



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 episode, we're talking with Sidhant from India who has taken the exam quite a few times and he's going to tell us how he got some exceptionally good grades. We're not going to tell you the exact grade, but it was over band 7. So, this is a good one and it's got a lot of information-- lots of valuable information. So, Sidhant, could you just give us an overview of where you are now and why you are taking the IELTS and where you intend to go please?

Sidhant: Yeah, sure. So Ben, right now I'm in India and I'm giving my IELTS exam because I want to move to Canada. So, this is regarding the PR opportunity. If I get a good score, only then my name would be in the cut-off list. So, that was my main focus to get into IELTS exams.



Ben: Right. And what draws you to Canada and not the UK, my country? I'm offended.

Sidhant: No, I mean I think the process which you know Canada is taking you know they are checking your scores, your different abilities; it's quite easy than other countries like Australia, UK. So that is why.

Ben: When you said easier, it's easier because they're accepting more people or the requirement is lower? In what aspect is it easier to get into Canada as opposed to other countries?

Sidhant: Yeah, I think it's not that the requirement is easier. It's just the process like they have streamlined it very you know efficiently for individuals. So, that thing I liked about Canada because even we don't need any consultant, right? We can submit our documents like individually. So, that's the main thing which really attracted me. And a couple of my friends I mean they went to Canada. I mean they did all the process on their own. They saved a lot of money you know. They're not giving it to consultant like lots of rupees.



Ben: Right. Interesting. Very interesting. Wow! And whereabouts in Canada do you intend to go?

Sidhant: Nothing specific from whichever district or you know wherever I get a call from I'm okay with that.

Ben: Super.

Sidhant: I don't know much about Canada. It's just you know it's a dream to go and get settled there.

Ben: That's beautiful, man. That's beautiful. Yeah. If we don't have dreams what do we have? Well so yeah. I'm so happy that we have helped you achieve this. So, it's fantastic. Now, a few seconds before we started this recording, you told me that you'd taken the IELTS eight times, right?



Sidhant: Seven times before this the last attempt.

Ben: Got you. Okay. So, you took it seven times before your most recent one and obviously your most recent one was probably your best one. And what specific problems did you have with the IELTS exam?

Sidhant: So Ben, I was facing the problem with the writing. You know from last seven attempts, I got 8 in listening and 7 in speaking as well as in reading, but writing I was getting 6.5 in four attempts.

Ben: Oh my word!

Sidhant: So, it wasn't bad you know. I was getting 7, 7.5 bands earlier also, but I was I got stuck in writing only.

Ben: Right. The famous stuck at 6.5, yeah?



Sidhant: Exactly.

Ben: It totally is famous, Sidhant, honestly and yeah. This is like the biggest frustration for IELTS. It's one of the biggest frustrations and I think part of the reason this is because it's not like reading or listening where you can just flip to the back of the exam paper or the book and find the answers and then go back you know and you can review it and then you can work on it that way. With writing, it's a much more spontaneous process and it's not as clear cut. It's not as black and white and this only adds to the frustration. And then of course, the lovely questions of agree/disagree and all of this. It can be a real frustrating painful process.

Sidhant: Exactly.

Ben: Yeah, yeah. Well, so we've narrowed it down to the writing. Can you specifically say where were you losing points with the writing? Was it questions? Was it ideas?



Sidhant: So Ben, I think what I was doing was I was checking the remarks which comes after you give your exams, right? They give you specific description like where you were going wrong. So, I checked my last seven attempts and all those remarks were same by the IDP IELTS. So, I didn't get much of a thing like what I need to get corrected in my writing. Then I took a tuition, right? I took classes in India only. So, some of my-- that tutor he told me to go to another state in India because writing might be lenient over there. I mean the checking might be lenient in that particular state. So, I was not convinced why was he saying that.

Ben: That sounds like a really good tutor to give you that advice, you know? I can't help you, but try over in this one. Maybe they might be lenient. I don't know. I don't know. Just give it a shot. That's crazy.

Sidhant: Yeah. He was like don't go with the IDP because it's strict. Go for British Council. It's quite easier and that in another state, the checking is also lenient. So, I was wondering I mean



does that even happen. I even googled it you know just to check if it's true, but you know I couldn't find any satisfactory answer. So, I did not do it. I did not do it, but I you know lose my money in that [unintelligible 00:07:22.08] class is for sure.

Ben: Oh my word! It's even more infuriating if you paid for classes and the tutor who you're paying says go to another state. It's oh yeah, yeah. Just as a side note by the way, British Council no longer does IELTS tests in India.

Sidhant: In India, yeah, but last year in 2020 it was conducting.

Ben: Right. Right. Right. Okay. So, this instructor who you pay to help you pass IELTS and his secret advice was go to another state where it's British Council, this is-- yes.



Sidhant: He told me I mean he told me like you know I'll give you a secret advice if you get enrolled in my institution. So, I was like okay what's that advice? When I paid him the money he told me like you have to go to that place to give your exam. This was his secret advice.

Ben: Oh my word! And now he's out of business the poor guy because it's all IELTS IDP. The poor guy has lost his business now. No more secrets. No one is going to sign up. Poor guy. Okay. All right. So yeah. So, just to go back, you said that you were reviewing your remarks from IDP and they were all the same.

Sidhant: Yeah.

Ben: So, it wasn't really helping I guess. So, this is why you went to this instructor. He suggested change state; secret advice by the way. If you're listening to this podcast, don't tell anybody. And that didn't work, right?



Sidhant: Yeah. It did not work, yeah.

Ben: Okay.

Sidhant: I was stuck with the writing 6.5, yeah.

Ben: Okay. And then how did you-- what was your next step in changing this situation?

Sidhant: So Ben, to be very honest since last couple of years when I used to get my result, I used to get very upset because I was getting good marks in other three except writing, right? I was getting stuck with 6.5. I was getting band overall band 7, 7.5, but only due to writing I was not getting a CRS score of more than 400 in Canadian score, right?

Ben: Yeah.

Sidhant: So, what I used to do was before sleeping I used to listen to your podcast for sure and you know the reason is because I wanted to hear the testimonials of the people that you



interview, right? I wanted to know like what are they doing, how are they passing; like that used to give me some kind of thought like okay, they are getting passed with you being involved in that. Maybe you know even I should give it a chance so.

Ben: Interesting. Interesting. So, it was my voice sending you to sleep all those nights.

Sidhant: Yeah, I mean to be very honest, there was one interview I heard on your podcast where I don't know a guy from which country he gave I think nine or ten attempts and he got past the ninth attempt and still he had already paid in advance for the tenth or eleventh attempt. So, that was very familiar to hear.

Ben: Wow! Yeah. Yes.

Sidhant: I tried to remember. I'm not sure.



Ben: I think yeah. I vaguely remember that story. I think-- yeah. It may have been a girl. I can't remember but yeah, somebody they weren't 100% confident that they were going to pass. So, they just took another test in advance just in case.

Sidhant: So, you know I related myself with him. I thought if he could pass with your instructions then even like after seven or six attempts, I could also do that.

Ben: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah and it's so strange, isn't it? That like you believed it from listening and then here you are you know a few months later. I think you started in April, didn't you?

Sidhant: Yes.

Ben: Around April time and then yeah six months later more or less, boom! You're a global star and somebody else will be on their bed-- somebody else will be listening on their bed, Sidhant, listening to you sharing how you got it and yeah, the cycle comes full circle. So, that is super. So,



you started with us around April and what was the process? How did you start? Were you sending in essays? Did you join the course?

Sidhant: I joined the 10 essay correction because Ben, the thing was I had really practiced a lot about all the four modules earlier also. I was confident with my speaking, with my reading, and with my listening because I had practiced a lot. For writing also, I had practiced, but I wasn't sure like where I'm going wrong, why I was getting 6.5. For that purpose, I took your course which was essay correction course; 10 essay corrections [unintelligible 00:13:12.27].

Ben: Right. Yeah. Okay.

Sidhant: And one more course so where you give your grading material that was for \$30 I think.

Ben: Okay. Yeah. I think you bought the essay correction pack and then you bought the-- sorry. Which course did you buy? You tell me.



Sidhant: Yeah. It was actually all your videos which gives us an idea how to write essay like CRT method and all.

Ben: Right. Okay. Now, I understand. Yeah. I think we gave you a special offer because you'd already bought the corrections and what we usually do in that case just for the listeners is if somebody's bought a big pack of essay corrections, we offer them the chance to upgrade to the video course where they can learn. Just as a side note, feedback will help you and you will get advice and we can give you advice like how to structure the essay, obviously the grammar, the language, the vocabulary, all of that of course as well, but if we don't have enough time doing the corrections to tutor you on the exam specific skills you need in order to write a coherent strong high scoring essay. So, this is why we offer it as a discount because we know from experience that they go fantastically well together. So, you started off with the essay corrections and then you joined the online course, right?



Sidhant: Yeah. Correct. Yeah.

Ben: Beautiful. Beautiful. Okay. And who was correcting your essays? Was it Ellen or Daphne?

Sidhant: It was-- yeah Daphne. Yes.

Ben: Got you. Okay. Super. Super. Now, at what point-- when you got your first feedback when you got it returned was there any aha moments? Was there anything that kind of stood out? Or when you joined the course, was there any moments like that?

Sidhant: Yeah. Ben, the first time when I gave my essay to her, she gave me a topic for letter and essay. I responded her that very night only in like within two or three hours and she replied back to me next day for sure within 24 hours and yeah. When I was reading her feedback, right-- sorry. When I was listening to her feedback on the essay specifically, I was actually feeling very low because you know I couldn't handle the way she was you know correcting my essay.



Ben: Oh, poor Sidhant. I'm so sorry.

Sidhant: No it was like even I was the same like what I had written because when I was writing it was looking good, but when she was correcting it felt like I mean what I had written man? I mean it's not good. It's not appropriate. So, she at the very first correction she told me to structure it properly because I was not structuring my essay properly. So, that was the issue I caught you know on my feedback. So, I think in my recent attempt I structured it quite well and that you know made me go through in my IELTS exam.

Ben: Got you. So, Daphne gave you your first feedback. You got it back and it hurt. Sorry. I should have been it hurt but it was--

Sidhant: It hurt actually yeah. When I was wondering like what I've written you know.

Ben: But this is growing, you know. This is growing. This is learning. You can't expect to write an essay perfectly you know if you've had poor instructors or you haven't had the right tuition



and it's something that you've never done before. You can't expect to write a great essay off the bat. You can't do it first time. And you know having this kind of pain I think is good you know. I mean it can hurt your pride. It can be a little bit humiliating, but I think there is some truth in the phrase no pain no gain you know.

Sidhant: Exactly. You know when someone else is reading your essay it feels more awkward.

Ben: Yeah. It's the salt going into the wound, isn't it? Yeah. I can relate. I can relate, Sidhant with my Spanish. The first time I wrote an essay in Spanish, they looked at me and they said did you use Google translate? And I was like no. I used Ben translate and they were like ah, okay. Okay. They ended up just saying look, just give me the English one and I'll write it to you in Spanish and I was like okay, fine. But yeah, yeah. I've been there. I've been there. If I hadn't had that painful moment, I would have never got better, you know. So, there is value there. You've just



got to find it. So, yeah. So, just going back to your essays, Daphne was helping you with the structure. And what about the content? Was the content of your essay was it focused?

Sidhant: So, my content was fine. I think I was making mistakes and punctuations and a little bit of grammar as well, but the major problem was my structure which I was not you know doing well on it. So, I improved my structure thing. Whatever Daphne told me I tried to implement that and yes, it worked.

Ben: Super. Super. And was the online course useful for you in helping you with the structure?

Sidhant: Yes. Yes. I mean the CTRT method it is really very helpful for sure. I did not-- I mean you had given a sample, right? Like from 100% of that sample, I took only 30% or 35% of your you know the wordings and all that written, but that CTRT method really helped me a lot in you know giving me-- I think let me tell you, Ben it was the first time I did my planning before



writing the essay and it happened-- yeah, and it happened just because of your CTRT method, right?

Ben: Right. That's interesting.

Sidhant: Yeah, because at that time I knew what points I had to write you know. It was I had written into the CTRT method what points I need to write in one side and what I need to write on another part of the essay. So, you know earlier what I used to do was I used to just think and when I was writing I used to forget like okay, what was the next point? So, I used to mess it up, but now I was more focused here. I know what I need to write the second point, third point. Yeah. So, this method really helped me a lot. Yeah.

Ben: This is so true. This is so true. When I was writing essays when I was getting into teaching IELTS and I just was like okay, let's have a look at these questions. It can't be that difficult. And if I ever wrote them without a clear plan, they were quickly going to turn into a train crash of



ideas, you know. It was just going to be an incoherent mess and even though the grammar might have been perfect-- the grammar would have been perfect. I'm from England. The vocabulary, word choice, everything else would have been perfect, but the idea, the cohesion, the layout, the task response would be a catastrophe. And this is why I think planning is so, so important. I think the CTRT method definitely helps with that organization of thoughts and just basically transforming your thoughts into quite a strong essay. So, you were working through the course and at the same time were you working on your other skills like you're speaking, you're listening, you're reading?

Sidhant: Not exactly, Ben because at this point, I just needed to improve my writing. All the other three skills I was very much okay with it because I know I had already scored four times right before this exam. I was getting 8, 7, 7 already or 7.5 already. So, I knew all other three were fine, but only the writing I was getting stuck.



Ben: Right. And 8.5 in the listening is ridiculously good. How did you get such a high grade?

Sidhant: I practiced a lot, Ben to be very honest from YouTube. I did a lot of practice and listening you know it became so easy for me like every time in the last four attempts I was getting 8 or more than 8 for sure.

Ben: And when you said you were practicing, did you practice with practice tests or did you have other material?

Sidhant: No, it's just from YouTube, yeah.

Ben: Just doing listening tests from YouTube.

Sidhant: Yeah. Listening from YouTube and reading I used to do online from different websites and then reading-- then speaking I mean you know I've been working with companies, so I know



my speaking is also okay. So, I would score more than 7. That only the writing thing that was problematic.

Ben: Okay. Yeah. Got you. Got you. Okay. Well, that is fantastic. Now, what would you say to-- actually, before we get to that question, tell us-- let me just summarize. So, seven attempts and then finally before your eighth attempt, you joined our course. Well actually, let me just add a little bit of drama here. I can't miss this.

Sidhant: That's why I like your podcast you know. I used to listen to your podcast because your humor is quite [unintelligible 00:23:49.02]. It's not a serious podcast.

Ben: It is a serious one. Thank you. Thank you. It's a serious, but enjoyable one. So, you were doing your test. You did about seven tests. In that time, you had an instructor who told you an industry secret that really we shouldn't repeat it just in case he goes out of business. So, if you didn't catch this industry secret, you have to listen again. But anyway, the secret didn't work. So,



after that, Sidhant was in his bedroom listening to the podcast, listening to previous successful students and then he decided to join the course. He got some feedback from Daphne on his essays which upset him which was good though, which was good pain because this is when you realized that some improvements were necessary and set him on the right path.

Sidhant: Yeah. Exactly.

Ben: And through that and through the online course and the feedback, he started improving his essays pretty quickly it seems. And then in the next test, what happened? Could you walk us through what happened like what grades you got?

Sidhant: So, on my eighth attempt, I got 8.5 in listening, 7.5 in speaking, 7.5 in reading, and finally 7.5 in writing.

Ben: Awesome, man. Awesome.



Sidhant: It's the first time I got above 6.5 in writing. After so much hustle wastage of my money, finally it happened the first time.

Ben: Yeah, yeah. That is amazing and I imagine a massive wave of relief.

Sidhant: Yeah, a massive.

Ben: Yeah. Wow! That is fantastic. I am so happy for you, Sidhant. That is amazing. Wow! And do you have a time scale for moving to Canada? Will it be in the next month? In the next couple of months?

Sidhant: Not exactly. I'm waiting for-- I have submitted my papers online and I'm waiting for my score to get into the cut-off list. So, that's why I'm waiting.



Ben: Super. Super. Well, that is absolutely awesome, man. That is awesome. Just one last question. What would you say to anybody who's probably sitting on the fence now and he doesn't know? He's 50/50 about joining the course.

Sidhant: I just want to say like you really need you know some kind of feedbacks to make sure like what wrong you are doing in your writing. Most probably it's a structure problem, so better to have an instructor to teach. You know you just have this whatever I have taken like an essay correction course you'll get to know what wrong you are doing and what needs to be done to clear this exam. That's what I did and that's what you should do as well.

Ben: Beautiful. Beautiful advice there. Okay, then. I think that's everything, Sidhant. You've been an absolute star. So, I wish you all the best for Canada.

Sidhant: Thank you so much, Ben. It's a pleasure talking to you. Finally after so many podcasts, yeah I got a chance. I feel good.



[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

