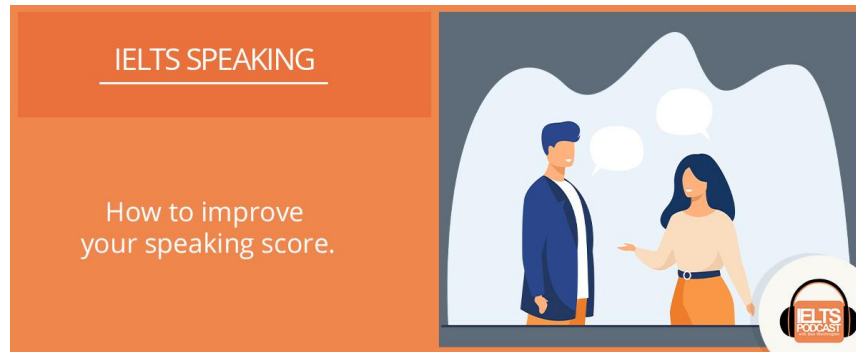


Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS Podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

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Ben: How to improve your IELTS Speaking score. Hello there. My name is Ben Worthington. In this tutorial, we're going to look in a detailed way at the four criteria and what you can do to improve in each one. Now, we're not only going to be focusing on exam skills. We're going to be covering language skills as well.

And unlike the writing whereby the exam skills are incredibly important, I believe with the speaking, the exam skills are less important. For example, I think the equivalent would be or the equivalent exam skills in the speaking would be to debate somebody; to debate, give reasons, give arguments, give examples, try and persuade in an academic fashion.

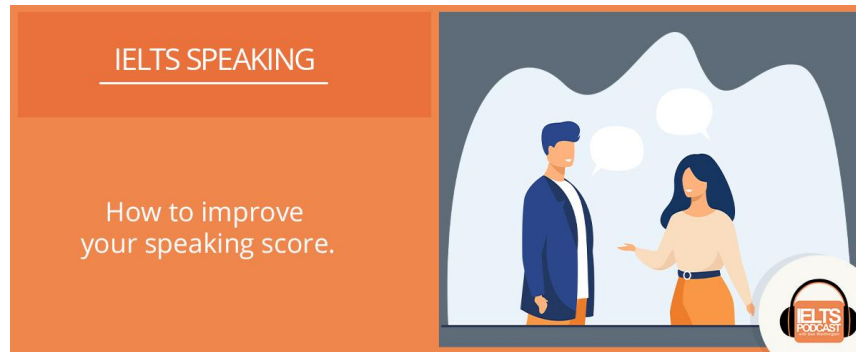


Fortunately, we don't have to do that for the speaking. It's more about the communication. It's more about your language skills which is absolutely fantastic. And so that's where most of the advice will be.

However, exam skills do play an important part. For example, speaking for two minutes. That's not common in everyday circumstances unless you're recording a podcast or you're giving a company presentation or a class presentation, but in everyday circumstances, it's very rare that you'll have to speak for two minutes.

Now then, let's have a look at those four criteria. We have fluency and coherence. We have lexical resource. We have grammatical range and accuracy. We have pronunciation. So, we've got four criteria there.

Let's start off with fluency and coherence. So, you are supposed to speak at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence. This is the criteria for band 7. You are allowed some

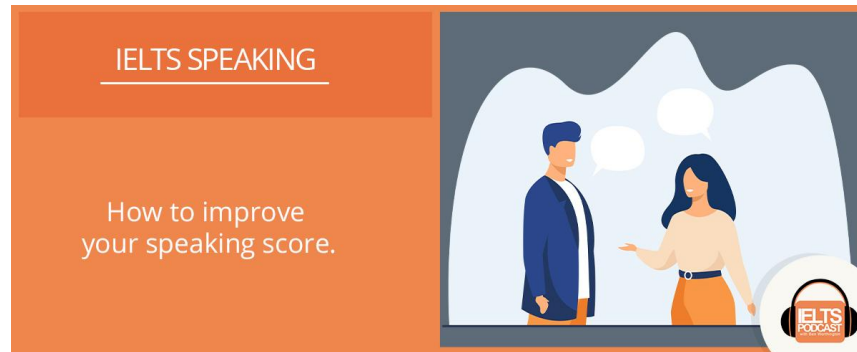


language hesitation, repetition, or self-correction, but ideally, it's not going to impede what you are saying. And of course, you need to use a range of connectors and discourse markers with some flexibility.

Now, I often think that if a student focuses too much on this criteria, it can almost get in the way of clear and natural speaking. So, just bear that in mind. It's good to be aware, but don't focus your entire preparation around this criteria. So what does it mean?

This criteria means that your speech is fluent, that you don't pause, that it's not filled up with ums and uhs and you can occasionally catch yourself making mistakes, but you don't spend the entire speaking test correcting yourself.

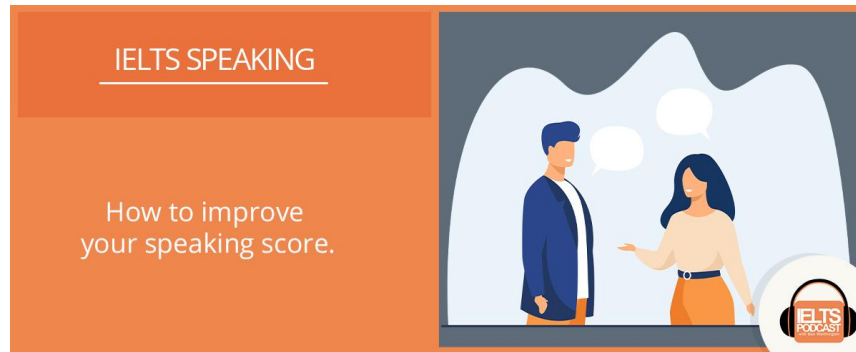
Now, a few years ago, I had a student who was always correcting herself and she was worried that this would impact her grade. And in the end, I said hey Teresa, try and reduce it to the minimum. And how are you going to reduce it to the minimum? Well, you're going to insert



more pauses with just empty space where you don't have to say anything. Get comfortable with those pauses and also just try and compose ahead of time what you're going to say rather than spontaneously.

And this is what you should do with your pauses. Just organize your thoughts. There is nothing wrong with it. If you ever listen or watch an interview with Steve Jobs, he usually does this. And what it does actually it pulls in the listener because they are waiting. They are expecting. You're building that anticipation.

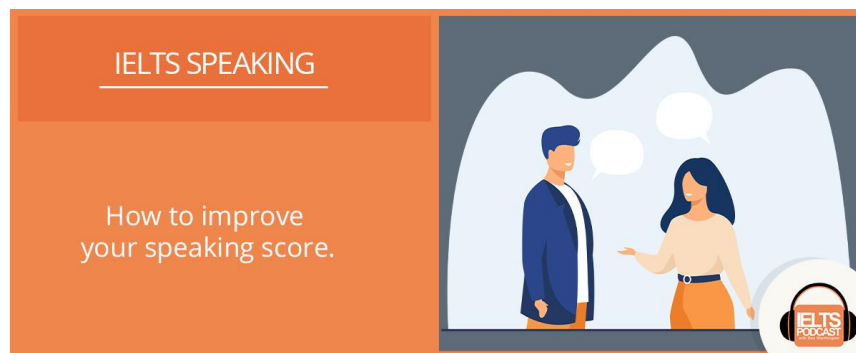
Obviously, you don't want to overdo it, but I suggest you make friends with these pauses. Do not be scared of those pauses. Try and introduce it into your everyday vocabulary, into your everyday language communication at McDonald's. Hello. I would like a bacon, double cheeseburger, please. Just joking, but you can definitely introduce it into your everyday language.



Secondly, going back to Teresa. Now, Teresa was correcting herself way too many times and it would have impacted negatively on her score. So, you can do it once or twice, but do not get into the habit of doing it with every sentence. And just the fact that you are aware that you committed a mistake is plenty of notice that you can speak correctly. You just probably need to slow down, introduce those pauses, and organize your thoughts a little bit better.

I think this often happens with visual thinkers who see a whole image in their mind and then try and communicate that whole image because an image can communicate so many more words than audio and can communicate so much more than just audio. And visual learners, visual thinkers especially often trip themselves up.

I have a friend in Spain who talks so fast and when he speaks in English, it's incredibly difficult to understand him. It's difficult in Spanish, but in English, it's even more difficult because of the

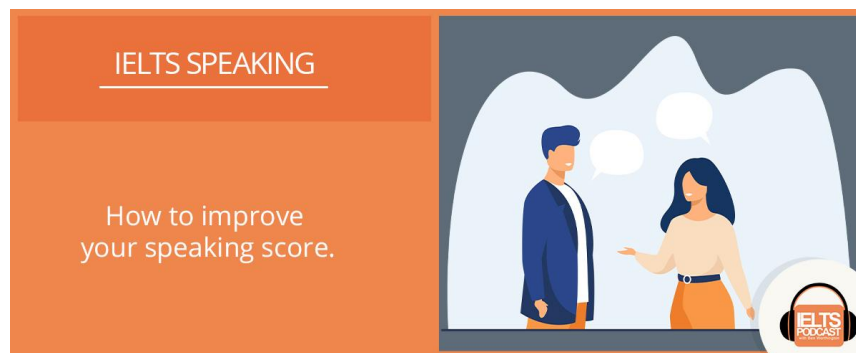


speed, because of the speed of his thoughts, the speed of his language and coupled with all the grammatical mistakes and poor pronunciation, it makes it a real challenge.

So, slow down. You'll improve your pronunciation. You'll improve the coherence and the organization of your sentence and you'll probably make less mistakes.

Lexical resource. Now, from the criteria what we have here is use vocabulary flexibly to discuss a variety of topics. Use some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and show some awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriacies. Paraphrase effectively.

Let's work backwards. So to paraphrase effectively. For example, would you say trust is an important part of modern society? For example, we're in Part 3 of the Speaking test. Would you say trust is an important part of modern society? A typical abstract Part 3 question. Now, if you work through our online Speaking Confidence course, we have a whole module about

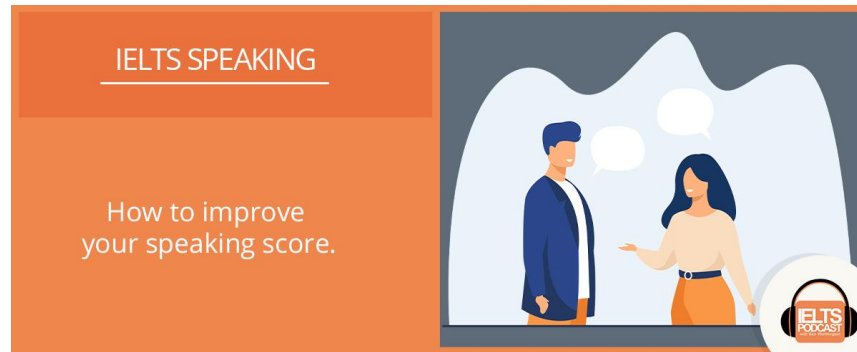


paraphrasing and it's an important skill. You can buy yourself a few seconds of time which you can use to organize the next part of your answer.

And in this case, we could say something like that's an interesting question. To be honest, I guess trust is an important part of living in a society nowadays. And what we do there is just repeat back what we heard. We reorganize it. We don't do it copy-paste like a parrot. We just add it. It's similar to rephrasing or paraphrasing which we looked at before with the writing.

Now, what these three criteria means it means that you're able to discuss different themes, different ideas without getting stuck. You can also use some expressions or less common words. It's always interesting speaking to people who use colorful or more richer vocabulary. It just brings the whole story to life especially non-native English speakers.

And also, you can show to the examiner that if you've got this dexterity or this lexical resource that perhaps you do not have the term for the word that you have in mind. It's on the tip of your

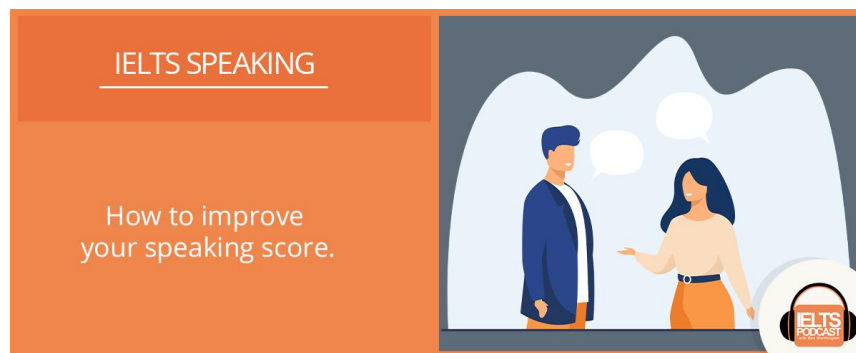


tongue so to speak and you cannot find that term. Then what proficient second-language speakers would do is they'll reorganize the sentence so that they don't have to use that word.

I cannot give you an example right now. I'm sure you've done this before, but experienced language speakers can do this. Experienced people speaking in a second language can do this so much so that they you don't even notice the kind of like change in the way they've expressed themselves, but the good thing is that you can still communicate what you want to say.

When I was learning Spanish, I did this all of the time and I just went back. I reverted back to the structures that I knew and the tenses that I knew and just reorganized the sentence and then I could do it, okay?

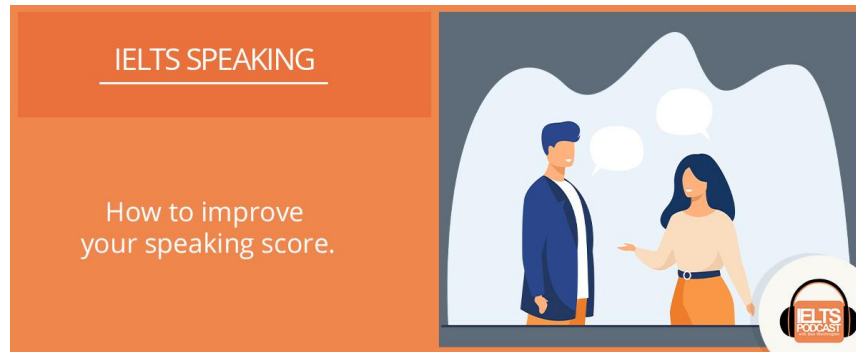
Grammatical range and accuracy. So, the criteria here says that you need to use a-- we're looking at band 7 by the way. You need to use a range of complex structures with some flexibility, frequently produce error-free sentences though some errors might still persist. What this means



well, it means that you just don't have one subject and one verb and that you're able to use different types of sentences, okay? So, you can make some mistakes, but more often than not, your sentences are accurate.

So, going back to what I said before when I would just fall back on my kind of like structures that I knew very well, that I didn't have a problem with. In these cases, I would probably score lower in the exam assuming I was doing like a Spanish one because I would have a limited grammatical range and accuracy.

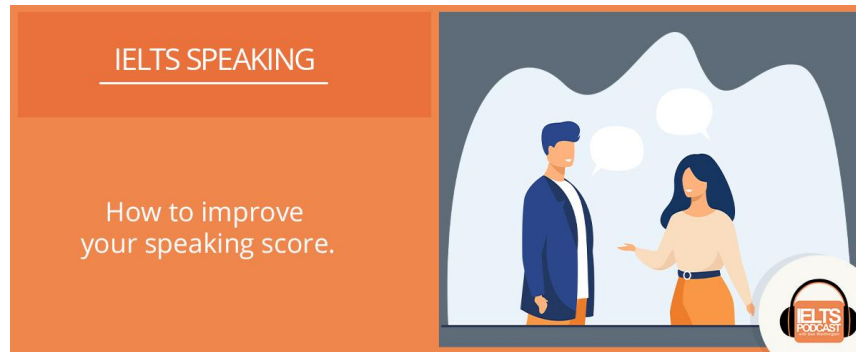
Now again, in the online course, we give you quite a few different grammatical structures that are easy to integrate. We also give you like a structure for you to organize your answers and you can extend or contract this structure for Part 2. And it just takes a little bit of mental energy out of the process because you know the system, you've got this structure to follow. So now, you can



focus on what to put in the structure rather than focusing on the actual structure because you know the structure. You've done it a hundred times.

Also by the way, we're giving feedback away. We're giving feedback for students who want to improve the speaking. It works similar to the essay feedback in that you send in a recording, we listen to it. We tell you where you're losing points, how to improve your score, and also some special exercises you can do in order to improve your score.

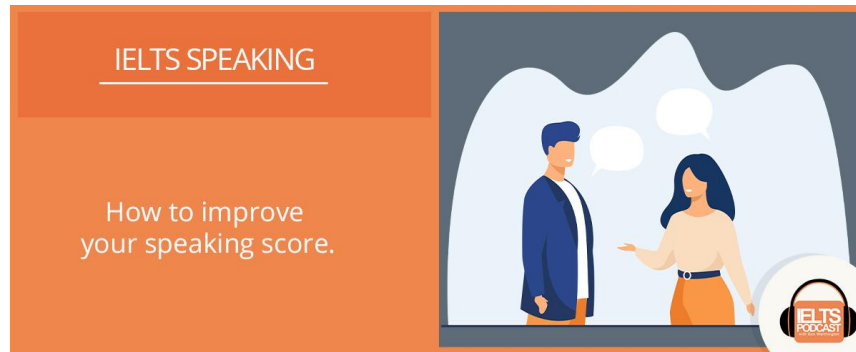
Pronunciation: the criteria says that you need to use a range of pronunciation features with mixed control. Also, you need to be generally understood throughout. The mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity. So, you need to be understood throughout the talk, okay? Even though you can mispronounce certain words or sounds, you can still get a band 7. Obviously, you cannot do it very frequently.



Now, this means that you understand how the sounds of English go together. You know how to stress the sounds or words for emphasis like I just did. Also, you know when to pause appropriately and I just did it on purpose there inappropriately. You can also produce English sounds accurately, but sometimes your accent makes it a little trickier to understand you.

Now, I always say with English and language in general that if you are being understood, your accent is fine. So, do not worry about it. Also, an accent shows that you have put in the time and effort to learn somebody else's accent. So, as long as you're understood with your accent, you should not be ashamed of it. And if you can't be understood, you still don't have to be ashamed of it. You just need to work on improving it.

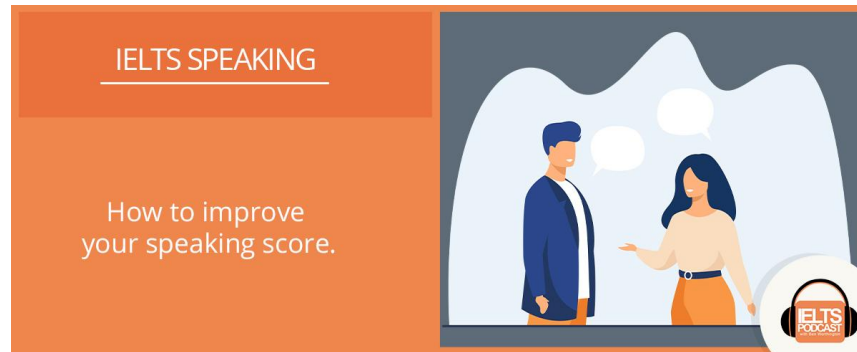
Like right now I'm learning Hungarian and all the time, people are laughing at my pronunciation, but I don't really care. This is in my mind the cost of entry and when I'll be speaking Magyar or Hungarian and my mother-in-law still can't speak English, that's a big



incredible victory for me personally. No, but it's just a challenge and I don't really care. I'm not that embarrassed about incorrect pronunciation at the moment. My main goal is just to communicate.

So, don't be ashamed of your pronunciation. Don't be ashamed of your accent. There's different ways you can improve it. There's the software Elsa-- the app Elsa and you can also try and mimic sounds, sentences, phrases in order to get closer towards a native English speaker. There's plenty of exercises. We've got whole tutorials all about pronunciation. Personally, I find mimicking one of the best ways.

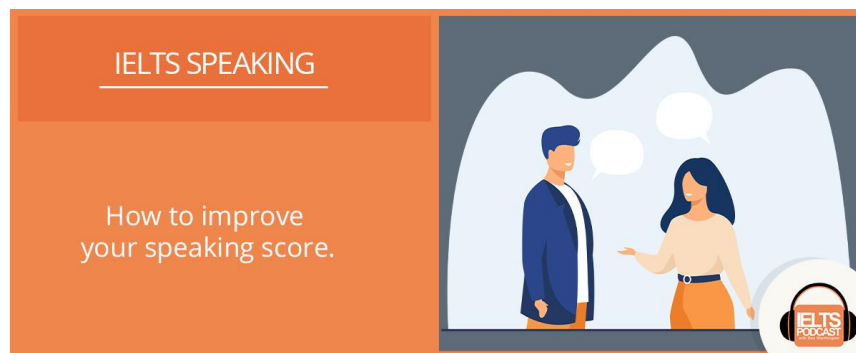
Now, let's have a look overall on how to improve your IELTS Speaking score. Now, as I said at the beginning, we need to focus on our language skills here. Exam skills are useful, but I think your general language English skills are going to make the biggest difference. It's like the 80/20.



So, of course, we can say improve your overall English, but how do you do that? I think mimicking, I think increasing the amount of times that you're speaking. At the moment with my Hungarian, I am learning a ton of vocabulary, but I realized I am not actually using it. It's still there in my passive memory. I know almost a thousand words and how many do I use in everyday situations? Maybe four and I realized my Hungarian is not going to get any better.

So, you want to use your vocabulary in the active sense. So, start speaking it. Start using it. Even just start making sentences up and start speaking to yourself. One big change for me that happened when I was learning Spanish was to change the language I was thinking in. So, I would go into the supermarket and I'd just start thinking in Spanish. This was a big game changer as well. And I know it takes a lot of effort to start off with, but you will get there.

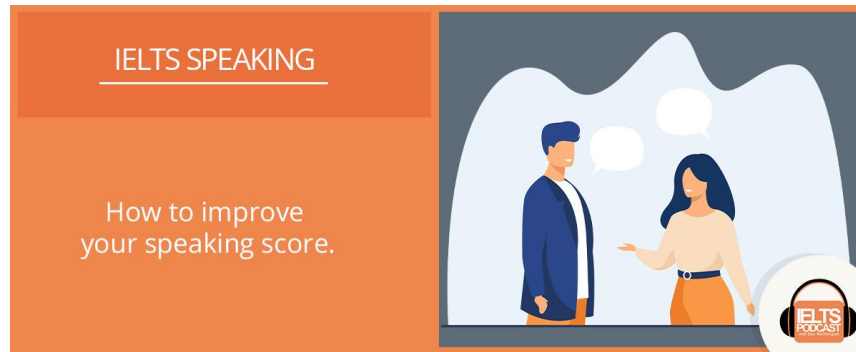
Also immersion. We've said this a million times before. You've got to immerse yourself in the language and I know it's easier said than done, but I know personally that the first maybe week



or two are going to be difficult and a bit of a strain and you don't get as much benefit, but eventually, it will become the norm and you can just sit and watch your series in English or whichever your target language is.

Now also as well, you can record yourself, listen back to it, and you can always get feedback on that. If you come to IELTS Podcast, we've got the feedback service. And also, you can even use like new apps like clubhouse and whatnot. Start speaking, start recording, get the feedback, improve your fluency.

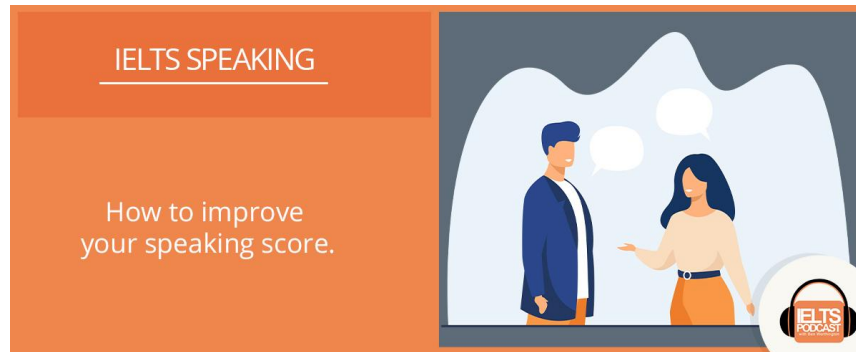
And finally as well is just to increase the frequency of speaking opportunities. So, can you go to a Toastmasters in your city? Can you organize a speaking class online? This is what I'm doing at the moment. I have like five hours a week of Hungarian. We just do flash cards, but basically, I am buying motivation because in the morning at eight o'clock when I have my classes, I don't



feel motivated, but I know my tutor is at the other end and she's waiting for me and if I buy 10 classes, I'm going to use the 10 classes.

And also with English with it being so prevalent, obviously it depends what level you're at, but in some cases, you do not need a native English speaker. You can practice with somebody who's got good conversational English skills just to get you into the speaking, just to make speaking more frequent for you and get you using your passive vocabulary.

Now, if you want to work on your accuracy, then a native English speaker is going to be helpful and you need to tell them hey, write down when I'm making mistakes and tell me. However, if you know that fluency is your issue, then maybe a native English speaker isn't necessary and you can get classes from an eastern European or some Filipinos or some non-native English speakers and all you have to do in these cases is just chat.

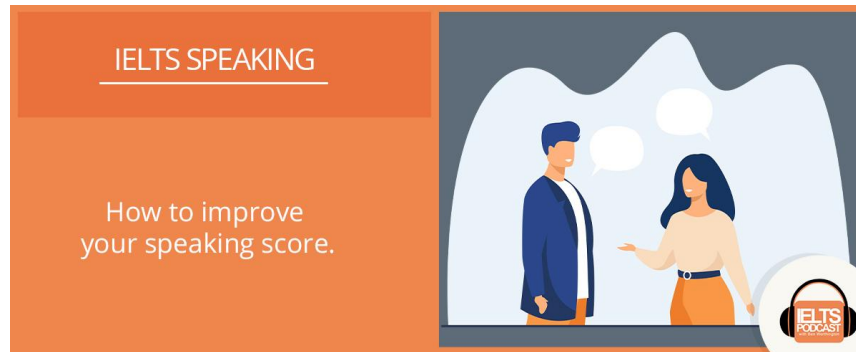


If they spot errors, fine. Get them to write it down, but you can just chat and you can do mock exams, but also I would recommend talking about IELTS topics; you know crime, pollution, education, all of that just to get used to using all your topic-specific vocabulary that you've probably acquired in the run-up to your preparation.

Now, that's everything from me today. I wish you the best in your IELTS preparation. And remember we are here at ieltspodcast.com to help you. If you go over to ieltspodcast.com, sign up to our newsletter. There you will get more advice, more lessons. You'll get whole lists of phrases and access to band 9 sample essays and also you will get access to some lower priced courses and discount coupons and whatnot just for signing up.

So, if you are preparing for IELTS, remember you're not alone. We can help you. We are here to help you and we want to help you. So, keep moving and you will get there. Take care.

[Music]



Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

