



ROLES

What can volunteers do?

It's worth reflecting on how exactly you, as the teacher, would like to work with volunteers. Volunteers can assist teachers within the classroom as well as augmenting formal provision through extra-curricular support – providing help with informal and non-formal learning (see diagram next page). Below we list a number of different ways that volunteers can support formal provision - inside and outside the classroom.

Volunteers in the classroom

Within the classroom, volunteers can play a variety of roles. Some volunteers stick to one function, others change depending on the particular lesson:

Volunteers as language coaches

Some teachers use volunteers to work with learners 1:1, or in a small, separate group, whilst the teacher focuses on the rest of the class. This can be useful where one or two learners have specific needs, distinct from the wider group. Alternatively, volunteers can provide time-limited intense tuition to every learner in the class, in turn. They can focus on specific task like reading, conversation or preparation of a text or questions, or even on assessment of students' needs.

Suited to: Relatively introverted types; volunteers who hold a professional teaching qualification.

Volunteers as participants (with high knowledge of the language)

Here volunteers are treated as participants and take part in class activities without prior knowledge of the lesson plan or the activities that they're about to get involved in. This can help to establish a sense of equality and camaraderie between volunteers and students and help build their relationships. Due to volunteers' proficiency in the target language, they are likely to understand activity instructions well and can then support other learners to participate.

Suited to: Volunteers who may not be able to attend consistently; extraverted, chatty volunteers

“My volunteer was great. In the classroom, we had an elderly couple and one of them had hearing difficulties so whenever we were doing group discussion it was really hard for him to join in. The volunteer spoke their language and was able to work with them separately and involve them in a separate discussion at times and just generally make sure they were ok. It was honestly so useful having her there.”

Teacher, UK

Volunteers as teaching assistants

Some countries such as Denmark have professional, paid teaching assistants, but this is a voluntary role in many classrooms across Europe. The volunteers acting as assistants may be trainee or retired teachers themselves. They assist the teacher in lesson implementation, which may include monitoring, supervising, error correcting and other support. Volunteer teaching assistants may even be involved in lesson preparation.

Volunteers as auxiliary support to formal provision

Many volunteers make language learning possible by supporting in a specific auxiliary field, for example childcare or administration.

These volunteers might not be involved in the language acquisition directly, but their engagement makes it possible for certain groups to access the language classes.

Volunteers outside formal provision

Volunteers may also run extra-curricular activities that sit alongside classroom provision, acting as 'language buddies'. Teacher engagement with these volunteers can benefit students by linking them to the volunteer or activity that augments formal classes. Closer cooperation with teachers may allow volunteers to plan extra-curricular experiences or



activities which complement what students are learning in class. Examples of such activities may include:

Volunteers supporting or organising excursions

Since language acquisition isn't limited to the classroom, excursions can provide a fruitful context for immersive learning and language practice - as well as community building amongst students. Learning the names of the fruits in a book is one thing, but buying them at the market is something else. Discussing how to access local services in class can be useful, but a trip to register for the local library en masse may prove more transformative for both language acquisition and access. Volunteers can support such excursions or even organise them on their own.

Volunteers as language buddies

In several projects volunteers and refugees are matched at an initial event and from then on meet autonomously one-to-one. Some projects offer buddying programmes which include supervision or group activities. However, the focus remains on one-to-one relationships and sponsorship. Language learning is not always the main focus of buddying but the relationship nonetheless provides important conversation practice for students. Patient listeners are a valuable resource for every language learner.

Volunteer contact persons for groups, activities and clubs outside the classroom

Shared interests, concerns, talents or passions can all be fruitful starting point for building relationships, groups or community. Language teachers can support their students to get involved in relevant groups (sport clubs, residents' associations, cooking activities, unions, gardening projects etc) by inviting representatives into the classroom. Teachers can help groups interested in involving refugees by explaining how language learning happens and how language learners can be best supported.

The VIME Model

The VIME (Volunteers in Migrant Education) research project suggests that successful language acquisition requires a combination of good language teaching (formal provision), supported practice with volunteers outside the classroom (informal provision) and language use in real life contexts such as cooking clubs or museum visits (non-formal provision or 'social experience').

Further Infos on <https://www.languagevolunteers.com/>

- ▶ 1:1 or small groups
- ▶ Speaking practice conversation clubs
- ▶ Homework help
- ▶ Qualifications
- ▶ Qualified teachers and Volunteer teaching assistant
- ▶ Cooking clubs
- ▶ Gardening
- ▶ Museums
- ▶ Other social activities
- ▶ Support with accessing services

