School Outreach Stories

Visit to the Adult Academic Program

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I live year-round in Spain but was in Minnesota visiting family for a few weeks in the winter of 2016. My mom works in the local school district’s Adult Academic Program and one of her co-workers teaches ESL to adults and invited me to do my school outreach presentation for her students. I won the 2015-2016 School Outreach photography contest, and since my mom did some bragging about my award, the cover of The Chronicle with my winning photo was up on the board when I walked into class, which was fun to see!

The experience was an absolute blast. The classroom was full of immigrants and refugees from all over the world, and they were so interactive and excited to have me there. They were mostly surprised to learn the difference between translation/interpreting and asked tons of questions, such as: How much can you make? What happens if you make a big mistake? What do we study? Who can we work for?

At the end, I opened up for discussion and many of them told me stories about their bad experiences with interpreters. One man shared that he volunteered when he was at the doctor's office and could see there were Spanish-speaking patients waiting for their interpreter who never showed up. He said he volunteered for five hours to help people communicate with their doctor.

Throughout the presentation, I encouraged all of them to continue forward with their English and other studies to work towards a career in interpreting. You should have seen their faces! I think that, for many immigrants and refugees, a "real job" seems like a far stretch sometimes. They looked so entirely hopeful that they could make a career for themselves in this field while helping their fellow community members. When I left, I felt so happy to have talked with them.

I have given numerous school outreach presentations before, but had never thought of visiting an adult ESL classroom. I think it is an audience that can truly identify and feel inspired by a nice presentation and chat with a professional linguist!