparison in the essay about why green energy is better than fossil fuels in these regards.

The important thing to remember is that your focus is supposed to be on green energy and not fossil fuels. This is where a lot of students are coming into problems. They didn't ask you: compare green energy to fossil fuels, which is better? They asked you specifically to discuss green energy.

Let's see what this particular student did here. We don't need to go into the introduction which is clear, it's appropriate, there are no problems. So, let's look at this paragraph here which starts with 'on the one hand'.

It says, "On the one hand, there is ample evidence that traditional sources of energy such as petroleum, gas and even coal always sustained the humankind needs. Perhaps one could argue

that those sources are irreplaceable, yet there is no scientific literature or precedents stating it will last forever. For example, recent empirical research by the UK government demonstrated that 90% of the earth's fossil fuel will end in 50 years if the population's demand for it remains the same. Therefore, it is conclusively clear that new energy sources must be researched."

Okay, so, you can clearly see that the focus of this paragraph is not where it should be. You're supposed to be talking about green energy reducing costs and being better for the environment, but this writer has not done that at all.

Instead, what he has done is he has talked about fossil fuels and how they are-- will not last forever and therefore other sources must be researched. Not on topic, okay? In fact, it goes rather off topic, okay? It's related to the topic, but he's certainly not discussing the side of the argument that he's supposed to, which is that green energy reduces costs and are better for the environment.

So, this is a trap a lot of IELTS students fall into. They write on something related to the topic, but it's absolutely not in response to the question and this is going to cost a student a lot of points for task achievement. Okay, so, now we're going to look at-- these particular essay topics, I think we're going to look at least at two-- these essays that are on this particular topic, let's look at it together.

The topic is, "International marketing is sometimes seen as invasive and an intrusion into the country in question. Others argue that it is a necessary and economic form of education in addition to spreading ideas, language, and culture. Discuss both views and give your opinion." Okay, again, it's a difficult topic and a lot of people look at international marketing and they think, "What is this?"

What happens is a lot of people mistake this topic and they think that it's about globalization. International marketing is part of globalization, but it's actually something very specific that falls under globalization, but is certainly something that is not synonymous with globalization. So, what I have seen is a lot of students essentially confuse this topic and make these two ideas, international marketing, and globalization, synonymous and that results in an off topic answer.

Let's look at what our author here did. The introduction is fine except-- writer, where you have a red flag here in this first sentence. Take a look. It says, "People have different views regarding to whether globalization could benefit a society or not." So, that's a red flag. The essay is not asking about globalization in general. It's asking about a very specific element of it, which is international marketing. So, that's a red flag right there. Unfortunately, this continues throughout the essay.

So, let's take a look at the first body paragraph so you can see what I mean. "There is a variety of negative effect of such phenomenon. Cultural exchange all over the world could bring devastating impacts to traditional cultures and values resulting juveniles have little motivation to communicate with the old generations. The perished traditional culture could have a negative impact on domestical economic growth. For example, younger generations in China enjoy Hollywood movies and have little interest towards Chinese opera, which makes opera actors lose their jobs. Some countries have already started to prevent the tendency of globalization."

So, the whole thing is about globalization, about how cultures are being lost, but there's absolutely nothing about international marketing and how it is invasive and an intrusion. It's clearly about globalization and it seems here that there's a reference to western society taking over other societies in the east.

So, you can definitely say that this is an off topic answer. Okay, so, here we have again the same topic, international marketing, and in fact, there's a lot of really good writing here in this essay because the writer of this essay is actually on topic in several places. She talks about industries making up their research based on local people, selling the product that are more useful for local people, and how local industries may suffer from fierce competition.

She's on topic and this is wonderful, but take a look at what happens in the second paragraph, the second body paragraph. Again, she refers to globalization. We've already established that globalization and international marketing are not synonyms. Okay, now, look here with—where the circle is.

It says, "Unlikely to the past that you need to go abroad to learn, it can help the country not only restricted in some kind of places, but also broaden their horizons. For example, there are many different restaurants from different cultures in Taiwan such as Japanese, Korean, American, and western styles. We can have a lot of choices when it comes to dining time. Furthermore, we can learn a lot of dining etiquette from different civilizations."

While she started off very strong, she starts going off topic. She goes off on to a tangent talking about restaurants and cuisine and none of these is really relevant to international marketing. It's like she has fallen into the trap of globalization and while, like I said, it started out really well and on topic, it's like she started with her example and then just kept going with it and this entire train of thought got her off topic and that's going to cost her in her task achievement score.

Okay, so again the same topic, international marketing, but here we have a different issue which will affect task achievement. The author is doing a pretty good job. All right, let's see what he is doing. Let's see what he says. "International goods seen as invasive..." So, far so good, "... the companies that opt for international business are usually well established in the first place. Hence they are in the international forum. This poses a serious threat to the organization and the nation which mainly has its presence in the national market or lesser as they have to compete against an international branch to survive nationally. Thus the manufacture of such an organization takes a hit and in turn, affects the nation as a whole."

Okay, so, what's happening here is that even though everything is on topic, it's just not very well developed. Our writer here says they compete against an international brand and then they take a hit. So, there is nothing linking these two ideas.

Why does the writer ask us to assume that because the local product is competing, that they will necessarily lose? So, what this amounts to essentially is an over generalization where-- and a lack of development because there is nothing to support this idea. There is no extension of it, okay, that makes us understand why the writer assumes that because the bigger brand is competing with the smaller brand, that the smaller brand automatically loses, okay?

All we are left with is this conclusion and we don't necessarily understand why. Okay, so just to move on now to the second body paragraph. Before I do that, I just want to remind you about what the task said. The second part that was supposed to be discussed was the international marketing is an economical, a necessary form of education in addition to spreading ideas, language and culture, okay? So, that's what's supposed to be argued in this paragraph.

Let's see what our writer does. Okay, "Necessity has several benefits. The national brands upscale in order to remain in competition. The upscaling would help the local brands to make a foot print in the internal market as thus enhancing the nation's economy. It would expose the nation to the economic models used by international brands and also a nation's cultures, ideas are reflected in the brand which in turn will help a nation to be recognized on an international level."

Okay, so there are a lot of really lovely ideas here, but they've not been extended. They've not been supported. For example, I have no idea why our writer thinks that a nation's culture and ideas are reflected in the brand. There's no example, there's no explanation for why the writer thinks this. So, I'm left with the writer's idea, but absolutely no information to support that idea and that's going to basically cost him the 7 because it's not an extended argument.

Okay, so now I'd like to go on to a different topic. This topic is that there are some people believe that people should stay in the same job for their entire careers while others believe it is more beneficial to have at least one job change, okay? So, that's what needs to be discussed here in this essay.

Our writer here has done a pretty decent job, but there are a couple of areas that I want to point out, particularly in the second body paragraph. The author says that there are a certain amount of people who prefer their current company due to various reasons such as fringe benefits, goal less career-- we don't understand what that means, and adjustment to the current environment.

Here's where the problem arises. "A plausible explanation for this is people having various responsibilities in the households like to run errands, which can be done in the day and will

work in the graveyard shift." Okay, that's really confusing. We don't understand why the author is making this the main argument here. So, the fact that I have things to do during the day, why does the author assume that staying in the same company will allow me this convenience?

I mean, if I wanted to work the graveyard shift, couldn't I work in various jobs that offer the graveyard shift? So, that's where the confusion comes. It's partially the way the author has organized his ideas. This feels more like an example and not exactly a main argument. This should be the support. It's not a main argument.

Then we have more support here, more examples. "Empirical research has shown that around 62% who stay in the same employment is because of various perks and benefits such as comfortable timings, bonuses, and even insurance benefits and so forth." There are lots of examples, but there's no real argument as to this, okay, and some of the arguments just don't seem very plausible like with this graveyard shift.

Okay, in some of the previous essays, I talked about today, I talked about how people misunderstand the topic and they might not be familiar with the topic like international marketing and this is reflected in the writer's writing.

Unfortunately, sometimes what also happens is a writer has a lot of knowledge about the topic, but this knowledge instead of helping the writer, actually hurts the writer because again they start going off topic. They're so willing to show their knowledge about the topic being given that they fail to actually answer the question once again and the result is a reduced task achievement score.

So, let's look at this particular essay. "These days problems with pollution are becoming worse particularly in large cities. What are the reasons for this and how can these be solved?" Okay, so there are a lot of really nice things about this particular essay. There's a lot of nice writing and the writer does a good job, but somewhere kind of runs into some trouble. Let's see where.

It's in this first paragraph here, the first body paragraph. "Firstly, it should be taken into account that indicators of development of countries are directly related to its production and also its consumption. The consequence of that is where population increment there is a need for more

resources to satisfy their demand. For that, a lot of factories must work. Generally, they obtain the energy from machines, from fossil fuels that implies atmospheric emissions such as CO<sub>2</sub>, COx, and NOx..." I don't even know what those are. "For example, most of non-developed countries see the industrialization as a way to evolve, but do not consider their externalities."

So, the writer obviously has some information, knows some things, but has not really created a well-structured paragraph, has not really answered the question to make a reader aware of the problems with pollution.

The other thing that I want to look at here is this. Here it is. "What are the reasons for this?" When you look at that paragraph that we just looked at, how many reasons has the author really given us? The writer of this essay has essentially given us one, which was kind of difficult to suss out, but essentially, we get the sense that he's saying that machines creating fossil fuels are the problem. If you think about it really, that's one reason, just one and the essay has asked you for reasons.

So, this is something to take into consideration and IELTS is really tricky like this. They use a lot of plurals and so we can assume that they don't want one reason. They want multiple reasons otherwise they would have said, "Why is this happening and how can this be solved." If they had said, "Why is this happening?" then you might be okay with one reason, but they clearly expect more than one reason.

Okay, so, continuing with this, a little knowledge can sometimes be a bad thing. I want to go back to the international marketing topic that we looked at before. I think we looked at two or three essays on that topic. Here again, is another essay on international marketing, but take a look at what's happening here. Again, our writer has said it has both pros and cons. So, we don't have a clear position throughout. So, right away, that's the first problem affecting task achievement.

Take a look at this enormous paragraph. It's a lot of information about international marketing and how to conduct international marketing. I'll read just a sample of it because, like I said, it's a long paragraph. Take a look. "On one hand when you want to expand your business in

another country, you have to deal with a thorough marketing plan related to product services, price promotion, and distribution for which you have to do research. Moreover, try doing a SWAT analysis where you analyze your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Then break down structure of the activities where you plan each activity against chart where you state the main activity of your project business in days, weeks, months and last but not least, a budget related to inputs and outputs and it is vital for you to have some backup plans in case you forecast unexpected costs."

Okay, so-- obviously our writer knows quite a bit about marketing, but there's absolutely nothing on-- related to the idea of marketing being a necessary and economical form of education, spreading ideas, language and culture. We read-- I don't even know, how many was that? Like seven lines of this essay, eight and there was nothing related to that topic or to those topics, rather. So, while it's great this person knows a lot about international marketing, she's not answering the question, so this is not going to help her at all.

You can kind of pause this if you'd like to read the rest of the paragraph. I'm not going to read the rest of it because I think we can see what's happening here and like I said, sometimes having knowledge of a topic is actually a disservice to you because our writer here really just went off topic.

So, we've gone through some of the main problems that writers experience that will affect their task achievement score. We discussed not having a clear position throughout the essay. We've discussed not supporting arguments. We've discussed going off topic and we've discussed just not answering the question; answering something related to the topic, but not really directly answering the question.

So, these are some of the big things that are happening that affect task achievement. I'm showing you this to give you an understanding of what's happening, what examiners are looking for, what kinds of things they are thinking about when they are reading your essays. Hopefully, you'll find all of this information helpful and hopefully, this information will help you

overcome these problems if you are facing them as well. So, that's the end of this tutorial. Wish you all the best of luck.

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