



Language Support for Migrants A Council of Europe Toolkit

Tool 25 - Functions and expressions useful in subject teaching with young migrants

Aim: To offer support and resources to support subject teachers working with migrant children in schools and colleges.

Teaching school and college subjects involves a certain level of competence in the special sort of language which is used for that purpose, which is different from the language of everyday communication. It involves:

- specific subject-related terms, for example, in mathematics: abscissa, right angle, etc.
- vocabulary used in general scientific discourse, for example, hypothesis, percentage, result etc.

As in the case of social communication, these terms can be identified and grouped into functions e.g. defining, giving a definition.

It is important to pay special attention to the use of these functions in the teaching of school and college subjects, and especially to check that they are fully understood and used appropriately. This is because they often cannot be simply translated from one language to another.

Listed below are some key functions often used when teaching subjects. The list can serve as a framework for identifying the corresponding expressions in the language of instruction used in the host country.

FUNCTION	EXPRESSIONS IN THE STUDENT'S FIRST LANGUAGE	EXPRESSIONS IN THE HOST COUNTRY LANGUAGE¹
Define, designate, name		
Express quantity, quantify		
Compare		
Locate in time		
Locate in space		
describe, enumerate		
Classify (e.g. typology)		
Explain the causes, the reasons		
Interpret (a text, data, etc.)		
Argue, prove, demonstrate		
Deduct, make a deduction		
Produce an account, describe an approach or a procedure		
Generalise, make a generalisation		

¹ Students can use a table like this to note down some relevant expressions in their own language as well as in the host country language.

Exemplify		
Make a judgement, an assessment		
Make a hypothesis		
Give a point of view, an opinion		

An alphabetical list of some verbs and adjectives in English frequently used in subject teaching (not divided into functions):

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| acquire | efficient |
| add | exact |
| apply (to) | extreme |
| arrive (at) | feed (with/on) |
| associate (with) | finish |
| attract | fixed |
| attributed (to) | good |
| belong (to) | heavy |
| big | high |
| bring | important |
| cancel | increase |
| central | large |
| certain | lengthen |
| change (from/to) | light |
| choose | low |
| cold | match |
| common | measure |
| complete | medium |
| complex | normal |
| contain | observe |
| continue | reach |
| contrary to | short |
| depend (on) | show |
| determine | simple |
| develop | slow |
| different | thick |
| direct | unknown |
| distinguish | |