

A transition to Language Coach

Interview with Veronique Dupuy, French Tutor, USA



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

I worked as a trilingual executive assistant while in France but decided to go back to college in the United States to pursue a Bachelor degree in International Business. After graduating, I worked as a marketing coordinator for 4 years. While in college, I started tutoring French for college and high school students, professionals doing business with France, people travelling to France and children. This grew into a fulltime job. I was using books and preset school programs. My approach was traditional and other tutors were offering the same methods and materials. The results were good but not great... until I read about ELC and decided to take the course.

How did you find the course?

The image that comes to mind when I think about the course is that of an iceberg. The visible part of the iceberg is the actual course and the hidden part is the work that comes after the course, how the material is applied to my classes, the coaching journey itself.

As a learning process, it felt like learning a new language and I treated it as such: I created flashcards, practiced using the specific language introduced in the courses, worked at creating new habits to the point so that they'd become a reflex etc.

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I took the course twice. The first time, I felt like a kid in a candy store. There were many insights and some resonated with me right away, others were new. I liked the pace of having a few days in between sessions to absorb the material, I loved the interactive setting, the professionalism, the spirit of camaraderie, the humor, the internet glitches and thunderstorms and the feeling that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, i.e. learn something new and help my students learn the language in a different and more efficient way. At times I felt a little overwhelmed, in a good way, because the material was so new and different from what I had been doing until then.

As I was putting the course to “use” with my students, I saw some changes in the way they received the material, the level of comfort and confidence was increasing and the results were definitely there. On my end, I was also discovering areas I still had to work on. So, when I was given the opportunity to take the class again, I did because I still needed to consolidate what I had learned the first time.

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The second time around, the course was set at a faster pace. It was equally challenging but in a different way. Again, I felt like a kid in a candy store because of the old insights led to new insights and more depth. It also had an undeniable impact on my personal life. I believe that coaching goes beyond the title and techniques and that I had to work on myself as well in order to truly and efficiently help my students.

Which highlights or insights did you gain from the LCC?

- brain connections, how the brain works
- having the student be in the driver's seat helps with commitment and motivation
- The concept of "generating own learning", the role of emotion and spacing assist in learning and help form long term memory which in turn lead to faster and long lasting results
- chunking down grammar in bite-size portions promote efficient learning
- neuroplasticity
- the role of the limbic system
- be in alpha wave state to optimize learning
- the learning journey
- the great value of gradual progress measurement and goal achievement for motivation

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

Leaving the books behind felt like riding your bike without the training wheels. It takes some practice. Understanding the client's learning style and preferences led to daily research for new material and I discovered that there were a lot of free resources that were relevant like online newspapers, videos, free online language programs, free drill grammar programs and MOOCs where teachers share ideas and resources...

Meeting my clients' needs also meant that I had to educate myself about new technologies and approaches. The way "millennial" students learn is greatly impacted by the new technology available. They have more choices, the information travels faster, the work is almost all done online etc...

My work was also more structured. I started using a different "language" to integrate permission, feeling, motivation. I became more flexible as I started listening to my coachees. I also had to be mindful about my approach to the coach/coachee collaborative dynamic and at times make sure I was not going back to my old habits of the teacher/student relationship.

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

I became a constant learner and I try to live/work by the motto “let everyone and everything be your teacher”. I subscribe to different chat groups related to psychology, neuroscience and languages, made new connections and friends. I am taking other classes to learn for instance about tools for online learning or interactive documents or how to use YouTube videos as a language resource. I also do a lot of benchmarking to see what others in the same field are doing. Something (a newspaper article for instance) or someone inspires me every day (Kamiya's TedX talks as a support for online seminars are a really great idea) and I try something new every day. Getting out of my comfort zone with confidence takes some getting used to and taking risks too. The course helped me gain a “global” vision of life in general and a better way of interacting and communicating with others as well. It also brought more structure into my life.

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How would you describe your professional development after the course?

I found that the course affected how I positioned myself professionally. It led me to search for/create my own style and doing so while integrating the coaching principles and techniques. I am looking at whether my goals, related to the type of clientele I wanted to target in the first place, are still the same. I was originally taking every job that came my way. After the initial period of learning to implement the coaching techniques and principles I learned (what works, what doesn't, can I or do I want to work with all types clients...), I started being more selective with new clients. With more structure and a real commitment from the coach and coachee, establishing goals and being held accountable for reaching those goals can be difficult for some clients.

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

I deliver my language course with more structure and listen more in depth to the needs of my coachees. Some of the needs are not always clearly expressed but there are signs or hints to be taken into consideration and clarified. I make sure that I tailor the learning material to my specific client's needs. This requires daily research for content and keeping abreast with new technologies. I am more goal-oriented. I am also careful with homework delivery and follow-through (doing homework in-between sessions in a consistent manner can be challenging for professionals with busy schedules). It clearly impacts their performance, goal achievement and motivation.

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

The impact on the coachees I work with is that they become self-sufficient, creative and confident. They are more involved in the process and learn faster because of the constant connection between goal achievement and study. Being mindful of working towards their goal equates to the image of dropping a pebble one at a time in a jar. There is a sense of accomplishment versus the feeling of “lack” when they look at how much they still have to learn before they are fluent, for instance. This helps defeat the empty glass syndrome.

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

Because of the vast amount and “layers” of information the course provided, I went through the manual again after 6 to 8 months of coaching. It was very beneficial to review the material and see how I had applied it in my classes. As I was reading through the course, some of the material I had not paid attention to or did not fully understand at the beginning of the course started to make sense and some “new” stuff came to light.

Due to the cultural differences and styles in terms of directness, politeness, boundaries for instance, I found that I needed to adapt some of the language learned in the course to an American audience (for instance “may I” is difficult to use).