



Ben: How is your preparation coming along? Do you find yourself improving?

Aousien: To be honest, yes. After joining this course, I'm feeling much more confident than before. Like this time-- like before whenever I used to go for IELTS exam, I was never confident. I had a lack of confidence. I kind of always knew that I would never be able to get 7, but this time, I'm more confident than before.

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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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Ben: Hello there, Podcast listeners. In this episode, we're going to speak to Aousien. He's a very successful IELTS student. And he's going to tell us a little bit about his success story. So, welcome to the podcast, Aousien. How are you?



Aousien: I'm good. Thank you, Ben.

Ben: Awesome. Can you tell us a bit about yourself; where you're from, where you are, and I guess where you want to go?

Aousien: I am originally from Syria, but I am working and living in Qatar for the last seven years; from 2007 and now, I'm applying for Australia immigration and my whole process was on hold until I pass this English exam.

Ben: Okay. And what challenge-- well, you took the exam before and you got was it a-- what did you get for the writing?

Aousien: For the writing I got 5 and I was very disappointed because the rest three topics were fine; 7.5. Only the writing was my problem and then I started to search on the internet for the best websites to teach writing for IELTS and I was very, very lucky to find your website. And then I started to work with you like five days before my next attempt and in these five days, you



managed to improve my writing from 5 to 6.5. So, I was very happy. I was happy and disappointed. Disappointed because it was not 7, but I was very happy like in five days you make me to jump from 5 to 6.5. So, for sure a little bit more work, you will make it and this is what happened. I started to work with you again and then in the attempt after, I got 7.5 in writing. So, in total in one month, you improved my writing from 5 to 7.5.

Ben: Thank you. Thank you, Aousien. Well, I must admit-- I must tell the students listening that Aousien was a perfect student. Every task I gave him he would respond within 24 hours. He would be responding fast. He would implement all the changes. He would follow the instructions and it really was a pleasure working with him because he was such a hard worker and he did everything right. He was perfect. A very good student. So, Aousien, can you tell us for the other sections, how did you-- what was the biggest challenge regarding the writing before we started working together?



Aousien: I think because English is the second language for us, it's like listening you can learn it. You can practice. Reading the same, but for writing, to know how to write first five days you improve my writing only by teaching me the correct structure; how to do introduction, paragraph one, paragraph two, conclusion, how the introduction should look like, how to start with topic sentences, to give examples, to make conclusions for the paragraph, which linking words to use. Everything was new to us. Like normally, we do some writing normal writing emails or something, but it seems the strategy for the exam is completely different for the academic writing. So, it was the best way to-- after you teach me the structure and then we started to concentrate on other vocabularies, grammar maybe, things to do, things not to do. Like what I never knew you told me don't use negative. Like don't say people don't have time. Say people lack the time. So, these things which I will never know alone without working with you or a lot of things that-- the feedback which I get after every essay, every essay was a new learning experience for me. So, I was very happy and generally, it will help me also in my life, not only for the exam. It was a very nice experience to work with you.



Ben: Thank you. Thank you. It's very true that what you said and even before I started becoming-- before I was a teacher, I didn't have any idea about negative constructions and how to write in a succinct concise way and I myself have been on a journey just trying to learn these things so I can pass them on and so my students have more success when it comes to passing the IELTS, but this is what I mean when I was saying you were a very good student. You implemented everything and I think this is the value that we can offer is that you send in the work and you're getting the valuable feedback and it allows you to improve like with every single essay that you send. Because maybe on the first essay I'll look at the articles and I'll say okay, do this exercise. Then on the second one, I'll-- once the writing gets under control, I start giving like more advanced techniques, but the problem is if you try to learn all these at the same time, then it becomes very, very, very stressful. So, Aousien, can you tell us before you mentioned you did some practice tests. That was very interesting what you did. Could you just share with us what you did for that?



Aousien: For the listening and reading, right?

Ben: Yes.

Aousien: So, for the listening and reading, there's one website-- free website which giving previous IELTS tests-- real IELTS tests. So, two weeks before the exam, every day I started to do one listening, one reading which will take about one and a half hours. Normally, the listening is 30 minutes, the reading is one hour. And I started to train myself to finish the reading in one hour and to be quick; train my ears and my brain for the listening. So, this is the best way to improve the listening and the reading; to do this practice every day at least one week or two weeks before the exam date.

Ben: And you said for the reading that you do section 1 and 2 in about 30 minutes.

Aousien: Yes. Normally, section 1 it's easy. Section 2 it's not difficult. So, the hardest section was section 3. So, it is-- I managed to finish every time section 1 and 2 in 30 minutes so I leave



myself enough time for section 3 because normally the vocabularies will be difficult and the article will be very long. So, I used to [press 00:07:43.18] the first two section and give myself enough time for the section 3. And it's doable. If they practice it every day and train themselves, it's doable.

Ben: Yeah, yeah because you're saying before, this is like one of those exam skills that you specifically need for the exam. It's like you're saying with the style of writing, it's a special style for the exam, but with training and with some concentration, it's not difficult. It's just a question of putting in the hours and working and doing the exercises. So, that's how you--

Aousien: Yes, the way how you approach the exam. So, maybe there's somebody else's English is better than me, but he didn't practice. He didn't work. Maybe I will get better marks than him because you have to practice the way how you approach it.

Ben: Yes, exactly and this is why somebody from Syria like yourself or from Russia or from Germany or from wherever in theory, they can-- well, not in theory. In reality, they can get a



higher grade than a native speaker just because they know the exam skills and they know to spend 30 minutes on part 1, part 2 in the reading and spend 30 minutes on the third section to pick up-- well, to allow for time for the more difficult questions. By the way, what did you get again for the reading? What was it?

Aousien: Normally, it was between 7, 7.5 and it was 7, 7.5, and 8. Last time it was 8. For the listening, I got 7.5, 7.5, 8.5, and for the writing you know it's 5, 6.5, 7.5.

Ben: And with the writing, what was the value you got like when we were working together?

Aousien: The first thing that the way you used to give me the feedback by sending back the link with a YouTube recording, it's very-- it would make the remarks stick in my brain. Also, when I was doing the exam, I was remembering some of your comments then I like do this, don't do this. So, it was very helpful the way you give the feedback. The Sentence Guide it is very, very helpful the Sentence Guide and the bonus downloads for the essays. So, I think if we read one or two essays every day before the exam, we can get a lot of vocabularies. We can get some



sentences which can be deployed in any topic by changing some vocabularies. So, everything from the bonus download to the Sentence Guide to the feedback to the time limits which you used to give me, everything was really motivating and encouraging me that I will do it. I knew that I will do it with your help and advice. And it is done.

Ben: Thank you. Thank you. We were just saying before like part of motivating or part of being a good teacher I think is just believing and I enjoy this. I enjoy it when my students send me an email and say Ben, I got a 7 or I'm going to Australia. I've got the immigration or whatever. And as we were saying before because we did this recording before and I didn't record it by accident so this is the second one. I'm just [playing 00:11:34.00] with the listeners. What we were saying before is like even though I'm not an IELTS examiner, I was saying we use the example of the football referee who knows the rules, but a football referee couldn't motivate-- it's not like-- they couldn't motivate the team to go out there and to win a Champions League or a World Cup whereas Mourinho or Ferguson or Ancelotti; these guys know the rules, but they also add that



little bit extra which is what differentiates them from a referee who knows the rules. Adding that thing is like the 11th player. It's like the 12th player. A person like motivates, pushes. I think it's a real key factor. One thing I have learned over the years that fair enough, you may know every single grammar rule, every single spelling, blah, blah, blah, but at the end of the day, there's much more to it than the technical side. It's about really pushing and believing that your students can do it which in my case, most of my students can do it with the right attitude and a bit of a push and like you said, 24 hours otherwise things just don't get done.

Aousien: Yes, true and I know I was very, very lucky to get the best coach ever. So, there was one picture on your website for one guy on the day of the test like have your coffee, relax, do the test, pass the test. So, I was always dreaming to carry the same. I don't know if you know the picture which I'm talking about. It was my dream. So, finally I made it true.

Ben: Yeah, yeah. I remember that picture. It was like a tick box, wasn't it? There's a list.



Aousien: Yeah, exactly. So, I saved it on my laptop. Every day I was looking on it. I said only I will change the date and I will do this thing.

Ben: Yeah, yeah. I think it was something like wake up, have a coffee, smile, and pass the IELTS exam, wasn't it?

Aousien: Exactly. Yes.

Ben: Yeah. I think I'll re-release that on Facebook actually. It was quite a popular one. Well, then Aousien, I'm not going to take any more of your time and thanks again for doing the interview twice. Sorry about that, but yeah. I much appreciate it and I wish you all the best in your application for Australia.

Aousien: Thank you very much. Thank you, Ben, for all your help and support. Without you really it was never going to happen.

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