



「雅思考官教雅思」系列



跟雅思考官练口语

A Sensible Approach to

IELTS Speaking

Tom Macri

北京语言文化大学出版社

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出版说明

雅思考试已在中国全面推广,雅思培训班也在中国遍地开花。在各地各类雅思培训班里,由外教讲授的雅思课,尤其是由雅思考官讲授的雅思课,总是备受欢迎。“雅思考官教雅思”系列图书让你聆听雅思考官授课,为你备考雅思指点迷津。

“雅思考官教雅思”系列首批推出《跟雅思考官练写作》和《跟雅思考官练口语》。雅思的听力、口语、阅读、写作四项考试中,听力和阅读为客观性考试,有标准答案,对错分明;而口语和写作考试为非客观性考试,虽然对评分标准有详细的描述,但标准的掌握及得分的判定却取决于考官。对于一篇雅思作文或一位雅思考生在口试中的表现,考官将怎样评判,评判的侧重点是什么,加分或减分的理由是什么;中国考生在雅思口语和写作考试中常犯的错误是什么,这些错误反映了什么问题,需要进行什么样的训练才能克服,……所有这些疑问,你都会在《跟雅思考官练口语》和《跟雅思考官练写作》中找到答案。

这两本书的作者 Tom Macri 先生为加拿大英语教学专家,加拿大蒙特利尔 Concordia 大学教育学系英语外语教学专业毕业。担任过多年雅思考官,并取得雅思考官培训官资格,在中国从事英语教学工作 6 年。书中深入浅出的解说、独到的分析、幽默的举例、精要的练习定能让广大雅思考生获益匪浅。

北京语言文化大学出版社

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前 言

也许你认为要想取得你需要的雅思口试分数,你所要做的就是记忆(背诵)尽可能多的问题的答案。当然,中国的许多所谓的“雅思学校”就是这么教的。

如果这就是你的想法,那么本书就不是为你写的,你也不赞同本书的观点。

你必须明白,雅思不是要考你的记忆力。雅思考官对中国考生的这一问题了如指掌,他们很善于识别背诵的演讲。

1. 靠背诵答题的考生难免是拙劣的演员。这一点考官们是知道的。
2. 你不可能猜到考官会问什么问题。如果考官怀疑你在背诵,他就会换问题,直到他确信你不是在背诵。
3. 靠背诵答题的考生往往答非所问,而是绕到自己准备好的答案上来,这时考官就会打断他,并且换问题。
4. 你所背诵的东西,不论你背的是什么,总是和你自己真实的语言形成对照。考官会抛开你背诵的东西,而只根据你真实的语言打分。
5. 如果你背诵,你就会惹怒你的考官。这意味着如果你的考官不能肯定比如是给你5分还是给你6分的时候,你几乎可以肯定你将得到那个较低的分。
6. 背诵答题的考生其结果往往比不背诵得分要低。

我记得曾经考过一位考生,这位考生背了大量的东西,不论我问什么问题,她总是回到她背的答案上来。最后我不得不警告她说,如果她继续这样下去,我就无法评估她的语言而不得不给她零分了。这时,这位考生才停止了背诵,我问了一些她不可能背了答案的问题,让我吃惊的是,这位考生实际上可以回答得非常好,她最后得了7分。她在背诵上下的功夫对她不仅毫无益处,而且几乎让她付出了通不过雅思的代价。而事实上,她英语说得比她所需要的那个分数要求的好。你的情况很可能也是这样。

不管怎样,教雅思的老师经常听到的一个问题是:“在我考雅思之前,我怎样能提高我的口语?”这通常指的是两三个星期的时间。

这个问题没有答案。加速语言学习的药还没有发明出来。通过参加学习班、阅读、看英语电影或利用机会说英语,你可以肯定你的英语甚至在一个星期里都会有所进步,但进步的幅度微乎其微,没有人会注意到。

如果你有时间参加一个两三个月的普通英语学习班(雅思评估的就是你的普通英语能力),就会有明显的进步,但两三个星期不会有大用。这就是说,除非你花时间参加普通英语学习班,你的英语是什么样就是什么样,没有办法让你的英语显得比实际水平好。

那么,本书的目的是什么呢?

首先,本书将让你为要参加的考试做好准备。知道要考什么,会消除对考试的陌生感,从而让你比较放松地去参加考试。

本书还将指出一些你可能需要避免的错误,明示雅思考官希望你在口试中怎样表达。

最后,通过本书所配的有声材料,你可以练习回答问题,甚至经历两三次口试,并对照所提供的实况模拟口试来评判自己的英语。

最为重要的是,请记住:本书中没有什么让你背记的,但有许多东西你要理解。理解不同于背记,理解意味着学习。

作者

PREFACE

Perhaps, you think that in order to get the score you need at your IELTS Speaking Test all you need to do is memorize(recite)the answers to as many questions as possible. Certainly, that is what many so-called“IELTS Schools”in China teach.

If that is what you think, this book is NOT for you and you are NOT for this book.

You must understand that the IELTS examination DOES NOT TEST YOUR MEMORY. Examiners are very aware of this problem with Chinese candidates and very good at recognising memorized speech:

1. Candidates who memorize are inevitably bad actors. Examiners know that.
2. It is impossible to guess what questions the examiner will ask. Examiners who suspect you have memorized will change questions until they can get to something they are sure you have not possibly memorized.
3. Candidates who memorize will tend not to answer the question and move to the speech they have prepared. Examiners will interrupt and change the question.
4. Anything you have memorized will stand in contrast to your real language. Examiners will throw out what you have memorized and mark on the basis of your real language.
5. If you memorize, you will irritate your examiner. This means that if your examiner is not sure whether you are, for example, a band 5 or a band 6, you can be almost certain that you will get the lower mark.
6. Often, candidates who memorize, will end up with a lower score than the one they would have got if they had not.

I remember a candidate I examined once. This candidate had memorized a lot and whatever question I asked she kept returning to her memorized speech. Eventually, I had to warn her that if she continued, I would not be able to evaluate her language and I would have to mark her with a zero. At that point, the candidate did stop and I asked her questions for which it was impossible for her to have memorized the answer. Much to my surprise, that candidate could actually speak quite well and her mark turned out to be a 7. All her work at memorizing not only was good for nothing, but it almost cost her failing IELTS when, in reality, she could

speak better than what would have been required for the mark she needed. This could very well be your situation as well.

Nevertheless, a frequent question an IELTS instructor often hears is: "How can I improve my spoken English by the time I take IELTS?" Usually, that means about two or three weeks.

Well, there is no answer to that question. A medicine to accelerate language learning has not been invented yet. By attending a course, reading, watching English movies or taking opportunities to speak, you can be sure that your English will improve even in a week, but the improvement will be so small that no one will notice it.

If you have the time to take a two or three month general English course (IELTS evaluates your competence in general English), the improvement will be noticeable, but a couple of weeks will not do much. That means that, unless you take the time to attend general English courses, your English is what it is and there is no way to make it look like you are a better speaker than you really are.

What, then, is the purpose of this book?

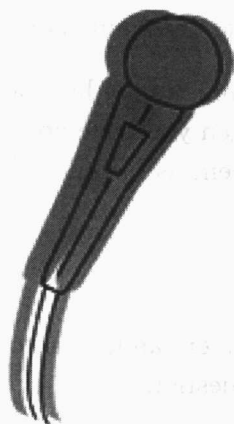
To begin with, this book will prepare you to what to expect. Knowing what to expect will eliminate the element of surprise and allow you to go to the exam more relaxed.

This book will also point out to you problems you may need to avoid and give you an indication of what IELTS examiners expect.

Finally, with the help of the attached audio material, you will be able to practice answering questions and even experience a couple of interviews. That will allow you to evaluate your performance by comparing it with the sample interviews that you will be supplied with.

Above all, remember: there is nothing in this book for you to memorize, but there is a lot for you to understand and, unlike memorizing, understanding means learning.

Author



CHAPTER 3

Common Problems with Chinese Candidates

General Problems

Here is a list of common problems. We will look at the details in a minute:

- **Memorizing speech**
- **Responding to a word instead of a sentence**
- **Beating around the bush**
- **Starting an answer with “*Because...*”**
- **Trying to say too much**
- **Not saying enough**
- **Using “*such as...*” followed by a long list**
- **Using “*several*” instead of “*a few*”**
- **Confusing “*recently*”, “*soon*” and “*currently*” (or “*presently*”)**
- **Using comparatives instead of adjectives**
- **Tenses**

Memorizing speech

There has been, and there still is, a lot of cheating at IELTS. A simple, but silly, way of cheating is to memorize things to say.

Of course, the examiners can quickly spot what is memorized. He or she can do this in two ways:

First, it is easy to recognize a bad actor and reciting what you have memorized makes you a bad actor unless you studied in a Drama Academy. Second, the examiner can easily compare speech that you have memorized with your normal speech.

Memorizing will only put the examiner against you, and you do not want that.

Unfortunately, because of the widespread cheating, the examiners may have a prejudice and think you may be reciting memorized speech even when you have not. Therefore, you should be aware of situations that may make it seem as if you had memorized, such as...

... responding to a word instead of a sentence

Listen carefully to what the examiner asks. If you do not understand, ask to repeat. Do not just say what you like based on one word in the question.

Here is an example of this common problem:

Question: *How long have you been working in your present position?*

Answer: *Yes, I work in a computer company. I am an assistant manager. I like my job very much, etc.*

Obviously, the candidate has not understood the question and is only responding to the word "working". If the candidate's language is fluent enough, the examiner may think that he or she is trying to lead to some memorized speech.

The same can happen in the case of...

... beating around the bush

"Beating around the bush" is an idiomatic expression that means not being direct.

The problem, here, is that the Chinese do not like to say things directly but English speakers usually like to hear direct answers.

Since IELTS actually measures also your capacity to deal with English speaking cultures, you have to learn the Western style. If you do not, again, your examiner may think that you are trying to lead to something you have memorized.

The most common way to beat around the bush, in China, seems to be...

... starting an answer with "Because..."

To begin with, "because" is not a way of starting an answer, in English, because it is bad grammar. It is a conjunction and conjunctions like "because" join clauses in sentences. Therefore they can only be found in the middle of a sentence and not at the beginning. If you really need to be indirect, you should, at least, use "as" or "since".

You may also give the impression that you have memorized if you speak fluently in...

... trying to say too much

Somehow, you have to be able to know, without thinking, when you have said enough. Imagine you are talking to someone you have just met. Keep your sentences at a natural length. The examiner's body language should give you a clue of when to stop.

On the other hand, the examiner will not think that you are trying to lead to memorized speech if you are...

... not saying enough

That would force the examiner to force you to speak more and it can be annoying.

Another annoying, although a little funny, trick consists of...

... using "such as..." followed by a long list

Here is an example:

Question: *Does your job give you many opportunities to travel?*

Answer: *Yes, I have visited many cities such as Shanghai, Tianjin, Shenyang, Harbin, Xi'an, Guangzhou, Nanjing...*

That sort of answer may make time go by, but it does not help the examiner evaluate your English.

Using "several" instead of "a few"

This is just a vocabulary mistake. **Several** means **many**, not **few**.

Actually *several* means just a little less than many. For example, if in a restaurant there are many people, it may be full, but if there are several people, you will still find a table available.

Another vocabulary mistake is...

... confusing "recently", "soon" and "currently" (or "presently")

Sometimes we hear things like: "Recently I do something" or even "Recently I will do something". These are wrong.

Currently and **presently** mean **now**, and require the verb forms *I do* or *I am doing*.

Recently means within a short time in **the past** and requires *I did*, *I was doing* or *I have done*.

Soon means within a short time in **the future** and requires *I will do* or other future verb forms.

Using comparatives instead of adjectives

and...

...tenses...

...will be discussed in the Grammar Points below.

Grammar Points: Tenses and Comparatives

Note: This is not a substitution for a good grammar book. This only deals with common problems of Chinese candidates at IELTS.

Important: you are not expected to memorize and recite. **You are expected to understand.**

Chinese IELTS candidates, typically, have problems with their tenses and comparatives. We will look at both.

Tenses: Talking about the present

I DO vs. I AM DOING

A tense tells us when an action takes place.

If I say **I DO**, when do I do it?

Maybe **I do** it **every day**.

Maybe **I do** it **sometimes**, or **often** or **usually**, etc.

Maybe **I do** it **in the morning**, or **every Tuesday**.

Maybe **I do** it **when it rains**, or **after lunch**, etc.

I DO is a generic statement of a fact or a truth, or something we believe is a fact.

Here we use the verb *to do*, but this applies, of course, to almost every verb: *I jump*, *I sing*, etc.

Sometimes, instead of **I DO**, we say **I AM DOING**.

If I say **I AM DOING**, when am I doing it?

You will probably answer **NOW**.

Your answer is correct, but only partially correct.

Suppose **I meet someone on the street** and I say "**I AM TAKING** a Chinese course."

Does that mean that I am taking a Chinese course **NOW**?

If I say that at a time when I am speaking to someone on the street, of course **NOT NOW**, but I can be taking a Chinese course these days. So...

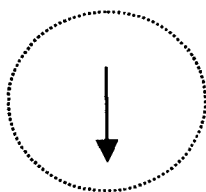
When I say **I AM DOING**, I can be talking about **NOW** or a time around **NOW**.

The time around **NOW** can even be very long. For example:

"*I am living in Beijing*" (and I have been living here for the past five years).

When you think of tenses, you imagine change in time and space. Pictures can help understand tenses.

I DO may look like this:



The arrow stands for an action. The circle can represent time.

I AM DOING may look like this:



The horizontal line stands for time as it flows while something happening. The little arrow on it indicates the action of doing at any particular time during this period.

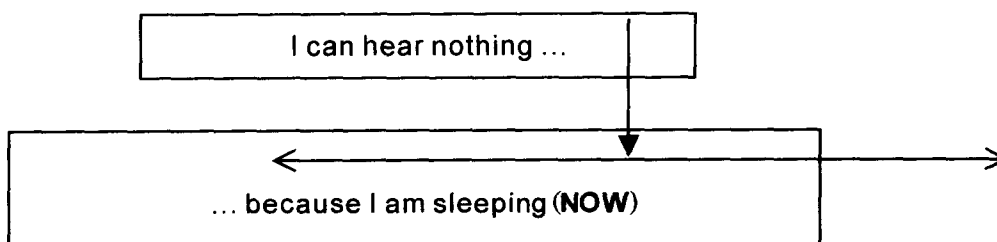
The English language pays a lot of attention to whether an action just happens (*I do, I did, I have done, I had done*) or it happens over a period of time (*I am doing, I was doing, I have been doing, I had been doing*).

If we want to show that the action happens over a period of time, we must use some form of the verb **TO BE** followed by a verb ending in **ING**.

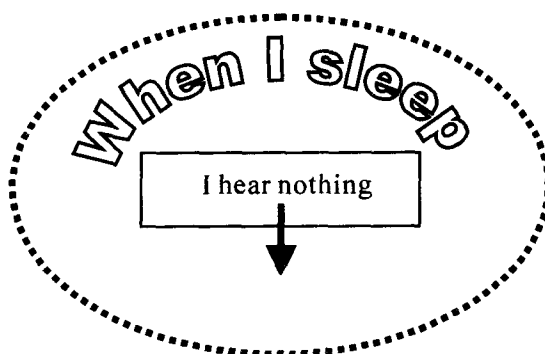
We call these **continuous tenses**.

Let's see how **I DO** and **I AM DOING** work in practice:

It is three o'clock in the middle of the night. The phone, downstairs, rings. I can hear nothing. Why?



Compare with:



Now try to answer the following questions and check your answers at the bottom of the page.

1. *I have a pack of cigarettes in one hand and a lighter in the other .
Am I smoking ?*
2. *I have a pack of cigarettes in one hand and a lighter in the other .
Do I smoke ?*
3. *I never learned to speak Chinese . Somebody is speaking Chinese to me .
I understand nothing . Why ?*
4. *When I don ' t feel well , I have to sit down and have a rest .
Now , I have to sit down and have a rest . Why ?*

Tenses: Talking about the past

I DID vs. I WAS DOING

If every night I **DO** my homework, that means that last night I **DID** my homework.

In fact, I did my homework until the lights **WENT** out. So ...

*When the lights **WENT** out ... I **WAS DOING** my homework .*

We can draw **I DID** (in this case **WENT out**) like this:



The dot on the right is **NOW**. The arrow jumps backwards to a particular time in the past.

It could be yesterday, it could be last year or it could be **at a time when SOMETHING WAS HAPPENING**, in this case: **when I WAS DOING my homework**.

-
1. No. I cannot be smoking because my hands are occupied with a lighter and a pack of cigarettes.
 2. Probably yes, I smoke, otherwise why would I have a pack of cigarettes and a lighter in my hands?
 3. Because I don ' t speak Chinese.
 4. Because I am not feeling well.