



Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

79 - Providing language support for migrant families

Aim: To offer guidance for those supporting the development of the language skills of migrants in the context of a family group.

Introduction

The family unit is a good context for language learning to take place. Those working with migrant families can build on the natural learning that happens in this context to introduce and develop language skills in the target language and, in the case of children, also to maintain their home languages (see Tool 80 – *Eight learning activities that can help migrant families develop their skills in the new language*).

‘Family learning’ is also empowering for families who, because of their situation, may have little control or power in their daily lives. It recognises the crucial and enduring role that parents play in their children’s education. Another important advantage is that it can ensure that diversity of culture and language is recognised and valued.

Some ideas for successful family learning

- It should always be a positive and enjoyable experience for learners and should encourage them to do more learning.
- It should provide opportunities for both adults and children to learn together. Using pictures and real objects can be a good way of getting family members to learn together (see Tool 30 – *Selecting pictures and realia for language activities-some guidelines*).
- Learning sessions should be relaxed and informal (not like a traditional classroom). Games of different kinds are useful for language support in a family setting (see Tool 49 - *Language games and activities for migrant learners* for some examples).
- It should take account of and build on the skills, knowledge and experiences learners, both adults and children, already have. You may want to ask someone in family as a group to complete a grid like the one below about the languages they already use:
- Lots of patience and repetition is needed to support language learning in the family context.

- If a child or parent can't do something, they can be reminded that, although they can't do it **yet**, they will be able to do it in the future.
- Questions and curiosity are important for learning and should be encouraged and responded to.

Languages in our family

FAMILY MEMBER (e.g mother, Faisal age 7, grandfather etc)	LANGUAGES THEY CAN USE (e.g. Farsi, English, French)	WHEN/HOW/WHERE DO THEY USE THEM?	HOW DID THEY LEARN THEM/ HOW ARE THEY LEARNING THEM?