

**IELTS EXAMINERS' KIWI ACCENT AND IRANIAN IELTS CANDIDATES'
IDENTITY AND SPEAKING PERFORMANCE IN NEW ZEALAND**

**SOTAQUE KIWI DOS EXAMINADORES IELTS E IDENTIDADE IRANIANA DOS
CANDIDATOS IELTS E SEU DESEMPENHO DE FALA NA NOVA ZELÂNDIA**

**IDENTIDAD DE LOS CANDIDATOS DE IELTS Y EL ACENTO DE KIWI DE LOS
EXAMINADORES DEL IELTS EN NUEVA ZELANDA**

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the influence of IELTS examiners' New Zealand accent (aka, Kiwi accent) on the speaking performance of 45 men and women Iranian IELTS candidates within the framework of communication accommodation theory (CAT) from the post-structuralism perspective in which identity is considered to be a dynamic approach. This is a mixed-method explanatory sequential design in which the candidates' speaking scores on a real IELTS test were compared to their scores on a mock test through employing a paired-samples t-test for each group of language proficiency (B2, C1, and C2). A semi-structured interview was also conducted to extract information about participants' feelings when facing the Kiwi examiners. The results revealed that 1) the candidates' self-identification and 2) their level of proficiency indicated how their performance was influenced by the Kiwi examiners' accent. Participants with B2 (band score 5.5-6.5) and C1 (band score 7-8) proficiency, Kiwi accent accentuated the differences of ethnicity and identity. They also attended to L1 cultural issues as a barrier. None of these issues were found in C2 participants (band score 8.5-9). IELTS instructors are to consider the candidates' identity features and cover all the main accents of English native speakers in their preparation programs.

KEYWORDS: Identity. IELTS examiners' accent. Kiwi accent. Negative cultural intervention.

RESUMO: Este estudo explora a influência do sotaque neozelandês dos examinadores do IELTS (também conhecido como sotaque Kiwi) no desempenho falado de 45 candidatos ao IELTS iranianos, homens e mulheres, no âmbito da teoria da acomodação da comunicação (CAT) a partir da perspectiva do pós-estruturalismo em que a identidade é considerada uma abordagem dinâmica. Este é um projeto sequencial explicativo de método misto, no qual as notas dos candidatos em um teste IELTS real foram comparadas às suas notas em um teste simulado através do emprego de um teste t de amostras emparelhadas para cada grupo de proficiência no idioma (B2, C1 e C2). Uma entrevista semiestruturada também foi conduzida para extrair informações sobre os sentimentos dos participantes diante dos examinadores Kiwi. Os resultados revelaram que 1) a autoidentificação dos candidatos e 2) seu nível de proficiência indicaram como seu desempenho foi influenciado pelo sotaque dos examinadores Kiwi. Participantes com proficiência B2 (pontuação na faixa de 5,5-6,5) e C1 (pontuação na

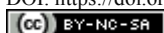
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1



faixa de 7 a 8), o sotaque Kiwi acentuou as diferenças de etnia e identidade. Eles também trataram das questões culturais da L1 como uma barreira. Nenhum desses problemas foi encontrado em participantes C2 (pontuação de banda 8,5-9). Os instrutores do IELTS devem considerar as características de identidade dos candidatos e cobrir todos os sotaques principais de falantes nativos de inglês em seus programas de preparação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Identidade. Sotaque dos examinadores do IELTS. Sotaque Kiwi. Intervenção cultural negativa.*

RESUMEN: *Este estudio explora la influencia del acento neozelandés de los examinadores del IELTS (también conocido como acento kiwi) en el desempeño oral de 45 hombres y mujeres candidatos al IELTS iraníes dentro del marco de la teoría de la acomodación de la comunicación (CAT) desde la perspectiva del postestructuralismo en el que la identidad se considera un enfoque dinámico. Este es un diseño secuencial explicativo de método mixto en el que los puntajes de expresión oral de los candidatos en una prueba IELTS real se compararon con sus puntajes en una prueba simulada mediante el empleo de una prueba t de muestras pareadas para cada grupo de dominio del idioma (B2, C1, y C2). También se realizó una entrevista semiestructurada para extraer información sobre los sentimientos de los participantes al enfrentarse a los examinadores Kiwi. Los resultados revelaron que 1) la autoidentificación de los candidatos y 2) su nivel de competencia indicaron cómo su desempeño fue influenciado por el acento de los examinadores Kiwi. Los participantes con competencia B2 (puntaje de banda 5.5-6.5) y C1 (puntaje de banda 7-8), el acento kiwi acentuó las diferencias de origen étnico e identidad. También se ocuparon de cuestiones culturales de L1 como barrera. Ninguno de estos problemas se encontró en los participantes C2 (puntuación de la banda 8.5-9). Los instructores de IELTS deben considerar las características de identidad de los candidatos y cubrir todos los acentos principales de los hablantes nativos de inglés en sus programas de preparación.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Identidad. Acento de los examinadores del IELTS. Acento de kiwi. Intervención cultural negativa.*

Introduction

In the English language learning contexts, in order to evaluate learners' language proficiency, four main skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are assessed either by professional experts or, in a broader range, by standardized testing systems. The International English Language Testing System (known as IELTS) is one of the most valid standardized language proficiency tests in the world by which one can receive a test report that is recognized and accepted by many international institutions such as companies, universities, professional organizations, and government agencies.

To achieve the highest possible score on the IELTS exam, most candidates in all over the globe participate in IELTS preparation programs and sit several mock tests prior to the

real exam. It is normally predicted for the candidates' band scores on the real test to be in a close range with their scores on the mock tests. Therefore, if this assumption is rejected in several cases, it is vital for applied linguist researchers to discover the probable reasons so that they can come up with compensating strategies to overcome the problems.

In the speaking module on the IELTS exam, unlike the other modules, test takers are not only dealing with the questions and their own knowledge but also, they are required to have a live conversation with an examiner and make a coherent communication throughout the test.

In this sense, research have shown that there are so many contextual factors that could negatively affect the quality of the candidates' speaking performance such as anxiety, lack of concentration, variety of the speakers' accents, and unfamiliarity with the context (TAYLOR, 2003); consequently, their performance could not actually represent their real level of competence on the test. One of these intervening factors is the examiners' form of utterances (TAYLOR, 2003; WEIR; MILANOVIC, 2003).

Various studies have investigated the effect of IELTS examiners' speaking style on the speaking band scores of the candidates (ALDERSON; NORTH, 1991; ALTAKHAINEH; AL-TKHAYNEH; RAHROUH, 2019; KENYON, 1998; LAZARATON, 2002; TONKYN; WILSON, 2003; WEIR; MILANOVIC, 2003). The results of such studies have confirmed the value of using a standardized script or 'interlocutor frame' in the IELTS speaking module (TAYLOR, 2003). However, some of the influencing characteristics of the examiners are not standardizable (such as their accent, ethnicity, and cultural issues) which have not been studied in the literature adequately. Therefore, this study is an attempt to explore the probable effect of IELTS examiners' accent on the spoken performance of the Iranian IELTS test takers who were newcomers to New Zealand (less than 6 months of stay in New Zealand) and were unfamiliar with the New Zealanders' accent (aka Kiwi accent).

Review of the Related Literature

In order to review the previous studies on speaking proficiency, first, defining the construct of speaking proficiency is needed. Speaking is defined as a productive skill which is highly relied on communication in nature; therefore, the only way to measure this skill is through the nature of live communications (IELTS BRITISH COUNCIL, 2017; LEVELT, 1989; MCNAMARA, 1996; TONKYN; WILSON, 2003; ZIBIN, 2016). Due to the immense importance of communication in evaluating the speaking skill, speaking is the only module on

the IELTS exam in which candidates are required to communicate with examiners face to face as in a live interview context. The IELTS scoring system for the speaking test is mostly framed based on the coherency, fluency, and naturalness of the conversation between the candidates and the examiners.

Since the concept of culture and language always go hand in hand, there are lots of studies in the literature that investigated the impact of individuals' culture on their language behavior even when they speak a second language (ARIFFIN, 2006; JI; ZHIYONG; RICHARD, 2004; SUN, 2007; TARONE; YULE, 1987). The main point of these studies was to present the fact that no language could exist in isolation and a person's oral proficiency is mainly influenced by the factor of culture (KARIM; HAQ, 2014; KHAN, 2006;). Consequently, we can infer that such a strong bound between language and culture could be the source of communication problems among speakers with different cultural backgrounds (ALPTEKIN, 2002; ZIBIN; ALTAKHAINAH, 2014).

Based on this conceptual framework, there are some studies in the literature which investigated the effect of IELTS speaking examiners' culture on the spoken proficiency of the test takers (e.g., ALTAKHAINAH; AL-TKHAYNEH; RAHROUH, 2019; KHAN, 2006; O'LOUGHLIN, 2002; ROSHAN, 2013). Among these studies, the results of Altakhainah et.al (2019) is very insightful in that they conducted a qualitative study within the framework of communication accommodation theory on 30 male and female IELTS test takers and 10 IELTS instructors and revealed that the gender of the IELTS examiners influences the oral performance of the Arab examinees with regard to the aspect of lexical and grammatical preferences. Also, their results demonstrated a considerable influence of cultural difference of the examiner and examinee in the speaking performance of the Arab IELTS candidates.

With regard to cultural factors, Khan (2006) explored the possibility of the influence of any cultural bias of the IELTS speaking examiners on their preferred structure, vocabulary patterns, and methodology of the scoring system. To do this, she used a questionnaire followed by a focus-group interviewing on 16 IELTS examiners and demonstrated that cultural bias had a strong presence in the choices of topics discussed in the speaking module in Bangladesh.

As influential as the cultural issues were found to be in the speaking proficiency of the IELTS test takers (ALTAKHAINAH; AL-TKHAYNEH; RAHROUH, 2019; KHAN, 2006; O'LOUGHLIN, 2002; ROSHAN, 2013), the accent of the interlocutors could also have a crucial role in the flow of conversation among the examiners and test takers since there is an

evident link between the cultural values of a speech community and the accent of the speakers of that language (WALKER, 2010).

Lippi-Green (1997) defined accent as "loose bundles of prosodic and segmental features distributed over geographic and/or social space" (p. 42) which is an evident marker of the social class of the speaker and the geographical position of the speech community (MOYER, 2013; SUNG, 2013). Therefore, an accent not only can identify a person in terms of social characteristics, but also it can define a speaker in terms of belonging to particular social groups (SMIT; DALTON, 2000; WALKER, 2010). In sum, various accents of the speakers of a language can represent many identity features of the speakers of those accents (MORGAN, 1997; SIFAKIS; SOUGARI, 2005; WALKER, 2010).

Concerning the fact that the majority of the IELTS examiners are English native speakers, and considering the fact that there are various types of English accents in the world (e.g., Kiwi accent, Scottish accent, Irish accent, multicultural London English accent, Canadian accent, New Jersey accent, etc.), there is no study in the published literature to illustrate the probable effect of these various accents on the spoken performance of the examinees. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill a small part of this big gap in the literature on the probable effect of examiners' Kiwi accent on the oral performance of the Persian L1 speakers on the IELTS exam within the framework of communication accommodation theory proposed by many scholars in the literature (AUER; HINSKENS; KERSWILL, 2005; COUPLAND; GILES, 1988; GALLOIS; GILES, 2015; GILES, 1984, 2007).

According to the communication accommodation theory, speakers are naturally inclined to adapt their speaking style to the dialects spoken by their interlocutors (GILES, 1984, 2007). This adaptation could range from changing the rate of speech up to the changes in vocabulary and grammatical preferences during a speech (AUER; HINSKENS; KERSWILL, 2005; GALLOIS; GILES 2015).

With regard to the main point of the communication accommodation theory, the changes that speakers apply in speaking with various addressees could be regarded as expressing their desire to converge to or diverge from their interlocutors. They make these changes with the intention of either achieving the interlocutor's approval or, conversely, presenting a social distance from them (TRUDGILL, 1986).

Therefore, the two concepts of convergence and divergence accommodation are defined in the communication accommodation theory as the strategies employed by the

speakers in order to adapt to the communicative behavior of the interlocutors to limit social differences for the former; and, the verbal and non-verbal behaviors that exhibit social differences among the speakers for the latter (GILES, 2007). Based on these definitions, it is evident that the communication accommodation theory is associated with the context of language use and the speakers' identities (GALLOIS; GILES, 2015).

Since the accent of a speech community is a sign of their socio-cultural identity (WALKER, 2010), and because according to the communication accommodation theory speakers try to change their speaking style to display their social intimacy or social distance from each other, the influence of IELTS examiners' accent on the speaking performance of IELTS candidates is an expectable probability which has not been explored in the literature in the past; therefore, this study is attempting to answer to the following reassert questions.

Research questions

- 1) Does the accent of IELTS examiners from New Zealand affect the speaking performance of the Iranian IELTS test takers?
- 2) If there is such an effect, what is the main reason for that?
- 3) If there is such an effect, is there any significant difference between the extents of this effect on the speaking performance of participants with various levels of English proficiency?

Methodology

This study is a mixed-method explanatory sequential design in which a quantitative approach is employed to explore the differences between the participants' speaking scores on a real IELTS test administered by examiners with a Kiwi accent and the participants' speaking scores on an IELTS mock test administered by examiners with a London British accent at an IELTS academy in Auckland city – New Zealand. The quantitative section is followed by a qualitative data collection and analysis in order to find the probable reasons for the results of the quantitative part.

Participants

A total of 45 male and female Persian native speakers who were all new comers to New Zealand (living in New Zealand less than 6 months) constituted the participants of this study.

They were all highly educated with a minimum degree of Bachelor of Art and maximum degree of Doctorate degree in dentistry and PhD. They were all required to sit an IELTS exam (academic or general) for their immigration, education, and business purposes in New Zealand. Their age range was from 23 to 56 and they were trying to get a job and stay in New Zealand for a long time; so, at least on the surface, they showed no resistance against accepting the New Zealand culture or the Kiwi accent.

Data

The data for this study were collected in an IELTS academy in Auckland city - New Zealand in 2020 which was comprised of two main parts:

Quantitative data, data analysis and results

The whole participants were divided into three groups of intermediate (B2), pre-advanced (C1), and advanced (C2) users of English. Two sets of speaking band scores of the participants were considered as the quantitative data set of this study. The first set of scores included the participants' speaking scores on a mock test administered by an examiner with a London British accent and the second set of scores included the participants' speaking scores on the real IELTS test with Kiwi examiners. A paired-sample t-test was performed for each group to investigate the probable differences between the participants' scores on the mock test and real test.

Table 1 presents the score means of each group on the mock test and real test. In this Table, pair 1 refers to the scores of the participants with B2 level of English proficiency (intermediate), pair 2 refers to the scores of the participants with C1 level of proficiency (pre-advanced), and pair 3 demonstrates the scores of the participants with C2 proficiency level (advanced).

Table 1 – Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean		N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
air 1	mock1	6.1000		15	.43095	.11127
	real1	5.1333		15	.22887	.05909
Pair 2	mock2	7.3000		15	.25355	.06547
	real2	6.5000		15	.32733	.08452
Pair 3	mock3	8.6000		15	.20702	.05345
	real3	8.5000		15	.32733	.08452

Source: Prepared by the authors

Table 2 – Paired Samples Test

		Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	
		Mock1-Real1	Mock2-Real2	Mock3-Real3	
Paired Differences	Mean	.96667	.80000	.10000	
	Std. Deviation	.35187	.25355	.20702	
	Std. Error Mean	.09085	.06547	.05345	
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	.77181	.65959	-.01464
		Upper	1.16152	.94041	.21464
t	10.640	12.220	1.871		
df	14	14	14		
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.082	

Source: Prepared by the authors

As Table 2 illustrates, there is a statistically significant difference between the scores on the real tests and mock tests of the participants with B2 and C1 levels of language proficiency. However, there found to be no statistical significance between the scores of the participants with C2 level of proficiency on their mock tests and real tests.

Qualitative data, data analysis and results

The qualitative data collection phase of this study occurred after the quantitative part as an explanatory follow up stage which included a semi-structured interview in Persian accomplished in twenty minutes with each participant on WhatsApp. All of the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for extracting the main ideas of the participants on how they felt about their identity features and their performance when facing the Kiwi accent of the examiners on the real tests.

The following are the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews:

1. How do you define yourself in New Zealand? Who are you in this country?
2. Did you have any problem with the accent of the examiner on the real test? If yes, what was it?
3. Did you feel like asking for repetition or clarification?

4. How did you feel in the context of the exam as a foreigner? Were you comfortable there? Were you nervous? Were you intimidated by the examiner?

5. How could you define your identity when you were taking the test with a Kiwi examiner? Compare it with the mock test.

6. When the examiner asked questions what attracted your attention/or distracted you the most which was different than the time you had practiced at the academy?

Coding system for the qualitative data

The qualitative data were coded twice as follows:

First, the transcriptions of the recorded interviews were coded based on 9 main categories found in the participants' responses as:

1. Being a foreigner in a new country with an education degree which made me a proficient skilled worker here;
2. Being an Iranian-New Zealander;
3. Having problem with understanding the examiners due to their accent;
4. Feeling intimidated by the ethnicity and accent of the examiner;
5. Feeling less confident because of my identity as a foreigner;
6. Feeling less confident due to my foreigner accent and exotic look;
7. Feeling embarrassed to ask for repetition or clarification of the Kiwi examiner;
8. The examiners' accent was the main difference between the real tests and the mock tests;
9. Loosing concentration because of the pressure of cultural issues, in my head, as I felt obligated to show more respect to the examiner.

These codes were further categorized into three main themes of 1) identity, 2) feelings and emotions, and 3) reason of failure in the speaking module as are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 – Coding scheme and the occurrence frequency of each code in this data set

Themes	Codes	Frequency of occurrence out of 45	English proficiency level
1. Identity	Being a foreigner in a new country with an education degree	31 ~ 68.8%	B2: 17 C1: 13 C2: 11
	Being an Iranian-New Zealander	14 ~ 31.1%	B2:3 C1:6 C2:5
2. Feelings and emotions	Feeling intimidated by the ethnicity and accent of the examiner	34 ~ 75.5%	B2:19 C1:15
	Feeling less confident because of my identity as a foreigner	31 ~ 68.8%	B2:21 C1:10
	Feeling less confident due to my foreigner accent and exotic look	24 ~ 53.3%	B2:18 C1:6
	Feeling embarrassed to ask for repetition or clarification of the Kiwi examiner	37 ~ 82%	B2:19 C1:18
3. Reason of failure in speaking performance	Having problem with understanding the examiners due to their accent	38 ~ 84%	B2:29 C1:9
	The examiners' accent was the main difference between the real test and the mock tests	41 ~ 91%	B2: 18 C1:20 C2:3
	Loosing concentration because of the pressure of cultural issues in my head as I felt obligated to show more respect to the examiner	29 ~ 64.4%	B2:19 C1:10

Source: Prepared by the authors

At the second stage, in order to find the possible relationship between the answers of the participants and their level of English proficiency the transcription of the interviews was also coded based on the six levels of A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), provided on the official website of Council of Europe as is shown in Table 4. This stage of the coding procedure was very convenient since a placement test had been administered to all of the participants by the IELTS academy before their enrolment to the preparation program. So, I just trusted their results and coded the data based on their report. To make the presentation of the data more convenient, I simply added a column to Table 3 and noted the proficiency levels of the participants whose answers were related to a certain code.

Table 4 – Language proficiency levels CEFR equivalent to IELTS scores

IELTS Score	CEFR	Description
9.0	C2	Expert User
8.5		C1
8.0		
7.5	Good User	
7.0		
6.5	B2	Competent User
6.0		
5.5		B1
5.0		
4.5	Limited User	
0.0 – 4.0	A2 and A1	Extremely Limited/Intermittent/Non Use

Source: Prepared by the authors

As the Table 3 illustrates, 68.8% of the participants defined their identity as a skilled worker foreigner in New Zealand. This type of self-identification could represent the feeling of divergence from the Kiwi community. Interestingly, the three codes of 1) Feeling intimidated by the ethnicity and accent of the examiner, 2) Feeling less confident because of my identity as a foreigner, and 3) Feeling less confident due to my foreigner accent and exotic look were mainly expressed by this 68.8% of the participants who were at B2 and C1 levels of English proficiency. The code of "feeling embarrassed to ask for repetition or clarification of the Kiwi examiner" was stated by 82% of the participants who were at B2 and C1 levels of English proficiency. Furthermore, 64.4% of the participants with B2 and C1 levels of English proficiency stated that they were stuck with an internal cultural-related issue which subliminally made them lose concentration on their speaking performance and feel obligated to respect the Kiwi examiner more than how previously experienced with other examiners in their mock tests. In the interview sessions they elaborated on this negatively interfering cultural issue as the feeling of being a guest in a foreign country. They clearly stated that they felt obligated to employ more ritual politeness expressions in interaction with the Kiwi examiner. This bizarre behavioral pattern reported on the real tests, was very much in line with the politeness pattern that Iranian people normally perform when they communicate with a host at a party (KOUTLAKI, 2002). This was a big discovery in this study as it comes from the cultural background of the participants and is related to their self-identification in a certain

context. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that no participant with a C2 level of English proficiency reported this cultural-related problem in their interactions with the Kiwi examiners. This fact shows that highly proficient users of English were not negatively influenced by the interference of their cultural background.

As Table 3 illustrates, 31.1% of the participants (at B2, C1, and C2 levels of English proficiency) identified themselves as Iranian-New Zealanders who were living in their second home. This type of self-identification was found to be the main reason of their confidence and not being intimidated by the Kiwi examiners on the real tests as opposed to the 68.8% of the participants who defined their identity as foreigners living in New Zealand. Also, the majority of the participants (91%) demonstrated that the examiners' accent was the main difference between their real tests and mock tests. So, they stated that they needed to familiarize themselves with the Kiwi accent as one of the main accents among the English native speakers during the IELTS preparation programs.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study showed that with respect to communication accommodation theory, intermediate participants with B2 proficiency level (band score 5.5-6.5) and pre-advanced participants with C1 proficiency (band score 7-8) demonstrated a divergence tendency rather than a convergence one; meaning, they viewed the Kiwi accent as a tool which accentuated the difference of nationality, ethnicity, identity, and cultural differences. This tendency was not significant in highly proficient users of English C2 (band score 8.5-9). In this sense, cultural issues were found to be of high importance.

In the Iranian culture, being a guest or hosting guests has a special place among other various forms of social communications; therefore, Persian native speakers employ certain forms of conversations in their get-togethers and parties as is called ritual politeness of companionship (KOUTLAKI, 2002; IZADI, 2016, SHOBEIRY, 2021). The main framework of ritual politeness of companionship in the Iranian culture was found to be degrading oneself and elevating the others' face (SHOBEIRY, 2021). This issue was obviously seen in the qualitative results of this study where participants, who identified themselves as foreigners in New Zealand, declared that in communication with the Kiwi examiners they subliminally felt obligated to employ the same type of ritual politeness strategies that they would use when they are invited to a party full of foreigners. Interestingly, they indicated that they did not have this feeling with the British examiner in their mock tests because, first, they were very

familiar with the London British accent, and second, they felt supported and protected by the IELTS academy members to the point that they felt being at home. These results revealed that the way the test takers define their identity can considerably influence their performance in a certain context. In this sense, the results of this study supplement the literature of cultural studies in the realm of IELTS exam in that, as opposed to the studies which investigated the effect of IELTS speaking examiners' culture on the spoken proficiency of the test takers (e.g., ALTAKHAINAH; AL-TKHAYNEH; RAHROUH, 2019; KHAN, 2006; O'LOUGHLIN, 2002; ROSHAN, 2013), this study illuminated the influence of the test takers' cultural background on their speaking performance on the IELTS exam. However, in this regard, highly proficient Iranian candidates did not report any negative influence of cultural issues on their communications with the Kiwi examiners.

Implications

The results have implications for IELTS instructors and IELTS preparation program designers to work on the candidates' identity issues. The candidates need to define themselves as users of English as *lingua franca* on the planet. Also, the New Zealand accent should be included more in teaching listening skill parts of the IELTS preparation programs, in that, the participants need to be familiar with all the main accents of English native speakers. It should be noticed that these issues were a problem for intermediate and pre-advanced candidates.

IELTS speaking examiners also need to notice that 82% of the candidates were found to feel embarrassed to ask for repetition or clarification which could negatively affect their performance of the test; therefore, the IELTS examiners are recommended that they paraphrase their statements or clarify their questions anytime they feel there is a communication breakdown during the speaking exam.

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