

Describing pie charts by Gabrielle Lambrick

Age:	Adults
Level:	Intermediate–Upper intermediate
Time:	2 hours 10 minutes
Objectives:	To learn to describe pie charts for IELTS Writing Task 1
Key skill:	Writing
Materials:	One copy of the worksheet per student

Note: This lesson plan can be split across two lessons: sections 1–3 in the first lesson, section 4 for homework and sections 5 and 6 in the second lesson. If section 5 takes longer, set the writing in section 6 for homework but allow some preparation time in the lesson.

Procedure

1 Seeing percentages in charts (20 minutes)

Hand out the worksheet. Students work in pairs to match the charts to the sentences. Then, they complete each sentence with information from the chart. Check answers as a class.

Weaker groups: First, do a quick review on the board by drawing a pie chart and eliciting vocabulary such as:

- a half, 50%
- a quarter, 25%
- three quarters, 75%
- a third, 33%
- two thirds, 66%.

You could also demonstrate the task by doing the first question as a class before the students start.

Key:

1. *E ... study drama.*; 2. *B ... are female.*;
3. *H ... are male.*; 4. *A ... are students.*;
5. *D ... are international.*; 6. *G ... do not own a car.*;
7. *C ... get a job.*; 8. *F ... study engineering.*

2 Common mistakes (10 minutes)

Students discuss these sentences with a partner and try to identify why each one is wrong. Check as a class, pointing out key errors to avoid.

Key:

1. *This is wrong because you always need to express a percentage 'of the whole pie' not 'of a slice'. Many students write a percentage 'of the slice', which is inaccurate. The sentence should be 'Over 60% of engineering students are male.' Encourage them always to look at the whole pie before starting their description and to ask themselves 'percentage of what?'*
2. *This is wrong because 'almost half' means 'less than half' but in the chart, more than half are male. This sentence should be 'More than half of all students are male.' Check students' understanding of almost, about, nearly, under, over, approximately.*
3. *This is a vague and unhelpful way to describe percentages. Encourage students to avoid using be + percentage. Remind them to ask themselves 'percentage of what?' and then to describe what happened using a verb (possibly be) + adjective. For example, this sentence should be 'About 55% of international students study engineering.'*
4. *The problem here is 'can drive' because we have no information about this in the chart – having a car and being able to drive are not the same thing. The sentence should be 'Around 90% of Camford residents own a car.' Encourage students to be precise in their descriptions and not say things that are not actually clear from the data.*

3 Using varied language correctly (30 minutes)

Explain that often, students want to use lots of synonyms to increase their range of vocabulary but in Task 1, precision is important so they must also be careful not to say things that are not in the chart.

In exercise 3a, students work with a partner to choose which sentence in each group is incorrect. Check as a class and be sure that students understand why each wrong option is unsuitable. Point out that there is only a narrow range of correct options.

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Key:

1. *c is wrong: we have no information about recommendations.*
2. *d is wrong: there is no reference to students, universities, etc.*
3. *a is wrong: the passive voice requires the verb be.*
4. *b is wrong: in chart labels, 'other' is used but when writing full sentences we should say 'other browsers,' etc.*

In exercise 3b, students add data to the sentences. Remind them to ask themselves 'percentage of what?' Here, the whole pie represents people using the internet in Europe so they can say '...% of people,' '...% of Europeans,' '...% of internet users,' etc.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *a. Over 25% of people use Firefox.*
1. *b. More than a quarter of people choose Firefox.*
1. *d. 27% of people browse the internet with Firefox.*
2. *a. 38% of people use Chrome.*
2. *b. Nearly 40% of people in Europe use Chrome.*
2. *c. More than a third of Europeans use Chrome.*
3. *b. Internet Explorer is used by about a fifth of Europeans.*
3. *c. Internet Explorer is used for internet browsing by just over 20% of Europeans.*
3. *d. Internet Explorer is chosen by 21% of Europeans.*
4. *a. Over a quarter of people use Firefox.*
4. *b. Only 5% of people use other browsers.*
4. *c. 21% of people use Internet Explorer.*
4. *d. Almost a tenth of people use Safari.*

4 Making comparisons (10 minutes)

Students read the sentences aloud to each other and choose the correct option for each rule.

Key:

1. *more + noun ... than ... / noun + more ... than ...*
2. *subj + more + verb + obj than ... / subj + verb + obj + more than ...*
3. *adjective + more + than ... / more + adjective + than ...*
4. *subj + verb + less than ... / subj + less + verb + than ...*
5. *less + plural noun ... than ... / fewer + plural noun ... than ...*
6. *subj + verb + obj + as much as ... / subj + verb + obj + as many as ...*
7. *subj + is not as + adjective + than ... / subj + is not as + adjective + as ...*

5 Practice (40 minutes)

In exercise 5a, ask students to form a variety of basic sentences, before adding any data or comparisons. This will help them to introduce a range of language while maintaining accuracy in more complex sentences later.

Write the students' sentences on the board. Deal with any errors, eliciting improvements from the students and correcting the sentences on the board.

Key (suggested answers):

- South Africans speak Zulu.*
Xhosa is spoken by South African people.
People in South Africa are Afrikaans speakers.
The population of South Africa speaks English.
People in South Africa use Northern Sotho.
Tswana is used by South Africans.
Zulu is common in South Africa.

In exercise 5b, ask the students to add data to the correct sentences on the board. Remind them to ask themselves 'percentage of what?' In this case, it is always the percentage of people/population.

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Key (suggested answers):

Almost a quarter of South Africans speak Zulu.

Xhosa is spoken by 16% of South African people.

Less than 15% of people in South Africa are Afrikaans speakers.

10% of the population of South Africa speaks English.

Less than a tenth of people in South Africa use Northern Sotho.

Tswana is used by 8% of South Africans.

Zulu is common in South Africa. (It's difficult to add data to this one but it's useful for comparisons in the next activity.)

In exercise 5c, ask students to write new sentences using the comparative structures given. Tell them not to include data for the moment. Write the students' sentences on the board and deal with any errors. Leave them on the board for the next stage.

Key (suggested answers):

1. *More people speak Afrikaans than English in South Africa.*
2. *Zulu is the most common language in South Africa*
3. *Xhosa is spoken less than Zulu by South Africans.*
4. *Fewer people in South Africa speak Sesotho than Northern Sotho.*
5. *English is not as widely spoken as Afrikaans.*
6. *As many South African people speak Sesotho as Tswana.*
7. *Sesotho and Tswana are equally widely spoken in South Africa.*

In exercise 5d, ask the students to look at the example sentences on the worksheet, then add data to the sentences on the board in a similar way. Write the students' sentences on the board and deal with any errors.

6 Putting everything together (20 minutes)

Ask students to write a full IELTS Writing Task 1 response to the charts on the worksheet, using the language they have been studying.

Weaker groups: You may wish to discuss as a class the bullet points below the charts before you start and/or allow them time to discuss the charts with a partner before starting to write. Alternatively, you could give them the model answer to read, then collect it back in, before asking them to write their own answer.

Stronger groups: The data is, in fact, from 2016. If you want your students to practise using the past as well as everything else, you could tell them to write this information into their responses.

Model answer

The pie charts show how much energy is produced in different ways, including natural gas, coal, nuclear, renewables and other sources, in Britain and the United States.

It can be seen from the charts that in both countries, natural gas is the main source of energy. Specifically, it provides over a third of the energy in each country. However, there are significant differences in how much coal and renewable energy are used. Coal is used much more in the USA than the UK: it is used for 30% of America's total energy production, compared with about 15% of British energy production. In contrast, Britain uses renewable sources much more than America (25% of its energy comes from these sources, compared with only 15% in America).

Nuclear power is equally common in both countries: approximately a fifth of energy production comes from nuclear. Other energy sources only provide a tiny amount of energy: less than 5% of the total in both the UK and the USA.









Overall, the USA uses more fossil fuels and less renewable energy than the UK.

(179 words)

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1 Seeing percentages in charts

Match the charts to the sentences below. Then, complete the sentences.

<p>1. male students</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ studying music ■ studying drama 	<p>2. students</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ male ■ female
<p>3. engineering students</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ female ■ male 	<p>4. Camford residents</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ students ■ employed
<p>5. students</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ international ■ British 	<p>6. Camford residents</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ car ■ no car
<p>7. male students</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ get a job ■ continue 	<p>8. international students</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ engineering ■ other subjects

- A. Approximately one third of Camford residents ...
- B. Just under 50% of all students ...
- C. Less than half of male students ...
- D. Just over a quarter of all students ...
- E. Around a quarter of male students ...
- F. More than half of international students ...
- G. About a tenth of Camford residents ...
- H. Over 60% of engineering students ...

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2 Common mistakes

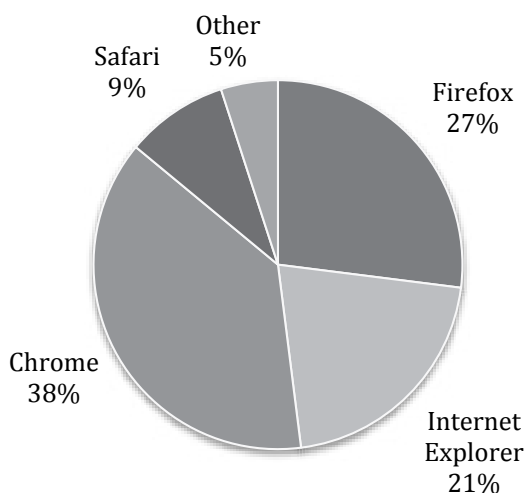
Look at the charts and sentences in task 1 again. Why are these sentences wrong?

1. Over 60% of males study engineering.
2. Almost half of all students are male.
3. Engineering students are 55%.
4. Around 90% of Camford residents can drive.

3 Using varied language correctly

a. Look at the chart and the groups of sentences. In each group, one sentence is not appropriate. Which one? Why?

Browser Use in Europe



1. Varying verbs

- a. People use Firefox.
- b. People choose Firefox.
- c. People recommend Firefox.
- d. People browse the internet with Firefox.

2. Varying subjects

- a. People use Chrome.
- b. People in Europe use Chrome.
- c. Europeans use Chrome.
- d. Students use Chrome.

3. Using the passive

- a. Internet Explorer used by Europeans.
- b. Internet Explorer is used by Europeans.
- c. Internet Explorer is used for internet browsing by Europeans.
- d. Internet Explorer is chosen by Europeans.

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4. Referring to the data

- a. People use Firefox.
- b. People use other.
- c. People use Internet Explorer.
- d. People use Safari.

b. Now, add data to each sentence by including a percentage or fraction. For sentences 1–3, you will be using the same percentage each time but try to express this percentage in a variety of ways.

Always ask yourself, ‘percentage of what?’

4 Making comparisons

Look at the sentences below and choose the correct option for each rule about comparisons.

1. More people use Firefox than Internet Explorer.
2. Europeans use Firefox more than Internet Explorer.
3. Chrome is more popular than any other browser.
4. Safari is used less than the other main browsers.
5. Fewer people use Firefox than Chrome.
6. People in Europe do not use Internet Explorer as much as Chrome.
7. Safari is not as popular as the other main browsers.

Rules

1. *more* + noun ... *than* ... / noun + *more* ... *than* ...
2. subj+ *more* + verb + obj *than* ... / subj + verb + obj + *more than* ...
3. adjective + *more* + *than* ... / *more* + adjective + *than* ...
4. subj + verb + *less than* ... / subj + *less* + verb + *than* ...
5. *less* + plural noun ... *than* ... / *fewer* + plural noun ... *than* ...
6. subj+ verb + obj + *as much as* ... / subj + verb + obj + *as many as*
7. subj + *is not as* + adjective + *than* ... / subj + *is not as* + adjective + *as* ...

5 Practice

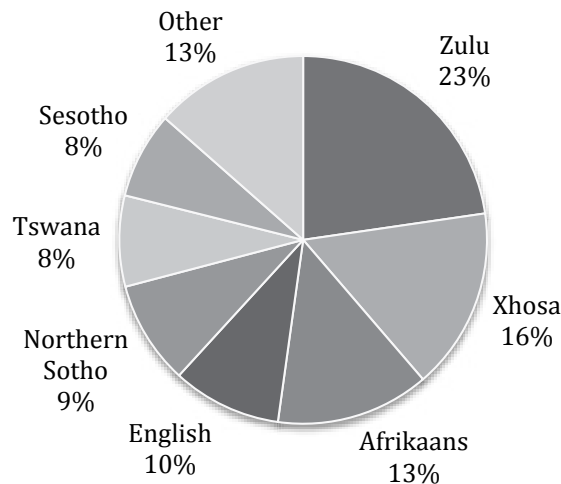
a. Look at the chart on the next page. Ask yourself ‘who does/did what?’ Try to make a variety of sentences, like the ones in task 3. Vary the verbs and subjects and try to use the passive. For the moment, don’t worry about including data or making comparisons.

Example sentences

- South Africans speak Zulu.
- Xhosa is spoken by South African people.

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Languages Spoken in South Africa



- b. Now, add data to each sentence, using a percentage or a fraction. Remember to vary the ways you express the data and always ask yourself, 'percentage of what?'
- c. Now, write some sentences about the chart using comparisons. Try to use the following comparative structures. Don't worry about including data at the moment.
- ... more ... than ...
 - ... the most ...
 - ... less ... than ...
 - ... fewer ... than ...
 - ... not as ... as ...
 - ... as ... as ...
 - ... equally ...
- d. Finally, try to combine your comparison sentences with your sentences that express data. Use colons, brackets or the word *specifically* to link the two parts.
- More South Africans speak Afrikaans than English: 13% of the population speak Afrikaans and 10% speak English.
 - More people speak Afrikaans than English in South Africa (13% of people speak Afrikaans but 10% speak English).
 - Afrikaans is more common than English in South Africa. Specifically, 13% of South Africans speak Afrikaans, while 10% speak English.

You can also use linking words to compare data. Notice the punctuation used.

- Nearly 25% of South Africans speak Zulu. In contrast, only 16% of them speak Xhosa.
- Nearly 25% of the population of South Africa speak Zulu, whereas only 16% of the population speak Xhosa.
- Almost 25% of people in South Africa speak Zulu, compared with only 16% who speak Xhosa.

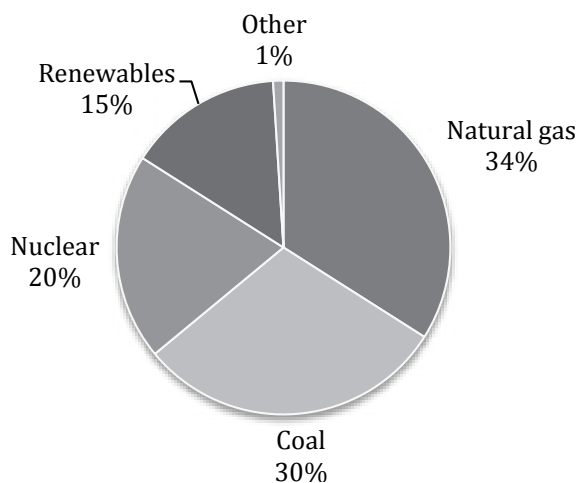
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6 Putting everything together

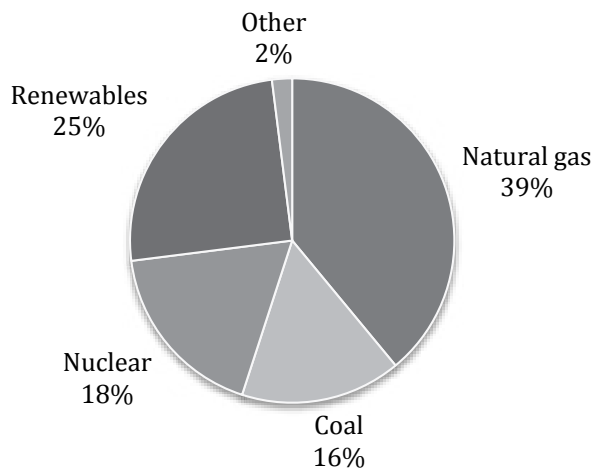
The charts show the percentage of energy produced in the USA and UK from different sources.

Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, making comparisons where relevant.

Sources of Energy in the USA



Sources of Energy in the UK



Think about ...

- **who did what?**
- the percentage **of what?**
- how to vary your language.
- making comparisons.
- combining comparisons and data.

Don't forget to ...

- paraphrase the question in your introduction.
- include an overview with one main point but no data.