



IELTS WRITING

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
DIFFERENT BAND SCORES

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**An analysis of Academic IELTS essays
scoring 5.5, 6.5 and 7.0 to evaluate
lexicogrammatical differences and
review the level 7.0 requirement for
international nurses applying to join
the NMC register**

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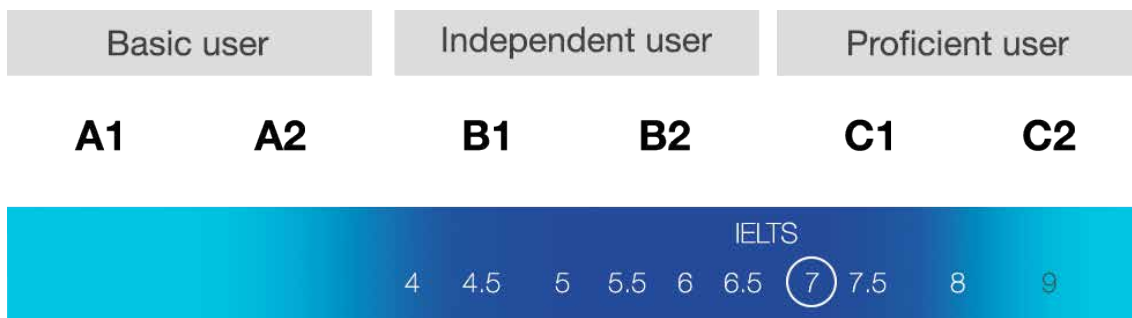
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Aims and justification of the investigation

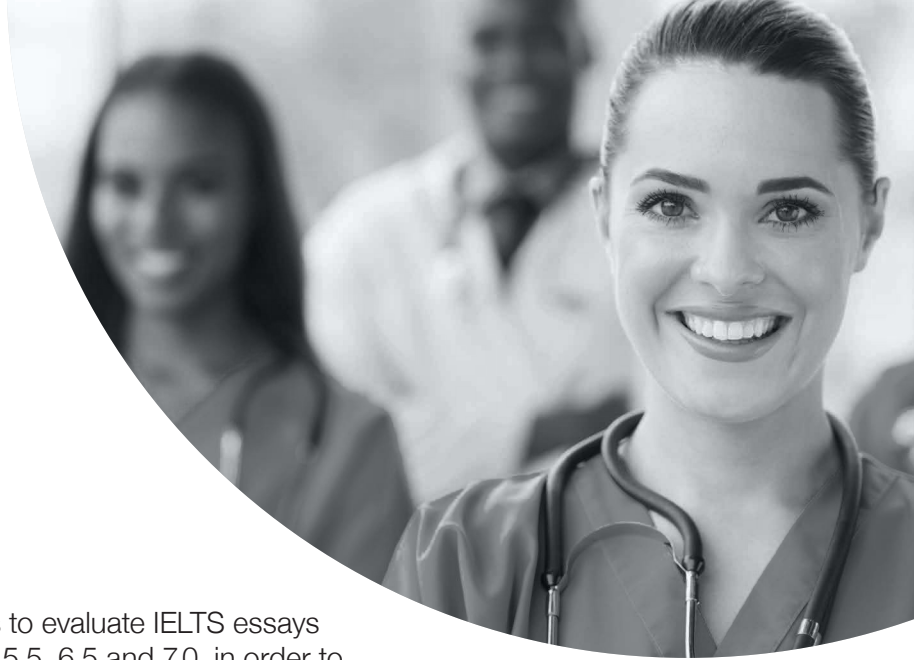
Justification and overall aim

Trained nurses from outside the UK are required to pass an English test in order to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and work as nurses in the UK. From January 2016 until November 2017, the only official exam accepted was the Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the required score being a 7.0 out of 9.0 in each of the four skills: Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking. The Occupational English Test (OET) is also now accepted with a grade B in all four skills. Both of these grades in the two exams are equivalent to an advanced level of English - a C1 level on the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR).

Since the test was introduced, a pattern has emerged whereby a large number of the international nurses taking the test have been scoring a 7.0, and often as high as 8.0 or 9.0, on Reading, Listening and Speaking, but are not able to score a 7.0 on the writing paper, even after multiple attempts. These results are preventing them from registering to work as nurses in the UK – in the meantime, they are only allowed to work as Healthcare Assistants/Support Workers. Talking to NHS Trusts, it is clear that the majority of nurses in this situation are deemed clinically competent if not excellent in their nursing skills by their ward managers. However, they are unable to use and develop their nursing skills until they achieve 7.0 in the Academic IELTS Writing paper. Meanwhile, the NHS is suffering from a severe shortage of nurses.



This situation has led many in the English language teaching industry who are working with these nurses, as well as their NHS colleagues, to question the justification for requiring these nurses to achieve a 7.0 in the Academic IELTS Writing paper. The average score achieved by native speakers on the test is believed to be around the 6.5 mark. In 2017, the average writing score for Academic IELTS test takers from Canada was 6.2. On the General paper, the average writing score of test-takers from Australia was 6.4.



Therefore, the aim of this analysis is to evaluate IELTS essays written by nurses who have scored 5.5, 6.5 and 7.0, in order to discover whether the lexicogrammatical differences between a 6.5 and a 7.0 on the Writing paper are significant enough to warrant the barrier it creates for highly skilled nurses wanting to come and work for the NHS. If so, I would like to identify specifically what those differences are in order to help IELTS teachers and students close that gap.

Lexicogrammatical features in focus

In order to choose the most important lexicogrammatical features to analyse to investigate my hypothesis, I have referred to the Academic IELTS Band descriptors for the writing paper (See Appendix 3) as well as the E304 “Exploring English Grammar” Open University module material regarding the typical features of Academic writing.

These areas, divided into the three language metafunctions, include:

Textual metafunction (Mode)

- Lexical density
- Average clause length
- Thematic organisation
- Grammatical cohesion
- Grammatical complexity

Interpersonal metafunction (Tenor)

- Formality of language (use of 1st/2nd person, contractions, vague language)
- Modality

Ideational metafunction (Field)

- Specialization of lexis



Methods

For my investigation I used manual analysis to calculate lexical density, average clause length and to tabulate, with a view to comparing, informal language, specialized lexis, hyper themes and conjunctions.

To control the variables, I took the texts from an online testing system where the students answered the same Academic IELTS Task 2 essay questions and had the same limited time to complete their essay (1 hour for an Academic IELTS Task 1 and Task 2, the latter being the one included in this project). All the essays from the system were marked by one of two markers who are both experienced IELTS tutors. The essay question was:

Write about the following topic:

Some people feel that the use of animals for scientific and commercial research, such as testing medicines and cosmetics, is unnecessary and cruel. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

I obtained the texts and permission to use them by emailing the students who took the test and achieved the scores I wanted to analyze, asking if they gave their permission for their work to be included anonymously in my project.

Findings



Textual metafunction (Mode)

Table 1: Lexical Density and Clause Length

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Lexical Density (range) | 43% - 47% | 45% - 53% | 48% - 52% |
| Lexical Density (average) | 45% | 50% | 50% |
| Average Clause length (range) | 6.5 - 8.0 words | 7.4 - 11.8 words | 8.5 - 11.0 words |
| Average clause length | 7.1 words | 9.1 words | 9.7 words |

Thematic organization

(See Table 2, overleaf)

All of the IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays and one of the 5.5 essays start with an introductory paragraph, while two of the three 5.5 essays start with language that mimics spoken text due to its conversational tone: “I don’t agree with the testing of drugs and cosmetics on animals...” and “Well, it’s a middle-class thing...”.

In terms of hyper themes, all of the IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays used signposting language to signal a change of topic for each paragraph e.g. “On the other hand,” “Firstly”, “To conclude...” while one of the 5.5 essays had no paragraphing and the other two started paragraphs without any signposting language e.g. “Animals don’t deserve...”, “When I access...”, “In most of the articles”.

Table 2: Thematic organization

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| Macro themes | <p>Student A I don't agree with the testing of drugs and cosmetics on animals and find it cruel and ruthless and whoever does this should be stopped.</p> <p>Student B Well, it's a middle-class thing, because I also agree the idea and I disagree the idea.</p> <p>Student C The debate on animal testing and the use of animals for commercial and scientific research has in the last period invaded traditional media and various social networks.</p> | <p>Student D It is now possible to see everywhere that science is very important for our life.</p> <p>Student E There is a longstanding debate regarding the use of animals experimentation in order to introduce new medicine or cosmetic products in the market.</p> <p>Student F In this day and time, our generation have been witnesses to amazing technological advancement in all aspects of our daily living.</p> | <p>Student G Nowadays, the use of animals for scientific and commercial research, such as testing medicines and cosmetics is very popular topic that many people argue about.</p> <p>Student H It is widely known that modern society has taken a different attitude towards the animal well-being in the last decades.</p> <p>Student I Despite the remarkable progress that has been made, ingredients used in cosmetics may still be tested on animals for scientific and commercial studies.</p> |
| Hyper themes | <p>Student A First of all,... Animals don't deserve... Research Institutions...</p> <p>Student B No paragraphing</p> <p>Student C When I access... In most of the articles... A prohibition on experimentation</p> | <p>Student D Why are there...? First of all... On the other hand... To sum up...</p> <p>Student E On the one hand... On the other hand... To sum up...</p> <p>Student F In my honest opinion... Overall...</p> | <p>Student G To begin with... Secondly... In contrast... Taking these points into consideration...</p> <p>Student H Firstly... While... If I were to... Personally...</p> <p>Student I Although... There are... To conclude...</p> |



Grammatical cohesion

When looking at conjunctions and text connectors/phrase linkers, it is clear that there is an increase in the use of subordinating conjunctions and text connectors from IELTS 5.5 to IELTS 6.5/7.0. The difference between 6.5 and 7.0 is not in the quantity found but in which conjunctions/connectors were selected.

Table 3: Grammatical cohesion

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|---|--|--|---|
| Conjunctions | And But Or Because While When That If | And But Or So In order to As That While If When Even though By As long as | And But In order to As That While If Where Whether Since Because Although Since |
| Text connectors / phrase linkers | First of all Well As I said Now Finally Therefore However In conclusion Due to | Firstly Such as On the other hand Despite Because of For one thing Like To sum up However On the one hand Moreover Overall Thus Then In conclusion | Firstly Such as On the other hand Despite Because of To begin with Secondly In addition Taking these points into consideration For example In contrast Therefore Due to As well as To conclude |

Grammatical complexity

(See Appendix 2, Table 4)

Table 4 - Modality

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Embedded clauses (range) | 3 – 4 | 3 – 12 | 5 – 10 |
| Embedded clauses (average) | 3.7 | 7 | 7 |

Interpersonal metafunction (tenor)

Modality

(See Appendix 2, Table 5)

The IELTS 5.5 essays made use of modulation but not modalisation. The IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays used a similar amount of both, just with variation in the choice of modal verbs.

Table 5 - Modality

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|---|--|--|---|
| Modulation: obligation and inclination | Should/should not (<i>obligation</i>) Could (<i>used incorrectly, context suggest 'should'</i>) Cannot (<i>prohibition</i>) | Should/should not (<i>obligation</i>) | Must (context suggests meaning of 'need to' as a matter of fact rather than strong obligation) Must (quoting, not part of actual argument within essay) Should/should not (<i>obligation</i>) |
| Modalisation: probability | | Could (possibility) May (possibility) | Could (context suggests 'can' for ability) Might (possibility) May (context suggests 'can' for permission and ability) |



Formality

(See Appendix 2, Table 6)

Table 6 - Formality - informal language and pronouns

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|---|--|---|--------------------|
| Number of 1st+2nd person pronouns used per 100 words | 4.8 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| Examples of informal language | Don't, doesn't, it's, what's Thing A bunch of Not ok Absolutely no Fond of me A sort of | For one thing Don't Been going on | In a flip don't |

Ideational metafunction (field)

Specialization of lexis (See Appendix 2, Table 7)

There was an increase in the amount of specialized lexis used from IELTS 5.5 to 6.5 but a less distinct difference in the quantity between the IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays.

Interpretation

Textual metafunction (mode)

Lexical density (See Appendix 2, Table 1)

IELTS essays are written under timed conditions, limiting the amount of planning that can be done before writing. Due to the inverse relationship between spontaneity and lexical density (Coffin and O'Halloran Book 3 p.10), these timed conditions will make it difficult for IELTS essay writers to achieve the level of lexical density one would expect from a fully planned academic essay. However, the higher lexical density of the IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays, compared to the IELTS 5.5 essays, shows that it is possible to package the lexical information more efficiently with the necessary strategies. It seems that lower scoring essays are written in the same way one would answer the essay question verbally, for example by starting off with the spoken discourse marker, "Well,...". This indicates that an understanding of the key differences between spoken text and academic writing is key to achieving a higher score. What's interesting is that between 6.5 and 7.0 there was no difference in the average lexical density achieved. On average, writers of essays scoring 6.5 as well as those scoring 7.0 were equally able to package information, most likely through the use of larger noun groups and nominalization (Coffin Book 3 p.73), for example in the sentence "Although companies should not sell animal-tested cosmetics in Europe, || they can continue to test cosmetics on animals outside Europe"

Clause length (See Appendix 2, Table 1)

Similarly to lexical density, the average clause length increased along with the IELTS score achieved, being a difference of 2 words per clause between IELTS 5.5 and 6.5 and a much smaller difference of just 0.6 words per clause between IELTS 6.5 and 7.0. Longer clauses point to the use of more complex verb and noun groups as well as more circumstances and text connectors surrounding each process. (Hultgren and Dare Book 2 p.130) This use of more complex language allows the writer to communicate more detailed messages. An example of this is "For example, pregnant rabbits are forced to consume a cosmetics ingredient for about 28 days" compared to simpler messages conveyed in shorter clauses such as "I love animals.", "I have 2 dogs and 2 turtles".



Thematic organization (See Appendix 2, Table 2)

The use of an introductory paragraph as in both the IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays helps the reader to prepare for the information coming and sets up a more organized message delivery. (Coffin Book 3, p.181/184) The lack of this macro theme in IELTS 5.5 essays makes the message of the text less clear.

There was a clear difference in the use of hyper themes when comparing IELTS 5.5 essays to the higher scoring ones. Writers of the IELTS 5.5 essays seemed to lack the range of text connectors needed to introduce the topic of each paragraph more clearly, so as to guide the reader through the message. (Coffin Book 3 p.186-187) The presentation of a clear central topic in each paragraph is paramount for achieving the IELTS 7.0 in the coherence and cohesion category. (Appendix 3)

Grammatical cohesion (See Appendix 2, Table 3)

As per Table 3 in Appendix 2, and in reference to the IELTS Band Descriptors in Appendix 3, the use of a wider range of conjunctions will have allowed the writers of IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays to achieve a higher score in the Coherence and Cohesion category. A more detailed study of the appropriacy of use of the range of conjunctions in IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 would have been necessary to try and find a key differentiating factor between the two.

Grammatical complexity (See Appendix 2, Table 4)

The increased use of embedded clauses by writers of IELTS 6.5/7.0 essays increases the lexical content of their essay (Leedham Book 2 p.86). The less frequent use in the IELTS 5.5 essays is another way in which they fall closer to spoken text on the mode continuum.

Interpersonal metafunction (tenor)

Modality (See Appendix 2, Table 5)

The use of modulization to temper bare assertions is an important aspect of Academic writing (Coffin, Book 4 p.98) and was absent in the IELTS 5.5 essays. It was present in slightly different ways in both IELTS 6.5 and 7.0 essays, showing that the higher scores are related to the writer's ability to write more neutrally and acknowledge the existence of other opinions. (Coffin, Book 4 p.109)

Formality (See Appendix 2, Table 6)

The higher frequency of 1st/2nd personal pronouns in the IELTS 5.5 essays compared to the 6.5/7.0 essays reduces the social distance between the writer and reader. (Leedham Book 4 p.10/11) An appropriate social distance achieved by avoiding the use of these pronouns may have contributed to the higher score of the 6.5/7.0 essays, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the marking criteria. (Appendix 3)

Similarly, the use of informal, vague and slang language in the IELTS 5.5 essays will have reduced the score in the “Lexical Resource” category where a level 6.5/7.0 requires an adequate/sufficient range of vocabulary for the task.

Ideational metafunction (field)**Specialisation of lexis** (See Appendix 2, Table 7)

The increase in the use of specialist lexis from IELTS 5.5 to 6.5/7.0 will also have contributed to a higher score in the Lexical Resource category. A more detailed analysis of the appropriacy of use would be necessary to distinguish the difference between the 6.5 and 7.0. The level 7.0 requires the use of “less common lexical items with some awareness of collocation and style”, while level 6.5 allows “some inaccuracy”. It could be argued that what one marker may consider to be “*some inaccuracies*” another marker may consider to be “*some awareness of collocation and style*”.

Applications



The differences between IELTS 6.5 essays and IELTS 7.0 essays have been too subtle to detect in a quantifiable way within this project. This suggests that the differences are not easily measured or judged and therefore may be subjective, varying from marker to marker.

This research has also helped me to identify features that will help bring IELTS candidates scoring a 5.5 on their writing closer to scoring a 6.5/7.0.

This advice would most likely need to be interpreted by an EFL teacher coaching IELTS candidates rather than given directly to candidates. The advice is the following:

- Increase lexical density and average clause length by packaging more lexical information into each clause through the use of nominalization and larger noun groups.
- Increase grammatical complexity by using a wider range of conjunctions and text connectors and using more embedded clauses, for example to post-modify head nouns.
- Use macro themes and hyper themes carefully to organize the content of the essay.
- Use modulization, e.g. may and might, to temper bare assertions
- Use less common lexical items appropriately
- Avoid the use of informal, vague and slang language and minimize the use of 1st and 2nd person pronouns

References

Coffin and O'Halloran, 2017, Book 3, Chapter 1, Page 10

Coffin, 2017, Book 3, Chapter 2, Page 73

Hultgren and Dare, 2017, Book 2, Chapter 4, Page 130

Coffin, 2017, Book 3, Chapter 4, Page 181/184, 186-187

Leedham, 2017, Book 2, Chapter 2, Page 86

Coffin, 2017, Book 4, Chapter 3, Page 98, 109

Leedham, 2017, Book 4, Chapter 1, Page 10,11

<https://www.nursinginpractice.com/article/nmc-amends-english-requirements-applicants-trained-abroad> accessed 19-5-2018

NMC guidelines: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/joining-the-register/english-language-requirements/accepted-tests/>

Petition to change IELTS requirements (almost 20,000 signatures): <https://www.change.org/p/nmc-uk-reduce-ielts-score-for-eu-eea-overseas-trained-nurses-registration-ieltsnmc>

IELTS recommendation for setting level: <https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/setting-ielts-entry-scores>

Appendices



Appendix 1: Raw unanalysed texts (100 words from each text)

Task 2 - Band 5.5 Student A

I don't agree with the testing of drugs and cosmetics on animals and find it cruel and ruthless and whoever does this should be stopped

First of all, you can not use animals as guinea pigs for human race experiments. There should be laws to punish with prison research institutions because they are doing this. They should find other solutions and not be involved with animals for the selfishness of people.

Animals do not deserve these acts of cruelty from people and are innocent and defenseless, and man knows this and just takes advantage

Research Institutions could experiment people if they are

Task 2 (240 words) - Band 5.5 Student B

Well, it's a middle-class thing, because I also agree the idea and I disagree the idea. It's 80% disagree the idea and 20% I agree. It's really cruel what's happening with that poor animals, because they die, and are kept in bad conditions. I know that, due to these experiments on animals, there were positive results in terms of human health, and vaccines have been discovered. But, I don't agree with the toxicity tests, especially use for the cosmetics produces. The whole method is cruel to animals, because they are given on the skin or in the eye to see

Task 2 - Band 5.5 Student C

The debate on animal testing and the use of animals for commercial and scientific research has in the last period invaded traditional media and various social networks. It is not easy to develop an accurate opinion about it or simply to stand up for or against animal experimentation.

When I access my Facebook social network during my daily life, I can see that in the page "home" there are numerous links and shares both for and against the use of animals for scientific research.

In most of the articles who I read on social networks, there are always two words:

Task 2 - Band 6.5 Student D

It is now possible to see everywhere that science is very important for our life. To achieve more outstanding results people have to use animals for research and development. Other people think that use of animals for achieving commercial or other results is closely related to pain for animals. It is also extremely important that use of animals is sometimes unnecessary.

Why are there so many opponents of making research on animals? For one thing, animals are still alive. They are able to feel, to smell, to be happy or be sad. It is very important to see that this

Task 2 Band 6.5 Student E

There is a longstanding debate regarding the use of animals experimentation in order to introduce new medicine or cosmetic products in the market. It is said that, animals should not be used in these examinations, as these cause tremendous physical pain, without a valid reason. I partly agree with the above statement, as humanity's well-being should be the most important, however, there are other different methods to test these research.

On the one hand, the advantages of using animal experiments of testing different treatments and medical cosmetics are plentiful. At the present time, humans are exposed to a wide range of

Task 2 Band 6.5 Student F

In this day and time, our generation have been witnesses to amazing technological advancement in all aspects of our daily living. Moreover, it has become inevitable that in the development of scientific research, animal experimentation is quite necessary and is actually been going on for over two thousand years or so. It has become a widely debated issue all over the world. Some say that it may seem inhumane but overall, the purpose is for the future of humankind; while some of the more conservative people are in total disagreement with the whole debacle.

In my honest opinion, I believe

Task 2 - Band 7 Student G

Nowadays, the use of animals for scientific and commercial research, such as testing medicines and cosmetics is very popular topic that many people argue about. People are more and more aware of the fact that animals are used for different reasons. I think that it is unnecessary and cruel to use animals in tests and medical research as they are living creatures just as humans beings.

To begin with, many animals are experimented on and later killed in bad conditions. It is widely known that all experiments are conducted in laboratories but sometimes the conditions are not fulfilled and animals

Task 2 - Band 7 Student H

It is widely known that modern society has taken a different attitude towards the animal well-being in the last decades. In this essay I will discuss whether this is commonly agreed by all stakeholders of society or not including my personal state.

Firstly, since the very start of modern life animals have accompanied our development being used in laboratories for medical testing and for the cosmetic industry. This certainly have led to important developments in field of medicine, researchers having discovered cures and antidotes to many illnesses that threaten people's lives. For example, mice have been used in laboratories in

Task 2 - Band 7 Student I

Despite the remarkable progress that has been made, ingredients used in cosmetics may still be tested on animals for scientific and commercial studies. Some people claim this is redundant and atrocious. I strongly agree with the view that living beings should not be used for this purpose.

Although companies should not sell animal-tested cosmetics in Europe, they can continue to test cosmetics on animals outside Europe and sell them in other markets. Therefore, companies can still profit from cruelty to animals. This is particularly important because many large emerging markets, such as China, are demanding that cosmetics be tested on animals.

Task 2 - Band 5.5 Student A analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| I don't agree with the testing of drugs and cosmetics on animals and || find it cruel and ruthless and || [whoever does this] should be stopped ||

First of all, you can not use animals as guinea pigs for human race experiments. || There should be laws [to punish with prison] research institutions || because they are doing this. || They should find other solutions || and not be involved with animals for the selfishness of people. ||

Animals do not deserve these acts of cruelty from people || and are innocent and defenseless. || and man knows this || and just takes advantage

Research Institutions could experiment people || if they are the beneficiaries || or stop the makeup industry || and find alternatives to medicine. || The human body can easily carry out the tests || and think that || if institutions paid, || many people would like [to do experiments] ||

Total words = 137

Lexemes = 62

Lexical Density = 45%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 3

Per 100 words = 2.2

Clauses = 20

Average clause length = 6.9

Embedded clauses = 3

Task 2 Band 5.5 Student B analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| Well, it's a middle-class thing. || because I also agree the idea || and I disagree the idea. || it's 80% || disagree the idea || and 20% I agree. || It's really cruel [what's happening with that poor animal] || because they die. || and are kept in bad conditions. || I know that. || due to these experiments on animals. || there were positive results in terms of human health. || and vaccines have been discovered. || But, I don't agree with the toxicity tests. especially use for the cosmetics produces. || The whole method is cruel to animals. || because they are given on the skin or in the eye || to see the side effects. || The animals are also beaten. || kept in horrible situations. || irradiated. || subjected to a bunch of tortments. || As I said. || I agree testing medicines. but no others horrible things. || In the past, experiments were only done on mice. || but now they are made on rabbits, monkeys, even dogs. || and for me this is not ok. || know || the science is very important. || but we must not forget that. || that mouse is a living thing. || and he doesn't deserve [to be mistreated]. || Emphasis should be placed on reducing the number of animals [used for experiments], reducing pain in animals by anesthesia and finding ways || to replace animals. || I know the importance of science. || but for me the animals are also important. || because I love the animals. and I know how special [they are]. || and how much they love us. ||

Total words = 240

Lexemes = 103

Lexical Density = 43%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 15

Per 100 words = 6

Clauses = 37

Average clause length = 6.5 words

Embedded clauses = 4

Appendix 2 - Analyzed Texts

Task 2 Band 5.5 Student C analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

The debate on animal testing and the use of animals for commercial and scientific research has in the last period invaded traditional media and various social networks. It is not easy to develop an accurate opinion about it or simply to stand up for or against animal experimentation.

When I access my Facebook social network during my daily life, I can see that in the page "home" there are numerous links and shares both for and against the use of animals for scientific research.

In most of the articles [who I read on social networks], there are always two words: "vivisection" and "animal experimentation". Initially I thought that they had the same meaning but then I realized that there is a big difference between the two terms.

"Vivisection" means to dissect and to make a sort of surgery on an animal [that is alive] while animal experimentation is the study [that relates to animals] and which covers various research areas such as biomedicine, ethnology, pharmacology, cosmetics and so on. If someone asks me the question: Do you agree with the vivisection? I answer absolutely no. Vivisection is an unnecessary and cruel way of studying the animal.

During vivisection, the animal suffers. It is ill and this seems to me incorrect because it is important to respect the other lives on earth. But if someone should ask me: Do you agree or disagree with animal experimentation? I will answer: I am agreed. I am a nurse and in the course of my studies I have noticed that animal studies have improved medicine and increased the chance of life of sick people. The animal experimentation allows us to protect human beings. Many tests can not be performed on humans because they could cause adverse and even fatal events to the life of the man.

A prohibition on experimentation, therefore, would stop scientific evolution and the chances of finding solutions to diseases [that are now incurable]. Finally, I think that animal experimentation, however, does not have the right to transform the study into exploitation of the animal. Animal studies must be conducted professionally and with respect for animal life. I love animals. I have 2 dogs and 2 turtles and I respect them every day because they are able to feel feelings like humans and they are very fond of me and my family too. In conclusion, I disapprove of the vivisection but I support the research that, through the study of animals, can improve the life of humanity.

Total words = 416
Lexemes = 197
Lexical Density = 47%
Occurrences of 1st/2nd person = 26

1st/2nd person Per 100 words = 6.3
Clauses = 52
Average clause length = 8 words
Embedded clauses = 4

Task 2 - Band 6.5 Student D analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

It is now possible to see everywhere that science is very important for our life. To achieve more outstanding results, people have to use animals for research and development. Other people think that use of animals [for achieving commercial or other results] is closely related to pain for animals. It is also extremely important that use of animals is sometimes unnecessary.

Why are there so many opponents of [making research on animals]? For one thing, animals are still alive. They are able to feel, to smell, to be happy or be sad. It is very important to see that this planet are not habited only by people.

Firstly, is significant to tell that [testing new amazing products on animals] don't make sufferings for people. Mice have great ability to renovate and multiplication. Research on animals are very cost-effective while [testing new medicines on people] are very expensive for pharmaceutical companies. It is important that when we use animals for researches we found safe a lot of humans.

On the other hand, companies are still using animals for [testing new cosmetics]. A lot of animals are suffering because of that situation. Opponents of such research argue that humans have no right to give animals that kind of trauma, and that the lives of all creatures should be respected. Personally, I am for [using animals for researching new kind of medicines, therapies] for diseases and suffering people. I am also for [banning the companies [which use mice for [testing new cosmetics] in immoral way]]. Like a people we should give more respect for other lives.

To sum up, while [using animals for medical research] is very important to achieve more clinical results and save people, it has also a drawbacks like [overusing animals for commercial effects], like cosmetics companies [which make a lot of sufferings for mice and other laboratory animals].

Total words = 309
Lexemes = 163
Lexical Density = 53%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 6
Per 100 words = 1.9
Clauses = 42
Average clause length = 7.4 words
Embedded clauses = 12

Task 2 Band 6.5 Student E analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| There **is** a longstanding debate regarding the use of animals experimentation || **in order to** introduce new medicine or cosmetic products in the market || **it is said that** || animals **should not be used** in these examinations. || **as** these **cause** tremendous physical pain, without a valid reason. || **I partly agree** with the above statement || **as** humanity's well-being **should be** the most important, || **however**, there are other different methods || **to test** these research. ||

On the one hand, the advantages of using animal experiments of testing different treatments and medical cosmetics **are plentiful**. || At the present time, humans **are exposed** to a wide range of life-threatening diseases. || **Even though** the medical field **provides** new discoveries on a regular basis, || these **should be tested** || **to endorse** their safety. || **It is** important || **to realise** that, || **by** || **conducting** these tests || on animals, the researchers **can gain** invaluable information || which **can promote** humanity's best interests. ||

On the other hand, people || **who are** in opposition to animal testing || **sustain** that, || these practise **should be banned**. || The main reason **is** that, || they **represent** enormous cruelty towards little creatures. || The similarities between animals and humans **should be taken into account** || not just when **testing** the medicines, || but also when animals **feel** all that terrible pain during the process. || **Moreover**, they **claim** that || there **are** alternative methods, **such as** patient simulators or **in vitro** testing. ||

To sum up, || animal experiments **represent** a reasonable option || **to improve** medical sector, even to ||

Total words = 237

Lexemes = 120

Lexical Density = 51%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 1
Per 100 words = 0,4

Clauses = 29

Average clause length = 8,2

Embedded clauses = 3

Task 2 Band 6.5 Student F analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| In this **day** and **time**, **our** generation **have been** witnesses to amazing technological advancement in all aspects of **our** daily living. || **Moreover**, it has become inevitable that || in the development of scientific research, animal experimentation **is** quite necessary || **and is actually been going on** for over two thousand years or so. || **It has become** a widely debated issue all over the world. || Some say that it **may seem** inhumane **but** || **overall**, the purpose **is** for the future of humankind. || **Write** some of the more conservative people **are** in total disagreement with the whole debate. ||

In **my** honest opinion, **I believe that** || the positive side of the use of animals in researches **far outweighs** the negative side of the issue. || The three main reasons || **why** animals **are being experimented on** || **are** primarily for research on disease, behavior and education. || **While** it **can be easily deemed** unnecessary and cruel, || the long term benefit **is** actually for the future of **our** humanity. || There are so many new kinds of illnesses || **that are emerging** over the course of time || **and** these researches **are focused on** actually || **having a concrete solution** to these medical problems ||. || **Despite** of these obvious practical reasons, the debate **has been** popularly growing from different societies worldwide || **supporting** the other side. || || **What we call** the animal activists || **have been gathering** amongst themselves || and **have strongly made** their voice heard above all these. || They **have stressed** their arguments || **that** there is no valid proof of these experimentations being beneficial to humans || || **having in mind** the research || **that was conducted** on chimpanzees in the search for treatment for HIV || **that proved** to be futile. ||

Overall, the use of animals in medical research **has always been** a part of the whole advancement of **our** growth as human race. || **It is** just more than inconvenient on these animals || **as** they are being made the sacrificial lambs for the said research || **and thus**, it **is** not a surprise that || there **are** ethical issues arising. || **In conclusion**, the only resolution for this debate **is** || **to practice** the use of animals in research responsibly || and **should be conducted** in the most practical manner. || **I have always been** a firm believer of the saying || 'the ends justify the means' || and **as long as** the reason and cause for the use of animals in research **is well founded**, || **then** by all means, **I fully support** the use of animals in research. ||

Total words = 401

Lexemes = 182

Lexical Density = 45%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person = 9

Per 100 words = 2,2

Clauses = 34

Average clause length = 11,8

Embedded clauses = 6

Task 2 - Band 7 Student G analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal Verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| Nowadays, the use of animals for scientific and commercial research, such as testing medicines and cosmetics is very popular topic [that many people argue about:] || People are more and more aware of the fact [that animals are used for different reasons:] || I think that || it is unnecessary and cruel || to use animals in tests || and as they are living creatures just as humans beings. ||

To begin with, || many animals are experimented on || and later killed in bad conditions. || It is widely known || that all experiments are conducted in laboratories || but sometimes the conditions are not fulfilled || and animals are kept in cages || and treated badly. || Some of them are injured || and still kept alive in captivity || which is inhumane. ||

Secondly, a lot of animals received tests for substances [that will never be approved or used in public consumption:] || it seems that || no benefits to humans occurred due to their death in vain. ||

In addition, animals testing generally costs an enormous amount of money, || as the animals must be cared for, || housed || and fed || in order to be treated with drugs or similar substances. ||

In contrast, research on animals helps people in [finding drugs and treatment:] || to improve health and medicine for example cancer, HIV, antibiotics, vaccines and many more. ||

Taking these points into consideration, I would say that || I totally agree with the statement [that [testing animals] is unnecessary and cruel:] because of the ethical aspect and my personal admiration to all living creatures || that contribute to the life of people and environment. ||

Total words = 255

Lexemes = 128

Lexical Density = 50%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 3

Per 100 words = 1,1

Clauses = 30

Average clause length = 8,5 words

Embedded clauses = 6

Task 2 - Band 7 Student H analyzed for...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal Verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| It is widely known || that modern society has taken a different attitude towards the animal well-being in the last decades. || In this essay I will discuss || whether this is commonly agreed by all stakeholders of society or not including my personal state. ||

Firstly, since the very start of modern life animals have accompanied our development || being used in laboratories for medical testing and for the cosmetic industry. || This certainly have led to important developments in field of medicine. || researchers having discovered cures and antidotes to many illnesses [that threaten people's lives:] || For example, mice have been used in laboratories || in order to test [how different types food affect the level of cholesterol:] || and the reason for this is the fact that || the mice brain has similar neuronal wiring to the human brain. || But should not this be challenging our ethical thinking || since mice process emotions similarly to us? ||

While medicine testing might find some solid ground in its justification, || cosmetics use is far from being necessary. || It is true that || cosmetic industry is a massive workforce || and provide millions of people around the world with jobs and career opportunities || which ultimately leads to better lives of many. || On the other hand, [causing useless suffering:] is far by [being ethical, at least moral:] || For example, pictures with red-eyed rabbits after cosmetic trial have gone viral around the world with the help of social media. || Not only do these events impact negatively the image of the cosmetic corporations || but they also tell something important about us as respectful habitants of this planet. ||

If I were to debate these issues 20 years ago || I would have said that || this was [the best human could do:] || and that something or somebody must pay the price of humans' safety and well-being. || But are things the same in the 21st century? || What are the odds of || changing everything in a flip. || taking a more tender approach to all living creatures? || Technology is providing us with great insights on || how we can find solutions to life threatening diseases from cancer cures to virtually side-effects-free medicines and cosmetics. || On the other hand, holistic approaches have been around us for centuries || and we should take advantage of this. ||

Personally, I believe that || where there is a second option || animal testing should be not only avoided || but banned by authorities. ||

Total words = 392

Lexemes = 189

Lexical Density = 48%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person = 13

Per 100 words = 3,3

Clauses = 41

Average clause length = 9,6

Embedded clauses = 5

Task 2 - Band 7 Student I analyzed for ...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal Verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| **Despite** the remarkable progress [[that has been made]], ingredients [[used in cosmetics]] **may still be tested** on animals for scientific and commercial studies. || Some people claim || this is redundant and atrocious. || **I strongly agree** with the view [[that living beings **should not be used** for this purpose.]] ||

Although companies **should not sell** animal-tested cosmetics in Europe, || they **can continue** to test cosmetics on animals outside Europe || and **sell** them in other markets. || **Therefore**, companies **can still profit** from cruelty to animals. || This is particularly important || because many large emerging markets, such as China, are demanding that || cosmetics be tested on animals. || Because of this, the only way [[to be completely sure that [someone is not indirectly supporting animal testing]]] is || to continue to purchase products only from companies [[that don't test on animals.]] ||

There are thousands of ingredients [[that have already been proved safe for use in household products]] as well as an increasing number of alternative testing methods for new ingredients [[that do not use animals and are more reliable]]. || For example, pregnant rabbits are forced to consume a cosmetics ingredient for about 28 days || and are then killed along with their unborn babies. || In some cases, rabbits are forced to eat or inhale || or have it rubbed into their shaved skin every day for 28 or 90 days. || and then are killed. ||

To conclude, || there are many other ways [[to test cosmetics]] || which do not involve animals. || These alternatives use simple organisms like bacteria, tissues and cells from humans, computer models or chemical methods. || These scientifically advanced tests are often quicker, cheaper and more reliable than the cruel and unnecessary animal tests [[they replace.]] ||

Total words = 276

Lexemes = 143

Lexical Density = 52%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 1

Per 100 words = 0,4

Clauses = 25

Average clause length = 11,0 words

Embedded clauses = 10

Task 2 - Band 7 Student I analyzed for ...

Key

Lexical word, 1st/2nd person pronouns, Processes, Modal Verbs, Conjunctions/Connectors

|| **Despite** the remarkable progress [[that has been made]], ingredients [[used in cosmetics]] **may still be tested** on animals for scientific and commercial studies. || Some people claim || this is redundant and atrocious. || **I strongly agree** with the view [[that living beings **should not be used** for this purpose.]] ||

Although companies **should not sell** animal-tested cosmetics in Europe, || they **can continue** to test cosmetics on animals outside Europe || and **sell** them in other markets. || **Therefore**, companies **can still profit** from cruelty to animals. || This is particularly important || because many large emerging markets, such as China, are demanding that || cosmetics be tested on animals. || Because of this, the only way [[to be completely sure that [someone is not indirectly supporting animal testing]]] is || to continue to purchase products only from companies [[that don't test on animals.]] ||

There are thousands of ingredients [[that have already been proved safe for use in household products]] as well as an increasing number of alternative testing methods for new ingredients [[that do not use animals and are more reliable]]. || For example, pregnant rabbits are forced to consume a cosmetics ingredient for about 28 days || and are then killed along with their unborn babies. || In some cases, rabbits are forced to eat or inhale || or have it rubbed into their shaved skin every day for 28 or 90 days. || and then are killed. ||

To conclude, || there are many other ways [[to test cosmetics]] || which do not involve animals. || These alternatives use simple organisms like bacteria, tissues and cells from humans, computer models or chemical methods. || These scientifically advanced tests are often quicker, cheaper and more reliable than the cruel and unnecessary animal tests [[they replace.]] ||

Total words = 276

Lexemes = 143

Lexical Density = 52%

Occurrences of 1st / 2nd person pronouns = 1

Per 100 words = 0,4

Clauses = 25

Average clause length = 11,0 words

Embedded clauses = 10

Table 7 - Field: specialization of lexis

| | IELTS 5.5 | IELTS 6.5 | IELTS 7.0 |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Examples of technical / specialised lexis | Cosmetics, make up industry | Research and development | Cosmetics industry Cosmetic corporations |
| | Commercial | Medical / scientific research | Emerging markets Animal-tested cosmetics |
| | Experiments | Animal experimentation | Household products |
| | Scientific research | Widely debated issue | Scientific and commercial research / studies |
| | Vivisection | Therapies | Alternative testing methods |
| | Dissect | Clinical | Scientifically advanced tests |
| | Surgery | Pharmaceutical companies | Researchers |
| | Pharmacology | To smell | Medicines |
| | adverse/ fatal events | Renovation | Antibiotics |
| | Research institutions | Multiplication | Holistic approaches |
| | Vaccines | Cost-effective | Well-being |
| | Side effects | Trauma | Human brain |
| | Toxicity tests | Diseases | Neuronal wiring |
| | Irradiated | Suffering | Side effects-free |
| | Anesthesia | Banning | Living creatures / beings |
| | Carry out tests, subjected to | Long-standing debate | Conducted / tested on / experimented on |
| | Drugs, positive results | Humanity's well-being | Inhumane |
| | Guinea pigs | Exposed | Cruelty to animals |
| | Beaten | Wide range of | Forced to consume / eat / inhale |
| | Debate | Life-threatening diseases | Housed, fed, Ethical, moral |
| | Animal testing/ experimentation/ studies | Endorse | HIV |
| | | Conducting tests | Injured |
| | | Researchers | Rubbed into |
| | | Gain invaluable information | Shaved skin |
| | | Cruelty | Threaten |
| | | Technological advancement | Banned |
| | | Inhumane | Pay the price |
| | | Humankind | Life-threatening |
| | | Far outweighs | Bacteria |
| | | Being experimented on | Tissues and cells |
| | | Be deemed unnecessary | Computer models |
| | | Long-term benefit | |
| | | Ethical issues | |
| | | Well founded | |

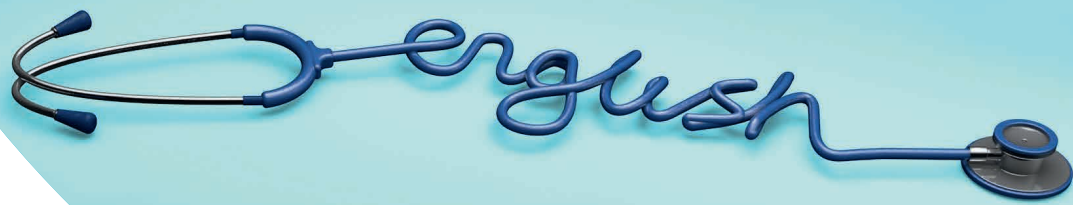
Appendix 3 - IELTS Task 2 Writing Band Descriptors

| Band | Task Achievement | Coherence and Cohesion | Lexical Resource | Grammatical Range and Accuracy |
|------|---|---|--|---|
| 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully addresses all parts of the task presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention skillfully manages paragraphing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' |
| 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sufficiently addresses all parts of the task presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequences information and ideas logically manages all aspects of cohesion well uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures the majority of sentences are error-free makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task presents a clear position throughout the response presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to overgeneralise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use presents a clear central topic within each paragraph | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of complex structures produces frequent error-free sentences has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately uses paragraphing, but not always logically | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no conclusions drawn presents some main ideas but these are limited and not sufficiently developed; there may be irrelevant detail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression makes inadequate, inaccurate or over use of cohesive devices may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution may not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a limited range of structures attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader |

Appendix 4

| Your performance on particular aspects | |
|--|-------------|
| Assessment criteria | Performance |
| Scale: Excellent, Good, Clear Pass, Bare Pass, Bare Fail, Fail | |
| Relevance to question set | Excellent |
| Knowledge and understanding of E304 material | Excellent |
| Skill of analysis of English grammar, including use of corpus tool | Good |
| Skill of interpretation (and evaluation), as well as application of findings | Excellent |
| Construction of a rigorous academic argument, well supported by evidence | Excellent |
| Clarity of expression and use of academic conventions | Good |
| Skills of independent study | Excellent |

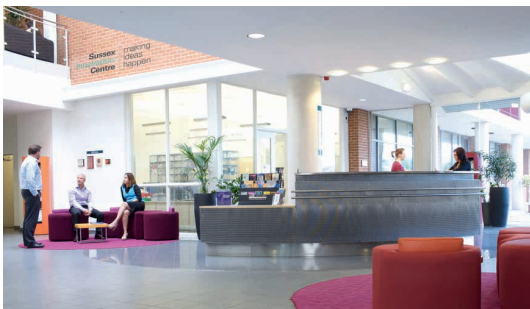
| The following comments have been recorded for you |
|--|
| <p>Relevance to question set</p> <p>This was a finely-focussed piece of research, animated by a very clear and worthy aim. Its conception and execution were immaculate, and one can only concur, having read the candidates' essays, that the line between 6:5 and 7:0 was an extremely thin one, with much scope for marker subjectivity intervening. Your research demonstrated very clearly what might be at stake when making such judgements.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge and understanding of E304 material</p> <p>You showed a fine awareness of what linguistic study using SFL was all about, and, indeed, have applied an impressive range of techniques relating principally to Mode to show what can be achieved in concrete applied research.</p> |
| <p>Skill of analysis of English grammar, including use of corpus tool</p> <p>Your manual, colour-coded demonstration was broadly accurate and instructive, although some of the shorter adverbs (e.g. 'just', 'even', 'also') were not identified as lexical, along with some lexical copulas, which rather dragged the LD figures down. You used the (invented blend!) category, 'modulization', twice, which needed revision.</p> |
| <p>Skill of interpretation (and evaluation), as well as application of findings</p> <p>Your interpretation of the data to reveal just what was at stake lexicogrammatically in the passage from one grade-band to another was very instructive, and I particularly appreciated the nuanced way in which you demonstrated the greater cohesion of the grade-7:0 texts. This was very convincing, and was based upon genuinely significant differences in the distribution of lexicogrammatical features.</p> |
| <p>Construction of a rigorous academic argument, well supported by evidence</p> <p>Your sampling of data and the construction of the comparative research around this data were immaculate: Bravo!</p> |
| <p>Clarity of expression and use of academic conventions</p> <p>You guided the reader skilfully and lucidly through the various implications of your research. There was just the occasional bit of odd phraseology here and there (e.g. "((communicate?) complicate more detailed messages").</p> |
| <p>Skills of independent study</p> <p>This was an excellent piece of research which showed that those rather stringent IELTS categories may need nursing into health!</p> |



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About Specialist Language Courses (SLC)

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Beth Cureton studied medicine at university, before changing careers to teach English. She set up her own company in Madrid, specialising in teaching both Medical English and Exam Preparation classes, including IELTS. As SLC's Programme Manager, Beth works closely with clients, learners and teachers to ensure that all our courses run smoothly and successfully.



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