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INTRODUCTION

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, **we are going to be speaking with Carlos and Carlos got some fantastic scores on the IELTS.** So, welcome to the podcast, Carlos. Could you tell us where you are from and why you're taking the IELTS exam?

Carlos: Hi, Ben. Absolutely and hi, everybody. Well, **I am Carlos from Mexico City and I just got the final results for my IELTS test last week with a great help from Ben and his team.** Well, I'm doing the IELTS just because I want to try-- I'm trying to immigrate to Canada. So, that's the final goal and the IELTS was part of it.

Ben: Awesome. Okay. How far along are you with this process for getting to Canada?



Carlos: Well, we started-- I mean we because I'm doing it with my girlfriend. We started the process in August. We had to get some documents together and from August maybe I started for the IELTS I made one first test in August and made the second test in September. That's when I started working with you after the second test and the third test was in October and I just got my results with final 7 in writing that I needed.

Ben: Wow! And what were you struggling-- well done, by the way. Well done, Carlos.

Carlos: Thank you very much, Ben.

Ben: You're welcome and what were you struggling with with regards to the writing? What was happening?

Carlos: Honestly, I wasn't sure what was happening. I started first with the YouTube videos that you can find anywhere. Then I went to these courses here in Mexico in the school which also has the IELTS test delivered. It wasn't [unintelligible 00:02:39.11]. Everyone told me that I was ready for the second-- I was way ahead for getting the 7 that I was looking for. Still, it didn't come. I wasn't sure what was happening. When I started working with you, I noticed at least two important mistakes. One was my use of prepositions and the second and I think it was the most important one was the [task achievement](#). Apparently, I used to answer the question in only one of the paragraphs and the second one I used to go away from the task. And it



happened every time. So, I started working on that with the template that you gave us. It was very good help.

HOW LOCAL TEST CENTER ACADEMIES WORK

Ben: Wow! That's fantastic. And let's go and focus on this sort of like this local test center academy.

Carlos: Sure.

Ben: Were they giving you feedback on your essays?

Carlos: Well, yes and no. In the end, the course was a group course. It was not an individual course. So, they had these topics that I had to work in. Everybody would work on those topics and they gave us some let's say regular feedback wrote feedback on our results, but in the end, they didn't actually read a full essay and had a specific grade on each of us. It was more general based.

Ben: I see. I see. So, they weren't actually like having a detailed look--



Carlos: Exactly

Ben: --at your essays. Okay. Okay because this is critically important as you've learned.

Carlos: Absolutely.

Ben: To get this feedback otherwise the improvement is quite difficult. So, for you, it was the prepositions. This is what you identified as your--

Carlos: Well, your team identified that. Every time that I was sending you essays, it came back with some corrections. It's very important that it's an individual check and a very detailed check on every sentence and every word and the whole essay by itself. So, I would say you identified that it was prepositions. I didn't identify because I was wrong already, but I probably lost two or three prepositions in the whole essay. What I think it was the worst part of what I did was task achievement because I went all the way out of the topic.

Ben: Yes. This is extremely common and I was doing exactly this when I was planning essays with students when I first began to teach IELTS. We would brainstorm ideas and then we'd get a plan together and then later, I would look at it and I would be like whoa! We've gone way off task achievement, way off [task achievement](#) and it's ridiculous when you do that because even though you're still using the English language, you're not going to get points because you could



be talking about anything and the reason-- just for the listeners-- why you have to stay on task achievement is because you may have remembered or memorized a whole paragraph about something and unless it's unique and corresponds to the question, they don't know if you just memorized this or you've actually got a strong writing ability to write about the subject. So, that's why we've got to keep close to task achievement. So, the framework that was what was helping you stay on topic regarding task achievement.

HOW THE C2 TEMPLATE CAN HELP YOU

Carlos: Yes. Most of all, you gave us this [C2 template](#) which I actually memorized. So, I was working with it while I was writing all of my answers for the essay. So, I was just following the-- I almost write the same template with the blanks in it, right? So, I was trying to fill in the blanks all the time, but it's very important to actually fill the blanks with the topic that you're trying to answer from the prompts that the IELTS is giving you.

For example, it was something about politics, right? So, you start answering something about politics in Mexico and suddenly you start talking about economics which is not the same. You try to match economics and politics, but in the end, they are not the same. So, I was answering



the first paragraph with politics the second one with economics and the conclusion was maybe closing my politics essay, but the second paragraph had nothing to do with it.

So, in the end, this template gave me at least the chance to think more about what I wanted to actually say because if you have to write a full essay answering the question, then you have to be a native speaker to be able to write the full thing and think about it in the 30 minutes that you have to answer, right?

Ben: Got you.

Carlos: Yes, absolutely.

Ben: Awesome. Awesome. Yes, the framework will definitely help you there, but as you said, you still got to make sure you're on topic. Let's just rewind a few seconds. You memorized the whole framework and then you used that all throughout our online course. Is that right?

Carlos: Yes. When you gave me the C2 template, I just try to work with it. The first time, I didn't do very well. The second time, I already had it. The third time I did an essay, I already had it memorized and I found myself actually trying to think on the right answer for the question instead of thinking of the words to fill to complete my paragraphs. After five or six essays that I



did, I was able to not only think about what I was trying to answer, but even made some slight changes to your framework so that it made a more cohesive essay.

Ben: Absolutely.

Carlos: It's probably what actually worked in it.

Ben: Absolutely. This is genius, Carlos and I'm glad-- I'm very, very glad that you mentioned this because we can memorize the framework, but it's like what I was saying before. You've got to kind of adapt it and you've got to make sure that it corresponds closely to the answer because it's fairly universal, but it can always be improved and the reason why it can always be improved is because it can always be adapted to each specific question and this seems like exactly what you've done.

This reminds me about another student who she sounds like she did similar to what you did, like memorized it and almost the framework became part of the muscle memory so no longer do you have to waste time thinking about the structure or thinking about the words in the C2 template. That it starts becoming automatic so you can now start focusing more on ideas and making sure the ideas correspond and then the next level, which is what you've just mentioned is once you get so familiar with it and it starts becoming more natural, then you can start sort of like customizing it and this is when we're talking band 7, band 7.5 and band 8 when you can



start playing with it and yes. I'm really glad that you mentioned that, Carlos. So, well done. Well done there. Who was giving you the [feedback](#)? Do you remember?

Carlos: Yes, I have it here. It was-- give me a second. I have her here in my most important emails--

Ben: Good comment.

Carlos: From the previous month. You give me a second. It was Daphne.

Ben: Daphne. Awesome. Awesome. Good. Good. Good. Yes. She's definitely a good teacher. They all are, but that's fantastic. Good. It was good to know that and for the other sections, how did you prepare for those other-- for the other parts of the exam?

Carlos: When I made my first IELTS, before actually going to the test, I started practicing with-- there are some URLs, some pages with IELTS exams-- previous IELTS exams where you can actually practice and then read the answers. So, I did this. I probably have the URLs here. You can actually-- for example, do a listening test-- you can find some of those-- some listening examples in YouTube also. So, I was looking at the video or that in YouTube for the listening or in this page you could find the audios and see the test and in the end see your results. That's how I practiced for both the reading and the writing. Everything was--



Ben: Reading and listening, yes?

Carlos: Yes. Reading and listening, sorry.

Ben: Got you. Got you. Okay. How many--

Carlos: It's just that I'm trying to find the page at this time. It was something like ielts-exam.com.

Ben: Okay. Got you.

Carlos: So, I got the reading and the listening from them. It was self-study. My first IELTS I already had a 9 and an 8.5 for each of those so I didn't have to practice anymore for those, but I would say the key for those are-- well, for everything is practice, practice and practice. So, reading just focus on the reading and while you are reading answers. So, you can actually go back and forth from the question and the reading. So, that's what I was doing; looking for the question and looking for the answer in the reading and I was going back and forth and I actually got a lot of spare time to check two or three times the reading.

Ben: Wow!

Carlos: The listening, well, it was really hard. You cannot go back and forth and the first two or three times that I did the listening, I was a total mess. I had like seven or ten mistakes, but there



was a key that I found. If you actually pay attention to what they are saying instead of just trying to answer, then you will have the right results. It's very stupid. It's very-- let's say obvious. You're usually just looking for the answer all the time and because you're so nervous, you lose or you miss the actual answer in the listening; what the people are actually saying. So, if you actually pay attention to what they are saying, you will have the right answer. So, that was my let's say my--

Ben: Professional tip shortcut.

Carlos: My tip for the listening. For the speaking, well there was this course in this test center I told you about. I did both the speaking and the writing courses with them. I will say the writing was not good at all because they don't focus on these individual and detail factors that I did with you, but there was one specific part of the course for the speaking where they told us to use fillers and I think that was a key because in my first test I got a 7.5, which was already good, but after this course, I got an 8.5.

Ben: Wow!

Carlos: Just because I used fillers.

Ben: Tell me about feelers. We're very curious.



Carlos: Instead of just going like straight forward to answer the question, so you say something like where do you live? I live in Mexico City, but you can always answer something like well, it's very interesting that you ask that question now because I have just moved to Mexico, but before I usually lived in [unintelligible 00:16:48.00] which is a small town in Mexico in the Mexican Gulf in the east of the country. I just start filling all the answer with these stories around the actual answer. So, I did that. I started with this it's very interesting that you asked this question and then I feel more stories about what the answer was all about or the question was all about and it worked very well.

Ben: So, you try and do the job of the examiner so the examiner doesn't have to keep working and asking and asking and asking.

Carlos: Yes, the more you talk the better.

SPEAKING CONFIDENCE COURSE

Ben: Yes, yes. Definitely. That's really interesting. **We've got a similar technique on the [Speaking Confidence Course](#).** I always use the example of if they ask me where I'm from I won't



just say I'm from Manchester. I would say something like I'm from Manchester, the old industrial city of England. It's a great place, but it's got a lot of lovely people and the weather is a bit grim, but apart from that, it's a pretty good place. I used to live in Huddersfield etc. etc. Yes, that's interesting. And they call this technique fillers--

Carlos: Fillers, yes because you fill the answer with a lot of words and stories beside the specific and straightforward answer.

Ben: Oh, it's fillers. Okay. I understood feelers in like emotions and feeling good.

Carlos: No, no. It's like fill-- to fill your fuel tank.

Ben: Yes, it's like fill your bag up or fill the cup up. Interesting. Wow! Let's just go back a bit because you said the first time you did the exam, you got really high [reading](#) and [listening](#) scores. Is that right?

Carlos: Yes, that's right. I had a 9 in listening, 8.5 in reading and the 7.5 in speaking and of course the 6.5 in writing which was the hardest.

Ben: Wow! Okay. So, this is the first time you did IELTS and you got those high scores.

Carlos: Yes.



Ben: What were you doing before you did this test? How come your English was so good?

Carlos: Well, thank you for that. Well, probably it's because I just studied for my whole life English since I was seven or six. I studied English in Mexico in my school; both in my primary school and secondary school and my high school and my university, we always had an English courses and actually when I was in university, I had both an English course and classes in English and I also went for a semester to study in Germany. So, I was studying German, but I was taking my courses in English. [Unintelligible 00:20:22.00] that's part of what helped and my job sometimes requires me to work in English with some people in the United States.

Ben: Very interesting and during the week, are you regularly watching series or listening to radio or watching--

Carlos: Of course.

Ben: In English?

Carlos: Yes. Yes, of course. every time that I watch a movie or a series or even when I listen to some TED Talks or some podcasts, I try to do that in English and if it's a very hard accent to get for example, I'm watching the Vikings series. Sometimes it's really hard to get all the



information, so I do subtitles in English. So, I try to always keep up with the English instead of switching to Spanish.

Ben: Got you and the famous Mexican telenovelas, you don't watch those?

Carlos: No, of course. That's for other kind of people.

Ben: Fair enough.

Carlos: But maybe you want to watch some of [unintelligible 00:21:27.05] the best telenovelas.

Ben: I have been considering it, to be honest with you. I have been considering it, but it's just so wild and crazy. I watched one or two and I was like wow! This is completely different, but I should really get into it because I'm losing my Spanish.

Carlos: Well, I can help you with your Spanish course if you want now.



INTRODUCTION

Ben: Okay yes, definitely. Definitely. I'm not going to speak Spanish now. I'm too embarrassed, but thank you, Carlos. Okay. Before we finish, do you have anything that you could add or anything that you would say to somebody who's thinking about joining the online course?

Carlos: Well, I would like to say two things. **One is for you and it's thank you very much for the course, for the help, for the follow-up. It was very, very helpful. It's a very fast. I studied with you for less than two weeks and I got-- have the band that I needed so--**

Ben: Wow!

Carlos: And I studied more than two months before with some different people and it didn't help. So, I would say first of all, thank you very much, Ben. **It was very, very helpful and to all your team, Daphne and the team thank you very much.**

Ben: You're welcome.

Carlos: And of course to the people listening, I would say let's divide it in two parts. One is trust yourself. Trust yourself, trust your instincts, and practice and if you're considering to study with Ben or you're already with him, have no doubt he will help you. Just try to follow his



instructions very carefully and do not miss a day because every day, you get more knowledge if you practice daily instead of skipping with some blank days with it [unintelligible 00:23:33.20].

Ben: Absolutely yes. Very, very good advice there. Thank you very much, Carlos, for your kind words and I will pass them on to the team. I really appreciate that. I'll just mention again what Carlos said about practicing daily and keeping up momentum is incredibly important.

I recently recorded a podcast and I was talking about-- I mentioned one thing and I just messaged a friend about it as well, but if you can keep up the habit daily until it becomes a system, it becomes automatic, this is fantastic and this is what you want to be aiming for, but if you miss a day, which is bound to happen because life gets in the way, if you do miss a day, make sure that it doesn't turn into two days.

Make sure that it doesn't turn into three days. You got to get back on the horse, so to speak, immediately. Even if you just missed that first day, you've got to get back on the horse the next day and keep on doing the daily habit because otherwise if you miss it two days in a row, that's the start of a new bad habit of not practicing.



So, excellent points there, Carlos. Excellent points. Thank you very much. Yes, I think that's everything. So, thank you very much for coming on the show and doing the interview. I very much appreciate it.

Carlos: It was my pleasure, Ben.

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