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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, IELTS students. In this interview, I'm going to be talking with Julia from China who has recently passed the exam and is going to be sharing with us how she did it and the score she got. So, how are you today, Julia?

Julia: Yeah, I'm good.

Ben: Excellent. All right. Could you just tell us a little bit about yourself like who you are, where you're from, and why you're taking the IELTS exam?



Julia: I'm a software engineer and I'm currently working in Beijing and actually, I'm working for a large IT company in China. I take IELTS because I want to immigrate to Canada and so that's why I take the general training. So, I have to have a total overall score of at least 7.5. I took several times of tests and finally got it.

Ben: Yes. I'm looking forward to asking you more about that in a minute. You said you've taken quite a few exams before. Could you tell us how you were preparing for the exam before you started our course?

Julia: Actually, because I have been studied overseas actually in America for a few years, at the very beginning, I overestimated my English level and at that time I thought that IELTS should be an easy exam for me and so I went and I still remember the first time when I took IELTS which was about two years ago and at the time, I only got a 6 in both writing and speaking sections. Oh, I feel very disappointed at that time. And at the time, I generally did nothing for preparing for the exam. And a few months ago, I was still busy working and seldom put my effort how to prepare



for IELTS exams and I finally came up with the IELTS Podcast where [unintelligible 00:02:29.01] English and then I really realized that I should prepare for IELTS. I decided to take the online course because the online course provides lots of other things like revise of the essays.

Ben: Fantastic. Yeah. And don't worry, Julia. So, many people underestimate the difficulty of the IELTS exam. Even native English speakers will go into the exam thinking I don't need to prepare. I'm from Ireland. I'm a native English speaker. And then lo and behold, they do the exam and they come up with the band 7 or something for the writing and they're like wow! Maybe I do need to prepare. So, yeah. I think the majority of the people underestimate it. So, I could totally understand you. You said you started preparing a few months ago with us.

Julia: Technically, I didn't do so much preparation before I used IELTS Podcast and at that time, I noticed as well I forgot and then I subscribed into the IELTS Podcast and I got lots of free information [unintelligible 00:03:45.23]. Once I noticed advertisement on it saying that one



essay correction for \$5 which is equivalent to 35 yen in Chinese yen and I thought it was not that expensive and I would like to have a try. So, I wrote I think about like the international trading.

Ben: Yeah, yeah. That's interesting. Yes. We occasionally run promotions like that for essay corrections for \$5 and yes, it is quite popular and so popular sometimes we take them down because the teachers complain they're getting too many essays to correct, but yeah. If you join the newsletter, you also get an invitation-- a special coupon to get your essay corrected for \$5. But that's interesting and you got the question about international marketing I guess.

Julia: Ah, yes. This was international marketing.

Ben: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. We were using that question, but we've updated it now just to one that was like more recent-- one that's been seen on recent exam papers by students just to change it up a little bit. So, going back to you, Julia how many tests have you taken in total?



Julia: I forget. I forget about it because I have take too many times of exams. The first time I took it was about two years ago and then I took only a few tests before the COVID 19 outbreak and after the COVID 19 outbreak, all the IELTS test centers in China had stopped working and then it was everything back to normal. Last year in August, I took another test and at that time, I got 7.5 in speaking at that time, but at that time I only got a 6.5 in writing. So, I decided to buy the IELTS Podcast essay correction again. The first time I bought it was like in late 2019, but last year when I got a 6.5 in writing, I realized that I should have my essay corrected again and then I repurchased it.

Ben: Right. Okay. Now I understand. So, you had taken the exam a few times and then COVID came basically put a pause on you taking more tests, put a pause on your preparation, but then you joined the course and got more feedback so that you could improve your work because you were stuck at 6 or 6.5 in the writing. Is that right?

Julia: Yes.



Ben: Got you. Got you. What was your biggest challenge with the writing, Julia?

Julia: It wasn't lexical resource because actually, I took a GIE test before and actually, I have learned a lot of fun stuff via reading, but I think I have a few problems with my grammar and sometimes perhaps the task achievement because I sometimes may misunderstand like the point of the opinion or the statement and I focus on the wrong thing. That may happen since that is quite common in Chinese candidates who are taking IELTS actually. Some expressions when we learn it, we learn the Chinese translation and the meaning can be slightly different from its Chinese translation. So, that's why sometimes I make some mistakes in task achievement. And also in some problems like the past perfect or like the perfect tenses and sometimes that's quite common in like Daphne's corrections and it happens every time.

Ben: Interesting. Yeah, it's quite interesting what you said about the task response. Just to summarize, the task response and the translation of the questions and the expressions from Chinese into English and English into Chinese also were areas of difficulty. Is that right?



Julia: Yes and sometimes I may have some problems with my cohesion or the logics because sometimes I don't really understand the linkers and the meaning of the linkers. For example, before I took IELTS, I don't know that on the other hand it's something and on the other hand another thing and these two things can be something is equivalent to something then, but I didn't realize that and I thought that on one hand and other hand I thought these two things are the same.

Ben: How did you realize that on the one hand and on the other hand were basically kind of like however or but?

Julia: Something that introduced linkers perhaps from the IELTS Podcast website or from the other like English learning website, but I can't remember now.

Ben: No worries. I'm sure we do mention it in the course I think. Just going back to the getting feedback, which teacher was correcting your work? Was it Daphne or Ellen?



Julia: It was Daphne and she did really fantastic work.

Ben: Oh, yeah really? Why? Tell me why, please?

Julia: Because she pointed at like many common errors that I usually made and she was so inspiring. Sometimes she makes some corrections and she focuses on them like the inconsistent tone in my writing and sometimes she point out which sentence is too informal in especially Task 2 Writing and then she corrected for me. And also, she encouraged me to a large extent. She said a lot of encouraging words to me and like make me feel good. So, I think yeah, her work is really fantastic.

Ben: Super. That is good. That is really good. I'm happy you said that. I'll pass that on. Daphne is an absolute star and so is our other essay corrector, Ellen. They're both geniuses I think. And also I love the fact that you mentioned that it was kind of inspiring because I think when you're preparing for IELTS, you need some positive motivation. Would you agree with that?



Julia: Definitely because taking IELTS exams can be very frustrating and-- yes, can be frustrating especially while I am also working. I didn't resign for preparation or for IELTS exams. I decided to work and at the same time prepare for IELTS. Sometimes I replied to Daphne not quite immediately and I thought I didn't move so fast, but she still encouraged me and she like she gave me a lot of positive feedback on my work and she said like I'm hard working or I did something so well and I was quite encouraged.

Ben: That is fantastic. I'm very, very happy about that. And yeah, kudos to you. Well done you Julia for being able to work full-time and also prepare for the exam simultaneously-- doing both at the same time. It takes a tremendous effort and a tremendous amount of focus. So, well done there. And with the feedback that you received; how did that help you improve? I mean how did you make sure that you didn't make the same mistakes again?

Julia: I put every correction into a spreadsheet and I put them on like the Google spreadsheet although also you probably heard that in China like we cannot use the Google services, but



actually in perhaps every Chinese IT company that we can use Google because we need to browse something and we need to search something via Google. And I put a lot of things-- the corrections and like the expressions that Daphne used into the spreadsheet and then I sometimes check it in my office while my colleagues are taking a nap after they have lunch and I make use of the like small chunks of time and I reset a lot of-- I review a lot of things.

Ben: Fantastic. Wow! That is amazing. Well done. Doing little things like this, making notes from the feedback that you get and especially putting it into a spreadsheet-- we provide a spreadsheet when you join the course to put all your notes so you could keep track of your performance, keep track of your mistakes just like Julia did as well. She was using a spreadsheet just to keep track and put down the expressions and the corrections and the improvements. And this is really one of the best ways to ensure and almost guarantee that you're going to improve. So Julia, what happened on your test? Well, you needed a 7. Is that right for emigrating to Canada?



Julia: Yes. I need a 7 and the thing which makes IELTS very frustrating to me is that where I got a 7.5 in speaking and at the same time I always get a 6.5 in writing. Where I get a 7.5 in writing and then I get a 6.5 in speaking. So, they're quite frustrating to me. That's something that I have to overcome and fortunately, I have insisted on working on like the corrections in writing and I kept recording myself and I talked to other like native speakers as much as I can and I finally make it.

Ben: Wow! Wow! Well done. Yeah. I can only imagine the frustration when you focus on one area and then the other one dips and you don't get it and then you go back to do the test and the other one dips while the other one's going up. It can be so frustrating. So, I really, really admire your determination for just pushing on. And what happened on your last test day because on your last test day I guess you got all the scores you needed. Is that right?

Julia: Yes. Actually, when I was preparing especially in this March and April, I feel very disheartened at that time, but I still kept correcting like the mistakes I had before. And then at the



end of April, I took my last test and at that time, I didn't do something that is special and I just had a good rest and reviewed all Daphne's notes and then reviewed like the expressions in the IELTS Podcast like the online course. I guess it was the Task 1. And also, I talked to someone in English before the test came then I made it. And I didn't-- actually, I didn't feel anything special yet on that day.

Ben: But I just want to mention some of the things that I thought would have really helped your score. So, first of all, you said you went in there quite relaxed and kind of like almost neutral. You said you spoke with-- you practiced your speaking I guess with another tutor before the exam as well and yeah. Is that right? Did you do those two things? You went in there quite relaxed and you practiced your speaking before the exam?

Julia: Yes. Enough sleep is quite important as well. I think I have some problems with my nerves and I purchased IELTS speak up session which is provided by the British Council officials and it's like official service like somewhat test.



Ben: I know exactly what you mean, Julia. I've coached so many students that if I'm speaking to them they're a band 7, a band 8, but as soon as they get into the exam, they drop to maybe a band 6.5 or maybe a band 7 and it's terribly unfair because they have the ability in the English language, but under certain conditions, the nerves come into play and it really can be detrimental to the score. But I like the tip as well about not only having like an hour conversation before the speaking but also having a good night's sleep because that's going to-- that's definitely going to help as well. So Julia, what scores did you end up with then? I'm kind of-- I'd really want to know and I think the audience want to know as well.

Julia: Yeah, sure. I got an overall of 8 and I got 8.5 in listening and 8 reading and 7.5 in speaking and 7 in writing.

Ben: Wow! Fantastic. Band 8 and that is a lot of points for your Canadian immigration, isn't it?

Julia: Yes. It's still very good to me actually. I guess that's enough.



Ben: Absolutely. Absolutely, Julia. Don't be so hard on yourself. You did fantastic and you achieved your objective which was to pass at a 7 or higher in the writing. It was the only thing that seemed to be stopping you and you managed to boost your score in the speaking to 7.5 as well. So, you did absolutely fantastic, Julia. You did wonderful and don't forget that you put in a lot of work and it paid off as well. So Julia, before we finish what would you say to somebody who is maybe struggling with the writing or with the speaking?

Julia: For writing is quite important to get some feedback especially because sometimes a person--the mistakes that a single person make can be quite similar and as I mentioned before that my problems are like how to use the perfect tense. It's quite important to get feedbacks, review the feedbacks, and always try to avoid making the similar mistakes over and over. In the speaking sessions, it's very important to have your own opinion and then try to explain it thoroughly.



Ben: Absolutely there. Great points. Great points, Julia. Before we finish, do you have anything else to add?

Julia: I think interesting point is that someone else told me that IELTS speaking test is something similar to an interview. Make your point and then give your fully explanation and then to try your best to impress the other people.

Ben: That's great advice. I love the fact that it can be like reduced down so we treat it as an interview. I've said very similar before in previous podcasts. We treat this like an interview. The level of language it's not overly formal. It's not informal as though it's with your friends, but also as well I love this little piece of advice you made, Julia, of giving your opinion and then making your point and developing it. We've also spoken about that in previous podcasts as well. So, I totally agree with that. So, I think that's everything Julia and I want to thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us today. You're going to inspire lots of listeners, not just around the



world but also in China because I know we've got a lot of listeners there. So, thank you very much, Julia, and I wish you all the best for your Canadian application.

Julia: Yeah. Thank you.

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Attachments area