



TOOLKIT FOR VOLUNTEERS

in language learning



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*In this Toolkit
you'll find* ↘

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HOW VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT

language learning for refugees



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- Having volunteers in language classes frees up the teacher to focus on the class as a whole. It gives the teacher the time and space to make more linguistic and behavioral observations, which can then inform lesson planning.
- Volunteers can help supplement formal learning. Outside the classroom, volunteers may run conversation clubs, different kinds of extracurricular activities, or act as language buddies or tutors. These activities can give students the chance to practise speaking, listening, reading and writing in authentic, everyday contexts (see below for more on this).
- In some cases, refugees don't have access to professional language teaching at all. Volunteer language teaching or practice is therefore the only support available. Although volunteer work can't replace a language course, it can help with the first steps in learning the new language and bridge the gap to formal provision.
- Volunteers' warmth and commitment cannot be underestimated. Alongside language learning, language classes are an opportunity for refugees to build relationships, be heard and feel supported. They can be a way to find out how to access further opportunities, services and support. Volunteers may be the first members refugees get to know in their new community. Volunteering in this context can be another way of offering a warm welcome to those arriving in the country. The interpersonal side of the work of volunteers can make a real difference.

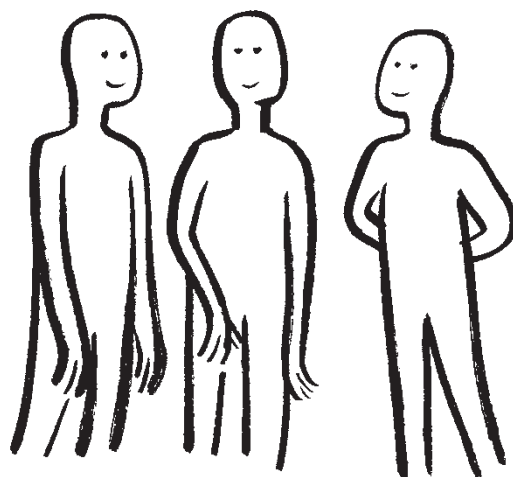


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Buddying/One-to-One





WELCOME

your support makes a difference

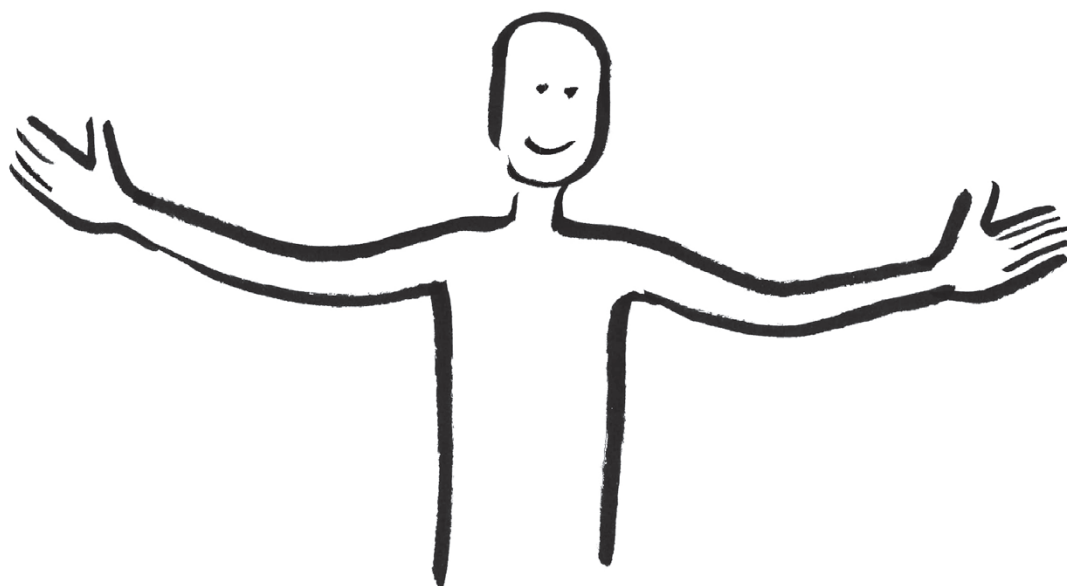
Welcome to the toolkit for volunteers. You want to act in solidarity with refugees where you live? Great! This guide is aimed at those who want to give their time and energy in this way. It's focused on language learning because this is a key area where practical support can make a difference.

Why language learning? Refugees face many challenges arriving in a new country, and learning the local language(s) is usually one of their top priorities. It is key to orientation, building new networks and expressing oneself. Professional language teachers are vital but language learning doesn't just take place in the classroom. The more opportunities language learners have to practise their new language, the better. This means that conversation partners are a valuable resource in the process of language acquisition. This is one area, of many, where volunteers can be invaluable.

The toolkit is aimed at both people already volunteering and those who want to volunteer and don't know where to start. The guide will cover volunteering in different contexts: supporting a classroom teacher, providing activities outside lessons and 1-2-1 support and buddying. It will speak to volunteers working with an organisation and those who want to organise something volunteer-led. It is for seasoned volunteers, complete beginners and anyone in between. In short, this is a guide for all those who want to give their unpaid time to support language learning for refugees.

The guide is informed (and inspired) by research into language teaching and volunteering across Europe. This research has highlighted different methods that volunteers are using to support refugees' language learning and the best ways they can offer support

We hope the exercises, tools and thoughts in this document will support you to make the most of your volunteering and become as effective and useful as possible. We'll do this by discussing the qualities and skills that make a good volunteer, informed by input from teachers and students. We'll give you an overview of useful language learning basics. We'll also include opportunities for self-reflection on your personal qualities, skills and behaviour that you can return to regularly to continue to improve your practice. Finally, this toolkit contains ideas of activities that we have collected from real life examples of innovative language support happening across Europe.





What to do... **ROLES AND TASKS**

There are so many different ways to support language learners as a volunteer. These can be broadly divided into roles in and outside formal classrooms. The list of roles below is designed to help you to reflect on what would suit you best.

Volunteers in the Classroom

In our research, we found a variety of ways in which volunteers across Europe are supporting paid language teachers in classroom settings. Volunteers can stick to one role, or can change function depending on the particular lesson:

Volunteers as Tutors

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 that are distinct from the wider group. Alternatively, the volunteer can provide time-limited intense tuition to every learner in the class, in turn. They can focus on specific tasks like reading, conversation or specific activities. They can also perform an assessment of students' needs for the teacher. Not all volunteers will necessarily have these skills or are expected to, but it is through discussions with the paid teacher that this is agreed.

Volunteers as Participants (as expert speakers of the language)

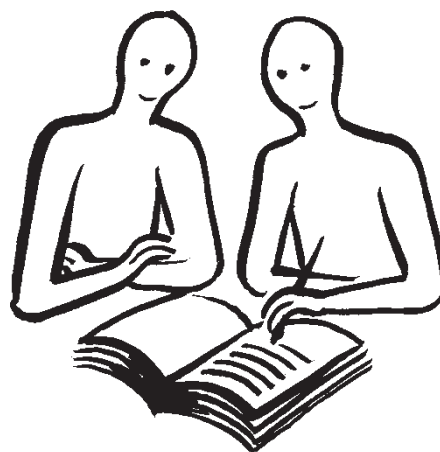
Here volunteers are treated as participants and take part in class activities without prior knowledge of the lesson plan or the activities that they're about to get involved in. This can help to establish a sense of equality and camaraderie between volunteers and students and help build their relationships.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

Volunteers as Teaching Assistants

Some countries such as Denmark have professional, paid teaching assistants, but in many other countries across Europe this is a voluntary role. 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 Extra Support in a Specific Field (not directly connected to the language acquisition)

Many volunteers make language learning possible by supporting in a specific field as for example childcare or administration. These volunteers might not be involved in the language acquisition directly, but without their engagement, certain groups would not have access to the language class.



Volunteers in Extra-curricular Activities

Volunteers may also run extra-curricular activities that sit alongside classroom provision. For example, teachers can signpost students to the volunteer-run activities happening outside formal classes. Good communication may allow volunteers to plan extra-curricular experiences or activities which complement what students are learning in class. Examples of such activities include:

Volunteers Supporting or Organising trips for Learners

Since we know that language acquisition does not only take place in the classroom, it can be useful for students to undertake trips. Learning the names of the fruits in a book is



one thing, but buying them at the market is something else. Learning the directions in the classroom is fine, but wouldn't it be nice to test out this language in the streets and the subway? Volunteers can support such excursions or even organise them themselves.

Volunteers as Buddies

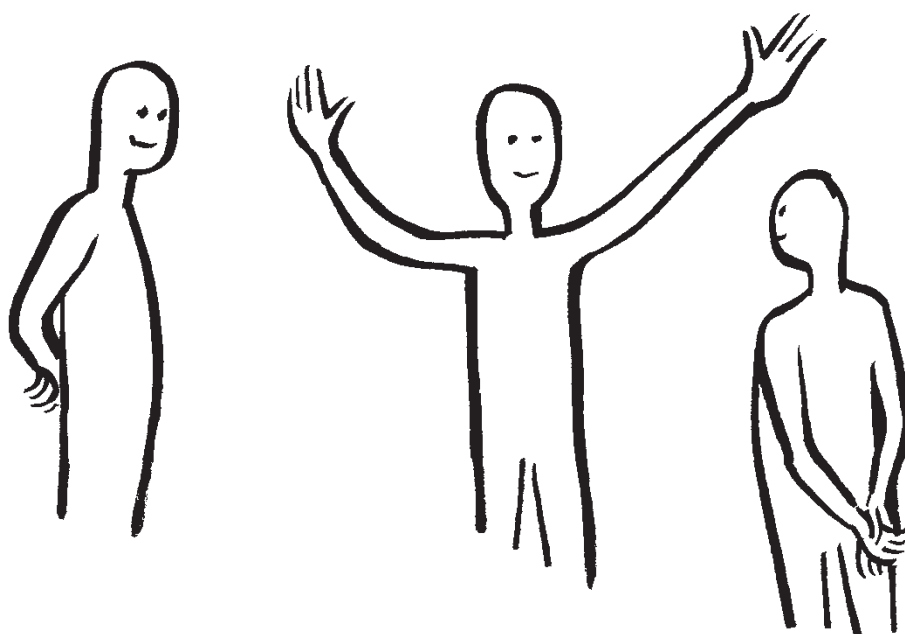
Buddy schemes are a popular format in many projects. Volunteers and refugees are matched at an initial event, and then meet up autonomously on a one-to-one basis. Some projects offer supervision or group activities for all participants in the programme alongside the one-to-one meet ups and mentoring. Language learning is not always the main focus of these projects, but the buddy is still a very important conversation partner for refugees. Patient listeners are a valuable resource for every language learner.

Volunteer Contacts for Leisure Activities/Sport Clubs

Volunteers who are part of sport or interest clubs can support language learners by acting as a point of contact to welcome refugees to the club for the first time. Participating in activities around a sports club or gardening project can benefit wellbeing, help learners build new relationships and give them opportunities to practise their new language in 'real-life'. After all, sharing interests, talents or passions with other people is a wonderful starting point for conversation and connection - regardless of language barriers. Contact language teachers to see if they can signpost learners towards the club or activities. Better still if the teacher is willing to invite the volunteer contact person into the classroom to talk about the club/activity and break the ice.

"I have really enjoyed Volunteering. I discovered a way of being and learning together that was very special - wholeheartedly generous - and fruitful beyond my wildest dreams."

Volunteer, UK





Where to volunteer: **DON'T GO IT ALONE**

Don't struggle alone or spend time and energy 'reinventing the wheel'. Join forces with others to do more and support each other through inevitable challenges. There are many benefits of getting organised or joining an organisation.

Sometimes working with refugees can present difficulties and there is a risk of becoming overwhelmed as a volunteer. Refugees are surrounded by professionals: Social workers, administrative officers, security agents, trainers... As a volunteer, you can offer something different. You aren't acting in a professional capacity. As a result, refugees may ask for your support and help on many other issues. It can be challenging to support people in distress, especially if you feel like you are the only one who can help them. Whilst this can be rewarding, it can also lead to 'burnout' - where you feel overwhelmed to the point where you withdraw from volunteering altogether. This is a situation which is disappointing and frustrating for all involved. And it is quite the opposite of what you had in mind when you began volunteering.

Being part of a group or organisation of some kind can help to support your volunteering and reduce the risk of burnout. Many organisations have developed policies, guidelines, or defined tasks for the volunteers. Some bigger organisations have Volunteer Coordinators who can advise and support you. Organisational support doesn't just benefit you - it can provide a helpful context for the people you want to support. 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 support the learners.

Find an organisation that you like the sound of and that connects with your values. In most European countries there is quite a variety of charities, governmental and Non-Governmental-Organisations to choose from.

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

**Language Learner,
Germany**

In the following, you can find contact details of organisations where you can engage as a volunteer in language learning.



SKILLS AND QUALITIES

for working in solidarity with refugees learning language

Before we dig into the practicalities of supporting language learning, we outline here some of the general personal qualities that make a good volunteer. Anyone can be a volunteer, as long as they are reliable, empathetic, friendly and respectful.

In the course of our research we've talked to teachers, language learners and volunteers themselves about 'best practice' - the attitudes and behaviours that make volunteers genuinely supportive. You can work to develop these in advance of beginning to work with language learners. You can also return to this section for reflection throughout your time as a volunteer:

Much of this builds personal qualities that you may already have and the strengths that you'll bring as an empathetic person and an expert speaker of the language. On the following pages we give more in-depth information about how to best support language acquisition. But the attitude towards refugees, language learners and the learning process all have a direct impact on how much genuine support you'll be able to offer, so it's a good place to start.

The Council of Europe Toolkit offer some interesting resources for reflection to supplement this toolkit:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees>

Warmth and Empathy

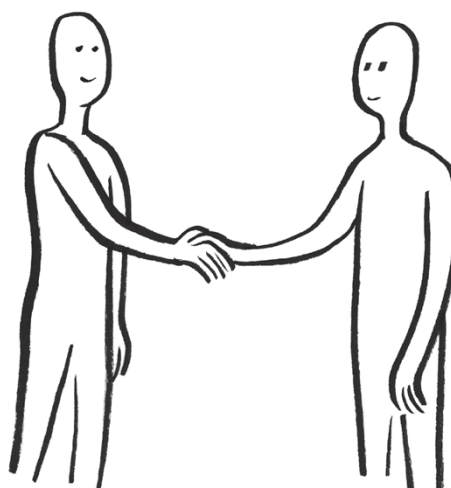
Learning a new language can be stressful. Learners can feel exposed, especially if others don't share their language and there is no safety net. Migrating to a new place, whatever the circumstances, also brings stresses and is a recognised risk factor for mental health problems. One simple response to this is to be as kind and friendly as possible and empathetic if learners are having a hard time.

Stress can be a barrier to learning, as it reduces the learners' inclination to take risks with their language and stretch out of their comfort zone. One way you can reduce stress in language learners you are helping is to be as kind and friendly as possible. This has to be authentic for you - not everyone can smile every minute of the day - but it really helps to be warm, open and approachable. The silences and the breakdowns in communication will not matter so much if the learner feels comfortable with you.

Reliability

Reliability and consistency are crucial when it comes to volunteering to help people learn their new language. Being a reliable volunteer will show learners and colleagues that you take them and their learning seriously. It is great if you can volunteer for a long period of time (several months or at least the period of time that has been agreed in advance). Language learning relationships can take time to get going and benefits accrue over time.

For newly arrived refugees the regularity of the meetings can be very important because it can help to give them a weekly structure. If you need to miss a session/appointment, give your colleagues and/or language learners plenty of notice so they can plan around your absence. The main thing is to communicate well with the people you are working and volunteering alongside.





Respect

People who seek asylum or are given refugee status have often gone through heavy and traumatising experiences. It's important for them to have safe spaces, which they can rely on and feel respected in. Some important things to bear in mind whatever your area of volunteering:

The people you'll be working with are adults who bring their own life experience, wisdom, knowledge and skills into the learning environment. It can be helpful and positive to think of the encounter as a mutual learning experience. You will likely have language skills (as well as lots of other things) to offer - and students will have things to teach you too. Expressing this attitude can help to create a warm and inclusive learning environment where everyone feels valued.

When working with language learners in particular, the maxim 'a beginner speaker is not a beginner thinker' is an excellent reminder. It is important to avoid infantilising people because of their language level. Any learning materials should be age appropriate, for example. Language may need to be simplified but ideas and themes for discussion can be complex. It is nice to recognise the learner's talents and strengths so that the learner can see that you value the whole person and see beyond the beginner speaker/writer. Discussing topics of interest is much more motivating for the learner, so be curious about their interests/hobbies. A conversation will feel more natural if you have an interesting topic.

Respect also applies to involving the learner in discussions about their learning and choices relating to their learning. Language learners feel respected when they can have their say about what they learn and how.

It is also vital to respect people's values and cultural practices, but also not assume you know what these are based on what you think you know about their background. Refugees are not a homogenous group - they will come from different places, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, have different legal statuses and a variety of formal and informal learning histories. It's fine to ask people about their cultural practices and encourage people to ask about yours.

Self-Knowledge and Critical Awareness

Building a positive relationship with refugee language learners is aided by self awareness.

It can be helpful to acknowledge the prejudices and privilege that you bring into your encounter with learners. For example, you may have never met a refugee before and may have some preconceptions about what they'll be like. Acknowledging your blind spots with self compassion may help you guard against acting on them in your volunteering role! Ongoing critical reflection and learning more about the socio-political context of migration and racism will help improve the way you relate to the refugees you work with. There is background reading at the end of this toolkit to aid you in this process. For more information on power and privilege see:

<http://neweconomyorganisers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/NEON-Power-and-Privilege-Guide.pdf>

(See page 17 for more information on cultivating safety for learners and yourself.)

"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

**Lilla Watson,
Aboriginal activist**



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.

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. (Cross reference: 1.5. Don't stay 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)

"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**

"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 consis-

tently, 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, volunteered 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 (cross reference 2.3.), with different prior educational experiences, motivations and needs (Cross reference: 1.4. Skills and qualities of a good volunteer). You might be particularly well suited to learn languages. What has worked for you may not necessarily work for other learners and different learners.

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?

"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: 2.5. Safer Spaces)

FIRST MEETING

with a volunteer coordinator or a teacher

If you are going to support a teacher in a classroom setting or a bigger organisation, you'll likely have an initial meeting with the teacher and/or volunteer coordinator. There are some useful things to find out from them before you start. The following list of questions to consider is fairly long and you may not feel the need to ask all of them, but we have included them for reference and inspiration:

Questions to ask

- How much time do I have to commit as a volunteer?
- How long will I need to commit to this activity as a volunteer?
- Will there be any training or induction for me as volunteer?
- Is there an exchange, training, supervision or reflection for volunteers offered by the organisation or other self-organised groups that you know of?
- Do you offer trainings, supervision or reflection with the teacher?
- Will I need to do any specific preparation before each lesson/session?
- What will you expect from me?
- How will I be introduced to class?
- Will I work with the same group of learners?
- Will I get a certificate for this activity?



Supporting language learning: **General Principles**

In this section we outline skills and tips that will help you support language learning in a variety of contexts - inside or outside the classroom. If you're looking for guidance on working in a specific setting skip to section 3.





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.

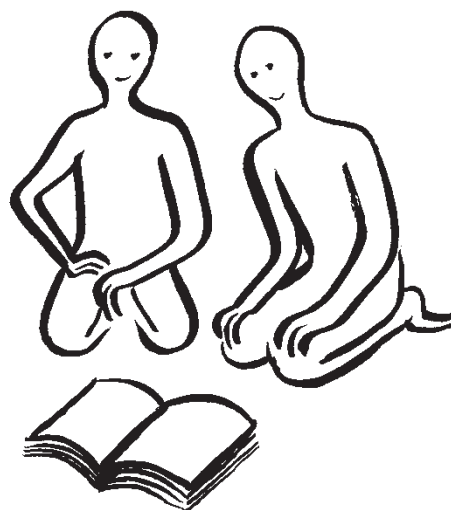
Here we outline some of the many ways that volunteers can support the language learning process:

- *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. (Cross reference: 2.5 Safer Space).
- *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 to 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 to-

gether, 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 ensure the learner builds specific knowledge.

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

Volunteer, Denmark

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!



Diverse learners need **DIVERSE APPROACHES**

Not everybody learns a language the same way. It's good to know people respond to teaching methods in different ways so you can take them into account when you support language learners.

Whether you find yourself in the classroom as a teaching assistant or you go to a soccer match with language learners, you will always be made aware that people learn language by listening and talking to you. Each learner has a unique experience of the world and this impacts on their learning. Some people have relatively undeveloped formal literacy skills for example and have developed an ability to remember language orally, whereas others prefer to take notes and see language written down.

Past language learning approaches, including the ones our teachers likely used at school, tended to privilege certain types of knowledge and ability. In language classes and activities it is important to acknowledge the diverse abilities and educational experiences of each learner. When lessons and support are adapted to this diversity, they're more likely to be effective.

So how do you get to know the individual needs of the learners you're working with? Even professional teachers can find this difficult. If in doubt, employ diverse methods, be observant and remember that everyone learns differently. What works brilliantly for you when you're learning a language might be totally useless for the person you're trying to support.



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 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.

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.

"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

Supporting Students Beyond Your Volunteering Role

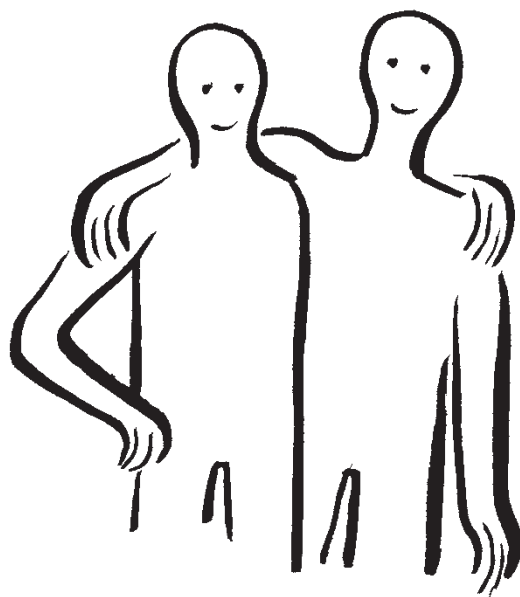
Students may be facing injustice, oppressive bureaucratic systems, discrimination and inequality in their lives and may ask for support to respond to any or all of these challenges. It's understandable to want to help out and do more to support students. Some tips on acting in solidarity with refugees:

- 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



"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



Context for Volunteering

Detailed section with case studies & lots of practical logistical & pedagogical information related to different contexts





#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. (Cross Reference to 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

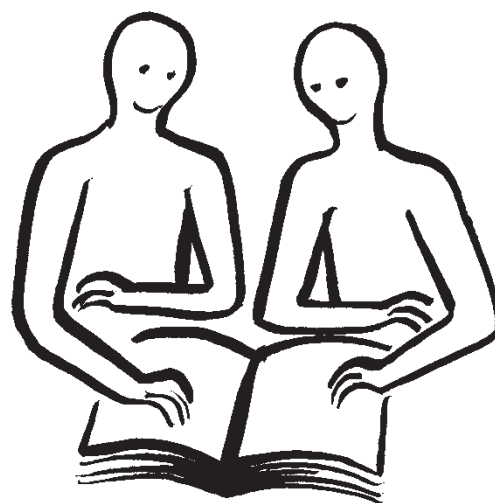
Before you came, the teacher may have been alone in the classroom. Teachers set up the classroom their way and their style of interacting with the learners might be very different to your own. Try to adapt and make sure the teacher knows what you're able to do. Do you have some skills - like singing, 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

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.



"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**

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 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

buddying (see Cross reference: 3.3 Trips & Walking Tours, 3.4 Shared Activities or 3.5 Buddying, 3.6 Focus on special topics)

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

[in the right-hand section you will find boxes with checklists]

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. (Cross reference....)

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. Cross reference ANNEX

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 (Cross reference: 2.2 Error Correction and Feedback) 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. (Cross reference: SAFE SPACES)

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. (Cross reference DON'T GO IT ALONE)

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

practical
example

build language skills and confidence

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:

<http://www.peabodylibrary.org/services/conversationcircles.html>

<https://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 for 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.

<https://www.weltkulturenmuseum.de/de/freundeskreis/veranstaltungen/8293>

<http://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

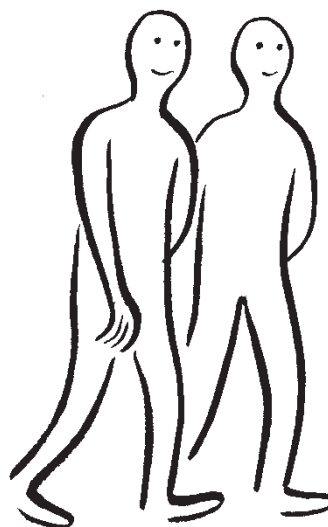
Sarah had just lost a job, when she started to support a women group of refugees at the local community centre round the corner. It was a neighbour who brought her there, and since Sarah had plenty of time and wanted to do something which made sense, it was a welcoming opportunity. "As I am normally sitting 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 had not time for the meetings with 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, which they probably wouldn't visit alone.

The first tour brought 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 is not the main criteria. "These women have surprised me so many times, so I do not dare to judge, what is useful for them, or what meets their interest. 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 easy 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 them 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'd contacted the institutions in advance the group was 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 is not only 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 craft-ing. 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. 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

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*

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.

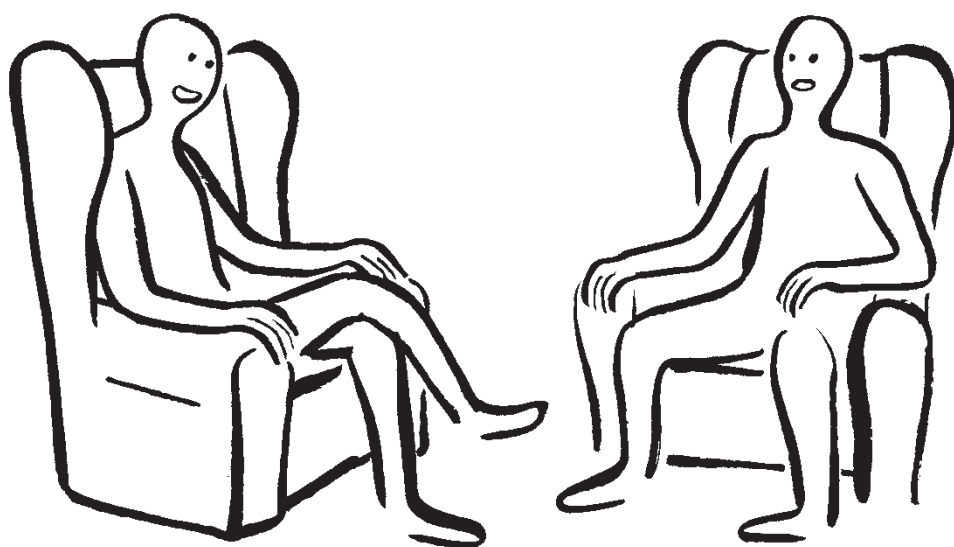
What to Talk About?

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 should always join the project voluntarily.
- Never neglect the importance of the right match between the refugee and the volunteer. Without mutual trust between the refugee and the volunteer 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 refugee had to seek asylum. If the refugee wants to talk about these issues the refugee can bring them up themselves.

THE CONVERSATION

that never stopped

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.

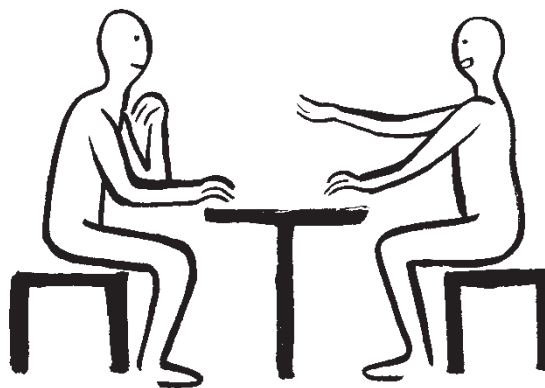
At their first meeting, Ruth opened with: "Tell me about yourself Baris - whatever you want to share. Afterwards I'll ask you questions, and then you can ask me questions - you can ask about anything". The conversation has not stopped since. Ruth says: "It is important for me to create as relaxed an 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."

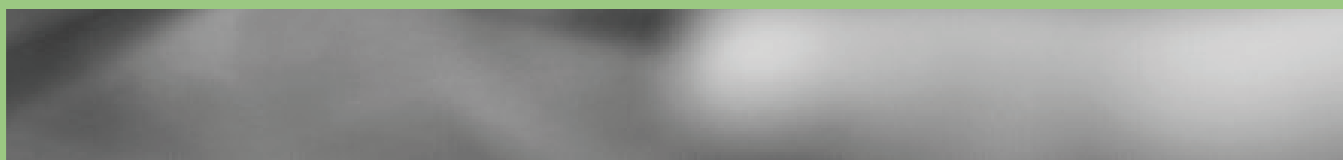
On the question of whether Ruth would recommend others to volunteer for one-to-one meetings she replies: "Yes, I would, but it depends on who it is - it requires a lot of patience and empathy and the ability to treat the learner as an equal on the one hand and on the other hand to correct the language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





Background Information for Reflection

In this section you will find a number of articles intended to spark reflection. These relate to teaching and learning and also the political and cultural landscapes in which we volunteer.





CONSIDERATION

Volunteers are committed to supporting refugees and migrants to improve their lives. Reflecting on this practice can help towards this. It can also help to reflect on the structural, political, economic and cultural barriers that our students may be facing. The prompts for reflection below all relate to this wider context for students. The attitudes and practices we bring to our work with refugee learners can help students to challenge or overcome these barriers.

Reflection: A tale of three sectors

Volunteering can be controversial. This is because volunteer provision is sometimes seen as a potential replacement for state-funded provision of language classes. Across Europe, the debate rages as to whether adult language education should be the responsibility of the state, the voluntary sector or the private sector, or a combination of the three.

In Britain, the state has been a major player when it comes to adult language education (ESOL) at least since 2001 when the Skills for Life Strategy was launched. In other European contexts, where there has historically been less multilingual migration, like Italy for example, the state has not invested so heavily in language education for migrants and refugees.

When the classes are funded and regulated by the state, there tends to be higher requirements for teaching qualifications, standardisation of curricula, accreditation and auditing (observations, inspections etc.). These classes are often held in colleges or schools with reasonable facilities. There is generally more institutional support for administration, HR and continued professional development.

Voluntary, or Third Sector, provision can be less formal. Largely because resources are stretched or non-existent, the classes would tend to be mixed level. Teachers may or not be paid and they may or may not have professional qualifications or experience. Because these classes are generally not funded publicly, they are not subject to the same level of government checks, procedures and restrictions. Some argue that as a result there is more freedom for the teachers, and students, to set the agenda. On the other hand, the quality can be variable.

The role of the private sector is complicated. It may be that private, profit-making institutions bid for public contracts to deliver language education (for example in Denmark), or accreditation, if not the whole provision. Or it might be that language schools are entirely funded by the fees paid by individual students. These classes often contain a mix of migrants and refugees, and foreign students. As a rule, the barriers to entry for teachers are lower, their pay and conditions worse and contracts more precarious than in the public sector.

Reflection: Volunteers, Migration & Refugees

It can be useful to understand volunteering in language learning in relation to the wider historical moment. In the last five years there has been a much publicised mass movement of people into Europe, often fleeing conflicts like the war in Syria and making perilous journeys across land and sea to do so. One result (amongst many) has been a huge number of people who want to give their time to support refugees – so volunteering in language learning is directly linked to this context. Reflecting on migration in a broader context can improve our critical understanding of the language and discourses around migration and refugees in the current period.

Migration is a defining part of European history and certainly not a new phenomenon. It's created the cultures and countries we think of as 'European' today – and continues to remake them. Across the last three centuries, immigration has, at various points, been encouraged to boost populations

TERMINOLOGY

Refugee – Someone who has had to flee their country due to danger for political reasons or reasons of religion or ethnicity. Legally speaking, a refugee is someone who has been granted the protected status of asylum by a host country.

Asylum seeker – someone applying for legal refugee status.

Economic migrant – someone who has moved country for economic reasons.

Immigration – movement into a country

Emigration – movement out of a country

'Expat' or migrant? Both these terms describe someone who lives in a different country from their country of origin. However, they have very different connotations. 'Expat' (short for expatriate) is a term often used to describe British migrants living abroad, or white immigrants from wealthy countries. 'Migrant' and especially 'immigrant' is often a term with unpleasant connotations because of the way it has been used to vilify poorer expatriates living in Britain.



and national economies. Europeans have also emigrated en masse, mainly to the Americas, in order to escape difficult conditions at home. The 20th century in Europe has been characterised by internal and external resettlement, escape and expulsion as 'displaced people' have been forced to migrate in the wake of Nazism and other wars and dictatorships.

European colonisation has also shaped European emigration and immigration. Relationships between colonising and formerly colonised nations have forged migration pathways that still exist today. Colonialism hugely increased economic inequality between colonising and colonised parts of the world. These inequalities, and the comparative poverty and instability in formerly colonised nations, continue to drive migration. European countries have also encouraged immigration of citizens from former colonies to provide cheap labour. Many European countries currently depend on cheap migrant labour to support their economies. Modern immigration systems have complexified the terminology and legal statuses around migration. But the basic motives for movement have changed little over the course of history.

Reflecting on Integration

Integration is a contested term. It is important for people who wish to help migrants and refugees 'integrate' to reflect what is meant by integration. It can be easy to slip into an "us" and "them" way of speaking and thinking, when in reality integration is way more complex than that.

First of all, social integration is much more than successful mixing between newcomers and those born and bred in a particular place. It is not only about nationality and language, as it is often depicted, but also about social class, age, gender, sexuality, religion and regional identities. There are often as many divisions and as much disconnectedness within national groupings as between them.

Discussions about integration can focus on the rights of migrants to participate in the new society or on the other hand it can focus on the responsibility of migrants to learn and play by the rules of the new country and adapt to the cultural norms. It can be seen as a one way-street (rules and responsibilities for migrants) or a two-way street (rules and responsibilities for migrants and non-migrants). Whilst the two-way street seems a fairer, more inclusive version, it still maintains 'us' and 'them' categories and perhaps in reality it's way more complicated than this.

As a volunteer, keep an open-mind in regard to what 'integration' looks like. Find out from the students how they are settling in and what the main barriers are to feeling at home. Newcomers may be interested in the local culture - you may have knowledge to share in this regard. However, some students will know more about this subject than you or the teacher, depending on how long they've been in the

area or the networks and knowledge available to them! The point is, culture and belonging are not straight forward or simple. Exploring differences in culture can bring this home and allow for a more nuanced and diverse understanding of 'national culture'.

Reflection Learning

Reflecting on one's own educational biography, we can say that learning doesn't just take place in formal learning settings, but in a range of places. Formal learning usually takes place in educational institutions, typically in classrooms. This type of learning is not only defined by a clearly formulated goal (for example, curriculum), but also tested by external evaluation. Learning in informal settings happens day to day and is a form of learning that can be less explicitly goal orientated.

Benefit of Non-Formal Learning - Involved Learning

We can bring the benefits of non-formal learning into organised learning activity by focusing on motivating learners, not just teaching language. The goal should be learners' engagement and participation, because the success of non-formal learning depends on enthusiasm. Learners are more likely to practise and absorb language if they're having fun and if there is a clear motivation to communicate for authentic reasons.

Transferring control to learners can also help motivation. Engaged learners are motivated learners. By involving the learners, for example in deciding session content, learning is likely to be more relevant and feel more important to learners. The distinction between language teaching and language support makes a big difference. For non-professional language educators, it is important to recognise this distinction.

Reflection Methods

As already mentioned, informal language support, where session content is decided with the learners, has the advantage of not having to comply with a ready-made curriculum. However, this doesn't mean that you don't have to prepare for sessions!

Grammar is not the central theme of language support; language practice is more based on improving communication skills for specific real life scenarios. Of course every group of learners is different; some may want a more explicit focus on grammar while others will be happy to build grammatical knowledge through use.

The kind of activities you do in informal groups makes a big difference. You can work in large or small groups, give input, play games or use other creative activities.



It can be useful to record games and activities that have worked well with the group. How learners respond to different activities will depend on their experiences of education, their expectations and their personal preferences! Learners with lots of experience of formal education may find games a welcome relief or alternatively not consider them 'proper learning'. It's good to discuss people's experiences of learning and how they like to learn. And bear in mind that participants' lives can be very stressful, so finding activities that provide relaxation and relieve pressure.

Reflecting Diversity in the Groups

Refugees are not a homogenous group. They will likely come from a variety of different social, educational and cultural backgrounds. In terms of language learning they will have different motivations and views. It can be valuable to discuss these backgrounds and give refugees the opportunity to decide for themselves what they want to learn. The pace of lessons, topics, activities and approaches can all be adjusted to suit different learners. The following differences can play a role:

- Classical Distinguishing Characteristics (Age, Gender, Nationality etc.)
- Motivation
- Outlook (optimistic, depressed, etc.)
- Language biography: formal and informal experiences of language teaching and the languages known to participants
- Previous educational experience including experience with different learning methods (for example of the country of origin)
- Expectations of language support



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 and volunteers talk 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 often face in the world outside the classroom because of structural inequalities based on race, gender, class and immigration status. As a volunteer, you 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 volunteer is therefore a part of the classroom community. A key 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 you, as a volunteer, should be on listening to students. This is because the 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. If you are

able to hold back and provide a supportive listening presence you 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. Getting involved in authentic discussion where you share your opinions and experiences helps to break down hierarchies and divides between you and the 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 can be emphasised by volunteers who engage in open exchange with students.



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 Tamazight 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 Tamazight, 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 linguist with a range of linguistic resources to build on. This makes learners feel more confident

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, linguistic discrimination (based on language) is on the rise. 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 and volunteers acknowledge the importance of learning the language(s) of the nation and/or local community but we should also oppose linguistic discrimination and 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? Volunteers (and teachers) should be careful not to (inadvertently) recycle hostile, unwelcoming narratives.



SOURCES, WEBSITES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

United Kingdom

Volunteering

In the following link you can find information about volunteering in the UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/volunteer>

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering>

<https://do-it.org/>

Charitable institutions in the UK

These institutions offer various support for refugees. From advice to ESOL classes, financial support or projects that promote social justice. The list is by no means exhaustive and there are countless local organisations doing fantastic work to support migrants and refugees.

Refugee Action - <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/>

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants - <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/>

Refugee Council - <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Migrant Help - <https://www.migranthelpuk.org/>

Migrants Organise - <https://www.migrantsorganise.org/>

ESOL teaching in the UK

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages courses) have a long history in the UK. Classes were run from people's living rooms, church halls and synagogues for Eastern European Jewish migrants arriving in London's East End in the 19th century. Nowadays ESOL is of course professionalised and publicly funded (despite the 60% cut over the last decade). ESOL courses are found at Further Education Colleges (FE) across the country and there are often local authority classes too. The best thing to do is google "ESOL + name of the city or local authority", for example, "ESOL Manchester".

State funded ESOL is only free to unemployed students in receipt of certain state benefits. This includes refugees but not recently arrived asylum seekers. There are a large number of charities providing free ESOL irrespective of students' immigration status or what state benefits they receive.

Information about Language Learning and Pedagogy:

Participatory ESOL resources:

<https://www.skillsforlifeforlondon.com/download/ashx?dok=1271>

<https://www.efalondon.org/esol/research-and-media>

Volunteering in language learning

The Council of Europe developed the handouts presented on this website (available in seven languages). The handouts were developed with a concern of their suitability for organizations, particularly for volunteers who linguistically support adult refugees.

<https://www.coe.int/de/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees>

Opportunities to volunteer to support language learning in the UK

Talk English - <https://www.talk-english.co.uk/introduction/become-a-friend/>

Opportunities to provide buddy support to migrant language learners in the UK

Local Further Education College See if your local college provides ESOL and whether they take volunteers

Local third sector and informal provision you can also look at provision locally. Refugee support groups and ESOL classes may be looking for volunteers.



SOURCES, WEBSITES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Austria

In the following link you can find information about volunteering in Austria.

<http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/>

Charitable institutions in Austria

These institutions offer support in Austria. From advice to German classes, financial support or even projects that promote social inclusion in Austria.

<https://www.hilfswerk.at/oesterreich/>

<https://www.caritas.at/>

<https://diakonie.at/>

<https://www.volkshilfe.at/>

Information about Language Learning and Pedagogy:

Here you can find all community college (VHS) classes in Austria, for German classes there is the possibility to choose a discount, ask in your regional VHS institute.

<https://www.vhs.at/>

In the project "Educational reflexivity in basic education in the migration society", methods and impulses for the realization of pedagogical reflexion were developed and tested. The practice was pursued together with teachers in basic education with migrants within the scope of reflexivity workshops. The publication is free and accessible online.

<https://www.maiz.at/projekt/maiz-bildung/basisbildung-und-paedagogische-reflexivitaet>

The Council of Europe developed the handouts presented on this website (available in seven languages). The handouts were developed with the organisations and volunteers who linguistically support refugees in mind.

<https://www.coe.int/de/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees>

Legal information for asylum seekers and supporters in Austria:

The Asylkoordination Österreich aims to support organisations, initiatives and volunteers in the counselling and care of refugees and disseminate expert knowledge to the public.

<https://www.asyl.at/de/>

The Austrian Integration Fund is the state institution that deals with issues of migration and integration and provides information.

<https://www.integrationsfonds.at/>

Four contact points (AST) in Vienna, Linz, Graz and Innsbruck offer advice on the recognition and evaluation of qualifications acquired abroad. In the other federal states, weekly speaking days take place. The advice is multilingual and also free.

<https://www.anlaufstelle-anerkennung.at/anlaufstellen>

Here you will find information about the Austrian education system:

<https://www.bildungssystem.at/>

Here you will find a collection of regional and national further education opportunities

<https://erwachsenenbildung.at/bildungsinfo/bildungsangebote/bildungsdatenbanken.php#oesterreichweit>

On the cross-agency platform [oesterreich.gv.at](https://www.oesterreich.gv.at), citizens can now take advantage of selected official channels online and find immediate help and information on all administrative issues. Through the portal-spanning search (including [HELP.gv.at](https://www.help.gv.at), [USP](https://www.usp.gv.at), [RIS](https://www.ris.gv.at)), public information can be accessed centrally via [oesterreich.gv.at](https://www.oesterreich.gv.at).

<https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/public.html>



SOURCES, WEBSITES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Germany

Volunteering

www.ehrenamt-deutschland.org

www.bundes-freiwilligendienst.de

Charitable Institutions

Here you find all kinds of social support incl. support for refugees

German Red Cross

www.drk.de

Charity of the Roman-Catholic Church

www.caritas.de

Charity of the Protestant Church

www.diakonie.de

Charity with working class background, founded in 1919 for social and equal rights

www.awo.org

Umbrella organisation for more than 10.000 social initiatives and organizations

www.der-paritaetische.de

Language Schools

Language courses for refugees are offered of different schools, organizations and associations. The adult education centers are represented nationwide. They exist in all cities and counties. Furthermore, some of the above mentioned charities (s.o.) also offer courses and language cafes. The trade union, esp. "Ver.di" and employers' associations (fx. Bildungswerk der Niedersächsische Wirtschaft BNW) also offer language learning opportunities. Finally, certain clubs also offer language courses and language clubs. So there are at least one, but usually several providers of language support measures in a city or a district.

www.vhs.de

www.verdi.de

www.bnw.de (Niedersachsen)

<https://ibis-ev.de> (Oldenburg)

Language Learning – material, links, apps

Four publishing houses are the main source for the language lessons and other materials (games, DVDs

etc) for "German as a second language" (DaZ).

www.hueber.de

www.klett.de

www.cornelsen.de

www.langenscheidt.com

Learning German online

Several Website provide possibilities to improve your German, like Babbel, Duolingo, Busuu, sprachheld, 50languages, Mosalingua, Memrise and many more

Support for Asylum seekers

In addition to the large refugee and asylum organizations, the charity and welfare associations (see above) offer help for refugees. There are also a large number of federal or local associations, associations and initiatives.

www.amnesty.de

Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org/de

www.proasyl.de

Bundesweite Arbeitsgemeinschaft der psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer (BAFF): www.baff-zentren.org

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Bundesverwaltung): www.bamf.de

Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen e.V. www.nds-fluerat.org

„AMBA“= Aufnahmemanagement und Beratung von Asylsuchenden in Nds., amba@nds-fluerat.org

<https://ibis-ev.de>



SOURCES, WEBSITES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Denmark

Volunteering

The Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE) is a national, independent centre for development, competences and knowledge for volunteering in the social welfare sector. They bring together knowledge and experience from practice from stakeholders involved in social volunteering.

<https://frivillighed.dk/>

Civilsamfundets Videnscenter produces guides, research and educational material targeted at civil society. The aim is to disperse knowledge, experience and tools among others within volunteering.

<https://www.altinget.dk/civilsamfundetsvidenscenter/>

Danish Refugee Council resources on volunteering.

<https://flygtning.dk/frivillig>

Charitable institutions in Denmark

These organisations offer various support for refugees in Denmark. From advice to Danish classes, financial support or projects that promote social inclusion in Denmark.

Danish Refugee Council: <https://flygtning.dk/> and <https://www.altomintegration.dk/>

Røde Kors:

<https://www.rodekors.dk/>

Trampoline House:

<https://www.trampolinehouse.dk/>

Danish education

De danske sprogcentre is a trade organization for language centres in Denmark with contact information for local language centres and resources on learning Danish.

<https://www.dedanskesprogcentre.dk/>

Free Resources for learning Danish

"Dansk her og nu", a free online course for Danish for Beginners: <https://danskherognu.dk/intro/intro-in-english>

"Online dansk", a free online course for Danish for Beginners: <http://onlinedansk.ventures.dk/emneside.aspx?menuID=1>

"Vores fælles sprog", a digital Grammar: <http://vfs.dansk.nu/#>

Ligetil – News in easy written Danish: <https://www.dr.dk/ligetil>

Lexin Billedtema - a multilingual interactive picture dictionary with illustrations, text, sound and animations: <http://lexin.udir.no/bildetema/bildetema-portal/index.html?page=about&version=danish>

Legal information for asylum seekers and integration professionals in Denmark

Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet provide information on asylum, legislation for foreigners, Danish education and integration.

<https://nyidanmark.dk/>

<http://uim.dk/siri>

Styrelsen for International Rekruttering og Integration (SIRI) collect and disperse knowledge, tools and facts about integration in Denmark.

<https://www.integrationsviden.dk/>

Information for professionals about refugees affected by trauma.

<http://traume.dk/>

Danish Refugee Council provide legal counselling for asylum seekers.

<https://flygtning.dk/>



SOURCES, WEBSITES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Belgium

Volunteer work

Via this link you can find information about volunteering in Flanders.

<http://vrijwilligerswerk.be>

These organizations provide support for non-Dutch speaking newcomers in Flanders.

www.huisnederlands.be

www.derand.be

www.netwerkegenarmoede.be

www.atlas-antwerpen.be

<https://www.leuven.be/nederlands-leren-en-oefenen>

www.muntpunt.be

Often the local government organizes (through the cultural center or in conjunction with other training organizations) Dutch courses in the form of language cafés, discussion groups...

Centers for Adult Education and Centers for Basic Education

The range of Dutch courses in these centers is large. Both modules that train speaking skills and writing courses are part of the standard offer. Those who meet certain conditions can often receive a discount on the registration fee.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe developed an informative bundle for organizations and volunteers who want to support adult's newcomers. The information is available in 7 languages.

<https://www.coe.int/de/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees>

Here you will find information about the Flemish education system:

<https://education.vlaanderen.be>

Links to free material to learn Dutch

www.oefenhierjenederlands.be

<https://www.nedbox.be/>

<http://www.taalblad.be/>

<http://www.wablieft.be/krant/online-krant>

Information for asylum seekers in Belgium

www.vluchtelingenwerk.be

www.fedasil.be

Cavaria has developed an information brochure for refugees. You can download them via <https://www.cavaria.be/mediatheek/asiel-in-belgie-informatie-voor-asielzoekers>

<https://www.caritasinternational.be/nl/asiel-migratie/asielzoekers/>

<https://www.naricvlaanderen.be/nl/informatie-voor-vluchtelingen>



LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THE UK

Terminology

There are several terms that are often used interchangeably or incorrectly. The term 'migrant' is an umbrella term for anyone who moves to another country to live. This could be a person who comes to London from France to study or someone who has fled the war in Syria. The term 'immigrant' technically means a person to migrants 'in' to a country as opposed to an emigrant who migrates 'out'. However, the term has some negative connotation, due to the barrage of negativity led by the right-wing press in the UK. People who are supportive of immigration and migrants' rights tend to speak of migrants rather than immigrants. The term 'ex-pat' is often used for 'higher status' migrants. For example, British people living in Spain are often described as 'ex-pats', rather than migrants, and this is also used for some groups living in the UK.

Refugees and asylum seekers

A refugee leaves their country because of the threat of persecution for reasons of race, religion, sexual orientation, belonging to a particular social group or political affiliation/opinion. An asylum seeker is a person who seeks to be recognized as a refugee and gain residence in the UK. In other words before a person is officially recognised as being a refugee they are an asylum seeker. It is an important legal distinction, as currently, asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are prevented from accessing many public services whereas refugees have the same entitlements as other residents without British citizenship. It can take years for the Home Office to process asylum claims and give a decision.

Asylum seekers are paid a small amount of money, £37.50 per week per person, and are given accommodation if they need it. They cannot choose where they live and they are unlikely to be offered accommodation in London or the south-east of England where rent is more expensive. Pregnant women and parents with children under three are given £3 extra a week for 'healthy food' and there is a one-off pay-

ment of £300 for pregnant women within eight weeks of giving birth. This information is updated on the gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get>

There is a campaign underway called "Lift the Ban" led by Refugee Action and supported by groups such as English for Action to let asylum seekers work. The humanitarian and economic reasons to allow people to work while they are waiting for their claims to be processed are compelling.

There were relatively few asylum applications in the UK last year, 32,693. That is down from a peak of 84,000 in 2002 and compares to 161,900 in Germany over the same period.

When a person received refugee status and is offered asylum in the UK, they and their dependents are given five years leave to remain. During this period, they can access mainstream benefits, rent accommodation privately and they have the right to work. After five years they are entitled to apply to settle in the UK.

When a person receives refugee status there are given 28 days to find accommodation and apply for mainstream benefits, or find work. After 28 days they are evicted from their asylum accommodation. Many refugees become homeless for this reason.

If a person's asylum claim is refused, they may have a right to appeal. If they can't appeal or their appeal is unsuccessful they may be forced to leave. People can be detained without warning and taken to an immigration removal centre (detention centre). 24,333 people were detained at a removal centre last year (2018-19).

Relevant websites

Refugee Council – <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Refugee Action – <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk>

Government information <https://www.gov.uk/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection>



LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN AUSTRIA

Some refugees are supported by the state through several language courses, others do not even get a beginner's course. Why is that so? If you want to help a refugee gain access to a state-sponsored language course, you should first get a rough idea of how the legal status of a person relates to access to language courses. In addition, of course, there is also the factor of luck because decisions made can be arbitrary.

In Austria, refugees usually have access to free formal language courses only with a recognised status (see details below). If the time frame of the recognition procedures lasted a few weeks, it might still be bearable, but it becomes difficult because some procedures drag on for years.

From the age of 15, the state encourages literacy and language proficiency to A2, ie at a level of elementary speech use. Whether further language courses are also financed is usually the responsibility of the Labour Market Service (AMS). Depending on whether someone is classified as able to work or not, the responsibilities of the allocation to a German course between the Public Employment Service and the state agency of the Austrian Integration Fund. As government funding for the Public Employment Service in 2018 has been greatly reduced, it is not clear at the moment how this responsibility will change in the future. Linking access to further language courses to vocational qualifications is problematic in that the other way around, professional qualifications, recognition of training and entry into the world of work are again tied to language skills.

In colloquial language, the term refugee is often used. But this title only says that people have come to Europe out of necessity and not if they get the chance to stay in here in the longer term. The following terms define the legal status, and thus access to language courses. During and after the completion of the asylum procedure, asylum seekers are issued with different documents (cards) depending on the state of the proceedings.

Asylum Seekers (green or white card):

Asylum seekers are those refugees who have applied for asylum and whose asylum process has not yet been completed. An asylum procedure can take several months or years. During this period, asylum seekers receive basic services (health insurance, food, pocket money, clothing money and accommodation in suitable accommodation). If you get access to a German course, you can be lucky, because the offer of German courses is very limited and is mainly assigned to those who are likely to get a positive asylum deci-

sion. Although in recent years, in some Austrian provinces, a free or low-cost offer has been set up with state support. Since 2018 it can be observed that courses for this target group are no longer being financed.

As long as asylum seekers have not been granted recognised refugee status in Austria, they are not allowed to work and therefore, cannot afford a paid course.

Asylum Seekers, Convention Refugees or Recognised Refugees (blue card):

These three terms are practically synonyms. The persons have completed an asylum procedure and have been recognised in accordance with the refugee definition as per the Geneva Refugee Convention. Since the change in the law in 2016, this status includes an initial of 3 years (temporary asylum, blue residence permit card) and finally permanent entry and residence rights in Austria. The recognised refugees will then also receive free formal German courses. This happens mostly through the AMS (Labour Service).

Subsidiary Protection (gray card):

These are people who are not recognised as refugees within the meaning of the Geneva Convention because, for example, they still cannot prove individual persecution, but still receive a temporary residence permit. This happens because they would face serious harm if they had to return to their country of origin. Among serious damage, i.e. the death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary violence in the context of a warlike dispute etc.

The time limit may be extended if necessary. By granting this residence permit, there is also the possibility to attend formal German courses, as well as to organise work and housing.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN GERMANY

There are several ways to learn the German language. Numerous educational institutions offer a wide range of language courses to enable the acquisition of everyday and business language.

Integrationskurse (Courses of Integration)

Courses of Integration consist of a language course and an orientation course designed to convey knowledge about the German legal system, culture, society and history. The BAMF is responsible for the courses. The courses are held by different course organizers. The classes are funded with federal funds.

The aim of the language course is to acquire sufficient language skills in order to communicate in Germany. The successful participation will be completed with a language test called "DTZ" (Deutschtest für Zuwanderer).

Who can take part in an integration course?

The participation is regulated in the residence law (§ 44 and § 44a AufenthG).

Eligibility:

Individuals with a residence permit: Those who receive a residence permit for 12 months in Germany for the first time - for example after the asylum procedure or family reunification - usually have a right to a place in the integration course.

If the individuals have received the residence permit before January 1, 2005, the BAMF may grant admission to the integration course if spots are left in the course. The application is submitted to the BAMF.

Participation commitment:

Individuals who have obtained a residence permit before 1 January 2005 must attend a language course under the following circumstances - if they cannot reasonably and easily communicate in German and

- receive unemployment benefits (Arbeitslosengeld II) and if the institution granting the unemployment benefits (Jobcenter) obliges them.
- if they are in need of support in integrating or if the immigration authority invites them to participate.
- They cannot be required to participate if they are undergoing an apprenticeship in Germany or if they have participated or are participating in comparable educational undertakings (further education, apprenticeship).

The German Immigration Office determines the obligation to participate when issuing the residence permit.

Individuals with a residency permit: Individuals, who are in the process of acquiring asylum in Germany can only participate if there are still enough free spots in the courses and who have good chances at staying.

Individuals with tolerance permit and permission

If there is a tolerance permit ("suspension of deportation"), usually no integration course may be attended. However, anyone who has a so-called discretion under § 60a (2) sentence 3 or a "training toleration" under § 60a (2) sentence 4ff AufenthG can take part in the integration course.

Permitted access to integration courses is available to those admitted: upon arrival before 01. August 2019, after 3 months of residence (from proof of arrival) and jobseeker's request, looking for a job or unemployed or employed or in a vocational training or activity. If you have a child under the age of 3 or a child from the age of 3, whose care is not guaranteed (§11 Abs.4 Satz2 and 3 SGB XII) access will still be cared for.

For the first time, asylum seekers from other states also have access to the integration course.

Individuals entering after the 01. August 2019, have access only with a so-called "good stay-perspective".

The opening of the integration courses for permitted persons in section 44 (4) sentence 2 AufenthG is no longer limited to those with permanent and legal residence (currently Syria, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq and Somalia).

Asylum seekers arriving from 1 August 2019 from Iran, Iraq and Somalia have access to integration measures only after a positive decision on the asylum procedure and the granting of the residence permit. During the asylum procedure, they can already take part in measures for the conveyance of values and orientation.

EU citizens

EU citizens can be admitted to the integration course if they do not speak sufficient German and are particularly in need of integration (Section 11 (1) sentence 1 FreizügG / EU in conjunction with Section 44 (4) Residence Act).

An application for authorization must be submitted to the BAMF.



Late emigrants:

Late emigrants who came to Germany from 1 January 2005 can take part in an integration course free of charge. The eligibility is issued immediately after their entry into Germany by the immigration authority.

Late emigrants, who were admitted before January 1, 2005 and have not yet attended a language course of the Federal Employment Agency (SGB III course), can participate free of charge. The application for eligibility is made to the Federal Office of Administration.

Occupational German language promotion (according to §45a AufenthG)

Die berufsbezogenen Sprachkurse (DeuFÖV) bauen direkt auf die Integrationskurse auf, sind ein Regelinstrument der Sprachförderung des Bundes und werden vom BAMF umgesetzt. Hier werden arbeitssuchende Migranten und Flüchtlinge auf den Arbeitsmarkt vorbereitet. Voraussetzung sind Vorkenntnisse der deutschen Sprache.

- Immigrants, including those who are in the recognition process and have a good job retention perspective, who are registered as seeking work and receive benefits under SGB II (Hartz IV) or SGB III (Unemployment Benefit), are looking for an apprenticeship or are in training, a migrant background and have a need for further language training can participate. Refugees from safe countries of origin are excluded. From the 01.08.2019 only people from Eritrea and Syria have a good stay-perspective (Ausländerbeschäftigungsförderungsgesetz / ABFGO).
- Citizens of the EU
- Germans with a migration background who have already completed an integration course and / or speak German at B1, B2 or C1 level according to GER (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The employment agencies and job centers decide on participation. Those who are close to the labor market can get access after 6 months of pre-term admission

(also vocational language courses with goals A2 and B1).

- The federally funded language course offer excludes persons from so-called safe countries of origin, individuals with an employment ban and persons with an unclear identity.
- Language courses with state funding

Vom bundesgeförderten Sprachkursangebot werden Personen aus sogenannten sicheren Herkunftsländern, Personen mit Beschäftigungsverbot und Personen mit unklarer Identität ausgeschlossen.

Language courses with state funding

There are refugees who are excluded from the integration course and job-related language support or who have to wait a long time for a vacant place. Many cities and municipalities have therefore, together with sponsoring clubs, created courses that are open to this group of people and are usually free.

Sources:

1. German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees: www.bamf.de
2. Information for refugees: www.fluechtlingshelfer.de



LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN DENMARK

Who is a refugee and who is an immigrant?

A refugee leaves his country because of persecution while an immigrant travels on his own volition or because of poverty and poor living conditions in his home country. Denmark does not grant asylum to people who have fled due to natural disasters, climate change, poverty or poor living conditions. The term migrant is used as an upper category, which refers to both refugees and immigrants.

Who is an asylum seeker?

An asylum seeker is a person who seeks to be recognized as a refugee and gain residence in Denmark. Thus, when a person is granted asylum, it is a recognition that he or she is a refugee and is at risk of persecution in his home country. Danish foreign law and practice are based on the international conventions that Denmark has acceded to.

Asylum seekers are paid money for daily expenses such as food, clothing, hygiene items, etc. The amount depends on age and family size, compliance with contract relating to work duties, etc. Asylum seekers have a duty to perform tasks at the asylum center - e.g. cleaning, participating in teaching and activating. Costs for food, lodging, cash benefits, transport and healthcare are covered by the Danish Immigration Service. In 2019, the rates for services were: clothing package (DKK 1,488.61), hygiene package (DKK 119.99), baby clothing package (DKK 2,977.22), children's clothing package per year. children every 6 months (DKK 699.72).

Applicants for asylum must participate in teaching and clarification of competence at the asylum centers. Teaching can include Danish, English and subjects that benefit the integration in Denmark or prepare for a life in the home country. It is also possible to get an internship or under certain conditions to be allowed to work under normal conditions in Denmark. Asylum seekers go to school at the centers or in some cases in the local primary school. The teaching must correspond to the teaching of bilingual pupils in primary school. The number of hours is basically the same as in primary school, and all subjects are taught in primary school. The language of instruction is Danish with the exception of hours in mother tongue and other foreign languages.

Are asylum seekers allowed work? The conditions for whether asylum seekers must work can be found at:

https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da/Words%20and%20Concepts%20Front%20Page/US/Housing/Conditions_for_occupation_of_an_asylum_seeker

Refugees - residence permits In Denmark, foreigners who are recognized as refugees can receive three types of protection and residence permits depending on their individual case. Refugees who fulfill the conditions of the Refugee Convention can obtain asylum in Denmark as convention refugees. In addition, refugees who - for reasons other than those mentioned in the Refugee Convention - may face the death penalty, torture or other inhuman and degrading treatment in their home country may be granted protection status in Denmark. Finally, Denmark provides temporary protection status for refugees in need of protection due to a particularly serious situation in their home country with arbitrary violence and abuse of civilians, but where the person is not individually persecuted. quota refugees Denmark previously had an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to receive approx. 500 refugees per year. In Denmark, they are referred to as UN refugees or quota refugees. These are refugees who often stay in refugee camps, but can neither stay there nor return home. They therefore need to be resettled in another country. Pr. On 1 January 2018, it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Integration who decides whether Denmark should receive quota refugees and, if so, the number to be resettled in agreement with the UNHCR. A position must now be taken from year to year rather than according to a pre-agreed quota. temporality When refugees are granted asylum, their residence permit is always temporary, ie. limited to start with. The temporary residence permit must be renewed every two years until the conditions for permanent residence are met after a maximum of eight years of legal residence in Denmark. A temporary residence permit means that a refugee may lose his residence permit and be sent back to his home country if the reason for his stay in Denmark changes. For example, if a refugee. no longer in need of protection because conditions in the home country have changed, the residence permit can be withdrawn or denied extension. Pr. On March 1, 2019, a new law came into force, which included means that all residence permits for refugees and family reunions for refugees are granted for temporary residence. It means that

This means that in future the immigration authorities will have a greater focus on not extending or withdrawing the



residence permit if the individual refugee no longer needs protection. They will assess whether the individual refugee is no longer at risk in his or her home country. Withdrawal or non-renewal of a residence permit will always be based on an assessment of the individual's situation. The authorities will be less obliged than ever to take into account the individual refugee's connection to Denmark. But every case of withdrawal and refusal of extension still has to be decided in relation to Denmark's international obligations ie. the conventions we have signed. This means that Danish knowledge, work, education, family and other connections to Denmark continue to play a role in the possibility of staying in Denmark.

Residence cards

When / if you get a residence permit in Denmark, you get a residence card as proof. It contains similar biometrics (ie face photo and fingerprints) stored in a chip on the card. There are residence cards depending on the type of residence permit eg. fixed-term residence permit for refugee, fixed-term, fixed-term residence and work permit for foreigners, fixed-term residence permit and limited work per-

mit for students, fixed-term residence permit, etc. They look immediately alike but have different letters.

"The residence card is an internationally recognized proof that you can use as evidence of your right to stay in Denmark. You must always have your residence card on you - both when you are in Denmark and if you possibly travel on holiday to another country during your stay in Denmark" (Source:

<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da/Ord-og-begreber/F%C3%A6lles/Opholdskort-med-biometri>)

Relevant websites

Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet: <http://uim.dk/>

Udlændingestyrelsen: <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/>

Det Nationale Integrationsbarometer (Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet): <https://integrationsbarometer.dk/>

Integrationsviden (Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet): <https://www.integrationsviden.dk/>



LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN BELGIUM

People from all over the world live in Flanders and Brussels. The Flemish government considers it important that these new citizens can fully participate in society and therefore offers a naturalization process.

The naturalization process consists of three parts. Because language is the basis of good naturalization, there is a Dutch course. In the social orientation course, naturalization officers gain insight into all kinds of practical aspects of life in our society: How do you look for work? How is education organized? How does public transport work? The course offers an answer to these and many other questions.

Finally, there is guidance for people looking for work through career guidance.

The naturalization process is an obligation for some and a non-binding choice for others. To which target group a naturalization officer belongs, is determined by law. During an intake interview, the learning path counselor explains the courses and the naturalizing person signs a naturalization contract that specifies which courses are followed.

Whether it is an obligation or a right, once an integration contract has been signed, it must be complied with. If not, the naturalizing person can receive an administrative fine. The enforcement officials of the Agency for Domestic Administration decide on the basis of the infringement, the information from the file and the defense of the naturalizing person whether or not to impose a fine. For a person entitled to integration, the file is closed after payment of the fine. A compulsory naturalization officer must still complete the naturalization process after the fine. If not, a new infringement file and a new fine may follow.

If you want to follow an NT2 course, contact one of these organizations:

Agency for Integration and Naturalization: Province of Antwerp, Limburg, Flemish Brabant, West Flanders and East Flanders

- House of the Dutch Brussels: city of Brussels
- Atlas Antwerp: city of Antwerp
- In-Ghent: city of Ghent

A consultant guides the naturalizing person and conducts tests if necessary. Depending on this, he / she is referred to the training that fits best: at a center for adult education (CVO), a center for basic education (CBE) or a university language center (UTC).

The Agency for Integration and Naturalization

Here you can go for the following questions:

- Learning Dutch: together with you, the Agency searches for the course and the school that suits you best. You can also contact them with all your questions about learning Dutch.
- Practicing Dutch outside class hours
- Dutch language test

Taking a Dutch as a second language course can be a condition:

- To obtain a naturalization certificate
- To put your candidate for renting a social home
- As part of a route to work at the VDAB

Useful websites

<https://integratie-inburgering.be/kaart-regio-vlaams-brabant>

<https://www.cgvs.be/nl/asiel>

<https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/een-cursus-nederlands-als-tweede-taal-nt2-volgen>



THE TERM “ECONOMIC REFUGEE / MIGRANT”

An economic refugee/migrant is someone who is understood to have left their country for economic reasons, which are not perceived as being political. Economic reasons unfortunately are not deemed to be grounds for flight and are not covered by the relevant laws and conventions. Whoever leaves their country for economic reasons struggles to secure a chance to stay in the country they choose to migrate to. Economic refugees/migrants are assumed to not suffer any harm or have any immediate needs. Instead, they are viewed individuals driven by selfish striving for more prosperity, when in reality the fate they are expected to accept is that of poverty. Regardless of the classification according to refugee conventions, caution is required in the moral assessment of each case, particularly when the economic need driving migration is often intertwined with the political situation in the respective home countries. It is also unfair that while in Europe more and more flexibility is demanded by jobseekers to accept a job, people who set out to escape a hopeless (economic) situation are vilified.

Refugees are people fleeing their home countries. War, hunger or other existential conditions are some of the reasons that cause people to give up their families, friends and their usual lives and cause people to set off on an uncertain future. However, uncertainty does not end in Germany, Austria or other more privileged countries. Refugees often have to wait ‘in limbo’ for a very long time to secure status in their new chosen homes, and are often failed by the established legal requirements.

Restrictive access to language courses through these legal requirements not only increases insecurity, but also complicates social and economic integration (something that, incidentally, is demanded of refugees).

The possibility to learn the language of the new homeland is regulated very differently in the different EU countries.



MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

The national context and rights in relation to language learning.

Migration - Structural Component of Social Life

Immigration and emigration are defining elements of European (and world) history. Immigration is an experience that spans generations throughout Europe's history – not something unique to our current historical moment. If we take a look at the history of the last three centuries in central Europe after the Thirty Years' War, some areas would have only made up a fraction of the prewar population and princes systematically settled displaced immigrants in their countries. In the 18th century, tens of thousands of people left the lands which were shaken by wars, price increases and bad harvests and settled in lands that were colonised by countries such as the UK, leading to a context of settler colonialism that also had a detrimental impact on indigenous communities.

The history of the 20th century is characterized by resettlement, escape and expulsion, culminating in the wave of forced migration in the wake of the Nazi dictatorship. The victims who survived the labour, concentration and extermination camps, became tens to twelve million "displaced persons" who were forced from their homes.

Colonialism and the independence of nations that were colonised in Asia and Africa have shaped migration in Europe in the decades after the Second World War and continue to have an effect today. The high demand of the former colonising countries for cheap labour in times of economic recovery on the one hand, and poverty and precarious living conditions in the countries of origin in Asia and Africa on the other, triggered the postcolonial labour migration. It is important to note that the poverty and precarity of former colonies post-independence is a colonial legacy, and the extraction of resources during colonialism and redistribution to colonising countries led to an accumulation of wealth that was not accessible by communities who were colonised. Migrant networks evolved over time as a result of the economic and political drivers of immigration that still influence national demographics.

In the postcolonial context, former colonising countries recruited so-called "guest workers" ("Gastarbeiter"), which created some of the largest migrations in the history of Europe. The fast-growing economy and Fordist industrial production created a high demand for cheap and low-skilled workers in the western and northern European industri-

alised countries, a need that could not be met by national labour markets. This was offset by a surplus labour force in the geographical and economic periphery of Europe, especially in the Mediterranean countries, whose labour markets could not absorb due to different economic positioning. While this benefitted the fast-growing economies, this model arguably led to a 'brain drain' in those countries in the periphery.

"After fleeing my home-country of Iraq, we moved to a neighbouring country and despite our deep-rooted connections in terms of language, religion and culture, we faced immense challenges. Those days were difficult. We had to pay for our children's schooling and medical care, even though we were surviving on very little. The situation was like the one in my homeland – we did not feel the sense of safety and security that we left our country in search of."

Asylum seeker, UK

Although the immigration patterns of our time are often thought of as more complex, the basic motives for emigration and immigration have changed little over the course of history. The need for emigration and immigration has largely been political, and the Europe we have today is an integral part of this analysis and has directly contributed to the instability and inequality that drive the migration we have been seeing. It is important, therefore, that we see the interconnectedness of our histories and not fall into an us/them categorisation when thinking of refugees, or think of



the geographical contexts they come from as independent from ours.

Asylum - Routes of Hope

The history of asylum law dates back to Ancient history. The modern asylum law, however, developed only in the wake of European nation-state formation in the 19th century, which was accompanied by major refugee movements. Beyond the respective national legislation for the protection of refugees, today the 1951 Refugee Convention forms the basis of international refugee law. It was created as a reaction to the experience of fascist dictatorships and the Second World War and the refugee movements associated with them. Asylum refers to a protection status for those migrants whose spatial movement is recognized by the host state as having no alternative because of coercion for political, ethno-national, racist or religious reasons.

According to the United Nations, more than 65 million people worldwide have been forced to leave their homes. People are fleeing from dictatorship, persecution, civil war, poverty, climate change, and social misery in their countries. Thousands of people lose their lives fleeing to Europe. In 2015, 1.3 million people applied for asylum in the countries of the European Union. Many of these were Syrian citizens who had to leave their homes due to the civil war. Simultaneously, neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt have received about 5.5 million people from Syria. The provision of support they can offer, given their economic standing and high rates of poverty, is therefore limited compared to European countries.

Culture - Integration - Diversity

Societies and their values are never as homogeneous as the talk of integration suggests, and they will have profound differences predicated on class, gender, sexuality, language, ethnicity/race, region, age, religion, political allegiances etc. These differences also make it impossible to speak of a clear 'stable' culture. Linguistic, professional and social connections with the heterogeneous society do not mean that the cultural or denominational differences must be abandoned. New migration movements challenge us to question the idea of a stable concept of culture and allow us to accept new differences. Value systems are always changing. The recourse to a value system that is not clear and never was is problematic, especially when used as an instrument by powerful groups in society to not deal with equality or justice claims by individuals who suffer from oppression.

Global Perspective - Migration

Migration not only enables people to survive and brings benefits to the destination country, it can also benefit the countries of origin through social connections. In economic terms, in 2014 - according to estimates by the World Bank - remittances from emigrants working in richer countries to their relatives in developing countries amounted to 435 bil-

lion Euros (and it is estimated that an additional half of that will be through informal channels). In contrast, development aid in the same year was only one-third of this. However, these transfers not only bring capital to the countries of origin, also directly reach the families in need and allow targeted investments in smaller companies as well as in education and health. Once again, it is important to consider alongside this arguments about 'brain drain' in underdeveloped countries as a result of migration that is driven by the inequality and poverty that disproportionately impact the Global South.

"I was always working and I never asked anyone for anything but here I am now, in a foreign country, and I have to borrow money and I am indebted to people. This is not who I am and it is hard for me to accept this. As a person seeking asylum, I am not allowed to work. [...] So, they are not giving me any options. I need to provide for my children."

Asylum seeker, UK

Refugee/Host Countries – Migration

In case the moral argument for welcoming refugees was not sufficient, the immigration of refugees to Europe, according to a study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will lead to more economic growth in the countries of refuge. Accordingly, this positive effect is concentrated above all on the main target countries Germany, Austria and Sweden, which can expect additional growth of 0.5 to 1.1 percent. For the entire European Union, the experts calculated an increase of 0.25 percent by 2020. According to the IMF, whether this growth can be maintained in the medium and long term largely depends on how well the refugees are admitted into the labour market and their respective societies. Therefore, again, it is important that refugees can have access to opportunities to take part in society in their new home countries.



Literature:

http://www.springer.com/cda/content/document/cda_downloadaddocument/9783658134082-c2.pdf?SGWID=0-0-45-1616902-p180087834

<http://fluechtlingsforschung.net/lehren-aus-der-geschichte-in-zeiten-einer-fluechtlingskrise/>

<http://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/integration-war-nie/>

<https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article140455786/Wer-von-der-Migration-wirklich-profitiert.html>

<http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Staff-Discussion-Notes/Issues/2016/12/31/The-Refugee-Surge-in-Europe-Economic-Challenges-43609>

Quotes

<https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/>

About the Volunteers in Language Learning for Refugees Project

www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu

This 2017 - 2019 research project aims to improve the quality of volunteer involvement in refugee language learning. The project is a collaboration between five organisations: Caritas (Austria), CVO Volt (Belgium), The Danish Refugee Council (Denmark), EFA London (UK) and IBIS (Germany). All organisations have firsthand experience of delivering language classes for migrants and refugees.

The research project aims to learn more about how volunteers can enhance refugee's learning and be put to best use by teachers and educational organisations.

The project will produce three toolkits for teachers, volunteers and organisations that will support good practice.

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