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**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.

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## INTRODUCTION

**Ben:** Hello there, IELTS Podcast listeners. In this episode, we're going to be talking with Linu who has got some exciting news to share regarding her IELTS exam. So, how are you doing today, Linu?

**Linu:** I feel great. I'm in fact happy to talk to-- have an interview like this with the manager of IELTS Podcast.



**Ben:** Super. Super. So, Linu, where are you based at the moment?

**Linu:** I'm basically from India, but at the moment, I'm residing in United Arab Emirates.

**Ben:** Oh, in the United Arab Emirates?

**Linu:** Yes.

**Ben:** I see and what are you working-- what is your job there?

**Linu:** Professionally, I'm a pharmacist.

**Ben:** Interesting, interesting and why are you taking the IELTS exam?

**Linu:** Actually, I had a plan for immigration. You know the job plan in UAE is not that stable especially in these days. So, we are planning for immigration to either Australia or Canada.

**Ben:** Interesting. When you said we, is it you and your family?



**Linu:** Yes, of course.

**Ben:** Interesting and you said you're working as a pharmacist in the United Arab Emirates. Is that right?

**Linu:** Yes, yes. I am.

**Ben:** Excellent. So, you need the IELTS exam to help you get to Canada or Australia.

**Linu:** Yes, yes. You're right.

**Ben:** Right. I see and how-- has that been complicated because of COVID?

**Linu:** Yes, yes. I have to admit.

**Ben:** I'm sorry to hear that, but how has it affected you? How has COVID had an impact?



**Linu:** Okay. Initially, it was about the exam date. The date of IELTS examination. Maybe you're also aware of that, but actually what happened here in UAE they would keep on postponing the date due to the strict regulations over here.

**Ben:** I see.

**Linu:** For the immigration, me and my partner both of us have to appear the [unintelligible 00:02:42.25].

**Ben:** Okay. I see. So, with the test dates continually changing, it was hard to actually just sit down and get the exam complete.

**Linu:** Yes. Yes, so we give our only on the half paper pages. I couldn't complete the processings.

**Ben:** Right. Interesting. Interesting. And so you had that challenge and you had these different dates and cancellations and so on, but eventually, you managed to sit down and take the exam, right?



**Linu:** Yes, yes.

**Ben:** Got you, got you and what challenges did you have before even booking an exam? Like what challenges did you have preparing for the exam?

**Linu:** Basically, my major concern was in the writing part; writing section of the IELTS exam, but to be frank, I have written three IELTS exams before attending IELTS Podcast course.

**Ben:** Right. Okay. So, when you joined us, you were looking to solve the issue with the writing, right?

**Linu:** Especially with essay writing, yes.

**Ben:** Essay writing. I see. What were the problems you were facing specifically with your writing?



**Linu:** If you ask me, I should be frank that I really didn't know what was the problem because I was stuck up at 6.5 and whenever I consulted with other IELTS tutors, actually I have taken another face-to-face coursing here itself in UAE.

**Ben:** Right.

**Linu:** It was helpful in many other ways, but in fact, the writing part was not helping me with this type of course.

**Ben:** Interesting. Interesting.

**Linu:** They were not band specific. That was the problem. They were coaching excellent. Everything was fine. They were not band specific. They were not looking for people to improve with their bands. They are only looking for the best scores or the desired scores like say it's maybe 6.5. That's it. They're not looking beyond that.

**Ben:** Interesting. So, it was kind of like a general approach to improving scores.



**Linu:** Yes and in fact I have also had a coaching individual based.

**Ben:** I see with the tutor that you found in the United Arab Emirates?

**Linu:** Yes, yes, here in Sharjah. He's teaching as well as in Dubai.

**Ben:** Right. I see. How was that tutor?

**Linu:** That was also only for writing. You would not believe for the writing part I have done so many research work and finally, I got this amazing coaching session.

**Ben:** Awesome, but the amazing coaching session was with the private tutor did you say or was it with us? I didn't hear.

**Linu:** Yes, with IELTS Podcast only.

**Ben:** Okay.



**Linu:** See the tutors helped me to improve my vocabulary I must say that.

**Ben:** Awesome.

**Linu:** But then that didn't have an impact on my IELTS scores.

**Ben:** Oh, no. Who didn't? We didn't or the tutor didn't?

**Linu:** No. I think I'm confusing you. In the previous sessions with my coach here in UAE, we had a lot of vocabulary sessions improving due to-- not due to but I can say the practice sessions, [unintelligible 00:06:38.13] corrections. All these practice modules were perfect. I felt that there is some improvement while doing the coaching here itself, but still when it came to the exam point of view, there was no change in the score.

**Ben:** I see. I see. So, even though the tutoring you did feel like you were improving, you did feel like you improved your vocabulary. However, come exam day, you were still at 6.5, right?





**Linu:** Yes. Exactly. That's what happened.

**Ben:** I see. I was confused before. I was confused if you were talking about our coaching or the--

**Linu:** I'm so sorry for that.

**Ben:** No, no problem. No problem. What specific doubts did you have before joining with us, before joining the IELTS Podcast?

**Linu:** As I told you before, in fact I had to know what are the mistakes I am making. That was my issue.

**Ben:** Okay. So, your concerns were you wanted to know what was going wrong with your score.

**Linu:** From the previous analysis from my other tutors, they said the grammar is okay, the grammar is fine, but the problem is with the length of the sentence. I used to write lengthy sentences. Then they asked me to get practice writing it in shorter and crisp manner, but then I



found it really difficult because when my writing style itself is like making it lengthy, lengthy like that. That was an issue. I felt maybe that was the reason I am stuck in 6.5, but other than that, I was not aware of my mistakes.

**Ben:** I see. I see. So, you're talking about grammar mistakes and-- what other kind of mistakes were you making or what mistakes did you discover you were making?

**Linu:** Once I started working with one of your colleague, I feel is Daphne, she really needs an appreciation for helping me out during this course. Working with her really helped me to be frank and I'm very thankful to her.

**Ben:** Excellent.

**Linu:** The thing is the way she made me feel how to improve my writing style. That had a different impact on me and from that point of view, when I started thinking like these are the



errors or minute mistakes that may hold back me. Then there started some kind of-- some changes in my way of writing and the way of approach towards the essay.

**Ben:** Excellent. So, when Daphne started giving you the feedback, then you started feeling better about your work. It seems like you started to improve faster as well.

**Linu:** Yes, yes.

**Ben:** Interesting.

**Linu:** I think it was only two weeks period that we had the course with Daphne.

**Ben:** Only two weeks?

**Linu:** I think yes.

**Ben:** And that was sufficient? That was enough for you to improve your band score?



**Linu:** In the beginning, I had a doubt whether it will be sufficient for me, but then I thought because everything has-- somehow the other way I had to choose the dates like that. So, I thought anyway I will make the best out of this time period. Somehow it worked.

**Ben:** So, you said that you had some doubts about it working within two weeks. What specifically-- what were your doubts?

**Linu:** No. Actually this is feedback-based coaching so I really wanted to know how long it will take for me to improve my corrections. Even with the feedback from professional tutors, we have to do our own hard work from our side. Then only it will help all together. I was wondering if this time period will be sufficient for me to improve myself like learning how Daphne wants me to do. And that was my basic concern while doing the course.

**Ben:** Very interesting. Very interesting. Yes, I can totally understand you were a bit skeptical about having this kind of feedback-based course, but I think you hit the nail on the head, Linu,



when you said it relied on the feedback, the framework and you mentioned something very important; your hard work because you put in a lot of hard work in writing the essays that we were sending you. Is that right? It seems like it.

**Linu:** Yes. I made sure that there was no delay between the essays. Like if you give me one topic to prepare, it's very important for me to write about that topic the same day itself and then after sending the essay and then I do the research work on that to know the related vocabularies or even the ideas. I rarely read so many essays and articles this, this. I really don't get time to do that, but still for this purpose, we have to find time to read the current affairs.

**Ben:** Absolutely, yes, yes. So, just let me get this straight. So, you received an essay question and which did you do first? Did you research the question or did you just write it straightaway?

**Linu:** I think only the first question, the first essay I did some research and I took some time without even in the question frame it was like that. They can take whatever time-- how much



ever we need we can take. So, research then write. So, in that case, I made the research and then only I started writing the essay. Later on, I used to keep the time frame. Within 40 minutes itself I used to complete and send it.

**Ben:** Okay. First, you did it immediately-- no, at first, you did a little bit of research, but then once you got more comfortable, you jumped straight in as soon as you got the question, you got your previous essay, you reviewed that, you took note of your mistakes, and then you jumped in to writing your new essay, correct?

**Linu:** Moreover, the Sentence Guide is really a helping factor. So, much of the time consuming portions were reduced due to this one; the framework. It just made in the Sentence Guide. Of course then the time which I used to take before was only for framing those words, those sentences. Once we got the idea, clearly and with the help of Daphne, she even helped me to improve those framework also. Like how to place those framework in that particular situation depending on the essay question.



**Ben:** Beautiful. Beautiful. Wow! So, once you got to grips with the framework, you dropped your ideas into it then Daphne even gave you feedback about how you can use the Sentence Guide framework related to the question. Is that right?

**Linu:** Yes, exactly.

**Ben:** Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful this. So, at what point did you realize that this was working well for you? When you started getting feedback or when you discovered the framework? At what point did it start working well for you, Linu?

**Linu:** I should say both worked well in my case, but it depends on the individuals, but in my case, both had a clear impact.

**Ben:** Sorry, I think you misunderstood the question. What the question was like did you realize immediately this was working well or halfway through the course you thought this is working good or at the end?



**Linu:** By the middle. By the half way, I came to know that there is a major difference happening.

**Ben:** Interesting. Interesting. Can you remember any details that made you think oh, yes, this is working well for me?

**Linu:** In fact, I don't remember now well. Especially with the grammar I should say. I was thinking the grammar is correct, somewhat better, but then sometimes even the grammatical errors we might leave them. We may think that this is fine or this is okay with the scenario, but then later on after the feedback only we'll start thinking okay, this is not the right grammar there. It is not the appropriate thing to be put in that [unintelligible 00:16:06.20].

**Ben:** Interesting.

**Linu:** When I started feeling like I have to change this kind of verbs, some general verbs and all which we generally speak in the spoken language.





**Ben:** Interesting. Interesting. So, it was kind of like-- one of the details that you remembered or sort of like or kind of demonstrated that you were improving was when you started getting some feedback on your grammar and you needed to make it more academic. Is that right?

**Linu:** Exactly.

**Ben:** Very interesting. Yes, yes. I remember when I used to correct essays, I still do every now and again, but I would see a lot of spoken English in the essay and it sounds okay because that's how we use it when we're talking. That's how we talk and then you probably hear it on television as well, but for the IELTS exam, we have to transform it and it's not until we get feedback that we realize we could be making mistakes. Interesting. Interesting. So, you had Daphne correcting your essays, right?

**Linu:** Yes.



**Ben:** Right then. Is there anything else you'd like to share about working with Daphne that we haven't covered yet?

**Linu:** Working with Daphne made me more comfortable with not only with language, but I feel there was a positive influence.

**Ben:** Beautiful, beautiful. Why was there--

**Linu:** She kept believing in me and she kept on encouraging. So, I'm thinking in that way also it helped me to give more confidence for the exam.

**Ben:** When you're getting your essay correction back you felt kind of like empowered and more confident. Is that right?

**Linu:** Exactly. Yes, yes.



**Ben:** Beautiful, beautiful. I think I'll just digress for a second here, but I think a lot of tutors just focus on the writing and just focus on the mistakes. Then a decent tutor will also focus on what's going well, but an amazing tutor like what we have here at IELTS Podcast, if I don't mind saying it, with Ellen and Daphne and myself, but with us, we really try-- not only the first two levels of just picking up mistakes, but also saying what's going well, but also inspiring and motivating the student and also not just doing it blindly, but if the student has done well, it needs to be recognized because that's how we build confidence and confidence is such an important element, of course.

**Linu:** Yes, you said it. Yes.

**Ben:** It's not covered in cohesion and coherence. You're not going to get a confidence grade like you do with lexical resource, for example. However, having a high level of confidence it will make you relax better, you're going to write better. It's such an integral part I think to exam



preparation. So, Linu, what scores did you finally get once you managed to book this test and sit the test and get your results back?

**Linu:** Okay. For my scores-- for the listening, I scored 9.

**Ben:** Wow! Awesome. Well done. That's fantastic.

**Linu:** Thank you. Thank you and then for the speaking and reading, my score was 7 and for the writing from 6.5, I jumped to 7.5.

**Ben:** Say that again, please?

**Linu:** For the writing section, my score was 7.5.

**Ben:** 7.5?

**Linu:** Yes.



**Ben:** Wow! And before this it was how much?

**Linu:** 6.5 always.

**Ben:** Oh my word. So, three tests at 6.5 and then you jumped to 7.5.

**Linu:** Yes.

**Ben:** Wow! Well done, Linu. That is amazing. Well done. Fantastic and that band improvement that was because of the feedback, the framework, and your hard work. All three factors, yes?

**Linu:** Yes, of course.

**Ben:** Anything else other than those three factors?

**Linu:** No. I feel these three factors are the most important that helped me to achieve this score.



**Ben:** Yes, yes, that's a really good point. I always talk about exam skills and language skills and I often overlook the hard work, but you're totally right. It's all three. Otherwise, it's not going to happen. So, well done.

**Linu:** It's the hard work sometimes we feel we are fed up with writing in my case. Maybe people are there who are trying more than three or four times still trying to get the desired score, but the determination is also a part of achievement.

**Ben:** Exactly and getting fed up is-- it's so important just to keep yourself motivated and again, this is why a good tutor not only spots mistakes, not only recognizes what you've done, but keeps you motivated as well. I know exactly what you mean, Linu. It's so challenging doing exam after exam after exam and it's frustrating.

**Linu:** Yes, that's what happens with most of the candidates I feel.



**Ben:** Yes, totally. Totally. And Linu, band 9 in the listening, that is incredible. You have to tell us how you got band 9, please.

**Linu:** In fact, there was no magic. I didn't prepare that much, but only as I told you this is my fourth test with IELTS. So, whenever I was preparing for IELTS, I made sure that I will do daily minimum two listening tests.

**Ben:** Daily minimum of two listening tests. Was this during lockdown?

**Linu:** No. I started writing exam before two years actually. In 2018 I'm attempting for IELTS.

**Ben:** Wow! Since then you've been--

**Linu:** One month preparation I used to take before writing the exam.

**Ben:** Say that again, sorry?

**Linu:** I used to take one month of preparation time.



**Ben:** Oh, I see. I see. So, you took a month of work and dedicated it entirely to IELTS preparation.

**Linu:** Yes, but then I should not say that entirely because I was working also simultaneously. So, whenever I get time, I will make sure that at minimum, two IELTS listening test I will do daily.

**Ben:** Beautiful. Wow! Wow! And by doing that, that's how you managed to get band 9.

**Linu:** To be frank, yes because I have not watched the movies or something. Yes, of course, people say that is really beneficial to watch audios and podcasts and I mean the other programs to improve their listening skills, but in my case fortunately or unfortunately, I had no chance to do that. So, I only worked with the exams.

**Ben:** Yes, totally. Totally. I think there are two schools of thought here. One is listen to stuff that you enjoy because you're more likely to remember it and you're more likely to do it more often





and then there is the other school of thought which you belong to which is okay, I don't have that much time and then just get focused and do IELTS listening tests.

**Linu:** And that is the thing that happened to me.

**Ben:** Yes, exactly and I think I would probably go-- depending on how close your exam is, if it's next week, obviously you don't want to be watching movies, but if it's in six months, maybe you have the luxury of watching movies. I think--

**Linu:** Absolutely. It may not work with working class people. I honestly feel like that. I really wonder how people manage to watch movies. It's like when we have an exam coming next week, you have not time for that.

**Ben:** Exactly.

**Linu:** Just make sure we are writing at least two or three exams preferably.



**Ben:** Say that again? Writing two or three essays a day?

**Linu:** Not essays, I was talking about listening part only.

**Ben:** Oh, okay. Sorry, sorry. Got you. Got you.

**Linu:** I think completely I have started writing essays only because of the feedback. Before I used to write essays once in a week or maximum twice in a week. That's it. You know that part which is time consuming and we feel lazy for ourselves.

**Ben:** But it's also difficult, Linu, just to write an essay and then review it yourself. It takes a lot of motivation and you don't even know what's going right and what's going wrong.

**Linu:** That's the part. After writing also we don't have a satisfaction whether it is worth 6.5 or 7. Who knows? We are not aware of the scores. Nobody is there to evaluate.



**Ben:** Exactly. I totally agree with you there. Yes, that's a good point. Wow! So, moving on, now that you've got this exam in your pocket and you've got this band 7.5 writing in your pocket, a band 9 in your pocket, what did you say you got for speaking?

**Linu:** 7 only.

**Ben:** A 7, okay and then for the reading?

**Linu:** 7.

**Ben:** 7. Got you. Got you. Now, you are going to be applying for your Canadian-- you're going to do the Canadian immigration process, right?

**Linu:** Yes, yes.

**Ben:** Interesting. How far along is that?



**Linu:** As the situation is there, we cannot predict anything. We are still waiting for the invitation. Anyway, the documents are there, so being hopeful that everything will be on time.

**Ben:** Wow! And then hopefully, you can get to Canada and start a new life, no?

**Linu:** Yes. Hello?

**Ben:** Beautiful.

**Linu:** Hello?

**Ben:** Hello, yes.

**Linu:** Can you hear me?

**Ben:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Linu:** Okay. Fine. In between the connection was breaking.



**Ben:** Oh, it's getting noisy now. It's getting noisy. Okay, then Linu. Do you have anything to say to students who are listening to this podcast and are struggling with their IELTS scores?

**Linu:** Yes, I will say only one thing because even four months ago, I was also listening like many other candidates; watching videos as well as listening to the podcast even like the experience to candidates who scored the desired band. So, at that point of time, I never believed I will achieve the score one day or the other, but that decision I made to approach an online coaching with IELTS Podcast, that changed my entire impression on the IELTS scores. Once I thought this is not achievable and I am going to leave these exams. I better go for some other maybe like the student program-- student visa program something like that to get the plan then-- to plan work with the Canadian immigration, but only because of this training and the feedback that I'm able to score this mark.

**Ben:** Beautiful. Beautiful.



**Linu:** So, other than waiting-- there may be people still waiting and listening to the podcast sessions. It is worth investing in something productive.

**Ben:** Beautiful point there. Beautiful. Yes. So, if you're listening and you're having doubts about it, then email us or just come and join the course and hopefully, we'll have you on the podcast and you'll be a global star like what is about to happen to Linu. Isn't that right, Linu? Are you ready for your global stardom? Okay. So, yes. That's everything. Thank you very much, Linu. You're an absolute star. Well done and I wish you all the best for your Canadian immigration application.

**Linu:** Thank you. Thank you so much, Ben. It was nice talking to you.

**Ben:** Yes, likewise.

[Music]

**Female Voice:** Thanks for listening to [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com)

