

Eric's Year-and-a-Half Testimonial

Somehow, next week will be the end of my 3rd semester with Super English. Where has the time gone so quickly?!

“Ooh, ooh, Teacha, Teacha! I know! I know! Time is flying when it's funny!” (One of the many fun things that makes time fly – trying, with sometimes hilarious results, to teach students English clichés.)

As I reflect all the way back to when we were first hired, I'm grateful for the opportunity Super English has given my wife and me to jump into life abroad. We've had an amazing time teaching and living here. It's been a little challenging at times, but it's been incredibly fun and rewarding. I have no regrets at all about the decision to leave behind a good life in America for this new adventure.

Both of us grew up traveling a lot with our families and always enjoyed experiencing other cultures. I spent some time in college working with international students and was really intrigued by their experiences living abroad in America. This was something I wanted to experience for myself. As we came to a transition point a couple years ago with our jobs, we tossed around the idea of maybe trying out this teaching abroad thing. We talked with some friends, who told us of their friends living and working in Thailand with an English school called Super English. They told us they loved it (they spent over 2 years with SE), and so we checked it out. We also looked at schools in a few other places, but here we had a connection, so that drew us in first. After reading a few articles on the website, it sounded awesome, and like a great fit! We applied, were offered jobs, and quickly accepted. It was a whirlwind, but there we were, planning to move literally around the world to Thailand.

Upon arriving, we were greeted and assisted by the Super English staff, the teacher managers, and all the teachers already here. We stepped right into a great supportive community. The managers helped us learn to drive our motorbike, then invited us and all the new teachers on a beach trip for the weekend before school. We walked around in wonder that first week or two, soaking up the quirks and joys of this unfamiliar culture, savoring the ubiquitous delicious cuisine, and admiring the tropical beauty within a couple hours of our new home. We started training and Peter did a great job getting us ready for our new teaching roles.

I showed up for the first day and the nerves quickly subsided as I stepped in front of a class of 55 smiling 3rd graders and just started acting goofy. I immediately felt comfortable and felt like I'd found the absolute PERFECT fit! They say a great job is one that doesn't feel like a job. Teaching these kids felt like this right from the start. The entire semester, I reveled in the joyous experience of tricking 10 year olds into learning English by playing awesome games all day. Plus, HIGH FIVES EVERYWHERE ALL THE TIME!!

My biggest struggle was with my weekly Anuban 1 class. 3 year olds. “Oh, they're so cute,” everyone said. “Teaching them must be so much fun.” Usually, yes. But not this particular class. I had 35 or so crazy little kids running around, climbing me, and completely wearing me out each Friday morning. I asked Peter for some tips. I tried them out, but the kids just got crazier. Nothing seemed to control the toddler mob. So I went to Peter again. He gave me some more concrete training, which helped me deal with the craziness better for the semester. I felt better, but I still wasn't excited about starting Anuban 1 again the next year. But this time, I got help from Peter and some other teachers before I started the class. I showed up the first day, put their advice into action, and... ANUBAN CONQUERED! Now I really like this class!

It was definitely a moment of pride when I finally felt I'd succeeded with what is a difficult age level for me. Peter gave me continuous encouragement and was always available to help whenever I needed it. Looking back I'm glad I had a tough class, because I learned a lot from it and I felt supported all the way.

Overall, teaching at Thida is amazing! I'm getting paid to play games with fun kids all day! SE encourages teachers to try new ideas and learn from our successes and the occasional flops. The teaching environment is really flexible and allows you to find your own teaching style and shape the material the way you want. You walk into a class and the kids go INSANE because THE FARANG ENGLISH TEACHER IS HEEEEERE!!! There's a lot of room for creativity. I'm tweaking and inventing new games to play with my kids every week or two. The fact that this is my *job* is still pretty amazing sometimes. Beside the great classes, the environment at Thida is also fantastic. All the Thai teachers I've had have been really friendly. A couple have even invited us to their weddings. And it's great sharing the office with the excellent group of Super English teachers – not just coworkers, but friends. Also, I think it's important to stress again how amazing it is to get HIGH FIVES EVERYWHERE ALL THE TIME!

There have been plenty of other great benefits of working with Super English. SE provided free housing when we arrived. It was nice to not have to worry about where we'd live when we got here. Peter has always offered plenty of extra earning opportunities with blogging, website articles, and private classes, all of which I've taken advantage of.

And one of my favorite perks of working for Super English is the extensive vacation time. I know other teachers in Surat who work most of October and all of March, and few other schools get a Christmas break. We get that time off, which has given us the chance to travel all over Southeast Asia over the past year and a half. We've visited Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, & Indonesia, and gone all over Thailand. Now we've got a big China trip planned and we'll probably see plenty more of Asia in the next year here. There aren't many other jobs where we'd have been able to do all this.

Last year, we had the chance to extend our contract and switch over to teach in the new MEP program at Thida. We really like living in Surat and working with SE, so switching was an easy (and great) choice. I got to follow some of my best P3 students up to P4 and spent the year really getting to know them. I've loved how MEP has let me see so much progress with my students and how I can have conversations with them outside of class. I already enjoyed teaching here. Now I love it even more.

Looking back, Super English exceeded the expectations I had before we arrived. Peter has been tremendously helpful with training and has created a flexible work environment conducive to professional and personal growth. This has helped me move from just some clueless guy trying to teach to a confident teacher proud of his students' success and improvement.

Peter approached us again recently about staying on another year. Once again, we were glad to sign on. So while many other teachers are about to move on elsewhere, I'm getting excited about the opportunities I'll have next year. We've found our niche in Surat, and now I'll be able to become a better teacher, deepen relationships, invest more time into my new brewing hobby, and improve my Thai.

I've had a SUPER year and a half, and I'm SUPER excited for one more!