



Ben: If Maria's boss is listening, her real name is not Maria by the way. I got your back, Maria.

Don't you worry.

[Music]

INTRODUCTION

Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

[Music]

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this podcast, we're going to be speaking with Maria from the Dominican Republic. How are you today, Maria?



Maria: I'm good and you, Ben?

Ben: Excellent, thank you. Excellent. I'm loving this summer weather that's arrived in Europe at the moment. It's absolutely [unintelligible 00:00:51.10]. Yes and the lockdown has been relaxed as well, so things are getting back to normal. There's a light at the end of the tunnel. So, all the students who are in lockdown, this does end eventually. So, keep your chin up. Okay, Maria. So, you've also been suffering because of the corona pandemic. Is that right?

Maria: Yes, yes. I am trying to apply to university, so I needed to get the IELTS done.

Ben: And you want to get to university in Canada. Is that right?

Maria: Yes, the George Brown College.

Ben: Right and what are you going to study?



Maria: Construction management. I'm an architect.

Ben: Interesting and is there a deadline? Is there a cut-off point?

Maria: Yes. Well, I'm starting on January, so the deadline is at least four to six months earlier. You should apply earlier. So, that's why I was trying to fill my application.

Ben: Got you and what requirements is the university asking for-- what band score requirements?

Maria: They're requiring a 6.5 overall which is a 6 in all components.

Ben: And you've taken the test before, haven't you? You took the traditional test.

Maria: Yes. I took the general one three times.



Ben: Each time you improved, you learned new things?

Maria: Yes.

Ben: And you've been also doing the online course and getting feedback with your writings. Is that right?

Maria: Yes, that's right.

Ben: How has that been helping you?

Maria: Very much especially with the writing because although you know English, you need to get assessment with the writing; a professional assessment.

Ben: Yes, yes and Daphne has been correcting your work. Is that right?



Maria: Yes. She's absolutely brilliant. I love her.

Ben: Yes. She keeps singing your praises when we do the interviews together. She's like this Maria she's a wonderful student and I've been reading the emails and the encouragement she's been giving you. So, this is fantastic. It seems like a good match. How has Daphne been helping you?

Maria: She's been helping me with the writing tasks; writing Task 1 and 2; both.

Ben: And you've been getting those corrections back and she's been kind of pointing out the mistakes and where to improve. Is that right?

Maria: Yes, that's right.



Ben: Super, super. Maria, recently you took the IELTS Indicator test. How long ago did you take that?

Maria: I took it May 20.

Ben: May 20, right and how did that compare to the normal IELTS test?

Maria: You're more comfortable because you're in your home, but despite that-- although you're in your home, I think it's actually the same. You have to have the same preparation.

Ben: Yes, yes. What were the main differences for you regarding the normal test?

Maria: Well, in the writing part, I was used to write by hand. So, it was a little bit difficult to-- I have like all these typos in the computer. So, that was the hard part for me.



Ben: Did you spot the typos or did you have the sort of like little blue underline or the red underline like we do with the word processors, with Microsoft Word and whatnot?

Maria: No, you don't see anything. There's no--

Ben: Spellcheck.

Maria: Yes, there's no spell check in the exam.

Ben: Right, right. So, you had to-- all the responsibility was on you to check for the spelling mistakes and for the typos.

Maria: Yes.

Ben: When you were doing the test, how did it feel in your own room, so to speak?



Maria: Well, it was comfortable because I'm the kind of person who reads out loud, so I get that chance. In a real exam-- well, it is the real time too, but in a [unintelligible 00:05:14.00] exam, you have to read in your mind, but this time, I had that chance. Your computer is locked, so you won't be able to search anything and I really recommend that you don't lose time trying to search anything because it will delay you and it will harm your performance in the test.

Ben: I see. I see. So, there's no point having another laptop open next to you to to check for things.

Maria: I don't recommend that because you'll lose time.



Ben: Got you, got you. And plus it is dishonest also. Another reason that is not recommended. So, your university they have said in advance that they're going to accept the Indicator test. Is that right?

Maria: Yes. Well, in the time I was applying, there was no list, but now the IELTS has a list in their website with a few universities and colleges, but at that time, I just wrote them and I asked them if they were taking the IELTS Indicator and they told me that they were taking it.

Ben: Interesting because on a podcast we did it just the other day, I was advising students just to email-- get in contact with the university. Are they being a little bit more flexible with the grades they accept?



Maria: No, not with the grades. They are asking for the same grades that they were asking before, but they are flexible with the payment and all that stuff.

Ben: Okay.

Maria: And the online teaching.

Ben: And the speaking part of the test, that was done on a Zoom call, yes?

Maria: Mm-hmm.

Ben: Okay. How did you find that?

Maria: I felt comfortable. It was in a Zoom meeting as you said and I had to log in like at least five minutes earlier and the question and the format was exactly as the one you take in person.



Ben: Did they ask for your ID?

Maria: Yes. You have to show your passport or your ID.

Ben: Right and then they start talking about you-- all about you in Part 1. Did you have any difficulties because it was online instead of face-to-face?

Maria: No, not really. It felt the same. It felt the same. You have to have a piece of paper too and a pen for Part 2.

Ben: Yes, because they're not going to obviously give it to you. So, you can have that next to you and you can make notes.

Maria: Yes and they share their screen so you can read the Part 2.



Ben: So, how did they do-- okay, they share their screen. So, you don't pick a cue card in this one. They just choose one for you.

Maria: Yes.

Ben: Right, I see. What cue card did you get?

Maria: They asked me about if I lie to a friend why and is that nice for me; lying to people.

Ben: Wow! Okay. That's quite a strange one.

Maria: Yes, that was strange.

Ben: And do you lie to people, Maria?

Maria: No. Even though I try, I'm not the kind of person that get nervous. I'm not a good liar.



Ben: Okay and what about little white lies?

Maria: Well, maybe, but I'm telling you I'm a bad, bad liar.

Ben: Personally, I've never ever, ever told a lie in my life.

Maria: [unintelligible 00:08:59.29]

Ben: I'm joking. As you can finally tell from that statement. No, personally, I will tell the odd occasion of a little white lie, but if I'm forced to I will say it and usually there'll be some good intention I think like most of us. We don't like lying, but if it is a good intention or a better end result because of small tiny teeny weeny little white lie, then yes. Okay, moving on from lying, well anyway, do you remember what you said about lying? Was it just what you-- I guess it's just what you told me, wasn't it? I guess.



Maria: Yes.

Ben: Okay.

Maria: And I talked about my boss that I lied to her because she don't know I'm going to study abroad. She doesn't know. Not yet.

Ben: Until this podcast is published.

Maria: [unintelligible 00:10:04.07]

Ben: By the way, if Maria's boss is listening, her real name is not Maria, by the way. I got your back, Maria, don't you worry. Okay, so moving on, I'm looking at your previous scores and in your latest exam before you did the Indicator test, you got listening 8.5, which is fantastic, reading 8.5, writing 6.5. So, you jumped 0.5 from I guess well, in two weeks, wasn't it really?



Maria: Yes.

Ben: Yes, yes. Wow! And your speaking 7.5 and then in the Indicator test, your listening stayed the same at 8.5, your reading dropped 1.5, which is quite a big drop because in your-- oh, no, no, no. In your other one, yes, it was 8.5. So, that is quite a big drop and your speaking stayed the same. Was the IELTS Indicator format to blame for this drop in your reading score do you think?

Maria: No, it has a-- the general one and the academic one has a different format. The reading part-- actually in the general, you have five questions and in the academic you just have three. They are very long and there are more difficult to read because there are more [unintelligible 00:11:49.18]. So, I guess it was because of that.

Ben: Right because I've been talking with a few students and they said that they had difficulty with the reading and the listening when it's computer-based due to organizing and writing and



the difficulty making notes and things like that when compared to doing the paper-based one.

Did you find that?

Maria: No, not really. With the reading in the computer, you can actually copy the answer and paste it. So, I guess it's easier that way.

Ben: I see.

Maria: Because you won't have spelling mistakes.

Ben: Good point, yes, good point. Wow! And the writing, you went down from 6.5 to 6 in the writing. Do you know why? Was it a difficult task?

Maria: Well, the Task 1 is a different one, so you have to have like a different preparation for that.



Ben: Got you, yes, yes because in the attempt before the IELTS Indicator, I forgot to mention that it was General IELTS, but this one it was academic. Okay. So, you hadn't been preparing that much for the graph description. Is that right?

Maria: Yes, that's right.

Ben: Got you, got you. What was your question on the writing test?

Maria: It was about-- let me see if I remember. It was about-- it was about technology.

Ben: Okay. Do you remember specifically?

Maria: They asked me about people are working from home more often because of technology, because of computers. So, they ask me why technology-- if technology is-- is it good for that or it has drawbacks?



Ben: That's interesting. So, they were asking you questions about working from home.

Maria: Yes.

Ben: Very interesting. Do you remember how you approached the answer?

Maria: Yes. I wrote about more and more people are working more from home because you have like all the facilities with the technology nowadays. So, because you have your computer, you have videos, you have all the facilities. So, it's better to work for home because you have the time to be with your family and work at the same time and you don't lose time. You don't lose time in the car with all the traffic. Here in my country, there is a lot of traffic, so I talk about that.

Ben: Interesting. Good. Good. Did you use that as an example?

Maria: Yes.



Ben: Excellent. Excellent and did you follow the structure in the Sentence Guide?

Maria: Yes, yes.

Ben: Good stuff. Good stuff. You've already kind of mentioned the drawbacks to doing the IELTS Indicator when you said the typos on the computer. Is there anything else that is bad about it or anything else-- not bad, but you should-- that if a student were going to take it soon, what would you tell them?

Maria: Well, if you're not a reader like a computer reader-- I'm not a reader in either. I'm not a reader even in real books, but if you're not a reader in computer, you should start to read more in the computer and to do like a mock test so you can get used to reading in the computer because I



guess you get more tired when you are looking for three and a half hours at computer. Your eyes get more tired.

Ben: Yes, yes, good point. Good point and did you do sort of like a simulation before doing the IELTS indicator test to get familiar with the format and the procedure?

Maria: Yes, I did. I tried-- they have a simulation I think it's in the British Council web page. They have a computer simulation which is actually the same as the IELTS Indicator.

Ben: How much further in advance was it before you took the test?

Maria: I took it like two weeks before.

Ben: And with this 8.5 in the listening, how do you get such a high score?



Maria: I don't know. In my first attempt, which is the general, but the listening is the same in both exams. In the first one, I needed an 8 and I got a 7.5 and then I just practice, practice, practice, practice and I got the score and I got the score like three times and I'm surprised, too. I'm like why am I...

Ben: When you were practicing, you were just doing practice tests I guess.

Maria: Yes, yes.

Ben: Excellent. Okay. Good. Good. And would you recommend this IELTS Indicator test?

Maria: For sure. If you are-- you save money because it's cheaper. It's like 150-something like that. I think it depends on your country, but it's definitely cheaper or less expensive and also if you're planning to take the exam overseas for example, I took the exam-- my second and my



third attempt I took it in Orlando. So, if you are planning to take it overseas, you save a plane ticket and you can use it for vacation, not for exam.

Ben: Or combine both and have a holiday and finish it up with an IELTS test if you like. It's a great way to finish a holiday.

Maria: I did that and it was actually not a good idea.

Ben: Oh, wow! So, you went on a holiday to Orlando and finished it up with an IELTS test.

Maria: Yes.

Ben: Oh, my word. That's pretty confident.

Maria: That was crazy. Don't do that. It's crazy.



Ben: Why didn't you do it the other way round? Like do the test and then for the rest of the holiday relax?

Maria: I don't know. I guess I'm crazy. I did that my second attempt, but then the third attempt I took like a little vacation so I should get first because I learn.

Ben: Okay, that sounds cool. Do you have anything else that you would like to share before we finish?

Maria: Well, I would like to thank you guys; you and Daphne for your last-minute help in my case. I think everyone should have the opportunity to take classes with you because I think you're really good and I will have loved to have the opportunity to meet you guys before because I didn't study with you for the general, but I would love to.



Ben: Well, if you need to study with us for the general, let us know. We can sort it out, but thank you very much Maria for your kind words. I appreciate it and I think Daphne will be more than happy to hear those words as well. So, I'll say thank you on behalf of her.

I think that's everything. So, basically just to summarize for the students that as I said, there is a light at the end of the tunnel and IELTS Indicator could be this bridge-- could be the bridge to get you to where you want to be, but Maria, just one last thing. With these IELTS Indicator tests and the agreement with your university in Canada, is there a condition that you have to take the official IELTS test after a while or are they just going to accept this and then it's done? You're in.

Maria: They're just going to accept this in my case. George Brown is just accepting this one and that's it. You don't have to take the-- well at least for now. They told me that. They told me that.



Ben: That's fantastic and even if they do come back, I doubt they would, but if they do say you need to take the IELTS, you'll have had a month or two in Canada already, wouldn't you? I guess.

Maria: Yes.

Ben: So, yes. So, even if you did have to take it, which I doubt you would--

Maria: I'll have the-- yes, but I will have the practice I mean the speaking and there is speaking practice there and I will definitely take a few classes with you because with the writing it's a thing because you have to keep practicing. I mean you can always improve. So, in my case, I will probably take a few classes more with you guys for the writing part.

Ben: Ah, okay.



Maria: And listening to the podcast, which I love.

Ben: Super. Thank you. We'd love to help you carry on improving with your writing, Maria and I think as well if you're sending us writing related to architecture and your subject, we can look at that as well although IELTS is our expertise. If you want to buy a pack and use it to help you prepare for your university studies, we would be happy to help you with that, but just as a warning, none of us are architects.

Maria: But that will be fantastic for me.

Ben: Super. Okay. Good. Good. Just remember we've never built a house. I've never designed one. I've just been correcting essays for the last couple of years. That's what we do and enjoy



and that's where we can offer the most value, but yes, we'd definitely love to give you feedback and help you carry on improving. Have you worked on reducing specifically your hesitation?

Maria: Yes, I did that. Well, I'm still working on it.

Ben: Interesting. What did you do to work on it?

Maria: I try to speak more English with my husband and I took a few classes to simulate the exam like with real questions and timing. It's a good idea to do that.

Ben: Interesting and you just took those online with an online tutor.

Maria: Mm-hmm.

Ben: Super.



Maria: I think you have-- I saw in your last email-- in your last podcast that you have now a speaking--

Ben: Feedback service, yes.

Maria: Feedback, yes. It's new or? It's kind of new, no?

Ben: Yes, yes, yes, yes. It's new. I think it was Daphne's idea or maybe we launched it together. And you took that and that was pretty helpful for you as well.

Maria: Yes. Well, I didn't do the one you have, but I think it's awesome you have it because I feel comfortable with you guys which is very important with your tutor because I had a tutor-- I'm not saying names, but I had a tutor and she was-- well, it was not good.



Ben: Okay. Why? What was-- you don't have to tell me the name, but I'm always curious. Why was she bad?

Maria: In my second attempt, he told me that I wouldn't have the grades I needed and I did. So, he was a little bit negative.

Ben: Yes, yes, definitely. That's not--

Maria: And the end the day before my test. So, I'm not too comfortable-- I'm not a comfortable-- I get nervous.

Ben: Oh, no. That's a shame.

Maria: But I did well. At the end, thank God I did well.



Ben: Yes, you did really well. You did excellent. Okay, so that's everything and well done, Maria. Well done for passing this test and I'm looking forward to carrying on working with you and Daphne will be as well. So, thank you very much for your time and doing this interview with this today.

Maria: Thank you, Ben. It's a pleasure for me.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com.

Ben: We'll be launching this probably in a couple of days at the weekend, so I hope you're ready for global stardom.

Maria: This is my first time so I'm ready.



Ben: You can expect the paparazzi outside your door and following you around.

