

A transition to Language Coach

Interview with Karin Raffa, English & German teacher, Germany



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

I've been a language teacher for about 15+ years before discovering LCC.

How did you find the course?

It was eye opening. I had read about science of the brain superficially but didn't know how to apply what I had read to my teaching. I hadn't heard about coaching before and couldn't imagine how it applies to what I do in the classroom. Since taking LCC, I've been researching and reading more about the brain and how it works. It completely changed my approach to how I work with private clients AND how I teach in the classroom. During my years at university, the use of the target language in class (only and exclusively!) was drilled into me, so realising that it's not the best way (and backed up by scientific research which had neither been mentioned nor taught at university at all) was a bit of shock. But I'm happy that I adapted to my latest discovery and I'm still surprised how good the results are – for learners and my own enjoyment!

“Grammar can be fun!”

Which highlights or insights did you gain from the LCC?

Grammar can be fun! It doesn't have to be boring, and doesn't mean having to follow a textbook or completing gap-fill exercises.

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

I'm less directive in classroom situations. I encourage the use of the mother tongue as much as possible, even asking learners directly to look for similarities or differences (including allowing notes/ translations into the mother tongue, even though I don't speak it and cannot check if it's correct. It means I have to trust the learner fully. Giving up my power completely, so to say.) When working with a private client, I let her take the lead and follow with questions to provoke brain connections. Also, putting the full responsibility into her hands makes a difference because she's fully in charge of her learning experience and her progress. No more „I didn't do the homework“ conversations.

“Being able to explain the science behind this approach gives it a professional view”

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

When I communicate with my 6-year-old daughter, I changed to asking questions on her level of understanding instead of simply asking her to do things.

How has your professional development after the course?

In addition to what I referred to already, I plan everything around a conversation, trying to get the learner to speak in German as much as possible and getting her out of the passive into active usage of German from the start. Private clients often report feeling tired at the end of a session.

“No more going back to „the old way“ of teaching languages! I totally feel like a rebel but in a good way”

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

Being able to explain the science behind this approach gives it a professional view. It's not hit and miss. I feel that I come across more as an expert (and can defend my position with scientific research if necessary).

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

I'm so glad I chose LCC over a Teaching Certificate from the Goethe Institut which so many institutions suggested to me! No more going back to „the old way“ of teaching languages! I totally feel like a rebel but in a good way. I also find that I'm losing clients faster because they feel that they've achieved their goal much faster than anticipated.

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