



Robert: Okay. Hello, hello, hello. It's me again, Robert Buckingham. How are you all? How's your IELTS preparation going and more importantly and what have you been doing lately to increase your vocabulary? Yes, yes, yes. I'm still on vocabulary. It's my favorite topic this month and the title of our talk today is some important tips that will help transform your IELTS writing from basic to advanced and that sounds very, very hopeful, doesn't it? Can we do this? Let's see.

Remember the last time I was talking to I think it was we were talking a little bit about the useful things we can all do to increase our vocabulary by really taking active steps to make new words and expressions a part of us, to be able to use them confidently and accurately in the right context.



And it's not easy. It's hard work and I think it's best for us to work on it a little bit every day. A little bit every day. If we're going to take this very seriously, 15, 20, 30 minutes, one hour a day. I don't know. When you're really preparing hard in those weeks before taking IELTS.

And it's not a bad idea in my opinion given the variety of IELTS topics to work on to work on areas where we're not so familiar and maybe areas that we are not really interested in or don't even like very much. That's why today I thought it would be a really nice idea to go through a recent IELTS Task 2 writing essay topic. I've chosen one that doesn't particularly catch my attention to be honest with you and I've taken it word by word from a section in ieltspodcast.com recent Task 2 essay questions. You can find it there.



There are some other good ones too. This one comes from January of this year 2022, so it's pretty fresh. Here it is. I'll read it out. You can check it out yourself later on online on ieltspodcast.com, but I'm reading it to you very slowly. Okay, here we go.

In many countries plastic shopping bags are the main source of rubbish. They cause water and land pollution and so they should be banned. To what extent do you agree with this statement? Okay. Now, let's step back in a minute. Remember me? I'm an ex-IELTS examiner both for the speaking and writing part and when it comes to IELTS writing, when we're thinking of what they call lexical resource-- vocabulary-- the examiner is basically looking out for two things: vocabulary size and vocabulary depth. To put that in other words very simply, we're talking about your general vocabulary that you can use in a wide range of topics and on the other hand, about your particular specialized knowledge and vocabulary you can use to talk about any given special topic.



Now, at the same time, reading through another article on ieltspodcast.com about how to do the type of question to what extent do you agree with this statement, which is a very common question type in IELTS exams, isn't it, that article recommends you first spend a few minutes two, three, maximum five-- remembering we have 40 minutes in total-- planning the essay. Planning, planning, planning. It's that phase we often call brainstorming and also here is very important that this article quite rightly points out decide what position or point of view you are going to take. To what extent do you agree with this? How do you feel? Totally, partially, or do you disagree partially or totally with the statement and why, etc. Okay?

So, obviously our first step is to read the question and as it suggests in that article underlined, identify the key words and then organize your paragraphs. Four paragraphs: the introduction and at the end the conclusion and in the middle the two main paragraphs, perhaps one describing the



effects of pollution from plastic bags and expressing your point of view, another one perhaps looking at other types of pollution or maybe other points of view, okay?

That's not my main interest today. I'm not talking about the paragraph organization, but thinking more about the vocabulary we're going to use from the beginning right through to the end of the essay. So, from the question, we're taking a position, a point of view and we should make that point of view very clear in the first paragraph. We're also in that introductory paragraph going to paraphrase the question, aren't we? So, perhaps first we paraphrase the question then we express how we feel about it, what our particular view is.

So, it doesn't take very much to realize of course the importance of being able to express ideas and concepts in different ways to have a variety at our fingertips if you like, to have synonyms and as well as knowing how words form very strong relationships between themselves. It's a



favorite of our friend Ben, isn't it? Collocations. That's right. How do words move together and form associations through collocations?

Now, let's look at what I did with this title going back to that essay title. I took the following words as key words. There are five of them, six if you include the word bags. Okay. Plastic or plastic bags, rubbish, source, pollution, and banned.

After that I made a very quick note of those words and associations with them. For example, derivatives-- words that we can derive from each of them-- synonyms and of course the very important collocations and verbs etc. is very closely associated of course with those words.

So for example, I got this. Plastic bags. I wrote down chemicals: the chemicals released into the atmosphere. Non-gradable: plastic bags are non-gradable. They are not biodegradable and of



course the negative impact on, the threat to, the threat to what? The environment, to the planet, etc. So, I'm associating those words with plastic or plastic bags.

With rubbish, well it's a very British word. Of course, we've got the American equivalent garbage, we have waste which is a slightly more technical word I suppose. We have verbs and nouns associated with what we do with rubbish or waste or garbage. For example, disposal, waste disposal, to dispose of, to throw out, to throw away.

When we get to source, well source sounds very similar to origin, maybe cause, the cause of. We can think of course of adjectives associated with source or cause: the major cause, the main source, the principal cause or the principle source of.

And pollution. It looks easier, doesn't it? Really, we've got of course contamination. We've got our verbs to contaminate, to pollute. Adjectives; something is a pollutant or a contaminant. We



are associating of course these words very closely with environment, environmental pollution, environmental issues. We could think of important verbs associated with contamination or pollution. For example, destroy or destruction as a noun. We are destroying the natural habitat etc. etc. etc.

You see there I'm moving quite easily into areas where these words of course are not so technical. They're quite common, but it shows that I can handle a language when I'm writing which has its depth to it, not only is it quite broad or wide, but also has its depth.

And then finally banned. Well okay, banned is the same as prohibited. We can use them as nouns a ban or we could also say a stop or a halt to and I could associate it with verbs: to cut, reduce, or totally ban the sale of plastic bags, the manufacture of plastic bags and so on.



Okay. Well of course I'm cheating, aren't I? I'm the native speaker and to be honest with you, doing all that it took me about ten minutes. You're laughing, aren't you? You're going to say yeah, okay. It's okay for you. You're a native speaker and it took you 10 minutes. The exam is maximum 40 minutes. I'm never going to be able to do all that.

I know that. Don't worry about that. This is just an example. This is an extreme example of how we can use our knowledge and imagination at that precise moment when we read the question to really get moving as quickly as possible on finding not only the structure to the essay, the paragraph organization, but also from the beginning thinking of the possible vocabulary we're going to use, noting it down quickly and I think we can do that in five minutes, seriously.

Of course, in exams with the time constraints and limitations we have, I know I couldn't do all that in the test, but what I'm thinking here is this. To make the whole thing easier for us when we face that exam on that very day when we take the IELTS exam, prepare for it by choosing recent



or maybe not so recent, but recent is better, no, essay questions and spend some time working on what we've done here today.

Reading the question, noting the key words, listing a few synonyms, antonyms maybe, collocations, verbs, adjectives associated with nouns, other nouns, other ways to say things associated with those key words. And seriously, I do think it's better to choose difficult topics; the ones that you don't know so much about, the ones where you need to do some background reading perhaps.

This one would be classic, wouldn't it? How much is there online or on the news, on TV, or wherever about contamination, pollution, plastic bags etc. etc. etc. Every day there's something new if we want to follow some of those things up. Reading, listening, make a note-- make a note of the new words and word combinations you come across.



Of course, let's be honest. There is no guarantee. There never is that one of the topics you may research, you may look up and work on will come up in the exam, but you will have learned new vocabulary and gained valuable experience in essay preparation and so that by the time of the real thing, the test itself, these organizational steps will become a kind of an automatic habit. It's just a routine. You've done it before. You're going to do it again.

And doing those things, seriously practicing them again, coming back to again, trying it again, sending in your essays to the IELTS Podcast team, getting the expert advice, getting the feedback, reviewing that feedback, positive feedback, constructive feedback showing you where you're doing things well, pointing out where you could make some more improvements, rewriting it, taking another topic, doing the whole thing again.



Practice makes perfect. Practice makes perfect. It's the only way. You can't go into an IELTS exam without doing that if you're really looking to improve your grade and get a high grade in that final exam to get those 7s, 8s, or whatever. Okay?

Well, I think that's all for me today. I'll be back soon I think probably by myself maybe. I hope with Ben as well who is fun to work with and record these sessions with you. Good luck to you all. Don't forget to check out the ieltspodcast.com sites where you can obtain of course your feedback and get hold of your IELTS materials to really help you prepare for the exam. Okay? So, that's all for me today. Goodbye and good luck.

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Female Speaker: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com