

A transition to Language Coach

Interview with Zsafia Kocsardi, English teacher, Hungary



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

Before taking the course I had been working in the ELT industry for almost 13 years. Having spent 10 years with a top corporate language school as an English teacher and Director of Studies in Hungary I decided to try myself in the profession in the UK and continued to work in educational management. It was during my time in England that I got interested in coaching so I spent most of my savings on a diploma in personal performance coaching. I immediately fell in love with the process and the idea of helping people succeed and started to think about how I could merge coaching with language teaching. Luckily, I found the LCC course and decided to learn from someone who had already figured out the way.

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How did you find the course?

I loved the fact that I could rely on my existing coaching skills and attitude and still learn a lot more towards becoming a language coach. Coaching is not just knowledge but a set of skills and that was perfectly reflected in the practice-oriented sessions. Every session was a step forward where we learnt how to put theory into practice. Although you can never be sure if you're doing it all right, by the end of the course I had a very clear idea how I was supposed to operate as a language coach.

“With the LCC course I learnt how to best figure out what an individual needs”

Which highlights or insights did you gain from the LCC?

In language teaching there's a lot of talking about personalising and individual learning styles and of course there are ideas how to do it, but you find very few solutions as to how you can find out exactly what your learners need and how you can serve them best, particularly because they themselves might not know. With the LCC course I learnt how to best figure out what an individual needs in order to be a better language learner and speaker, and a lot of times it's not teaching!

“I found that the techniques I was learning were perfect solutions to the audience I’d always worked with”

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

After each session I could implement what I’d learnt with my existing students. It was incredible to see how we all switched into a different mode when I started coaching rather than teaching. In a second I could see more confidence in their eyes as I led them through knowledge their own way instead of using my teaching toolkit. I found that the techniques I was learning were perfect solutions to the audience I’d always worked with – and was going to work with -, i.e. busy adult learners.

“I felt energised and inspired and that of course reflected in all areas of my life”

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

As a result of the course I got more confident that this was what I had to do. Seeing the results with my first coachees gave me extra energy and motivation to further build my business and focus it more on language coaching instead of splitting my efforts between different services. I felt energised and inspired and that of course reflected in all areas of my life. Besides, I noticed my use of language had changed. Now I tend to use softer language in conversations and am more open and understanding towards other people’s different needs and attitudes.

How has your professional development after the course?

After qualifying I started to offer free coaching sessions to gain more experience and show people what language coaching was. Each session gave me insights into what was working and what wasn’t and I believe I got better and better with time. I kept reading related books and went back to my original coaching course materials to see what else I could implement. Whenever I got the chance I took part in webinars and I’m planning to learn more by attending the advanced course and also by taking part in more general coaching courses and seminars.

“My attitude changed and I got more skilled in finding out exactly what they needed and how they needed me to teach them it”

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

When I qualified I had a few students from the past that I’d been teaching for years and years. I continued to teach them but my attitude changed and I got more skilled in finding out exactly what they needed and how they needed me to teach them. I think I became more patient in letting them learn their own way and in their own pace. Apart from these few loyal students I didn’t take on any more teaching tasks, I decided to offer language coaching only and I am very happy about that decision.

“The results they produce are much better and far more tangible than what I experienced as a teacher”

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

The impact language coaching has on my clients is something I’ve not seen as a language teacher and teacher educator. It seems like their motivation never runs out and even if it does it is really easy to build it up again. Results they produce are much better and far more tangible than what I experienced as a teacher, which of course gives them amazing self-confidence and further motivation. The fact that they can see the use and relevance of what they’re learning really clearly and having the chance to learn it their own way gives them tremendous trust in me and the process. I also see aha moments a lot more often and learners come up with ideas for their own learning that I’ve never thought about or seen from other teachers during my career.

“This focused and goal-oriented process gives clarity to learning, helps achieve goals and develops learning strategies that guarantee long-term results development”

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

I’m very happy I completed the LCC course and am looking forward to doing the advanced one. I think language coaching – if done well – is a tool that can turn around age long beliefs of adult learners that don’t serve them in improving their language skills and getting what they want in life or their jobs. This focused and goal-oriented process gives clarity to learning and does not only help achieve goals but develops learning strategies that guarantee long-term results. It’s given an incredible amount of success to me and my clients so far.

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