

A transition to Language Coach

Interview with Paola Francesi, Language Teacher, UK

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Can you describe your professional career before taking the language coaching certification (LCC)?

I have a very solid language background myself. My very own love for languages and for people made me pursue a career in teaching.

I in fact had started as an English teacher to medical professionals in Italy after my Master's Degree in French Translation back in 2004 (the courses were funded by the EU and some of them were run at the time of the Turin Winter Olympics, back in 2006). I wanted to be fully fledged, equivalent to a native speaker and decided to move to London and take a Celta course in 2008 (I am currently completing a Delta course). I settled in the UK and opportunities for Italian (my native language), French, came up, as long as TEFL ones (First Certificate preparation classes, some IELTS and summer courses at Westminster University, LSI, various institutions). London is a fantastic city, full of challenges and opportunities.

Over the years, I had developed relevant experience in high end companies and institutions (such as Mulberry, Westfield, the chocolatier William Curley, etc.) combining my



translation skills (to fulfil the needs for technical vocabulary), my deep interest in seeing people succeed, and creating the amazing process of teaching. My drive, extreme empathy and willingness to develop are my strengths. Despite years of experience, I really could benefit from a more innovative approach to improve my methodology. I did feel that this type of training happened just at the right time in my career (2015). My skills did not fit the bill anymore back then.

How did you find the course?

I felt the course was truly inspiring, intense, engaging. I was extremely grateful that Rachel approached me on LinkedIn. She spotted the potential to transform in me. Rachel is an excellent model for newly qualified coaches. She gives invaluable non-stop guidance and support.

“I realised how effectively you can help your coachees and build excellent rapport as well as successful, empowering sessions”

“The immediate impact was for sure more engaging sessions, quicker understanding of the needs, faster and more meaningful learner centered process”

Which highlights or insights did you gain from the LCC?

It really helped me to develop my active listening. I love listening by nature (and I love learning new languages with music, listening to podcasts, etc.). The “sonic” experience of a language is amazing and immersive. However, by developing it, I realised how effectively you can help your coachees and build excellent rapport as well as successful, empowering sessions. Active listening is in fact the very start for placement to set the goals, identify areas to work on, inspire your coachees. It is extremely insightful and a constant process of discovery to then act as a sounding board. It helps coachees develop their intuition and unlock their full potential for success.

What was the immediate impact on your way of teaching after taking the course?

The immediate impact was for sure more engaging sessions, quicker understanding of the needs, a faster and more meaningful learner centred process (refer to coachee’s feedback below).

“It helps coachees develop their intuition and unlock their full potential for success”

Were there any impacts on your personal life during or after the course?

Yes, the course definitely impacted on my personal life (extremely important to then influence my own lifestyle and be better in my job), Increased self-awareness, confirmation of what I want to do myself and how I want to achieve it. In addition to that, more interest in meeting the different clients, more confidence in the sessions, more sense of meaning and fulfilment, more powerful conversations. The Neuroscience information was key to get more understanding on who we are, how we function and we can be happy.

How would you describe your professional development after the course?

After the course I was extremely motivated to put everything into practice enthusiastically and also supplement with more qualifications around the same area. I in fact decided to gain a DISC accreditation that helped me to understand people in seconds. I also find workshops about Neuroscience very interesting to grasp more information and tips as well as expanding my knowledge in such an exciting pioneering field, broaden my knowledge regarding the brain. I was honoured to be accredited after attending courses run by TED speaker Gabija Toilekite. I have now just completed a Mindfulness Meditation diploma. Those are key tools to a holistic approach where you aim at being like a “lighthouse” for your clients (especially in these times of uncertainty).

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How has the course changed the way you deliver a language course?

I have been feeling definitely more confident and in control of the sessions. I can see them having now more of a structure and most importantly a purpose. Clients feel more part of it. Acting as a sounding board mainly helps them to bear their goals in mind and be reminded on the best way to achieve them (getting to an ideal performing state and a clearer decision making). A better awareness of the fascinating brain topic also contributes to have a better understanding of how someone learning feels and responds during the process. (as a linguist I can put myself in my clients' shoes very easily and use my empathy).

Were there any impacts on your learners?

Progress is visibly faster and more long lasting. This is above all because trust, confidentiality and a relaxed environment are key during the learning process. Coachees are encouraged to do self-correction. They feel motivated to keep trying until they succeed and feel they are making progress.

“Progress is visibly faster and more long lasting.”

Is there any additional comment you would like to add?

Proud to add first coachee's comment (2016). Pioneering Language Coaching sessions with a false beginner (background of French at school): “For me language coaching prevents a situation whereby the client is able to hide behind the one-directional approach of teaching. This results in a much slower learning curve than language coaching. With language coaching it is much easier to target the learning on specific areas for example business related Italian but in contrast teaching often follows a text book which is very broad. Essentially language coaching is a much more intensive, goal specific way of learning a language where the student feels empowered and therefore is able to achieve their goals efficiently”.

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