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INTRODUCTION

Ben: Hello there, IELTS podcast listeners. In this episode, we'll be talking with Alline who is based in London, but from Brazil. How are you doing today, Alline?

Alline: Hello, Ben. It's great to listen your voice again. I'm pretty much fine today, thank you.



Ben: Excellent. All right. Well, Alline has been in the UK for the last I think it was a year you've been there. Is that right?

Alline: Yes, it's about a year now.

Ben: Excellent. Okay and so obviously, you were there during the whole lockdown period over the last few months. Is that right?

Alline: It's right.

Ben: Wow! Wow! Okay, before we jump into Alline's story about how she was preparing during lockdown and how she got the grades that she wants, before we go into that, I've got to ask Alline a very important question. How do you like British food, Alline, coming from Brazil?



Alline: Oh, my. This is such a difficult question. You put me in a really difficult situation here. I wouldn't say that I love British food, not at all. Well--

Ben: Hey, Alline--

Alline: I would say it has some advantage, some drawbacks. They have some positive points, but I would go for the pubs which if I had to say one highlight from London drinking and food, I'll go for pubs.

Ben: For the pubs, yes.

Alline: Yes, yes London or British food is basically-- I'm getting used to the Sunday roast if I can say something or...



Ben: Alline, you can say anything you want now. You've got your IELTS. You got your certificate. You can say anything now.

Alline: Yes, yes that's the feeling. That's exactly the feeling now like I have the exam, I have this number, I have exactly my results so I can talk about them pretty much better now. No, no, no, but I'm kidding. Fish and chips could be good if you go for a really traditional place here because we can find everywhere. London it's a really touristic city so we have fish and chips everywhere, but we have some local restaurants which is really I would say more traditional.

So, in that places, I would say the gastronomy or the British food it's pretty much better, but considering that London is such a multicultural city, you can find whatever you want to eat. So, if you want to eat foods from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Asia, North America, you can find everything



here. Even Brazilian; we have a thousand of Brazilian restaurants here. So, if someone wants to live in London, this would not be a problem.

Ben: Yes, this is what I like about London and the UK. It's so multicultural. The Ethiopian food; I love injera; all of this. Yes, it's amazing, but you're totally right there and I just want to highlight what Alline said that a lot of tourists or a lot of people will go to London, pick up a fish and chips from the corner; from the same place that is doing Turkish kebabs, that's doing Indian tandooris, that's doing Italian pizzas and French cuisine and English fish and chips and then they're surprised that it tastes absolutely terrible and I'm like well of course, if you go to any random place on the corner, what do you expect?



Like Alline says, if you go to the traditional ones especially the pubs; pub food it's better to-- if you go to the traditional fish and chips shops, it's a totally different meal and it is amazing especially if you're on the coast as well.

Alline: You are right. Perfect. This is correct.

Ben: Yes, I do miss pub life actually. After moving away from the UK a while ago and living in Spain and then staying out of the UK for the last 15 years or so even though it's my home country, I do miss the fish and chips.

Okay, let's get into it. So, why are you in the UK, Alline?

Alline: So, my husband was living here before. Actually, he was living in Moscow before and then moving to London and by that time, we decided that we had been on a relationship by



distance for a longer time, that would be better to live together. Then we got married and then I'm moving to London. So, that's why I'm here now.

Ben: Interesting, interesting, and that of course obviously led you to taking the IELTS exam.

Alline: Exactly, exactly. My purpose with IELTS is validate my graduation, my career here in London. So, I need to apply for equipment which called HCPC. It's a general registration for healthcare careers. I think probably you would ask me about that at some point. So, I'm a dietitian. I used to work in hospitals in Brazil. My whole life was working in hospitals and that was my idea to continuing this purpose here. So, before I start to work, I need to have my registration and before my registration, I need IELTS for it. They asked for IELTS this course to analyze your level of English and then you need-- it's the first step before I start my whole registration here.



Ben: Interesting, interesting and did you do the UKVI; that IELTS?

Alline: Could you explain that for me? What is VI?

Ben: Isn't there a version where you have to take for the British visa?

Alline: No, no. I don't need that just because my husband works in our embassy. So, I have a different type of visa. I have kind of a citizenship here.

Ben: Okay, I see. I see. Interesting, interesting.

Alline: Sorry, I interrupted.

Ben: That's fine. Carry on, please.



Alline: I wouldn't just say that IELTS was for the registration. So, this government council of healthcare professionals asked for IELTS. They have different grades for different professions, so this is why I took IELTS.

Ben: Right. I see and how did you start your preparation?

Alline: So, when I came to London, I decided to start to study English again. Well, my whole life in Brazil, we had this basic English classes at school and after that, I lived kind of less than a semester-- four months-- in Canada, but it was five years ago and then I moved back to Brazil and then by the time that I came to London, I decided that I need to study further the language. I need getting used to this accent which is completely different from my background. My English background was American English and when I came here, I thought okay, here they speak almost everything different, so I need to start the language again.



And then I start to study general English in a school; face-to-face classes and then I took three months to study general English and then I started my English classes-- IELTS classes in the same school and it was until November last year when I took the exam for the first time. I must say that I took IELTS three times. I passed in the third one.

Ben: Right. I see. So, just to get it straight, you had been studying English before. You had a period of time in Canada, but then you moved back to Brazil for a couple of years and then you moved to London, UK and you continued with your English education there by using a local academy. Is that right?

Alline: Yes, this is right. This is perfect.

Ben: Got you. Got you and they were preparing you for the IELTS exam, correct?



Alline: Yes, yes. At that time-- firstly, I studied general English which was more a conversation, listening, but as I was in advanced classes, I didn't have properly grammar classes or basic topics. They just put all of us in the class. We had some conversation. We had some grammar, but it was really little. The teacher said that we need something or need to straightway some point. In that time, we had some grammar classes, but in general, it was a conversation, improving accent, improving fluency, cohesion, coherence. And then after that, I start my IELTS preparation in that academy.

Ben: Got you. Okay, okay and what issues did you need solving regarding your IELTS preparation? What problems did you encounter?

Alline: So, the first thing for me was be aware of what is IELTS. So, what is IELTS, what they want from me. That's the most-- it could seem like the most basic, but it's really true. You need to be aware of what the exam is expecting from you, what they want from you. So, that was my



first point; to understand what means listening, speaking, reading, writing. What is the bands; what they want from that.

So, that was my first point about IELTS and then I realized that I have more difficulties with writing and on the other hand, reading was really easy since the beginning for me. So, I could focus on writing which was my difficult task.

Ben: Interesting. I think this is a common pattern with medical students is that the reading is definitely one of the strong points, but the writing and the speaking-- especially the writing is one of the biggest hurdles for most of the students. So, what specific issues did you have with the writing, Alline?

Alline: So, at the beginning, I would say that IELTS has some style of writing that you need to follow. So, they have a lot of different topics I'm pretty sure about that, but we need to show off



your vocabulary when you are writing. So, my first essay it was too basic for IELTS, so I need to level up the language. I need to add more information. I need to add more examples. I need to find a way or find a frame for writing down that. So, that was my first issue. After that, I could see some flaws on my grammar which I've been working on with Daphne when I bought our essay corrections and yes, that was my way to get my exam my rights.

Ben: Interesting. So, the actual questions were they a problem for you or was it more the language part?

Alline: Some of the questions, the language I would say. Firstly, the grammar-- some points of grammar, for instance, prepositions. I realized after so many years since I did English that I had problems with this basic grammar which was preposition or gerunds, infinitive verbs which is really basic grammar and on the other hand, I could use advanced structures that I've been used to use here living in London. So, that was my first point that Daphne showed me. Listen, you



need to study these parts before you use this advanced structure because the examiner will see that and say okay, you have these basic, basic, basic language issues. It will get your levels down.

Ben: Right. I see. I see and with your writing, I know you mentioned a few minutes ago about the style of the writing and I think specifically you were referring to the academic style of writing. Is that right?

Alline: That's right. Yes, it's about academic writing because you need to have this style, this proper and formal style. You cannot use some idiomatic expressions sometimes which is more frequently used in speaking part. So, we need to separate that and not only this academic style but Daphne showed me how could I level up my writing; adding some adverbs, some adjectives on my writing.



So, when you need to show the examiner you know the vocabulary, you have topic-specific vocabulary and this was something that switched up key on my mind like okay, now I know that I need to writing down some structures or some examples or some adjectives. I need to be more specific when I'm talking about some topics. So, that was my point also.

Ben: Excellent, excellent and Daphne helped you improve your writing by giving you the feedback. Is that right?

Alline: This is perfect, right. Sorry I forgot to mention that before.

Ben: No problem. No problem.

Alline: I'm so sorry. I bought this essay pack-- essay corrections. Firstly, I bought just one between my first and my second exam. I bought one essay correction which helped me a lot, but I didn't get the mark that I need. My target was 7 overall and 6.5 each. So, I got 7 overall since



the beginning and 6 on my writing the first and the second time. It was so frustrating because it's just half a band and it was separating me from my registration here and this process was quite tough.

But okay, jumping back. I'm going off topic. Sorry.

Ben: No problem. Can I just jump in there, Alline? So, when you got your band 6 in the writing, this was when you were preparing with the local English academy. Is that right?

Alline: Yes. I was preparing with my local and I had already bought just one essay correction and Daphne was the one who correct my first essay and since then, I asked her to correct all of mine. I don't know any other professional who is working with you, but I have a really great relation with Daphne even just by email. Well, you know when you feel that you trust on the person, the style of the person match with your style, so I do like the way that Daphne works. So,



she correct my first-- between my first and my second exam and then I didn't pass and then the lockdown comes and my third exam which was the last one was postponed many, many, many, many times for the center.

Ben: Right, right. Okay. So, just to summarize, you did start off with your local academy--

Alline: Yes.

Ben: --preparing for the IELTS and at the same time, you bought a correction from us-- an essay correction and you got some feedback and then did you carry on working with the local academy or did you just switch your energy or switch your focus into online corrections?

Alline: I just focus on online correction because I had bought a pack of six months studying in this academy and then when it finished, I decided to not go back to the face-to-face classes and



then I decided to study by myself. I had books at home. I've been studying English for a while. At that point, I knew with them. I know what they are expecting from me.

So, I decided to study by myself and then I realized that writing down a lot of essays without any correction wouldn't be the best strategy. I saw okay, I don't know where is my mistakes now because I just have a point and if I got this 6 before and I don't have anyone showing me what is my flaws, where is my problem with my essay, I'm not improving here. So, I decided to buy another essay corrections pack which was six essay corrections I guess or eight essay corrections. I think it's eight and then I started to work with Daphne.

So, she's really fast. I wrote down my essay, I sent to her and then she sent me back the next day because I have a really short time in that time when I bought this exam because the point is during all the lockdown, my third exam would be two days after the lockdown. So, the exam would be in a Saturday and they sent me a message on Friday or Thursday cancelled my test



because of the lockdown, but two days before, I was fully prepared for it and they cancelled my test.

Ben: Oh, my word.

Alline: Yes and during all the lockdown, they do not-- no, no. They haven't canceled that. They postponed that. So, as the college was closed and my test place it's a college and all the colleges here in London was closed. So, they postponed my test a month and then two or three days before they sent another email cancel that and postpone that again and then again and again. They made that four times. It was so frustrating. I was so, so, so tired of it.

Ben: Yes, that's an emotional roller coaster, isn't it? Wow!

Alline: Yes. So much up and down because the quarantine is difficult. It was such a difficult period for everyone here in London. I'm not aware of whole world, but I could say about London



that lockdown was at the beginning really strict. I wasn't allowed to stay out apart from going to the supermarket or I need to have a letter to be on the streets. Well, it was quite difficult and in the meantime of all this, this feeling of not being safe or we don't know about the virus. I had this rollercoaster about my English exam-- my IELTS postponed my test many, many, many times.

Ben: Wow! That is quite a challenge and yes, I think suffering a lockdown in a city is a completely different experience to if you're living in the countryside. It's a very different experience. I was also in a city center during lockdown and I wish I would have been back home in England near my family and in the countryside in Yorkshire rather than be in a city center in Europe in which I was.



But you had it even more difficult, didn't you, Alline, because your test was kept getting moved, postponed as you said, and finally, you did get your test date. And while the exam was being postponed, what were you doing? Were you continuing to work on your IELTS?

Alline: Yes. I had these ups and downs. So, when they postponed my test, it used to be a month. So, I used to get this email saying that my exam would be postponed again. I took four or five days off of studying like I need to clear my mind. I need to put my mind on the right way again and then I start to study again and I studied daily a couple of hours. I used to listen your podcast all the time. This is something that is getting used to my routine. I was staying in the house, I was at the gym, I was walking, I was-- whenever. During the lockdown-- before the lockdown, I was listening all the time your voice and after that. During the lockdown was the same. So, I used that time to listen old podcasts, new ones, the ones that I had listened before and then I decided to listen again.



So, this was part of my preparation for sure and after writing down some essays and at some point in the middle of the quarantine, I realized that I need to buy a package of essay corrections. Otherwise, studying by myself no one correcting me I wouldn't see where is my mistake. So, that was when I bought it and I started to work with Daphne.

Ben: Got you. Excellent point there. I just want to mention that when we're preparing for IELTS, it's quite easy and it feels okay just to be kind of like listening and consuming information and getting more advice and all advice and learning how to do this and that, more vocabulary, but from my experience, it's action which will get you the results. And I think Alline would definitely confirm this because once you invested in getting this pack of essay corrections, then you could immediately see what needed to be improved. Is that right?

Alline: Is that perfect right. So, I used to say to my friend that the podcast or the classes is just one part of the preparation. It's where you get information. You get what you need to do. You get



the vocabulary. You can find a way to write down that properly, but you need to do your part. You need to put it in practice. You need to write it down and say-- my flaw was writing, so I need to write down an essay and I have this third part which is someone corrected that for you because it's not only important to have the information, trying to use that, but you need to know if you are using that in a correct way. So, that was my advice for my friend which was asking me how it was with IELTS.

Ben: Yes, this is so true and it's good advice. You need to choose which information you're going to consume, but also what action, what steps you're going to actually take because as I've said a million times before that IELTS is like learning to ride a bicycle. You can read all the books you want to about riding a bicycle or you could watch YouTube videos about learning to ride a bicycle, but unless you get on the bike i.e. do a practice test or write an essay or do a mock speaking exam or get feedback for your speaking or writing; unless you start doing those, then



it's difficult-- it's practically impossible to improve unless you're actually taking action and getting feedback. So, Alline, what would you say was the most valuable part of getting the feedback? Was it seeing your errors? Was it the correction or the suggestions on how to improve your writing?

Alline: Well, I think I have two points here. Firstly, was building up my confidence because when you have someone not only saying what you are doing wrong but really emphasizing what we're doing correct, you will repeat this point in another essay. So, when Daphne was correcting my essays and I could see which points was my strong point, which sentence I was using and was correct, I tried to repeat that.

So, now I have a perfect frame on my mind how to write down an essay my first sentence how it would go because Daphne told me which one was my strong point. She said okay, this is a really good sentence. This is a really advanced level of grammar and I try to repeat these really good



points in my other essay and it was really good. It was really, really important because my essay could be concise and with advanced use of the language and other point which was my second point really important during this Daphne corrections was show me these basic grammar mistakes; preposition mistakes or how to giving an example using concise examples, how to use or how to bring more or catch more information in the end of the paragraph; how to develop that, using that therefore as an example to summarize this paragraph, adding more information in my conclusion like a prediction in the end of it.

So, when she gave me these specific points where I could improve and level up my band together with this feeling of being more confident because I know I'm doing something correct as well. I'm not but just messing up my essay. I'm doing something which is really good here. So, that was something really important.



Ben: Beautiful. I love your explanation there. I like the fact as well that you acknowledged it's a mixture, isn't it? It's a mixture of not only getting the corrections but it's also getting the suggestions on how to improve, but also the recognition of what you've done well because with that, like you've just said, you get that positive encouragement and you're 10 times more likely to use it in your next essay which is-- basically, it's the right track you want to be on. Just keep on improving. So, what about the other sections, Alline? I'll have to ask you about the speaking, reading, listening; how you prepared for those. What did you do to get yourself ready for the exam for those parts?

Alline: Well, as I said previously, the reading was something easy for me since the beginning. Since I was knowing about the exam, I found that reading was my strong point. So, I didn't really study about it during my last preparation for the last exam. My listening I used to listen a lot of podcasts. News is really important because you can get vocabulary and you can get used with



the language. So, BBC, Sky News, Independent-- all the papers that we have here in the UK I used to listen to them although I try also listen from different countries because I know that the exam wouldn't be just British accents. It could be, but it's possible to be from Australia, from wherever. So, I try to listen from different countries to getting used with accents and the vocabulary and the use of the language.

If you search on YouTube, you can find some exams-- listen exams to prepare for it. So, exercises to prepare for it. I used to do that with the listening as well. For my speaking, speaking is quite difficult to prepare when you are in a lockdown. You don't have exactly how to practice that. So, my first point was writing down some answers. This was really helpful for me for writing-- for speaking, sorry.

So, I knew that the first part would be about personal questions so I really wrote down my answers because I know you believe that you are aware of your personal information. Sometimes



you can find you in a situation that you don't know such a simple word because you predict that you know because it's about yourself, but in fact, you don't.

I think I remember one of your podcasts talking about physiotherapist which could not explain about their own career. When I listened I said okay, I need to realize if I had any mistakes with my own career. So, I wrote down about my previous experiences and at that point when you are writing down, my speaking I was doing that, I could add some information. So, I could find some idiomatic expressions which I related in my mind with careers or another one about myself.

So, my three exams, they asked me if I prefer to work in the morning or in the afternoon or in the morning or at night and I predict that would be the same for students because the first question is do you study or do you work? When you say work or study, the second question for me was do you prefer to do this in the morning or in the afternoon? So, if you could recognize some words to use that point, for example, I'm an early bird person and then you have an idiomatic



expression that you can relate it with yourself. So, I wrote this down during the speaking preparation. So, I had this early bird for personal and early bird could be if they ask about myself, about my father, about any other person. So, I related some idiomatic expressions with persons, places, experiences. So, that was the way that I could study during the lockdown.

Ben: That is fantastic, Alline. So, I'll just summarize. So, you were listening to a previous podcast where one of the listeners or one of the successful students shared their experience in the speaking exam where they struggled to explain their own profession. So, you learned from their mistake by writing about your profession and also answering questions that you've had previously in other exams and applying it to your profession and also preparing idiomatic expressions that you could use with your personal experience. Is that right?

Alline: Yes. I try to find these idiomatic expression for everything. So, if they asked me about places and places could be a place that I would like to visit, a place that I had visited before, a



place that someone told me about. So, they have these general points that they could asking you in speaking the monologue which could be personal or could be about a person, could be about a place, could be about an object, or a thing. So, I try to find idiomatic expressions to use for each of them regardless if it's something in the past, something that I would like to do, or something that I've been doing during the quarantine.

So, idiomatic expression for places such as off the beaten track. So, I would like to visit a place which is off the beaten track or I had visited a place which was off the beaten track. So, I tried these idiomatic expressions for each type of questions they could ask me and it doesn't matter if there was the past and the future, if this is true or not. I just put these idiomatic expressions in my mind and then that was the bullet point which I wrote down in a paper they gave to us. So, I had these really pointed idiomatic expressions in my mind to use whenever the topic they gave me.



Ben: So, if they were going to ask you about anybody or anything, that person would be an early bird.

Alline: Exactly.

Ben: And if they were going to ask you about any place you've ever been to, it's going to be off the beaten track, correct?

Alline: Exactly. That is right. So, I have that in my mind. So, I have these expressions to use and I don't need to try to remember many of them. I just tried to put three or four for each topic in my mind and then it is. It is. So, the other one is just building up the situation around. So, if they ask me a museum or a place-- so if they ask me about a place that I would like to visit or a building-- the first one, they asked me about a building that I would like to visit or the second one they asked me about museum. So, I had topic-specific vocabulary for it. It doesn't matter if this is



true or not because the examiner doesn't know-- don't know if this is true or not. I tried to put in my mind these words and at that moment, is just building up the situation around the question they gave me.

Ben: Absolutely. I'm just imagining that they ask you to tell us about-- they ask you to tell them about a childhood teacher that you remember and you could say oh well, I remember my teacher Mr. Shaw. He was an early bird and he lived off the beaten track.

Alline: [unintelligible 00:35:49.14] you cannot mix them up. You need to separate which one is for places which one is for person, but yes, I had something kind of it for describe person, describe places and I had this information-- I must admit I had a lot of this information from your podcast. So, I used to write this down and then okay, I can use this not only my writing. I can use



this with my speaking as well. Just put this here on my notes and then I try to realize how to use that.

Ben: Beautiful, beautiful. That's exactly how to listen to the podcast. It's just to take notes, write things down and that way, you're extracting the best out of it and you're taking notes. It becomes more active learning, active listening. So, that is genius. Good move there, Alline.

Now, we're coming towards the end of the episode and I'd like to just ask you what would you say to any students who are on the fence right now; who haven't decided and who might be thinking about starting working with IELTS Podcast; with Daphne, with Ellen, with myself, and Candice? What would you say to a student who's considering starting to work with us?

Alline: I would say that it's a really good pathway to go. Well, it was how I sorted out my problems, so definitely, yes. If you are in doubt if it's worthy or not, it really is. It really is. It's



something that will level you up. Daphne is such a lovely person. You are also really kind. So, you can trust that IELTS Podcast will help you.

Ben: Beautiful. Thank you very much for that, Alline. That definitely means a lot to us here and I know that Daphne and Ellen; everybody on the team will be really happy with that. So, thank you. So now that you have applied-- sorry. Now that you have passed the exam, what's the next step? This is the last question and then we finish. What's the next step for you now? You've got your IELTS score. You got your IELTS certificate. What are you doing now?

Alline: So now that I have my results, I need to apply for this council; the healthcare professional council, which is another step. It's not only the language. Now, I need to compare all my career from Brazil, my graduation, my post-graduation, my previous experiences here. So, I translated all my papers. It must be official translation and then I send them all my experiences letters from my ex-managers. Well, I send them all these papers and they will analyze that. They



will send this back for me. Most of the time, they send it back asking for further information and then I sending them again and then so on and so forth. That's just my pathway in this future.

Ben: Wow! Wow! So, it seems like a lot of back and forth and emailing and messaging and then you will get the certification from them and then you can start practicing your work. Is that correct?

Alline: Yes, is that correct. My main idea here is working NHS, the National Health System, as a dietitian. So, I've been working with them in another position and my target, my goal is working as a dietitian and yes, that's it.

Ben: Maybe it's a slow process because they want you to get used to British food before you start talking about it.



Alline: Maybe. I don't know exactly how to describe Sunday roast for someone. It's the time. It takes time.

Ben: Exactly. Okay for you Sir, I can see you're a bit of an early bird, so I would recommend a Sunday roast. There's a pub off the beaten track I know.

Alline: Or if you go off the beaten track and turn the corner and if you are an early bird, walk in the morning, going off the beaten track and having a Sunday roast.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com