

A transition to Language Coach



Interview with Sofia Potes, Business English Teacher, France

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

I have been teaching English for over 12 years (mostly ESP: for business, marketing, art & design, TOEFL, TOEIC, literature, engineering, IT). I have worked mostly with young adults (public university and private art school and business schools in Colombia, England and France) but also with older, working adults, and have worked with individual clients and large groups (35 students). I trained as a teacher with the CELTA and then the DELTA courses and have also been Director of Studies and Centre Manager for summer schools in the UK, so I enjoy working with teachers and being involved in teacher training. For the last 3 years I have been drawn to the world of personal development and have recently decided to become a coach myself. I see language coaching is a smooth transition into the life that I want and I am grateful that the course (Rachel) that will enable me to do exactly that, found me.

How did you find the course?

It was easy to follow the course because it was offered online and because over the

summer I was more available than at other times of the year.

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Which highlights or insights did you gain from the LCC?

It shed light on the difference between teaching, coaching and mentoring. Thanks to the course, I have more clarity over what I would like to do in the future.

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

I am a better listener and I am more aware of the importance of ‘calming the brain’. I feel a lot less ‘resistance’ from my university students and I believe it’s because my rapport with them is better, softer.

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

Overall, I would say I am a better listener and also I have found myself doing lot of 'placement' outside the context of work, which has had a positive impact for more effective communication.

"I see myself teaching less and coaching more, both with one-to-one clients and small groups"

How would you describe your professional development after the course?

I am still very busy with teaching (I had committed for the whole academic year before taking the course), so I have not been able to market myself as a language coach and try to find clients. At the moment, I have only one. She was a student a few years ago so she has been able to experience the difference between teaching and language coaching. She is very happy with our sessions and I believe she will likely want to continue working together after her first 12-week cycle is finished. My plans for next year involve continuing training as language coach as well as life coach and having much more independent work. I see myself teaching less and coaching more, both with one-to-one clients and small groups.

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

I do a lot more placement, there are more coaching conversations and a lot of focus on goals and taking small action.

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How would you describe the impact you are now having as a language coach on your learners?

I have had very positive feedback at one of the business schools where I have a 'small' group of students for TOEFL coaching (this is with students of Management & Marketing). They do feel a big difference between their traditional English class and their class with me. The LCC did not prepare me for 'group coaching' so I am trying to apply what I learnt in the course as much as I can and have been organizing a lot of 'peer coaching' and 'accountability partners' with that group. It is an experiment for the school (and for me!) but the feedback has been good and I have been offered more work at the school as a language coach with another "small group" in a different department (Event Management).

Is there any additional information that you would like to add?

I am very happy that Rachel got in touch via LinkedIn and that I took the course. I really look forward to sending my recorded session soon so I can receive my certification and in order to be able to take part in the advanced course (although I already know that neither schedule suits me, unfortunately. I will wait for another advanced course to be organized at the usual 8-10pm schedule). I would really like to take that course to learn more about how to find clients and how to market myself as language coach, as well as how to do group coaching.