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Volangteer



# Methodological Guide

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## Abstract





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# METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE : ABSTRACT

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# METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE : ABSTRACT

## 1. PRESENTATION OF THE VOLANGTEER PROJECT

**VoLANGTeer** is a European Leonardo project whose general aims are to identify good practice and develop new methods in the teaching and learning of regional languages, by using volunteers in the role of trainers/mentors.

The specific objectives are the following:

- To contribute to the development and promotion of regional languages;
- To help in the learning of regional languages;
- To help new arrivals to integrate in the regions of Europe where local languages are in use ;
- To create links between the inhabitants of a region and new arrivals;
- To improve inter-cultural dialogue.

The **VoLANGteer** Project should allow a system for the learning the basics of the target regional language to develop, as well as the discovery the local culture, thanks to the use of mentors : each new arrival is put into contact with a volunteer, native to that region. They will work together, helping the learner to acquire the basics of the target language and to integrate more easily into his/her new linguistic and cultural environment.

## 2. ORGANISATION

The setting up of a **VoLANGteer** Project necessitates the taking of a certain number of precautions.

The Methodological Guide presents a series of How-To files, based on the different elements contained in the List of Good Practice, and devised as check lists to help avoid overlooking anything important and any would-be potholes.

### Example of How-To file :

#### **How-to file # 2: Role and responsibilities of the project group**

\* The group's mission :

.....  
.....  
.....

\* Make-up of pilot group :

.....  
.....  
.....

\* Protocol for communication within the pilot group :

.....  
.....  
.....

\* Protocol for communication with others (The Project Manager, Political Representatives, other partners, etc.) :

.....  
.....  
.....

\* Frequency of meetings :

.....  
.....  
.....

A special focus concerns the Volunteer, who is at the heart of the whole project. The volunteer's role is central to the integration of the beneficiary ; it is he/she who will be responsible for:

- Acting as a guide to the town or region,
- Accompanying the learner in his/her linguistic learning and encouraging him/her with helpful tips on his/her language,
- Helping the learner to discover the most interesting or less well known aspects of the town or region,
- Introducing the learner into a social circle, thus helping his/her integration,
- Helping the learner understand any particularities of the region's social codes – which may be different to his/her own,
- Helping the learner with administrative tasks,
- ....

The recruitment, motivation and training of volunteers are fundamental factors in the success of the project. We think it necessary to point out several important selection criteria that will help you avoid potential problems. Obviously this should not be seen as an attempt to create a photo fit portrait of the ideal volunteer, something which would be pointless, but rather to help you to find and recruit the participants in the project. Here is a non exhaustive lists of some of those criteria :

- Language skills: the ability to speak a second language – other than one's mother tongue – is important because it gives the volunteer a different perspective on his/her own language and culture.
- Travels abroad: the fact of being in a similar position to that of the learner (immersed in a cultural environment different to one's own) is also useful as it will help the volunteer better understand any difficulties that his/her partner might face.
- Family abroad or from different cultures: will likewise be of assistance.
- It is also important that the volunteer knows his/her region well if he/she is to be able to help the learner discover its geography and culture.

**Proposed "Volangteer" registration form :**

\*First name :

\*Surname/Family name :

\*Age :

\*Local regional language learned as mother tongue?

\*Second regional/national language?

\*Travels abroad: Where ? How many times ? How long ? Why (business/pleasure/other) ?

\*Overall impression (positive/negative) ?

\*Why are you interested in the VoLANGteer project?

Have you taken part in similar projects?

\*Availability : How much time can you give to the project per week?

\*Do you have any suggestions for how you might play the role of volunteer in the VoLANGteer project?

## 3. TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

### 3.1. Why highlight interculturality?

One of the mainstays of the **VoLANGteer** project is to put into contact a new-arrival wanting to integrate linguistically and socially into his/her new environment with a volunteer who, while not a teaching professional will accompany the new-arrival/learner.

To help this relationship succeed, volunteers must be given the necessary information and guidelines that will help them 'step back' from their language and culture, focusing on the following notions:

- Their relationship with their regional language and culture ;
- Their perception of 'others' ;
- Their ability to collaborate with others in a group project and ability to accept differences in others.

Three notions should be taken into consideration ; those of **communication** and **culture**, which lead to the third, **intercultural communication**.

At the root of the major current in thinking about **communication** lies the assertion [that] "it is impossible to not communicate", as communication is linked to the behaviour of individuals. Since 'non-behaviour' is impossible (silence and inactivity are themselves forms of behaviour) communication is therefore constant.

According to UNESCO, **culture** in its largest sense can be thought of as "the sum of distinctive behavioural traits, spiritual and material, intellectual and affective, which characterise a society or a social group. Culture includes, along with the arts and literature, ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

From an anthropological point of view, culture brings together everything produced by the human spirit – material and immaterial through which we recognise ourselves as being human.

The word might equally describe the way of life of a social group, how it feels, acts or thinks.

The aim of communication is to create an exchange, in the same way that culture can be seen as a way of bringing people together. Within the notion of culture, there are the ideas of community and identity, of sharing traditions and knowledge themselves transmitted from the past.

"Intercultural communication means the relationships built between people or groups belonging to different cultures. We must focus on the relational element here, even if that brings with it a series of representations, values, codes, lifestyles, ways of thinking each belonging to a particular culture."

For Ladmiral and Lipiansky “Intercultural Communication is primarily a problem of communication, that is to say essentially a problem of verbal communication. In a general sense, the door to culture, and in particular cultural identities different from our own, is opened by language. In practical terms, in our relationship to the culture of the ‘other’, the first barrier is that of language(s). Everything starts there; it is the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, when we talk about intercultural communication we essentially think of the problem of multilingualism to the extent that we lose sight of the cultural dimension which underwrites the said communication, beyond that of linguistic barriers. That said, linguistic barriers do make up the first hurdle that has to be overcome.”

These linguistic barriers were what the **VoLANGteer** Project was designed to address but not alone, as the difficulties for the new arrival do not end here. There is the additional problem of the local cultural context, local linguistic (or otherwise) customs which can destabilise, even isolate, the new arrival.

In any intercultural exchange, each individual must make allowances in the way they deal with the other person so as not to cause offence. This includes adapting our behaviour, our speech, our way of thinking – including our beliefs – our prejudices, our opinions, etc.

The way the person who is speaking sees the person to whom they are speaking is all the more complicated as it can be influenced by different (psychological as well as cultural) communication barriers – such as stereotypes, prejudices, racism, the history of the community, the context in which the meeting takes place, etc.

One of the main aims of the VoLANGteer Project is to favour intercultural communication between people native to a region and those newly arrived in the region in order to change minds, to defuse stereotypes and prejudices, about a population a region or a country.

**VoLANGteer** Project volunteers are not by nature teaching professionals – neither are they linguistic or intercultural specialists, neither are the beneficiaries of the project. It was therefore decided preferable that these complex subjects should be dealt with using group activities rather than traditional ‘chalk and talk’ teaching methods. In the training of the volunteers as well as in the work done by volunteers and learners, the question of intercultural communication will be often dealt with but always with a sense of fun so as to at least lighten things up.

## Example of activity for the training of volunteers :

### « I NEED... »

#### **Objective**

Help volunteers to become aware of all the conditions that are necessary to feel comfortable within a group of people.

#### **Duration**

15 minutes.

#### **Preparation**

As many sheets of paper and pens as participants.

#### **Method**

- The trainer tells the group : *"In order for me to feel comfortable in a group, I need to hear people say hello to me when I arrive"* (or any other condition – the trainer has to be honest).
- He asks every participant to think individually about a list of 5 conditions that seem necessary to them in order to feel comfortable in a group. Everyone must write down the list.
- The trainer announces the pooling of ideas, and also makes it clear that attention and respect are absolutely necessary : every participant must be able to express sincerely his/her feelings regarding the group situation he/she is in, without fearing mockery or value judgement.
- As each participant reads his/her list, the trainer writes it on the board. He also writes how many times each condition has been mentioned.
- When everyone is done talking, the trainer explains that certain conditions are necessary for everyone, but for a group to work, it's important that EVERY condition is respected. The participants have to realize that the common points, but also the differences, make living together fulfilling.
- They also have to think about how it's easier to respect another person if you feel listened to and respected in the first place.
- If there's enough time, the group can start writing together a charter of the conditions for being together, based on the conditions chosen by the participants.

### 3.2. The linguistic objectives

The object of the **VoLANGteer** Project is not to try and make the beneficiaries bilingual. On the contrary, the linguistic learning objectives are very modest : the aim is to help the new arrival to 'get by' with a minimum of language skills in the sort of everyday situations they will face in their new environment. We have decided to base our work on linguistic objectives on the theoretical grounding provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), aiming at a small part of level A1. However, that is not to say that certain elements of level A2 will not be attained by some learners.

Let us not forget that the overall aim of the project is to help new-arrivals successfully integrate socially in their new environment. To that end, a minimum of knowledge of the local language certainly helps but learning any foreign language takes up a lot of time and effort. The beneficiaries of the project are busy people who don't have a lot of time on their hands. Even less if they also have to devote time to learning/perfecting their skills in a national language for their job or their studies.

### 3.3 The pedagogical approach

It might seem obvious, but we feel it necessary to assert that adults don't learn in the same way as children.

The first consequence of this is that you cannot simply apply the traditional teaching methods used in a school lesson, those which you might yourself have experienced as a pupil, to a teaching session for adults.

Past experience, professional, social and family commitments, lack of availability, etc., mean that an adult is forced to apply him/herself in a different way to that of a child or teenager. In addition, adults can sometimes develop a resistance to traditional teaching methods for a variety of reasons, notably because:

- For an adult, the authority of a teacher/trainer, even if they are training professionals, is not automatically accepted. The relationship between a teacher/trainer and their learner/trainee is one of equality, not one of "teacher – pupil".
- An adult comes to a training course with a specific learning aim and the expectation that this will be achieved.
- An adult has a certain amount of knowledge, experience and abilities (the mastery of a foreign language other than the one he/she will be learning during the project, for example) and expects this to be recognised and taken into account as part of the training course.

Teaching is not the transfer of knowledge from one person to another, it is rather **accompanying a person in their learning**, helping them to understand and sharing your knowledge as best you can.

There are several important things to remember when teaching adults:

- Adults learn if they understand what they are doing;
- Adults learn if they understand the purpose of the tasks they are asked to perform;
- Adults learn if they are sure that the teaching methods bring results;
- Adults learn if they are made to feel worthy and trust the teacher/trainer;
- Adults learn if learning is a pleasure;
- Adults learn if they are made to be active.

The Methodological Guide presents some « Golden Rules » to be explained to the volunteers during their training session – and re-insisted upon throughout the life of the project :

- The volunteers are not (in the main) teaching professionals.
- During the Volangteer Project, the volunteer will play the role of a companion in the learning of the beneficiary; they may explain and answer the learner's questions about the target language and culture, introduce him/her to other people, invite him/her to regional cultural events, etc but on no condition should the volunteer play the role of the one who knows and whose job is to evaluate and judge the learner.

- During the Volangteer Project, the aim is to favour fun-based learning activities different to those we might find in traditional language teaching text books, first of all because the volunteer is not a teaching professional, secondly because he/she is not a specialist in linguistic didactics either and finally because as the learner has the opportunity to be immersed in the language, the best approach is a more natural, more fun, more convivial one than that usually seen in the classroom. At the same time, spoken language is different from written language and vice versa.
- Learning a language is always a long and difficult process. It is not because a teacher/trainer has said something once that a learner has taken it in! It is often said that you have to forget something seven times before really being able to remember it. At the same time, it is not necessary to be able to say something in order to understand it being said. The focus for learning should be on comprehension.
- Making mistakes is a necessary part of learning. By making mistakes, then analysing them, you make progress. When a child learns how to walk, he/she necessarily falls over. No-one imagines at this point that the child will never learn how to walk!! The same is true for all forms of learning, be they taken on during childhood or adulthood.
- A language is, of course, the sum of its vocabulary (different words) and its grammar (the way these words are put together to make sense) but there is a lot more to it than that. Speaking a language is also being able to listen to other people and understand what they are saying. It is being able to read and above all being able to use what you know to communicate with others. Even if you have very little language skills – in a language that is not our mother tongue – you can communicate in this language, you can also understand and make yourself understood using your own words, your own gestures, even.
- Even at the end of the course, it is very unlikely that the learner will have sufficiently mastered the target regional language to communicate easily in all situations. The relationship between the volunteer and beneficiary should therefore be based on the use of one or several shared languages. That might be the national language, or the beneficiary's mother tongue if the volunteer can speak it well enough, or even a lingua franca like English.

The Methodological Guide then presents the description of a one-day training session for all volunteers, aiming at :

- Creating a team spirit amongst the volunteers and to make them feel part of the "Volangteer" project.
- Making volunteers aware of the inter-cultural approach required for the project.
- Presenting them the basics of what it is to learn/teach a foreign language.

| Sequence   | Objectives  | Methods   |
|--|---|---|
| Welcoming participants<br><br>(10- 15 mins)                      | . Introduction to the training session.   | . The trainer briefly presents him/herself.<br>. PowerPoint presentation of the <b>VoLANGteer Project</b> .   |
| Presentation of the participants<br><br>(30 mins)                | . Breaking the ice.<br>. Becoming aware of each other's differences and similarities.   | . The " <b>Coat of arms</b> " or " <b>Find someone who...</b> " activities.<br>. At the end of the activity each participant briefly presents him/herself.  |
| The inter-cultural approach<br><br>(30 mins)                     | . Thinking about what it means to belong to a different culture, and how each of us might see each other.   | . Completion of the " <b>My language, my region</b> " questionnaire.<br>. Discussion of answers.<br>. Topics for the discussion: community - belonging to/being excluded from etc   |
| First steps in learning a foreign language<br><br>(30 mins)      | . Putting participants in the shoes of a new-arrival in his/her new linguistic environment.<br>. Talking about the stereotypes people have about the target language and language learning. | . " <b>What is this all about?</b> " group activity – 2 groups<br>. Discussion: the trainer asks each group the following questions:<br>- Which language is it?<br>- What did you understand?<br>- How did you feel?<br>. Topics for the discussion: similarities and differences between different languages; using knowledge and experience to help you understand a foreign language.  |
| First steps in learning a foreign language<br><br>(30 to45 mins) | . Identifying the keys points in learning a language.   | . Recap of " <b>My language, my region</b> " activity (questionnaire).<br>. PowerPoint presentation with commentary: " <b>What a language is/isn't; What learning a foreign language is/isn't</b> ".<br>. Presentation of the Common European Framework of reference for languages (CEFR); description of the linguistic and pragmatic objectives to focus on within the "Volangteer" project (presentation of level A1 of the CEFR). |
| Non verbal communication<br>(15 mins)                            | . Taking the relationship between language and cultural identity into consideration (= language is not "disconnected" from this).   | . " <b>Doing is saying</b> " activity.<br>. Discussion. Topic for discussion: a language is not "disconnected" from cultural identity; it is part of a shared sense of belonging.   |
| Inter-cultural approaches<br><br>(30 to45 mins)                  | . Identifying the essential components of inter-cultural communication.   | . PowerPoint presentation with commentary: " <b>The essential components of inter-cultural communication</b> ".<br>. Discussion with participants.<br>. According to the reaction of the participants, carry out one or more of the activities proposed below.  |

| Sequence                                    | Objectives  | Methods  |
|---|---|--|
| Inter-cultural approaches<br>(30 mins)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Thinking about the difference between perceptions, value judgements and reality.</li> <li>. Thinking about how it feels to be watched and judged.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. "<b>I know who you are</b>" activity.</li> <li>. Discussion: Why did you make such assumptions? How did it feel to have these ideas reflected upon you?</li> </ul>  |
| Inter-cultural approaches<br>(15 mins)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Thinking about what people need to feel part of a group.</li> <li>. Learning to listen to other people.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. "<b>I need...</b>" activity.</li> <li>. Group work: participants make a final list of 5 things that they all feel that people need.</li> </ul>  |
| Inter-cultural approaches<br>(15 mins)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Experiencing the feeling of injustice and discrimination.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. "<b>The dunces</b>" activity.</li> <li>. Discussion: participants from the different groups and observers share their feelings and observations.</li> </ul>   |
| Inter-cultural approaches<br>(15 mins)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Thinking about the difficulty we have in accepting others and their differences.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. "<b>My sweets are sweet !</b>" activity</li> <li>. Discussion: How did you feel? Have your opinions/feelings changed as a result of the activity?</li> </ul>  |
| Inter-cultural approaches<br>(15- 30 mins)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Taking distance from previous activities.</li> <li>. Thinking about one's own system of values in connection with inter-cultural communication.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. "<b>A Proverb</b>" activity.</li> <li>. Ask participants to write down their reaction to the proverb, do they agree or not and why?</li> <li>. Discussion in reaction to the activity.</li> </ul>   |
| End of session and evaluation.<br>(30 mins) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Thinking about what has been learnt during the day.</li> <li>. Establishing the common rules within the "Volangteer" project.</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Completion of the end of session evaluation.</li> <li>. Discussion and suggestions for follow-up.</li> <li>. Ask participants to establish a "Volunteer's charter", a list of common rules agreed to by all the participants (collective agreements in connection with their role as "Volangteer" volunteers).</li> </ul> |

\*All timings are subject to the size of the group, participation of the volunteers during the different activities as well as the importance given by the trainer to the given to the 2 themes: linguistic approaches and inter-cultural communication.

## 4. TRAINING LEARNERS

In this last part of the Methodological Guide, the learners are presented a series of technical tools and practical methods to go through their learning and integrating process. For practical purposes, all examples of concrete activities are based on the Galician region, and will of course need transposition to the reality of any other regional language and culture concerned.

**Chapter 1** presents a series of activities aiming at helping the newly-formed pair Learner/Volunteer to get to know each other better.

### Example of “breaking the ice” activity

**Name of the activity :** “The I.D. card”

**Objective :**

During the first session, to exchange basic personal information in order to get to know each other.

**Preparation :** Translate the two tables of information into the target (regional) language.

**Activity :**

\* The volunteer asks questions, firstly in the target language and then using a *lingua franca*, and completes Table 1, where possible, with the information given by the learner.

\* For each section of the table, the Volunteer models the sentence in the target language.

\* The learner then asks his/her questions, using a *lingua franca*, and completes Table 2.

| <b>TABLE 1</b><br>To be completed by the Volunteer, according to the Learner’s answers | <b>TABLE 2</b><br>To be completed by the Learner, according to the Volunteer’s answers |
|--|--|
| * <b>First name :</b>  | * <b>First name :</b>  |
| * <b>Surname :</b>   | * <b>Surname :</b>   |
| * <b>Country / region of origin :</b>  | * <b>Family :</b>  |
| * <b>Age :</b>   | * <b>Where you live (house, flat, ...) :</b>   |
| * <b>Family (number of brothers and sisters) :</b>                                     | * <b>Profession or studies followed :</b>  |
| * <b>Brief description of the region of origin :</b>                                   | * <b>Hobbies :</b>   |
| * <b>Hobbies :</b>   | * <b>Favorite food :</b>   |
| * <b>Favorite food :</b>   | * <b>Favorite animal :</b>   |
| * <b>Favorite animal :</b>   |  |
| * <b>Reason for stay :</b>   |  |
| * <b>Length of stay :</b>  |  |

**Example in Galician:**

V : *Como te chamas ?*

L : *Eu chamome yyy.*


V : (writes and says at the same time) : *Te chamas yyy.*

In **Chapter 2**, a set of activities are proposed in order to help the teamer to discover in a fun way some elements of the cultural background of their partner.

### Example of activity oriented towards cultural communication

To encourage contact between the learner and local people, volunteers can send their partners on a treasure hunt, the aim being to find out different details of local life – customs, interesting details, specialties, famous people, etc. This activity could be organized by the project pilot organisation, so as to include all the participants in a shared activity.

A few example questions for Galicia :

1. What are the main ingredients of Paella ?
2. What are the buildings on stilts that can be found in the Galician countryside for ?
3. What does the following symbol mean ? 
4. What is the name of the current Bishop of Santiago ?
5. How many squares do you cross in Santiago on your way to the bus station from the Cathedral on foot ?
6. ....

**Chapter 3** presents another set of concrete activities aiming at discovering in a very precise way elements of the volunteer's region and culture (here again, the examples given concern the Galician region and will obviously need transposition). At the end of the chapter, a list of very common communication situations give way to examples of concrete activities to be carried out by the team. These will help the learner to gain self-confidence in communicating in everyday situations with the natives.

**Examples of activities to be carried out in everyday situations :**




| <b>Situations</b>              | <b>Different examples of useful sentences for listening and speaking</b>   | <b>Example activities / « missions »</b>  |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>On the telephone</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Hello/Good morning/afternoon, can I speak to...please?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who's speaking?</i></li> <li>- <i>Hold the line please.</i></li> <li>- <i>He's not available, could you call back later?</i></li> </ul>   | Ask the learner to call the local Tourist Information Centre (TIC) to ask for the opening hours of a museum.                  |
| <b>Greetings/Presentations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Hello, my name's...</i></li> <li>- <i>How are you?</i></li> <li>- <i>What's your name?</i></li> <li>- <i>Pleased to meet you.</i></li> <li>- <i>Where do you come from?</i></li> </ul>   | Present the learner to a friend and ask them to present themselves.   |
| <b>Asking the way</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Excuse me, I'm looking for the station.</i></li> <li>- <i>Is this the bus that goes to the airport?</i></li> <li>- <i>Turn right/turn left.</i></li> <li>- <i>It's straight on.</i></li> <li>- <i>Just after the church.</i></li> <li>- <i>Could you tell me if there is a phone box?</i></li> </ul> | Give the learner a destination and ask them to ask passers-by for the way.  |
| <b>At the hotel</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do you have a (single/double/en suite) room?</i></li> <li>- <i>Do you have a reservation?</i></li> <li>- <i>For how many nights?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is the price for bed and breakfast?</i></li> <li>- <i>How much are the rooms?</i></li> </ul>  | Ask the learner to go to a hotel and ask how much a single room costs.  |
| <b>At the camp site</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do you have a pitch for a two-person tent?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is the pitch far from the toilets/near the lake?</i></li> <li>- <i>Where are the showers?</i></li> <li>- <i>How much is it per night?</i></li> </ul>  | Ask the learner to telephone a camp site and ask for the availability of a pitch for x number of nights, from the...to the... |

With **chapter 4**, learners can use suggestions for a follow-up of their own progression in the learning of the regional language as well as in their integration process. They are asked to fill in self-assessment sheets, and they can also use this very concrete tool as a personal notebook.

[Example of self-assessment tool :](#)

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <u>Self-evaluation Chart</u> | <b>Level A1</b><br><b>All languages</b> |
|------------------------------|---|

 Without difficulty    
  With difficulty    
  Not at all

| LISTENING | I can understand familiar daily expressions as well as simple sentences (for example short, simple instructions) if someone is talking clearly   |  |  |  |
|-----------|--|---|---|---|
|           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I understand when someone is saying hello, when they ask me how I am or when they say goodbye</li> <li>▪ I understand simple questions about everyday life and about my everyday environment (who I am, my age, my job etc)</li> <li>▪ I understand simple everyday expressions about daily life (accepting, refusing, thanking someone)</li> <li>▪ I can follow short and simple instructions (for example for finding my way)</li> <li>▪ I can understand a simple description (of a person, a place, or an object)</li> <li>▪ I can understand numbers and figures (quantities, prices, sizes, the date and time etc)</li> </ul> |   |   |   |

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