

TOOLS AND METHODS IFSJ 2021

Language Café and Conversation groups

Austria 2021



IFS FOSTERING SOCIAL JUSTICE

TOOL'S SUMMARY

Tool/method name	Language cafe and conversation groups
Tool/method summary description	Informal meeting between local inhabitants and newcomers
Country observed	Vienna (Austria)
Year observed	2021
Programme area	Area is migrant integration but contributes also into active citizenship and social inclusion
Tool type	Activity, improve spoken language skills through constant practicing
Specific topic:	Social inclusion by non-formal language education, networking, contribution/participation, first contact, active citizenship
Beneficiaries of tool:	Open to everyone, migrants, local inhabitants by encountering people from other cultures.
Can this tool be applied to other beneficiaries: yes/no	yes
What type of beneficiaries: ALL, or specific ones?	all
If specific ones, which?	Migrants

Tool full description

The language cafe and conversation are an easy to access activity for meeting people from different backgrounds. The aim is to learn the local language and meet local inhabitants. By talking about different backgrounds and cultures, habits and values are shared. It is about learning to know each other better and learning to have small conversations in the local language by the help of translators. So, the tool has many side effects besides learning the language alone. It helps people to be understood and get a feeling of belonging in a new country they do not know. It helps newcomers to build a network and to participate in other activities. It helps volunteers to contribute and participate in building a nice society that gives access to minorities and new citizens as well.

Languages are best learned and improved by constant speaking and practicing. (Learning by doing).

Context

It is in the context of refugee/immigrant support. In Austria the social centers which are studied have a lot of volunteers. Easy access to local community and support (if needed); language, translation or otherwise (healthcare and legal issues).

Could it be used in other contexts? If yes, which ones?

Yes. just as there are enough immigrants, refugees, and local volunteers to apply for the meetings. There needs to be a right balance between locals and newcomers.

What is innovative about this method or tool?

The informality and dynamics of the meetings. There are no prerequisites, and it is open to everybody. It is about meeting around language but is innovative because of the site effects mentioned before.

The context is voluntary to all. The groups, cafes or tandems can be structured and adapted to one's preferred time frame.

Detailed Methodology

- Provide space.
- Provide time frames.
- Actively ask visitors and volunteer network to participate in this form of activity.
- Make advertisements for refugees and immigrants (flyers in their own language)
- Advertise activity to municipalities and other institutions to create strong network and distribute the flyers.
- Variety of non-formal and voluntary education.

Specific advice for staff/volunteers/adult educators

- Make it easy to access.
- Find the right balance between newcomers and local volunteers (too many members of one group can be frightening and overwhelming for the other groups) a 50/50 percent balance would be great.
- Make the topics flexible adjust to the dynamics of the group.
- See out for the capabilities of the participants, maybe they can join as a volunteer in another activity of the social center (for examples if a teenager is good at football, it helps him to learn the local language and integrate in the local community by joining a football team)
- Language doesn't have to be a barrier for doing other activities within the centers.
- Doing other activities helps to improve language development and helps to improve self-esteem. Focus on the practical use of language, not the grammar or right pronunciation.

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