STUDY NOTES   **EPISODE 15: ASTRONOMER**

IELTS SPEAKING TEST

The purpose of the **IELTS Speaking Test** is to assess oral proficiency, which means your ability to communicate effectively in English.

In assessing spoken language, the examiner looks for a number of different skills, including your ability to speak fluently and coherently, use a wide range of vocabulary, communicate accurately with a variety of grammatical structures, and speak with clear pronunciation.

These skills are assessed in a variety of different functions such as describing a person or place, expressing opinions and giving reasons, comparing and contrasting, speculating on the future, stating a preference and others.

> **STUDY TIPS**
> Whether in the individual long turn (section 2) or the discussion (section 3) of the IELTS Speaking Test, remember to expand on your answers by describing, explaining, comparing, suggesting or perhaps expressing your opinion.
>
> This allows you to demonstrate your ability to use a range of grammatical structures.
>
> The examiner will be assessing how accurate and appropriate your use of these structures is.

Focussing specifically on the skill of **communicating accurately**, these notes review the various **language functions** and the **grammatical structures** used in the Speaking test.

Communicating with grammatical accuracy

Grammatical accuracy refers to how accurately and appropriately a candidate uses grammar. This is measured in terms of the number of errors and the effect of these errors on communication.

Communicating with a range of grammatical structures

The range of grammatical structures means the variety of simple, compound and complex sentences used appropriately. This would include linking information using coordinate and subordinate conjunctions, especially when extending an answer.
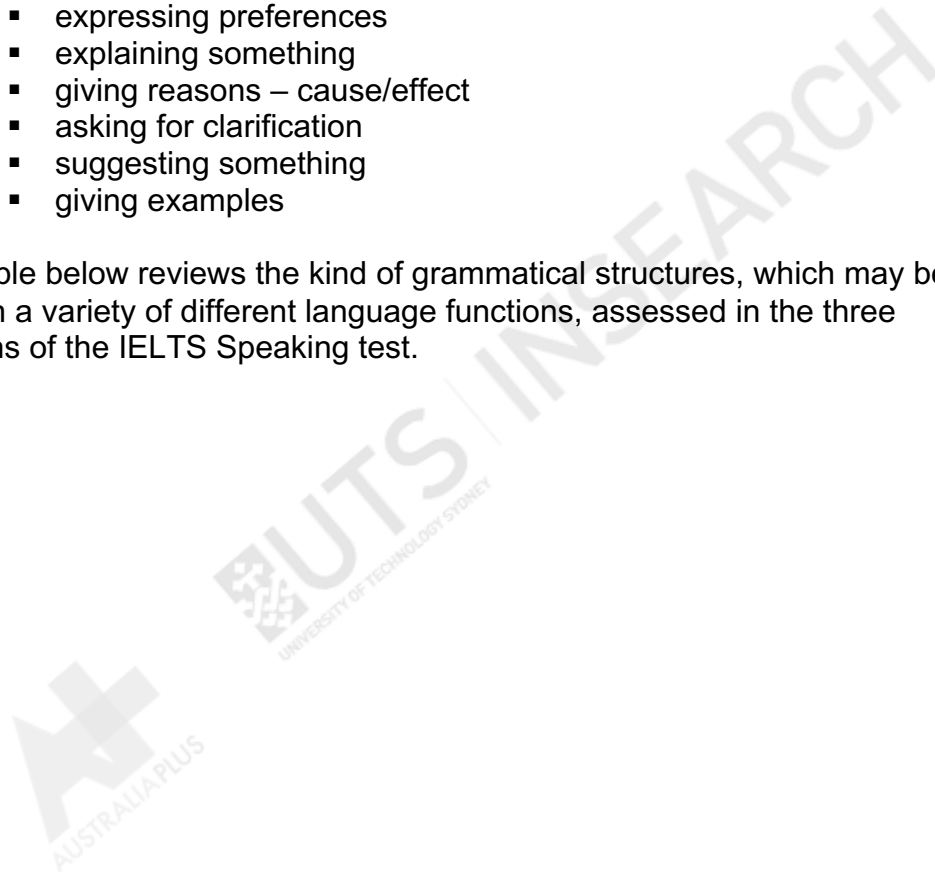
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Language functions

Language function refers to the various purposes for which we use language to communicate. The kind of language functions you can expect in the IELTS Speaking test include, for example:

- describing people, a place or things
- expressing an opinion
- comparing and contrasting
- speculating about the future
- planning for the future
- expressing preferences
- explaining something
- giving reasons – cause/effect
- asking for clarification
- suggesting something
- giving examples

The table below reviews the kind of grammatical structures, which may be used in a variety of different language functions, assessed in the three sections of the IELTS Speaking test.

Language Functions	Grammatical Structures/Expressions	Sample Topics
		Sample Questions
Describing people, a place or things	**present simple active tense** (*I play…; they live…*); **present simple passive tense** (*it is located…*); **simple past tense** (I finished…) or **present perfect** (I've lived..); *there is/there are*; **singular/ plural forms of nouns**; **countable/ uncountable nouns**; **subject/verb agreement**; **royal order of adjectives** (opinion *beautiful*, size *tall*, quality *friendly*, colour *blue*….); **prepositions of place, direction and distance** (*in*, *to*, *on*, *at*, *near*, *across*, *between…*); **simple sentences**; **compound sentences**, **using a variety of conjunctions** (*and*, *or*, *but*, *so…*)	Family, sports, education, hobbies, music, food, employment, films, travel
		What kind of sports do you like? Could you describe the city, town or village that you are from? Do you like trying new food? Have you travelled much? Are you working? Do you go to school?

Language Functions	Grammatical Structures/Expressions	Sample Topics
		Sample Questions
Expressing opinions	**modals**: possibility/ probability (*may (not)*, *can(not)*, *might (not)*, *could (not)*, *should (not)*); **adjectives/adverbs**: *likely*, *unlikely*, *probably*, *certainly*, *definitely*, *personally*; **gerund forms** (*playing…*, *singing…*, *swimming…*, *reading…*); **expressions**: *I believe…*; *I think….*; *What I think is…*; *I'd say that…*; *To my mind…*; *As far as I'm concerned…*; *I'm of the opinion…*; *The way I see it…*; *It seems to me…*; *I feel…*; *I'm convinced…*	Is tennis a popular sport in your country? Should people be forced to recycle? Do you think tourism is a positive thing? How has technology assisted mankind? Why are waterways being polluted? What can be done about poverty in third world countries? Would you say obesity is a problem in your country?
		tourism, environment, medicine, education; technology, health, communications, food, film, society
Explaining something (giving reasons, linking cause and effects)	**compound sentences, using coordinating conjunctions** (*and*, *or*, *so*, *for*); **complex sentences, using subordinating conjunctions** (*as*, *because*, *since*); **cause/effect language structures**: *consequently*; *as a result of…*; *because of…*; *the cause of…*; **expressions for giving a reason**: *that's because…*; *the reason for…is…*; *an explanation for that is…*; *one reason is that…*; *it's because…*; *one of the problems with that is…*;	What kind of person does a teacher need to be? Is learning another language important? Why is drug addiction a negative thing? Did you find the film interesting? How do you feel about shopping on the internet?
		education, geography, tourism, sports, transport, music, environment, science, medicine, eco-tourism, employment

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Language Functions	Grammatical Structures/Expressions	Sample Topics
		Sample Questions
Comparing/ contrasting	**comparative language structures: comparative adjective forms**: *younger*, *smaller*, *better*, *worse*, *friendlier*, *more/less*; **superlative adjective forms**: *youngest*, *smallest*, *best*, *worst*, *friendliest*; **other comparative expressions**: *not as…as*; *as…as*; *just as…as*; *like/alike*; *similar to…*; *similarly*; *as well as*; *compared with…*; *in comparison with…*; **contrastive language structures: compound sentences using a coordinating conjunction** (*but*, *yet*); **complex sentences using subordinating conjunctions** (*although*, *though*, *even though*, *while*, *whereas*); **contrasting expressions**: *on the other hand*; *in contrast*; *one of the differences is…*)	Are people travelling more now than in the past? Who make better teachers – men or women? What is more dangerous – football or rock climbing? Have family values changed over the years?
		family, education, travel, environment, tourism, employment, medicine, technology
Speculating about or planning for the future	**future tense** using '**will**'; **future** with '**be going to**'; **present continuous tense** (*is bringing*, *are coming…*); **future conditionals** (*if you get a good score, you'll get into university…*); **expressions**: *I'm planning to…*; *I'd like to…*; *If I'm successful… I hope to…*; *I'm determined to…*; *I imagine…*; *I suspect…*; *I would think that…*; *I intend to…*; *I expect…*	Do you think people will have to conserve water in the future? What will your country be like in 50 years? What are you planning to study? What kind of job are you hoping to get? Where would you like to go for your next holiday? Why do you think exploring other planets is important?

		society, environment, education, technology, transportation, science, health

Language Functions	Grammatical Structures/Expressions	Sample Topics
		Sample Questions
Suggesting something (giving advice)	**modals**: *can*, *shall*, *should*, *could*, *ought to*; *need to*; *must*; **expressions**: *I would suggest..*; *I think the most effective course of action would be…*; *I think it's important…*; *What I think should be done is….*; *My feeling is…*; *I wonder if….*; *If you ask me…*; *It might be an idea…*	How can stress be relieved? What would you do to reduce the crime rate? How can someone improve their pronunciation? How should the government promote tourism in your country?
		communications, employment, technology, health, food, environment
Expressing preferences	**modals**: *would rather…than*; *would rather not…*; **expressions**: *I prefer…*; *I'd rather…*; *I'm more interested in…*;	What is the best form of exercise? Why? What mode of transportation do you prefer, and why? Do you prefer studying or working? Why?

Grammar checklist

- ❑ articles
- ❑ subject-verb agreement
- ❑ countable/uncountable nouns
- ❑ verb tense
- ❑ prepositions
- ❑ number/gender agreement
- ❑ conjunctions: coordinate and subordinate
- ❑ direct/indirect object