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Ben: Advanced IELTS speaking techniques part 2 of 2. This is the second tutorial in a two-part series. The first one was how to add emphatic structure. In this one, we're going to focus more on inversion. Now, my colleague, Helen, she did a wonderful tutorial about this and it was really popular and I think the reason it was really popular is because it was incredibly valuable and practical and quite straight forward and easy to implement.

This is why I decided to do another one and in this one, we're going to look at the rules and we're going to look at the structure and we're going to make it very IELTS specific. Now, this structure will have a significant impact on your IELTS speaking score and what we're going to look at is inversions as I said before.

This basically means putting the verb before the subject. We can do this when we want to show surprise or when we want to show that something is quite unusual or is quite striking. For example, I could say, "I've never been so tired." I could also say, "Never have I been so tired." The second sentence puts the stress on the 'never' and it has a much stronger effect than the first one.

We mostly use this structure of inversion with negative adverbs and adverbial phrases. These include: never, hardly, rarely, seldom, only then and it wasn't until, in this way, nowhere, in no



way, and on no account and no sooner than. Don't worry, we're going to-- I'll give you some more examples of these later on.

With the inverted sentence, we put the adverb at the start and this emphasizes it and then we change the place of the subject and the verb 'to be'. So, the normal version would be, "She is rarely so rude." The inverted structure, "Rarely is she so rude." You see?

The first one, the first example is that that's how we speak normally, but we want to show a little bit more emphasis and we want to show the examiner that we know how to invert sentences. We want to show them more grammar structures and that's why it begins with the adverbial phrase.

By the way, while we are on this subject, the similar rule applies for writing. If we have a sentence and we want the reader to focus on a certain point of the sentence, put it to the front of the sentence. Bring it to the front of the sentence. Make it as early as possible. Don't hide it in the middle or at the end of the sentence. Bring it right to the front and reorganize it accordingly.

Right, let's get back to the examples. Sorry, first one, "You are to go there on no account." Inverted version, "On no account are you to go there." On no account are you to go there. Next one, "I have never tasted such good food." Inverted version, "Never have I tasted such good



food." You see? It's much more emphatic and it's much-- it just shows a richer range if you start incorporating these in your speaking test.

In a few seconds-- in a few minutes, we'll jump into how we can use these in part 1, part 2, and part 3 again, with real-world practical examples or IELTS examples. Now, when we do this with the present simple and the past simple verbs, you will need to add the auxiliary. You'll need to add do or does or did plus the infinitive.

Also with the more modals, the modal verbs should, could, would, we add modal plus the verb 'to be'. Let's do it. "We seldom see such things." Inverted version, "Seldom do we see such things." Next one, "I hardly got to sleep." "Hardly did I get to sleep." Next one, "He could never be called clever." "Never could he be called clever." You see?

Now, we'll do the ones with the auxiliary verb and this changes place with the subject, but the verb remains the same. "I had only called them once." "I had only then called him." Inverted version, "Only then had I called him." Normal version, "I will in no way be going." Inverted, "In no way will I be going."

So, let's have a look at how we can do this for part 1. So, in part 1 you'll most certainly be asked about your likes, dislikes, your opinions, and a typical question would be what kind of music do you like? Well, we could say what I really enjoy the most is rock. No sooner do I start listening to it than I feel excited, get goosebumps or whatever.



So, not only did we do the emphatic structure that we looked at previously, but we also did that ‘no sooner do I start listening to it’ and that’s the inversion. It really is about adding more information here and just building and developing your answer.

Let's have a look at inversion for IELTS speaking part 2. "Describe a piece of art you like. You should say what the work is, when you first saw it, what you know about it and explain why you like it." Let's have a look. "The piece of work I like the most is Sunflowers by Vincent van Gogh. I first saw it when I went to the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam and no sooner had I seen it than I fell in love with it. Only when I arrived in Amsterdam did I learn the full story of Van Gogh's real life. Rarely had I seen anything as striking and distinctive. What I love about it is the color."

So, not only did we use the emphatic structure that we looked at previously, we also used the inversion. “No sooner had I seen it than I fell in love with it...” and in the second instance, "Rarely had I seen anything as striking and distinctive."

Moving on. Inversion for speaking in part 3 of the test. Question: How has that changed in the last few decades in your country? “Well, the thing that has most changed in the last few decades is the rise of graffiti as an art form. In the past, seldom did we see urban art in the museums or auction houses.” So, we've used that inversion again at the end. “Seldom did we see urban art in the museums or auction houses.”



Now, the structures will most certainly help you not only improve your general English because it's going to add some more variety, but it will also help you with your IELTS speaking exam. So, I would recommend we learn those phrases, recommend you practice doing some inversion exercises maybe writing a few normal sentences down and then transforming them into inversion sentences.

Perhaps the most valuable or efficient or effective way of learning these phrases is for you to start incorporating them into your everyday use; maybe with your English teacher. Just try and drop them in there. Slap one in, see if the teacher notices and if they don't say anything then perfect because that's what really it's all about. It's using them-- getting to use them in such a way that they appear natural.

Let me just briefly explain one quick story that demonstrates this point. In Budapest a couple of years ago while I was speaking with an Israeli friend. We were there just chatting away and it turns out that he knows how to speak Spanish. So, we-- I switched the conversation to Spanish just to test-- not to test, but just out of curiosity just to see how good he was. It turns out he was really good.

He had a South American or Colombian accent and interesting I have a normal European Spanish accent. Anyway, I credited him on his speaking ability. I was like wow! You really do know Spanish. That's excellent. You speak it to a good level as well. I'm quite surprised and he was like, "Well, actually the thing is Ben that when we were speaking English you never even



commented that we were speaking a foreign language, but when I speak in Spanish I've got the accent and it's clear and you felt obliged to comment. I was like yes, that's a fair point actually.

The point I want to make is that if you can use it to such a level that it's not obvious, like in his case when he was speaking Spanish. In my case when I speak Spanish it's obvious it's a foreign language, but when he spoke English, he'd learned it to such a level and it came so natural and it flowed so authentically that there was no question in my mind that he was speaking a foreign language.

And that's the kind of level we want to get at when we're using these techniques otherwise they can sound forced. Let's just review the list again. We can use this with never, hardly, rarely, seldom, only then, it wasn't until, nowhere, in no way, on no account, and no sooner than.

So, I think these would be definitely useful when you've got a little bit of time to prepare them. So, the examiner might ask you about your favorite teacher. You can talk about your favorite teacher and then maybe in an anecdote, for example, my favorite teacher is called Mr. Sykes. He used to teach us economics. He was a very delightful, generous, pleasing, and entertaining teacher.

I remember one day that he came into the classroom just at the wrong moment because no sooner had I started imitating my best friends dance move, the teacher entered and he saw me



dancing like a clown and in that moment I had to turn around I had to apologize and I think it really changed his opinion of me since that day.

Okay, by the way, that was just a completely ridiculous made-up example. I've never danced in my economics class. Even though we were there at high school, I think we were there like 14 or 15 years old and I never danced in the class, but I needed a quick example.

So yes, we can really-- in part 2, what I'm saying is in part 2 we've got time to set it up, to set up the story and then we can use it and it doesn't sound as forced. It almost sounds natural. So, just bear that in mind when you are preparing for the exam and when you are learning these inversion structures.

That's everything from me today except if you know anybody who is struggling with their IELTS exam please ask them-- please send them my way or send them a link from ieltspodcast.com or introduce them to the podcast and we would be more than happy to help them and you probably going to help them pass the exam as well. So, if you've got any friends tell them about the podcast. That would be fantastic.

Also if you're having some issues, you can sign up at ieltspodcast.com and get a PDF full of IELTS materials; just sign up on the email list. And the final thing is that if you are struggling with the course come over to ieltspodcast.com, have a look at the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free online IELTS course. We're having some terrific results with the course at the moment.



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