

# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE 12: CANE TOADS

Hello. I'm Margot Politis. Welcome to Study English, IELTS preparation.

Today, we're going to talk about expressing attitude, and using the words 'so' and 'such'.

And we're going to find out about some nasty creatures called cane toads, and all the trouble they can cause.

Curious? Let's watch the clip.

You can see these large glands he's got behind his eyes, which contain a lot of toxin. It's got various compounds in there but basically what it does is give you a heart attack. The toxin's actually all throughout the skin but the main concentration is in these glands. So basically, something bites it, if it gets into its bloodstream, there's a good chance it will be killed very quickly.



We found a dead freshwater crocodile, which was apparently killed. Certainly a one death adder, which is a venomous snake, quite an important Australian snake, we found one of those freshly dead with a small toad in its mouth. And even to small children, if a child was to put them in their mouth, the toxin is quite severe.

The flip side of that is that there are a whole lot of animals which will be out-competed by cane toads. So they're other animals, which eat insects for instance, 'cause cane toads are so numerous that they suck up all the insects from the biota, like big vacuum cleaners and so they can actually cause other animals to starve.



Why are we literally sitting back and watching the cane toad invasion move further and further up through Kakadu and through the Northern Territory?

Well there has actually been quite a lot done, in fact, over a period of perhaps 10 years prior to this, a huge amount of effort and money has already been spent on looking at some way and means of controlling cane toads. All that work has come to nothing, and most people understand that now.

What we have to do is wait on the big guns in Canberra with their genetic engineering and biological control work. That's the only hope there is.

Cane toads are such prolific breeders, each female would produce 50 thousand eggs. There will be millions of cane toads out there.

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Unfortunately, cane toads are a big environmental problem in Australia. They're a species that was introduced from another country. We'll use their story to talk about attitude or, more specifically, *attitude markers*.

*Attitude markers* can indicate the attitude of someone to what they are saying or what others have said.

I just used one. I said: "‘Unfortunately’, cane toads are a big environmental problem."

The word 'unfortunately' indicates my attitude to cane toads.

Other words that are *attitude markers* include:

'actually',

'in fact',

'certainly',

'of course',

'really' and

'surprisingly'.



Let's listen to a Wildlife Ranger, Greg Miles, answering a reporter's question. Listen for *attitude markers*.

Why are we literally sitting back and watching the cane toad invasion move further and further up through Kakadu and through the Northern Territory?

Well there has actually been quite a lot done, in fact, over a period of perhaps 10 years prior to this, a huge amount of effort and money has already been spent on looking at some way and means of controlling cane toads.



Greg Miles says: "There has actually been quite a lot done in fact."

He uses the *attitude markers*, 'actually' and 'in fact' to show that he disagrees with the reporter, and to advance his own view.

It's a polite way of expressing an opposing opinion.

Other examples of words and phrases that are used to do this include:

'as a matter of fact',

'to tell the truth', or 'well'.

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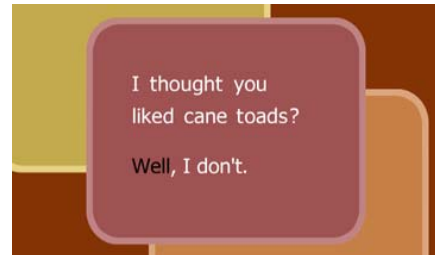
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Let's see some examples.

"Cane toads look harmless, but as a matter of fact, they're dangerous."

"I thought you liked cane toads?" "Well, I don't."

Can you hear the attitude expressed in these phrases?



Now here's ecologist, James Smith again.

You can see these large glands he's got behind his eyes, which contain a lot of toxin. The toxin's actually all throughout the skin but the main concentration is in these glands.

James uses 'actually' here to introduce details. Because the details of the toxins are surprising in nature, and perhaps unexpected, 'actually' provides this subtlety of meaning.

Now here's Greg Miles again. He uses two other *attitude markers*.

We found a dead freshwater crocodile, which was apparently killed. Certainly, one death adder, which is a venomous snake, quite an important Australian snake, we found one of those freshly dead with a small toad in its mouth.

He says: 'apparently' and 'certainly'.

He says: "the crocodile was apparently killed".

He uses 'apparently' because he got his information from someone else, and he's not certain that it's true. Based on appearances, it looks like the crocodile was killed by the cane toad.

Greg says: "certainly one death adder" was found dead.

Here, Greg is emphasising that there's no doubt that this is true, that the death adder was killed by the toxins in the cane toad.

From the use of these *attitude markers*, we can tell that he's not completely sure the crocodile was killed by a cane toad, but he's definitely sure the death adder was killed by one.

Okay. Let's turn our attention to another way you can express subtleties of meaning in English.

They're *co-relative subordinating conjunctions*.

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The words themselves are short and simple:

‘so ... that’, and

‘such ... that’.

Listen to Greg Miles talking about the number of cane toads eating insects.

The flip side of that is that there’s a whole lot of animals which will be out-competed by cane toads. So they’re other animals, which eat insects for instance, ‘cause cane toads are so numerous that they suck up all the insects from the biota, like big vacuum cleaners.



Greg says: “Cane toads are so numerous that they suck up all the insects from the biota.”

This means that cane toads are ‘numerous enough’ to suck up all the insects from the biota. There are enough of them to do that.

‘So ... that’ is called an *amount construction*. It expresses a meaning similar to ‘enough’, which means an adequate number or amount.

But this construction also adds a meaning of ‘result’, using the ‘that-clause’.

Let’s study a sentence to see how this construction works.

“Cane toads are numerous.”

How numerous?

“So numerous.”

With what result?

“That they suck up all the insects from the biota.”

“Cane toads are so numerous that they suck up all the insects from the biota.”

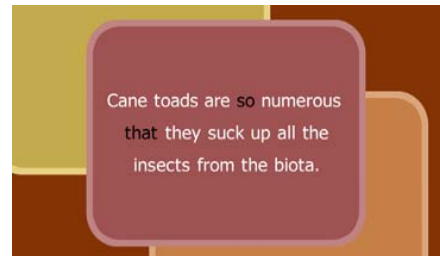
The sentence uses the *amount structure* ‘so ... that’ to define an amount and a result.

Here’s another example: “Have you seen the film Cane Toads?”

“The film was so good that we went to see it twice.”

‘So’ tells us how good the film was.

‘That’ tells us the result: ‘we went to see it twice’.



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Let's listen to how Professor Madsen expresses 'amount' in relation to cane toads.

Cane toads are such prolific breeders, each female would produce 50 thousand eggs. There will be millions of cane toads out there.

He uses another construction to express the amount. He says 'such':

"Cane toads are 'such' prolific breeders."

He adds the result clause 'there will be millions of them', but without using the word 'that'.

'That' is sometimes omitted in informal English. It is understood without being stated. More formally he would have said:

"Cane toads are such prolific breeders that there will be millions of them."

'So' and 'such' in these constructions also provide emotive emphasis.

For example:

"Cane toads are so ugly!"

"Cane toads are such a pest!"

So today we've looked at *attitude markers* and language for expressing emotion.

We've also talked about the *degree or amount constructions* 'so' and 'such'.

Using these language features will make your language more interesting, and will show an appreciation of subtleties of meaning.

And it's time for me to go, but you'll find today's story and a lot more on our Study English website.

I'll see you next time. Bye bye.

