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|  | **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.

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| **FUNCTION** | **EXPRESSIONS IN THE STUDENT’S FIRST LANGUAGE** | **EXPRESSIONS IN THE HOST COUNTRY LANGUAGE[[1]](#footnote-1)** |
| 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 |  |  |
| 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):**

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

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. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)