We Love IELTS
All you need for IELTS Success podcast
Series 2: Episode 2: Common mistakes to avoid in IELTS when using adjectives

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00:00
LE: Hello, and welcome to the second episode of our We Love IELTS podcast. My name is Liz and I'll be with you over the next few weeks as you find out more about common mistakes test takers make and how to avoid them.

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As you're aware this podcast is for anyone taking the IELTS test. Remember, if you like this podcast, you can subscribe on whichever channel you're listening to us on. And if there's a topic you'd like us to cover in a forthcoming episode, do get in touch with us on social, more information can be found in the show notes.

00:49
Last week, IELTS specialist Pete Jones gave us some top tips on how to reduce test anxiety. If you missed the episode, do go back and listen. There's lots of really useful strategies and information in there. This week, I'm really pleased to be joined by IELTS experts, Emma Cosgrave and Liz Marqueiro. What will you be focusing on this week?

01:07
EMMA: Hi, Liz. So this week, we're going to be focusing on adjectives, we're going to be thinking about some of the common mistakes that IELTS test takers make when they're using adjectives. And we hope that it will be really helpful for our listeners.

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LE: Brilliant, I look forward to hearing more over to you guys.

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EMMA: Okay, so first of all, we're going to talk about a really common mistake that's made by English language learners all over the world, really at all levels of their learning. And that is when to use an -ed adjective, or an -ing adjective. So we're talking about things like bored and boring, or exhausted, exhausting, that kind of thing.

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LIZ: Yeah, they can make some really funny mistakes when you get those wrong.

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EMMA: Yes. So there's a great blog post, actually about it on our on our website. So you can check that out as well after you've listened. But basically, what's the rule Liz?

02:03

LIZ: Well, let's start first by actually talking about what an adjective is, I know it's not really very exciting but an adjective is a word that gives extra information about a noun. So for example, very basically, a red car 'red' would be the adjective or an interesting podcast. Interesting is the adjective.

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EMMA: Okay, so I could maybe say, I am very amused by Liz.

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LIZ: Yeah, that's correct. And you are very amused by me, because I am very amusing.

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EMMA: Okay, so these are adjectives that describe the way we're feeling.

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LIZ: Yes, so you are feeling amused, but I am amusing. So this is the thing that is causing the feeling.

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EMMA: Okay, so what I've heard many, many times, I'm sure all teachers out there would say the same, I've had my students tell me that they are very boring.

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LIZ: That always makes me laugh.

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EMMA: So they'll say, Oh, I'm very boring Emma, can we do something else? I'm very boring. And I'll say, Well, I don't think you're very boring. But you know, maybe you should take up a new hobby, and then you'll be more interesting. But I don't think that's what they mean.

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LIZ: No, that's a prime example. What they actually mean is Emma your lesson is really boring. I feel bored.

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EMMA: Oh, unbelievable. I try to make my lessons so interesting as well.

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EMMA: So, what we can say is that when we're describing our feeling, we'll use an -ed form. So, bored, tired, amused, excited, interested.

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LIZ: Yep. Exactly.

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EMMA: And when we're describing the thing that gives us that feeling, or the person, or whatever we use the -ing form.

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LIZ: That's correct. Yes. So, you watched a really interesting film, and you felt interested when you were watching it?

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EMMA: Okay, I think that's clear. Hope so hopefully, it is for the rest of you guys as well.

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EMMA: So what other kinds of confusions do you find students have with adjectives Liz?

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LIZ: Well, there's a common mistake that is made, especially in IELTS tests, and that is the difference between knowing when to use the noun form or when to use the adjective of male and female or man and woman.

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EMMA: Oh, yeah, I've seen this mistake made many times. So the male and female they are the adjectives, aren't they?

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LIZ: Yes, they are. But when we're speaking, so mostly when we're speaking and we're writing, we use the nouns, man, or men for plural, or woman or women.

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EMMA: Okay? So, when would we use the adjectives?

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LIZ: Again, when we're speaking or writing we use male and female as the adjectives. These are the general rules. So the noun is man, men or woman, women, and the adjective is male and female. So, Emma, can you give us some examples of how we use male and female as adjectives?

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EMMA: Okay, so we could say something like there are more female students on the course. Or we have a male teacher for science, for example. So we've got female being used as an adjective to describe the students. We've got male being used to describe the teacher, in this case.

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LIZ: Great. And do you have examples for us? How we could use them the nouns?

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EMMA: Okay, so we might say that the competition is only open to men, there is a different event open to women. So, when we're talking about the Olympics, or something, and there are men and women's competitions, or we could say something like, there are more women on the team than men.

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LIZ: Great. So that's the use of the noun forms. There are however, exceptions aren't there.

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EMMA: There are so this is one that I think is quite important for IELTS. Because when we're using very formal technical writing, or style, sorry, or when we're talking about animals, instead of people, we'll often use the male or female, what we just said was the adjective, they can be used as a noun. So here's an example for you: the male tree frog sings to attract a female.

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Liz: So here we've used the adjective forms, but use them as nouns.

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Emma: Well, we've used one as a noun, and one as an adjective. Let me give you the example again: the male tree frog sings to attract a female.

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Liz: So the male tree frog, that's the adjective, but to attract a female, now female here has been used instead of the noun.

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Emma: Yes, because we're talking about an animal.

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Liz: Correct.

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Emma: So we wouldn't say to attract a woman frog, we know.

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Liz: Or girl frog, girl frog,

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Emma: We could say seems to attract a female frog, I suppose but we don't need to. When we're talking about animals, we can say a female.

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Liz: Correct. There's also another exception, where we use just to confuse us even more. We can use the noun, woman, or women before another noun. Usually, we would say use an adjective plus a noun. But in this context, and increasingly, we use a woman or women before another noun. Let me just give you some examples to make it clearer.

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So here's an example: the party has a lot of support among women voters, not female voters, women voters. Here's another example. She was the first woman president of Ireland. Now, it's not female president. It's woman president. So that's an example another example, where we use the noun instead of an adjective.

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Emma: And Liz, would it be okay to say, female voters and female president? Would they be grammatically correct?

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Liz: They are grammatically correct but it's not an acceptable way to speak anymore. That's not how we speak. So when we're talking technically or formally, we have to use woman president, women voters.

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Emma: So the last thing we're going to talk about today is how we can use the adjectives that we already know and add a prefix to it, to change the meaning of it and expand our vocabulary.

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Liz: Exactly. But what is the prefix Emma?

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Emma: It's a small piece of language, so 'dis-', 'un-', 'in-', 'im-' that changes the meaning, it holds a little bit of meaning in itself. So you might say something like, the book that I'm reading is **un**suitable for children. 'Un-' means not suitable, or she was **un**aware of all of the events around her, not aware.

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Liz: Okay.

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Emma: There are others as well. Things like 'post-'. 'Post-' means after. So you might do a **post**graduate qualification, which means it's something that comes after you've graduated, **post**graduate or it could be **post**-school meaning after you finish school. Can you think of any other examples of prefixes we might use with adjectives Liz?

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Liz: Yes. So you've just mentioned 'post-', which means after, we have a prefix that means before, which is 'pre-'. So you talked about **post**-school where there's also a **pre**school, a school that is before you actually start attending big school. You can have a **pre-**arranged meeting, you can be **pre**-prepared, which means that you get prepared before the event. So 'pre-' is another prefix.

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There are others obviously, there are lots, for example, 'dis-'. 'Dis-' means the opposite, so **dis**organized. So that's how I feel a bit this morning. **Dis**satisfied, you might be **dis**satisfied with the service you receive in a restaurant, for example. And then we have 'in-', and 'im-' and they both mean not. So for example, if something is not expensive, instead of saying not expensive, you can really show off your range of vocabulary by saying that it's **in**expensive. Or if you don't have experience of something you can say you are **in**experienced. In terms of 'im-', so if something is not possible, you say it's **im**possible. Or if somebody is being a little bit rude and not very polite, you would call them **im**polite. Now, the interesting thing about the prefix 'im-', is that it only comes before adjectives that begin with a 'p' like possible, 'm' like mature so you can say that somebody is **im**mature and before a word, an adjective that begins with a 'b', so like, **im**balance.

12:02
Emma: Great. My personal favorite though is still 'over-', which means too much. So if I really don't like crowded places, so if I go to a restaurant, and there are too many people in there, I might say to my husband this this restaurant is so **over**crowded, let's try somewhere else. Or if something is **over**priced, it's just too expensive. I don't want to buy its **over**priced.

12:26
Liz: Yeah.

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Emma: That's I feel a bit **over**worked some days as well.

Liz: I know the feeling. And can we just talk about why it's good to know these prefixes? I think I touched on it a little bit earlier, it just, it shows that you've got a wide range of vocabulary. And it stops you from repeating the same vocabulary and using a more complicated structure.

And they're really good to use. So you will use them actively when you do the IELTS test, you will be using these in your Speaking and your Writing test. If you use them in your Speaking and Writing test, it really shows the examiner that you've got a wide range of vocabulary, and that you can use it accurately. But also, you'll come across words with prefixes in the Reading, and in the Listening. So it really helps with comprehension in the Reading and Listening test also.

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Emma: So as always, with I'm sure Liz agrees with me when I suggest that when you learn new vocabulary, you don't just learn it on its own. And you think very hard if it's an adjective, look up, whether it takes a prefix to change its meaning, to give it the opposite meaning in particular, because it really is a very quick way to expand your vocabulary.

13:41
Liz: Absolutely. And a really simple thing is just if you do have a notebook, or you know, if you're making notes online, or on the screen, you just make sure you have like columns of the prefixes. So you could put, make a table with columns and at the top, you would write the prefix 'un-' and underneath you could write all the adjectives that take the prefix, 'un-', it's a very visual way of remembering this.

14:08
Emma: Okay, we hope that we've given you some stuff to think about. And we've helped you with your IELTS preparation today. A lot of what we've been talking about today came from the Common Mistakes IELTS band six to seven. So that's a great book if you're interested in looking at these kinds of common mistakes and doing a few activities, exercises, just to really tighten up your English.

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Liz: Yeah, we hope you found this useful, and we hope you are very satisfied.

14:44
Emma: We'll see you again soon. Bye.

14:47
LE: Thanks, Emma and Liz. That was really, really useful. That's it for this week. My thanks to Emma and Liz for sharing these common mistakes made by IELTS test takers. The links to the book mentioned can be found in our show notes.

15:02
Do make sure to join us next week when Emma and Liz will be discussing commonly confused words, so make sure to subscribe so you don't miss out. More information about preparing for IELTS can be

found on our website weloveielts.org. You can also find us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube where we'll be sharing even more useful information and advice.

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We look forward to seeing you next week.