



Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

Tool 19 - Reflecting on your language support work

Aim: to help you reflect on your experiences of providing language support to migrants and keeping a record of your thoughts about these experiences.

There are many reasons why it is a good idea to reflect on your language support work. Critically thinking back on your own practice helps to ensure that you learn from what you are doing and that you develop your own skills and confidence over time. Among the reasons for regular reflection are the following:

- to regularly give yourself time to think about your language support work.
- to enable you to take individual and group needs into account in future sessions.
- to help you understand what works well and what doesn't work well.
- to identify your areas of strength and/or uncertainty.

This tool suggests some things you can do in your future practice. to aid reflection Thinking about your own experiences as a learner may also help you in this process.

Make a habit of keeping a record

- Try to set aside 15 minutes after each language support session to think about how the activities worked and what progress learners made.
- Do not let problems or difficulties detract from what you did well.
- Write quick notes in a diary or log, for example using the headings suggested on page 4 of this tool. Your record can be in any form you like. Or you might prefer to create an audio or video diary using your mobile phone.
- Note down points to remember when planning your next session with the same participants or doing the same activity with a different group.
- Use all situations, however difficult they might be, as learning opportunities.
- From time to time ask the learners you work with what they think about the language support activities. Their comments can be very useful too.
- If possible, talk through some of your reflections with other colleagues. It is very useful to share ideas about what has gone well and why – as well as coming up with ideas for improvement.

Some guidelines on keeping a record based on observations and using it to define action points for the future

The group and individual learners in it

Observation:

Note differences in the group which impact on learning and /or interaction such as age, gender, previous education, level of literacy etc.

Action:

Try to adjust activities to the range of needs in the group.

Ambiance/atmosphere during the session

Observation:

Note how individuals cooperate, show a tolerant, collaborative attitude and how they behave towards one another and to you.

Action:

If necessary, try negotiating some rules with the learners about collaboration in the group. Think about how you can foster a positive atmosphere. If necessary, get advice.

Learner participation and interaction

Observation:

Note who is/is not participating and who seems bored or disengaged.

Action:

Adjust future activities to ensure that all migrants have the opportunity to participate. Make sure that your instructions are clear. Check that there are no cultural constraints on participation. Be careful not to talk too much.

Comprehension and communication difficulties

Observation:

Note non-verbal signs of confusion or misunderstanding. Note how quickly/slowly the learners respond to language stimuli, questions or tasks. Note any individuals who are constantly asking others for translation or help.

Action:

Speak more slowly and use simple language. Use repetition and emphasis when you are speaking. Ask participants in the group to translate for you if necessary. Break down activities into smaller tasks. Use pictures, mime or gesture to support understanding.

Reflective activity

Work through the questions on the next page focusing on those that seem most relevant to you in your situation.

When you have finished thinking about the questions, decide whether it would be good to discuss anything with a colleague, a friend or family member etc.

Some questions to reflect on after language support sessions

Topics, activities and resources

1. What topics did you focus on? Which other topics came up?
2. What was the language focus of the language support session (scenario, words, expressions)?
3. What language support activities did you use?
4. What resources did you use?
5. What worked well? Why?
6. What didn't work well? Why?

The group of learners

7. Who was in the group (names, ages, new people etc.)?
8. How did individuals/the group react – with enthusiasm, anxiety, concentration etc?

Your views and feelings after the session

9. How much progress did learners make (individually and as a group)?
10. Did some learners have difficulties? What kind of difficulties? What caused them?
11. How did you feel after the session? Excited and satisfied or worried?
12. What did you learn from the session (about these learners, about the language activities etc.)?
13. Will you make changes next time? What kinds of changes?
14. What other points did you think about?

Example of a reflective log which you may wish to use or adapt to your needs

Log			
Name		Location	
Session date		Time	
Brief notes on learners who attended			
Topics covered/language practised			
Any issues/follow up action			
What worked well?			
Ideas to improve the next session			
What did I learn?			
What do I want to find out more about?			