



Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

40 - The first interview¹

Aim: To offer guidance on how to collect information on migrants' literacy and language profiles, their needs and their oral skills in the target language while also gathering useful insights for planning language support.

More specific aims are:

- A. to encourage use of a broader approach to language needs analysis involving questions in a language the learner knows, thus highlighting the importance of valuing the learner's plurilingual repertoire.
- B. to offer a more specific diagnostic focus that involves the use of questions in the target language to determine learners' oral skills.

Some guidelines

- If you share a language with the migrant who you are meeting, or if you speak a language that has some similarities with theirs, use that language to aid communication. For example, in the shared or related language you can explain what you are doing and why.
- If you don't share a language and don't speak a related language, and the migrant is a beginner in the target language, it may be helpful to have someone with you who speaks their language, such as a professional cultural mediator or, if not possible, another migrant.

The following are some practical guidelines to bear in mind when using this tool:

- Create a friendly atmosphere and treat the learner courteously.
- Speak in a slow and clear way (not more loudly).
- Repeat, rephrase, and use pauses and body language.
- Make use of any shared language knowledge as required.
- Use yourself and learners as an example when appropriate (e.g., "*I am [name]. What is your name?*")
- From time to time, repeat or rephrase the learner's response to show empathy and provide confirmation.
- Prepare in advance a kit with the pictures mentioned in the table below and use these whenever needed during the interview.
- Explain why you are doing this, e.g. "*This is not an exam. It is just an informal conversation. We need this information to organise our language activities*".
- Remember that what they say about their language competences is based on their own opinion, so it may be different from your own perceptions.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage the learners to talk.
- Follow as closely as possible the sequence and the wording of the questions indicated (the interviewer's turns are in italics in the table below), but bear in mind that not all the questions need to be asked:

¹ This tool is based on materials developed by ALTE-LAMI.

- certain questions may be too sensitive given the circumstances of the individual and the need for privacy. They may need to be rephrased or avoided;
- depending on the answers to previous questions, some questions may not be needed

SECTION	WHAT	HOW (questions)
0	Greeting + early meeting	<i>Hello (wait for reply to the greeting). Welcome! I would like to talk to you to know you better, ok? I am ... (name). I am from... (country). Do you speak /Do you understand ... (target language)?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the learner doesn't understand, proceed with needs analysis in another language, possibly covering all the sections. • If the learner understands, then proceed with the other sections in the target language as far as possible. 		
1	Name	<i>So, I am ... (name)/ My name is ...What is your name?</i>
	Country of origin	<i>I am from ... Where are you from?</i>
2	First language	<i>I speak ... (L1). What language(s) do you speak in ... (country of origin)?</i>
	Other languages	<i>I speak ... (English, French and Vietnamese). Do you speak ... (other languages)? What other languages do you speak?</i>
	Educational background	<i>Did you go to school in (country of origin)? Showing pictures and using gestures to express past. How long did you go to school for Showing years with fingers.</i>
3	Occupation / Job experience	<i>I am a teacher. What do you do? Now I am a teacher, but before I did different jobs. What about you?²</i>
4	Social environment and housing	<i>How long have you been here in (name of the country)? I live in ... (name of the town/area you are now). Where do you live here in (name of the country)? Elicit town or area. Are you here in (name of the country or name of the town/city) alone? If not, who lives with you?</i>
5	Free time	<i>Can you tell me a little about your day? Every day I work in the morning. What do you usually do now in (name of country)? When I'm not working, I like meeting friends and watching TV. What about you? What do you like?</i>
6	Personal goals in the target country	<i>Would you like to stay here for a short time or for a longer time? What would you like to do in ... (target country)?</i>
7	Learning goals in target language	<i>Would do like to learn (the language of the country)? If yes, what do you need now with/in ... (target language)? Where do you use the (language of the country)?</i>

² According to the complexity of the question (including the reference to the past), users are invited to consider it as mainly a needs' analysis question, more than a question aimed to place in spoken interaction.