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INTRODUCTION

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we will be talking with Jesny. She's recently passed IELTS. She's got some fantastic grades. So, could you please introduce yourself and tell us why you're taking IELTS or why you were taking the IELTS exam?

Jesny: Sure. Thanks, Ben. So, I'm Jesny Jacob. I am originally from India. I have been here for pretty much most of my life. I'm planning to move to Canada as part of the current express entry



program that they have, so I was interested to apply for it and hence the attempt to do the IELTS because that was part of requirement for them.

Ben: Interesting.

Jesny: Yes, pretty much that's the initial bit of why I started doing it.

Ben: And what profession will you aim to sort of like take up once you get to Canada?

Jesny: Yes. So, I am an HR professional. I have been working in India for about five years so post my postgraduate program. So, that is what I would wish to take forward obviously which means probably pre-skilling a little bit certification, but yes. More or less that's what I hope to be doing.

Ben: Interesting and because of COVID and all this craziness at the moment has it changed the immigration procedure for you?



Jesny: Not really. To be honest, I was initially planning to do the exam and all of that at the start of the year or which is what I was planning to go in for and actually, because of COVID I paused my plans because I thought or rather was hearing a lot of news with regard to a lot of layoffs all across. So, the job markets everywhere were a little volatile, so hence it seemed safer to stick to what you have and so on and so forth, but I started reaching out to my friends and family who are based out of Canada, people who have made the same kind of moves and from what I understood from them more or less things are returning back to normal.

And for that reason alone and because the process is a long one, so thought that I might as well just start it right now so that hopefully by mid next year we should be ready to move. So, I think by then things will be okay because if things are getting back to normal now, I think mostly by then it all should be back.

Ben: Yes, I've been daydreaming about what I'll be doing next summer as well and I was suggesting to--



Jesny: I can imagine.

Ben: I was suggesting some places to go with my girlfriend and she was like you really think it's going to be over? But yes, I'm like you. I think things will be getting back to normal sooner rather than later.

Jesny: One can hope.

Ben: Exactly, exactly. Yes, I like this mindset and so when you were taking the exam in India were you struggling to find a test center that was open with all the lockdowns and all the craziness that's going on?

Jesny: Yes. So, actually I think-- so in India, I'm not sure if you're aware. We had like a national lockdown for about five to six months because of which my initial exams were planned I think in April which I had to cancel because the exams-- I mean because the centers closed down. The centers in the city that I am in, so I'm in the city of Mumbai, opened in September. Towards I think mid to end of September is when they started opening the centers back for test takers.



I mean I think everybody was a little worried about whether it would be safe enough because you've been in your own bubbles and you've been taking care and suddenly crowds and you're really not sure about how safe it is, but the British Council which conducts the exams here for us they did a lot of-- they did have a lot of information on their websites about how they are taking precautions and so I thought it would be safer to do the exam one month later once things settled in and that's how I planned my exam for the 20th of October.

Ben: Right.

Jesny: So, yes. So, I think by then I was mentally somewhere kind of feeling that they've been doing this for a month or so, so they probably should have their protocols down in place. So, it probably would be relatively safer to give the exam then.

Ben: Okay that's not-- 20th of October or 20th of September?

Jesny: So, I did my exam on the-- oh, sorry. Oh, we are in October. Sorry, my bad. On the 20th of September is when I did my-- yes, I did my exam. So, sorry. My bad. So, then the centers



opened I think towards the-- yes, towards August 19th then. Sorry, it's kind of blurry in two months now.

Ben: Yes, I totally know the feeling. Don't worry about that, Jesny. And was that the first IELTS test you'd taken or have you taken some tests before?

Jesny: No. So, I did an IELTS test last August. So, August 2019 I gave my first IELTS exam and my scores were fairly all right. I mean like if you wish I could just tell you how my scores were then. I got 9 in listening, 8.5 in reading, 8.5 in speaking, and 6.5 in writing.

Ben: Wow!

Jesny: So, yes. So, I was okay, but then-- so, yes. For the program that I was looking for, I required at least a 7 or 7.5 in writing which was when my overall points for my immigration program would be competitively high enough. So, that was what I was looking for and hence I thought I would do the exam again.



Ben: Interesting. So, a 9 in listening, 8.5 in reading, 8.5 in speaking, and 6.5 in writing. Correct?

Jesny: Yes, yes.

Ben: How did you get such good scores in your listening, reading, and your speaking? Those are incredibly good.

Jesny: I think-- so, I've had an edge with English to be honest. I've done fairly well in school and stuff for English. So, English has been kind of like a strong point for me, but I also did a lot of the IELTS mock exams that you have online because you need to get familiar with the pattern even though you might know English to speak that way.

So, speaking I knew wouldn't be much of an issue because from what I was reading. It was basically colloquial conversational that you need to get to. So, that was not something that I was too worried about. Listening, writing, and speaking I mean yes and reading was something that I was worried about and I kept doing all the tests that I could that way. So, enough and I think



there were multiple free apps that you have. So, I kept doing at least a few tests. So, I did a few tests so every day so to speak for about a month or so and then went and did my exams.

Ben: Excellent and any strategy for those tests; for the listening or for the reading like did you read the questions first or read the text first?

Jesny: No. I've always-- I think I've been more comfortable reading the text first and then doing the questions although I've heard multiple views on that, but I tried both to be honest when I was preparing to see what I was more comfortable with and I felt I was more comfortable with reading first so that I have a gist of what the paragraphs are and so on and so forth.

So, this is specifically with regard to reading. When I just read through the-- at least glimpse through what it says to have a fair understanding of what's coming in each paragraph and then going back to the question and then coming back; doing that to and fro because else I felt I would probably be biased like I would probably see an answer I mean see something that is



repeating somewhere else and not be able to choose the actual statement. So, I thought I should probably just give it a read go first.

Ben: Wow! Fantastic. Yes, yes.

Jesny: So, that's what I've gone about basically. Listening I think initially also I didn't have a lot of challenge with listening per se probably a lot to do with the COVID, the meetings that we have seen you're anywhere listening to a lot of you know this is pre-COVID, right? So, yes. Listening basically wasn't much of a problem except for the map questions. That was something that I was not doing quite well in initially; the map grid kind of those questions that were there.

Then I did specifically focus and look at practicing those kind of questions. So, yes. So, that was primarily the only place where I was losing out on listening when I was practicing else it would just be that I'm not keeping my attention for those 30 minutes and somewhere towards the end, usually towards section 4, my mind would start wandering and I would lose something that's



important. So, that was where I think the challenge was but-- so, yes. Basically just practice that out to ensure that it's okay.

Ben: Interesting. Wow! So, just to summarize, for the reading you felt that for you it worked best if you read over the text first just a very brief read to get an idea or to get a gist of the text and then you started looking at the questions, right?

Jesny: Correct.

Ben: Got you. Okay and then for the listening-- yes, sorry for the listening, maps and the plans was a weak spot and you identified that as a weak spot because previously you'd been doing mock tests and you'd found out that that was a weak area. So, you focused on that specific area to bring up that area, correct?

Jesny: Correct.



Ben: Got you, got you. Interesting and then also with the listening and the reading I think you said it was a question of sort of like developing a focus muscle or developing the capacity to stay focused through the questions.

Jesny: Yes.

Ben: Interesting. How did you do that specifically? Was it just willpower or did you have a technique?

Jesny: No. I think it was practice because I'm not personally used for a very long time to keep listening to something and like making notes if it's not-- so somewhere to be honest it's not exactly very challenging, so sometimes I felt that my mind would wander. So, I don't have a challenge that way with something I'm not familiar with like a meeting or something that I know I need that information. So, somewhere it was not exactly very challenging in hand, so I was not able to focus, but the practice really helped so that you know that this is 30 minutes, this is one hour. You keep practicing and get this done.



Ben: Interesting. Very good. Very thorough, very thorough technique there and with the writing it's 6.5. Which areas were giving you so much-- which areas were you struggling with within the writing?

Jesny: So, I think all of it to be honest because the last I did an essay writing was probably 10th grade and that is like a long time ago for me. So, basically Task 2. Task 1 was more or less-- at least I thought was rather okay, but Task 2 to write the essay, to figure out what is the format that they're looking for, and to consolidate that in 40 minutes which is the ideal time that it takes. So, that was something that I kept struggling with and when I was practicing even before my first test, I was fairly certain that probably this is not something that would fly if I want to get like--

So, I was obviously looking for a 9 in all kind of things so to see that what is the maximum that you can get. So, basically I didn't understand the concept of how and what is the scoring elements. I didn't know what is the structure I should follow and since it's also been a while since I'd done something similar, so I was struggling to get it all in the time of 40 minutes.



Ben: Right and how did you go about solving this problem with the writing?

Jesny: So, for my first test to be honest, so I'm still talking about my first test. I just kept listening to videos, reading sample essays online, but they really weren't very consistent because every-- for example, any instructor or any essay it's quite different from the other. So, you really don't know what works and what doesn't because I understand fundamental essay writing structure, but every essay was different. So, I was really in a confused state of mind as to okay what is it that is actually going to help me win. So, I think that kind of reflected when I did my exam as well that I wasn't kind of prepared for what they were looking for.

Ben: I see. So, you were kind of like consuming lots of different resources, but each of those resources with regards to the essays had their own take or their own procedure and you kind of consumed them all. Would that be right?

Jesny: Yes, yes, yes. I think that would be right.



Ben: Interesting and then-- so you got the 6.5 and then you decided okay-- what did you decide when you got the 6.5 like what did you realize?

Jesny: So, I realized I was doing something wrong because I mean I know from my way of doing a language I'm fairly certain that I could have done better and I needed a better score. I mean I was fairly certain that I could do it also. So, then I was very clear that I needed to pick up some coaching or something from a legitimate source so to speak and pick up something that will help me improve my score because I didn't see a point in doing the exam again; self-preparing and wasting time on it rather.

Ben: Yes.

Jesny: So, I thought just figure out what is the method of doing it, pick it up from the right source, and just give the exam post that.

Ben: Interesting and which sources were you looking at? Which sources did you review before because we know you ultimately ended up with IELTS Podcast and the Sentence Guide, but



which other sources were sort of like in your-- were you considering? Were you considering a private tutor, for example?

Jesny: No. I was not preferring a private tutor because one, I was sure I wanted to do it with somebody who came-- I mean I wanted to specifically do it from a British or an international institute. So, I didn't want to do one from India because I was-- again, I didn't have the time to find out what was legitimate or not. So, I basically was going by the most-- because the exam is international and therefore look for what is realistically closer to home so to speak.

So, yes. So, I didn't look at anything-- I didn't look at a private tutor. I kept looking at online reviews for programs similar to yours, but I felt yours had the best reviews and I had gone through the essays on the website. I kind of felt that okay, it's probably going to help and hence decided to go with IELTS Podcast.

Ben: Okay. That's interesting. Had you listened to the podcast before?

Jesny: Yes.



Ben: Okay. Good, good, good. Okay. So, you know that now you're going to be a global star once this gets published?

Jesny: Okay.

Ben: And you probably-- you may have heard that joke before, but which episodes did you listen to like previous students being interviewed or were you listening to my podcast, Helen's and Daphne's or were you just listening to all of them?

Jesny: Yes, yes. No, I wasn't listening to student reviews. I actually just read the student reviews, but I was just listening to yours as well as the other instructors who were speaking. So, I felt-- I mean I was able to get more information out of it. So, of course I like the structure, the way the conversations flew, so I felt it would help me more.

Ben: Interesting, interesting. So, you started working-- you got the IELTS course, the Sentence Guide course and you started working with us and how did that feel like once you started getting the feedback?



Jesny: Oh, that was good. I mean really good actually especially when we started-- I mean I started with your modules; the ones that are the recorded modules that I started with and I was like okay, this helps I mean and the build up to getting those, the template, all of that really helped because I then realized that okay what I was doing wrong. It's probably-- I mean I was doing something, but I was not doing all of what was required.

So, that helped especially the podcast before-- I mean the recordings of the video classes kind of helped for me to figure out what I was doing wrong in comparison to what an idealized essay looks like and the feedback definitely helped because you read something, you listen to something, and then when you try to like ideate it and put it down into words is definitely always a better way of doing it.

So, Daphne was the instructor working with me and she was okay, probably put it this way, put it that way and that really helped. So, trying to learn from one essay, trying not to make the same



mistakes in the next essay which gave her more room to keep helping me with other mistakes that I might be probably making. So, yes. That really helped; the feedback really helped. Yes.

Ben: Super, super, yes. I liked what you said at the beginning about that although you already knew some of what was in the course, but you realized okay. Yes, I'm doing this, but I also need to do this, this, and this and kind of like--

Jesny: Exactly.

Ben: Yes, yes just organize it and kind of like I think more like a process to the whole essay writing experience. And then getting the feedback, I love doing essay corrections. Sometimes I take a break off it, because I just get burnt out, but I love doing the corrections, giving the feedback, and seeing the improvement because as you've experienced with Daphne, you get a first batch of corrections and then if you start implementing what you've learned from there, the tutor has the capacity, has the time, has the space, to start teaching you more so you can really improve so much faster especially if you are repeating this cycle like four or five times which is



exactly what we do. So, what did you like about getting or what did you like about the feedback? I mean is there anything specific you could share with that or do you think we've covered that already?

Jesny: To be honest, I think we've mostly covered it. So, I just like the entire process. The fact-- no, I think the best part about it was that it was a recorded feedback. I think that really helped because especially because I did my exam post- COVID. I did a couple of months later. So, it helped me to go back to all that I did initially, what the feedback was. It helped me recollect faster than I think if it would have been in any other form. So, that conversation flow really those trigger of thoughts kind of helped primarily because it was a video conversation. So, I think that was the best part about it.

And it was really-- I mean it is in a very simple format where you kind of like just simply focus on what you have written. You keep hearing her walk through the entire essay; what you would



have done right and wrong. So, the entire format I think is very simple and just clean and neat and that really helps focus on what's most important.

Ben: Yes, yes, I totally agree with you. I totally agree with you and I think with the video corrections we do there is just the right amount of information that you need in order to get to the next stage. It's not like a complete overwhelm of three pages of corrections and suggestions. I think it's--

Jesny: Exactly.

Ben: Yes, yes. Okay. So, what happened on your test day? Did you feel more confident when you got in there, when you started doing your writing?

Jesny: Yes. So, with regard to-- I mean writing to be honest, I got a few wrong in my listening which I started with. So, I mean I did exactly what I feared. I lost my train of thought somewhere in between and I missed a word or so-- one or two words and I was already upset about that when I started my writing.



Ben: Oh, no.

Jesny: But-- yes. But then I had pretty much knew that writing was probably my most challenging part of the exam. So, I had kind of spent a lot of time before giving my exam on writing. So, I kind of had to me the most important aspects especially the format and all of that kind of known at the back of my hand. So, I was fairly certain.

So, even though I was a little disappointed and had that playing in my head, I was quickly able to formulate my thoughts in the manner that I'd practiced and what Daphne had suggested and so on and so forth. So, that really helped with the entire process of writing the exam. So, definitely a lot more confident from the last time I did it because I knew that if I follow this and I'm able to keep time, I will be definitely able to do better and that kind of reflected I guess.

Ben: I see. I see. So, even though you felt like you didn't perform to your best in the listening, you still kind of sort of like stayed positive and implemented what you'd learned from the course and focused on-- and just kept you focus for the writing. Is that right?



Jesny: Yes.

Ben: Right, right. Okay and how did the writing go? So, you managed to sort of like get composed and refocus.

Jesny: Yes.

Ben: And then once you were actually writing, how did it go? Did it go smoothly? Was there any hiccups?

Jesny: No. It went-- so I think it could have definitely gone better, but it was definitely smooth with regard to I knew what I needed to do. So, that was a huge confidence booster that helped save a lot of time which I would probably spend on if I had not gone through the course where I would spend an initial few moments thinking about okay, how do I frame this? What goes next? Do I need to do this line first or the next one.



So, in the time frame that's given, that's precious moments that you can't afford to lose. So, since that was out of the way, I could purely focus on the content and what I wanted to put in. So, that helped definitely.

Ben: Super, super. Yes, it makes such a difference if you're fully prepared and you can sit down and you've got a procedure, you've got a system to follow to basically organize your thoughts so you can jump straight into the writing. Basically, I think focus on the language skills because I mean at the end of the day, this is a language test and if you focus on that then it's going to obviously help you rather than waste time as you just mentioned organizing your thoughts and trying to plan the time, plan the essay, whatever, but if you've just got a step-by-step procedure, it just makes a complete world of difference there. So, after you'd done your writing, how did you feel?

Jesny: I felt definitely better than the last attempt, but obviously like I said, I kept thinking I could have done better probably. I think time was the concern here and I think that was



something that Daphne had talked to me about because I was writing more elaborate essays probably when I was doing it with her, but obviously I was also taking a lot more of time. So, that 40 minutes of crunch was probably where-- that was probably my biggest challenge for giving the exam. So, that was kind of like a regret that I could have probably done better.

Ben: Yes. I remember when I was correcting essays and some students would send in the most beautiful essays, the longest ones and I'd be like really, Vijay, you did this in 40 minutes? Come on. Like let's get realistic, okay? I want the next essay you write I want it to be written in 40 minutes. This is too good. This is amazing for-- if you could do it in 40 minutes, that's amazing, but if not we're dreaming. Let's get back to reality. Yes.

Jesny: Yes.

Ben: And so, can you tell us the grades that you finally got for your latest exam?

Jesny: So, I got listening 8.5, reading 9, writing 7.5, and speaking 8.



Ben: Wow! Wow! So, you jumped a whole band score in the writing. Wow!

Jesny: --pleased about it, yes.

Ben: That is amazing. Fantastic. Wow! What did you do when you got your results? Were you screaming? Did you party?

Jesny: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, pretty much. So, I mean I expected a 7. I knew I'd done better than last time, so expected a 7, but not a 7.5. So, that like really eased my process. So, I kind of like quickly looked at all that and did yes pretty much all that you said because that was my biggest barrier; the exam. So, yes.

Ben: Wow! Wow! That is fantastic. Well done, Jesny. That is amazing. So, now that you've passed I guess you're moving full steam ahead with your application.



Jesny: Yes, I am. I did well, so the 7.5 really helped me jump into the application pool. So, I got my call literally a day after I got my IELTS score. So, that helped and I'm already starting with my application process, so I'm in just getting all my documentation ready.

Ben: Wow!

Jesny: So, I didn't really have to wait for multiple rounds like a lot of people have to. I got it in the first call itself. So, yes. That helped. That really helped.

Ben: Yes, definitely that is amazing. Well done. Fantastic! So, just two questions left and then we're done.

Jesny: Sure.

Ben: What would you say to anybody who's on the fence about joining the course?

Jesny: I would say jump right in because I-- so honestly, I haven't done any other course per se, but my experience of doing the course with IELTS Podcast was really, really good because like I



was just saying a clear thought process. The structure of the program is very simple and it really helps you. I mean I don't see any way I could have done it without taking the course. So, yes. That's what I would tell anybody.

Ben: Thank you. Okay and then last question. Is there anything else that you would like to add; any tips for current students, any a piece of advice that you would like to pass on?

Jesny: Just practice. I think that is the only thing to it basically because I'm sure in today's world, almost everybody has some aspect of English that they need to deal with. So, it's not something that's very new, but looking at the format that IELTS is looking for and just practicing and trying to get that done is I think the only thing that you need to get sorted.

Ben: Absolutely. Great advice there. Yes, great advice especially with the mock test and finding the strategy, finding what works for you, finding your weak points. We say exactly the same in the podcast, so it's lovely to hear a student like yourself implementing that and succeeding with that. So, that is amazing.



Jesny: So, I think one thing-- sorry. I think what really helped me in the writing and I think I heard that from you primarily was I think something I was doing wrong was I was trying to always give my point of view for the essay rather than like you mentioned it is an English exam and not what you think.

Ben: Exactly.

Jesny: That was like kind of like a eureka moment for me. I was like why am I doing this? I mean I can simply choose the easier argument to fit in an essay and just go for it. I think that was really, really helpful. So, yes. That's one point.

Ben: Absolutely, yes. That's a great point. I see this day in day out when I'm correcting essays. Just like okay, it's a beautiful argument, but I don't really care about the quality of the argument. I care about the quality of the language used and I think as humans, we have a tendency to over complicate things and the IELTS essays are a perfect example of humans tripping themselves up



and over complicating it and yes, just basically getting ourselves in a little mess. It's just so common. Yes.

Okay. So, that's everything. Thank you very much, Jesny. You've been an absolute star. So, that's it. Thank you very much.

Jesny: Thank you. Thank you so much to you and the entire team.

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Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com