

LIMITED VOCABULARY: THE PRIMARY OBSTACLE TO SUCCEEDING IN IELTS

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Abstract

Many IELTS candidates cannot reach their target scores. One major reason is a lack of vocabulary. Vocabulary is essential for understanding and communication. It supports all four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Without enough vocabulary, learners struggle to perform well in the exam. This study examines how limited vocabulary becomes a key barrier to IELTS success. It focuses on common problems faced by learners. These include difficulty understanding reading texts, weak idea development in writing, and problems with listening and speaking. The study is based on a review of relevant literature and general learner patterns. The findings show that poor vocabulary knowledge lowers overall performance. Many students fail to reach band 6 or higher because of this issue. Vocabulary also affects confidence and fluency. The study suggests that improving vocabulary can increase IELTS scores. Targeted vocabulary learning helps students understand better and express ideas more clearly.

Key words: IELTS, Vocabulary Knowledge, Language Barriers, Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, English Proficiency.

Аннотация: Многие кандидаты IELTS не достигают желаемых баллов. Одной из главных причин является недостаточный словарный запас. Лексика играет ключевую роль в понимании и общении. Она поддерживает все четыре навыка: чтение, письмо, аудирование и говорение. Без достаточного словарного запаса учащиеся испытывают трудности при выполнении экзамена. Данное исследование рассматривает, как ограниченный словарный запас становится основным барьером для успеха в IELTS. Особое внимание уделяется типичным проблемам учащихся. К ним относятся трудности в понимании текстов при чтении, слабое развитие идей в письме, а также проблемы с аудированием и

говорением. Исследование основано на анализе научных источников и типичных моделей обучения. Результаты показывают, что недостаточный словарный запас снижает общий уровень успеваемости. Многие студенты не достигают уровня Band 6 и выше именно по этой причине. Лексические ограничения также влияют на уверенность и беглость речи. Исследование показывает, что развитие словарного запаса может повысить результаты IELTS. Целенаправленное изучение лексики помогает лучше понимать информацию и ясно выражать свои мысли.

Ключевые слова: IELTS, словарный запас, языковые барьеры, чтение, письмо, аудирование, говорение, владение английским языком.

Annotatsiya: Ko‘plab IELTS topshiruvchilari kerakli ballni ola olmaydi. Buning asosiy sabablaridan biri — yetarli lug‘at boyligining yo‘qligidir. Lug‘at tilni tushunish va muloqot qilishda muhim rol o‘ynaydi. U to‘rtta ko‘nikmani qo‘llab-quvvatlaydi: o‘qish, yozish, tinglab tushunish va gapirish. Yetarli lug‘at bo‘lmasa, o‘quvchilar imtihonda qiyinchilikka duch keladi.

Ushbu tadqiqot IELTS muvaffaqiyatiga lug‘at yetishmasligi qanday asosiy to‘siq bo‘lishini o‘rganadi. U o‘quvchilarda uchraydigan asosiy muammolarga e‘tibor qaratadi. Bular matnlarni tushunishda qiyinchilik, yozishda fikrlarni rivojlantira olmaslik, shuningdek, tinglash va gapirishda muammolarni o‘z ichiga oladi. Tadqiqot ilmiy manbalarni tahlil qilish va o‘quvchilarning umumiy tajribalariga asoslangan.

Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, yetarli bo‘lmagan lug‘at umumiy natijani pasaytiradi. Ko‘plab talabalar aynan shu sababli Band 6 va undan yuqori darajaga erisha olmaydi. Lug‘at cheklanganligi ishonch va ravonlikka ham salbiy ta’sir qiladi.

Tadqiqot shuni ko‘rsatadiki, lug‘atni rivojlantirish IELTS natijalarini oshiradi. Maqsadli lug‘at o‘rganish talabaga ma’lumotni yaxshiroq tushunish va fikrlarini aniq ifodalashga yordam beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: IELTS, lug‘at boyligi, til to‘siqlari, o‘qish, yozish, tinglab tushunish, gapirish, ingliz tili malakasi.

Introduction

English is now part of everyday life in education and communication around the world. It is widely used in universities and academic settings, so students are expected to use it at a high level. Because of this, many learners prepare for exams like IELTS to prove their English ability and gain access to higher education opportunities. However, even after years of studying English, many students still do not achieve high IELTS scores. One of the main reasons is a limited vocabulary. Vocabulary is the foundation of language use because it affects how well a person understands and expresses ideas. When learners do not know enough words, they struggle to follow reading texts, understand listening materials, and express their thoughts clearly in speaking and writing. In IELTS, this problem becomes even more visible. Students may know grammar rules, but they often cannot explain ideas in detail or understand complex questions because their vocabulary is weak. This leads to lower performance across all sections of the test. For this reason, it is important to look closely at vocabulary as a key factor affecting IELTS success and understand how it creates a barrier for learners.

One of the main problems candidates face in the IELTS exam is difficulty understanding reading passages. When vocabulary knowledge is limited, students cannot fully understand sentence meaning or infer the message in complex texts. As a result, they spend too much time trying to understand individual words rather than focusing on the overall meaning, which lowers their performance on the reading section. Another major issue appears in the writing task. Many candidates struggle to express their ideas clearly because they do not have enough academic vocabulary. They often repeat simple words or use incorrect terms, which reduces the quality of their writing. This makes it difficult for them to develop arguments, explain examples, and achieve a higher band score. The third problem concerns speaking and listening. In speaking, a limited vocabulary prevents candidates from expressing ideas fluently and confidently. In listening, they often fail to recognize key words or understand spoken information, especially when unfamiliar vocabulary is used. This leads to misunderstanding and weak responses during the exam.

RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

Research conducted by Gul Ahmad Amirzai (2021) consistently demonstrates that vocabulary proficiency is a critical determinant of success in the IELTS examination. Candidates possessing an extensive vocabulary generally exhibit superior performance across all four skill domains, with particular prominence in reading and writing. For instance, in reading assessments, examinees familiar with academic terminology such as "consequences," "significant," or "impact" are able to rapidly comprehend the central thesis of a passage. Conversely, students with limited lexical resources frequently pause to infer meanings, resulting in time inefficiency and reduced accuracy. In writing tasks, high-performing candidates employ a diverse range of academic terms, including "advancement," "increase," or "decline," whereas lower-performing students tend to rely on repetitive, elementary vocabulary such as "good" or "bad." Consequently, this research indicates that vocabulary mastery directly influences band score outcomes.

Another important study by Beata Ross and David Stuckler from Keele University shows that vocabulary limitation increases anxiety and reduces confidence. When students cannot find the right word, they become nervous and lose fluency. For example, in the IELTS speaking test, a student may want to explain "environmental pollution," but because they do not know the exact vocabulary, they stop and say something very simple like "dirty air problem." This hesitation makes the answer less fluent and lowers the score. In writing, students may avoid complex ideas because they are afraid of using the wrong words. Researchers conclude that vocabulary weakness not only affects language ability but also increases stress and fear during performance.

Joseph B. Quinto from Benguet State University also shows that vocabulary gaps lead to misunderstanding in real IELTS exam situations. In listening tests, students may miss key information when they do not recognize familiar words spoken quickly. For example, they may hear a sentence about "global economy" but fail to understand it if they do not know the term. In reading, unknown words can change the meaning of an entire paragraph, causing wrong answers. In speaking, learners often replace complex

ideas with simple expressions, such as saying “big problem in the air” instead of “air pollution issue.” This reduces clarity, precision, and academic quality. Studies conclude that vocabulary limitation is a direct cause of communication failure in IELTS tasks.

To solve the problem of limited vocabulary in IELTS preparation, students need to focus on systematic and consistent vocabulary learning. Instead of memorizing random word lists, learners should study words in context, such as through reading passages, articles, and practice tests. This helps them understand how words are used in real situations and improves long-term retention. Another effective solution is regular exposure to English through daily practice. Students should read academic texts, listen to English podcasts, and watch educational videos. This constant exposure helps them naturally build vocabulary and improves their ability to recognize words in different contexts, especially during listening and reading tasks. Finally, learners should actively use new vocabulary in speaking and writing practice. Writing short essays, speaking with partners, or practicing IELTS questions helps them apply new words correctly. This not only strengthens memory but also improves fluency, accuracy, and confidence during the actual exam.

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