



SPEAKING COHERENTLY

Speaking coherently means organising your answer in a clear and logical manner, and linking your ideas logically. To achieve coherence it is important to be aware of and put into practise the use of the following language devices:

- transition words and phrases
- reference words
- appropriate verb tenses and time phrases
- conjunctions for linking ideas

IELTS Tip

Remember to organise your answer logically and link your ideas using a range of language devices, including transition words and expressions, referents, appropriate verb tenses and time phrases, and conjunctions.

Responding to the bullet points in the order they occur on the topic card will help ensure your answer is organised.

These language features also help with fluency, the other criterion used to assess your communication skills.

In this episode a variety of language functions, such as identifying, speculating, comparing, contrasting and others are used to develop a coherent answer in the two-way discussion in Part 3. Coherence is also important in Part 2 of the Speaking Test because you will be speaking on a given topic at length. This will require you to organise and order your response logically, using language appropriately.

Part 2 - Topic

Topics asking you to describe someone or something may occur in Part 2 of the Speaking Test. Here is such a topic in a sample prompt card.

Describe your favourite teacher.

You should say:

- who was the teacher
- what this teacher taught
- how long you had this teacher

And explain why you liked this teacher so much.



This is one candidate's response:

My favourite teacher is Myoung Jin Park. He was my English teacher when I was in high school in Korea. You know, in Korea all the English teachers are basically Korean. He taught me for two years, in other words, in year eleven and year twelve. The girls of that age, you know, they normally like teachers, who are good-looking, with the looks and with a good sense of humour but this teacher, specific teacher, was not physically attractive at all. He was rather, not terribly good-looking, but I really adored this teacher because, I guess, to start with, I love studying languages, and he was teaching English, and I really loved learning English from him. He was very passionate about his job teaching and he was actually enjoying it. I could tell that he was enjoying it. He had good teaching skills. He encouraged and nearly coerced, you know, contributions from the students. Also, you could actually be quite sure, sitting in his class, that, er, when you gave an answer, no matter how silly it might sound, you'd never be laughed at or anything. So you felt quite free to have a conversation or discussion with the teacher, or other students in the class. And what was also, um, quite special about him was that he had a good sense of humour, so much so that you only remembered his jokes, when actually you had the test paper in front of you, looking at all the questions but you couldn't remember the answers, only his jokes.

Language Devices

In answering this question the candidate used a wide range of language devices to give a coherent and cohesive response. How this candidate achieved this is examined below.

Structure

The candidate begins by identifying and stating the topic of her talk.

My favourite teacher is Myoung Jin Park.

This in fact is the topic sentence of her talk. To sequence her talk logically she follows the order of the bullet points which is: **who, what, how long, why.**



Bullet points	Response
who	My favourite teacher is Myoung Jin Park.
what	He was my English teacher when I was in high school in Korea. You know, in Korea all the English teachers are basically Korean.
how long	He taught me for two years, in other words, in year eleven and year twelve.
why	The girls of that age, you know, they normally like teachers, who are good-looking, with the looks and with a good sense of humour but this teacher, specific teacher, was not physically attractive at all. He was rather, not terribly good-looking, but I really adored this teacher because, I guess, to start with, I love studying languages, and he was teaching English, and I really loved learning English from him. He was very passionate about his job teaching and he was actually enjoying it. I could tell that he was enjoying it. He had good teaching skills. He encouraged and nearly coerced, you know, contributions from the students. Also, you could actually be quite sure, sitting in his class, that, er, when you gave an answer, no matter how silly it might sound, you'd never be laughed at or anything. So you felt quite free to have a conversation or discussion with the teacher, or other students in the class. And what was also, um, quite special about him was that he had a good sense of humour, so much so that you only remembered his jokes, when actually you had the test paper in front of you, looking at all the questions but you couldn't remember the answers, only his jokes.

Transition words and phrases

Transition words and phrases are used to further organise the response and link ideas between and within sentences. There was a number of transition signals used.

Transition signals	Connection	Example
in other words	clarify a point	He taught me for two years, in other words , in year eleven and year twelve.
to start with	sequence an idea	He was rather, not terribly good-looking, but I really adored this teacher because, I guess, to start with , I love studying languages, and he was teaching English, and I really loved learning English from him.
Also	add another idea	Also , you could actually be quite sure, sitting in his class, that, er, when you gave an answer, no matter how silly it might sound , you'd never be laughed at or anything.
no matter how silly it might sound	draw attention to a statement and presenting a possible response	
so much so	result	And what was also , um, quite special about him was that he had a good sense of humour, so much so that you only remembered his jokes, when actually you had the test paper in front of you, looking at all the questions but you couldn't remember the answers, only his jokes.

Here are some common transition words and phrases.

Type	Transition Words or Phrases
addition	in addition, furthermore, moreover, also
listing	first, first and foremost, firstly, second, secondly, the most important, the most obvious
similarity	similarly, in the same way, likewise
contrast	however, in contrast, on the other hand, on the contrary
example	for example, for instance, such as, like
result	therefore, as a result, consequently, hence, thus, accordingly
emphasis	indeed, in fact, above all
conclusion	in conclusion, to conclude, in summary, to summarise, in short, finally, in the end

Reference words

Reference words point back or refer to words or phrases in previous sentences and are used to connect the ideas. They replace the word or phrase used before and therefore need to agree in number and person.

Here are some referents which are commonly used.

Referents	Examples
pronouns	
personal	it, she, his, them, their
possessive	his, their
demonstrative	this, that, these, those
relative	who, which, that
definite article	the

The candidate uses a variety of these referents to avoid repeating the same word or phrase and also to refer back to a particular point. They also allow her talk to flow smoothly. She uses them in the following places.

Referent	Example
he	My favourite teacher is Myoung Jin Park. He was my English teacher when I was in high school in Korea.
the	He was my English teacher when I was in high school in Korea. You know, in Korea all the English teachers are basically Korean.
that	He taught me for two years, in other words, in year eleven and year twelve. The girls of that age, you know, they normally like teachers, who are good-looking ...
it	He was very passionate about his job teaching and he was actually enjoying it. I could tell that he was enjoying it.

Appropriate verb tenses

The candidate uses the appropriate verb tenses and time phrases when making time references in her talk.

Example:

He **was** my English teacher **when I was in high school in Korea**.
 You know, in Korea all the English teachers **are** basically Korean.
 He **taught** me **for two years**, in other words, **in year eleven and year twelve**.

When describing the past – her high school years – she correctly used the simple past tense: **was** and **taught**. In stating a fact that the English teachers in Korea are Korean, she switched to the simple present **are**.

Describing the situation about giving answers is a past event but it was an event in the future at the time, so she correctly uses the modals **could** and **would** to express that, i.e. **gave** is the simple past tense referring to the past.

Example:

Also, you **could** actually be quite sure, sitting in his class, that, er, when you **gave** an answer, no matter how silly it might sound, you'd never **be laughed** at or anything. So you **felt** quite free ...

Conjunctions for linking ideas

Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and other parts of speech link ideas within and between sentences. Using conjunctions correctly makes your talk clear and easy to understand.

Here are some conjunctions which are commonly used in English.

linking ideas	conjunctions		other parts of speech
	coordinating	subordinating	
equal ideas	and, both ... and		another, as well as
alternative ideas	or, either ... or		
contrasting ideas	but, yet	although, even though, though, while	despite, in spite of
reasons	for, so	because, as, since	as a result of, because of, due to
condition		if, provided that	
subordinating words			
referring to humans			who, whom
referring to nonhumans and things			which, that
referring to a time or place			when, where



The candidate uses various coordinating and subordinating conjunctions to link her ideas.

To contrast two qualities she uses the coordinating conjunction **but**.

He was rather, not terribly good-looking, **but** I really adored this teacher ...

Not terribly good-looking is contrasted with **adored**.

To give a reason, the candidate forms a subordinating clause using **because**.

He was rather, not terribly good-looking, but I really adored this teacher **because**, I guess, to start with, I love studying languages ...

The reason why she adored the teacher was the fact that she **loved studying languages**.

To add other equal ideas, she uses the coordinating conjunction **and**.

... I love studying languages, **and** he was teaching English, **and** I really loved learning English from him.

This is a compound sentence consisting of three independent clauses joined together.

I love studying languages. He was teaching English. I really loved learning English from him.

To give more information about physical features, she uses a relative pronoun **who**.

The girls of that age, you know, they normally like teachers, **who** are good-looking, with the looks and with a good sense of humour ...

This is a relative clause and is used to make a complex sentence.