IELTS Writing Task 1 Describing graphs with trends

TIPS AND STRATEGIES

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Academic Writing – formal writing

- Write in paragraphs **(Intro – Overview (main trends) – Details– Details)**
- Word count: **150**; Time limit'': **20 minutes**
- Paraphrase the rubric with your own words (This is your Introduction)
- Overview: write a short paragraph summarizing main points – DON'T mention any details (figures, percentages, etc.)
- Avoid contractions (e.g. it's, can't, doesn't)
- Be impersonal (use Passive Voice and avoid the word "I" – use "one" instead)
- **Make comparisons where relevant**

Introduction. Paraphrasing the rubric

► **The task:** The chart shows information about visitors to Australia, 2006-2014.

► *You:* <u>The graph provides information on **how many** people visited Australia</u>, *over an eight-year period between 2006 and 2014.*

OR

► *<u>The given line graph illustrates data about **the number of** people who visited Australia</u>, over an eight-year period between 2006 and 2014.*

► *Now try to paraphrase this:* ***The chart shows information about Car sales in the USA, 2001-2007. NB** Use **passive voice** here.*

People and cars *are countable nouns. What about* **Uncountable nouns** *?*

Introduction with uncountable nouns

► We, basically, just substitute the words "**many**" and "**number**" with "*much*" and "*amount*", respectively.

► **The task:** The graph shows information about **how much** money *was* earned by the three London bakeries, 2005-2015.

► **You:** <u>The provided graph highlights data</u> about **the amount** of money **that** *was* earned by three bakeries in London, over **a decade** (a ten-year period) between 2005 and 2015.

► **NB** Note that we use a **singular verb ("is/was")** with uncountable nouns

► *Now try to paraphrase this:* **The graph shows data about Coffee production in Kenya, 1996-2006**

Overview. Highlighting the key trends

► Describe general trends (if they were **upward** or **downward) and** most striking details (highest/lowest extremes). Do it by making a **comparison** – "… there was a considerable upward trend in X, **while/whereas** Y experienced a substantial fall over a period (in the question).

► Start it with a **Linking expression,** e.g. "*Overall, what stands out from the graph is that …*" / "*In general, it can be seen that …*" and describe trends.

► *Add another sentence outlining a striking feature.* Start by "*Another remarkable/striking point is that …*" or "*In addition, …*".

2 sentences are absolutely enough for your overview.

Some useful language

► There are two general words for **trend** – **Upward** (^) and **Downward** (v).

We can also describe them with the *adjectives of extent: significant/considerable/notable/substantial* – *slight/moderate/insignificant*

We use words Rise/Increase/Growth – going Up (^);

Fall/Decrease – going Down (v)

… there was a notable upward trend in the income (earned money) of X, whereas Y saw/experienced a substantial decrease in sales over the considered period.

☐ Use **comparative** and **superlative** word forms for main points.

…. Z was the most successful retailer in 2005, but in 2015 X generated more revenue than the others.

Main body paragraphs (1 or 2)

➤ First and foremost, describe changes/details from **MORE** to **LESS** noticeable.

➤ **Divide details onto different paragraphs when it makes sense only.**

For example, describe the trends for given graphs in 1st and make comparisons and contrasts in the 2nd **OR** one type of data in 1st and the other type in 2nd;

➤ Try to **avoid** simple sentences; use simple IN-sentence linkers like **and/but/thus/hence/because** Relative clauses (who/that/which), passive voice **where relevant**.

Check yourself! What are the functions of each **IN-sentence linker**?

Language to describe changes 1

Put the Past Simple form of these verbs in the correct column (you may use a dictionary).

decline decrease double drop fall go down go up grow halve improve increase jump plummet plunge rise rocket shoot up soar surge			
Verbs to describe increases	**Verbs to describe decreases**	**Verbs to describe big increases**	**Verbs to describe big decreases**

KEY

Language to describe changes 1 Key

Verbs to describe increases	Verbs to describe decreases	Verbs to describe big increases	Verbs to describe big decreases
Went up, grew, improved, increased, rose	Declined, decreased, dropped, fell, went down	Doubled, jumped, rocketed, shot up, soared, surged	Halved, plummeted, plunged

NB it is more effective to memorize patterns of changes than specific words, but here – do the latter.

Language to describe changes 2

► Which of these adverbs describe **1.a big change, 2. a small change, 3. a medium-size change, 4. a fast change, 5. a slow change, 6. a consistent decrease or increase:**

considerably   dramatically   gradually   rapidly   remarkably   marginally   sharply   significantly   slightly   steadily

► **Other good expressions. Check their meaning!**

► Income **fluctuated** and then **levelled off.**

► Income **reached a peak (^) / hit the trough (v).**

► The figure **remained stable** in the first three years.

► Income increased steadily **year on year.**

► Earnings **worsened** in the last three years.

Language to describe changes 3

► Literally the same words can be used in noun forms (from verbs) and adjective forms (from adverbs):

<u>There was</u> **a considerable rise in** the income of Donkey Doughnuts.

The income of Donkey Doughnuts *saw/experienced/witnessed* **a notable increase.**

► **What are the noun forms of these Past Simple verbs? –**

rose – <u>a rise</u>, fell - ___, levelled off - ___, declined - ___, increased - ___, dropped - ___, fluctuated - ___, decreased - ___, recovered - ___, jumped - ___, grew - ___

► **What are the adjectival forms of these adverbs? –**

dramatically - ____, steadily - ____, considerably ____, sharply - ____, gradually - ____

Answer Key. Nouns: fall, levelling off, decline, increase, drop, fluctuation, decrease, recovery, jump, growth
Adjectives: dramatic, steady, considerable, sharp, gradual

Practice. Adjective + Noun

► **Rewrite these sentences, changing them to verb-adverb or adjective-noun.**

► 1. Sales of DVDs in the UK rose sharply between 2001 and 2004.

There was ___*a sharp rise in sales of DVDs*___ in the UK between …

► 2. Chocolate production in Colombia experienced a significant fall.
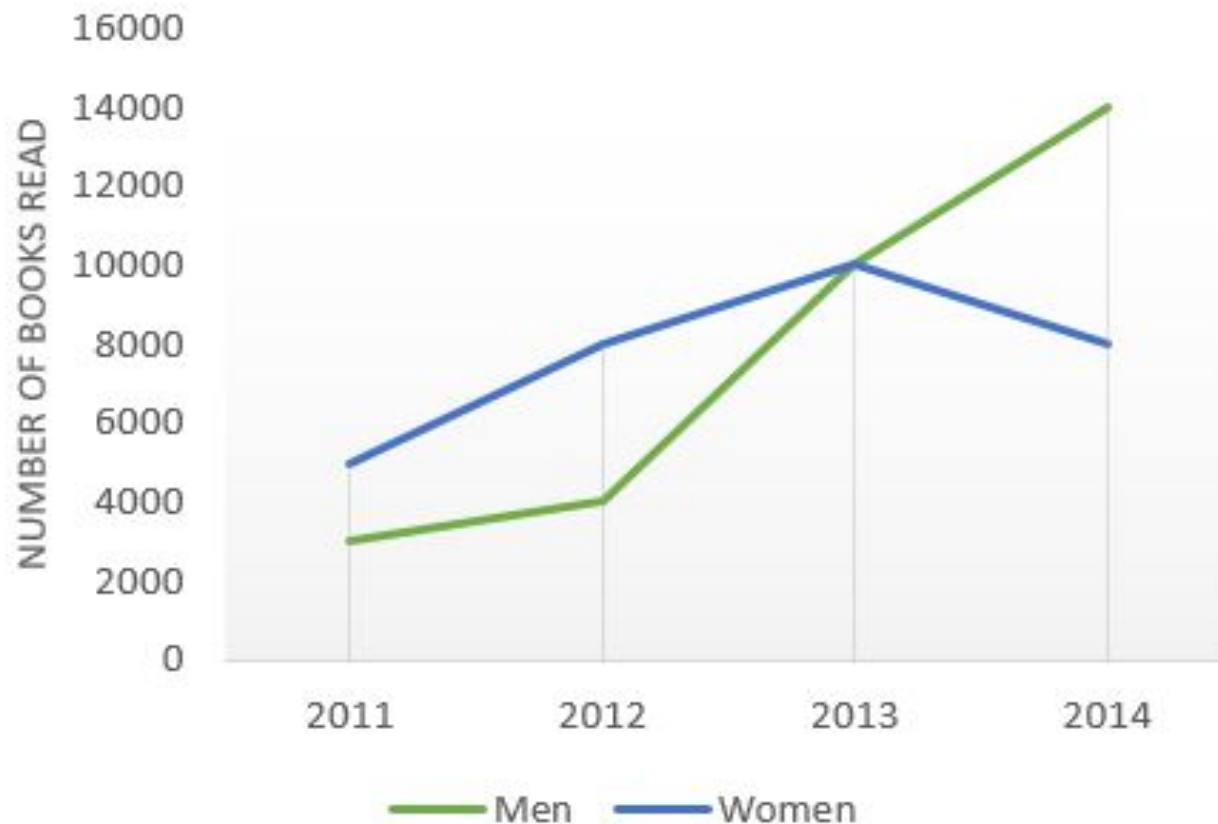
Chocolate production in Colombia _____.

► 3. There was a steady growth in average incomes in Europe.

Average incomes in Europe _____.

► 4. Tea production in China declined gradually by 2001, then fluctuated for 3 years and, ultimately, levelled off in 2004.

Tea production in China _____.

Now make 3 sentences about yourselves

Burnaby Public Library

Look at this task:

The given diagram shows how many books were read in Burnaby Public Library by men and women, over a four-year period between 2011 and 2014.

Check the
Model Answer

Model Answer

The provided graph highlights data on the number of books which were read in Burnaby Public Library by representatives of both genders, male and female, from 2011 to 2014.

Overall, what stands out from the graph is that there was a sustainable upward trend in the quantity of books taken by men, while a figure for books read by women saw a moderate growth by 2013, and then started to fall gradually. Another interesting point is that at the beginning of the period in question females read nearly twice as much as males, but by 2014 trends changed to the opposite.

Looking at the details, as regards men, they read approximately 3000 books in 2011, then there was a slight rise by 2012, which became a year of the sharpest increase from roughly 4000 to just under 10000 items read in 2013. The following year saw a slightly less considerable rise in the number of books read by men that peaked at about 14000 in 2014.

By contrast, the figures for women followed a different pattern. Even though their rate started off with a moderate increase from almost 5 thousand books in 2011 to just under 10 thousand, in 2013 this trend changed the direction to the opposite, having witnessed a gradual decrease up to just over 8 thousand books in 2014.

Color code: Linking expressions; language on changes; complex grammar; quantifiers.

Language use. Linking expressions

► Linking phrases to introduce new section of a graph: *As regards* _ and *If we look at* _ **to show that a new part of the graph is being discussed.** Similar phrases are *Regarding, As for* and *With respect to.*

► *!* When you use these linking phrases, you generally need to repeat the <u>subject</u> of a sentence: *Regarding* <u>the income</u> of Mr. Green, <u>it</u> started at 500,000 rubles in 2014, and then…

Rewrite the sentences using linking phrases from the above.

1. The income of M&M's began at just under $60,000.
2. The amount of money earned by Pampers in 2010 was $100 million.
3. The earnings of Pepsi remained stable during the first five years of the graph,
4. Income for Nike fluctuated considerably between 2000 and 2007.

Language use. Prepositions

- ➤ Ss have a handout with the exercises (p. 86).

- ➤ **RULES**:

1. With **started** and **finished**, use **AT**; 2. With *increases and decreases*, use **TO**; 3. With **remained stable** and **levelled off**, use **AT**; 4. With **peaked**, use **AT**; 5. To describe *how much something increases or decreases*, use **BY**; 6. To describe the range of fluctuation, use **BETWEEN**.

Complete the sentences with a preposition: **1.** The figure went up _____ around 30,000. 2. Their number peaked _____ 300. 3. Earnings fluctuated _____ 80,000 and 100,000. 4. There was a sharp rise _____ 80,000. 5. The percentage of male polo-lovers remained stable / levelled off _____ 20%. 6. Income started ____ 55,000.

- ➤ Another exercise from a handout please.

Comment on data

► Make your essay more advanced by **commenting** on the data.

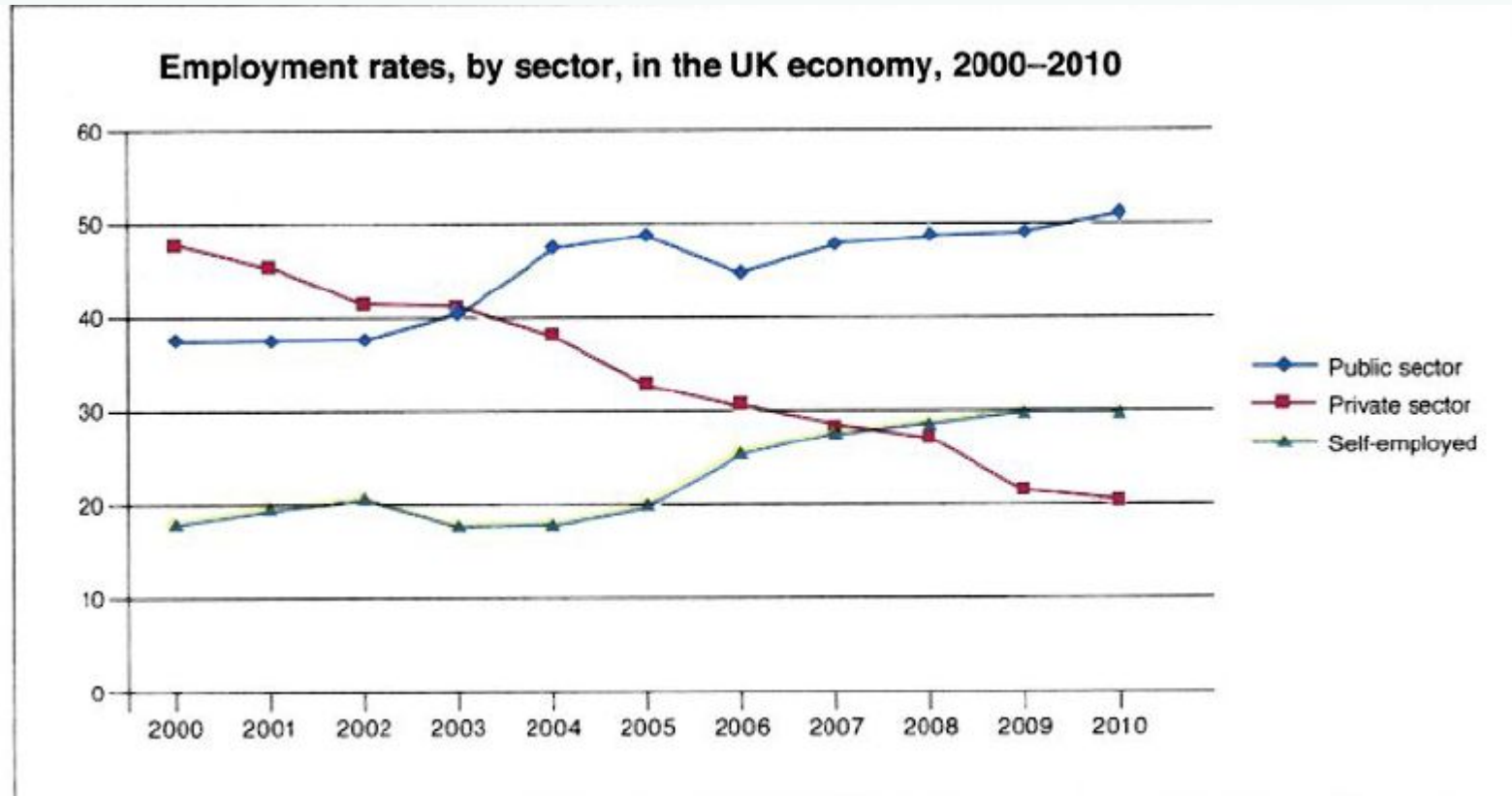There are a few possible sorts of **appropriate comments:**

1. **Compare the different parts of the graph with a "which-clause".** *The income of X fell sharply to 20,000 in 2000,* ***which meant*** *they earned far less than any other retailer.*

2. **Comment on the peak.** *There was a considerable rise in the takings of Z to 1 million,* ***this figure being the peak level of*** *income during the whole period.*

3. **Add an extra verb to give emphasis.** *The income of M&M's rose sharply in 2008,* ***rocketing to*** *just under $100,000.*

4. **Add a superlative.** *Nike earned $200,000 in 2005,* ***which*** *meant* ***it*** *had* ***the highest income of the covered*** *companies in that year.*

PRACTICE. Use the ideas above to complete the sentences with comments.

1. The earnings of X were $20,00 in 2007, **w_____ was the l_____ i_____ of the three companies.**

2. The income of Y fell sharply in 2005, **p_____ing to just over $60,000.**

3. The income of Z remained stable **in the first d_____ of the period.**

4. There was a sharp rise in the income of Z between 2005 and 2011, **which meant (that) it earned far _____ than the other companies.**

5. Y's income fell considerably to $40,000 in 2008. **This meant that it had the _____ income of the three companies.**

Key: 1. which _ lowest_income; 2. plummeting; 3. decade; 4. less; 5. lowest

More practice

- Look at he graph and complete the sentences below.

Employment rates, by sector, in the UK economy, 2000–2010

1. 48% of people worked in the private sector in 2000, which meant …..

2. There was a slight rise in the percentage of people who worked in the public sector to just over 50% in 2010, this figure being …

3. The percentage of people employed in the public sector rose sharply between 2002 and 2004, soaring…

The percentage of people who worked in the private sector went down steadily to 20% in 2010. This meant…

Same kind of data, different form

The table below highlights data on the number of travellers using three major British airports between 1998 and 2003.
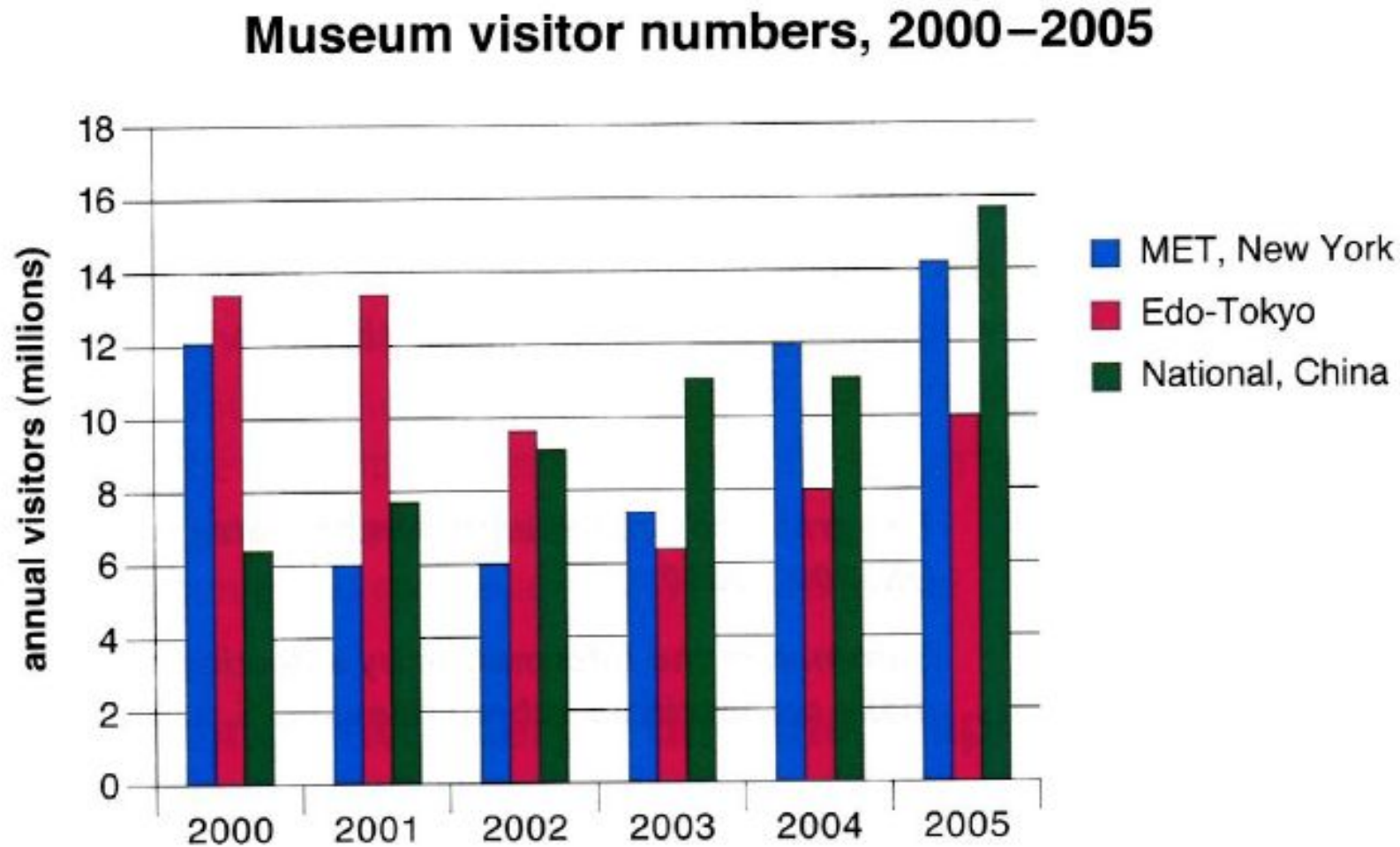
Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Airport visitors, 1998–2003 (millions of travellers per year)

airport	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Heathrow	27.2	36.4	48.2	37.1	33.2	45.6
Gatwick	36.5	41.9	44.4	47.3	51.1	69.3
Stansted	17.3	26.6	39.9	43.3	43.3	43.3

The graph below shows the number of visitors to three museums between 2000 and 2005.

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

Museum visitor numbers, 2000–2005

Legend:
- MET, New York
- Edo-Tokyo
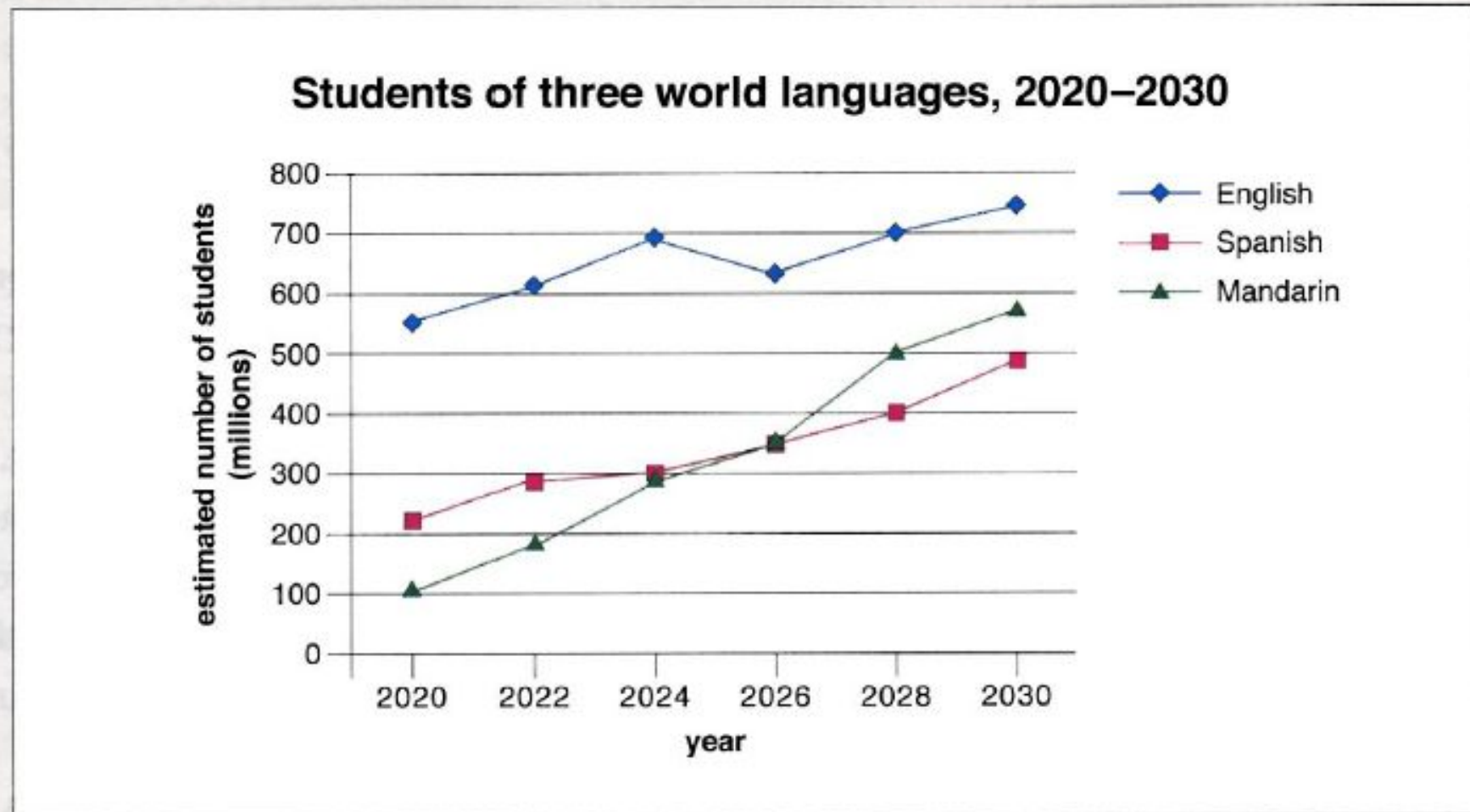- National, China

Same kind of data, different form 2

But what if… the diagram shows a future trend?

► **First, remember HOW we talk about future and use these structures with the same Lexis (<u>covered above</u>).**

► **Useful decent phrases: "It is estimated that..", "It is projected that..", "It is predicted that.."** ..the number of students of Spanish **will rise** drastically.

► **Writing about a state of trends in a particular year in the future, use "By 'year', <u>subject</u> *will+have+V3*. "*By 2030, <u>the number of students of Mandarin</u> will have risen sharply to over 500 million".**

► *Use the word "Projections" and the structure "be likely to": <u>Projections</u> show that the number of people who study Spanish <u>is likely to</u> increase steadily.*

Now give it a try! 150 words

The graph below shows predictions about the number of people who will study three major world languages between 2020 and 2030.

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

Students of three world languages, 2020–2030

Feel like practicing?

- **Burnaby Public Library –** **PRACTICE!**

- **Employment rates in the UK –** **PRACTICE!**

- **Travellers using British airports -** **PRACTICE!**

- **Visitors to museums –** **PRACTICE!**

- **Studying languages in the future –** **PRACTICE!**

Resources:

- ► **"IELTS Advantage. Writing Skills" by R. Brown, L. Richards (https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9bJPDOXJG9xSzZvSkJyZHJxYUU/view?usp=sharing)**

- ► **Various Writing Tasks and exercises (http://www.ielts-exam.net/academic_writing_samples_task_1/)**

- ► **More useful advice on describing Line Graphs: http://www.ielts-exam.net/ielts-preparation-tips/describe-a-line-graph.html**

THANKS FOR ATTENTION

IF YOU STILL DO HAVE ANY QUESTIONS LEFT, APPROACH YOUR TEACHER ;)