



Ben: How to describe two pie charts. Hi there. My name is Ben Worthington and in this tutorial, we are going to look at how to describe two pie charts, the vocabulary needed, the tenses, we're going to look at the language of proportions, and of course, the language of comparisons. So, it's quite a packed tutorial.

Before we start, I want to mention two things. The first one is a big thank you to our sponsor ELSA Speak. elsaspeak.com or ELSA Speak is an app that you can install on your phone on your android or your iPhone and it will give you instant feedback on your pronunciation. So, not only will it look at your word pronunciation, it will also look at sentence delivery and because as we know, intonation and fluency are criteria in the speaking exam. So, if you want to get some instant feedback it could be a very useful tool. And at the end of this tutorial, I'll share a link with you where you can get a discount.



Now, the second thing I want to mention before we get started is I want to introduce myself for those who are tuning in for the first time because I know we are getting a lot of new listeners and a lot of new subscribers. So, I'll just basically describe who I am where I'm from.

So, my name is Ben Worthington and while I was at university at Manchester, I did my final year the Erasmus year-- I don't think British citizens can do that anymore because of Brexit, but back then, we could. We could do a final year abroad and I did mine in Spain. After that, I decided to teach English and at first, I taught general conversation then I taught kids then I taught business students and then eventually, I came across IELTS.

And I instantly knew that I wanted to focus on IELTS because I'm a results orientated person that means like I want to get results for my students and doing one hour a week of conversation class, at best, the student was maintaining it, but I couldn't really judge if the student was improving, if my methods were working. So, this is why I decided to specialize in IELTS



because I wanted my students to get results and if they're failing their exams, they're obviously not improving. They're obviously not getting the results, so the methods I was teaching needed to change.

I mean at first, that was the situation because I wasn't totally prepared for tutoring students through the IELTS exam. So, how did I improve? Well, I started interviewing lots of linguistic experts, examiners, grammar experts, pronunciation experts and then testing what they told me in the podcast, testing it on my own students. If it worked, I'd make a note and put it into the online course. If it didn't, I just threw it out there.

And that's how I managed to develop the online course and that's how I managed to be so confident in it I could give a guarantee. That guarantee is jump to band 7 or it's free. So, if you go to ieltspodcast.com, you can find out more information about that online course.



Now, before we jump into how to describe two pie charts and the language you'll need, let's just have a look at the vocabulary you need for IELTS pie charts or for pie charts in general. Now, a few examples of some good sentences would be it is clear that corn, for example or it is clear that France represents the largest portion of consumers or the largest portion of cereal types.

And in that sentence, it's quite clear literally, but also we've got the superlative and what we could do after putting the final noun in there the portion of, for example, it is clear that corn represents the largest portion of cereal, whereas wheat is undoubtedly the smallest. And that sentence in itself incorporates immediately a comparison because we've got the conjunction whereas.

So, it's very useful and also we're grouping. We're grouping the largest as-- well, we didn't group actually, but we could easily group. We could say it is clear that corn and wheat represent the largest portions of cereals whereas buckwheat or rice is undoubtedly the smallest or whereas rice



and hops are undoubtedly the smallest. And there, not only did we group, we used the superlative and we also made a comparison.

Now, another useful sentence and I always tell my students this is majority and minority. If we can include these words especially for pie charts, we're already grouping. So, we could say sales of corn stood at 30% in 1925 which is the majority of sales for that year. Likewise to explain the smallest portion, we could say a minority of students prefer to study French whereas the majority clearly prefer to study English or clearly preferred to study English.

And that just reminds me actually of another point: consistency. So, while we're writing, we want to maintain a consistent tense especially in the sentence. Some cases there will be some comparisons, but in that example I just gave you, that was a clear example of an inconsistent



mistake in the tenses because we're still talking about the same year. So, just be careful and try to keep it consistent.

Now, a very useful technique is rounding up. So, if we've got a percentage, that's something like 62%, we can say nearly two-thirds. And this makes it easier to read, it's a little bit more stylish, and it's especially easy to read if you've already mentioned a boatload of figures, if you've already mentioned a lot of figures. So, if you are mentioning a lot of figures, it can get tiring especially if you're including all the data points which we do not recommend you do. So, this is a good way to avoid that.

And it also increases the amount of grammatical features that you're including in your writing. So, if the percentage is around 52, we could say over half of all respondents. Over half of all students surveyed preferred to study English over French, for example. Now, another good



sentence is if it's a round number, we could say exactly. Exactly 30% of students. So, we could say exactly 20% of students. And again, it's just enriching our language.

Now, as I said before, we're aiming for the reader to be able to get an overview of the graph. We're aiming for the reader to be able to interpret it and sketch out a rough and accurate version or a roughly accurate version of the chart that you see. So, just bear that in mind. And this is why it's useful to group the information because we don't want to bore the reader in this case, the examiner with every single data point and that's just failing at the criteria.

Now then, another example of a good sentence would be converting the number to a fraction. So, if we've got 33%, we can say a third. Likewise, 66% two-thirds, 75% three-quarters, a quarter 25%. And here's a pro tip. When I was correcting the essays, I would see sometimes a lot of



students would mix these up. So, they would say two-thirds of the students preferred geography whereas 18% preferred maths and that doesn't read as well.

This goes back to what I was saying before about the consistency. So, if you're using fractions in the written form at the beginning of your sentence, try to include them all the way through the sentence. Likewise, if you're using percentages, if you've said 18% of students prefer French whereas 12% prefer English, then you're on the right track because there we used 18. We've used an exact number and likewise, in the second version, we used an exact number as well. So, it's consistent.

And likewise, if we're using the fancier sentences, we can say roughly a quarter of respondents preferred maths whereas just under half of the students preferred German. And this way we're



keeping it consistent and it just makes it easier to read. These are the small stylistic elements that help you get to a band 7.

Now, I'm not saying using one of these will take you to band 7. Obviously not, but what I said before is we stack the deck. This is a phrase. It's like small little incremental steps. If we do enough of them eventually, they all add up and we get to band 7, 8, or 9.

Now then, when you are reviewing your work-- oh sorry-- when you are planning your work, you need to pay special attention to the chart especially the tense. You need to look at the year. You need to look at the measurements. You need to look at the units. All of this can cost you points.

Now, also check the graph title and the pie chart subtitles. Look for the dates. So, if it's before the present year, then you want to be using the past tense. However, if it's after the present year, you



would use the future tense, okay? And if there is no year, then you just use the present simple tense.

And again, this is why consistency is so important. Make sure you don't switch the tenses halfway through, okay? In a lot of cases, you'll see charts that need you to describe both-- sorry-- needs you to use two different tenses. That's okay. Use your two different sentences, but do it deliberately and with caution, okay? So, in most cases, you want to be consistent, but in some cases, you will have to switch both tenses, but just make sure you are completely aware that you are doing it.

We've got a full tutorial about this specifically about the tenses. So, you can go to IELTS Podcast. Just put into Google ieltspodcast.com which tense.



Let's move on now and look at how to compare two pie charts. The first thing you want to do is just take a minute and fully review. As we said before, look at the subheadings, look at the title, look at the tenses, look at the topic. Also, very important is just to interpret the graph. I cannot tell you the amount of students that have sent me in their interpretation of a graph.

For example, it was something like exports of gas from the Ukraine to the European Union-- sorry-- exports of gas from Ukraine to the European Union and what they wrote about were the sales and they talked about all the time the sales increasing and whatnot. And that's not technically right. We're looking at the exports. And I've seen it again and again where a student has just rushed through the interpretation stage of planning basically.

So, if we're in the exam, we're going to get two types of two pie charts, okay? The first one could be two pie charts with related topics and one time frame. This probably is slightly easier, but in this case, we need the language of proportion and pie chart comparison. So, we could have, for



example, trading partners for the European Union and in one chart, we have export partners and then in the second, we have import partners and both are for the same year.

In this case, the tense is going to be the same all the way through, but we just need to be aware of as I said before language of comparison, language of proportion. And this goes back to what I was saying before using conjunctions such as whereas, while and language of proportions within sector, percentage, the largest, smallest, superlatives, all of those.

Now, the second type of two pie charts that we could see I think is probably a little bit more confusing because in the second type, we've got one topic, but at different times. So, we could have agricultural exports from the USA to Cuba in 2005 and then in 2014.

And this can be quite dangerous. It can be quite risky for students especially if they have been preparing writing descriptions of line charts and line charts require dynamic vocabulary. In this



case, we want some of the dynamic vocabulary, some of the trend language, but some of it would be a little bit inappropriate.

For example, we couldn't really say exports plateaued because a plateau is sort of like a long period of steadiness, stability and we don't really have that data whereas if we see I don't know exports of corn in 2005 at 20% and then the export of corn in 2014 at 40%, we can easily say doubled. That's clear. So, as I said some vocabulary we can use-- some of the trend language we can use, but others we cannot and we probably want to stay away from.

So, just to summarize, if we have two pie charts on a different topic and the same time frame, then we use the language of proportion and comparison. However, if we've got two pie charts on a related topic and in a different time frame, then we're going to use the language of proportion, language of comparison, and the language of change.



Just be careful. When you've learnt the language of change or trend vocabulary, dynamic vocabulary, be careful that you're using it over a time frame of change. Do not use it to describe a flowchart or a bar chart that is set in one time frame. I see that so many times when I'm correcting essays. I see increased dramatically to 30%, but hang on a second. It's the same year. Both pie charts are the same year.

Okay then. Now as we said before, give yourself time to think. Review it. I remember one tutor saying to me that he tells his students to just squint their eyes so it's all a bit blurry. And this way, it's easier to pick out the key data points, the key overall idea. And as I said before, review the time frames because this is going to not only affect your vocabulary, but also your verb tenses.

Now, if you've missed the previous episode, you'll remember that we suggest a four paragraph model essay. We recommend 20 minutes. We recommend you plan it cautiously, studiously beforehand and then jump into writing. If you're using the Academic Task 1 course, then you've



got a framework already and then it's just a case of transferring your points, transferring your notes, your observations, transferring them over to the framework, dropping them in there. And that framework includes your superlatives, your comparisons, and all of that. And that's available on the Academic Task 1 course.

Now, as you know the Writing Task 2 is a broadly similar process. We suggest you make your notes, you carry your notes over, and you drop them into the plan and easy peasy lemon squeezy as we say.

Okay. So, that's the end of this tutorial. I want to say thank you again to our sponsor ELSA Speak the pronunciation app and remember you can get a 40% discount on a one-year membership at elsaspeak.com/inf/ieltspodcast. That's elsaspeak.com/inf/ieltspodcast and you also get seven days of pro membership free, but that link's just available on our blog post at IELTS Podcast.



And just one final word. I want to say if you're struggling with the IELTS exam, just keep moving forward. Whenever I personally have like an obstacle or something difficult or an upset, my reaction is next. I just got to keep on moving. If you stop moving, then you've failed, but if you keep moving, keep preparing, keep trying, keep pushing, then you're going to pass this exam. Keep studying.

Every month, we have students who pass. We've got a system that works. They join us on this podcast, we interview them and there's no reason why you cannot be on this podcast either. Just take action. Write those essays, put in the work and you will get there. You will get to the UK. You will get to Australia. You'll get to the USA. You'll get to Canada. You can reach your objectives. You just got to put in the work. All the best and good luck.

[Music]



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