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INTRODUCTION

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we'll be talking with Babur from Pakistan and he's going to be sharing with us some great insights into his IELTS score. So, hello there Babur? How are you doing today?

Babur: I'm good, Ben. How about you?



Ben: I'm fine. I'm fine. All right. Before we jump into this, could you just tell us a quick overview of like where you're from and why you're taking the IELTS test?

Babur: Yes. Actually I'm from Pakistan and I took this test basically to immigrate to Canada. This is what I intend to do right now and this was the primary reason why I took this test.

Ben: Interesting and right now, you're based in Saudi Arabia. Is that right?

Babur: Yes. Right now, I'm based in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.

Ben: Right. Okay and to get to Canada, one of the steps is to take the IELTS exam and get over band 7. Is that right?

Babur: Yes. You need to get over band 7 especially in the writing test.

Ben: Right. Okay and had you taken the exam before in Pakistan before going to Saudi Arabia?



Babur: Yes. Actually, I gave this exam once in Pakistan, but I could not score more than 6.5 in the writing so-- and then once again I moved to-- once I moved to Saudi Arabia, I gave it again, but then again the score was stuck at 6.5. So, I realized at this point that there was something wrong with my approach towards the exam.

Ben: Interesting. How were you preparing before you got the band score you wanted?

Babur: Honestly, like I was listening to some of the-- watching YouTube videos, listening to some podcasts-- some random podcasts I would say like things were not a bit structured or they were not organized and other than that, I was just looking at different websites online.

Ben: Okay. Okay and so you were sort of like searching around online consuming different material be it podcasts, videos on YouTube, and different blogs and websites. Is that right?

Babur: Exactly, exactly.



Ben: Got you. Okay. And so that was kind of like the research stage. What about the actual sort of like hardcore preparation like for writing essays or did you write any essays before the exam? Yes? Okay.

Babur: I used to write essays, but the gap that I realized was that even though I was writing essays, I was the only person-- I was ultimately reviewing them myself. So, there was self-review there like I was reviewing my own work. Sometimes I used to like match my essays and do a gap analysis with those given online, but I realized that it was not as effective as it should have been.

Ben: I see. So, you were reviewing your own essays and you were also-- to do this, you were using like different software just to try and get the spelling and the grammar under control. Is that right?



Babur: Yes. Yes, that's right.

Ben: Got you. Got you. Okay and how many tests did you take before you actually got the band score you wanted?

Babur: Like I gave IELTS twice.

Ben: Right. Okay. Both in Riyadh or in Pakistan?

Babur: No. One time in Pakistan and the second time in Riyadh and during my third attempt, I achieved the desired result. One thing I would like to mention is like there was a gap of-- like between my first test and second test, there was a gap of around eight months because one reason was COVID and the other reason was at the time I was a bit demotivated after giving my first test because I had put in a lot of effort and after I gave the second test, I was really depressed that



I seriously need to change my approach towards studying. It was only the third test that I took with you guys and in that test I jumped from 6.5 to 7.5.

Ben: Wow! Wow! That's amazing. That's a great score from 6.5 to 7.5. That is fantastic. Well done there. So, Babur, just to get it straight, so the first test-- after the second test, you were kind of like really depressed and really down. Is that right?

Babur: Yes, yes. Obviously.

Ben: Got you. Okay, okay. And then this is when you decided that you needed to change your approach to taking this test.

Babur: Yes. Yes, this is when I realized and this is because at that point, I was honestly not able to understand that what was the reason why am I getting 6.5 again and again after putting so much effort? So, I realized that there could be two mistakes; either I am not preparing this test



the way it is required to be done and secondly, I am not solving the paper how it is required to be solved. So, these were the two what you can say mistakes that I identified during this process and the second time I gave for IELTS it was on 8 August, 2020 and my third test was on 26 September, 2020 which was with you guys.

Ben: Right. Right. Okay. So, just to get it straight, after the second test in which you got 6.5 the second time, you kind of concluded that it's either I'm preparing for the exam wrong or I'm writing the essay wrong. Is that right?

Babur: Yes, yes. These are the two points.

Ben: Okay. I see and this is when you decided to join our course and get some feedback on your writing. What happened after the first piece of feedback?



Babur: After the first piece of feedback, I realized that how-- like I was failing in both of these points which I mentioned earlier that even my approach was not right and I was-- like my writing style was not appropriate and even like there are certain-- you can say I was wrong on many parameters like there was lack of coherence. I was not what you can say responding according to the task and there were a bit of gaps leading to task achievement.

So, these were the areas where I realized that I need to improve and after giving that first test, I realized that what are my mistakes. Previously, this identification of mistakes was not there. So, this is what I realized that I need to go further just to improve my mistakes.

Ben: So, you said it wasn't just a case of sort of like spelling and grammar. You said that you saw the mistakes with regards to cohesion and coherence, with task response, and all the other errors-- all the other areas, sorry. Is that right?



Babur: Yes, yes and the reason-- and third important point was like when I was going through your course, it was like one of the instructions for submitting the work was that you need to-- if you want to get more out of this, just make sure that you do not have spelling mistakes or basic grammatical mistakes. So, I used to write my work first and then I used to upload it onto like a computer. I used to type it again. So, during that process, I used to identify some of my spelling mistakes, some grammatical errors.

So, I literally populated a lot of items in the error list. So, I used to make sure that I am not repeating the mistakes again. So, during this process, the first step like writing and typing, I realized a lot of mistakes and then I submitted my work. So, after submission, there were no spelling mistakes obviously, but there were other grammatical mistakes; mistakes from a coherence perspective, task achievement perspective.



Ben: Absolute genius. Genius. I'll just summarize what you said there for the audience because when you join the online course as Babur said, there are plenty of modules and one of the specific ones and this is the one that Babur was referring to is that before you send your work, we strongly recommend you put it through a spellchecker.

So, either you type it up first or you check online and you correct all the mistakes yourself and you make a note of them and this way you can improve your spelling yourself, but more importantly, it frees up time for us as tutors to dig into your essay where software cannot,

So, for example, there's exactly as Babur just mentioned like looking at task response, looking at cohesion, looking at coherence; all of these other issues. It frees up time for us in order to spend our time on more higher value activities other than just spelling, for example. So, that is fantastic. Well done there, Babur. That's a good point you've mentioned there. And could you tell



us what you kind of like realized once you got your feedback back into your hands-- once we emailed it back to you; your evaluation so to speak?

Babur: Yes. Yes. I realized a lot of mistakes like no.1 -- like you've just mentioned, number one thing was that when I was continuously submitting my essays so I was like learning or memorizing the mistakes that I was previously doing and I was like building a corrective mechanism in my mind. Usually when I used to write previously even though I used to identify mistakes, but I used to forget them and I was repeating them.

So, at this point number one was that whenever I was submitting the new work, I used to make sure that whatever the marker has given me for my last essay those mistakes should not be done again. So, this is one thing that I was very much sure that these mistakes should not be reported and I used to continuously-- before writing any of my essays, I used to like spend 10-15 minutes



on the error sheet that I had compiled. So, I used to review that these were the mistakes that I have been making. This is one thing.

And the other thing was that I realized that mostly when you are writing essays, there are numerous words like even though you may be correct in terms of spelling, but those words do not fit into the context. Like for example, if you are writing about a formal context, you need to use a different set of words and if you are writing about an informal what you can say context or a background, the set of words would change. So, this is a key area that I realized; using the right word for the right time.

Ben: Genius. Genius. Okay. So, yes. So, one of the biggest things was I'll just say it very briefly for the listeners is that before you submitted each piece of work, you checked it against like your personal error list to see that you had not made the mistake before, correct?



Babur: Yes.

Ben: Genius. Yes, this is another sort of like instruction that we give to students on our online course that they-- once they get their essay back that they fill out the spreadsheet we send them and add all the mistakes that they've made and then in the next essay, you check your essay to basically make sure you haven't made the same mistakes as last time and this way, it really does speed up improvement. So, yes. Well done for you, Babur for using that. That's probably one of the key factors in getting you from 6.5 to 7.5. So, that is genius. Well done. What was the last thing you mentioned? What was that?

Babur: Yes, using the right words for the right context. This is something that I learned. Like for example [unintelligible 00:12:24.15] what you can say the issue with me was like for example when you are working in a formal environment, you tend to use those words more often.



Ben: Yes.

Babur: Like this is like for professionals' perspective. Like people who are experienced professionals they tend to use certain words that they are using in their daily life in their office communication or those contexts. So, I think this is what I realized that I need to change my words. I need to like look for different synonyms and make sure that they go well or they went well with the tone of the essay.

Ben: Interesting and how did you go about that change? How did you manage to improve your vocabulary?

Babur: Yes. Whenever I used to send work-- initially when I got this point that I need to pick up vocabulary according to the context of the essay, I used to do a bit of research. I used the sample essays that were given on your website as well as the letters. So, initially I memorized some of



the words. Then I learned okay whenever there's a formal context these are the certain set of words because in the IELTS examination, more or less things or the theme of the topics is the same.

Ben: Yes.

Babur: You have to what you can say adopt your vocabulary according to that thing. Once you've done that, it's very easy.

Ben: Yes, absolutely. So, just to rephrase, to improve your vocabulary, to improve your range of synonyms, you were looking at model essays that are also on the course. You were looking at those and looking for certain phrases basically to expand your own vocabulary and that you can later use in your own essays. Is that right?



Babur: Yes and to other sources like no. 1 was the academic essays that the course tells us to like whenever there's a topic search about it on the Google like just see the academic essays related to that topic. They will just give you a brief background and then there were TED Talks. I used to listen to some of the TED Talks as well. They gave me topic-specific vocabulary and with the other list I was also building a vocabulary list.

Ben: Wow! Okay.

Babur: So, I have that list with me because I used to update it on a real-time basis. Like for example, if I'm listening to TED Talks on environment, I used to list down all the words that pertain to environmental issues and things like that. So, in this way, before writing an essay I used to refer to that vocabulary list and see where I can use those words.



Ben: Oh, wow! That is fantastic. That's a great way to improve your vocabulary. So, I'll just mention this again. So, you were watching TED Talks and actively writing down any topic-specific vocabulary basically, right?

Babur: Yes.

Ben: Got you and then you are also using the technique from the course where we search for academic reports about that topic. You were doing that as well. Is that right?

Babur: Yes.

Ben: Beautiful. Beautiful. And how did you know that you needed to improve your vocabulary?

Babur: There were two things. Like number one was when I got feedback regarding lack of coherence and like another thing was that I could not manage time and generation of ideas is also linked to that. Whenever you have topic-specific vocabulary, it becomes very easy to populate



ideas or to come up with ideas. Like if you like just know a term [unintelligible 00:16:03.23] you know that this is-- it could be a reason behind personal health issues or things like that. So, I realized that basically learning words is not just learning words. It's like basically learning ideas and it helped me save a lot of time. Previously, I used to complete the work or the essays in a very tight or I used to struggle a lot to complete it in a timely manner, but after learning some new words I felt it was really easy and there was a flow in my essays and this was also recommended by the marker who used to mark my work.

Ben: Okay. So, just to-- I'm sorry I have to keep summarizing. It's just because the line I can hear you, but I'm just worried about the listeners because it seems like there could be a bit of a challenge with the echo. So, just to summarize there, to improve-- well, you knew that you needed to improve your vocabulary for two reasons. One because of the feedback you got-- the teachers were telling you. Was it Daphne? Is that right?



Babur: Yes, Daphne.

Ben: Daphne, okay. So, Daphne she was giving you some encouragement to improve your vocabulary, but second which I think is very interesting is that basically, you're saying that the more your vocabulary improved, the easier it was to write the essay and the faster it was to write the essay, too. Is that right?

Babur: Yes. Yes.

Ben: That is genius. Beautiful. Beautiful. Wow! And now we've pretty much done the writing. Can you tell us how you prepared for the other sections such as speaking, reading, and listening?

Babur: For speaking it was very easy because I was speaking English during office hours as well with my colleagues, so it was not much of an issue and the thing was that I was-- when I started thinking in English language and I was searching for improving my writing, so I came



across a lot of different ideas, words and even listening to different speakers at TED Talks. So, it helped me with that as well.

So, for the listening, I practiced a bit of listening audios from different websites and it helped me a lot and for the reading, I guess I was already good at reading. So, I used to read a lot of books and I used to do a lot of comprehension what you can say critical reading, critical analysis of different things. So, I was already good at that one. My key area for improvement was writing.

Ben: Okay. All right. So, for all the areas, you were pretty much on top of them. You had it under control. It was just the writing that was stopping you.

Babur: Yes.

Ben: Right. Okay and now that you've got your IELTS certificate, what band score did you get overall and for each of those sections?



Babur: Yes. My overall score is 8 like I've got 9 in listening, 8.5 in reading, 7.5 in speaking, and 7.5 in writing.

Ben: Wow! Those are fantastic grades. That is awesome. Well done there, Babur. Fantastic.

Babur: Thank you.

Ben: And now what's the master plan? How do you get from Riyadh to Toronto?

Babur: Yes. I've just submitted my application just three days back. I've also received an invitation to apply. So, I'll just start the process in the next couple of days and hopefully, I guess in four or five months I'll be there.

Ben: Right. Wow! And what about with the whole COVID scene? How has that had an impact on you and your process?



Babur: Yes. Actually, I think because the COVID has honestly helped me a lot especially this lockdown because I'm a full-time professional. Like I you work for like 8-10 hours some day or even 12 hours a day. So, it becomes really difficult to like pursue a full-time course, but during this lockdown whenever I used to get time, I dedicated a part of my calendar for these videos. So, I'll say that if this lockdown had not happened, I would not have gotten the chance to look up for your website, find this course, and even like had the time to think to join it and to like regularly write essays. So, it helped me a lot in those terms and it really helped me upskill on a number of other things as well.

Ben: Oh, wow! So, you took absolute control of this and turned it into a blessing so to speak.

Babur: Yes, on really.



Ben: Fantastic. That's great news, Babur. I love it when students come across like difficulties like this such as the lockdown and really manage to transform it into a golden opportunity exactly like you did. So, well done there. That's fantastic. All right. So, just before we finish, do you have any advice that you would like to share with the thousands of students that are listening right now?

Babur: Yes. I would like to say to them that they need to realize that what is required. They need to follow an exam specific approach rather than their own approach and they need to get their essays marked-- their essays checked from a professional which you can say examiner or a person who knows the IELTS because a generic writing or very simple general essays are very different from what is required at IELTS. You need to have a specific what you can say structure in mind before you proceed to write and--

Ben: Can you say it again those two tips?



Babur: Yes. Those two tips are basically that you need to work on how you study for your exams like your study method or your approaches. It should be aligned with the IELTS exam and the execution phase which is basically how you execute your knowledge and how you execute-- what you present-- what you have learned and basically, this is your paper solving technique. So, you need to maintain a balance of both like preparation and execution. Master these two stages according to the requirements or the structure of the IELTS and it will become very easy for you.

Ben: Awesome. Awesome. That is very good advice there. Very good advice. It's like once you know the actual specific criteria-- we have this at the beginning of the course. We've got links to the actual criteria of the course and you can get the official criteria. Just go to Google, put official criteria ielts.org and have a read of those because this is what Babur is saying is like you need to really know inside out what they are, what they are asking from you because then obviously you'll be able to-- you're much more likely to give it to them.



And this is why in past tutorials as well we've had a full breakdown of the criteria because it's so much easier to know what you need to do once you've got this criteria in front of you. So, have a look at those episodes.

And I think that's it from myself and Babur, so thank you very much, Babur. It's been absolutely fantastic.

Babur: Thank you so much, Ben. Thank you so much for your efforts and your support throughout. I really appreciate that.

Ben: You're welcome, buddy. It's been an absolute-- it's been an honor and yes, I'm glad we finally managed to match our times. It was getting a bit crazy.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

IELTS SUCCESS

Babur is going to Canada
with his Band 8!

