

Summary – The story in short

We were searching for two kinds of participants:

- 1) individual people to meet in tandem couples of two different tongues, to practice together each others languages
- 2) groups of foreigners of different countries in classes to become a 'language café' integrating Spanish or Basque speaking people, to speak in Spanish or Basque about common topics

The search was a lot more difficult than expected, because address lists use to be unaccurate and migrants at the moment have urgent survival problems (new restrictions of health assistance).

Aims/Objectives - Why, Where?

After an analysis of the focus groups of migrants with the strongest need for such activities, in order to promote their integration and contacts with local people, we identified two groups:

- a) Arabic speaker
- b) people from countries from the south of Sahara.

As the native languages 'offered' by b) are not asked for or learned in Basque Country / Spain, they would offer their second language, English or French. As there is a broad offer of English courses in schools and private centers, and France is 30 km away, this offer would not be attractive. So, we decided to start by group a), the Arabic speakers, as to individual exchanges refers.

As to groups, we got in contact with organizations which run courses for migrants.

By the other side, we did not make restrictions about the local participants and offered both languages for exchange, Basque and Spanish, depending on the wishes of the Arab participants.

We selected for the pilot phase from October to mid of January the province capital, Donostia / San Sebastián (186.000 inhabitants), and a smaller one, Tolosa (18.200 inhabitants).

The Project - How, Who, When?

As there are few experiences of learning of Arabic in this area, we began with the contacts on the Arab side to get an idea of the figures of persons which would be interested. Once made the publicity on this side, we would know how extensive should be the publicity among the local people.

First of all, we made a mailing to every Arab organization we found by internet and other lists, and left phone messages, without result.

As migrants use to trust more information which come from well-known persons, we decided to contact some stakeholders with activity for migrants:

1) The Research Centre of SOS Arrazakeria / Racismo

2) The Equality Dept. of Basque Youth Council EGK

Those put us in contact with some other groups which became stakeholders:

3) Jatorkin, morocco group in the area of Tolosa

4) Another antiracist group

5) Loiola Etxea, a community which gives shelter to young Arabs which came alone across the sea

6) a public training center for migrants, EPA, in a quarter where we had good contacts with

7) the neighborhoods association of the same quarter

Being the contacts with the EPA extremely difficult due to work overload, we contacted by ourselves the two other big players in the migrant education in the area,

8) a church charity: the responsible acknowledged receipt without answering, later the office staff told us very clearly not to call anymore

9) a humanitarian organization: the responsible wrote us after much insistence that they “could”

not participate for multiple reasons.

After a series of personal meetings with the responsible, those contacted and proposed future participants. We made another series of meetings with them and picked up the questionnaires with data about level, interests, timetable we need to look for adequate partner. Those were filled out with our help and we noticed several difficulties in understanding and filling out forms in spa

These contacts which started before summer and were refreshed in September, led at the beginning of October to 5 potential Arab participants (and some with other desires like Arabic/German exchange), for which we started looking for partners. Due to the surprisingly low interest of natives, we had to widen our circles step by step:

- 1) mailing to stakeholders
- 2) mailing to NGO in the field of development and international solidarity, whose volunteers go abroad (which led to some contacts out of our pilot area)
- 3) mails and phone calls to the culture department and the organizer of an Arabic course of the public university, which were never answered
- 4) mails and phone calls to the only private school with classes of Arabic, and the arab teacher of vocational training for adults in a neighbour town, without results
- 5) three leaflet campaigns at the university and the public libraries, which had some results
- 6) two ads in the local newspapers, which also had some results.

Unfortunately, 5) and 6) also provoked more enquiries of Arab participants, so at mid of October we still had a disequilibrium and lack of local people. But we decided to start with the couples we could build, offering every local person two Arab partners (at different times) if she wanted.

We proposed to plan the exchange from mid of October until mid of January (meeting of Metikos project in San Sebastián).

As to the 'language café' refers, we managed to have a meeting with all teachers of EPA at the beginning of October, but do not know at the moment if a group will participate.

Results/Evaluation

As we are just in the beginning, there are only some provisional appreciations about organization to be made:

- a) the interest of local population in the language of their neighbors and tourist destination is extremely low
- b) the interest of the 'big players' in the migrants area in promoting projects as ours also is extremely low, it seems "the more money they get from the state, the less they move". Our supporters were grass root groups or individuals
- c) there is a high rate of people interested which never reaches to send the questionnaire, and participants with short school career need help
- d) it is very difficult to get the information in time, so it is also difficult to make meet all interested

at the same day in the same room

As to Arab participants, the range is from young people which came alone over the sea, to unemployed and university students with master degree, all male. The local people are all female, polyglot and elder than the Arabs.

Sustainability

After the end of the project, TANDEM Fundazioa will not be able to maintain the service. Thus, it has to be transferred to organizations which work in the field of migration and could offer it as a complement to their usual services. To prepare this right now, we follow two strategies:

- a) take notes about the experiences, to be able to complement the standard material for tandem intermediators with complements focused to migrants
- b) make participate staff of the stakeholders in each step (filling out of questionnaires, presentation meetings, evaluation).

So, we expect that the meeting in San Sebastián can be the starting point for more tandem exchange programs in more cities and villages and more language cafés.

Lessons Learnt

Looking at the lack of local participants, it is clear that the next phase has to use more impacting ways of dissemination, e.g. press and radios. We could not do so in the first phase due to the risk to provoke too much expectations.

Also we learned that the organizations which are paid to support migrants are less effective and active than those which support them for idealistic reasons.

Finally, it seems to be impossible to calculate the work load according to a smooth running of the project, it should be timetabled the double or three times

Influencing agenda

As we are in a pilot phase, we did not inform any political contacts neither ask for support. By the way this would not be of common sense, as we are in pre-electoral period...

International links

For the preparation of the presentation meeting, it was very helpful that we count with a research about Arabic-German tandems at the university of Leipzig, carried out by Margaret Bahati Glass with our supervision.

Consent

Confirm you have the consent of the commissioning organization or key stakeholders before submitting your case study Yes (those which did not answer are anonymized)

Quotes and Photos: Quotes and photographs of the participants really add to the story. Please send 1-2 photographs if possible. Attached.

Photos/graphics should be gif or jpg files. Confirm you have permission from the people involved to use their quotes/photos. Yes for the report, NO for publication in internet.