

5 COACHED EXPERIENCES

LETTING EXPERIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE

During your time with us as an Apprentice Interculturalist specializing in language skills development for immigrants and refugees, you'll have five required “Coached Experiences”. You can do them in any order you like, though there is a progression that makes sense for a lot of people.

Coached Experience #1: Model Teaching

When you choose Model Teaching, the Program Director or other Guild Member will teach a class and you will act as the DJ. It's very common for this to happen immediately after your Dress Rehearsal. When you experience Model Teaching, you are really the observer, instead of the observed.

You'll be looking to address the following questions:

- a) What did you see that you aren't sure the reasoning behind?
- b) What are some things that you have been doing differently?
- c) Anything you think we should do differently?

You will update the website. You can request a model teaching anytime throughout the program, and we'll do that for you as resources allow. You are always welcome to shadow any other teacher at any time.



Coached Experience #2: Try My Recipe

After you've taught a few classes and gotten over the initial adrenaline (a.k.a. “panic”) of being in front of a group, it's very helpful to have an experienced teacher provide you with a lesson, just like you did in your Dress Rehearsal. The Program Director or other Guild Member will provide you with a detailed lesson plan 24 hours in advance, and give you live feedback in the class as you're doing it. This can be a little nerve wracking, but being a good facilitator requires being open to feedback and being able to “dance” together in this way. This makes it possible for you to work better with assistants, and to handle some of the Planning Challenges and Coached Experiences which require working together and sharing leadership.

Ideally you will have your “Try My Recipe” experience near the end of the Instructor phase or the beginning of the Practitioner phase. If the Program Director is teaching with you on a regular basis, every class will either be Model Teaching, or Try My Recipe.

Coached Experience #3: Annotated Observation

Typically, you will want to have an annotated observation during the Practitioner phase. By this time, you've gotten over the honeymoon and you've tried some things out and now you're ready to start really honing your skills. When you request an Annotated Observation, the Coordinator of Apprentices, or other Guild Member will observe you. You will need to plan 30 minutes after class to debrief. Your observer will take notes on what you're doing but not interfere while you're teaching (it's ok to acknowledge them and you can always ask them to help or participate). Your observer will provide you with lots of positive feedback, 3 things you did well, and 2 things you could do to improve. You may ask for specific feedback, including further critique, but your observer will be careful to only answer specific questions. If you'd like, the observer will provide you with their notes.

Please understand that this process can be difficult! Many people, especially people who want to be language teachers, don't like seeing their weak spots. You may feel misunderstood or get defensive. This is a training program, and the best attitude is to invite critique and incorporate it as well as you can. No matter what – we know you are a good, caring, intelligent person, or you wouldn't be doing this in the first place! The observer should be careful and gentle with you in providing feedback. We're looking to guide you, not overwhelm or shame you.

Coached Experience #4: Gentle Intervention

Typically, your Gentle Intervention is best done during the Practitioner stage or in the early Facilitator stage. This experience is one of the most intense for most Apprentices, but it's important. We've thought about it a lot, and tried many different things, but ultimately, there are some things we do that are out of our awareness. The only way to bring them to our awareness is to make us aware of them when they're happening – often multiple times. This doesn't always feel good – but over and over we've seen that it's effective.

The Program Director or Coordinator of Apprentices will be with you, and they will intervene when they feel like an activity that you're doing is not expressing itself to its fullest potential, and suggest alternatives. Many people find it a relief to have this kind of guidance and direction – and many people also experience this as anxiety provoking. You are highly encouraged to have your lesson plan reviewed or critiqued beforehand to maximize your success.

This program will provide you with opportunities to become a better teacher and a better person. Most of our cultural ideas about language learning and culture learning come from an academic framework – most of us have never really seen a community-based learning environment. Here, doing it well is more important than doing it right; going with the flow is more effective than being precise; it's about the people and not the content. The shame that some learners feel has to do more with their fear of looking foolish or being wrong; the shame that Apprentices feel is that learners won't respect them if they see their authority challenged. Being a good cheerleader is better than being a good explainer.

Learning a language (or any highly technical skill) is an arduous process, and can feel humiliating at times. You can't take anything for granted and you regularly discover the boundaries are by accidentally bumping into them. And just to put a fine point on this, this can have legal, social, or economic consequences. As opposed to always being right, the effective classroom facilitator in an intercultural context will Model Graceful Error – they will make it safe for all of us to be wrong, to take risks, to make mistakes. They'll accept influence, and try things out that challenge them – and yet, still acknowledge that it's their job to keep the class moving forward. Teachers don't know everything – they know they always have more to learn. Empathize with your learners. Every day, they walk out into a confusing world where they feel wrong and out of place.

There will be a 30 minute debrief afterward, and you will need to write a reflection. We may check in with you again within a few days to see how you're doing, and we request that you respond authentically to this.

And by the way – even when you get good, you'll still get embarrassed when you make a mistake. Be gentle with yourself. Life is about mistakes – only death is error-free.

Coached Experience #5 – You're the Boss, Now

For this experience, you will be MC with the Program Director or Coordinator of Apprentices as your assistant. This will be one of your last classes, so many times we refer to this as your Final Exam. This experience must come after your Silent Class.

Your primary goal here: give the Program Director enough instruction to keep them busy the entire class. You will be nervous – everyone is – it has nothing to do with whether you know the class, or you've learned all the tricks, or you like the Program Director. It's the fact that the spotlight is on, you know it's on, and you have to perform. Some find this even more challenging than the Gentle Intervention, because you're so used to having the Program Director tell you what to do, it's brings up self doubt when you don't know what they're thinking.

There's only one rule: if you want your class to go smoothly, you have to tell the Program Director (and everyone else) what to do. If you feel like the Program Director is not responsive or acting weirdly, it's because they don't know what to do. The minute you notice this, tell them what to do. You're not aiming for blunt bossyness – gentle, firm, clear, directiveness until you get the result you want. There will be no debrief afterwards, unless you specifically ask for it.