



Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

Tool 5 - Some points to bear in mind when providing language support for migrants

Aim: To offer practical suggestions for those providing language support for migrants.

Depending on their educational background, the country they come from and their experiences of language learning, migrant learners in your group will have different expectations of the way language support is provided. The way you work will depend on your training and experience and the approach recommended by your institution or association, but below are some general suggestions about interacting with learners at elementary level during your language support sessions.

- Find out the migrants' preferred names and learn to pronounce them correctly. Use their names when greeting them, asking questions, requesting answers, giving them feedback and so on.
- Make sure learners understand the main aims of each activity and give them clear instructions. Check that learners understand your instructions. Repeat them if necessary, using different words.
- Speak slowly but normally in a clear voice, with pauses between sentences, so that everyone in the group can hear, but do not speak too loudly.
- Give simple and clear explanations and examples using gestures, real objects, pictures etc. Invite learners to give other examples and repeat them if necessary.
- Don't be nervous about asking learners to repeat new words, expressions and examples: they need to practise the sounds and intonation of the new language. If you wish, write new words, expressions and examples clearly on the board: this may help some learners.
- Some learners are more willing to speak than others: don't put pressure on quieter learners.
- Depending on the activity, ask learners to practise in pairs or small groups, for example during work on scenarios.
- Encourage peer support: migrants with some knowledge and experience can help less experienced learners.
- Don't worry if learners use the translation apps on their phones or if they help each other in their own language, even if you don't know what they are saying.
- Show an interest in the learners' own languages and cultures, for example by asking "How do you say: 'thank you/please/happy birthday etc.' in your language?" or "How do you celebrate [religious festival, birthday etc] in your country?"
- During each session use a variety of activities, ways of working and resources, but make sure learners understand what you are asking them to do and why.
- Make sure learners have regular opportunities to:
 - listen to simple language, for example on sound recordings (simple dialogues, public transport announcements, etc.),
 - read simple texts (cooking instructions on food packets, an e-mail from one friend to another about a journey, etc.), and
 - to write answers to simple SMS messages or complete a short application form.

- You can act as a model when they need to repeat and to practise useful words and expressions.
- Correction of errors should be handled carefully so that it does not interrupt classroom communication activities. For example, important errors can be noted and mentioned at the end of an activity or session
- It may not always be possible to quickly establish an easy relationship until learners feel reassured and supported. You can help by offering praise and encouragement when they have language or other difficulties.
- Whenever necessary repeat or paraphrase what you say, especially your questions.
- Include games, movement, singing, etc. in your language activities.
- Prepare, introduce and use sound recordings carefully – it is difficult to find suitable recordings so it may be easier to make recordings within the team of teachers/volunteers.

(See also Tool 4 - *What is involved in providing language support for recently arrived migrants*).