



Ben: Congratulations for getting your Band score. Well done there.

Mary Ann: Yes. Thank you.

Ben: You're welcome.

Mary Ann: Thanks to you also for your help.

Ben: You're welcome. All right then. Now. So. I'm just going to ask you a couple of questions. Could you tell us a bit about yourself please?

Mary Ann: Well I'm Mary Ann. I came from the Philippines.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: And I'm currently working here UAE as a nurse. So I've been here for almost five years now.



Ben: Why did you decide to take the IELTS exam?

Mary Ann: Actually this is a prerequisite in with a, during my application for a US visa.

Ben: Right.

Mary Ann: So, my agency told me to take another exam.

Ben: Right.

Mary Ann: So I took it here.

Ben: I see. I see. And what did you get the erm. So this is the second time you've taken it?

Mary Ann: No actually this is the third time.

Ben. OK. Wow.



Mary Ann: And the third time I took it so yeah. First it was last year in 2013, maybe around April and then the second was October 2013.

Ben: Right.

Mary Ann: And then after that I just felt frustrated you know? I don't know if I want to take another one. And then this is my last shot I said.

Ben: Ah really?

Mary Ann: If I did not pass yeah no I was just telling myself if I did not pass this one so the US is not for me.

Ben: Oh wow. Wow. I see. So what did you do for your? What was the main problem? What was the main problem you as coming up against?



Mary Ann: The Speaking part actually. You the the two attempts that I made in IELTS exam err I had a band score of 7, which is the requirement for academic ah, academic, academic type of IELTS.

Ben: Yes.

Mary Ann: It was 7 but my speaking was 6.5. They're requiring me to have err at least 7.

Ben: Right.

Mary Ann: So twice I failed in the speaking part.

Ben: Wow.

Mary Ann: But my Band score is err is pass.

Ben: Right then. And how did you improve your speaking score?



Mary Ann: Err. I listened to your podcast and then with the tips that I, that I get from the er, from the ex- examiners and err.

Ben: Ah ha.

Mary Ann: And the teachers that you have interviewed.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: And also I listen mostly in programs like BBC, CNN and TED Talks.

Ben: Excellent.

Mary Ann: That's what, yeah. Those were those were the tips that you gave in your podcast so I just followed it. And then I tried to speak more frequently in English. I just have to make more compatible speaking with it.



Ben: I see. So, just to summarise. You got hold of like native speaker material, native spoken material and listened to it a lot and then increased the oport- increased the amount of time that you were speaking. How did you do, how did you do that? How did you increase the amount of speaking that you were doing?

Mary Ann: Ah when I, when I talk to my friends.

Ben: I see.

Mary Ann: Filipino friends they were just laughing at me why I am speaking to them in English. But I just them just to just to help me.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Just. Just be there to help me. So just talk to me in English.

Ben: Yeah yeah. I mean sometimes.



Mary Ann: And also [inaudible] also if I need it so sometimes when I talk to her I just have to practice my English err communication with her.

Ben: I see. Excellent. Yeah I do the same. Well I used to. When I came to Spain I would speak Spanish to my English friends just to practice and it feels strange but.

Mary Ann: Yes.

Ben: And they look at you a little bit crazy. But you have to think, it's only gonna be a couple of months that I'm going to do this and you might as well do it anyway because you're going to get a lot of fluency out of that. And, just out of curiosity, did your friends correct you if you made a mistake?

Mary Ann: Err actually no.

Ben: No? Oh OK. Well it's not all.



Mary Ann: But sometimes if I make a mistake they will just laugh at me.

Ben: OK well that's almost a correction.

Mary Ann: yes.

Ben: All right. Yeah because sometimes it's a bit. I mean depending on the activity, it's not always necessary to be corrected. I mean if your objective is fluency, then the objective is jts to keep on going and to get comfortable stringing quite a few sentences together. Whereas if your objective is accuracy, string sentences together without errors, then it's good to get somebody writing down the mistakes or even interrupting and correcting. But now just to move on to the Writing. What did you get in your err exams previously?

Mary Ann: Previously err it was 6.5.



Ben: I see. Right

Mary Ann: Yes.

Ben: And what was the main problem you came up with when you started writing the essays?

Mary Ann: Actually the main problem was the idea on what to write.

Ben: Right. Oh.

Mary Ann: Because that's the main problem that I that I had previously. And how to construct, on how to construct my essay. What word to write first.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Yes. Those were the main problems. So the idea and how to construct the essay properly.



Ben: Right then. OK. Erm what used to happen when you started to write? You said you couldn't find an idea. Could you give me an example? Like, maybe you found, I don't know a gen- an essay about gender equality and you would just be searching for ideas and things. Is that what happened?

Mary Ann: Err with this examination Ben? Or with the previous?

Ben: With the previous ones sorry.

Mary Ann: OK. Ahh. I think the topic was asking about economy.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: And it. And it. The first one was economy, the first examination and the second one is about sports.

Ben: Right.



Mary Ann: And then at the time I was very nervous and I don't have, my mind is. I don't know where, what I, what to write.

Ben: I see.

Mary Ann: And I'm just staring at the blank page.

Ben: Oh no!

Mary Ann: And my. Yeah. It's just difficult to start.

Ben: Yeah it's common. It's very common.

Mary Ann: Terrible.

Ben: Yeah. So. And. What was the, what was the technique you used to get over that problem? How did you start generating ideas?



Mary Ann: Err I just trying to do erm. I tried to do the brainstorming. So I just jot down ideas that comes in my mind.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Although it took. It took me a while before I-

Ben: Yeah

Mary Ann: Before I. Before I think about those ideas. And then after that um, I just have to group it on how I will err, [inaudible]

Ben: I see.

Mary Ann: that's what I did. Yeah.



Ben: Yeah. I see. Yeah 'cos I, what I found when. I remember when you sent me the first essay and I was thinking well, the grammar is good and the vocabulary is really good. It just needs some organisation, you know?

Mary Ann: Yes. Yeah that's my problem then. How to organise. Yeah.

Ben: Yeah and this is. This is really common. And it's usually the organisation and generating ideas. And what I find is that students err, um, to general ideas it's almost like a skill and the more you do it, the more you get good at generating ideas for your own essays. You know?

Mary Ann: Mmm.

Ben: And I think yeah. This is why I. You may have seen it in the Sentence Guide but there's. I have written two hundred and fifty questions, IELTS Task 2 questions. And just for the listeners, it's at [IELTSpodcast.com/250](http://IELTSpodcast.com/250) and it's a PDF yeah yeah, two hundred



and fifty questions and it's just to get into the habit of writing the essays. Err sorry, creating ideas. Because it's like mathematics. If you do maths day in, day out, eventually you start getting very good at calculating and your brain starts to function that way. And it's the same with generating ideas for a, especially for the Task 2. So tell me, could you erm, could you explain what happened in the last essay you write in the last exam. What was the question about and how did you go about writing it?

Mary Ann: Ahh the question was about the com. Err. If I agree or disagree about err. If the health will become less below standard in the future. I think that was the topic. It's all about health. It just err asking me if I agree if the standard of health is, will become lower in the future with that.

Ben: I see. I see.



Mary Ann: And then when I read the err, when I read the question, it. It just ah, comes into my mind of one of the TED Talks that I have err listened to, so.

Ben: Excellent.

Mary Ann: It's err. It's. Maybe it. It's what err. I'm lucky that I got that question then after that I just wrote all my ideas and then I follow your Sentence Guide. Err yeah. I just follow your Sentence Guide. And fill in, like fill in the blanks, you know? I have already my introduction and I just fill in the blanks with my err, if I agree or disagree. What's my opinion, stuff like that.

Ben: Excellent, yeah. And I think I said in previous podcasts as well that what you said about it being luck, yeah, maybe there was a little bit of luck.

Mary Ann: Yeah.



Ben: But I believe that people create their own luck, you know? And you created your own luck by being prepared and by doing lots of preparation because maybe you'd have. If you'd just listened to three TED Talks you probably would have been reduced but you must have listened to lots to be, in order to have been lucky. So yeah you create your own luck. And what I was going to say was, if you fill your head up with information, and with ideas, it helps when it comes to creating them you know. It's like I said before. Nothing in, nothing out.

Mary Ann: Yeah. I, I remember that. Nothing in, nothing out.

Ben: Err it really is that that simple, you know? You just fill your head up with ideas. So the TED Talk. Was the one all about err mass food production? Was it that one, with the American guy? I think I've seen it.

Mary Ann: Erm I think that the one that I heard was about err Oklahoma.



Ben: Oh.

Mary Ann: About yeah. At first they are in the list of most of the obese citizens in Oklahoma. And then this mayor, he did something to improve the Oklahoma. And then after how many years, they are one of the most healthiest ah cities in the US.

Ben: Wow.

Mary Ann: That's what I, one of the TED Talks that I have heard.

Ben: Wow. OK and did you use that as your example in your Writing?

Mary Ann: Yeah actually it was that one. It's the most accurate example that I placed in my, in my essay. Because you said here are. My example should be accurate and specific, right?

Ben: yeah. Ah ha.



Mary Ann: So.

Ben: Wow. Excellent. That is excellent. Well done. Well done there. And then.

Mary Ann: And Ben just to, just to add. I think it's ah, it's really look you know? Because I had only six TED Talks. I listen only six TED Talks over and over again so I think that I had to be lucky.

Ben: Maybe there was some luck involved then OK.

Mary Ann: Yeah.

Ben: OK. I was trying to motivate my, everybody to listen to TED Talks day in day out. I might have to delete that part. We'll see.

Mary Ann: yeah just delete that part.

Ben: All right.



Mary Ann: Off the record.

Ben: Yeah. OK. So now. Can you share any other tips or resources that would really help a student maybe for the other sections or other advice that you might be able to share?

Mary Ann: Actually, the resources that I use was all learned from your podcast. So, first is your podcast, IELTS podcast and then err, I took lots of practice, practice tests.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Lots of online practice tests so I just ah, used them.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: And what else? The myIELTSteacher.com

Ben: Ahh you used that website?



Mary Ann: Yeah I used that website My IELTS Teacher. Err mostly because the Task 1 on how to interpret graphs. Charts.

Ben: I see.

Mary Ann: Yeah. They have their err lessons on how to, on how to answer or interpreting charts and graphs.

Ben: Right.

Mary Ann: And what else? Listening to TED Talks.

Ben: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Um BBC, CNN, ah Splendid English. This is one of the podcasts that I listen to to improve my speaking also.

Ben: Ah OK good.



Mary Ann: yeah.

Ben: Did you do any like mimicking where you listen and repeat what they say? Did you do that, or were you more just passively listening than taking on tasks?

Mary Ann: Err I'm more on the passively listening. Listening to it. Yeah.

Ben: Right.

Mary Ann: Yeah. Passive.

Ben: Right. I see. I see. OK.

Mary Ann: And then when I listened to, because more. In Splendid English what, what the, I forget the name of the, of the speaker. Err.

Ben: Pete.



Mary Ann: Yeah Pete. What he's doing was ah he, he allow two students to talk to each other. And then they're interacting, they're giving questions, then sometimes Pete is the one who is asking one of the students. Like a practice Speaking Test.

Ben: I see. I see.

Mary Ann: And then. And then he, he's ah. He was giving corrections. Ah what must be said. Ah what is the correct grammar. What is not correct, and how to answer questions like the Rule of Threes, things like that.

Ben: Ah that's interesting. That's interesting.

Mary Ann: Yeah. Rule of Threes is like ah when giving examples when you are asked to give examples you must give ah at least three.

Ben: Oh really?



Mary Ann: Is what I. Yeah.

Ben: Wow. Wow. And you used that in your Speaking exam as well?

Mary Ann: Yes.

Ben: Oh good.

Mary Ann: Yes I did.

Ben: Sorry.

Mary Ann: Yes I did.

Ben: OK.

Mary Ann: I did yeah. The Rule of Threes.



Ben: Right. OK. Yeah. Excellent. Now, Mary, what are your plans now? Are you planning to go to the US?

Mary Ann: Yeah. Actually I inform already my agency that I already pass my examinations and they are forwarding all my documents to process my visas quick and hopefully err within next year available to work their.

Ben: Oh wow. Wow. I'm so jealous. Wow in the US.

Mary Ann: Yes.

Ben: Have you decided on a state yet?

Mary Ann: Err. No. It depends on the agency where they, where they will be going to deploy me.

Ben: Ah OK then.



Mary Ann: So it depends on them, yeah.

Ben: I hear Oklahoma is a very healthy state. You know?

Mary Ann: Yeah I heard also.

Ben: Someone told me it is. OK then. All right Mary Ann. Well, thank you very much. Thank you for agreeing to do the call and erm, yeah, you'll be a great inspiration for all the other listeners who are studying for their IELTS and their, going for a Band 7 as well. So well done. All the best for the future eh?

Mary Ann: Yes. Thank you also Ben.

Ben: You're welcome.

Mary Ann: Thank you for your erm Listener's Guide, the podcast and also the, for the motivating your students.



Ben: Ah OK then.

Mary Ann: It is a great ah. This is the main key. When you motivate your students they are, their morale, their confidence is ah, it's boosted.

Ben: Boosted.

Mary Ann: And you boost their confidence. Yeah.

Ben: Ah ha. I thank you. You're making me blush. Thank you so much.

Mary Ann: Yeah that's true.

Ben: Thank you very much Maria.