

29 - What are the most important things to learn? The refugees' point of view

Aim: To provide volunteers with guidelines for finding out refugees' opinions about the language(s) they are going to learn, what they think will be easy/difficult about learning it, and what they need to be able to use the language for.

When deciding what language to practise, it is essential to ask refugees for their views. Their opinions are important if they are expected to engage fully with the language activities you suggest.

'Standard' language teaching content such as vocabulary and grammar is unlikely to be suitable for the context in which you are working, but the views refugees share with you should not be acted on automatically either. It will be useful to compare their views with the information you gather from the observation procedure outlined in Tool 30 *Observing situations in which refugees need to use the target language*. The following suggestions should be adapted depending on the context in which you are working (e.g. in transit situations, in a reception centre in the destination country, etc.).

Some groups may have sufficient linguistic resources to understand and respond to the questions below, but you should be prepared to use drawings and mime to support your explanations of the questions and elicit the refugees' answers.

Guidelines for discussion with refugees

Now that you are in your new country, let's discuss what you are going to learn.

1. What languages can you speak already?
2. Are you willing to learn [name of language]?
3. Does it seem easy to you?
4. Do you understand it a little?
5. Do you like it as a language?
6. Have you already learnt it? How did you learn it?
7. What words in the language do you already know?
8. What do you find easy and difficult in this language:

	Easy	Difficult
The pronunciation.		
Writing in a new script.		
Understanding the written word.		
Listening to the radio/watching TV.		
Talking to someone you know		
Talking to someone you don't know.		
Other things.		

9. Do you think it's an attractive language?
10. Do you want to learn the language of the country you are hoping to go to?
11. What is it important for you to learn to do in the language?

	Important	Not important
Any context:		
Talk to my new neighbours.		
Learn the script/the written form.		
Understand words that I see in the street.		
Listen to the radio/watch TV.		
Talk to people in shops.		
Talk to other refugees and migrants.		
Use the internet.		
Read newspapers.		
For fun.		
After arrival in destination country:		
Talk to people at your children's school.		
Talk and write for work reasons.		
Talk to doctors.		
Talk to people in government offices.		
Practise sports.		
Other things: what?		

12. Do you like learning on your own?
13. How do you prefer to do that?

Note: Not all the questions have to be used, and others can be added. They are simply intended as a guide for this kind of exchange with refugees (suggested duration: maximum 1 hour in a group).