

VOLUNTEERS

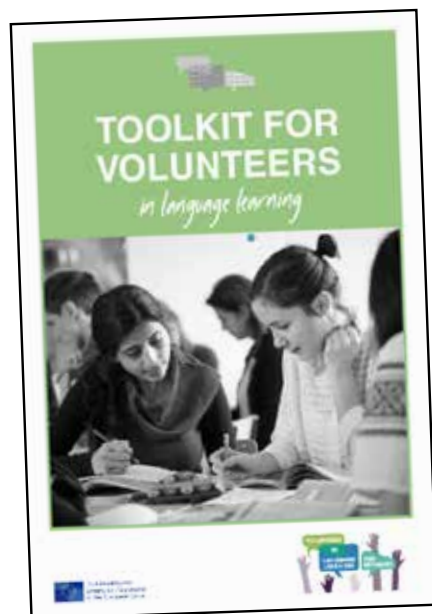
IN

**LANGUAGE
LEARNING**

**FOR
REFUGEES**



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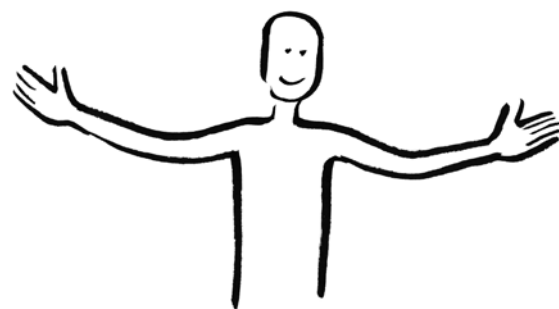


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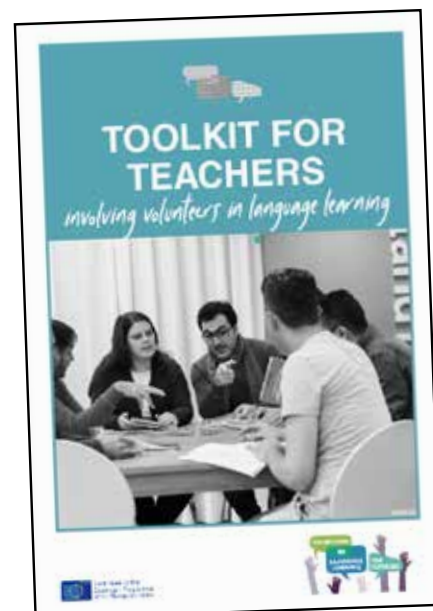


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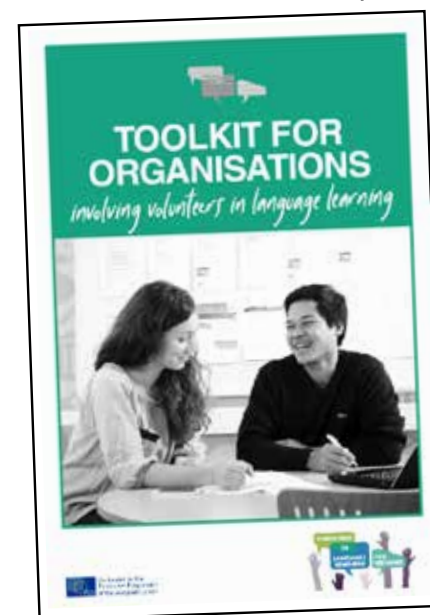
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About this Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership VOLUNTEERS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR REFUGEES

During the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015, people across Europe showed huge willing to volunteer their time to help. Since language learning is key for all migrants arriving in a new place, many volunteers got involved in their field. This was the starting point for this Strategic Partnership, part of the Erasmus+ Programme.

We wanted to know: What is the additional value volunteers can contribute to language learning? How can volunteer involvement be improved? What does the volunteers need to perform their tasks well? How can teachers and trainers support volunteers, and how can volunteers support professional teaching? And what do language teaching organisations have to consider before they get volunteers involved?

We explore answers to these questions in three toolkits: one for Volunteers, one for Teacher and one for Organisation. This booklet collates highlights from all three toolkits. The complete toolkits are available online on our website www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu

We hope you'll find the materials included useful and that they support you in your next steps. And if you have any feedback please contact us via our website.



Improving the Involvement of Volunteers in Language Learning for Refugees

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership 2017-2019

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Does volunteering undermine professional language teaching?

The mention of 'volunteers' amongst teachers can cause concern in some European countries, where paid professional language teaching are losing jobs and funding and sometimes being replaced by volunteer provision. That is why, this toolkit focuses explicitly on the work of paid teachers alongside volunteers.

However, we know from our research that many unpaid volunteers across Europe are organising classes for refugees and often acting as teachers where no funding or paid teachers are available. Often these volunteer-run classes are the only provision that refugees have access to. Volunteer groups are also doing innovative work around informal language provision. We want to celebrate the generosity of the volunteers acting in this way.

At the same time, we also want to make the case in this booklet for the importance of properly paid and trained language teachers. Professional teachers can offer a level of expertise and consistency that only the most dedicated and financially independent volunteers can match. They're therefore vital to supporting refugees to learn language and participate fully in the new communities in which they find themselves.



Advice for Volunteers

Those who want to support refugee language learning in a voluntary capacity will find plenty of guidance, information and tips in the following section. Find even more material see the TOOLKIT FOR VOLUNTEERS which is free to download at www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu



SELF-REFLECTION

before you start volunteering

You want to volunteer in the field of language learning? Great! Here are some points to reflect on before you start. Get more clarity about your motivation - you'll be more likely to find volunteer placements that suit you and avoid disappointment. To provide support based on solidarity and respect, it might be helpful to consider the following:

"I'm volunteering because I want to support refugees..."

Firstly, focus on solidarity rather than help to inform the flavour of your support. Solidarity means respecting the capability, autonomy and dignity of the refugees you work with while also appreciating the multiple oppressions and difficulties they may be facing. Solidarity means acting by their side, at their invitation.

"To speak a language fluently also means, that you are able to advocate for your rights and to enforce your will. Only if you can speak up by yourself, you will be able to articulate your specific perspective."

Language Learner,
Austria

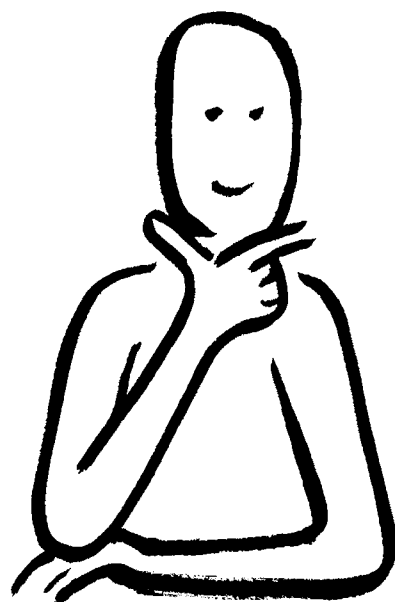
By volunteering with language learners, you can offer something of real value - you will be helping people acquire a new language. This can make a real difference to refugees' lives, but students may be facing difficulties in other areas as well. It's understandable to want to help - that's why you're volunteering in the first place - and it is important to know your personal limits. This is especially true if you're working outside the context of an organisation with less accountability and support. (See the box next page: DON'T GO IT ALONE) You will not be able to solve all the problems language learners face. For more on supporting learners in as safe a way as possible, see (Cross reference: 2.5 Safer Spaces)

"I've got spare time"

It's great that you're motivated to volunteer! Having the time to do so is a must. If you are not too sure whether you have the capacity to volunteer in language learning consistently, look for volunteering opportunities that allow for a series of one-off or short term time commitments. Generally speaking, working in the fields of language learning means in most cases building up trust with the learners in order to create a good learning atmosphere. (Cross reference: 2.5 Safer Spaces) If you are not reliable, and have to cancel commitments at short notice, you may become more of a burden than a help.

"I want to develop my teaching"

If you are training as a teacher, volunteering can give you the chance to assist a language teacher in a classroom setting and gain experience. Teachers may even agree to give you references to help you find work or pass your course.



We would not recommend running formal classes as the sole teacher in a voluntary capacity. Teaching language requires considerable expertise and training. In a national context in which there is some paid provision, volunteer-led formal provision can undermine the sector and be used to justify funding reductions to properly funded classes for refugees. Sometimes, of course, refugees have no other access to language teaching and in this case volunteer provision can fill this gap.

"I want to support integration..."

Supporting people to learn the language of their new surroundings is a great way to help them open up their possibilities - they will be better able to build relationships, get more meaningful work and take part in public life if they so wish. Integration is not a one-sided process, and as a volunteer you also have the chance to get to know the refugees and find out about their lives. Talking about habits, values and traditions can foster mutual understanding. Please show respect for different ways of life and value systems. Your job is to enable people to live the lives that they choose, not to judge how they live their lives.

You speak several languages, and you want to share your knowledge of the language learning process...

Language learners can make brilliant volunteers! You may well have insight into the learning process and provide inspiration to others. However, it's worth bearing in mind that there are many different types of learners, with different prior educational experiences, motivations and needs (Cross reference: page 9 USEFULL SKILLS FOR VOLUNTEERS). You might be particularly well suited to learn languages. What

Questions you could ask yourself before volunteering

- Why do I want to volunteer?
- Is there anything in particular I'd like to get out of volunteering?
- What experiences, skills and knowledge could I bring to the volunteering process?
- What skills and knowledge do I need to develop?
- What kind of context would I like to volunteer in?
- What kind of role?
- How long might I be able to volunteer for?
- How much time could I give up per week?
- When am I available as a volunteer?
- Do I have any other resources that I could contribute to help language learners?

has worked for you may not necessarily work for other learners and different learners.

"I want to spend my time in a meaningful way..."

You will.

"I am curious about people from different cultures..."

Showing interest in the people you work with is a great starting point for supporting language learning. Your listening skills and your questions will help the learners to improve their speaking skills. Of course, there is also a balance to be struck here: respect learners' privacy and sense whether your questions are welcome. If students don't seem comfortable talking about certain things, open up space for alternative less personal subjects for discussion. (Cross reference: page 11: SAFE SPACE)

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Volunteering with a group or organisation of some kind is by far the easiest way to give your time to support language learners. Many organisations have established volunteering roles and language learning activities, so you don't have to start from scratch. Some bigger organisations have Volunteer Coordinators who can advise and support you. Organisational support doesn't just benefit you - it can help the learners as well.

In an organisational set up with regular volunteers, for example, you can leave your volunteering placement safe in the knowledge that you'll be replaced by another volunteer to take up your role.

Even if you don't feel comfortable working with established organisations, don't stay on your own. Find like-minded neighbours, colleagues or friends and form small groups of volunteers to support refugees to learn language. If one of you drops out, the others can take over - and you'll hopefully be able to offer mutual support to one another if difficult situations arise.

Sometimes it's also possible to partner with an organisation, retaining your autonomy but benefitting from their resources or experience. This might give you access to material resources like rooms, a printer or even contacts. So, if you're interested in pursuing your own ideas but you do not have the resources, take advantage of what organisations can offer you. Some municipalities also offer support for volunteers..



I AM NOT A TEACHER

How can I really be of any help?

Nobody expects a volunteer to act like a teacher and to explain grammar rules etc.. Even without a broad knowledge of language learning you can still definitely support refugee language learners. The interpersonal and attitudinal qualities outlined in the first section of this toolkit (see section 1.4) are more important than language know-how.

Here we outline some of the many ways that volunteers can support the language learning process:

- **Volunteers can offer an experience of authentic communication**

Volunteers have a lot to offer just by sharing their own life experiences and interests with learners. If there is a connection between these experiences and learners' interests this will make communication in the target language more appealing. Learners may forget their self consciousness because they genuinely want to communicate, which is very beneficial to learning. Topics like jobs, hobbies, school and family often provide fertile territory for finding things in common and for connecting.

- **Volunteers give more opportunities for speaking**

The more learners can practise speaking, the more they'll be at ease in the language they're learning. Working with volunteers, inside or outside the classroom, gives students more opportunities to practise 'producing' (speaking or writing) the language. Volunteers encourage the learners to speak, listen to them and give them feedback.

- **Volunteers can give feedback and corrections**

Volunteers can give feedback by being honest about when they understand or don't understand students. They can also answer learners' requests for help with spelling or other corrections.

- **Volunteers can help create a safe environment**

People generally learn best when they feel safe, comfortable and supported by their environment and the people around them. Volunteers can help create a positive, supportive atmosphere with warmth, encouragement, friendliness and positive feedback to learners. Learn more about SAFE SPACES on page 11.

- **Volunteers can help learning through repetition**

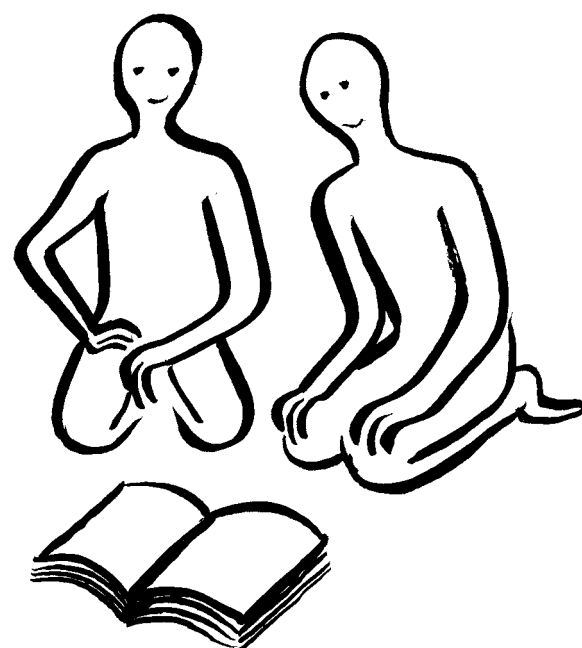
If you are volunteering in a classroom setting or the person you are supporting attends a language course, it might make sense to repeat content from this course. Repetition and practice is essential. You don't have to explain (new) grammar to the learner, you can just ask them to explain what they have learnt on the course.

- **Volunteers can help with pronunciation**

You can support learners with the right pronunciation through your example and with feedback. (Cross reference page 10: ERROR CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK)

"Every volunteer brings a slightly new dialect into the classroom. That is hard to understand sometimes, but that is in the end what we need to learn. The difference to the life out there, is that the volunteers are much more patient with me."

**Language Learner,
Denmark**



USEFUL SKILLS FOR VOLUNTEERS

supporting language learning

Some of these skills will come naturally to you and some may take some time to develop

- holding silence and making space for students to speak may initially feel difficult or socially uncomfortable. This list may provide a useful resource to return to for self reflection as you continue to volunteer with language learners.

Listening Skills

Listening properly to the learner - whether in a classroom or another context - will encourage them to speak. This means giving space to the learner to formulate their thoughts and words. It can take a long time to formulate an utterance in an unfamiliar language. This might mean longer periods of silence than in a conversation between two expert speakers of a language. Although silences can feel awkward, it's worth holding yourself back from jumping in to fill this silence. Continue to listen and give time for the learner to say what they want to say.

Be an active listener, where you encourage the learner to speak as much as possible with encouraging body language. The learner will grow in confidence when they feel understood by an advanced speaker like yourself. They will probably learn a lot more from speaking than they will from listening to you talk.

Ask Questions

Asking questions shows that you are interested and have been listening attentively. This is motivating for the learner and will encourage them to speak more. It's also helpful to provide some structure to speaking. Some learners will only need a simple prompt like "tell me about x" in order to find more to say. Others will need more specific questions to encourage longer stretches of spoken language, eg. "What was the best thing about ...?"

Learn (and Teach) how to Analyse Language

As a volunteer, you're not expected to be an expert on technical things like grammar and phonology, but an ability to analyse language is really helpful. In fact it can be encouraging to show that even expert speakers don't know every spelling or rule. Furthermore developing the skills with your students to look things up, guess and take risks is far more valuable than providing 'correct' answers all the time. It's not necessary to know the terminology of language but it's important to be able to think about what words go together, when you use particular phrases or structures and

the differences between language choices. You can do this collaboratively with the learner. For example, a learner may ask a question like "when do you use 'have you' and when do you use 'do you'?" A qualified teacher would know this question is about the difference between the present perfect and past simple and of course a volunteer may also have this knowledge. However, it's not a requirement! If you don't have this kind of technical info at your fingertips, you can produce several examples of both forms and think about the contexts in which each would be used. From there you may be able to work out some guiding principles.

Speak Judiciously

Your speaking will be valuable input for the language learner. To make the most of this resource you will need to use it carefully. First of all, it's helpful to grade your language. This means speaking at a level of complexity that is appropriate for who you're speaking to. Most people do this quite naturally.

If you're talking to a lower level learner, speak at a slightly slower speed that isn't too unnatural. Try to avoid very long sentences and complex structures (again, assuming the learner is not at a high level). Avoid using unusual words, slang and dialect. Pause and check in to give the learner a chance to process what they have heard and ask you questions to clarify if they want to. Do not be afraid to repeat your sentence multiple times - all this can help the learner understand. If a learner has difficulties understanding a specific word, then a good way forward is to use examples. Drawing a picture or giving a simplified definition to convey meaning can also help e.g. "A forest is a place with many trees." It's also fine to use a dictionary, get another student to translate or say the word in a language that you and the learner share.

ERROR CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK

Language is learnt through practising. Making mistakes is an inevitable and natural part of the learning process. How should volunteers handle error correction in order to be supportive?

Language learners often feel like they want to be corrected when they speak or write. There is a lot of debate among linguists about whether error correction is effective at all. Certainly, it is unhelpful to correct every single 'mistake'. This can undermine confidence, prevent fluency and learners cannot realistically take on board every correction. Over-zealous error correction is perhaps based on the erroneous assumption that if you don't correct errors, the student will acquire 'wrong' language and these mistakes will fossilise. The most important thing is to create an environment where students are encouraged to speak and error correction can work against this 'pedagogy of appreciation'.

It's important to distinguish between free speaking and controlled practice. During free speaking activities, it can be detrimental to intervene in order to correct whereas in controlled practice activities, such as when learners are required to reproduce target language (for example, 'make sentences with because') error correction can be required to

"Volunteering requires a lot of patience and empathy and the ability to treat the learner as an equal."

Volunteer, Denmark

ensure the learner builds specific knowledge.

When looking at writing perhaps only highlight mistakes in one or two areas rather than underlining every single spelling mistake in red pen. In fact, many people argue that the teacher (or volunteer's) pen has no place in student writing at all. Instead, you can use post-its to write on and then the student can make their own corrections/edits on their text. Perhaps draw attention to a recurring error, an error that relates to language recently studied, or errors that really impede the effectiveness of the text.

With speaking, rather than interrupt the learner in full flow, perhaps make a note of errors and then judiciously choose two or three to share with the learner later. Remember that making mistakes is a good thing as it often means students are stretching themselves and going beyond their comfort zones. You wouldn't necessarily want to correct mistakes around a grammatical structure the learner is yet to study or encounter for example.

The type and extent of error correction will also depend on the profile of the learner, the contexts they are using (or aiming to use) the target language and their level. For example, learners needing to operate in official or academic contexts, may need to produce accurate, written texts for audiences less tolerant of 'errors'.

There are different ways to offer feedback:

- gesture: you could try using gesture, especially for repeated mistakes. The gesture, a raised eyebrow, quizzical look or tilt of the head, for example, will become familiar to the learner. Gestures are less intrusive during speaking activities and the learners will be able to correct themselves and won't necessarily feel corrected.
- recasting: you repeat the content of the learner's uttering by reformulating what they said in a correct sentence. Sometimes, however, learners will repeat the mistake again without being aware that what they said isn't correct.
- prompting: you repeat the sentence emphasizing the mistake. By drawing attention to the mistake you invite the learner to correct themselves. It's very important to be able to assess if the learner is able to correct themselves. They may not have learnt the necessary vocabulary of grammar structure.
- explicit feedback: you correct the error and ask the learner why. This way you refer to a rule they've previously learned. If the learner isn't capable of finding the rule, you can ask other learners to help, rather than give the explanation yourself.

Note: If you support a teacher in the classroom setting, try to follow their attitude towards error correction. Never be more diligent in error correction than the teacher!

SAFE SPACES

What is a safe learning environment and why is it so essential? How to help make the learning environment as safe for yourself and students as possible.

What kind of environment helps people to learn? There is no one answer and each student, volunteer and teacher will have their own preferences when it comes to their ideal classroom or group setting. Generally speaking though, people are more likely to learn when they feel respected, valued for who they are, able to get things wrong and feel comfortable asking for support. Creating safe spaces is also about finding ways to deal with difficulties when they arise. This means promoting an environment where boundaries are respected and painful emotions are met with compassion and understanding.

Here are some thoughts about how you can contribute to creating this warm, nurturing space for learners - and yourself.

Talk to Learners About What They Need

As a general rule, it's important never to assume you know the thoughts, feelings or needs of anyone that you're working with (students, teachers or other volunteers). Ask instead. Having an open discussion about what people need to feel comfortable, safe or to learn well can be highly productive and increase the trust between you.

Unexpected Sensitivities

As with any group, students may have trauma or sensitivities that you don't know about. Again, as with any group of people, there are no truly 'safe conversations' - even a conversation about pets or favourite colours may trigger a difficult memory. If emotions do arise, then recognise your own feelings as well as being sensitive to others'. Generally, listening with empathy can be a helpful response. But you

can also ask students directly what they need in order to proceed. A direct question like "This is a difficult subject, do you want to carry on talking about this?" can help you work out what is comfortable for others.

Personal Questions or Discussions

If you want to initiate, or are involved in, a discussion which may be potentially sensitive, then you can make this conversation safer by emphasising to students that they don't

"I like this class because I wanted to improve my language skills. I'm making more friends. I'm enjoying each class. The place is wonderful. I'm feeling a little bit confident when I speak".

Language Learner, UK

have to disclose or talk about anything they don't want to. You could also prepare by looking up services or places where students could get more support, related to the topic you're going to talk about. If you're volunteering at a particular institution, they may be able to sign-post students to further support if needed.

Self-Care

Your capacity to offer solidarity and support to others is improved, in the long run, if you recognise your own needs. This means being aware when you're giving too much time, money or energy. It also means recognising (as soon as you are able to) when conversations or people in the group trigger difficult emotions for you. Recognising your own needs will help you to protect your boundaries and avoid burning out by doing too much.

"I need this new language to build up a new life, after my past life was destroyed."

Language Learner, Germany

You may also want to reflect on what your responsibilities are as a volunteer and recognise that there are limits to how much you can and should do. Volunteering means working without pay and sometimes without much training or the support of an institution or peers. All of these factors may limit how much effective support and time you're able to give.

Supporting Students Beyond Your Volunteering Role

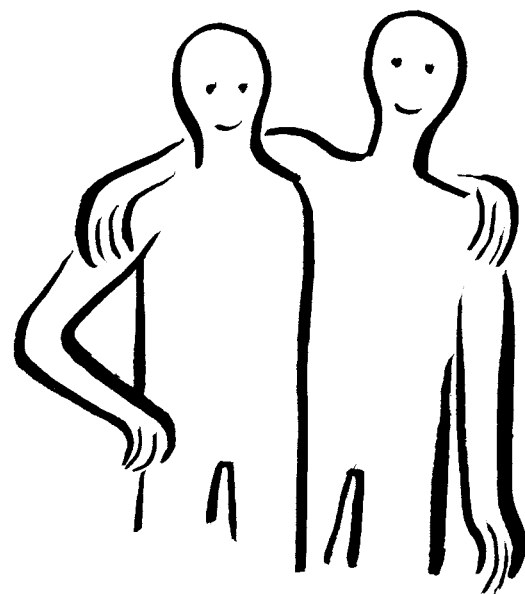
Students may be facing injustice, oppressive bureaucratic systems, discrimination and inequality in their lives and may ask for support to respond to any or all of these chal-

"When I arrived in London I was pregnant with my first son. I had to go to the hospital and had many appointments with different specialists. I needed an interpreter for my appointments as I was unable to do by myself. The interpreter was a very kind and nice man, he helped me a lot but at the same time it was a little bit embarrassing sometimes. For my second son I asked not to have an interpreter and tried to do that by myself. Sometimes it was not easy principally because of the vocabulary and different people and accents. But finally I made it and I happy for that."

Language Learner, UK

lenges. It's understandable to want to help out and do more to support students. Some tips on acting in solidarity with refugees:

- Unless you are a professional doctor, lawyer, therapist or social worker avoid taking on these roles! Support learners to access support from these professionals instead and offer to accompany them.
- Make sure you're not assuming what learners want or need and that they really want your support.
- Don't do for others what they can do for themselves. It's far more empowering for people to meet their own needs and solve their own problems. Sometimes swift action may be needed to support students and you may want to leverage your skills, power or privileges associated with your race, class, citizenship status or fluency in a particular language to do this. But in the long run, supporting students to take action for themselves is usually more helpful as they will likely learn more skills and gain more confidence along the way.
- Check in with yourself about what you are able to do, with regards your own time, energy and finances to avoid offering support but feeling resentful or drained, which can lead to burn-out



Context for Volunteering

There are many ways to support refugees learn language. In the following section we describe five common scenarios where volunteers can help and we outline practical info and educational guidelines - along with some project examples.



#1 SUPPORTING TEACHERS *in the classroom*



THE CONCEPT

Volunteers support teachers by helping to supervise activities in the classroom, working with learners on an individual, small group or whole class basis. Some volunteers work on a one-to-one basis with beginner or very advanced learners.

Volunteers can make a big difference for the teachers and for the learners. Thanks to volunteers, the teacher can spend more time with learners who have questions or require more support.

In contrast to all the other contexts of volunteering presented in this toolkit, you are likely to be guided, supervised and accompanied by a teacher throughout your volunteering in the classroom. The teacher will give you more scope to act. Is ultimately in charge of their class, so do what you can to make sure you're on the same wavelength and understand each other well.

When assisting a teacher in the classroom, they may ask you to carry out the following tasks:

Classroom Monitor

You can be checking for students':

- accurate pronunciation
- reading comprehension
- accurate grammar
- general comprehension of the activity



"Having a volunteer in the classroom makes a big difference to the teacher, because you often have these mixed levels. Although the students support each other a lot, it can help to divide those groups."

Teacher, UK

You can also provide extra conversation for shy or quieter students, and opportunities to interact with another expert speaker. When the teacher presents new activities, the volunteer can sit with students who are a little lower than the others and help them understand the instructions

Co-Presenter

You can assist the teacher in presenting new activities, for example, taking a role in a dialogue with the teacher. In a conversation you can play the other role so that it will sound and appear more authentic for the students.

One-on-One Tutor

You can help students with special needs one-to-one. This can be helpful for a student with low levels of literacy compared to others in the class. One-to-one support can also be helpful

if a student is preparing for a specific challenging situation, like a test for a driving permit or citizenship, or a job interview, and it is not appropriate for the whole group to work on the topic at that time.

Special Project: e.g. Job Interviews

After the learners have practised interviews in class for a while, you can roleplay an interview situation, with you conducting the interview in the role of a potential employer. In a location outside the classroom, you can make the situation as real-life as possible, greeting the student formally and asking a variety of questions specific to the job the student is interested in.

FIRST STEPS (TO BECOMING A SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER IN THE CLASSROOM)

If you decide that you'd like to volunteer in a language class, contact language schools and other adult learning organisations to find out if they work with volunteers. If they have volunteer vacancies, the volunteer coordinator may well invite you for a selection interview. Be prepared and find out for yourself what you want to do as a volunteer in the classroom. Why are you interested in this kind of volunteering? Do you know the school's policy? Are you happy with a job supporting the teacher?

First Meeting

If possible, request a meeting with teacher you'll be working with to discuss your responsibilities, the specific needs of individual students and the language school's approach to language learning. Does the teacher want you to work with all learners or only with the lowest level? Are you allowed to translate or should you explain vocabulary in the language students are learning? What does the teacher want from you in terms of error correction? Bring a list of specific questions and concerns to make the most of your scheduled time. Often teachers are doubtful about working with a volunteer for fear the volunteer might take over the classroom. Make clear this will not be the case.

Boundaries

Before you start your volunteer experience, have a clear idea of what your personal boundaries are. Are you willing to discuss aspects of your personal life such as your relationships and children? People might ask you a lot of personal questions. You don't have to disclose anything that you don't want to talk about.

Be Open-Minded

Don't judge the teacher's teaching methods, especially during your first few volunteer sessions. The teacher is trained for the job they are doing and likely has a lot of experience. Observe what is going on in the classroom. There may be reasons why the teacher takes decisions that might appear counterproductive at the start but that work out well in the end.

Communication

Ask the teacher what kind of communication they prefer. Is it ok to send an email, text or to phone? Try to be on time, or arrive in advance if this is what the teacher prefers - it might be necessary to exchange information before the class starts. If needed, be available also for a few moments after the class for a debriefing. Let the teacher know if you're having difficulty with a task. Persevering with something

the wrong way may create more work for the teacher than taking a few minutes to ask questions during the process.

BASIC IDEAS AND CONTENT

Even if lesson content is provided by the teacher you might want to add your own input to particular lessons. Talk to the teacher about what you could add. For example, you could tell your own story or bring a meaningful object to the classroom to tell students about. If you feel like your contribution to the class could be helpful suggest it to the teacher. You'll be supporting the teacher and working together as a team.

Methods

Most teachers use the communicative approach to language learning: students are encouraged to talk and explore what a text is about. Expressing and exchanging ideas is more important than the perfect use of grammar. This might be very different from the way you learned languages yourself. This approach is based on scientific research and has proven to be more effective than the grammar approach you may have worked with as a student. Don't turn the clock back - see for yourself what the benefits of communicative language learning are for the learners.

Feedback

As a volunteer you might want to correct the errors the learners make. Talk with your teacher about their policy on feedback and error correction. The degree of correction will depend on the aims of the activity and the teacher will have an idea of what errors are productive to focus on. (Read more on page 10: ERROR CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK)

Lesson Plans

Teachers usually work to lesson plans and decide lesson content in advance. If you want to prepare yourself you could ask to see lesson plans in advance of the class as well. You can reflect on lesson plans with the following questions:

- What could I do to contribute to this topic?
- How will I be supporting the teacher during different activities (role play, one-to-one, monitoring the classroom)?
- How can I rehearse the vocabulary with the learners?

Discuss your contribution with the teacher. Of course you want to reduce the teacher's workload, not add to it, so take responsibility for preparing any of your own ideas.



CHALLENGES

So Much to Do

Chances are good that you'll arrive in a busy classroom with beginners who can't communicate much in the target language. Where do you start? Observe how the teacher manages the classroom and makes sure everybody is able to speak and learn. You'll quickly see which learners have more difficulty and which learners are quicker. After the lesson talk to teacher about how you can best support. This could include discussing the specific needs of different students and how you might help them. It can be useful to check in with the teacher at least a few times at the beginning of your placement, to find your way. When the teacher can rely on you, lessons will go smoothly.

Find Your Role

Sometimes, as a volunteer, it can be hard to find your place in the school/organisation. If in doubt, ask. Some institutions have teachers' lounges reserved for staff, for example, and volunteers eat separately at lunch. We hope that wherever you are volunteering makes you feel welcome but unfortunately volunteers can sometimes be something of an afterthought. You can always ask if the rules and etiquette of this kind aren't clear.

Collabouration

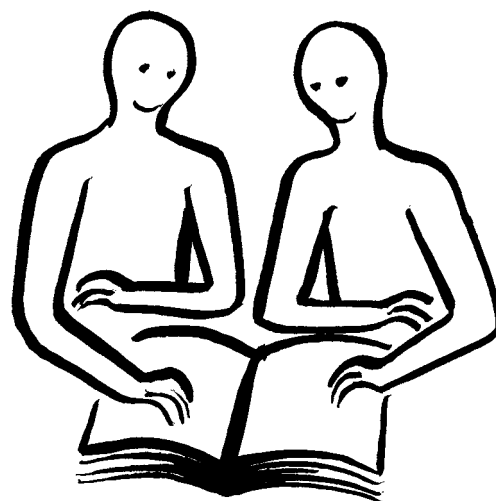
Before you came, the teacher may have been alone in the classroom. Teachers set up the classroom their way and their style of interacting with the learners might be very different to your own. Try to adapt and make sure the teacher knows what you're able to do. Do you have some skills - like singing, drawing, acting - or areas of interest that might come in useful? Once you get to know the teacher and the class well enough, you can always offer up these talents or areas of knowledge. This can help learners get to know you better or just make lessons more enjoyable. The teacher may be happy for you to contribute to the class community in this way.

If Things Go Wrong

Sometimes you try your best to help out as a volunteer, but things don't work out. Perhaps communication between you and the teacher isn't working for whatever reason. In this scenario you could also try talking to the teacher about the communication difficulties. Perhaps they'll want to find a way forward and come to a better understanding. There may also be a volunteer coordinator you can talk to who can match you with another teacher or opportunity that's a better fit. Maybe there are other volunteering activities that you'd prefer. There will be other possibilities, so don't let this misadventure get you down. Volunteering is also a learning process after all.

GROUND RULES

If you support teachers in the classroom, stick to their rules as much as possible. It is they who set the agenda, determine error correction and decide on priorities.



HAPPY MEMORIES

PRACTICAL
EXAMPLE

October 2018. 25 migrant learners in a classroom full of pictures. Most people know their way around the classroom, and Patrick does too. He started as a volunteer at CVO VOLT just a few weeks ago. After a career as a headmaster he wanted to do something for society and decided to dedicate some time to others. That's why he started to look for opportunities to volunteer. When he saw CVO VOLT's ad in a newspaper, he immediately sent an email to the coordinator and a week later he was back in the classroom, not as headmaster but as volunteer. Joke, the class teacher, is happy to have a volunteer with teaching experience in her group. "But volunteers don't need to have experience in teaching", she points out. There are certain skills that matter. Volunteers particularly need listening skills and patience. Patience to wait until the person has spoken and patience to speak more slowly than usual. "They also need the patience to let the learners think. The learners may not give the answers immediately" Joke says.

Patrick was at ease in the lessons, explaining exercises or having a conversation with more advanced learners who finished their work early. "Teaching changes lives forever", Patrick says. When the coordinator asked him if he'd like to take part in a storytelling project with the migrant learners he was thrilled. After two meetings with the teacher they decided the project would be about memories and places. When migrants arrive in the new country, memories are often the only thing that's left to them. Teachers and volunteers felt creating a bond between the migrants and their new town would help them express themselves better and feel more at ease in the new language they're learn-

ing. Patrick is one of four volunteers in this project, and he is the only one with teaching experience.

After some icebreakers, the first lesson of the project focussed on memories. The teachers used storytelling techniques to encourage the learners to talk about their own country. The volunteers involved did so too. Patrick talked about the memories of his childhood, how the town changed and what he did in his free time when he was a teenager. It was nice for the learners to talk and listen to a native speaker who wasn't the teacher and barriers disappeared rapidly. Next step was to choose a place in town the learners could relate to, something that made them think of their home country. Some chose the botanical garden, the town hall, the market, a school or the theatre. The learners went home with one assignment: explain why they had chosen this place. One week later learners, teachers and volunteers went to the city and visited each other's favourite places. They explained why they liked it so much, what kind of memories they revealed etc. The final exercise was back in the classroom. Together with Patrick and another volunteer involved in the project, the learners shared their experiences based on pictures that were taken during the walk in town. All the participants exchanged memories and told the others which memory had touched them most.

Volunteers, teachers and learners were happy to take part in the project. They learned about each other's culture, gained self confidence in expressing themselves in Dutch and enjoyed practicing their new language.

#2 CONVERSATION CLUB



THE CONCEPT

Conversation clubs allow language learners to practise listening and speaking in an informal, relaxed environment. They are run alongside a language course, or are visited by language learners who want to refresh their speaking skills. The concept of the Conversation Club is open and flexible. That means it is always possible to get involved and doesn't demand commitment for participants to be present every session. Ideally, the offer is held weekly at the same location at the same time in order to establish regular attendees. Conversation clubs suit volunteers with some experience of supporting language learners.

The focus of Conversation Clubs is on confidence building, promoting communication skills but not measuring participants' progress against any formal criteria. The topics of conversation should be based on, and relevant to, the real lives of the learners.

By practicing open conversation - which can be surprisingly rare in formal language classes - clubs not only promote language progress but also allow for an exchange of knowledge and experience. Participants may exchange questions and knowledge about local services, facilities and institutions or collectively discuss issues they face and potential solutions.

The location of the conversation club can be important in its own right. If the club is held in a local institution like a library



"My volunteers enjoy their [Conversation] Circles immensely and they believe they benefit from learning about their students as much as the students learn about speaking English. It makes a wonderful sense of community."

**Volunteer Coordinator,
Massachusetts**

it may make it easier for refugees to feel comfortable in that space and use that service in the future. This also applies to trips that may be offered in addition to or in the context of the Conversation Club (Leisure Events, Visiting the Library, Art, Clubs, etc.).

It can make sense to have several volunteers with a lot of knowledge of the target language in the same session. This will allow more participants to have conversations with a more advanced speaker. Volunteers can take turns to lead the sessions, sharing the workload and allowing flexibility if one of them can't attend a session. As mentioned earlier, a conversation club can lend itself well to additional activities like walking tours, shared activities and buddy-ing. (Read more about these kind of activities in the following texts in this section Context of Volunteering.)

TARGET GROUPS

A Conversation Club is ideally for those learners who have reached the level B1* and above (*More to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf). That means learners who are able to discuss basic topics, understand simple coherent texts and can describe experiences and events. Of course, a conversation club can be offered at a lower level, but here the methods have to be adapted accordingly, and the focus will be more on training and perhaps having less open conversation.

Conversation Clubs work best alongside more formal courses. However where course places are unavailable or unaffordable, a conversation club can fill a gap for learners until they find a way to access a suitable course. Conversation clubs can also be aimed at specific groups, such as for women, or for mothers with small children (with appropriate child care incorporated into the design).

FIRST STEP – ORGANISATION AND PREPARATION

Before setting up a new Conversation Club, see what already exists in your area. Pre-existing Conversation Clubs may need support from further volunteers.

Organisational Considerations

There are a few logistical things to consider when setting up a new conversation club. You will need a space to hold the meetings and other volunteers to team up with. Choose a time for the sessions to take place, or set the date and time for an initial session where you can scope out whether that date/time works for participants. Regularity is important for building up attendance, and reducing the work you will have to do communicating. When choosing a time, think about who you're trying to reach: Working people are more likely to come at evenings or weekends, parents with young children might find it easier to attend in the middle of the day. Also think about organising childcare if you have enough volunteers and want parents (usually mothers) to be able to access your courses.

If you're not working with a pre-existing group, you'll also have to consider how to reach and attract participants to your conversation club.

Some refugees may value certification that proves their attendance at the Conversation Club. If in doubt, ask participants whether they'd like this and if so, it's not hard to produce some participation certificates. Even if it is not a formal further education, these certificates can be helpful when looking for work or applying for citizenship, because they demonstrate participation in the community and a proactive attitude. Don't let participation certificates lead you towards becoming more formal: Successful Conversation Clubs work because they are fun, interesting and relaxed!

CHECKLIST

SPACE

- organise a room
- ideally somewhere pleasant and comfortable
- A blackboard or flipchart might be useful
- Accessible: near public transport or walking distance for the people you want to reach; wheelchair accessible; ideally a familiar and not too intimidating building
- Easy access to the room (Will you receive your own key, is it always accessible or do you have to ask someone each time to go there?)

FELLOW VOLUNTEERS

- What different skills do you have between you?
- What is the capacity of those involved? How much time can people give?
- Who is responsible for what?

ARRANGE TIME

- Establish a regular session time
- Start small: don't commit to something you can't sustain
- Consider the living situation of the refugees when setting the dates - ideally by asking them

MATERIAL

- Material depending on the level
- Copy options for learning materials/texts
- Paper, pen and materials for language learners

■ PARTICIPATION CONFIRMATION

BASIC IDEAS ON FORM AND CONTENT

Relevance of Content

Conversation Club participants may turn up for a variety of reasons. In many instances, they want to learn the language but it's the social, enjoyable aspect of the club that makes people become regulars. Conversation clubs are also ways to exchange useful information and learn more about how to navigate life in the new country. So whatever forms and methods you use in the conversation club, aim at engendering connection and conversation and keep things relevant to the participants and their lives. The most effective way to find authentic everyday issues and understand the needs of the group is simply to ask them.

Ask them:

- What topics they'd like to talk about
- What language forms they'd like to practise

If you don't feel comfortable letting sessions unfold spontaneously you can prepare sessions or at least conversation starters in advance. At the end of each session make time with participants to reflect on how the session went and discuss what they'd like to focus on in the next 3-4 sessions.

In the annex you will find further material & methods.

CONTENT? ASK YOUR PARTICIPANTS!

Some ideas for relevant content:

- Getting to know each other (hobbies, activities, and meaning of your own name)
- Daily routine (What did you do today/on the weekend?)
- Work and profession
- Health (e.g. doctor visits)
- Appointments
- Homes and Housing
- Education and schooling
- Supporting children at school
- Food and Shopping
- Appointments/Invitations/Cancellations
- Directions
- My District
- Friendship
- Objects in Room
- Clothing
- Communication (Internet and Mobile) etc.
- Speech exercises for examination

Vocabulary Work

Conversation clubs are a great way for participants to learn new vocabulary, phrases and figures of speech. Much of this learning will happen naturally through conversation. However, you can also make a note of words that have arisen in the session or are relevant to the theme discussed. You can write these up on a flip chart /black board or on a sheet of paper to show everyone how they're written and even drill them collectively at the end of the session. By showing everyone how the word is written they learn the spelling of the word as well. Make your handwriting as clear as possible, especially if you're working with participants who are also literacy learners or have a different alphabet in their first language. See the annex for further methods and approaches.

Material

If needed, you can have some materials to hand to prompt discussion and conversation. These can act as a stimulus and support for the participants. These can be texts or open questions that get everyone thinking. Pictures can be a very valuable resource as well. You can let the participants describe what they see, speculate what people in the picture may be thinking or what life they live. Last but not least, you can use them for games.

Error Correction

For information on error correction and feedback see page 10 in this booklet. In a conversation club be even be more careful about correcting people. Never correct people's mistakes unless they ask, as it breaks the flow of conversation and can undermine people's confidence to speak. You can talk openly about this with participants - explain that the most important thing is communication and therefore you won't correct mistakes. They can always ask. If the same mistake is repeated by many participants during a session you can make a note of it and feedback at the end of the session, once conversations have come to a close. List 4-5 frequent mistakes max, without any reference to who made the mistake.

Positive Feedback

While the group performs an activity e.g. a conversation game, you can make notes of the effective speech that is used by the participants during the exercise. Write on a flip chart the title of the topic (for example, friendship) in the middle, and the figures of speech in balloons around it. Also write down all useful language you've overheard such as "good friend", "best friend!", "close". This feedback method makes visible what has been used effectively. In doing so, learners become aware of how much they can already do and good practice is shared between learners.

CHALLENGES

Knowledge of the Target Language Among the Participants

The participants of a Conversation Club are likely to be at different language level. You can advertise the Club as being for learners at a certain level, but inevitably you will have variation in people's levels. That is a challenge you have to tackle. Forming small conversation sub-groups during the session can help with this problem. In a larger group, higher level and more confident students can dominate.

Bear in mind that the Conversation Club is not just about language learning, but also about meeting people and having fun. So even if there are big differences of level in the group, it may not be an issue for your participants.

If the gap is too big this problem may resolve itself by some participants dropping out. However, sometimes this can be the beginner participants who need the practice most! Another option is to talk about the issue openly with the group and ask the higher level attendees to act in a supportive role to the lower level participants.

Ideological Differences Among Participants

Some discussion may develop a dynamic you could never have expected. To a certain extent, everyone at the club is an adult and you can't take too much responsibility for the direction that conversations take! It's also good to remember that what may be awkward or seem tense to you may not be experienced as such by those people involved. Sometimes people enjoy confrontational conversations. Nevertheless you may want to create and agree a set of ground rules when you set the Conversation Club up, which you can refer to when conflicts occur. Mutual respect has to be the basis of the club. Learn more about the importance of SAFE SPACES on page 11.

If your participants want to discuss a delicate or sensitive issue, you can also propose doing the discussion as a role play: Every participant has to perform a character with a specific opinion in a talk show setting. Sometimes this helps to put oneself in the position of someone else. It can avoid discussion becoming too personal.

Alternatively, be ready to halt discussion if it's becoming too tricky and ask the group if they want to continue. Another 'safety mechanism' is to include a check-out after the discussion where participants can reflect on how they found it. This can give everyone a chance to express their feelings, apologise for any missteps. It can be very useful for clearing the air.

Participants Speak in Another Language

If participants speak together in another language they share, don't automatically treat this as a problem. In fact, it

can be an extra resource if participants support each other through translation.

Sometimes some members of the group may talk privately or make jokes in a language the others don't understand, which can be divisive. Discuss this openly rather than trying to impose a rule about what languages people speak. If participants are having separate conversations in a whole group sessions (regardless of which language), you can always ask whether they're willing to share their conversation. Sometimes there are shy participants who are interested in the topic of discussion, but only feel able to express their point of view in their expert language(s). This could be a chance to involve them.

If participants speak in their first language during group work this may not really disturb anyone. It's always worth asking the group how they feel about having other languages spoken in the space. Sometimes this is a helpful safety net and shortcut for exchanging information. Sometimes though, participants may want support to stick with the target language and use other languages less. If you are working with a group with many different languages you can suggest that participants work with other people who don't speak the same first language. As a rule of thumb, some rules and structure can be supportive but don't try to impose these without the group's consent. Conversation clubs work best as relaxed spaces where the entire group ('volunteers' and 'learners') share responsibility for making the sessions work well.

Continuous Attendance

It can take time for a core group of participants to become established. Don't expect participants to show up to each session like in a language course. Try to set up the sessions in a way that doesn't rely on continuous attendance. You can repeat vocabulary, phrases and mistakes from the last session. Every participant will benefit from that.

In most cases it helps to give up on the expectation that people will show up every time. Don't be annoyed if they don't - welcome them back when they return. Instead, cherish the informal and flexible character of Conversation Clubs.

Share Responsibility for the Conversation Club as a Group

Try to find other volunteers to share the workload. Before you start, talk honestly and realistically about how much time you can each give to the project. It's also useful to assign different tasks to different volunteers, so everyone knows who is responsible for what. For example, you could divide up tasks like setting up the room, contacting partner organisations to advertise your Club and bringing refreshments.



Clarify who is going to take responsibility to lead each session. You may have heard of the concept of 'team teaching', but be aware that this is something people are specifically trained for and often requires extra preparation time. So it may be easier to put one person in charge of leading each session (or at least a specific part of the session) to start with. If you are not the one leading but are taking part in a supportive capacity, trust the person leading. You can give feedback later on, but try not to intervene and make alternative suggestions.

There are challenges running a Conversation Club with a whole team of volunteers but also great advantages. Organising a regular, ongoing event is challenging for one person to manage on their own. Reflection and feedback among the volunteers will improve the quality of your sessions.

GROUND RULES

- Conversation clubs are not formal classes. Focus on a relaxed atmosphere.
- Let people decide what to talk about.
- If in doubt, ask the group

CONVERSATION CLUB REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- How was today's session for you?
- What did you like?
- Which aspects are you satisfied with? Are there aspects that you would like to do differently next time?
- What do you think the group liked?
- Which activities were well received by participants? Which activities and topics have been well received by the participants so far?
- Were the tasks appropriate? (Scope, degree of difficulty)
- How are the group dynamics?
- How are individual participants? (in the group, with the exercises and during the exercises)
- Are there participants who speak more or less? (Why do you think this is?) (Are all participants speaking?)
- Are there any participants with particular learning needs? How could you plan for this next time?
- What topics do you want to talk about next time? What do you want to practise?
- Are you happy about how the volunteers are working together? How are you finding the division of tasks or roles?



CONVERSATION CIRCLES

build language skills and confidence

PRACTICAL
EXAMPLE

Gerri Guyote from the public Peabody Library in Massachusetts launched a pilot project in 2013 that allows migrants to practise English daily in a comfortable location.

These weekly "Conversation Circles" fit alongside regular language courses and focus on building vocabulary, improving pronunciation and building participants' confidence in speaking English. The sessions are run by volunteers and deal with topics such as holidays, news, travel, cooking and gardening but also cover basic grammatical rules that are important for spoken English.

"All of the programs and resources are free to the public and we try to make the circles fun and engaging for the students" explains Mrs. Guit.

The program started with three circles but at the time of writing there are seven weekly groups meeting for English practice. Over the past four years, they have had over 100 language learners participate in Conversation Circles. Participants' English speaking abilities ranged from beginner to advanced. Their needs and goals are as diverse as their backgrounds.

Some are enrolled in English classes at local community colleges or non-profits, but want more conversation practice. Others attend the circles while they look for jobs. Some are newly arrived in Massachusetts, some are here for extended visits and some have been here for over twenty years. The ages, backgrounds and countries of origin of the participants vary widely. What connects them all is a desire to better navigate their daily lives at work, at home, in social situations, at the doctor's, the grocery store and their children's schools.

An intangible benefit of the Conversation Circles is the social connection that participants can find with other learners and Circle volunteers. Having limited English skills, a lack of confidence in their ability to express themselves or simply being in a new place leads many Circle participants to feel socially isolated. Some friendships remain contained within the circle time and others lead participants to connect outside of class. Either way, spending this time together over multiple weeks often provides English

Language Learners with valuable connections. Many circle participants comment on how much more social interaction they are accustomed to in their neighbourhoods in their home countries. Friendly encounters and banter with volunteers and other learners can go a long way towards making their new home seem a bit more friendly.

Over time, different materials for the format have been developed and collected such as collections in bilingual picture dictionaries, activity books, online language learning subscriptions and teacher guides. In addition, a 12-unit curriculum has been developed, which is readily available to the volunteers. Volunteers can pick and choose what materials they use, so each circle has its own tone and focus. Some volunteers are formal educators, others are local residents who consider their volunteering as a way of giving back to the community. Each volunteer has their own style and they are usually quite successful at sustaining a small group over 6-12 months.

There are 6-month or 9-month sessions. Most of the volunteers conduct their conversation circle about 46 weeks a year. For example, there is a family circle for parents with children up to the age of 6 years. This circle combines spoken English practice with playtime for children and family literacy (story time at the end of each circle).

The volunteers enjoy their circles immensely and they believe that they learn also from their students as the students improve their spoken English. There is a wonderful sense of community. Conversation Circles allow the Peabody Institute Library to offer these new arrivals some conversation, a little bit of extra language knowledge and a valuable chance to connect with others in their new home.

More Information:
www.peabodylibrary.org/services/conversationcircles.html

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ6HNkuh78s



#3 TRIPS AND WALKING TOURS



DESCRIPTIONS AND GUIDELINES

The Idea Behind Trips and Walking Tours for Refugees

Having limited language skills makes it difficult to get used to your new surroundings. As a volunteer, you can support refugees by taking them around your town, public transport or institutions which could be useful for them. In some cases, language learners may know the area or certain institutions better than you. In which case, they can show you around but you can support them to practise language associated with these places! Visiting new places together in a small group can give participants a feeling of safety.

Every trip or walking tour can be seen as one little piece of a big puzzle. People may not feel comfortable using the library after only one visit, but it does make it more likely.

To learn about public institutions like libraries, community centres or cultural institutions in a classroom is one thing, but actually to visit these places in someone's company can give people confidence. There can be many reasons for the fear of embarking on something new. Concerns like getting lost or worries about specific dress codes may keep people from visiting certain places. By taking people to visit places, you can help to break down reservations.

Language teachers have to deal with curricula and lesson plans, so they often do not have the capacity to organise trips outside the classroom.



"I learned that some of these women [in the community centre] rarely left their neighbourhood or were not used to use public transport. That's why I started to organise short trips"

Volunteer, London

In order to strengthen the aspect of language learning you can prepare a short list with relevant vocabulary for this specific trip. And you could work with the participants on dialogue relevant to the places you visit.

Another focus of these trips and walking tours is relationship building. You can show language learners specific places, relevant to your life and culture - and vice versa. Most refugees are curious to learn about local traditions and if they've been in a country long, they may have places to show you. You both may be curious to visit each other's places of worship, for example, without feeling uncomfortable to visit them uninvited. If you and the learners know each other in advance, there may be more motivation on both sides to learn about each other's

significant places and spaces.

TARGET GROUP

Trips and walking tours can be interesting for learners of all levels. Of course it doesn't make sense to plan a sightseeing tour with a lot of verbal explanations about historical background for a group of beginners, unless they have specific interest in this area and have studied this vocabulary in advance. If you are finding it difficult to anticipate what language learners may be able to understand, a teacher may be able to give you some hints. You will find ideas for preparing for trips further below.



Organising a trip or a walking tour can be a one-off event. You could prepare this trip, and offer it to several existing groups as an optional activity for a language course. You could approach teachers of language courses to offer these additional activities.

A different concept would be to organise several excursions for one specific group. This specific group could be a language course or a group which lives together in a refugee shelter. Working consistently with the same group of people is helpful in order to build trust which helps learning. (cross reference SAFE SPACES). Furthermore, knowing each other helps to involve the participants in finding new destinations to visit.

FIRST STEPS

Take one step at a time, even if you already have ideas for a whole series of trips and walking tours. Start by planning a single trip so that you can evaluate and learn from this first experience.

Before you start, get in contact with the people you want to take along, or a relevant contact person like a teacher. Tell them about your initial idea in terms of the destination, and ask for feedback: Is this relevant to learners? Would anyone be interested in coming along? Start small: Don't just plan tours for huge groups or an entire class. A trip with 2-3 people can be much easier to start with.

As we always recommend: Don't work alone! It is always useful to have someone to provide accountability, support and a second opinion. This person could take part in the event as well and plan everything with you. They could be someone who knows your target group well already, such as a their language teacher.

The amount of preparation you'll need for the trip depends on the language skills of your learners and on the numbers of participants. The most challenging scenario would be a huge group with low language skills. A small group of participants with higher language skills is much easier, because you will have the chance to improvise. You can be responsive to their interest and spontaneously change your plans or you can start a discussion. With complete beginners this isn't so possible.

If you have a group of beginners, it is always helpful to prepare a short list of vocabulary as a guide. 10-15 words or phrases will be sufficient. It is more about quality than quantity. (see box) Especially if you're working with beginners, it can be helpful to do some preparation with the group before you start. Talking to a group of language beginners in the middle of the street is unlikely to be successful. Street noise and other people walking by make it difficult for the learners

to concentrate. Find a quiet place before the walking tour and explain what you're going to do. On this occasion you might want to offer some vocabulary as well.

If you're working with the learners' teacher, you might agree on a division of work. If they prepare the participants for the trip in classroom this could help communication. You can let the participants tell you what they already learnt: What words they know, if they learnt specific phrases... If they are not too confident in talking, you can ask them to show you the course material, and refer to some words etc. during the trip.

Vocabulary Lists

A short specific vocabulary list is a helpful tool for all trips or walking tours with beginners. Just prepare a list of words and let the participants find the translation with their smartphones. If they don't have access to such a tool, let them guess, using words or gestures, as to what it could mean. Everyone will at least have the chance to look it up later, as they can take the list home with them.

Be specific with your choice of vocabulary for this list. Quality (and relevance) is definitely better than quantity! If you for example visit a library, you could have a look at the signs you find there. Be accurate in coping the wording of the signs for your list to avoid confusion. This could for example be:

- Quiet area
- Returns
- Library card
- Ask a librarian
- Set phones to silent

When you have arrived (or if applicable, during the trip) you can ask them to look out for these signs.

The journey is valuable in itself. For some participants the orientation in the city with public transport will be no challenge. Nevertheless they will participate as well because they are curious to learn something new. For others, using public transport will be a lesson in itself.

CHALLENGES

Groups with very unequal language skills between participants will definitely present a challenge. Try asking the advanced learners help the beginners.

If you use public transport, be sure that everyone has got a valid ticket. If you've got a small budget from somewhere to buy tickets for the group, make sure no one has season tickets or bus passes so you don't waste the money. It is worth double checking!

Punctuality is always an issue if you agree on a set time and meeting point. Events outside any of our control can always happen, like delays on public transport. If possible, give learners your details in advance so you can contact you or contact each other in case you're delayed. Of course, some beginner language speakers may not be able to communicate about this over the phone. This is where it can be really helpful if you're working with someone else to organise the event, as one of you can wait for the latecomers.

As mentioned above, it is always possible that you'll meet a group who aren't interested in what you're offering. Listening to the needs of the group is always key and if you are not connected to the respective group, this can be particularly difficult. Sometimes it is just not a good match, and you should accept it. There will be other options for your engagement.

www.weltkulturenmuseum.de/de/freundeskreis/veranstaltungen/8293

architectureforrefugees.ch/en/walking-tours/

GROUND RULES

- As we are targeting refugees, always be aware of their financial situation. Watch out not to exclude anyone. Even a bus ticket can be an obstacle for some.
- Orientation is a challenge for many. Choose a very easy meeting point which everyone knows. If you have further volunteer to help you, someone should wait for latecomers.
- If you want to plan a trip for a specific group, ask them to propose a place to visit. Or if the destination is already fixed, try to find out what will be relevant for them at this place. If you have advanced learners, you can also ask them if they would like to organise a trip for the others.

THE CITY FOR FREE

PRACTICAL
EXAMPLE

Sarah had just lost a job, when she started to support a women group of refugees at the local community centre round the corner. It was a neighbour who'd brought her there, and since Sarah had plenty of time and wanted to do something which made sense, it was a welcome opportunity.

"As I normally sit in front of my computer 7 hours a day, it was really exciting for me, supporting these women with their learning and daily struggles," Sarah remembers. After a month, Sarah got a new job, so she didn't have time to meet the women in the mornings. "When I told them about my new job, and that I had to travel 40 min. each morning, I learned that some of these women rarely left their neighbourhood or were not used to using public transport." That was the starting point to organising short trips to show the women institutions and parts of the town that they probably wouldn't visit alone.

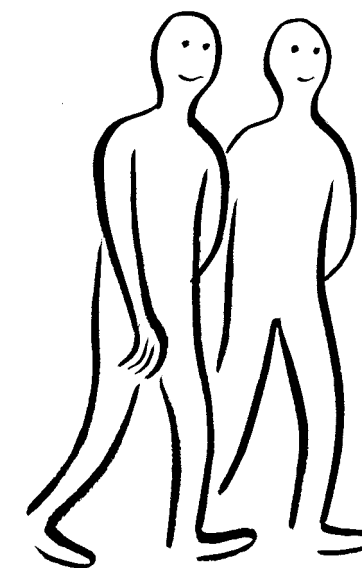
The first trip took the group both to the library and to an art gallery. It seem obvious that the library and the various services they offer actually might be a resource which could be very useful for the women. But that was not the main criteria. "These women have surprised me so many times, so I don't dare judge what's useful for them, or what will interest them. I think they join in because they know me, and they are curious." So the only clear criterion through the past four trips has been that Sarah only picks places where you don't have to pay any entrance fee and the services are free of charge. The fact that you don't need money doesn't necessarily mean that these places are easily accessible. Some would only be known to 'insiders'. It might be that the women never visit these places again, but they have seen the city from many new perspectives.

Depending on the size of the place or institution Sarah always lets the institutions know about the visit or asks if she can come with a group of eight. She hasn't been refused so far, quite the opposite: because she's contacted the institutions in advance the group have been personally greeted, which was obviously a very nice gesture for the women.

Rosaly, a volunteer from the community centre who still facilitates the morning meeting in the community

centre, supports Sarah with her trips. Rosaly is able to come along too, as the trips take place in the afternoon after work. This also means that two women take their kids along. Rosaly supports by preparing the trips some days in advance by looking at the city map together with all women, giving a very brief introduction to what is awaiting them and collecting expectations and assumptions about the places from the women. For the last trip Rosaly gave the women the task to find out how to get there by public transport, and to estimate how long it would take. The women did well. Nevertheless, Sarah picks them up as a group at the community centre in order not to lose anyone.

After each trip the women are asked to give feedback about their experiences and their thoughts. That is the part Sarah likes the most. The rule is, that everybody has to give feedback no matter what language skills they have. And what the women tell her isn't just about the places they get to know, but also about things that happened or what they noticed on the bus ride to the destination. "At this point it is no longer me showing them the town, but them showing me their perspective of the city we live in."





#4

SHARED ACTIVITIES

eg. Cooking, Sewing, Football...



THE IDEA

It's easier to learn a language when there is a real-life need and motivation to communicate. If people have a shared interest, it's likely you will have something to talk about. It doesn't matter whether you are passionate about sports, gardening, craft activities or chess, activity groups can be a great place for refugees to meet new people and get informal support with language learning. The communication carried out during the activity is the starting point.

Of course it can be a challenge for language learners to find people to communicate with who will be patient enough to slow down their speed of speaking and take time to understand what a beginner speaker is trying to say. In a group brought together with shared interest, it's more likely to find patient speakers and listeners - especially when these beginners in language learning - have relevant knowledge, expertise and skills to share.

As refugees and migrants interact with people and organisations in their local community they will be learning language at the same time. In fact the authentic communication involved in participating in civic life may actually be more effective in terms of language learning than doing 'out-of-context' language practise exercises. It keeps students motivated, students get authentic feedback and can feel more confident.



"If someone is motivated to take part in a useful project it means more than just learning from German neighbours. Some of the refugees wanted to do something useful for the society they were now living in, useful for all the inhabitants of Nortorf."

**Participant,
Gardening Project,
Nortorf, Germany**

In this setting you may not be in the classic role of a volunteer. Perhaps you yourself are active in a sport club, in a community cooking group or something similar. If this is the case, you could try to open your organisation, association or group for newly arrived citizens.

This voluntary role focuses on areas of expertise other than language - its as much about welcoming refugees and acting as a contact person than language support. Pay special attention to what language learners can contribute in terms of interest-related knowledge. They can show skills in the specific activities, such as sport or crafting. The language becomes relevant through the activity itself. For example in a football training session, the coach's instructions is the language that becomes crucial. In community cooking activities the recipes, the ingredients and the methods are starting points for easy communication. The benefit of language acquisition in this setting is that the meaning of words and

phrases will often become obvious as the activity progresses. Nonetheless, as a volunteer you can take advice on how to support language learners from this toolkit (page 9-12). Support with activity-specific technical language may be particularly helpful.



People who have the same interests often organise themselves in groups or associations. These groups can make a specific effort to give refugees a chance to participate.

Reaching Refugees

Your job is to build bridges between the refugees and your existing organisation. Think about approaching refugee organisations and language courses to publicise your group and invite refugees to join. If you want to reach people with a specific interest in cooking, crafts or sports you may want to emphasise this aspect - although be open to them bringing friends along if they feel more comfortable not coming on their own.

On the other hand it's also possible to invite an entire language course to visit your soccer training or a cooking session - bearing in mind that some people in the group may be less interested in the activity. In this case, you may want to focus more on showing the group the normal activities in a visit or session that is tailor made for complete beginners as well as people who are experienced in the activity.

CHALLENGES

Making it possible for people to participate in existing groups is not always easy. It helps if there is the space to talk about difficulties openly. Be aware that there may be cultural differences you don't know about that act as a barrier to people's participation. Reflect on the extent to which you and your organisation is willing to open up. Are you also open to make changes in your organisation? Or do you just want others to adapt? Nowadays it's common to cater to vegetarians by offering options without meat. Are you and your organisation willing to accommodate religious dietary requirements in the same way?

These considerations should not scare anyone off. Even if you are not able to open up your organisation to the extent you would like, small steps and first encounters can still be valuable.

Economic Barriers

If taking part in your activity or club costs money this could be a barrier to refugees participating. It's important to consider this challenge and think about how socially and economically disadvantaged people can participate in the activity in the longer term. Try to find out if there is a possibility that the club in which you are active can find sponsors or access other

funding opportunities in order to subsidise refugees' participation.

Is the Organisation Really Willing to Welcome Newcomers?

If you want to open an existing club or association for refugees, it is important that the club genuinely supports this initiative and that you have allies in your project. It is advisable to talk to your members in advance about your plans and to get their feedback so you know where support lies. It

GROUND RULES

- Put the shared interest at the centre of the activity.
- Find allies in your club/organisation, to ensure that refugees are really welcome. To invite someone who's not really welcome, puts the guest in an uncomfortable situation.
- Find sustainable solutions so the refugees can participate in structures/organisations which normally require fees for participation.

is always important to have allies and other people to work with on this, so you are not the only one pushing the project. If there are mixed feelings in the group, you could start small and only invite one or two refugees, so you can gain experience and check how the other members will deal with the new situation. Be aware that you may be putting people in a difficult position if you invite them along without knowing whether they are welcome in the eyes of the other club members.

Participants Speak in Their First Language

Even if you want to support refugees in language acquisition, try not to regard it as a problem if participants speak in another language. It can actually be helpful, as people can support each other's participation by translating words or phrases that others don't understand. If participants are speaking privately or making jokes in a language that others don't understand and it divides the group or causes social problems you can always speak to them about it. Avoid enforcing rules - they are not school children!



GARDENING OPENS THE HEARTS

and the tongues

PRACTICAL
EXAMPLE

On a rainy day in April 2015 refugees met their German neighbours in two old gardens in the middle of Nortorf.

Nobody lived in the old houses attached to the gardens. The houses were being used to store donations for the refugees from the local town. But what about the gardens? Couldn't they be more than just a forgotten place filled with weeds and old apple trees? One woman decided to organise a gardening project for refugees.

Julia Beilke is a woman in her 40s and she liked the idea of gardening and getting to know the new inhabitants of Nortorf, in the rural area in the north of Germany near Kiel.

"The address of the two old houses was known by the refugees," she says "so, we could start something new." One garden was planted with vegetables and the other was assigned as a playground for the refugee families and a meeting point to have barbecue parties all together.

Garden furniture and garden tools were secured second-hand and the volunteers and the refugees started weeding the gardens and creating beds for the vegetables and flowers together. They put signs with the name and a picture of the plant on the beds. But not just in the beds: signs were placed on trees and garden tools as well. The garden looked like a Picture Dictionary.

"The vocabulary of the refugees and the plants were growing at the same time", Julia Beilke says. While working in the garden with the German volunteers every refugee learned not only the nouns but also the verbs for what they were doing together. The refugees got the vocabulary for making appointments and plans for the next gardening day: the German words for times, days of the week and months were practised.

In one of the houses there was a store for the local museum association. The storekeeper saw the garden project and decided to create a meeting point for the refugee project in the house.

The city administration supported him and the volunteers. So everybody helped to store the museum inventory somewhere else and to renovate the house to create a social space. Now it is named the "little white house" and the intercultural garden. Since November 2016 it's been a meeting point for refugees and their German neighbours. Volunteers are organising activities from Monday to Saturday. Activities are announced on Facebook and WhatsApp.

It's not just the volunteers and refugees of "Die Mitte Nortorf" (which is now the official name of the project) who are fascinated by what they've grown. It is a model that can be copied by other towns and cities with unused spaces and groups who want to build bridges between refugees and their neighbours. Now the house is like a gallery with photos and writing by the refugees and the volunteers.

"We asked them to write something about themselves: where they come from and what they like to do in the house or in the garden", says Julia Beilke. After a year in the middle of Nortorf this was an easy exercise for them. For Julia Beilke it is important to say that the gardening project has brought benefit to everybody in Nortorf. The team of volunteers has increasingly been joined by refugees who are not passive recipients but active contributors. "If someone is motivated to take part in a useful project it means more than just learning from German neighbours. Some of the refugees wanted to do something useful for the society they were now living in - something useful for everyone living in Nortorf." To be part of a project means to participate in society and this is the best motivation for language learning.

#5 ONE-TO-ONE *buddying*

CONTEXT FOR
VOLUNTEERING

THE IDEA

The idea of "the one-to-one meeting" is that a refugee and a volunteer meet regularly - on their own - to practise the refugee's new language. This gives the refugee space to practise their new language in a quiet and safe setting. No other setting gives the language learner more time to speak. The volunteer is not a private teacher but an expert speaker (and listener!) with whom the refugee can train and develop their new language.

The frequency and the duration of the meetings depends on the time both the refugee and the volunteer have available.

TARGET GROUP

These kinds of meetings are interesting for all language learners who wish to invest extra time in practising their new language. It can be refugees who need someone to practise their new language with and who find it too overwhelming to come to a conversation club or do not have time available to join a conversation club at a specific time. Some language learner also appreciate the one-to-one setting because they feel uncomfortable talking in a bigger group. Last but not least: in this setting you get the chance to really get to know someone better and can focus on this person.

FIRST STEPS - ORGANISATION AND PREPARATION

As mentioned earlier in this toolkit, it can have many advantages to volunteer for one-to-one meetings coordinated by



"It is important for me to create as relaxed an environment as possible from the very beginning, so I start with small conversations between myself and the student. In that way I can hear what level the student is at."

**Volunteer,
Lärdansk Odense,
Denmark**

an organisation. A volunteer coordinator can help you to find a good match for the one-to-one encounters and offer ongoing support.

If you can not find an organisation that offers this structure, you can also try to set up something yourself. Perhaps you have already met somebody you could support in language learning. What you have to consider is that in this one-to-one setting, you will be regarded as "volunteer" if an organisation is involved. If you just meet someone on a regular basis outside an organisational context, the terms of the relationship might be less clear - are you friends or are you meeting specifically for a language exchange?

It's worth thinking about any specific boundaries you would like to set. Find out for yourself if there are specific private things you don't

want to talk about. If there aren't, it is okay as well. If you meet the language learner in a setting of an organisation, they might have specific guidelines on how to handle things. In any case make clear what this is about: An opportunity to practise the new language with you in a focused context, one-to-one. It will give both you and the language learner clarity if you agree on a specific setting including how many minutes you meet and how regularly.

An important consideration is where to meet. The place you meet should be quiet but ideally not too private. That is a big advantage of meeting on the premises of an organisation. The organisation may be able to provide a separate room, so that you and the refugee can meet in a "neutral" place, where you can talk quietly without being interrupted. It is

best to find a place with no distractions so that both parties can focus on the conversation. Ideally, the room can be equipped with dictionaries, books, photos, games, maps and other things which might be useful during the conversations.

A café or restaurant is not ideal as meeting place but it can work if you're clear about the purpose of your meeting. Bear in mind that cafes require you to purchase something and this could be a barrier for the learner that they may be embarrassed to discuss. Sometimes libraries, galleries or community centres offer places to meet without the obligation to order something, which can work better. Look for a location where you can meet as equals and both feel comfortable!

BASIC IDEAS ON FORM AND CONTENT

As mentioned above it can be useful to give the meeting some formality, in order to focus it around language training. This formality happens automatically if the meetings take place in a language teaching organisation and the matching of volunteer and refugee is conducted by a third person like a volunteer coordinator. On the other hand too much formality and rigidity may get in the way of a relaxed and friendly atmosphere which is conducive for good conversation! If you volunteer in an organisation, the first meeting will hopefully be facilitated by a volunteer coordinator, who can guide and advise on how the coming one-to-one meetings will take place. The coordinator could also suggest some subjects to talk about during the one-to-one meeting.

What to Talk About?

It is totally up to you. And that's what makes this set up interesting. You don't have to be afraid of silence, because most language learners who choose to take part in such meetings want to communicate. Ask the refugee what they want to talk about. You can also have a little set of simple questions up your sleeve to act as conversation starters, like "Tell me about a nice experience from last week?" If your counterpart doesn't have anything to say, you can tell them your answer to the question, and suggest that you ask the same question next week.

In case of awkward silences, you can usually find inspiration by thinking about, or asking about

- News
- Books
- Hobbies
- Beliefs
- Dreams for the future

If you meet someone with fairly basic language skills, you can also ask what topics they're currently working on at their language course, if they attend one. Discourage the learner from getting out their workbook - it's more useful to discuss what they can remember instead. These might not be the most thrilling topics, but the advantage is that the learner will be equipped with some basic vocabulary.

CHALLENGES

This format may be more suitable for experienced volunteers in language learning, since they'll be left alone with their partner one-to-one. The volunteer may be the only contact the refugee has to an expert speaker beside the teacher in the classroom.

Due to the amount of time the volunteer and refugee spend talking, the refugee may want to talk about difficult subjects such as their migration journey, war experience, loss of family members and so on, which some volunteers may find difficult to handle.

Boundaries around the timeframe for the conversations can be important for both the learner and volunteer. The volunteer might be the only contact the refugee has to an expert speakers in their new country. It can therefore be a challenge to say no, if the refugee wants more contact than the volunteer. It helps to be clear and say what your limits are and how much time you want to spend. As already mentioned before, it is better to set a specific timeframe right from the very beginning if you're able to. Better to set a tight timeframe and expand the number of meetings, than promise a lot of meetings that you later feel unable to commit to.

The one-to-one meeting is based on the refugee learner and volunteer meeting as equals. The fact that the refugee has limited language whereas the volunteer knows the language and can express themselves fluently can result in "linguistic inequality". The volunteer should be aware of this challenge in order to minimise this inequality through respect and empathy.

GROUND RULES

- The refugee learner should always join the project voluntarily.
- Never neglect the importance of the right match between the student and volunteer. Without mutual trust between them the one-to-one meeting will not be a success.
- It may be best for the volunteer to avoid sensitive subjects such as why the learner had to seek asylum. If they want to talk about these issues they can bring this up themselves.

THE CONVERSATION

that never stopped

PRACTICAL
EXAMPLE

Refugee Baris and volunteer Ruth meet up at the language school Lærdansk Odense 2 hours every week for Baris to practise his Danish. Before Ruth meets Baris, she picks up the keys for the room from Anette's office. Anette is the volunteer coordinator in the language school Lærdansk Odense, and it is she who brought Baris and Ruth together. Ruth and Baris have met for the past 1 ½ years and have gotten to know each other quite well in the process.

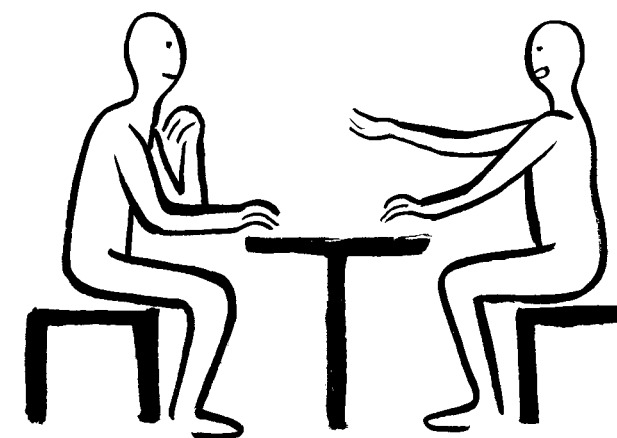
At their first meeting, Ruth opened with: "Tell me about yourself Baris - whatever you want to share. Afterwards I'll ask you questions, and then you can ask me questions - you can ask about anything". The conversation has not stopped since. Ruth says: "It is important for me to create as relaxed an environment as possible from the very beginning, so I start with small conversations between myself and the student. In that way I can hear what level the student is at."

The language is practised using basic tools. Lots of talking and memorizing and repeating new words from session to session. Ruth explains: "The more relevant the topic of conversation is for the student, the easier it is to talk together. We normally begin meetings with the student choosing "the topic of the day", unless we have already agreed what we should talk about. We often repeat the new words from last time when we meet. The student often takes notes, and so do I."

But how are challenges dealt with when meeting one-to-one? Ruth has support in place: "I am so fortunate to have Anette as my volunteer coordinator at the language school. Anette and I talk about the process I'm having with the students, we talk about challenges concerning language learning or others things I might have experienced during the meetings with the students - e.g. if a student talks about personal "ugly" experiences." Ruth sees Anette regularly because she has to pick up the key for the meeting room from her office every week.

Ruth has been involved in language training since 2002. Why is she especially drawn to the one-to-one meetings? Ruth says: "I like to meet with the same student. You get to know each other well, and I learn the language level of the student well and can therefore help them in the best possible way...I have learned a lot from meeting so many different people. We compare their culture and religion with my culture and religion. I've got new friends out of the meetings."

On the question of whether Ruth would recommend others to volunteer for one-to-one meetings she replies: "Yes, I would, but it depends on who it is - it requires a lot of patience and empathy and the ability to treat the learner as an equal on the one hand and on the other hand to correct the language of the student."

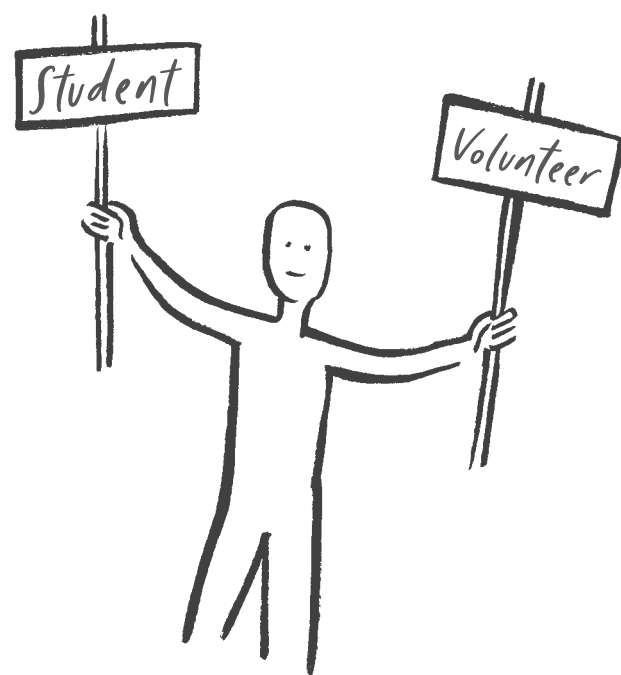




STUDENT TO VOLUNTEER

Volunteers in language learning don't have to be native speakers! Our research has shown that higher level language learners can make excellent volunteers, as Farhana's story exemplifies.

English For Action (EFA London) have been running English language classes for adults in a primary school since 2014. Farhana was initially a student in the class. As an active parent at the school, she'd pushed for an English language class for years because she knew there was a big need not just in the school but in the local area as well. She also knew that an English class would be a great way of getting new parents involved in the school.



When the class was first set up, it was a mixed level class and Farhana was one of the higher level students in the class. The class was then changed to a beginner's level class. When this happened, Farhana indicated that she would still like to support the class as a volunteer.

"Farhana has done an amazing job, helping these students access the classroom activities and giving them confidence to get involved," says the class teacher, Becky Winstanley. "She has built up an excellent rapport with all the students, especially the new readers who will often call for her to help them even when I am available. I can see that the students really rely on her. For the more specialist basic literacy work, I will

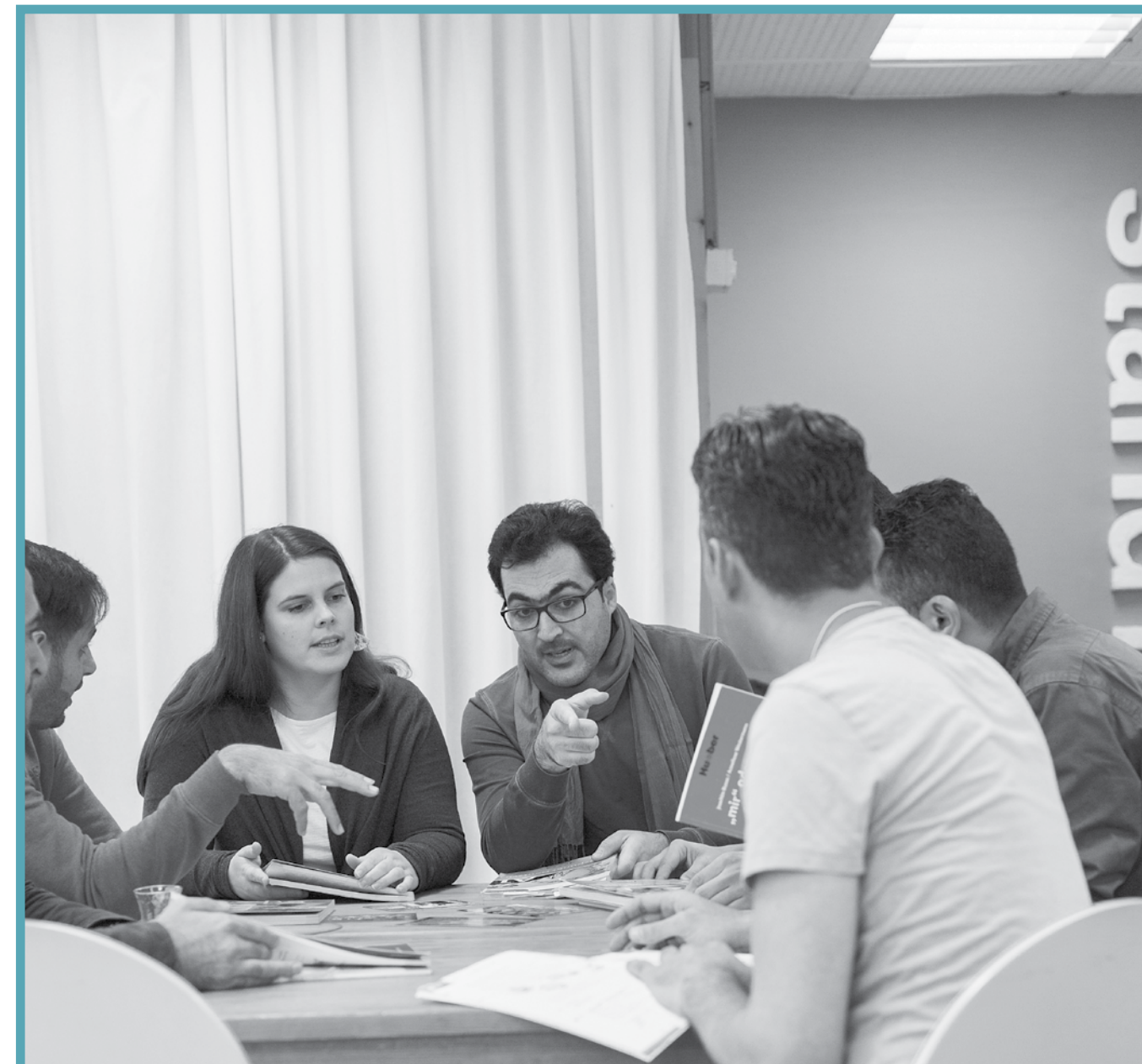
often ask Farhana to watch me while I work with the students and then ask her to take over doing the same activities.

"Basic literacy activities are often very time consuming and I am not able to focus all my time on the new readers as I have the rest of the class to manage. It is invaluable for me to be able to set up the activities and then leave Farhana to continue the work. This work might be reading and re-reading a text, practising letter formation or using flashcards, for example. While she is doing that I can then support the other students who are working more quickly or on different activities."

Farhana also supports with Bengali in the class. All but one of the students are Bengali speakers and Farhana will often assist by translating an instruction or an explanation. Students also know that they can ask Farhana something in Bengali if they are struggling with English. "When teaching I like to draw on students' other languages to support their learning and having access to Farhana's language skills helps me to do this" says Becky.

Farhana has also contributed to the class community and links with the wider community of the school. "Farhana is incredibly funny and more than once we have all been falling about laughing" says Becky. "She has a bubbly personality and we all really appreciate this."

Farhana's involvement with the life of Chisenhale School community also helps smooth the logistical issues around running the class in the school. She passes on important information from the school to other class members, including information about forthcoming interesting courses or events happening at the school. This really encourages learners to attend and get involved. As Farhana is known within the school, local parents contact her directly if they have an issue. She also does a lot of recruitment for the class, which is always full.



Input and Tips for Teacher

The following activities are aimed at teachers and specifically suited to making the most of volunteers' support. Further activities can be found in the TOOLKIT FOR TEACHER available for free at www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu



Working with volunteers: OPPORTUNITIES & DIFFICULTIES

Why work with volunteers in the first place? What benefits can they bring? Volunteers can augment and support the language teaching we're able to provide as paid teachers. They can act as an extra listening ear, giving more students more talking time, support and attention. They may be able to help with practical support, when you just need a spare pair of hands, like setting out chairs or collecting photocopies. Where mixed level groups are unavoidable, volunteers can help the teacher make the lesson accessible to a wider range of students.

The PROS:

Volunteers can:

- Give students more attention and opportunities to talk
- Help manage classes with mixed levels and/or complex needs
- Offer knowledge and experience of the local area /country
- Build supportive relationships with students

Language learning groups of any kind also have many benefits beyond just language learning – they're an opportunity for people to make connections and exchange knowledge and experience. Conversations may arise about how the school system works, or how to access medical care, for example. Volunteers may have knowledge and skills to share in these kind of exchanges. They are likely to have lived in the country for some time themselves and be able to support with navigating bureaucracy, accessing services or answering questions about how things work.

The class will also, hopefully, act as a supportive community where people enjoy their time together. Volunteers can add to this sense of community by being a warm, welcoming presence. They may have things that they have in common with students – perhaps they live in the same area, speak some of the same languages or come from the same cultural or religious background. The teacher may be able to facilitate activities in class which reveal other shared interests, hobbies or experiences. These connections between learners and those in a teaching or supportive role help build the community in the class.

However, some teachers are wary of working with volunteers. An ineffectual volunteer can hinder learning by error

correcting inappropriately, dominating conversations with learners or making lesson planning difficult through their inconsistent attendance. Teachers may not be paid for the extra time and effort that is involved in recruiting, inducting or managing a volunteer.

If you'd like to work with volunteers but have some doubts about how to proceed, this toolkit outlines the fruits of our research on how to get started. It looks at effective volunteer recruitment, induction and some tips for how to work well together. In short, how to make the most of what volunteers may have to offer, whilst safeguarding against the risks involved in inviting a new person into your classroom.

In our experience, it's worth taking some time to set up a mutually beneficial teacher-volunteer relationship. Clear communication and ground rules at the beginning of the relationship help prevent some of the unhelpful volunteer behaviours mentioned above.

It takes time to set up a new relationship. No matter how formal and well organised the intake and induction of new volunteers may be, a fair bit of chaos or friction at the beginning of the relationship is inevitable. If you let someone else in your classroom there will be a period of adjustment. It is

The CONS:

Volunteers can:

- Attend inconsistently, making lesson planning difficult
- Error correct inappropriately
- Talk too much, not giving students space to talk
- Create extra work for teachers who aren't paid extra to induct or support volunteers

our task as teachers to be open to new ideas and unexpected behaviour that challenges our view on good teaching. In turn, we can share our pedagogical skills and experience with volunteers. In other words: we teach them to be assistant teachers. All being well, this will be a fruitful process – well worth the time involved.

"It is our first job to make the students feel noticed in the classroom, and with help from the volunteers it is easier to consider every student and give them a feeling of being paid attention to."

Teacher, Austria

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*

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 child-care 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.

"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

PARTICIPATORY PEDAGOGY *and Volunteers*

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY LANGUAGE TEACHING?

'Participatory' language teaching aims to address inequality and injustice by making the learning process more democratic and empowering. One way it does this, in practice, is by giving students more ownership over their class and how it's run. To do so, this approach doesn't use predetermined curricula or work books. Instead, the class teacher talks to students about their lives and listens out for the 'live' issues which are most relevant to the group. This informs lesson planning. Students' real life concerns and issues are the driving force behind the curriculum. There is ongoing feedback from students about whether what they're learning is relevant.

The idea is that students should be respected as 'experts' when it comes to their own interests and language needs. Respecting students in this way is a corrective to the injustice they face in the world outside the classroom. Volunteers can also contribute to this by showing students respect and being interested in their point of view, their needs and what they have to say.

The participatory approach draws its inspiration from radical Brazilian educator Paulo Friere. In Britain, a project called 'Reflect ESOL' (2007-2011) showcased how his ideas could be applied to language learning.

The teacher then is a facilitator. They do provide some language input but their main job is to help everyone in the class to contribute to creating a strong, supportive learning community. Participatory education often centres around in-depth discussions about issues central to students' lives. Language learning comes out of this meaningful and genuine dialogue.

VOLUNTEERS IN THE PARTICIPATORY CLASSROOM

In a 'participatory' classroom, the emphasis for volunteers should be on listening to students. This is because participatory approach focuses more on students' output than traditional methods. Evidence suggests that students learn language through their own output (producing language) and not only by processing input (hearing or reading language). The participatory focus on discussion, dialogue and self-expression means students get lots of opportunities to produce their target language. Volunteers who are able to hold back and provide a supportive listening presence can greatly support this process!

But volunteers aren't just there to listen - they can get involved in class discussion like everyone else if the topic is relevant to their lives. In this way, the volunteers can enrich the community in a participatory classroom. Involving volunteers in authentic discussion where they share their opinions and experiences helps to break down hierarchies between volunteers and students, because everyone becomes active participants in the class. For example, volunteer-run project Xenia runs women-only workshops aimed at 'meaningful two-way social integration'. Xenia doesn't distinguish between language learners and expert speakers - they are all equal 'participants' in the workshops.

In a participatory classroom, the distinct roles of 'teacher' and 'learner' are critiqued. Whilst in practical terms the paid teacher will still be ultimately responsible for planning and facilitating the lesson, the idea is that everyone in the group has things to teach and things to learn. This message is emphasised when there is open exchange between students and volunteers and when there is the opportunity for students who have progressed to a high language level to become volunteers themselves.



MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY

Much recent sociolinguistic research lately has focused on the fluid way people use language in the context of increased mobility, complex migration and the linguistic diversity of many parts of the world. Previously linguists had focused on whole, named languages (eg. French, German, English) that people spoke at different levels. These levels were conceived in a hierarchy from 'beginner' level to 'native speaker'. Bilingualism was often conceived of as parallel monolingualisms, where people were not really recognised as being properly bilingual unless they spoke two languages to an equal 'native speaker' level. This model dominated second language teaching and led to the orthodoxy where teachers ban languages except the target language. There is little or no evidence that this approach helps people to learn new languages (see Elsa Auerbach, *Reexamining English Only in the Classroom*, 1993). However, whatever your view, it's important that teachers and volunteers are on the same page here and sending the same messages to students as to whether the classroom is a multilingual or monolingual space.

An alternative to this rigid, bordered, monolingual concept of language is to consider that everyone has a fluid and evolving range of language resources (our 'linguistic repertoires') that relate to our social, economic and geographic contexts - to our biographies, in other words. For example, a person who is born in Algeria to Berber speaking parents, studies business at University and then ends up in London via Belgium will most likely have acquired of language skills and knowledge that dip in and out of named languages. She will speak conversational Berber, but may be more confident in familial contexts than work contexts. She will read standard Arabic and understand most varieties of Arabic with varying degrees of difficulty but she will be most comfortable speaking Algerian Arabic. She will operate fluently in written and spoken French, especially academic and business discourses, communicate with increasing effectiveness in English across a variety of discourses and understand a smattering of Flemish, especially reading it, from her time in Belgium. In a super-diverse local community in London, for example, someone might use the full range of their repertoires on any given day.

What does this mean for teaching and learning? First of all, taking a more multilingual approach means trying to understand and validate the students' existing language resources. Students are not treated as 'deficient' in the target language but a skillful linguistics with a range of linguistic resources to build on. This makes learners feel more con-

fidant and respected. When people feel good about themselves as learners they are more likely to learn well. Asking students how they say a word or phrase in other languages, for example, helps them to connect new knowledge to existing knowledge. Allowing students who share languages to use their expert language(s) in order to analyse the target language and help one another can help develop language awareness and understand complexities around grammar or meaning. Using a range of languages to discuss, generate ideas and plan (in writing for example) can lead to more complex, higher level results in the target language.

If language mixing and translanguaging increasingly characterises the way we communicate in diverse societies, then why not prepare students for this reality in our classes? Enforcing a 'target-language-only' blanket policy (eg. English only in classes in London) creates an artificial, inauthentic environment. It can be fruitful to ask students about their views (language ideologies is the sociolinguistic term) on things like language mixing, bilingualism and language learning. You can also ask students about their language use (practices is the technical term) in their homes, communities, workplaces etc. so that the learning can be as relevant as possible (see Ofelia Garcia, *Problematising the Linguistic Integration of Migrants: the role of translanguaging and Language teachers*, 2018).

In addition to sound pedagogic logic, there are also important political reasons to welcome multilingualism and linguistic pluralism in our classes. Across Europe, language is being used as a proxy for racism with people who are hostile to immigration and diversity not only demanding that immigrants learn the language of their new country but also demanding that immigrants stop speaking their other language(s) in public or even at home. In England, and elsewhere, it is a common experience for migrants to be abused in the streets or in public places for speaking languages other than English. Of course language teachers acknowledge the importance of learning the language(s) of the nation and/or local community but we should also celebrate the benefits of speaking more than one language at an individual and a societal level. Where better to show that migrants are welcome and migrants' languages are welcome than in the language classroom? As teachers we need to make sure that our volunteers are singing from the same hymn sheet and don't (inadvertently) recycle hostile, unwelcoming narratives.



Classroom Activities

The following activities are aimed at teachers and specifically suited to making the most of volunteers' support. Further activities can be found in the TOOLKIT FOR TEACHER available for free at www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu



all levels

A1-C2



10 MIN

15 WORD STORY

This exercise aims to build vocabulary and bring awareness to intonation, word stress and the fact that successful communication doesn't always need lots of words! It can be used as a warm up or an energiser in between other activities.

PREPARATION

Prepare a list with 10 given words to use. These should be simple words from different categories like nouns or verbs: man, woman, love, go, time, now, just... There are 5 blank spaces for students to add their own words. These words can be anything the students choose.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The goal of the exercise is for students to write a story using only the 15 words. They're not allowed to use other words or alter the words in any way. Incorrect grammar and missing words are not only allowed, but inevitable. A story could look like this: Man love woman. Woman go away, etc.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

Volunteers can walk around while the students write and check if the 15 word rule is followed and if not, remind students to use 15 words only.

2. The teacher should point out at the beginning that this is a fun exercise to play with words and that the story is what is important, not the missing words and/or grammar mistakes. A lot can be told using 15 words only!
3. Once students have prepared their stories, they are read out aloud and applauded.

4. Debrief /follow up options: these stories can be made into coherent and "correct" texts by adjusting the endings or adding extra words within a small group as a follow up activity. A debrief could include each story being described and expanded on by other students:
Is this story sad or funny?
Who is this man/woman?
Can we give him/her a name?
What happens next?

Note: The complete TOOLKIT FOR TEACHER with further activities in the classroom setting can be downloaded on www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu

upper elementary - proficient
A2-C2

40-60 MIN

VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW

This activity can be used when a class still doesn't know a volunteer particularly well. It can help build relationships between students and the volunteer. It allows students to explore the genre of 'an interview', practice question formation and note taking. The participants work in pairs to prepare and conduct an interview with the volunteer to find out about them.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Introduce the topic of an interview (for a newspaper, magazine or television show) and ask students questions to explore the genre: e.g. what's the purpose of an interview? What happens in an interview? Are there interviews in publications in your country? You could also bring in some examples of written interviews from magazines or newspapers.
2. Explain that everyone is going to interview the volunteer(s).
3. Divide students into pairs with partners who work at a similar pace /level.
4. Ask students to prepare five questions that they want to ask the volunteer and write these down on the sheet. Teacher and volunteer can circulate at this point to help with sentence formation.
5. Once they're ready, pairs then swap question sets with another pair at a similar level.
6. Pairs look at the questions that have been prepared and predict what the answer may be and write their predictions

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The volunteer supports the process by helping with sentence formation and then helping students during the interview process. If students are still unsure of instructions when they come to interview the volunteer, the volunteer can help remind students that a) they can ask three questions and b) they should take notes as the volunteer talks.

TIPS

- This activity works particularly well if students work at different paces, so they're all ready to interview the volunteer at different times in the lesson.
- Not for use with beginners unless you allow the use of their other languages for translation/discussion in the preparation stages and for instructions. Works well in groups where students work at slightly different paces.

on a separate sheet.

7. Once at least one pair has made their prediction, introduce the idea of 'note taking' to the whole class. Say that when the volunteer gives their answers to the question, you can write down notes. These are to jog your memory and need to be written at speed as the volunteer talks, so they can be just a few key words or phrases, they don't have to be complete sentences!
8. Once students have made their predictions, ask them to choose three questions from the list they've been given that they'd like to ask the volunteer.
9. The volunteer then goes and waits outside, ideally in a sitting area, for students to come and interview them.
10. Once pairs are ready, they can visit the volunteer and ask their questions, taking notes as the volunteer talks.
11. After the interview, the students return to the classroom and look back at their predictions to see how many were correct!

beginner - proficient
A2 - C2

20-75 MIN

SILENT DISCUSSION

Students have a discussion (using writing rather than speaking) about a given topic or in response to a stimulus. This can be a useful activity to generate deeper contemplation and discussion around a theme or shared concern. It also creates a visual record of students' thoughts which can be referred to, or used as a text later on in the course. It can also be a useful activity for a group where there is very unequal participation in group speaking activities, as it may give shy students the space to express themselves.

PREPARATION

Material: Large sheets of paper or sheets of flip chart paper pre-prepared with stimulus e.g. image, text.

Place pre-prepared sheets of flip chart paper around the room. On each sheet, place a stimulus. This can be a text, image or an open question related to a theme or concern that students share. It makes the activity more coherent if the stimuli are connected by some kind of theme.

Examples of open questions: If students have identified 'high rents' as a shared concern, you could have sheets asking: How do rents here compare to other places you have lived? What are the consequences of high rents? Why do you think rents are so high? Who has the power to change rents? What could we do as a class about this issue?

Or you could mix open questions on high rents with brief articles, images or quotations on the subject.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

Option 1

The volunteer could take part as a participant, also contributing to the sheets.

Option 2

They could circulate the room, being available to answer any questions from students (in whispers) about spelling or sentence structure.

Option 3

you could ask the volunteer to circulate the room reading the sheets and noting down any common errors and any exemplary phrases for you to highlight in language feedback after the activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide students into small groups around each flip chart paper. Ask them to write answers, comments or further questions on each flip chart paper in silence. They can also write responses to things other people in their group have written and use lines to connect comments and questions together.
2. After everyone has had time to contribute to this 'home sheet', give them time to circulate and look at other groups' sheets. They can take their pens and write further comments and questions on these sheets.
3. After this second round of the process, there are a few different ways to feedback collectively on what's been written:

a) You could give everyone time to circulate (without pens) to read the final sheets. Sheets could even be pinned or blue tacked to the wall at

Continued on the next page! ➔

SILENT DISCUSSION

this stage, so that they can be viewed more easily. You could ask student to identify one question or comment which really stands out for them. They could then feed this back, while the volunteer writes them on the board (verbatim).

b) You could divide the class into groups and give each group one flip chart paper. Ask them to read the sheet and come up with a brief summary of the sheet to present to the class.

c) You could ask students to discuss: What did you learn from doing this activity? This can be discussed with the whole group or in small groups.

TIPS

- You could give students different coloured pens to make the sheets look more vibrant.
- Prep volunteers to assist students with language only if they request - error correction and accuracy are not the main purposes of this activity.

all levels
A1 - C2

5-10 MIN

TRUE OR FALSE

This activity is a good 'getting to know each other' activity for a new group of students or when a new volunteer joins the class.

PREPARATION

Ask the volunteer in advance to prepare three statements of fact about themselves to present to the student. Two statements should be true and one should be false - but it shouldn't be too obvious which one! Tell the volunteer that this is a chance for students to get to know them better.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The volunteer tells the students their three pre-prepared facts.
2. Students can then vote on which fact is false.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The volunteer models the exercise for students and also builds students' willingness to speak in front of the whole group by exposing themselves first.

3. The volunteer reveals the truth.
4. Then ask students to do the same - write three facts about themselves, one of which is a lie.
5. Once students have prepared their facts, repeat the process: one student shares

their statements with the class and everyone else (including the teacher and volunteer) vote on what they think is false.

6. After each student has revealed the truth, they can then nominate another student to go next.

TIPS

Make sure the volunteer knows the purpose of this game: it's a chance for students to get to know them better.

all levels
A1–C2

10-30 MIN

The activity would have to be adapted for a group of complete beginners in order for them to understand the instructions and be able to create a record of their associations.

WORD FLOWER

Students produce a visual representation of the associations and collocations of a theme word, that also acts as a record of their group discussion. This activity is useful for exploring ideas and associations with a generative theme (e.g. home). It can be used at the beginning of a new theme to identify 'sub topics'.

MATERIAL

Large sheets of paper and pens.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide students into groups and give each group a sheet of flip chart paper. Each group writes the generative theme word or phrase (e.g. 'Home') in the centre of a flip chart paper and circles the word. Give students a few minutes to discuss words, phrases and ideas that come up in association with this central word.
2. Walk around probing and listening to the conversation in groups in order to begin to identify 'sub topics' - aspects of the theme that are emerging across students' conversations and seem areas of particular interest. From a theme like 'home' this could be anything from interior design, to house prices or tenants' rights. After a few minutes of discussion, ask students to add petals around their central word and write their key associated words or phrases, one in each petal. They can add as few or as many petals to their word flower as they like.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

Make sure your volunteer understands the basic outline of the activity. Give them a clear task to do that will support the students in their learning experience.

Option 1

While students are discussing the theme the volunteer can work with one of the groups and keep people on track by asking questions about the theme and perhaps contribute a word themselves. They can then go on and support students with writing fuller sentence in a further stage of the activity.

Option 2

Whilst students work in small groups you can ask the volunteer to circulate and listen out to students' speaking for successful examples of target language. They could collect a list of phrases or sentences for you (that students have produced) which you could then feedback to the whole class after the exercise.

TIPS

- Agree a time limit for the volunteer's speaking within any speaking activities. This is especially important when working with low level learners. Students may automatically draw a set number of petals (therefore limiting the task somewhat) if they are familiar with the activity so it could be helpful for the volunteer to monitor the process - to encourage discussion before writing and encourage one petal per idea.
- Adapting for complete beginners: As long as you've checked that students understand the central, thematic word, students could discuss associations of the word in their first language before translating their ideas into key words/phrases in the target language using translation and even looking up words in online dictionaries. They could also draw pictures in the petals to represent the associations they've discussed.

all levels
A1–C2

10-30 MIN

GROUP WRITING EVALUATION

Students write anonymous feedback in relation to a number of categories. This is a useful record of students' feedback, using criteria which the students define themselves. For the purposes of clarity, we've based instructions around evaluation of a course, but this activity could also be used to evaluate meetings, projects or events.

MATERIAL

A number of blank pieces of paper.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Get students to sit in a circle. This can be around a central desk or in an open circle.
2. Ask students what is important for a language course and elicit a number of categories: e.g. good teacher, nice students, good classroom, good topics. Gather 3 - 10 criteria. You or the volunteer can write these on the board. Alternatively, you could pre-prepare a number of evaluative questions like 'What did you like about the course?' 'What could be better?' etc. If you have pre-prepared questions it may be necessary to run through these with students to check for understanding.
3. Explain the purpose of the evaluation to the students, who will see it and what it will be used for. Students may change their comments depending on whether the feedback is for the teacher or is going to be used externally and based on whether other students will see it or not!

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

This can be a slightly logistically tricky exercise so it is really helpful to have the volunteers' assistance preparing the sheets and distributing them. It's also really helpful to have a volunteer present who understands the activity and can help students to fold their paper correctly and pass sheets in the right direction.

4. As you're explaining the evaluation, the volunteer prepares the activity by writing one evaluation category in clear letters at the bottom of one sheet of A4 paper (i.e. one category per sheet).
5. Distribute these sheets of paper to students at regular intervals around the circle. Get the volunteer to help you distribute sheets.
6. Ask each student with a sheet of paper to write one line about how they rate the course in relation to the criteria written at the bottom of the sheet. For example, if the criteria is 'good classroom'

they could write 'fine', 'the classroom was too hot' etc. Explain to students that after they've written their thoughts, they fold the paper over so their writing isn't visible and pass the sheet to their left.

7. Students continue to write on sheets or pass sheets until everyone has contributed to each sheet.
8. It's important for the teacher to feedback to students after this activity in order to show them that their feedback is valuable and has been taken on board. The teacher could either read the sheets and then summarise them for students in some way, including practical action points that the teacher will implement to improve their practice. Alternatively, the teacher could ask the students to review the feedback as a group and condense it into a number of 'points for celebration' and 'areas for improvement'.

TIPS

- It can be useful to explain the activity to the volunteer before the class.

all levels
A1–C2

10-60 MIN

VOLUNTEER IN THE HOT SEAT

Students ask the volunteer questions to find out about them. This activity is useful for large classes with only one volunteer. The activity can be expanded to an hour or run much more briefly as a warmer activity. This is a chance for students to get to know the volunteer better.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The activity starts with students writing questions for the volunteer. This can take longer with lower level students, who may also need some input on question structure and language. Alternatively, higher level students could work in pairs to come up with one or two questions in 5 minutes. The students can ask the volunteer about anything



VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

Check with the volunteer in advance that they're prepared to take on this role. Let them know they can say if they don't understand the question and can also ask the students to elaborate their questions. Optionally, volunteers can also have the option to 'pass' questions they don't want to answer or to 'reverse' a question and ask it back to the student.

although you might want to suggest they don't ask anything that they wouldn't want to answer themselves! One way to encourage this is to give the volunteer a 'PASS' card if they don't want to answer something and/or the power to ask the same question back to the student on two or three occasions during the exercise.

2. During this preparatory stage, the teacher and

the volunteer circulate to help students form their questions and practise their pronunciation (if necessary). Once the questions are ready, the volunteer sits on a chair (the 'hot seat') in the middle of the class.

3. The students take turns asking the volunteer their questions. The volunteer answers the questions briefly so all of the students get a chance to ask their question. Depending on the level you can tell the students to ask their question while keeping their preparatory writing covered.
4. After the activity, the teacher can give feedback on the language used and/or initiate a debrief session about the content. This debrief could take the form of asking students to name one thing that surprised them or one thing they learnt during the questions. The teacher could also ask students and volunteers if any questions made them feel uncomfortable, to open

Continued on the next page!

VOLUNTEER IN THE HOT SEAT

up a discussion about how to make the classroom space safe for everyone involved.

5. Optional: the activity can be expanded so the volunteer is recorded while they answer questions. This recording can then provide a 'text' for further listening activities. For example, the class can listen again to the recording and discuss the things the volunteer spoke about.

TIPS

- The exercise may also work in 30 minutes where the students only ask questions to the volunteer. If there are several volunteers involved, one volunteer can be in each group to help preparing the questions, and afterwards the volunteer can take turns answering the questions the students have.
- Brief the volunteer in advance that the purpose of the exercise is that the students get a chance to ask their questions, as well as getting to know the volunteer better. Therefore, the volunteer's answers should be honest and informative but relatively brief.

intermediate - upper intermediate
B1–B2

105 MIN

WRITE ABOUT A VOLUNTEER

Students practise question formation, reading and writing. You need a blackboard or a whiteboard.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Interview a volunteer in class, based on a subject chosen by the teacher.
2. The students ask as many questions as they can to the volunteer. The teacher takes notes on the blackboard.
3. At the end of the interview, either the teacher or a student takes a picture of the volunteer.

In the following lesson:

1. The teacher shows the picture of the volunteer and provides the students with the notes from the blackboard.

2.

Now the students have to write a text about the volunteer.

3.

Afterwards, the students take turns to read their text out loud, while the remaining students listen and ask questions.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The volunteer should provide insights into a relevant topic, e.g. working life. The teacher can instruct the volunteer not to use complex vocabulary or give lengthy answers to the students' questions.

TIPS

- Performing the activity on the same day is beneficial, e.g. interviewing the volunteer in the morning and writing about them in the afternoon. Much information will be lost if there is too much time in between the two activities.
- It is an advantage for the students to write about the volunteer in class because it enables them to help each other with information, and they can ask the teacher for help if they have any doubts.

intermediate - upper intermediate
B1-B2

30 MIN

I NEED GOOD ADVICE...

This activity could be used before a follow up writing activity or action planning session. It is good for persuasive speaking skills and discourse around giving advice.

PREPARATION

The teacher should prepare papers with statements describing different problems or dilemmas before class. Examples of statements:

- *Last week I forgot to send my brother a birthday gift.*
- *I want to get to know new people.*
- *My best friend works too much and is starting showing signs of severe stress.*
- *I want to get in contact with my neighbours.*
- *I want to be rich and famous.*
- *My sister cares too much about making money and buying expensive things.*
- *I borrowed my friend's digital camera, and now it is broken.*
- *I think my life is standing still and is way too boring.*
- *We are invited on a weekend trip with my husband's colleagues, but I cannot stand them.*
- *I need to hand in a big assignment tomorrow, but I have not yet started.*
- *My neighbour hits his kids and wife.*
- *I want to experience something new and exciting this weekend, but I do not have any money.*
- *My mother-in-law always interferes with our life.*

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The volunteer asks questions and facilitates dialogue among the students. The volunteer can also help with vocabulary, if necessary.

TIPS

- This activity is also usable for other linguistic levels if the students are divided into groups containing both strong and weaker students. By doing so, the stronger students can help students on lower linguistic levels to understand the task.
- If there are 2-4 topics to discuss and 4 students in each group, it can be beneficial to expand the exercise from 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the students in groups.
2. One at the time a student takes a note from the stack and says: "I need good advice" and then reads the note out loud, e.g. "I want to be rich and famous", "I borrowed my friend's digital camera and now it is broken" or "We are invited on a trip with my husband's colleagues, but I cannot stand them".
3. The groups discuss what advice they want to give on the matter. The volunteer either participates in a group or circulate between groups.

Alternative: There is also the option to elicit students' real life dilemmas as material for the advice. This can form a second round of advice seeking and giving. Students can write their dilemma on slips of paper and then read them out to their group as they did in the first round.

all levels
A1-C2

30 MIN

OVERHEARD: CONVERSATION BETWEEN TEACHER AND VOLUNTEER

In this exercise, students listen to the teacher and volunteer have a conversation and then ask follow up questions. This gives students the opportunity to listen to a longer dialogue between two expert speakers, in a relatively safe space where they can check understanding. Students may not hear that much everyday and general conversation in the language they're learning. Hearing their teacher speak may be one their primary experiences of actively listening to the target language.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The volunteer and the teacher have a conversation in front of the whole class for up to 10 minutes (for higher level) while the students listen. The dialogue does not have to be prepared in advance but can focus on the theme of family, daily life or another subject that interests everyone in the class and perhaps has been the focus of previous study. The teacher could even get students to decide the theme on the spot.
2. The volunteer and the teacher have a conversation.
3. Afterwards the students can ask the volunteer and the teacher questions.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The volunteer is an interlocutor on equal terms with the teacher and speaks in a natural language and natural pace in a way that they would do in any other conversation. The teacher can prep the volunteer by asking them to speak naturally but also grade their language if possible.

TIPS

- After the exercise the class can discuss what the dialogue was about
- The exercise requires no preparation for the teacher or the volunteer.
- It is helpful if the volunteer is familiar with the level of the class in order to adjust their speaking level and, perhaps, speak slightly slower if necessary.
- The exercise can help to make the students feel safer around a volunteer – especially helpful if the volunteer is expected to be a part of the class for a long period of time.
- For real beginners some preparatory questions to help learners 'listen for gist' to the conversation can be helpful. The conversation between teacher and volunteer should also be shorter and made as simple as possible.

upper elementary – proficient
A2–C2

10-20 MIN

Space needed to move around!

FIND SOMEONE WHO...

This is a good warmer activity at the beginning of a class or new theme. It can also be a good activity when a group don't know each other very well. The aim is to complete your sheet as quickly as possible by asking coherent questions to other members of the group.

PREPARATION

Prepare worksheets listing criteria that will likely apply to members of the group. Include at least five items (include more items for larger groups).

Example:

Find someone who...	Name
Rides a bicycle	
Speaks Arabic	
Likes hip hop	

The sheet can also be on a certain theme, as an introductory warmer activity introducing a new theme:

Find someone who...	Name
Lives in a flat	
Has a garden	
Used to have a garden	
Knows how to build houses	
Likes where they live	

For lower level students, you can add a third column to this worksheet:

Find someone who...	Question	Name
Rides a bicycle	Do you ride a bicycle?	

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

The volunteer can circulate to support question formation for lower level students and demonstrate pronunciation. It can also be nice to get the volunteer to participate in the main activity of 'finding someone who...' in order that they connect with students.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give students time to fill out the second column in pairs. Volunteers and teacher can circulate to help with question formulation. Make sure students in pairs each fill out their individual sheets with questions.
2. Drill pronunciation of questions as a group. You can demo and also use the volunteer to demo. This can be useful (and fun) even for higher level students, where you can draw students attention to emphasis in the sentence and tone.
3. Get students to circulate

individually with their sheets and ask each other questions to fill out the sheet with names of other students. The volunteer can also take part as a participant.

4. The first student to complete their sheet wins (and could even win a prize!)
5. You can debrief from this activity by reassembling the group and getting each student to read out who they found for one category. That way the whole group will learn more about each other.

all levels
A1–C2

10-20 MIN

RUNNING DICTATION

The activity is a competition. Students work in pairs to replicate a text and whichever pair completes their text first wins! This is an energising activity that develops reading and writing skills in students. It's particularly useful for classes with mixed levels of language and literacy as it allows for differentiation. Ideally you want to differentiate in such a way that students all finish around the same time. A volunteer can be particularly valuable in this activity as they can support any students who don't have someone to pair with - either because of odd numbers of students in the class or because there is one student in the class at a different level from the rest.

MATERIAL

- Prepared texts
- Bluetack

PREPARATIONS

Choose a number of texts differentiated by level. Students with low levels of literacy can have a very simple text (e.g. 'no smoking'). Higher level students should have something much longer.

Pin these texts onto walls outside the classroom. As well as differentiating texts by levels, you can also place the higher level texts physically further away from the classroom than the lower level texts.

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

If all the students are paired, the volunteer can circulate in case the students doing the writing have any questions about the meaning of the words they're writing.

If the volunteer is supporting a student who doesn't have a partner, the student can run and the volunteer can write. This is especially useful for students with very low levels of literacy who may need support remembering letters.

Volunteers can also help to (playfully) enforce the rules of the exercise e.g. the fact the runners are not allowed to write!

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place students in pairs, matched by language and literacy levels.
2. One member of each pair then runs to the text while their partner stays at their desk. They remember as much as they can of the text and run back.
3. The runners are not allowed to write. You could even tell them that they have to keep their hands on their backs.
4. Once a pair is finished, give the writer an extra minute to make any final changes and corrections.
5. Once they're finished, writers can read the original text in order to correct their spelling.

all levels
A1–C2

30-90 MIN

MY LOCAL AREA MAP

Students produce a map for someone new moving to their area, including local services, shops and their top tips. This activity can help with learning vocabulary related to students' locales, as well as being a way for students to share useful knowledge about local services and facilities they can access. By drawing on students' expertise and knowledge outside language, it also destabilises hierarchies that can form in the classroom space related to ability in the target language - suddenly students (not the teacher or volunteer) may become the experts!

MATERIAL

Large sheets of paper and pens.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Get students to work in small groups. They should be grouped, as far as possible, according to where people live. If all students live in the same area, you can also differentiate by level. Give each group a big sheet of paper and some pens.
2. Ask students to imagine someone new has just moved to their area. Ask them to draw a map of their area, showing the places that they like and would recommend. As well as drawing these places, ask students to label them.
3. Lower level students can focus on the vocabulary around important locations e.g. school, bank, Doctor's surgery. Higher level students can add notes around different locales, recording their 'insider knowledge' about places including their personal

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

Option 1

Volunteers can circulate to help support students by answering questions about spelling or writing. If there are students with very low level writing, the volunteer could scribe students' spoken knowledge about their area.

Option 2

Volunteers can take part as participants if they share knowledge of a certain area with a group of students. They can feed in their knowledge, but allow students to write.

experiences and recommendations e.g. there is a nice Doctor who speaks Spanish here, this shop has the best bread etc.

4. Once the maps are complete, you could finish the activity by giving students a chance to circulate and see each other's maps. One member of each group could stay with their map to present it to other students.
5. Optional extension: After the activity, you could ask students to reflect on their knowledge, either in a group discussion or using a spectrum line (see page 27). Do they feel they know their area well? Have they learnt something new about their area through the activity? What else would they like to find out? You could collect questions on a big sheet of paper and see if you can answer some of them, as a class, there and then. You can also keep this as a record of questions to try to answer collectively in the coming weeks - perhaps students could commit to finding out some answers for the next class.

Note: The complete TOOLKIT FOR TEACHER with further activities in the classroom setting can be downloaded on www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu



Volunteer Coordination Basics

There's many things to consider before involving volunteers in your organisation's activities. This section aims to help you think through where to start. More information can be found in the TOOLKIT FOR ORGANISATION available for free at www.volunteersforlanguagelearning.eu



CONSIDERATIONS

before you start

If your organisation has not involved volunteers in language learning before it's worth gaining clarity about what you're looking for before you begin recruitment in earnest. Here you'll find some points for reflection.

Why do we need volunteers?

Where does this need come from? Is it coming from students? Is it from your organisations' teachers? Or perhaps you are responding directly from demand from potential volunteers themselves? It is important to consider the need as this will help you to articulate why you're involving volunteers to the various stakeholders. You are not just introducing volunteering in your organisation because it's the done thing!

What do we want the volunteers to do?

Describe the activities in written form as job or role descriptions. Clarify within your organisation (in most cases with the teachers) whether you have a common understanding of the volunteer role. Job descriptions should include:

- The activities volunteers will do
- The volunteers' expected areas of responsibility
- What skills and experience you are looking for in volunteers

How many volunteers will we need?

Do you want to start small and create a pilot in one small area of your organisation, or do you have many teachers who all want to collaborate with volunteers? If you have limited experience and resources for the recruitment and management of the volunteers, it might make sense to start small.

What are the risks when involving volunteers?

Doing a risk assessment of working with volunteers can help you plan. This can be led by the volunteer coordinator but should really involve those responsible for the management of your organisation. A risk assessment should list the possible risks of involving volunteers, rank how likely they are to occur and how severe the consequences would be and then put in place some steps to mitigate the risk. Aside from a more formal risk assessment, engage in open dialogue with teachers around this and listen to and address their concerns.

Who do you want as volunteers?

You may want volunteers with particular skills, experience or characteristics. Who is the 'target group' you want to attract

as volunteers? Be clear about this from the beginning – it will affect how you recruit. It might make sense to focus on finding volunteers:

- With specific languages
- Who live in a certain area
- Who have experiences of migration, seeking asylum or language learning
- Who come from a particular ethnic or religious background
- Who have particular skills or areas of knowledge

Writing a role description and person specification (see above), as you would do for a paid role, can help you establish your target group(s). You may want to be explicit about some of these requirements when you advertise volunteers. For example, it will be essential that volunteers are able to give a certain amount of time to volunteering and have sufficient language skills to support others to learn. Thinking about your target group will also affect where you advertise. For example, if you want volunteers from a specific institution (e.g. parents at a specific school, members of the local mosque) it makes sense to contact this institution directly and advertise through them.

What can our organisation offer volunteers?

It can be useful to articulate this in advance so it can inform how you communicate with volunteers throughout the recruitment process. The benefit for volunteers can include basic things like insurance during their placement sessions,

Some potential benefits for volunteers in language learning:
– Work experience
– CV references
– Placements or references for trainee teachers
– Learning about language teaching and acquisition
– Making a difference
– Relationship building and interaction with students
– Feeling part of the community
– Working to support refugees and migrants

training or development support. But for most volunteers there are other things that count, for example:

- Being part of a team or community
- learning opportunities
- respect and gratitude.

In order to get an idea of what aspects could be interesting for your volunteers, consider your target group of volunteers and their interests and needs. If you're looking to involve volunteers from the local area, you might emphasise community, solidarity and the difference they'll make. If you want to recruit volunteers from teacher training you might design your volunteering placements as development opportunities where they can receive mentoring and references from teachers.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

before you take on volunteers

The politics around volunteering in language learning for migrants and refugees are not straightforward.

On the one hand, it's a marvelous thing that ordinary people are rising to the challenges presented by the arrival of large numbers of people who do not yet speak the local language by offering to help in one of the most practical and useful ways.

On the other hand, it may be argued that in an environment where many states across Europe are reducing state spending, and especially state spending on migrants and refugees, the use of volunteers to do what should be a statutory job is playing to this cost-cutting agenda. In the UK for example, funding for English classes (ESOL) has been cut by around 60% in the last decade and at the same time the government have invested a fraction of this money into programmes that encourage volunteers to plug the gap. It is a good idea for your organisation to have a discussion about this tension before inadvertently getting into a situation where you may be open to criticism from allies and perhaps supporting policies that you don't necessarily agree with. What is your organisation's stance on volunteering in language learning? What roles are acceptable and which should be the reserve of paid, qualified professionals? What is the teaching union's (if you have one) stance and do you wish to support it? To what extent (and how?) do you wish to challenge government cuts to adult language education and campaign for more funding?

First steps

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Who in your organisation will be involved in the recruiting? Who will be responsible for what part of the recruiting and induction process? It is not easy to distinguish between the tasks around recruitment, induction, training and day-to-day volunteer coordination. Defining and distributing tasks from the very start can help create clarity.

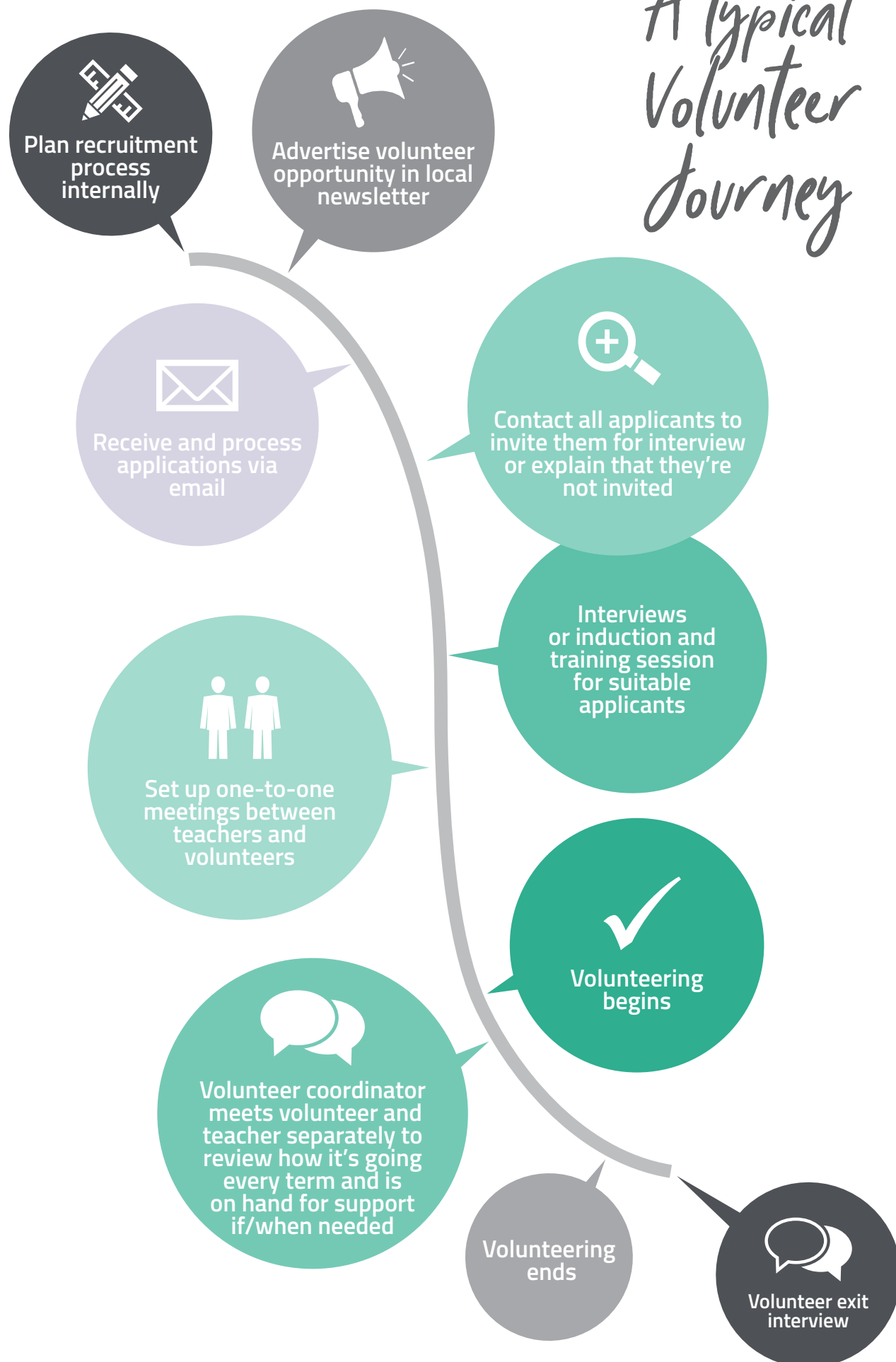
Before beginning to work with volunteers, it can be helpful to think through the entire volunteer experience from recruitment right through to when the volunteer leaves your organisation. The best volunteer coordination involves care at every stage of a volunteer's 'journey' – and this is made much more likely if you consider each stages of this process in advance. Although it is desirable to have long term volunteers, it's important to consider that all volunteers will leave your organisation one day. If you facilitate 'good endings' with volunteers you'll be better able to gather useful feedback from them and increase the chance that departing volunteers might one day return.

Many organisations will have an ongoing turnover of volunteers and therefore have to do ongoing work to bring volunteer's involvement to an end and recruit new volunteers. Volunteers do not stay in the organisation forever: they move away, find a job, get tired, lose interest or have other occupations. It's realistic to see recruiting and inducting volunteers as part of your organisation's daily operations if you are hoping to work with volunteers in the long term. For an example of a typical volunteering journey please see next page.

TIP

In the following text WHAT TO COVER IN THE INDUCTION (page 62), you will find a long list of possible topics and items. You can use the list as a check-list for your induction process and a reference for division of tasks in your organisation. Much of the processes outlined below can overlap or combine with recruitment, induction and training processes. For example, finding out about volunteers' motivation or communicating the time commitment involved in a volunteering process can happen at the recruitment stage. Conveying to volunteers how to support teachers in the classroom or how to work with refugees could happen in a training. Therefore it's useful to have close coordination between induction, recruitment and training processes for volunteers, and ideally the same person overseeing all of these stages.

A typical Volunteer Journey



Recruitment methods: WHERE AND HOW TO ADVERTISE FOR VOLUNTEERS

How do you prepare to advertise?

Advertising your need for volunteers will mean providing some information about your organisation and what you're looking for. The recruitment process should also give you a chance to gather information about would-be volunteers. It is advisable to plan this initial communication carefully so that you communicate key information and make requests for the information you need. There's no point getting to the stage where you are meeting would-be volunteers, only to discover that they're not free at the times you need or lack a basic skill that is required for the role! Any information that you can gather at initial stages that will help filter applicants helps avoid wasting your time and theirs.

If you are recruiting through some kind of advertisement or call-out, you may well have limited space for information. When people react and show interest, you can then provide more extensive information - though it's still a good idea to keep this as specific as possible. Having an application form ready which you send out to the interested people can be time efficient. Even better if it's available online and people can download it themselves. Don't waste people's time by asking for information in the form that is not relevant to your specific volunteer vacancy. You want to make the application process as easy and swift as possible for would-be volunteers while getting the information you need! It's worth making sure you explain why you're asking for partic-

ular pieces of information, how you will handle applicants' data and make the surrounding text (including website copy and emails) as friendly as possible. You can also ask people to fill out the form to the best of their abilities and return it even if not all questions are answered.

A word on capacity

Choose your recruitment method based on the number of volunteers you need and the particular skills, experience and attributes you're looking for.

Processing large numbers of applications will create a lot of work for your organisation! If you think that high application numbers are a risk, consider how to reach the right people whilst avoiding being overwhelmed. Be specific about who you want and limit the reach of your advertising or call out - at least at first. Word of mouth recruitment and physical (rather than online) advertisements can limit the number of respondents. You could also consider finding volunteers through the supporters already in direct or indirect contact with your organisation. This can also simplify your induction process as volunteers may already know about your work.

You can recruit broadly if you need a large number of volunteers with less specific qualifications. That does not necessarily mean spending money and making a big effort.

Some useful methods to reach potential volunteers:

- **Word of mouth:** If volunteering is a new thing for your organisation, you could spread the news in your organisation first. Encourage your staff to put the word out that you are looking for new volunteers! If you already have volunteers in your organisation, encourage them to recruit others. If you have the capacity, you could organise a "bring a friend" day for volunteers with time for socialising. Ask your volunteers to post your posters in other institutions they're part of, and don't forget to invite your own friends and contacts.
- **Posting on social media:** In social media you can spread the news about your volunteering opportunities at minimal cost. You can post to specific interest groups to reach certain audiences. And again, get volunteers and staff to share posts with their friends and followers.

TOP THREE TIPS

for setting up the first volunteer advert

1. Be precise, aim high and describe exactly what you are looking for. If you need volunteers on Friday and Monday write it. If you need volunteers with a certain background write it.
2. Think about where you advertise in order to attract the volunteers you want.
3. Advertise in more languages if you need volunteers with skills in that language.



- **Ads and articles in local newspapers:** Depending on your budget, local newspaper advertisement might be a good way to reach people. If you choose the publication well you're likely to reach the people you want to involve in your volunteer's network. People who have time to spend, are engaged in the community and want to help others. If you know a journalist, it can also be worthwhile to pitch a story to them about your organisation and the volunteering opportunity. Journalists are always on the lookout for interesting stories. Perhaps you can invite them when you have activities with the volunteers or a photogenic event. An article on the organisation's volunteers is free publicity.
- **Teacher training courses:** new teachers who are doing their initial training are a good source of potential volunteers. These trainees may need some teaching/ classroom experience to complete their courses, or they may simply want to practise some of the theory they are learning. Volunteers from teacher training programmes tend to be highly knowledgeable, skilled and motivated. On the other hand they are often looking for paid work and may not be able to volunteer for long.
- **Posting flyers:** Grocery stores, coffee shops, college campuses, laundromats, schools, and civic buildings often have bulletin boards where you can post announcements. The benefit of posting flyers is that you can target a very specific neighbourhood. Choose the places you put them

AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN: RECRUITMENT & INDUCTION MEETINGS

It might or might not make sense to separate recruitment (the process of finding suitable volunteers) and induction (preparing volunteers for their task) in your organisation - the specifics of your requirements can inform your judgement on this. An alternative to processing application forms, holding interviews and induction is to hold an open meeting for all would-be volunteers. Some organisations run these open meetings for prospective volunteers at regular intervals throughout the year and signpost all volunteer applicants to the forthcoming meeting.

This meeting could be used to provide applicants with more information about the role, and even double-up as an induction training that will help volunteers work well with you. It could also be a chance for you to meet would-be volunteers and get a sense of them. If applicants are still interested after attending this meeting, they could then fill out an application form or sign a volunteer agreement and leave the meeting ready to get started.

carefully and think of the kind of people who might see it there. Are these the volunteers you have in mind?

- **Using volunteer databases:** A lot of organisations find their volunteers on specialised websites. Have a look at the existing websites and publish your vacancies. You can also contact your local Volunteer Center (if there is one) and make them aware of your need for volunteers. They can then help spread the word.

Make sure it is as easy as possible for applicants to get in touch with you. An easy email address and a page on your homepage or downloadable document with all the information they need can help pave the way.

HOW TO REFUSE VOLUNTEERS

If you're clear from the start that your volunteering opportunities are contingent on selection it's much easier to turn applicants away - even further down the line.

Use wording like: "Apply now!" instead of "Sign up!" in your communication.

When you send out an initial questionnaire or application form, point out that the selecting process is meant to prevent disappointments on both sides. ("Please give us an idea of why you want to volunteer and what you'd like to get out of it. This will help us work out whether our opportunities on offer would be a good fit"). If you've stated this early on in the application process, it's much easier to say "thanks, but no thanks" later on. Using application forms in your selection process can definitely help with selection.

Whenever you turn people away it's courteous to let them know your reasons. Be fair and honest and give them a brief explanation. Sometimes a fairly generic explanation will suffice - you're currently looking for people with skills in X; you've received many more applications than you have vacancies etc. If applicants don't ask for further information you don't need to go there! Of course, if you can offer alternative volunteering opportunities in your organisation that will make rejection easier for applicants. So be honest about whether you want a candidate to volunteer in your organisation or not.



VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

on a shoestring

If your organisation has little time for volunteer coordination it can be hard to prioritise tasks. When working on a shoestring budget, we recommend the following.

If you have got
 **1 hour
a week**


- Respond to volunteer enquiries thanking people for getting in touch, explaining that the volunteer coordinator has very limited capacity and reassure the potential volunteer that you'll be in touch in due course. You could even set up an automated email to explain this when people get in touch.
- Ask potential volunteers to fill out a form about their skills, experiences, relevant qualifications, availability and motivation.
- Read volunteer forms in order to find a suitable placement
- Connect potential volunteers with host colleagues (eg. teachers)

If you have got
 **3 hour
a week**



In addition to the above:

- Organise a volunteer induction/training day. You can put this on when you have around five-ten new starters
- Apply for some funding for volunteer coordination

If you have got
 **5 hour
a week**



In addition to the above:

- Get in touch with volunteers after their first session to see how it has gone
- Keep regular contact with teachers (or other colleagues) who are working with volunteers to assess how it is going
- Monitor the impact of volunteering on the organisation's students

WHAT TO COVER IN THE INDUCTION

Below are some suggestions for what you could cover with a volunteer in the induction process. Not all points will be relevant to your context – pick and choose what is helpful. Whilst all of this could be covered in conversation, it could also be communicated via documents for the volunteer to read, before or after the meeting.

It's also worth noting that whilst this section includes a long list of points for consideration this should not be a replacement for human warmth and there should be space and license for you to use your gut instinct as well. Getting a sense of someone and building a relationship is not an exact science. It could also be very off putting if you approach the one-to-one meeting with too much formality and reliance on a check-list for guiding conversation. As well as clarifying expectations, the main purpose of this meeting is to make the volunteer feel supported and valued for their contribution.

Items that may be better off covered by, or repeated by, a teacher are starred.

WHAT YOU SHOULD FIND OUT ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER

- *Finding out about the volunteer: their skills, experience, motivation, needs and expectations**
 - What has drawn the volunteer to volunteering?
 - What do they hope to get out of it?
 - What do they know about our field of work/ organisation?
 - What is their professional background?
 - What volunteering or teaching have they done in the past?
 - What aspects of volunteering do they think they'll enjoy the most?
 - How can the organisation support you them to get the most out of their time volunteering?
 - Do they have any needs or particular requirements that we (the organisation) need to know about to support them to volunteer? e.g. accessibility

INFORMATION THE VOLUNTEER NEEDS FROM YOU

- *Explanation of organisational approach to teaching and learning**
If your organisation has a particular approach to any of the following, you can explain this to the volunteer.

Teachers may have their own different approaches within your organisation – in which case, this may be best covered by the teacher themselves.

This could include:

- how the organisation conceptualises the role of the teacher, learner and volunteer
- how the organisation create a safe and welcoming learning space for students
- the organisational attitude to the use of other languages in class
- how classrooms are generally laid out
- the kind of activities that generally take place in classes or extra curricular sessions
- the organisation's attitude toward error correction

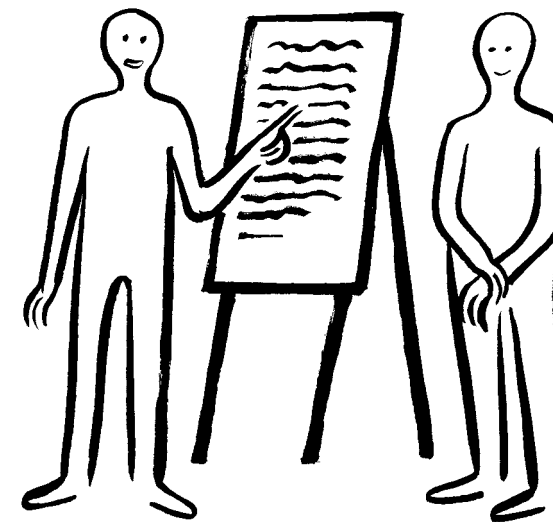
"If I do something wrong, I have confidence in the teacher to tell me how I should do things differently. That confidence and trust is important to make the corporation work."

Volunteer, Denmark

- *Information about the group they'll be volunteering with: level, needs etc**
This is where you can outline the learners' language and literacy level, their general character and give a sense of their particular needs e.g. any disabilities which should be taken into account.
- *Information about the organisation: history, values, how it works*
It can be useful to outline the organisation's story and any relevant information about its culture. You can also give the volunteer a sense of how your language class fits in with the wider operations of the organisation and other volunteer activities within it.
- *Explanation of your national language learning context: how classes in your organisation fit into wider educational and governmental structures*
For example, do students gain qualifications through your classes or activities? What do these qualifications allow them to do? Are students required to achieve

these qualifications in order to qualify for residency? Is participation in your classes funded by or mandated by the state in some way?

- *Explanation of volunteer's and teacher's role and responsibilities**
Establishing what is and what isn't the role of the volunteer is very important to avoid misunderstanding. This can be further delineated by outlining what the teacher's role and responsibilities will be – and the role of any paid teaching assistants, where relevant. It can be useful to explain who will be responsible for and involved in:
 - Planning lessons
 - Deciding lesson content
 - Error correcting
 - Participating in activities
- *Building a healthy relationship with students*
Healthy relationship with students could also be explored in more in-depth training for volunteers. Think about some aspects to cover in order to promote mutually respectful relationships with the language learners and discourage paternalistic or patronising attitudes amongst volunteers. This can also be outlined in your overview of your organisation's core values (above). Some other ideas for how to encourage respectful attitudes:
 - Emphasise to volunteers that it's useful to remember that students are 'beginner language learners, not beginner thinkers'
 - Refer to the fact that 'refugee' status has all sorts of connotations around it, but in your organisation's experience you can't assume what students' feelings, experiences or preferences will be – advise volunteers to keep an open mind and, if in doubt, ask learners themselves or the teacher
 - Emphasise that the role of the volunteer is to be warm and friendly and that getting to know students and finding common ground is encouraged
 - Refer volunteers to the Toolkit for Volunteers which includes sections on working with refugees.
- *Practicalities*
 - Logistical information about the class or sessions: time, place, access to the building etc.
 - Guided tour of the building or facilities
 - How to claim expenses /stipend
 - Insurance
 - Who the volunteer should refer to in case of:
 - absence
 - doubts regarding the scope of the volunteer work
 - a need to discuss "sensitive" information about students
 - disagreements between teacher and the volunteer
 - Any criminal or police record checks the organisation will need to carry out on the volunteer and the documents that will be required
 - Make sure the volunteer is familiar with your safeguarding procedure etc



- Confidentiality agreement around students' disclosure
- Data protection of the volunteer's details
- *Volunteer welcome and support*
 - What training and support they'll be offered
 - How they can meet other volunteers to share experiences
 - How the teacher and/or organisation can support them to get the most out of their placement
 - Summary of ground rules/agreement

INDUCTION RESOURCES

You may want to point your volunteer to additional resources that they can read in their own time to support their development. Your organisation may have its own teaching resources or documentation that you would like your volunteer to look at. There are also additional resources available that are aimed at volunteers:

- **Our Toolkit for Volunteers:** aimed at volunteers supporting teachers in classroom (formal) settings and leading activities beyond the classroom in informal or non formal learning environments.
- **Language Support for Adult Refugees Council of Europe Toolkit:** www.coe.int/en/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/guidelines - aimed at volunteers providing language support so not all sections will be relevant to volunteers working in formal settings.

- Summarise what you've covered and check that it's all understood and agreed
 - An expression of appreciation for the volunteers' time commitment and the difference the volunteer will make
 - An opportunity for the volunteer to ask any other questions

AGREEMENTS TO BE MADE

- *Agreement about ongoing check ins/evaluation: when and how will this take place.*

You may want to schedule a meeting or a phone conversation with the volunteer after their first lesson or session to see how they found it.

You may want to have another meeting with them after a term, six months or a year has passed. It's up to you (and your organisational procedure) how and when you evaluate how the volunteering is going, but it can be useful to make this clear at this early stage.
- *Agreement between volunteer and organisation about time commitment.*

Clarify when and for how long they'll be able to give their time.

WHO SHOULD DO THE INDUCTION?

Volunteer induction can be undertaken by a teacher or volunteer coordinator. The advantage of having a coordinator is that they can act as an independent support to both teacher and volunteer in case of difficulties. Additionally, successful recruitment, induction and volunteer training and support requires dedicated time which teachers cannot be expected to have without significant expansion to their roles. A dedicated and skilled volunteer coordinator can therefore help volunteer collaboration work well and avoid overburdening teaching staff.

Even where a volunteer coordinator oversees induction, it is still important that teachers get a chance to meet with volunteers – ideally before they enter their classroom – to provide information about methodology, grading, classroom climate etc. This is also an important part of relationship building between the volunteer and teacher and establishing how they will work together well. If the teacher needs extra paid time to do this meeting it's worth building this into budgets and funding applications in advance.

There is guidance for teachers in our Toolkit for Teachers on how to conduct these one-to-one meetings. The guidance is aimed at teachers undertaking induction without the support of a volunteer coordinator so you may want to adapt this resource to make them relevant to your induction process.

MATCHING VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVITIES

The matching of a new volunteer with an activity or task depends both on where their interests lie (what tasks they want to do) and their availability (when and how often they're able to give their time). Experience and skills also are a factor here.

One-to-one language support

If the volunteer is interested in being matched one-to-one with a refugee it is preferable that the volunteer is experienced (perhaps the volunteer has already experience with one-to-one meetings or has participated in a conversation club) as they will be alone with the learner. Personal factors can also be important for making a good match, especially where volunteers will be working closely with individuals. The volunteer's gender, religion, age, interest, study and or work experience may play an important role when matching. The next step in matching volunteers with learners one-to-one is a face-to-face meeting between the volunteer, the volunteer coordinator and the learner, where the volunteer gets introduced to the learner and the structure and ground rules or principles for future one-to-one meetings are established.

Classroom support

If the new volunteer is interested in classroom support, then the match between the volunteer and the teacher is important as the teacher and the volunteer are going to work closely together.

Volunteers' involvement as classroom support should always be based on the wishes of the teacher. The process starts by the teacher asking the coordinator for a volunteer or expressing enthusiasm for the idea. The coordinator then needs as much information as possible from the teacher about the class (day, time, level, the volunteer's role). The coordinator can then find a suitable volunteer who is available at the time required.

Once a potential class is found for the volunteer, the coordinator can then organise the first meeting between the volunteer and the teacher.

Job clubs and conversation clubs

For those volunteers interested in supporting job seeking, it's preferable to find people with up-to-date knowledge of the job market and how to apply for jobs.

For both job and conversation clubs, it's worth involving a variety of volunteers (in terms of gender, age, work experience) in order to reach a varied target group.

No relevant opportunities

If no match is possible at the time that an otherwise suitable volunteer applies, the volunteer coordinator might want to stay in touch with the prospective volunteer, as they may be available to do volunteer work in the organisation when other opportunities arise. It is therefore important that the coordinator makes as many notes about the volunteer as possible so the coordinator knows who to contact when the need for a new volunteer arise.

Think about what data you need to collect from your new volunteer for your coordination and how this will be stored and accessed. As well as the contact and background information you'll have likely gathered in the recruitment process, you will need to keep records on which volunteers are active in the organisation. This can include what task the volunteer is doing, day and time they attend, when they joined. An overview of the volunteers' coming and going in the organisation is important for organisation, accountability and for contacting volunteers en masse.

Supporting teachers

There may be teachers who have experience of working with volunteers and therefore need less support to get started. However, there may also be teachers who want to work with a volunteer but aren't sure how best to involve them. This is where the volunteer coordinator's support can be particularly helpful. You can also refer the teacher to our Toolkit for Teachers for guidance and ideas for classroom activities that make good use of volunteers.

Ideas to handle VOLUNTEER TURNOVER AND RETENTION

Of course, some volunteer turnover is likely and shouldn't be seen as a failure on the part of either organisation or volunteer. Volunteers have good reasons to leave: health issues, a new job, career opportunities, family matters, etc. However, when a volunteer leaves the organisation it's useful to hold an exit interview to evaluate their experience and gather useful feedback. What can be improved? Would the volunteer consider coming back if certain things changed? You can also ask if the volunteer is willing to be contacted for occasional activities with the learners even if they can no longer commit on a regular basis.

For those organisations that are struggling with volunteer retention, here are some questions you might want to reflect on:

- Do the volunteers know who to go to when there are difficulties? Do they have an appointed contact person a supervisor or coordinator? Does this person check-in with them regularly about how they are?
- Do volunteers receive adequate training to feel comfortable and confident in their new roles? Do they have the right tools for the job? What other tools and support can you offer?
- Is their work designed to be efficient with minimal bureaucracy and roadblocks to progress? Do you report and celebrate with volunteers goals attained, as well as key learning, on a regular basis?
- Do you ensure that new volunteers are fully integrated into the larger group? Do you actively work against the formation of cliques and "insider" groups? Do you keep everyone in the loop with emerging information? Do you address volunteer-teacher relations issues proactively?
- Do you have a supportive feedback system in place to help volunteer improve the way they're working?

1

MAKING VOLUNTEERS AN INTRINSIC PART OF THE ORGANISATION AND RETENTION

Hold regular meetings or gatherings with the volunteers in order to collect feedback and find out about their wellbeing. What can be improved? What kind of needs do they have in order to perform better as a volunteer? Suggestions can be followed up in various ways with both volunteers and teachers. For example, you could run seminars, trainings or workshops to meet the needs identified by volunteers. This will build their skills and show how much their role is valued by your organisation. Volunteers will definitely be more committed when they feel recognised and when they are part of a community. An informal lunch with senior management and teachers for instance can build the engagement and motivation of the volunteers.

2

SAY THANKS

- send them a card for Christmas or send them a text during the week
- name the volunteers in speeches
- ask the teachers to send them an email at the end of the school year
- put a 'thank you' picture on your social media

if you have the budget gifts can include chocolate or merchandise with you organisation's logo like a cup or pen

3

PARTIES AND EVENTS

- organise a small party to thank the volunteers. Ask them what they would like to do.
- combine it with a training event - it's useful and creates a community feeling

recruit new volunteers at these kind of events. They can meet the other volunteers and make up their mind if they would like to be part of the organisation

4

BUILD A VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

Once you've started working with volunteers and have enough volunteers involved, you may want to create a volunteer community. This is some kind of space where volunteers can come together, get to know each other and even exchange knowledge and experience related to their involvement in your organisation. For many volunteers, making new friends and feeling part of a community is an important part of why they're volunteering in the first place. Creating a sense of a volunteer community will help make your organisation a welcoming place where volunteers feel at home and valued for their contribution.

To get a volunteer community off the ground, organise small, enjoyable social events for the volunteers, with or without the teachers they assist. This could be something simple like a shared lunch or coffee. The key thing is to frame it around the shared role as volunteers of the organisation. The meetings can be informal social occasions without a set agenda, or they can include a topic for discussion or relevant input from a trainer or speaker. Volunteer community events can be organised by paid staff or you can hand over the running of them to the volunteers themselves.

5

NEWSLETTER

Newsletters are a useful tool for communicating with the volunteers and keeping them informed about what's going on in your organisation. During the intake interview ask them to register for the newsletter or send them one so they have an idea of the content. Don't overdo it: once every two or three months might be enough. The content must be related either to the organisation or the volunteer's role. Possible items are: testimonials from volunteers, interviews with learners about having a volunteer in class, calendar with workshops for volunteers, report on extra curricular activities with volunteers, volunteer of the month. For low resource settings an email every now and then that fills volunteers in on the organisation and thanks them could be a good substitute if you're not able to do this face to face.

6

FACEBOOK OR WHATSAPP GROUP

A social media group is a place where people interact. A group is a form of online community. Volunteer groups are usually closed, with only members of the group allowed to view and make posts or add new members. Volunteers can share pictures, experiences and ask each other questions. Facebook or Whatsapp Groups have proven to be a cost-effective and efficient way to communicate with volunteers. These groups do not replace traditional methods of direct mailing, phone calls, face-to-face interactions, and texts, but supplement them, reaching volunteers using the platforms that they're familiar with.

7

A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

- share pictures of volunteers receiving a gift on Facebook
- change your Facebook profile picture where relevant. In Belgium for instance there's a 'week of the volunteer'.

Highlight the volunteers in your organisation by changing your profile picture.

- tag the volunteers
- make a poster and ask the volunteers to post a selfie

8

PICTURES AND VIDEOS

- make a picture of all the volunteers together at a 'thank you' moment
- make an original video with some volunteers, ask them for ideas

9

ARTICLES

- put an interview with a volunteer on your organisation's website
- ask a journalist from a local paper to be present during an event with volunteers
- write an article about the volunteers in your organisation and send it to the local press



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Formal and informal ways?

Make a plan of how you want to check that volunteering is progressing well - ideally before taking on volunteers so that you can communicate this plan to the volunteers and teachers at induction stage.

Depending on the size of the organisation, the volunteer coordinator can check in about volunteering whenever they meet the volunteer/student/teacher in the organisation.

Alternatively, the volunteer coordinator can do this by email or phone. Depending on the volunteer activity, evaluation meetings could be set up every term or at regular intervals such as every quarter. Some organisations assign volunteers for limited time periods (e.g. one term) so that there is an opportunity to review and, where required, to reshuffle volunteers regularly.

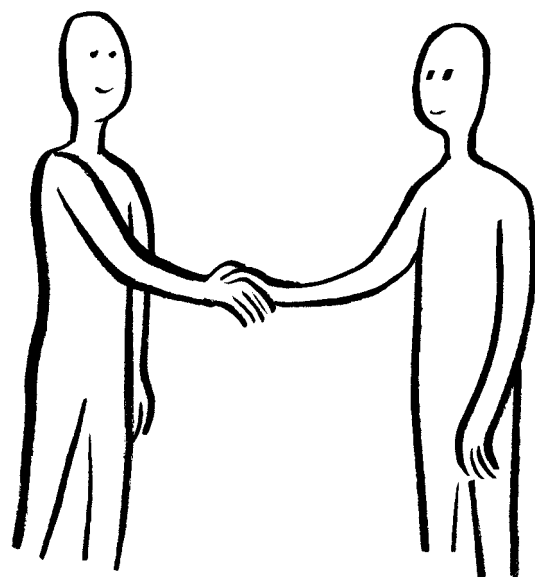
In terms of checking in with the teacher, this can be done simply through a regular conversation between the volunteer coordinator and teacher about what is working. The coordinator can then feed this back to the volunteer.

Another approach would be to ask teachers to have a conversation with their volunteer every term about what has been helpful and where things could improve. This could be supported by a sheet with questions to structure the conversation. The benefits of implementing procedures at organisational level is that teachers may feel nervous initiating and structuring these conversations on their own. Presenting it as part of organisational procedure, with an accompanying sheet, can give them a useful premise to request and structure this conversation with their volunteers.

HOW TO ASK A VOLUNTEER TO LEAVE

Most Volunteer Coordinators have experienced it: Despite a good recruitment and induction process you experience a volunteer with values so different from the organisation that you don't want them to work with you. But how do you go about asking to leave without hurting the volunteer while being fair and as considerate as possible?

At The Danish Refugee Council (DRC)'s language school, the first step is to search for alternative activities/tasks where the volunteer can be put to use. If no such activities exist (or if their values are such a poor fit) they are then asked to leave. The process mirrors that found in employment and the same "ground rules" apply. Therefore the organisation is always specific in its evaluation of the volunteer's performance. Which specific situations were unacceptable and why? If the coordinator believes that the volunteer can change his behaviour a fair warning can provide a solution. Again DRC is always specific in the changes it requests and sets up objective criteria for evaluation and a date for a new evaluation-talk. In any case the organisation makes sure that employees act professionally and take all possible steps so that the volunteer can use the feedback constructively.



Case Studies

This section contains case studies of good practice involving volunteers in language learning. They should serve as inspiration and are designed so that they can be easily copied. More case studies can be found in the TOOLKIT FOR ORGANISATION available for free on www.volunteersforlanguagelearning.eu





MUTTER KIND DEUTSCH

Language learning among babies and toddlers

The project “Mutter Kind Deutsch” (Mother Child German) shows that it is possible to conduct a language course for women with babies in the same room. The women and the facilitating teacher were supported by several volunteers in order to create a suitable learning environment. The volunteers were flexible and able to move between helping out with child care and supporting learners with partner work.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Women who have to care for very small children and who can't count on support from their families can become isolated if they don't speak the local language. Childcare programmes in Austria often start at the age of three, and even then some mothers don't feel comfortable handing over their children to childcare workers who they can't communicate properly with.

This course was set up so that children would stay in the same room with their mothers during the entire class.

The aim was to establish a learning context that met the needs of this specific target group. So learning took place on the floor, with rugs and pillows to make it suitable for children. Desks were removed and the only traditional classroom items that remain were the flip chart stand, clipboards, paper and pens. There was a play zone for those children able to play independently, but children also stayed with their mothers, got nursed, lay in the middle of the learning circle or slept in their buggies within the classroom.

Sessions were led by a German teacher and volunteers were involved both to help take care of the children and to support activities related to language learning such as group and pair work. The course was attended by six-eight learners per group (plus their babies and the supporting volunteers), meaning that there could be up to twenty people in the room. The course took place for two hours, twice a week.

Lessons were based both on plenary sessions and a lot of partner work. This meant that lessons could be adapted to the diverse needs of the women and were flexible if one of the women was badly needed by her baby.

The course involved at least two volunteers per session. Having three or even more volunteers in the room was even better. The volunteers were not involved in lesson planning

and were able to respond, moment to moment, to the needs of the group. Flexibility with the volunteers' roles paid off in this project. Volunteers naturally tended towards the tasks that suited them best - some focussed more on rocking/playing with the children and some showed more interest in supporting the mothers' language learning. Nonetheless, volunteers were expected to be flexible to move around to where they were needed most.

The project also highlighted the benefit that non-native speaker volunteers could bring to language support. These volunteers modelled how to achieve language learning and overcome barriers, showing that one does not need to know everything in order to speak with confidence.

“If I'm lucky, some children go to sleep and I can form small groups with a volunteer in each group”, said Jana, the teacher, during the project. Jana had previously also worked in Kindergarden to give specific children language support, so she was not afraid of chaos with small children. At planning stage, the idea of involving the children more in the language course was considered. They could sing songs and work with nursery rhymes in German. But neither the children nor the mothers showed interest in these elements of the class (or were too shy), so the teacher didn't continue with these activities.

STRENGTH OF THE PROJECT

The fact that this project is focused on women and supported and conducted by women had several benefits. Nevertheless there were also some men involved in administration and translation. For the volunteers, it was very rewarding to be able to support other women in a potentially challenging stage of their lives and have the opportunity to directly connect with them.



From the very beginning of the project, the participants supported each other by taking care of each other's babies.

One of the groups had significant diversity in terms of the age of the women and their educational background. Stronger group members in this cohort tried to motivate and encourage the other participants.

SET UP

Before starting the first two regular courses, there was an eight week pilot course. Women with children up to the age of three could sign up. The main learning from these eight weeks was around the involvement of the children. The first insight was that the age group was too wide. In the following course the decision was made only to take in children younger than a year old, so none of the babies had learnt to walk at the beginning of the course. The course could definitely be conducted with two year old children as well, but every age group has its very specific needs connected to the children's ability to move around and communicate. During the pilot course some volunteers found it very challenging to attend to the older kids without being able to communicate with them through a shared language.

Another interesting learning: During the pilot course many women's attendance was very inconsistent. This turned into a serious problem with session where there were more volunteers than learners in the room, which was very bad for the motivation of the volunteers. It was also a shame as some women had initially been turned away from the course since, based on signups, it had reached capacity. And last but not least, the funding body requested specific numbers of participants.

To address this inconsistent attendance, all applicants for the first four month courses were invited to come to a meeting to sign in. Everyone had a brief one-to-one conversation in their first language about the course expectations. During this conversation the ten ground rules of the course were explained (in their first language) and applicants had to sign a document to show that fully understood these rules. The ground rules contained simple standard like no telephone calls or texting during class, and that no unexcused absence would be accepted. Some of the participants that had taken part in the pilot were slightly shocked by this new policy but nobody declined to sign and the impact on attendance exceeded our expectations.

In the pilot course we felt uncomfortable being so strict, because the target group had enough burdens to be dealing with. But faced with so many women applying to the course, we felt that we had to take action to be fair to those who could not attend because of the limited capacity.

SUPPORT AND COORDINATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS

This entire project was also established to offer untrained volunteers a way to support language learning as there were many people who were interested in volunteering at that time. The basic idea was that the teacher would be the person providing continuity in person and ensuring the quality of teaching.

Following an initial brief screening (filling out a questionnaire about previous experiences and motivation), each volunteer met with the volunteer coordinator. Those who seemed suitable and were interested to support this specific course came to their first class twenty minutes before the start of the course in order to get to know the teacher. This seemed to be sufficient to be supportive in this setting. After each lesson the teacher had five-ten min. reflection about the sessions with the volunteers.

Some volunteers were very committed and could support several times a week and others were only available once a week. There were also some turnover of volunteers over the entire course of the project as people left and new people joined. The presence of the volunteers made a big difference to the lessons, so the volunteer coordinator made sure that several volunteers were present for each session. With four sessions a week (two course with two sessions each), ensuring that there were enough volunteers was occasionally challenging. There was dedicated time for the teacher to meet with the volunteers, but none of these meetings took place. It seemed that there was no real need for it because there was always sufficient time to talk before or after the lessons.

TOP THREE TIPS

1. If you're working with total beginners, be sure you have someone to translate when they sign in. It is important that there is no misunderstanding concerning the ground rules and expectations. This is an unusual educational setting after all.
2. If you're including children who can already walk make each mother responsible for their child or children so as not to overburden the volunteers. The volunteers support, but they don't take total responsibility for childcare.
3. Working on the floor seems suitable, but this means the classroom needs to be arranged in advance, which is extra work. We were lucky to have a volunteer to help us with the set up every day. All volunteers brought toys, but we got the impression that these weren't really needed.



BITE IN YOUR FREE TIME

At the pitch we're all equal

Bite in your freetime (Bijt in je vrije tijd) is an initiative that aims to get migrants involved in sports and cultural organisations in Leuven, Belgium. During the months of October and November migrants can participate for free in over fifty different activities. During these activities, they have the opportunity to speak Dutch with other participants. They can choose activities to get involved in according to their interest and their language level. There are also activities they can do in a group or with their family. Although most participants are linked to the local language schools some of them come from migrant organisations or are sent by the social organisations that offer support to newcomers.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The reason why 'Bijt in je vrije tijd' was created is because migrants are frequently looking for opportunities to talk Dutch outside the classroom but have difficulties finding the way to cultural or sporting organisations. Furthermore, many organisations try to reach migrants in order to diversify their audience but seldom succeed. The City is attempting to build a bridge between migrants and organisations so they can meet each other. Therefore they ask organisations to give free access to migrants for this short period. The cultural and sporting activities are put together in a brochure which is distributed in the language schools, cultural centres etc.

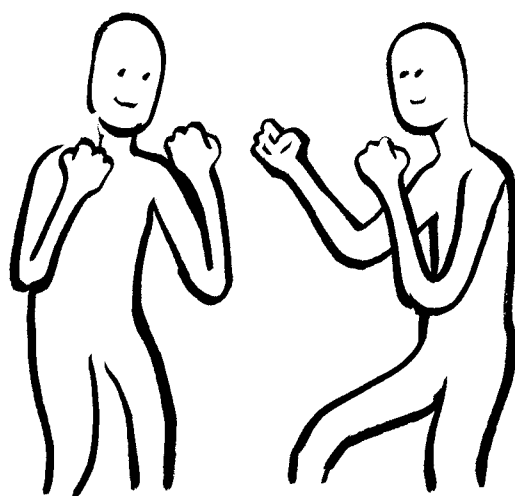
In order to lower the threshold for participation, induction days are organised in collaboration with language schools. Several organisations come to the schools and offer a set of activities during the classes so that students can participate in a familiar, comfortable context. At that same time these visits allow students to meet buddies (volunteers) and make an appointment to do an activity together. They can also ask to be set up with a buddy via email. Registration can be done online or face to face via the teacher.

The teachers help the migrant learners to find the right course. For some courses the knowledge of Dutch is more important than for others, but course selection is primarily based

around learners' interests. Teachers talk about the activities in their classes and teach relevant language, such as vocabulary to talk about sports, hobbies, free time in general. The involvement of the teachers is very important for encouraging the learners. Sometimes, when young migrants are concerned (in what's called the 'OKAN classes'), the mentor of the youngsters will accompany them and they go to a sporting facility together. OKAN offers foreign students a one-year, focused study of the Dutch language through an intense training of the four key language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. These studies enable students to smooth the transition into secondary education. OKAN stands for OnthaalKlas voor Anderstalige Nieuwkomers (Reception Class for Newcomers with another native Language). Learners must be at least twelve years old and have not reached the age of eighteen when signing up, and have been living in Belgium for less than 1 year.

For many migrants who don't speak the language it's crucial to have a familiar person introducing them and supporting them to persevere.

The collaboration and the motivation of the buddies is therefore essential to the success of 'Bijt in je vrije tijd'. One month long volunteers accompany migrants, adults and youngsters, to the cultural or sporting events. They spend a few hours a day (or evening) with the migrants and help them to find their way to the event, to register, ... They also make



them feel at home in the club. The buddies are the perfect mediators. There are fewer obstacles between the migrants and the buddies since they are not being assessed as would have been the case in the classroom. The buddies should have a keen interest in communicating with other people and try to overcome language and cultural barriers. To prepare them for this job they get a training offered by the City. Sometimes the volunteer accompanies a small group to the activity but it also might be just one person. It all depends on the availability of the volunteers and the wishes of the migrants.

'Bijt in je vrije tijd' is a fine example of how language learning and community building come together. Each year many organisations, such as language schools, cultural and sporting organisations, the integration office and the city council work together and it's always a huge success.

STRENGTH OF THE PROJECT

This project has been running for quite some time. Most of the organisations involved are familiar with the planning in October and November: language schools adapt the curriculum and offer space and time for leisure organisations to come to the language centre and present the activities. Similarly, the leisure organisations know beforehand what kind of activities to present to the migrant learners. The number of participating organisations increases each year. Since the project answers to many needs from different parties, its major strength is the close cooperation between various partners. In class for instance, migrants can have a look at the website, choose an activity they like and discuss the language level required. There are four different language levels, from beginners to well advanced. Migrants who live in Leuven for quite some time and speak the language fluently can try more challenging activities such as theatre, creative writing, ... If you have a limited knowledge of the language you can opt for activities where a basic knowledge of the language is sufficient. Last year 30% of the participants returned to the organisation after the free activities. 52% mentioned they would have liked to continue but blame lack of time or bad timing of the activity for not doing so.

Another strength is the incredible variety of activities on offer. You can learn how to ride a bike, practice sports or join a crafting group. Young people can have a look at one of the local scout's groups, make a radio program, do a theatre workshop or go to the museum.

SET UP

Bite in your free time is an large scale project that involves many organisations. But you can start small. It's sufficient

to have a language centre with migrant learners and some leisure organisations, a museum, companies prepared to offer a tour or whatever. All learners, of any level, can participate at the events.

Preparation

Present 'Bite in your free time' to the local organisations. Depending on your national context, local organisations may meet together in local alliances or community boards where you can communicate with a number of organisations at once. Contact the adult education providers in the region as well and agree a timing for the activities. Use specific communication channels to reach a broad audience, not just learners who already take part in language courses.

Make sure all the stakeholders have enough information: make a flyer, a powerpoint presentation and involve the local press.

TOP THREE TIPS

1. Good communication is essential since many partners are involved. If you are the organisation responsible for setting the project up make sure you communicate well in advance. Go and talk to the council, the leisure and sports' organisations and explain what you're going to do
2. When talking to organisations taking part in the project one of the issues seems to be the continuation. Try to set up a sustainable collaboration and make sure the participants are welcomed and part of the group also when the project is finished.
3. Make sure the language levels are well defined and clear to all partners. Language levels differ depending on the kind of activity. Use icons to make clear what language level is needed per activity.

Timing

Make sure the timing suits all the stakeholders. Avoid holiday periods or examination periods.

Involvement

Choose ambassadors in the language centres who will promote the events with colleagues.

Communication

Bite in your free time in Leuven involves thirty-one leisure organisations, three language centers, the City Council and about ten smaller organisations (like migrants communities). They meet three times a year. If you want to set up

a similar activity, communication is really important, especially if you don't know all the stakeholders. Once the period and the program are set, make a leaflet, posters, an updated Facebook page and a website with all the information. Ask the organisations involved to actively recruit buddies. The actual buddies sometimes have participated in previous years, so they really know the structure and can convince others to come and join in.

Each organisation indicates a buddy who is responsible to welcome the learners at the start of the activity. The buddy is the bridge between participants and organisations and helps to eliminate barriers. Buddies accompany non native youngsters and adults to the leisure or sports' activity. They support the participant in the first contacts with the organisation. Afterwards they help the participant where needed to enrol, to get a discount ... Buddies are also ambassadors

of the project, one of the faces of Bite in your free time. Depending on how much time a buddy can spend they might be asked to promote the project in schools and partner organisations. Buddies are recruited through the volunteers' organisations and the language schools. Especially buddies with a migration background are precious facilitators as they have been on the other side of the language barrier.

Buddies get a training (two and a half hours) provided by the City and have a buddy coordinator who matches buddies and participants and who is responsible for the follow up. The coordinator will check with the buddy how things are going and meets with the buddies after Bite in your free time. The buddies fill in a questionnaire and do suggestions about how their activity can be improved and what are the difficulties for them.

TAALVLOER

Volunteering and learning a job

In this project it's the language learners who work as volunteers in social enterprises and community organisations, such as childcare, recycling shops, community centres etc. They are supported by a language coach who is trained by the local employment centre. It's a unique possibility to combine language learning with work and aims at enhancing the migrants' language, professional and social skills.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Taalvloer started in 2017 as a social project by the City Council of Leuven and OCMW (Public Social Welfare Office). At the beginning four social organisations were involved, as well as the VDAB (the Flemish Employment Exchange and Vocational Training Service) who offer the training for the language coaches. In each organisation about ten to fifteen migrants are involved as volunteers. Later in 2017 OCMW started the individual Language Floors - smaller organisations such as a childcare centre or a nursing home - where one volunteer can go to work.

The volunteers work at least two half days and five half days at most. Language schools announce the Language Floor in the Dutch for foreigners classes. If the learners want to volunteer, they get in touch with the OCMW and there's an intake to see which activity matches the volunteer, how much time they can give etc. The learners must have acquired level A2. The Language Floor provides an extra opportunity

to practice the language outside the classroom. Migrants combine the volunteering with language learning. They can volunteer until they find a paid job or enroll in further education or training. Filimon Measho Tewelde (Eritrea) puts it like this: 'I participate in Taalvloer because I like to work. Really. I like my colleagues and my language coach Bieke, they do a great job.' Filimon volunteered in the cleaning company 'Allround'. He liked to be part of the group and made sure everybody felt ok.

The language coach has been trained by VDAB over six months to support the volunteer and to improve the volunteers' language skills. A language coach will emphasise specific vocabulary, e.g. vocabulary linked to warehouse tasks or fruits and vegetables if the volunteer is working at a farm social enterprise. The role of the language coach in the individual Language Floors is taken up by two language teachers from Open School (Centre for Basic Education). The

language coaches in the other organisations support fifteen volunteers per months. It's a full time job.

The project is unique in Flanders. There have been other local OCMW who are interested in this project but right now the one in Leuven is the only one. Although the focus is on language learning, the project has had some other beneficial side effects: migrants grow more self-confident, they improve their social skills and they get out of isolation. At the moment there are fifty-eight migrants working as a volunteer on a Language Floor in Leuven. All partners involved are satisfied with the project. Each month there's a meeting between all the Language Floors. Every six months there is an evaluation with all the partners, the project will be financed until the end of 2019.

STRENGTH OF THE PROJECT

This project gives an answer to the pressing question expressed by many migrant learners: how and where can I practice Dutch? Even if the Dutch courses are quite intense (twelve or six hours a week), learners feel the need to learn outside the classroom. At the same time many learners also want to prepare themselves for a paid job or occupy themselves and develop a social network.

The project was a huge success from the start due to high demand and the fact that the partners involved were prepared to offer training and finances. There's also a cross-pollination between the stakeholders in this project. In the conversations with the language coach the volunteer sometimes talks about poor housing, childcare problems or medical issues. The language coach passes this information to the social worker who takes up the problem with the volunteer. Volunteers are thus better screened and supported.

SET UP

The project Taalvloer definitely started because there was a huge need, identified by all the stakeholders. If you want to start a similar project it's important:

- to be able to provide training to the language coaches. The VDAB (the Flemish Employment Exchange and Vocational Training Service) provides this training for six months.
- to inform the organisations involved in the project about what they can expect from the migrant learners. They are volunteers and not paid employees. From the start it should be clear what the volunteer can and cannot do. Find organisations that have experience working with migrants, volunteers and marginalised groups and an understanding of their needs.
- Find funding. This project started in 2017 and has funding

to the end of 2019. Despite the success continuation depends on political decisions and social policy of the partners. You could consider collaboration with language schools to provide the language coaches if the cost of the training is too high.

- volunteers sometimes drop out of the project because they have found, or are seeking, paid employment. This is something to bear in mind.

SUPPORT AND COORDINATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS

The volunteers are sent by the language schools, both the Centres for Adult Education and Open School (Basic Education). They should have language level A2 to participate. They want to take part because they 'd like to develop their language skills and are looking for speaking opportunities. You are only eligible to take part in this project if you are part of a Dutch for foreigners course or a professional track established by the VDAB.

TOP THREE TIPS

1. Inform the language schools about the progress of the project. Tell them if you need more or less learners. Go there and present the project to the migrant learners in person.
2. Make sure the group of volunteers in one organisation is not too big (max. fifteen volunteers)
3. If the language coach is faced with other issues (such as housing problems) this should be followed up by a social or support worker of some kind

The language coaches are employed by VDAB or Open School and receive six months of training to prepare for the job. The Language Floors, the companies involved in this project, already have experience with migrant workers, volunteers and long term unemployed people. There is no specific volunteers' coordinator in this case, because the learners are the volunteers and they meet each time they come to work with the language coach. There are meeting between the language coaches (one a month) and between the other partners (twice a year) in order to evaluate the project and adapt where necessary.

XENIA

Women's conversation group for language learners and expert speakers

Xenia runs informal women-only conversation workshops attended by migrant language learners and expert speakers (migrants and non migrants) every week. It's purpose is to help women migrants to learn English and feel welcome in their communities (integrate). The workshops and the whole organisation are run by volunteers. Xenia is an interesting case study because of its focus on community building, what it manages to do on a very low budget and its open door policy to participants. An interesting element of this project is that they don't distinguish between expert speaker participants in their workshops (who others might call the 'volunteers') and the participants with lower levels of English (who others might call the 'learners'). The emphasis is on sharing and conversation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Xenia was started by a small group of women to support migrant women to improve their language skills. They are motivated by a desire to be welcoming to migrants and create a fairer, society. They see proficiency in English as a vital tool for navigating everyday life in the UK. Their workshops are women-only and their website states: "research has shown that migrant women often face greater barriers to accessing English classes than migrant men.

"A report recently published by the Wonder Foundation recommends providing single-sex provision as well as 'empowering community spaces where women feel welcome and safe' as steps to breaking down some of these barriers"

Xenia runs weekly three-hour workshops at Hackney Museum in East London. Hackney is a diverse, inner city borough of London with high levels of deprivation and a high percentage of migrants. The venue for workshops is provided for free by Hackney Museum - a good example of how clever partnerships can support work with low budgets.

There are about thirty people present at each workshop - a mix of English language learners and expert English-speaking women from the local area. The workshop might have a specific focus, like cooking or home or children etc. Bringing everyone together in a women-only space allows some women to attend who might not be comfortable learning in gender-mixed spaces. Language is developed through practice and informal feedback rather than through explicit language tuition or instruction

Workshops are run by volunteer facilitators who are involved in Xenia in a more formal, committed way. The group of facilitators support one another to develop their skills. New facilitators are selected by the existing organising

team and often come from the participant group (particularly the expert speakers).

STRENGTH OF THE PROJECT

An interesting element of this project is that they don't distinguish between expert speaker participants and the participants with lower levels of English. This could be seen to challenge the idea that volunteers give to the learner 'beneficiaries', but not the other way round. It means learning and teaching can be more on a continuum. Arguably this makes it easier for participants to transition from learners to conversation leaders as their English improves.

Another strength of the project is their emphasis on relationship development. Workshops are advertised as a place where friendships can form. The informality of the setting and the loose structure lends itself well to relaxed conversation and relationship building between participants across linguistic and national differences. Accessibility is also prioritised: travel expenses can be paid and children are looked after by volunteers in the same venue where workshops take place.

SET UP

Xenia began with a single stand-alone workshop which was so well attended and received that the organisers decided to make it a regular occurrence. The first workshop was part of an annual event called the AntiUniversity but this is coincidental - it could be reproduced in partnership with any civil society institution (library, school, museum, faith organisation) or at a festival or cultural event. What is key is having small team of committed facilitators and a mechanism

to attract participants (ie. links to migrant/refugee support group or advertising effectively on social media).

Starting with a stand-alone workshop is a great testing ground. Xenia got the space for free thanks to Hackney Museum and contacted a local language education provider to advertise the session to migrant learners.

SUPPORT AND COORDINATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS

Xenia has a management group which is predominantly volunteers. They have one paid member of staff who was elected from this group. Xenia distinguish between 'volunteers' who perform staff functions in the management group and volunteers with high levels of English who take part in their workshops (who they call 'participants' along with language learners).

In terms of recruiting participants to the workshops, anyone who wants to take part (language learners and advanced speakers) can register for workshops online or just drop in without registering.

Participation relies on making the workshops fun for expert speakers. Each workshop is run by a volunteer facilitator who guides the group discussion. Conversations focus on shared interests and participants benefit from building relationships with new people in their area.

Xenia workshops are not attempting to be formal language lessons or replace formal educational provision. They are more focused on relationship building and creating 'language rich' environments for learners to practice their speaking. However, the reliance on mutual support and training by volunteers does sometimes put strain on individuals involved. At workshops, The volunteer facilitator who are often relatively untrained, "relies on personality" and high level language participants' ability to talk well. New participants can turn up every week and Xenia has run into problems with expert speakers using "inaccessible language".

Beyond taking part in the workshops, participants can become management group volunteers (see above). Xenia organises non-hierarchically as far as possible. In order to recruit volunteers, a call goes out to participants at the workshop and an initial meeting is held to discuss the role in the organisation. Individuals are told clearly what the current volunteers are looking for in terms of skills and time commitment and volunteers can forward accordingly. Again, these opportunities are open to all participants if they fit the role requirements, disrupting any concept of workshop 'beneficiaries' and 'volunteers'.

Because nearly everyone at Xenia is a volunteer, volunteer training, support and accountability happens in a very mutual way at Xenia.

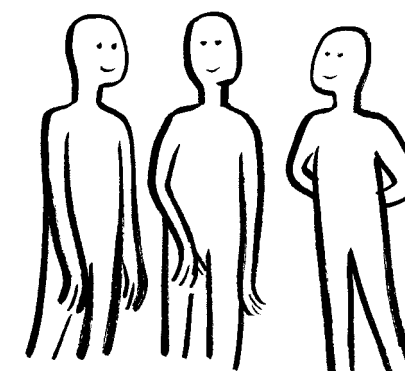
TOP THREE TIPS

1. In informal, low resource settings volunteers can support and skill-share with other volunteers
2. A way round resource-intensive volunteer recruitment is to run sessions that anyone can turn up to without vetting. Obviously this comes with risks and should be framed accordingly. If you want to run open sessions that anyone can come to think about how the facilitator can set expectations and ground rules at the beginning of each session. Regular attendees who 'get it' will also help promote group norms.
3. Think about what practices (including what language you use) can disrupt the idea that volunteers only give and language learners only receive. How can you promote the idea that learning is a two-way street?

"we realised that several of us needed more support and the new volunteers were often calling on those of us who had been in the project from the beginning and there was no way set up for those of us who had been with the project from the beginning to find support from the others and we tried to create a more genuinely circular way of each supporting each other"

Volunteers now organise themselves in two groups: volunteers that facilitate workshops and volunteers that do 'back end' functions such as monitoring, evaluating and communications. Skill sharing across the two 'circles' also happens - so facilitators share their skills with the other volunteers and vis versa.

At the time of writing Xenia are recruiting their first trustee board (trustees are all volunteers) and transitioning towards becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.





TALDANSK CAFÉ

Practicing language in an informal setting

The language café Taldansk Café takes place every Friday 9.30-12.00 where students meet volunteers to talk and get help with homework. Language cafés is a good way to start involving volunteers in language learning as it is relatively easy to manage and coordinate. The activity greatly improves the students' understanding and oral language by conversing with volunteers in a different way than in formal classes. At the same time students overcome their uncertainty about making contact with strangers in the new language.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The language café Taldansk Café takes place in an informal setting in the language school's library. The school provide coffee, tea and biscuits. The volunteers come every week. The activity is accessible not only for refugees, but for all students of the language school: The students are adult refugees, international employees, spouses and international students at all levels. They come voluntarily to:

- Enhance their communication skills
- Prepare for tests and final exam
- Get help with various things such as homework, understanding letters and call to authorities etc.

A language teacher is always present to help and guide the students as well as the ten-twelve volunteers. The teacher introduces students to all the learning possibilities at the school's library and guides them to suitable learning resources. The teacher also guides volunteers in how best to help and support students either one-to-one or in small groups. The Volunteer Coordinator at the school support with ongoing dialogue with volunteers and a range of practical issues.

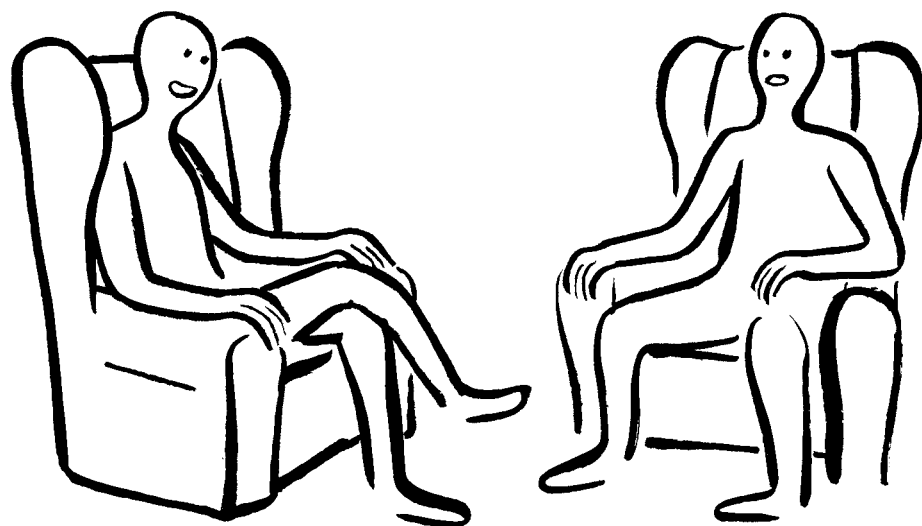
The volunteers in the Taldansk Café are mainly retired teachers, retired social workers, retired lawyers, but on-and-off young Danes studying at the university also volunteer at the café. The volunteers come every week when their schedule allows. A lot of empathy and patience is needed to be a volunteer in order to provide good help without stressing or just doing the work for the student. The teacher knows both stu-

dents and volunteers and can facilitate good matches between help needed and available volunteers.

STRENGTH OF THE PROJECT

Taldansk Cafe give the students the chance to train in a relaxed setting and learn how the language is used in everyday life. They meet Danish culture and hear how expert speakers pronounce the words. Even more important they practice in different environments and through different methods (small talk, games, pictures, introduction to movies) and thus get more courage to speak Danish.

Combining classroom instruction with conversation practice creates a good dynamic between formal learning and informal practice. The teacher often introduces the Taldansk Café as a part of classes and thus guides the students to further learning possibilities.



SET UP

For setting up a language café you of course need to recruit and train volunteers. When recruiting bear in mind the target group and try to ensure the volunteers reflect that group and the primary purpose for the café. It's definitely preferable if a teacher coordinate the café. Volunteers will come and go but the coordinator will be the central figure and promote recognisability, togetherness and a good volunteer community. You might find volunteers who can take over some of the tasks in coordination, for example assigning days to volunteers. However, a paid coordinator is preferable.

It is also preferable that the coordinating teacher is present in as many language cafés as possible. They will then build strong relationships with both students and volunteers and can then facilitate good matches and positive learning possibilities.

Matching the students' learning needs with a suitable volunteer can take many different forms. Some language cafés work with a schedule where the students "queue up" for fifteen -thirty minutes of volunteer time by writing their name on a blackboard. That way all students can get access to volunteers. Other cafés work with the coordinator being the "matchmaker" assigning students to volunteers.

Despite rigorous induction and training there is always the risk that the volunteers "misinform" learners about grammar and pronunciation rules. This makes the coordinating teacher even more important as such misinformation can be addressed and learned from.

SUPPORT AND COORDINATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS

The induction of new volunteers can be handled by the coordinator of the language café or the Volunteer Coordinator for the whole school. Depending on intake the induction will be one-to-one or in a small group. It consists of an introduction to language learning and the different language tests that the students undergo. The daily help and guidance is provided by the language café coordinator who follows up on the subjects from the induction. The volunteers are furthermore invited to courses hosted by the Volunteer Department in Danish Refugee Council elaborating on language learning for adult refugees and migrants.

In the day-to-day operations or the café there is regular interaction between the coordinator/teacher in the language café and the students' teacher. This makes sure that the coordinator knows in-depth about the learning needs of the student. Otherwise the coordinator will always ask the indi-

vidual student about their level, so that the volunteer knows the student's needs from the beginning.

TOP THREE TIPS

1. Optimize the schedule for the language café to match the formal classes of the target group, for example so that students can practise at the café either before or after classes. This way you provide convenient learning options.
2. Secure volunteers of diverse background, skill-set, age and gender thus always having a suitable volunteer on hand to suit different students' needs.
3. A paid teacher coordinating the café gives you many advantages and ensures quality. Do prioritise this if possible.

www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu

Project Partner



www.drc.ngo



www.efalondon.org



www.cvovolt.be

Caritas

www.stand129.at
www.caritas-wien.at



www.ibis-ev.de



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