

# A Prophetic Approach in Maximizing IELTS Band Score

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**Abstract:** *Despite an adequate preparation to an exam, including test on language proficiency, anxiety and nervousness may come in the way and adversely affect the test result. Emphasizing on the individual religious aspect may help overcome the confidence crisis during the test preparation since the religious aspect unifies not only mind and body, but also soul in the learning process. A case study on the correlation between the religious element and self-confidence increase was conducted with the students of IELTS Preparation Class of LPDP Affirmation Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta as the participants. This research is aimed to (1) identify the factors account for the pre-test IELTS band score of the participants; (2) observe the application of prophetic approach in language training; (3) prove the influence of prophetic approach on the post-test result of the participants. The data were collected from questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS. The results of tests (pre-test and post-test) was used to complete the analysis. The findings show that prophetic approach applied in the language training program in the given period of time proves to be effective in increasing the students' self-assurance through three elements, namely adversity intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and devotion and emotional intelligence. This approach assists the learners to nurture self-identity with strong character, religious mind, and persistent behavior which help them to reach their goal of learning.*

**Keywords:** *prophetic approach, IELTS, band score, language training program*

## 1. Introduction

Not every person likes test which is very likely to bring anxiety and discomfort before and during the test. Such psychological conditions are actually normal and often helpful to stay mentally and physically alert, however, too much anxiety can result in emotional and/or physical distress, difficulty in concentrating, and inferior performance, not because of intellectual problems or poor academic preparation, but more due to the fact that testing situations create a sense of threat which can disrupt attention and memory function (I. Sarason, B. Sarason, and Pierce, 1995). The individuals with high level of anxiety are constantly comparing their self-performance to peers, considering the consequences of failure, low levels of confidence in performance, excessive worry about grades, feeling that they are unprepared for tests, and loss of self-worth (Cassidy and Johnson, 2001).

The phenomenon also takes place during the IELTS Preparation Program held at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The program is a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Finance and the state higher educational institutions in Java, one of which is UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, represented by its Language Center P2B UIN. To assist the awardees of Beasiswa LPDP (a scholarship program endowed by the Ministry of Finance) to reach the minimum IELTS band score of 6.5 is the main goal of the program. Consequently, P2B UIN attempts to design a specific training program to enable the awardees to realize the main objective comprising complete materials, test tips, exercises, independent learning, and test simulation. The training program employs outcome-based, student progress-centered, classroom management consisting collaborative learning process.

Along the first intake of the test preparation training program which lasted from November 2015-May 2016, the presence of test anxiety was observed and concerned to jeopardize the noteworthy efforts made by the students. Hence, the anticipatory approach was applied at the minimum to keep the students from losing their confidence to their own capacity. Emphasizing on the religious aspects of life which nurtures the wholeness of intellectual, emotional, and moral character of the students (*tarbiyah*) by unifying the mind-body-soul in the learning process was conducted and expected to be effective to increase the students' breadth and self-assurance.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. IELTS Training Program**

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is an international standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers which was established in 1989 by Cambridge English Language Assessment, the British Council, and IDP Australia. This test can be assumed as the most popular language test for higher education and immigration with its participants in 2014 reaching 2.5 million in more than 140 countries, up from 2 million in 2012 ([www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)).

Training program is defined as a short term educational process utilizing systematic and organized procedure by which non managerial personnel learn technical knowledge and skill for a definite purpose (Sikula in Mangkunegara, 2000). Moreover, Mathis (2002) states that training program is a process in which participants are able to achieve certain level of ability. Hence, it can be assumed that IELTS training program is an educational process employing a certain systemic and organized procedure to learn technical knowledge and skill to be able to achieve the certain level of proficiency, in this regard, the targeted IELTS band score to pass.

IELTS LPDP Affirmation Language Training Program is designed to train the awardees of LPDP (Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education) selected from the forefront, outermost, and less developed areas of Indonesia. The awardees have succeeded in the administrative and interview scrutiny, however, to be eligible for the scholarship, they must demonstrate their English proficiency of band 6.5 of IELTS.

As one of the collaborators with the Ministry of Finance, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has assisted to train the LPDP Awardees since November 2015. The first intake ran for six months from November 2015 to May 2016. There were 24 participants coming from various parts of Indonesia with the same objective, namely reaching the IELTS band target of 6.5.

### **2.2. Prophetics Approach in Learning Process**

Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (2016) states that learning process is a process, a way, to make human being learn something. Basically, learning process is the art of shaping human character (Budiyanto, 2009). Prophetics rooted from the word prophet, which is also derived from Greek prophetes, is a noun for foretelling the future benefit of mankind (Haryono, 2014). In this context, the prophet used as a role model is the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., a great educator who spread and taught Islam in Mecca then made many followers in respects (thereafter called Moslems) and shaped them with Islamic characters. During his life, he was a great example toward his companions. This exemplary conduct refers to the prophetics approach in teaching and learning process. Prophetic learning can be assumed as a process adapting spiritual learning from inner enlightenment which had been done by the Prophets. It transfers knowledge and values to build human characters and get closer to God and universe. By this way, the learning approach can create an ideal social community (*khairul ummah*) which includes enhancing the wholeness of intellectual, emotional, and moral character of the students.

### **2.3. Prophetics Intelligence**

The prophetics values including humanization (spreading goodness), liberation (preventing immorality), transcendence (believing in God) are employed in prophetic learning. Moreover, for implementation, spiritual approach is used to increase adversity intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and emotional intelligence. In the end, a mentally healthy condition is realized when a human being relieves from mental sickness, e.g. shirk (polytheism),

kufir (disbelief), nifaq (hypocrisy), and fusūq (wicked) (Adz-Dzakiey, 2005). As achieving this mental statement, they will definitely have belief in God which will further raise the desire to make improvements. In prophetic approach, there are three types of intelligence included, namely adversity intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and devotion and emotional intelligence.

Intelligence means an ability to learn, understand, and make judgments or have opinions that are based on reason (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2016). Adversity is defined as a difficult or unlucky situation or event (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2016). Stoltz in Adz-Dzakiey (2004) states that adversity intelligence is a positive energy to transform obstacles into opportunities. People’s success is definitely based on this quotient. Quran Surah Insyirah [verse 1-8] stipulates that:

Did We not widen your bosom for you?. And relieve you of the burden. Which had broken your back?. And We have exalted your remembrance for you (O dear Prophet Mohammed - peace and blessings be upon him). So indeed with hardship is ease. Indeed with hardship is ease. So when you finish the prayer, strive in supplication. And incline towards your Lord. (Ali, 2004)

### 3. Research Method

The primary data were collected from pre-test, progress test, post-test and questionnaire which were then analysed using SPSS. The test results were compared to know the correlation between the teaching approach and language progress. The questionnaire was a set of the defined questions addressed to the respondents which had logical correlation with the research questions. The answers were recorded then tabulated to get a general conclusion to answer the research questions. The list of questions was semi-open questions which contained ‘yes/no’ questions added with further explanation to gain more information from the respondents.

The respondents of this research were LPDP Affirmation awardees who obtained the six-month language training program focusing on IELTS Preparation at P2B UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. There were 24 awardees that come from different areas of Indonesia. Mostly, their language competencies ranged from false beginner to intermediate. The training was scheduled for five days in a week (Monday to Friday) from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. plus one hour independent learning. There were four sessions each day dedicated for practicing the four main skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) and three complementary materials (Letter of Acceptance (LOA), Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU), and vocabulary).

### 4. Findings and Discussion

#### 4.1. The Factors Account for The Pre-test IELTS Band Score of the Participants

The data of pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire were collected then analyzed into its category and the research questions. Targeted band score for LPDP language development program is 6.5. This language competence is between competent user and good user. A test taker (the one takes IELTS test) is able to handle complex language well and understand complete reasoning mostly in familiar situations, though with some occasional inaccuracies, inappropriateness and misunderstandings. Since many test takers failed to achieve this band score, this competence level is a problematic for English learners. The language competence of 24 participants can be analyzed on this way.

Table 1  
Pre-test Result

<i>Band Score</i>	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5
<b>Participant Number</b>	5	8	4	3	2	1	0
<b>Percentage</b>	20.83	33.33	16.67	12.5	8.33	4.17	0
<b>Total Participant</b>	24						

As a result, all of the participants are under targeted band score; moreover more than half participants had very limited English language competence. The participants absolutely need to get language training (IELTS preparation program) to achieve targeted IELTS band score (6.5).

The study background and origin of each participant influence the English proficiency. Mostly, the participants' origins are from forefront, outermost, and lesser-developed regions. They come from border regions which are geographically located directly on the border of neighboring countries or open seas and from lesser-developed regions which have low performance and are estimated to score below average. Consequently, the language training material quality is one of the objectives to maximize the result of training. Curriculum development includes teacher, administrator, and targeted participant. Below is the training participants' answer as they were responding questionnaire from the researcher.

Table 2  
Questionnaire on Language Training Sufficiency

No.	Question	Answers		
		Yes	No	Not Answering
1.	The IELTS preparation meets the students' need.	79.167%	8.3%	12.167%
2.	Adequacy of training program in term of duration.			
	Enough	50%		
	Fairly enough	37.5%		
	Not enough	12.5%		
3.	Adequacy of training program in term of material (main and additional).	100%		

Moreover, the other reason why this training helped them to maximize their band score was test anxiety. Preparing for and taking a test gives high pressures and physical discomfort. Consequently, affected test takers do not achieve to their potential and the result scores do not exemplify their level of knowledge and understanding. Respondents' answer related with test anxiety is given below.

Table 3  
Questionnaire on IELTS as a Problematic Test

No.	Question	Answers		
		Yes	No	Not Answering
1.	IELTS is a problematic test.	70.8%	20.8%	8.4%
2.	Confidential difficulty in facing IELTS test.	83.3%	16.7%	0
3.	Making mistakes during test as a result of test anxiety.	83.3%	16.7%	0
4.	Achieving IELTS targeted score.	83.3%	12.5%	4.2%

Based on the previous explanation, basically training participants definitely felt optimistic to pass IELTS, however they needed more knowledge of tackling test anxiety.

## 4.2. The Application of Prophetic Approach in Language Training

## 4.3. The Application of Adversity Intelligence

Prophetic learning adapts spiritual learning from inner enlightenment which transfers knowledge and values to build human characters, and gets closer to God and universe. By this way, this learning approach can create an ideal social community (*khairul ummah*) which includes enhancing the wholeness of intellectual, emotional, and

moral character of students. At this point, it is viewed from two sides; teacher and students (training participants).

Table 4  
Questionnaire on Teachers' Role

No.	Question	Answers	
		Yes	No
1.	Material given by teachers (resourceful teacher)	87.5 %	12.5 %
2.	Teachers as a role model.	100%	0
3.	Teachers prioritize sincerity, patience and honesty in teaching.	91.67%	8.33%
4.	Teachers give empowerment to support students psychologically.	100%	0
5.	Teachers make a strong bond with students.	100%	0
6.	Teachers combine horizontal and vertical consciousness in teaching.	70.83%	0
7.	Did they give their life experiences and life habit to stimulate you more in studying IELTS? How?	100	0
8.	Did they know well the students characteristics and know how to handle the students' difficulties? Give example.	87.5%	8.33%

From teachers' role, there are some points that can be discussed. Transferring knowledge and values was through class lecture in order to deliver IELTS material and human character such as getting more understanding by being down to earth to knowledge itself. Teachers emphasized that participants were able to receive more material if they thought of what they need. Teachers are also a role model and participants got abundant examples from teachers in tackling IELTS test with its tips and exercises. In line with the previous question, participants certainly admitted that their teachers gave their life experiences and life habit to encourage them in studying IELTS. One of the examples is teacher gave his or her life story when achieving the highest score in IELTS.

In teaching, teachers prioritized sincerity, patience and honesty to get closed with the participants. When they did this, they got easily to have strong bond with the participants and know well the students characteristics. Getting close with participants helped teachers to handle their difficulties especially IELTS skills. A teacher takes a big part to be a role model and giving material to students. He has to strive (*jihad*) in being persistent and consistent to prepare the material and be all out in the learning process. A teacher should give more time more energy to let students learn with him and help students whenever necessary. Only a compassionate teacher can achieve these all learning process.

Respondents also stated that their teachers gave empowerment to support students psychologically. They also believe that their teachers also combine horizontal and vertical consciousness in teaching. Teachers relate the learning process and learning out come not only with things they have struggled but also God blessing. Students were emphasized that what they achieved were not fully from their efforts but God.

#### 4.4. The Application of Spiritual Intelligence

Training participants had gained spiritual intelligence in which they were able to live with spiritual environment. They strengthen their religious life by reciting Al-Quran, more praying, fasting, performing *tahajud* prayer. Therefore their act of worship vertically makes them stronger, more confident to get through difficulties such as IELTS test. They also believe that Allah S.W.T. plays an important role in passing IELTS. Even though mostly limited user, participants believed that they optimistically can achieve 6.5 band score. As being religious person, participant felt His existence and God's supervision at anytime and anywhere. Allah S.W.T. plays an important role in passing IELTS test. Human beings do their best and Allah decides what a good thing for us. They also should be grateful to what had given by Allah then happiness and life comfort come. Below is a table showing data of participants' answer about their believe of human relation with God.

#### 4.5. The Application of Devotion and Emotional Intelligence.

Commitment and passionate are also included in prophetic approach to achieve IELTS band score. Those criteria are created through things and people surrounding, so learning process happens efficiently. Things that can help are classroom atmosphere, friendship, family, and facility. Below is the information gathered from the questionnaire.

There are some supportive aspects that help them motivated to study. Friendship and togetherness would be the highest points to be discussed. They were together in a classroom to study IELTS, 9-10 hours a day, 5 days a week, and neighborhood living. Their friendship and togetherness were getting stronger day by day. It aroused a psychological atmosphere which invites happiness. This is in line with emotional intelligence that human being should be able to understand and appreciate what happened in everyday life. There are some indicators that show emotional intelligence among IELTS training participants; they are sowing love, understand others, appreciate and respect others, *Muraqabah* (cautious and introspective), to be environmentally friendly.

#### 4.6. The Influence of Prophetic Approach on the Post-test Result of the Participants

The official IELTS test is held by the official institution with standard operational process. The result the official IELTS test is given in the following chart. There were 10 participants reached targeted band score (6.5). This is very fantastic result as previously they were at the level limited user. Normally, to increase 0.5 band score needs 3 months intensive training. However, in this training everybody showed remarkable progress. The following band score is 6 which were gained by 11 participants and 5.5 achieved by 3 persons. Even though they failed to complete the targeted band score, this result is incredible. The result of post-test is given in the following chart.

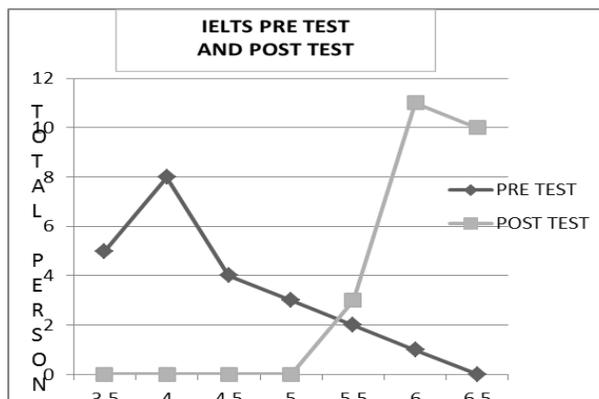


Fig. 1: The comparison of pre-test and post-test

It can be concluded that the purpose of this training is successfully achieved. This training program is intended that the participants should be able to achieve certain level of ability. It can be concluded that IELTS training program is an educational process with certain systemic and organized procedure to achieve targeted IELTS band score (6.5). Though only 10 from 24 participants got targeted band score, it should be seen from the result of pre-test that most participants were in the level of limited users.

#### 5. Conclusion

The result of pre-test will be influenced by participant background of IELTS knowledge, background of study, and origin. Participants, who come from different places around Indonesia and mostly from forefront, outermost and lesser-developed regions, moreover various education backgrounds which mostly are not from English Department, have low IELTS band score. Although they have knowledge of English, however IELTS is a problematic test that should be learnt further and intensively.

The content and quality of training program includes the teachers' qualification this language training program has already met the participants need. There are three basic aspects of prophetic approach applied in language training program, adversity intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and devotion and emotional intelligence. Those three basic aspects help participants manage their knowledge, emotional, spiritual life to get maximum score in IELTS.

Based on the pre-test and post-test, prophetic approach is efficient to be applied in IELTS training program. The results increase significantly. Though not all of participants succeeded to achieve targeted band score, the result of post-test was incredible considering the pre-test in the beginning of training was very low.

## 6. Acknowledgements

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