

Sara Fowler*

Centre de Formació Professional d'Andorra, Andorra

Sara Fowler is a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Aixovall, Andorra. After completing her "A TESOL at Hawaii Pacific University", Sara began a ten-month term teaching at a vocational school called The Professional Training Center of Andorra (Centre de Formació Professional d'Andorra) starting in September, 2011. This essay was written partly through her experience as a reflection on what she has learned so far. You can read more about her teaching and traveling stories at her blog,

Since then, I've moved talkative students to the front row, confiscated cell phones, given out papers, and singled out students who are obviously not listening. I tell students to stop, but these things help! They still think I'm nice, but they also know that I'm serious. As I tell them, "You're

structure and spelling, and I know which English words have cognates that'll latch onto quickly and which ones will be completely indecipherable to them. So even when I am speaking in English, I use that knowledge to adjust myself; I speak English however I structure my sentences, which words I use, how I rephrase things when there's confusion. In addition, when my students speak, a lot of the mistakes they make are things I totally understand, and I know what they are trying to say, because I know they are making them because they are translating directly. Knowing the difference helps because I spend a lot less time trying to figure out what my students meant to say. Knowing your students' first language is by no means necessary, but if you know it, it can certainly save you a lot of headaches and confusion, even if you never actually speak a word of it to your students."

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Not even a quarter of the way through my Fulbright term, I have already learned too many lessons to possibly share them all here. One wonderful thing about teaching is that we can learn from the good days and the bad days, so I am excited to see what adventures and challenges the next eight months bring. I look forward to sharing whatever wisdom I find along the way in a future piece, so stay tuned!