

Teachers...

As a second language teacher you lay the foundation for your learners to be able to communicate and function in society. How they practice their newly acquired language skills outside the classroom is crucial to their progress. Volunteers can play an important and supportive part in helping learners practice. Also, teachers tell us it can be useful for teachers to have an extra pair of hands in the classroom, support for which is planned in close cooperation between teachers and volunteer language assistants.

Volunteers in migrant language education come in different shapes and sizes and they fulfil various roles. As we mentioned they may provide support as language buddies or classroom assistants, act as mentors and run conversation clubs among many other roles. But in which roles are they of best value and what competences are required for each of these roles? This is what the VIME project has been researching.

Partnership, cooperation and collaboration between teacher and volunteer is crucial to make the process of second language learning a success. The VIME project aims to facilitate and optimize what volunteers can do to support the second language teacher in providing the learner a good learning environment. VIME project describes exemplary roles volunteers can play and connects these roles with matching competences and provides training modules suitable to these roles. /

In the VIME project 4 important roles for volunteers have been identified:

1. *The Language Assistant- Assisting in the class*

The main focus of this role is to provide extra help in the classroom. The volunteer has a direct connection with the teacher (formal educator) who directs their work with the learner in the teacher's teaching session

2. *The Language Coach- Practising language use*

The main focus of this role is on language practice (individuals or small groups). The work of the volunteer may or may not be directed by the coordinator or teacher. For example, some volunteers support learners in homework clubs, reading groups, or conversation clubs.

3. *The Language Buddy- Providing opportunities for social engagement*

The main focus of this role is to promote the value of the host community engaging with migrants; to advocate for more and better language learning opportunities; and to encourage people to improve their language by using opportunities in their local area. The work of this type of volunteer is often not directed by a coordinator, but liaison with coordinators in the local area increases their effectiveness.

4. *The Language Champion- Promoting and encouraging language improvement*

This role may be particularly relevant to people in organisations that work with migrants, but not in a language education capacity. For example, local GPs, housing associations, libraries, municipality councils, social workers, hospitals, children's schools, NGOs, law centres, and migrants who are current or previous language learners. All of these can promote language learning as part of their interactions with migrants.

The training modules

There are three modules for volunteer training. The first module is about how a language is learned. The second concerns working with migrants and involves interaction with learners and the differences between working with small groups and working one-to-one. The last one covers the context, both national and local, rights and regulations, social mapping and cooperation with other organisations. Volunteers learn about the principles of scaffolding and how they can support the language learner and leave the teaching to the teacher.

After the training volunteers are able to adapt what they have learnt to different roles and situations that they might be supporting in, being well prepared for the role that fits best with their competences and the needs of the learners. This provides you as a teacher with clarity about the tasks different volunteers can perform and what you can expect from them in terms of supporting the language learner.

More information about the roles, modules and materials you can find on www.languagevolunteers.co.uk