VIME Framework

September 2018

1. Introduction

This document describes the framework for the Erasmus+ project *Volunteers in Migrant Language Education* (VIME). The aim of VIME is to identify the different roles that are played by teachers and others in supporting migrant language acquisition, and to agree the competences needed to carry out those roles. Identifying roles, and the competences needed to carry them out, will allow for effective matching of individuals to roles and for the development of training modules tailored to the particular role.

Our focus is on the effective involvement of volunteers in the migrant language education process. The training materials, which are a major output of the project, are aimed at volunteers, not teachers. They do not attempt to train volunteers to become teachers. Instead they are designed to support volunteers in carrying out other complementary roles, including informal learning through social engagement.

Within the project we see volunteering as an economic issue: a volunteer is someone carrying out a role without pay. However, we should also be aware that for many volunteers, there are more complex reasons for making this commitment. The Danish word for volunteer means 'free and willing'. Free as in autonomous, not as in unpaid. In English, we can distinguish between doing something voluntarily, i.e. without external pressure (or incentive) and volunteering, which has a more emotional sense, suggesting commitment to the support of a particular cause. The Centre for Volunteering in Australia defines volunteering as an activity which takes place through not-for-profit and community organisations and projects or your local community and is undertaken: *to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer *of the volunteer's own free will *without coercion *for no financial payment.

It is important to note that while we are interested in the language learning experience of migrants, we have only been able to look at projects designed to explicitly support the language education of adult migrants. We have not considered the learning of the host language that takes place informally through engagement with the demands of daily life. This is not to suggest that we believe that language acquisition is only ever the direct result of language teaching. Formal classroom language learning can play an important part in supporting language acquisition among this group, but the formal route is not the only way in which languages can be acquired.

From work on multilingualism and in particular recent work on translanguaging we have a greater awareness of the complexity of the linguistic environment in which adult migrants operate. We should also be aware that many migrants already have rich language repertoires which they use to communicate across languages and cultures. This should inform the design of interventions to support migrant language learning.

In this document, we have described the VIME model of migrant language learning. The model includes six elements:

1. Learning goals
2. Domains of activity / Patterns of learning
3. Outreach activities
4. Conditions for effective language learning
5. Volunteer roles
6. Competences required for each role.

2. Learning goals

There are some differences between the adult migrant groups in the four countries taking part in VIME (principally the existence of migrants 'in transit' in Slovenia), and of course there is a great deal of heterogeneity amongst migrant groups in each of the four countries. However, we found that migrants had consistent reasons for learning the host language.

Learners' goals in learning the language are important in determining their learning pathway. Formal provision often assumes and supports the achievement of a limited range of learning goals, in particular 'work', other types of provision may be needed to provide opportunities for learners to meet other goals.

3. Domains of activity

The organised activity that we have investigated in the initial phase of VIME can be described as taking place within three distinct **domains**.

- **Formal education engagement**: formal classroom teacher, group learning, leads to recognized qualifications as part of a formal education pathway, taught by qualified teacher.
- N**on-formal educational engagement**: timetabled / drop-in, one to one / small groups, oral skills, practice, homework support, working under supervision / independently, no formal curriculum / accreditation.
- **Social engagement:** (cooking clubs, gardening groups, choirs, drop in cafes) no explicit language learning goal, instead opportunities for use, social support, providing help with forms/official letters etc. or just someone to talk to. Also cultural integration: opening a window to society, visits to local places of interest, explanations of local holidays and customs etc.

The three domains should be seen as having 'fuzzy' boundaries with overlap between them in the work of particular organisations. In each we identify roles, but do not equate these roles with individuals, as each individual may carry out more than one role within the migrant language education process. Similarly, the work of particular organizations may cross the boundaries of these domains. We should also note that the model presented here is descriptive, not prescriptive. It should be seen not as a suggestion as to how provision for migrants should be organized. Instead it provides a frame through which to view existing provision within an individual organization or across a system.

3.1 Formal education engagement

Formal language learning requirements, their relationship to immigrant status, and individual migrant's access to language learning provision differ in each country. However, it is possible to identify what we will call here formal classroom language learning for migrants, based on group learning, leading to recognized qualifications as part of a formal education pathway, and taught by professional teachers. In each country the requirements for a teacher to be considered a professional teacher differ, but there is a role of formal classroom teacher.

Aside from the formal classroom teacher there are other useful roles that can be identified in the formal language learning domain. Two factors that help us to differentiate between these roles. Whether:

- the role is carried out inside the formal classroom or outside at another time, and
- the work of the volunteer is coordinated with/directed by the formal classroom teacher.

Where the work of the volunteer (either in or out of class) is coordinated with that of the teacher this forms part of the formal language education experience of the migrant. However, this model appears to be comparatively unusual.

There is also evidence of tensions between teachers working in formal language education and volunteers. Aside from the fear that increased use of volunteers will lead to job losses for teachers, there is also mistrust among teachers about the relationship between the type of learning that they promote and that made possible by the work of the volunteers.

3.2 Non-formal educational engagement

The largest number of volunteers we identified working in migrant language education in the four countries were deployed in supporting non-formal language learning. There was little coordination of their work with that taking place within the formal learning domain.

The provision in this domain, as with much non-formal adult education, seeks to meet a learning need, in this case to support adult migrants in learning the host language. It has likely been established in response to a lack of access to formal language learning opportunities for particular groups due to their immigration status or socio-economic situation or other barriers to attending formal provision such as caring responsibilities.

This was also the most diverse group of activities. Here we have seen volunteers engaging with migrants in timetabled or drop-in activities, working one to one or in small groups. A number of initiatives were observed in which volunteers focus on the practice of oral skills, perhaps using generic materials designed to facilitate this. In others the generation of the learning materials was more ad hoc and, in some cases, learner-centred.

Some of the activity in this domain (one to one support outside of the formal class) is mirrored in the formal domain. What distinguishes it from the formal learning domain in most cases is the lack of coordination. The activities in this domain are separate from those in the formal domain.

3.3 Social engagement

In each of the countries we also saw a great deal of activity that can best be described as social: cooking clubs, drop in cafes, gardening groups, help with forms/official letters etc. Such activity often has a cultural focus with visits to local places of interest, explanations of local holidays and customs. None of these activities have an explicit language-learning goal, but they provide opportunities for migrants to use the host language in an authentic, supportive environment.

This activity often happens in the same social space as the non-formal language education activities, though that is not always the case. The role of the volunteer here is as a facilitator/companion and no specific language learning expertise is required. In some of these activities learners themselves may act as volunteers supporting other learners or working collaboratively to achieve a goal.

Social engagement refers to the act of participation in the activities of a social group. Successful social engagement of an individual will lead to that individual interacting with other members and developing a commitment to stay in the group. Social engagement helps to build social capital through the development of social connections to and within communities. Social engagement is different from the concept of a social network, which is focused on the group, rather than the activity

4. Outreach

Outreach work to identify and engage adult migrants is a vital part of the migrant language learning process. Outreach is

"…a process that involves going out from a specific organisation or centre to work in other locations with sets of people who typically do not or cannot avail themselves of (make use of) the services of that centre" (McGivney 2000[1])

Outreach can be understood as:

- **Staff activity** - to physically leave the institution to engage learners;
- **Marketing or recruitment strategy** - activities to make people in different locations or groups aware of what an organisation or centre can offer;
- **Delivery mechanism** - provision of learning programmes in informal community locations
- **Networking activity** - liaison and contact with other organisations or particular sets of people
- **Method or approach** - working in particular ways with people outside the main centre or institution

There is no single linear path to acquisition of the host language for adult migrants. Each individual will have different needs and will be acting under different constraints. The pathway of adult migrant language learners may involve any number of combinations of activities in the social, non-formal and formal domains in any one period. In order to maximize the coherence of individual learning pathways, outreach by different organisations should be coordinated to ensure that at the stage of initial contact migrants are supported in seeing the full range of opportunities that are available to them.

Both outreach and initial screening and assessment are very often carried out by each different actor in the marketplace. Thus, outreach workers recruiting for one particular project may not signpost learners to other provision that could be of relevance to them. This may be for lack of knowledge, or through competition for learners/clients. It is also true that there is much duplication in terms of screening and assessment with providers not sharing processes or data working against coherence across the system.

Each organisation within each of the domains may carry out outreach activities to recruit participants for their programmes. However, we found that there was often very little connection between the domains, with no pathways being created across domains to enrich the learning possibilities of individual students.

The lack of connection between the three domains means that in many cases learners are active within only one and are active in that domain by chance, because they happen to have been 'recruited' by an organisation within that domain, not because that makes the most sense for their learning goal. Some learners are active in more than one domain, but there appeared to be little connection between what they do in one domain and another. In other words, there is a lack of joined-up pathways that use activity in more than one domain to maximise the opportunities and support for adult migrants to learn the language of the host community.

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[1] McGivney, V (2000). *Recovering Outreach: Concepts, Issues and Practices* NIACE: Leicester.

5. Conditions for effective language learning

In each of the domains we saw activities designed to support migrant language learning. For us to create a model to describe this activity we need to stipulate the conditions required for effective language learning to take place.

5.1 Individual factors

There are certain **social and cognitive factors** that are influential in determining the success or otherwise of language learning.

Linguistic faculty –relates to individual cognitive ability and is influenced by factors such as age, but also prior language learning experiences. Volunteers cannot influence this through their work, but they should be aware of factors involved in individual difference in language learning to avoid placing unrealistic expectations on learners.

Access to the target language and opportunities to receive input and engage in communication in social and functional contexts. Volunteers have a key role to play in facilitating access to the language.

Motivation – the learner's need to acquire the language, their motivation, is of central importance. We can break down motivation using the three elements identified in Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory (2000)[2].

- **Autonomy** (the opportunity to make your own choices (for instance goals, material, methods, activities, moments, volunteers etc.)
- **Competence** (the belief that you can accomplish a task and the experience that you indeed can and improve your skills, including noticing and being rewarded for even small steps in progression)
- **Relation** (the feeling that you belong to the community you want to be part of, being the society as a whole and/or the groups of students you're following class with. This implies that the volunteer should pay attention to group processes and create opportunities for students to show learning results and facilitate bonding between students.

Awareness of these three elements of motivation should inform the approach taken by volunteers in their engagement with learners in activities in each of the three domains.

5.2 Conditions

We can then look at the conditions that need to be created in order to support language acquisition. These may include:

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[2] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, *55*(1), 68.

Comprehensible input

- Comprehensible input is language input that can be understood by listeners despite them not understanding absolutely all of the words and structures in it. It is suggested that students are able to acquire new language when the input that they receive is just beyond their current level of proficiency.

Interaction

- It is important that participants have a clear communicative purpose – that is, they know what they are trying to achieve in the exchange.
- Within interaction speakers constantly negotiate meaning in order to reach a clear understanding of each other. Negotiation of meaning requires such functions as asking for clarification, rephrasing, and confirming what you think you have understood are all strategies for the negotiation of meaning. In the classroom it is often associated with information gap activities such as jigsaw reading or listening, group story building, and other activities that give learners the opportunity to develop their communicative competence through negotiation of meaning as they share information.

Output

- Noticing (when learners "notice" new language, they pay special attention to its form, use and meaning. Noticing is regarded as an important part of the process of learning new language, but will only occur when the learner is ready to take on the new language. In the classroom part of the teacher's role is to create the conditions under which learners can notice aspects of language use that are important for development of their language use.
- Automatization (in order to perform a task without conscious or deliberate effort, to achieve fluency in the new language, we need careful, and often intensive, practice. In terms of language learning, this may take the form of controlled practice focused on replication of particular linguistic patterns, or it may be freer practice in which the learners are encouraged, but not required, to use certain forms of language.

Scaffolding

- The term scaffolding is used to describe a process in which a learner is directly or indirectly supported in completing tasks that they would not be able to successfully complete on their own. Scaffolding can be provided by any external source that supports the learner in working beyond their current independent development level. It enables learners to bridge the gap between what they can do alone and what they can do with support.
  Learning is most commonly scaffolded by the people around us, by someone with greater knowledge who can help us bridge the gap between what we know at the time and the target knowledge. The volunteer can scaffold participants' development of the host language by creating an environment in which use of the host language(s) is required, directing migrants' attention to correct models of use and supporting them in increasing their understanding and ability to replicate these.
  While the most important source of support is collaboration with others, the volunteer as well as fellow participants, learning can also be scaffolded by the structure of the activity, with the interaction patterns required providing support for participants' engagement. Structured activities, worksheets and writing frames can also all act as scaffolds.

5.3 Language socialization

Engagement in language learning for adult migrants involves more than just the acquisition of linguistic knowledge. Theories of language socialization suggest that migrants are integrated into their new community through their use of the language of that community and that interaction with the host community is beneficial to their development of proficiency in the host language. This language use can take place in a range of public spaces, such as parks and shopping centres, schools and public transport, but also in official spaces such as those in which migrants engage with government social services representatives or look for work and in more private spaces with neighbours or in the workplace.

However, **recent research with groups of refugees in England** has shown that while better language skills led to more contact with the host community and more contact led to greater well-being among the refugees, the reverse was not true. That is, just because refugees come into contact with the host community if they do not have the necessary language skills that contact will be less meaningful and will have limited impact on the development of their language skills and on their sense of integration and well-being.

5.4 Inter-cultural communication

The activities in the three domains described above increase the chances of adult migrants interacting with the host community. This has a beneficial impact on their language skills but can also have a positive impact in terms of integration. Migrant language learning can provide a focus for informal activities which facilitate contact and understanding between adult migrants and the host community. They provide opportunities to understand and address cultural differences, and similarities.

6. Volunteer roles to support language learning

Aside from the classroom language teacher we have identified four core roles within the migrant language learning activity.

- Language assistant
- Language coach
- Language buddy / befriender
- Language champion

6.1 Language Assistant

In this role, there is always a direct connection with the classroom (non-formal or formal) and with the classroom teacher.

- The Language Assistant may work **inside the classroom** to support individuals. The Language Assistant does not teach the group, instead he or she facilitates **differentiation**, providing extra help for **individuals** or **small groups**. The language assistant may also work **outside the classroom** to support **individuals** or **small groups**.
- The work of the Language Assistant with learners is directed by the classroom teacher and is intended to reinforce and practice language presented in the classroom or to focus on particular areas of the learner's language that the teacher has identified as in need of improvement.

6.2 Language Coach

The Language Coach differs from the language assistant in that he or she has no connection to the classroom (formal or non-formal) and so his or her work is not directed by a teacher.

- The Language Coach may work in the **learner's home** or a **public space,** or **a community venue** to support individuals or small groups.
- The focus of activities should be dictated by the learner's individual goals, and may include work on writing, but the main focus of the language coach is often on oral practice.

A Language Coach should be able to organise language learning activities which are not directed by a professional language teacher. A professional teacher or coordinator is always in the background in case the Language Coach needs some guidance or support.

6.3 Language Buddy / Befriender

While the role of both the Language Assistant and the Language Coach is explicitly focused on language learning, the focus of the Language Buddy / Befriender is social support. They act as a reference point, for example helping the adult migrant to understand official letters and complete forms or explaining processes that they need to go through as part of their new daily life. In the workplace, a Language Buddy may support a colleague to understand work processes or health and safety instructions.

6.4 Language Champion

As with the Language Buddy, the priority for the Language champion is not work with adult migrants to directly improve their language. Instead, he or she works actively to engage adult migrants in language learning activities, which involves referring, encouraging and advising. This may involve Outreach work but may also involve campaigning and lobbying in order for more appropriate provision to be developed or for better resources to be made available. They may work in organisations that work with migrants, but not in a language education capacity. For example, local GPs, municipality councils, social workers, hospitals, schools, NGOs, law centres, and migrants who are current or previous language learners. Language champions may also work with the host community to support them as part of a two-way process of integration.

Coordinator

As a general principle, we suggest that those carrying out these roles should always work under the supervision/coordination of someone else (teacher/pedagogical coordinator). We have identified two distinct coordinator roles, though of course, depending on the size of the organisation the two roles may be carried out by one person.

Pedagogical coordinator

- The pedagogical coordinator takes responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer is supported in selecting appropriate materials / approaches for particular individuals / groups and may also lead professional development activities for volunteers.

Logistical coordinator

- The logistical coordinator deals with practical matters of timetabling, resourcing and matching of learners to volunteers.

7. VIME volunteer attributes and competences

7.1 Attributes

There are certain attributes which we feel volunteers should have in order for them to successfully build and sustain the relationship with learners

The volunteer:

1. Is reliable

2. Is patient

3. Is flexible and open minded

4. can plan and organize his work

5. is aware of his role as a volunteer in the learning process of the participant, specifically in relation to the role of the teacher.

6. can reflect systematically on his own practice, learning and development

7. accepts guidance from a coordinator and or professional teacher, acts upon advice and feedback and is open to coaching and mentoring

8. values and promotes social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion

9. builds respectful, positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and participants and communicates effectively with them.

The attributes should inform the volunteer selection process.

7.2 Competences

The volunteer should also have certain competences in order to be able to work most effectively with learners.

The volunteer should:

1. have linguistic awareness and knowledge about how a language is learned;

2. be able to work with participants in one-to-one and group situations

3. have knowledge of "the bigger picture" of migrant education in a national, regional or local setting.

1. Has linguistic awareness / Has knowledge about how a language is learned
a) Can adapt his language to the level of participants (grading language).   b) Is aware of body language and gestures as part of cultural linguistic awareness.   c) Can assess his own language in terms of the CEFR and/or national standards and can estimate the level of language of the participants.

d) Is aware of accurate linguistic models and structures of the host language.
e) Is aware of the factors that contribute to successful language acquisition.
f) Has very basic knowledge of didactics in second language learning.
g) Can stimulate the participant to be an active learner outside the classroom or the one-to-one sessions and supports transfer of the learning into real contexts.
h) Knows the difference between a participant who is illiterate and a participant who does not master the Latin script.
i) Can adapt effective strategies to help participants to achieve their diverse learning goals and interests in one-to-one situations.
j) Knows how to support the participant in developing oral skills and, to a certain extent, reading and writing skills.
k) Is aware of different participants' profiles and implications for the learning process including initial literacy.

2. Can work with participants in one-to-one and group situations

a) Is aware of the fact that participants are adults and treats participants as such.
b) Is aware of the diversity within the target group of migrants.
c) Is aware of the factors relating to the participants' situation in their new home country which may affect the content and progress of their studies.
d) Is aware of his own and the participants' cultural values and habits that can effect communication in one-to-one situations.
e) Can inspire, motivate participants and strengthen the participants self-confidence.
f) Has tools to facilitate and promote the participants' participation in society.
g) Is able to discuss with participants the choices and consequences of "cultural based" behavior.
h) Has knowledge of legal responsibilities regarding the health and safety of participants, particularly in the context of home visits and engagement with social services.
i) Is aware of his own and the participants' cultural values and habits that can effect communication in groups.
j) Has knowledge of group dynamics and conflict management.
k) Can adapt effective strategies to help participants to achieve their diverse learning goals and interests in heterogeneous groups.

3. Has knowledge of 'the bigger picture' of migrant education in a national, regional or local setting

a) Has basic knowledge of commonly used frameworks of language, such as the CEFR and national standards and final terms.
b) Has basic knowledge of national, regional or local policies regarding migrant education and the role of volunteers and volunteer organizations within that policy.
c) Has basic knowledge of the 'social mapping' in the local context to advice learners where to seek for support or help with non-educational problems.

The VIME Toolkit contains:

- Model for roles of volunteers in migrant language learning
- Selection tools for volunteers and learners
- Training modules for volunteers
- Leaflet for professional teachers
- Guide for Policy makers

The VIME Toolkit can be found at: www.languagevolunteers.com

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