

Sadie Marvel graduated from Bard Biology in 2018, and already has an interesting twist to her career! We asked Sadie some questions, to learn about her life since Bard:

Hi Sadie! How are you doing? Where are you now?

I am an English teacher at a small, grassroots school called Interlink English, in a city of Tuxtla Gutierrez in Mexico. The school is operated by three Americans, and is one of a kind in this area. It provides students with the special opportunity to learn English from native speakers, in a way that focuses on the practical and conversational use of the language, rather than the theoretical and grammatical knowledge that is taught in schools here.

On the surface, teaching English seems very far from what I studied in college, but this job has sparked my interest in topics like the psychology of language learning, communication, and linguistics that definitely have some roots in what I studied in my classes at Bard. Seriously! I have such a huge appreciation of language now... I feel like it is something I took for granted and didn't even really question before when I only spoke to other English speakers. but when you really have to think about how to communicate with someone and actually pay attention to the words you are saying, it opens up a whole new perspective on how beautiful and special it all is. Does that make any sense?

What does your typical day look like?

Well, I start teaching at 4 pm, and before that I have a lot of free time to go on walks, read in cafes, or run errands. At around 2:30, I head to the school to start preparing for my classes. I teach 4 classes back-to-back that are each an hour long, and I finish off my day with a "conversation club" where I just get to relax and spend an hour talking with students who are fluent in English but want to continue practicing. It's a great way to end the day because most of the people in the club have become my friends, so we just chat about anything and everything!

What do you like the most about your job?

There's a lot of freedom in teaching here. Even though the school has designed structured lesson plans for every class, the teacher is also free to diverge from them, coming up with class activities on their own. I like the ability to try out new teaching practices and trying to hone in on my own style, but I also like having the lesson plans to fall back on if I need to. I teach every level of English, from a kid's club class to advanced students, who are mostly adults. And I was pretty much thrown into teaching the day after I got here... some people would say it was "baptism by fire"!

I love this job because the students are so enthusiastic and eager to learn, and I get to work with people of all ages and levels of English. I also feel like I am learning as much from my students as they learn from me, not only about the Spanish language, but also in learning effective ways of communication and teaching that will help me in my future pursuits.

How did you find this job? Was it hard?

I found this job within a week of searching, so no, it was not hard at all! The market for ESL teaching jobs is booming, and job listings are posted all over the internet. I found a listing for this position on Dave's ESL Cafe (www.eslcafe.com). The site is overwhelming at first, but I spend a week just sifting through all

of the listings, particularly the ones that were posted directly from schools rather than the bigger companies that hire people and then place them in different locations.

And since this post is meant to inspire students, I want to mention how I was able to get certified to teach ESL, which is a super easy thing to do at Bard, even though not a lot of people seem to know about this opportunity. If you are interested in it, reach out to Learning Commons, and talk to them about ESL tutoring!

How do you like living in Mexico?

It has been nothing but warm and welcoming! The people are so friendly and willing to show their culture. I'm sure once I learn more Spanish I will experience even more of that. Chiapas is crazy beautiful too! Tuxtla is in the valley surrounded by mountain ranges from all sides. Once you go into the mountains, there are all of these quaint towns like San Cristobal, which I have been visiting regularly on the weekends. My Spanish was pretty minimal at first, but I am learning very quickly! Right now, listening and reading are getting easier but I still have a ton of trouble speaking.

What do you plan to do next?

I am open to many possibilities! I may decide to stay here for another year, or perhaps I will go on to teach English in some other part of the world. After that, I am thinking about coming back to the U.S. and applying for an MAT program, or a program in Educational Psychology, but nothing is set in stone yet!