



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.

[Music]

Ben: Hello there IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are talking with Salma who had some fantastic results with her IELTS exam. Salma, could you please introduce yourself and tell us why you are taking the IELTS exam, please?

Salma: Hello Ben. I have taken the IELTS exam because I'm planning to travel to Canada soon. I sat for the general module-- sorry. What was the other question?

Ben: Yeah, no worries. So, you're planning to go to Canada. You're taking the general module and you're from Egypt, but you're based in UAE.

Salma: United Arab Emirates, yeah.

Ben: Right. Okay. And why is that?



Salma: I was born here. I have lived here all my life. I only travel to Egypt only in the holidays. I don't know. I feel home more actually here than any other place.

Ben: Okay. All right. And what's the reason for moving to Canada?

Salma: I'm looking for different growth prospects; things that I wouldn't find in the Middle East normally. I think I've reached to-- I mean the maximum satisfaction here in the UAE from leisure and education and work prospects. I don't think I'll get further in my life here in the UAE anymore.

Ben: Very interesting. Very interesting. Yeah, changing countries is a big step and on the one hand, you have to start from zero, but then on the other hand, there's no reason why you should spend the rest of your life in the same country. So, I can totally understand. I can totally understand this move. Okay then Salma, could you tell me how you've been preparing for IELTS or how you were preparing for IELTS?



Salma: For all modules or just writing?

Ben: Yeah. Let's start with all modules if that's all right.

Salma: Speaking I haven't prepared much. I think I'm comfortable speaking although my last score was 7.5 and the one before was 8, but I think I'm fairly comfortable speaking-- continuously I mean.

Ben: Right.

Salma: Listening as well I have also-- I mean I've scored three times before 8.5. So, I also didn't prepare much. Reading however in--

Ben: Hold on. Hold on, Salma. You just dropped a bomb there. You scored 8.5 three times and you didn't prepare much? Wow! Well done. Okay. So, I guess you've just got like very familiar with the exam and you've obviously exceptional listening skills.



Salma: I mean not the one before, but I mean two times before that and I was very comfortable with it and I just used the-- yeah and I just used the exam preparation that was sent by the IELTS once you register for the exam. I just used it and I was fairly comfortable with that. I used this thing also for reading. I just needed practice in writing because for all my past four times I only scored-- I mean the very first time I scored 6 and then when I only got better it was 6.5.

Ben: Right. Okay. So, you've take an exam-- you've taken the IELTS exam a total of four times, right?

Salma: Yeah.

Ben: Got you. Okay. And then the first three times you were getting your target score in all the-- so yeah. In all the three-- the first three times you were getting the target score you wanted in the three modules: speaking, listening, and reading, right?



Salma: Yes.

Ben: And it was writing that were holding you back.

Salma: Yes.

Ben: Got you. Okay. What kind of pain points did you encounter because you weren't able to tackle the writing?

Salma: I think the paragraph structure is what I've learned. I mean this was the main thing that I was able to grasp and I could see at first that this was the problem; that I didn't have a proper structure. When I understood the structure for each and every paragraph-- the introduction, body, and the conclusion-- once I've got that, I think I've gotten a grip on how the writing should be.

Ben: Right.



Salma: And then I just moved forward from there into structuring my topic sentences, my examples, and all those details for each and every paragraph. I think my main issue is still the grammar and word choices as has been pointed out before in the previous videos. This still remains an issue, but overall when I got a grip of the structure of each and every-- I mean the whole essay including each and every paragraph, I think that's what made me score. And I think I'm very solid on my vocabulary based on the comments also I got from the videos that were-- from my essays that were being corrected. So, I think also vocabulary helped a lot.

Ben: Interesting. Yeah, I totally agree. Once you get the ideas or once you get the knowledge about paragraph structure and the sentence structure, it all starts to become much easier, much clearer and it just becomes a straightforward process, no? Would you agree with that?

Salma: Yes, totally. Yes, totally.

Ben: And what options did you try before the online course? How were you tackling it before we got in contact with each other?



Salma: I have tried two courses before. My only problem with the other two courses is that although they gave me questions, I didn't have anybody to correct them and I just needed to know exactly what was I doing wrong because even if I wrote an entire essay, I could just read the model essay and still don't know where's my problem. I know there's a clear difference between my vocabulary and the structure, but I just can't pinpoint exactly what I'm doing wrong. So, the fact that I've been given comments on every single line that I've wrote, this definitely helped me I mean recalibrate.

Ben: Interesting. So, you're saying that you tried some online courses before and with these courses, you didn't get the feedback, so it was difficult to improve.

Salma: Yes. It was very hard to improve without any feedback.

Ben: Interesting. And why didn't you try like a local academy or an online tutor you know like a face-to-face tutor?



Salma: I live very far in the UAE, so commuting to proper places where they teach it's very hard. That's one thing. The other thing is that I don't think here in the UAE they have a lot of professionals. I mean there are, but they're very few and they're located very far. So, it was easier for me to find someone online, not that it was easy to find you either but once I did, I was absolutely satisfied.

Ben: Okay. Super. So, you live out in the sticks so to speak. You live in a remote area in UAE.

Salma: Yeah.

Ben: Interesting. Okay. I guess yeah like you said, it's difficult to find a qualified tutor and then there's the commute as well I guess if you live far away from everything.

Salma: Yeah.

Ben: And Salma, what were the specific doubts you had or concerns before joining or before moving ahead with us?



Salma: I was concerned that-- I was very comfortable reading the reviews. I think this is the most important thing when buying anything at all. So, when I read the reviews and I've seen the pictures of the people with their IELTS test scores and the pictures of their test results, I think that's what gave me a-- I mean that's what made me definitely join, but yeah, I thought that I wouldn't get the service I expected. I mean the correction services. I mean I could send you the essay and you just mark it on the exam and I think that would have been fair if that was being offered, but the fact that there was a video and-- it's like sitting in front of a teacher, but not sitting in front of a teacher like listening exactly to what your mistakes are. I think this is the closest thing to human interaction. This is definitely the best thing in the essay correction part.

Ben: Interesting. Very interesting. So, your concerns were that you were worried about not receiving what you were promised. You were worried that you might not get the corrections or the corrections might not be good enough.



Salma: Yeah.

Ben: Very interesting. And then you kind of like read the reviews. Did you read the reviews on Trustpilot or where did you read the reviews?

Salma: No. I think in IELTS teachable podcast.

Ben: Right. Okay. Okay. Cool. I'll check that out. So, that's fantastic. And at what moment did you realize that this feedback was working really well for you?

Salma: I think after the first essay in because that was-- I mean if you know me well, I'm quite lazy and actually if I don't get motivated, it's quite hard for me to continue. And after the comments on the first essay, I was encouraged right away to do the second one. I mean if you asked the team, I was actually sending them essays on a daily basis. I just wanted to maintain this momentum given the comments-- the very specific comments that they gave me and I wanted just to make sure I was actually doing it right. So, when I was given the very specific



mistakes that I have been making in my essays, I wanted to make sure I rectified them as soon as possible. So, I think the nature of the comments or the very specific comments that were being given to me were the ones that made me motivated to continue doing the essays one after the other.

Ben: Yeah. This is so true, Salma. This is so true. Like I know as well personally from studying a foreign language that once you find your motivation, you've got to keep on. You don't want to stop it because you've got momentum and it's so-- and sometimes it can be quite difficult to restart or to jumpstart that motivation again. So, yeah. And having the tutors there guiding you and encouraging you is also another motivating factor which you don't want to lose at all. That's valuable. And then the third thing is that the faster you move with this, the more chance you have of remembering what you learned the last time and then applying it and using it. And then you get your feedback and then you write another essay hopefully within like 24 hours and it's still like in your memory from the last time. So, you know what you're doing and it just



makes the whole writing process much easier and the improvement much, much faster. So, yeah. I can totally agree with you there, Salma. And also, Salma, don't beat yourself up about being lazy. I mean I think we all go through lazy spells and I think it's just part of human nature. Which tutor were you working with?

Salma: Daphne. I wasn't sure if I was supposed to say her name, but yes. Daphne. Daphne was sort of my online right now.

Ben: No, it's fine. It's fine. Yes. Yeah. We've got Daphne, Ellen and then sometimes I correct as well. Okay. Super. And then can you remember anything that Daphne specifically told you that kind of really helped you or like it's still stuck in your mind today?

Salma: Daphne said-- I mean positive comment or one of the negative comments about my English skills?

Ben: Tell us both, please. Tell us both.



Salma: Negative comment there isn't much. She was very particular about my choice of words and grammar, but that wasn't a big deal to her. I mean at first there were my sentences were incomplete or they weren't full or they weren't long enough, but I was able to rectify this by the third or the fourth essay I believe. I have done quite a few like I've done the package twice and I was very comfortable with those. So, I think by the second package I was in complete grip of the whole situation, but the positive comment by the end of the video she said are you a journalist by any chance. And ever since I've been considering going back to school. I always wanted to write so much despite not reading much though. I mean I still haven't found exactly where I click in certain topics. I know psychology, a bit of science, but I'm still looking for that area where I really want to read much, but I always enjoyed-- I mean language itself has been a huge part of-- I mean it's a soft spot in my heart. Whenever I read beautiful language I've always feel jealous of the people who write because I want to be the same. So, when she said are you a journalist by any chance, I said I wish I were. Now, I wish to go back and do the



same. I mean this comment given from an English teacher means a lot. I mean I could always go back and hear that she said this.

Ben: Oh, that is beautiful. That is absolutely beautiful, Salma. Wow! So, yeah. It's amazing, isn't it, how little comments like this--I bet Daphne has never thought about it again. I mean obviously when you replied I wish, but she's probably never thought about it again. And now, it's still going around in your head and hopefully possibly inspired you to do this.

Salma: Absolutely. It did inspire me. I've been considering this in many different schools. Hopefully, if I ever make it to Canada, hopefully that I will soon and the pandemic, but I've been considering which are the best schools in journalism that I could start even if I could start in small courses. That would be absolutely great since I've been given the comment by an English teacher that I'm a journalist.



Ben: This is fantastic. We have to put this on the website. Our tutors inspired our students to become journalists. That is fantastic. Okay. Wow! I'm very pleased about that. So Salma, can you tell us what happened on your test day?

Salma: Nothing much. I went very early to the exam like super early like two hours early. I had no sense of time, but then I just wanted to make-- I just wanted to make sure to be there as soon as possible. I felt that I was prepared, so I wasn't nervous even while I was waiting and at least I mean I know I had a grip of speaking and listening but not reading so well, but I knew that writing I have done enough at least. Even if I'm not well versed in grammar, I have been doing a lot of mistakes in grammar, but I know the structure and I know I have a good functioning vocabulary. So, I was quite comfortable. After I was done, I felt completely satisfied with what I wrote especially in writing and reading. I didn't feel that I have been lagging behind anywhere.



Ben: Fantastic. And you said you were there two hours early. What did you do for those two hours?

Salma: I was just waiting in the exam room. Nothing else.

Ben: Okay. Fair enough. Okay. Super. Okay, but I know what you mean about that feeling about walking out of the exam center and just feeling like okay, I did the best I could. Let's leave it there. There's no point--

Salma: I haven't felt like this in a very long time. Even my parents are so concerned like since when are you-- since when do you prepare so much for any exam.

Ben: Awesome. Awesome. You worked out of the exam center and you were like okay, that's done. Now it's time to become a journalist.

Salma: Yes. Yes.



Ben: All right. Super. And then what would you say to somebody who's considering or who's on the fence about joining our course?

Salma: I would tell them go for it with your eyes closed. Whatever you ask for it will be served and even more.

Ben: Super. Beautiful. And what results did you get in the end then, Salma?

Salma: Yes. I got 8.5 in listening. I got 7.5 in reading and speaking and finally, 7 in writing. Finally 7.

Ben: Wow! Fantastic. Fantastic. That is awesome. Wow! And now you're in the process of applying to go to Canada, right?

Salma: Yes. IELTS is my last step like I have scored the maximum in Canada express entry and I've scored maximum points in everything: my work, my education. I was only lagging in



IELTS. Like I've sat for the IELTS three times before. I even considered stop sitting for the IELTS and just apply through another program.

Ben: Wow!

Salma: IELTS was my ticket to-- my final ticket to Canada and just the problem that's keeping things on hold. Otherwise, I know people have scored points less than I have are already there.

Ben: Wow!

Salma: Only I was stuck on IELTS. That's all.

Ben: Wow! So, very soon I guess once this pandemic situation gets-- once things get back to normal maybe I guess you'll be straight off to Canada.

Salma: Yes. We were just discussing this point with my parents right before the interview what is the next step.



Ben: Wow! That is fantastic. Good for you, Salma. Good for you. Two questions before we finish. The first one is has the pandemic-- I've heard that they've increased the quota now for people who want to go to Canada because they missed the previous quotas because of the pandemic. Can you confirm that or do you know anything about that?

Salma: Yes. I have been following the news on the official websites for Canada immigration and yes, they have been taking a lot of students-- a lot of people who are immigrating, but that's through the PNP I think and the CPC and I haven't applied through these yet. The normal federal way this is the one that is on hold because this would require a lot of people coming from outside and I think that's what they're keeping on hold. And I haven't applied through those two. Either way, if I apply through the normal PNP or the normal federal way, I have scored-- I mean federal way I have scored I think maximum points that are possible 475. I think you could score more if I got higher in speaking and reading, but otherwise, I have scored fairly more than people I know who are already there in the past few years. And through PNP



the jump that I got in IELTS because of my writing exam would even score me higher than what's being already been taking people. Through PNP I know they're taking around 700 points. With my current score because of IELTS if I applied through PNP I would score well around 1000 so.

Ben: Wow! So, you're more than ready-- you're more than prepared for Canada. It's a certainty. That is fantastic. Well done, Salma. Well done. Final question. Do you have anything else to add or any tips for current students?

Salma: Current students all I would say is if you practice enough you shall make it. Don't give up like I would have given up just before taking this course. I think you should keep going strong. I think they should look for the right materials and I should think they should stay consistent in practicing even if their pace is slow, but they should definitely give it their all.

Ben: Absolutely. That is great advice especially the consistency. Just to emphasize that, I read the other day anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. And at first I didn't understand, but



the logic is that just show up. And maybe it's one sentence of your essay. Maybe it's just read one or read a couple IELTS Task 2 essays, but I think the key is just to keep consistent and keep moving forward.

Salma: Exactly. Consistency is key. It is absolutely key.

Ben: Yeah, yeah, this is so true. I'm learning Hungarian now and some days I don't feel like doing anything. So, the very minimum I allow myself to do or let myself get away with is just write out 10 sentences in Hungarian and then you know I've maintained this consistent standard of at least doing something every single day. So, yeah. I totally agree with you there, Salma.

Salma: It's an accomplishment.

Ben: Exactly. Exactly and we've got to reward these accomplishments and we've got to stay positive and this is helped even more if you've got a tutor looking over your shoulder and



talking to you and giving you this feedback and it just makes the whole process so, so much easier. So, thank you very much, Salma for that interview. I really appreciate it.

Salma: Thank you, Ben.

Ben: No problem.

Salma: It's a pleasure talking to you.

Ben: Sorry?

Salma: It's a pleasure talking to you finally.

Ben: Yes, yes. Likewise. Likewise. And yeah. For all the listeners, Salma has been getting feedback on her essays. That's how she was able to improve and she managed to get the band 7 that she needed and now she's on her way to Canada. And if you're interested in improving your essays and your IELTS skills as well, then go to ieltspodcast.com and you can sign up for the newsletter there and you'll get special offers and more advice and guidance on how you can



improve your score. So, thank you very much for listening and remember to visit ieltspodcast.com.

[Music]

Ben: It's published on an international scale now. So, if anybody is looking for a journalist we know who wants to be one.

Salma: Wow! That's another comment.

Ben: Yeah. Well, I wish you all the best, Salma, in Canada, in journalism, and in English in general. I'm sure you'll be able to do it. With your attitude and determination, I'm pretty sure you'll be able to get what you want.

Salma: Thank you. I appreciate it very much. I appreciate it