The METIKOS Facilitator's Guide-

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide a few hints and tips in how to be a facilitator to support the delivery of the METIKOS language cafes, cyber café and TANDEM partnerships.

> Group facilitation is a process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision-making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, to increase the group's effectiveness. The facilitator's main task is to help the group increase effectiveness by improving its process and structure. (Schwarz 2002: 5)

A facilitator is an individual whose job is to help to manage a process of information exchange. While an "expert's" role is to offer advice, particularly about the content of a discussion, the facilitator's role is to help with HOW the discussion is proceeding. In short, the facilitator's responsibility is to address the journey, rather than the destination.

Whether it's a meeting (big or small) or a training session, someone has to shape and guide the process of working together so that you meet your goals and accomplish what you've set out to do. While a group of people might set the agenda and figure out the goals, one person needs to concentrate on how you are going to move through your agenda and meet those goals effectively. This is the person we call the *"facilitator."*

Being a good facilitator is both a skill and an art. It is a skill in that people can learn certain techniques and can improve their ability with practice.

A good facilitator is concerned with both the outcome of the meeting or training session, with how the people participate and interact, and also with the process.

Good facilitation is hard work and it is difficult. There are many styles of facilitation and no single "right" way to carry out the role. We each develop our own unique style and make different kinds of contribution to the facilitation function.

This guide has been produced to help and support those who are new to facilitation to prepare for this role.

Quick Hints and Tips

Here are a few more points to remember that will help to maximize your role as a facilitator:

1. Don't memorise a script

Even with a well-prepared agenda and key points you must make, you need to be flexible and natural. If people sense that you are reading memorized lines, they will feel like they are being talked down to, and won't respond freely.

2. Watch the group's body language

Are people shifting in their seats? Are they bored? Tired? Looking confused? If folks seem restless or in a haze, you may need to take a break or speed up or slow down the pace of the meeting. And if you see confused looks on too many faces, you may need to stop and check in with the group, to make sure that everyone knows where you are in the agenda and that the group is with you.

3. Always check back with the group

Be careful about deciding where the meeting should go. Check back after each major part of the process to see if there are questions and that everyone understands and agrees with decisions that were made.

4. Summarise and pause

When you finish a point or a part of the meeting process, sum up what was done and decided, and pause for questions and comments before moving on. Learn to "feel out" how long to pause -- too short, and people don't really have time to ask questions; too long, and folks will start to get uncomfortable from the silence.

5. Be aware of your own behaviour

Take a break to calm down if you feel nervous or are losing control. Watch that you're not repeating yourself, saying "ah" between each word, or speaking too fast. Watch your voice and physical manner. (Are you standing too close to folks so they feel intimidated, making eye contact so people feel engaged?) How you act makes an impact on how participants feel.

6. Occupy your hands

Hold onto a marker, chalk, or the back of a chair. Don't play with the change in your pocket!

7. Watch your speech

Be careful you are not offending or alienating anyone in the group. Use swear words at your own risk!

8. Use body language of our own

Using body language to control the dynamics in the room can be a great tool. Moving up close to a shy, quiet participant and asking them to speak may make them feel more willing, because they can look at you instead of the big group and feel less intimidated. Also, walking around engages people in the process. Don't just stand in front of the room for the entire meeting.

9. Don't talk to the newsprint, blackboard or walls--they can't talk back!

Always wait until you have stopped writing and are facing the group to talk.

The Role of a Facilitator

"Guiding an event through to a successful conclusion"
So you've been asked to facilitate a meeting or language café? What does that mean exactly?

- Do you just ensure everyone's introduced, and

- Maybe kick off with a quick ice breaker exercise?

- Is your main role simply to stand by the flip chart and note down all the ideas?

- What preparation do you need to do?

- How do you manage the event, and

- How exactly do you pull the whole thing together?

In many types of group situation, and particularly in complex discussions or those where people have different views and interests, *good facilitation can make the difference between success and failure.*

As a facilitator, you may need to call on a wide range of skills and tools, from problem solving and decision making, to team management and communications.

What Is a Facilitator?

The definition of facilitate is *"to make easy"* or *"ease a process".*

What a facilitator does is plan, guide and manage a group event to ensure that the group's objectives are met effectively, with clear thinking, good participation and full buy-in from everyone who is involved.

To facilitate effectively, **you must be objective**. This doesn't mean you have to come from outside the organisation or team, though. It simply means that, for the purposes of this group process, you will take a neutral stance. You step back from the detailed content and from your own personal views, and focus purely on the group process. (The "group process" is the approach used to manage discussions, get the best from all members, and bring the event through to a successful conclusion. How you design this depends on many factors, and we'll explore this in a little more detail later in the guide. The secret of great facilitation is a group process that flows – and with it will flow the group's ideas, solutions, and decisions too.)

Your key responsibility as a facilitator is to create this group process and an environment in which it can flourish, and so help the group reach a successful decision, solution or conclusion.

Tip:
Facilitation can take a lot of mental effort, meaning that it can be difficult to think about and contribute content while facilitating. Neutrality is also important. So if you have an interest in the outcome, or have skills, experience, information or authority which is important for a successful outcome, then consider bringing in an external facilitator.

What Does a Facilitator Do?

To facilitate an event well, you must first understand the group's desired outcome, and the background and context of the meeting or event. The bulk of your responsibility is then to:

- **Design and plan** the group process, and select the tools that best help the group progress towards that outcome.
- **Guide and control** the group process to ensure that:
  - There is effective participation.
  - Participants achieve a mutual understanding.
  - Their contributions are considered and included in the ideas, solutions or decisions that emerge.
  - Participants take shared responsibility for the outcome.
- Ensure that outcomes, actions and questions are properly **recorded and actioned**, and appropriately dealt with afterwards.

We look in more detail at most important of these areas below.

Design and Plan

With the group's objective firmly in mind, preparation for the meeting or event is all-important. **Your job is to choose and design the right group process (es), and develop an effective agenda / topic for the occasion.**

Tip 1: Focus on Outcomes
Whether you're planning a straight-forward meeting, or a complex event over several sessions or days, it's important to keep in mind always the **outcome** – and how you are helping the group reach it.

If the event spans multiple sessions and topics, make sure you are clear about both the desired outcome and process for each one. And make sure you know how the outcome of each session or topic contributes to the outcome of the event overall.

Tip 2: Involve your customer/client!
If you've been asked to facilitate an event by someone else, make sure you consult him or her carefully

as to the final "shape" of the event. Even if they haven't been explicit about what they want, they probably have an idea of what they want, and will be unpleasantly surprised if this isn't delivered.

Two key aspects of the design and planning are choosing the right group process, and designing a realistic agenda/topic.

Choose and design the group process

There are as many ways to design a group process as there are events to facilitate: It's quite an art! Group process design is also a huge topic in its own right, and something that professional facilitators learn through experience and training.

Here are some of the just some of the factors and options to consider:

• **Do you want an open discussion, or a structured process?**

An open discussion, well facilitated, may be the simplest option for your group process. But ask yourself whether you will be able to achieve the participation you need, and manage the discussion with the number of participants involved with this format.
-Can you cover the variety of topics needed?
-Can you generate enough ideas and solutions?
-Can you involve everyone, and get their buy-in?

• **What structured process should you choose?**

If you need to accommodate participation from a large group, consider smaller "break-out" groups.
Are you concerned about getting enough participation? Then give people time in the agenda to think about and write down the things they want to contribute. If you want to get ideas flowing, then consider including a brainstorming session.

• **Other factors to consider**

You won't be able to change some constraints. However, you may be able to change others to optimise your process and agenda. As part of this, consider:

  • The number of participants.
  • The nature of the topics under discussion.
  • The type of involvement people need to have/

- The background and positions of the participants.
- How well they know the subject and each other.
- The time you have available.

Remember, whatever group process you define, it's a question of keeping your focus on outcomes. Find the best way to achieve the objectives of the overall event.

Designing a realistic agenda

Designing the agenda/ agreeing a topic goes hand in hand with designing the group process. As you iterate between designing the process and designing the agenda/topic, the event starts to take shape. Among the factors to consider when planning the agenda are:

- In what order should the topics be presented?
- How will participants get to know each other?
- How will they gain a common understanding of the objectives?
- If an event is to be broken into separate sessions, how much time should be allocated to each item?
- Will all participants be involved each session?
- Or will some be in smaller, break-out groups?
- How and when will break-out groups' feed back to the wider group?
- When will you recap and summarise?
- How will the outcomes of one session flow into the next?
- How will you achieve closure of the overall event?

By the end of the design and planning stage, you should have a solid agenda, which focuses on outcomes, and provides a good flow and structure for the event.

Other design and planning considerations

In addition to process and agenda, you should also consider the following:

- Information and materials – What do participants need to know before or at the event? How will this be provided and when?
- Room arrangements – What room set-up will best encourage participation? Are separate rooms needed for break out groups?
- Supplies – What supplies and props do you need? Pens, flip charts, post-it notes are just the starters – make sure you have everything you need for the agenda and process you've planned. And make sure you have backups for things like data projectors, just in case these fail.
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Guide and Control the Event

With the agenda and group process in place, it's time to think about how you'll guide and control the proceedings. There's still some preparation to do for this, and then there's whole business of guiding and controlling the event itself.

The final stage of preparation is to think about how you'll guide and control the meeting. This is where you prepare the ground rules for the event, polish your facilitation skills, and also consider some what-if scenarios:

-What if there is major disagreement?

-What if a solution does not emerge? and so on.

At the meeting itself, as facilitator, you'll set the scene and ensure that participants are clear about the desired outcome, the agenda/topic, the ground rules and expectations for the event. By doing this, you help everyone focus on the task at hand. At the start of the meeting, and throughout, your role is to use to ensure the meeting keeps progressing towards a successful outcome.

To guide and control the meeting, you will need to:

- ***Set the ground rules*** –
  -What rules should participants follow in the meeting?
  -How will people interact?
  -How will you ensure that people respect each other's ideas?
  -How will questions be handled?
  -You'll prepare some ground rules in advance, and propose and seek agreement to these at the start of the event.

- ***Set the scene*** – Here, you'll run through the objectives and agenda/topic. Make sure everyone understands their role, and what the group is seeking to achieve.

- ***Get things flowing*** – You'll make sure everyone introduces themselves, or perhaps use appropriate icebreakers to get the meeting off to a positive start. (For more ideas on ice breaking exercises, refer to annex A

- ***Keep up the momentum and energy*** – You might need to intervene as the proceedings and energy levels proceed. Make sure people remain focused and interested. (If energy levels are beginning to flag, perhaps it's time to take a break?)

- ***Listen, engage and include*** – Even though, as facilitator, you're taking a neutral stance, you need to stay alert, listen actively, and remain interested and engaged. This sets a good example for other participants, and also means you are always ready to intervene in facilitative ways.

  -Is everyone engaged?

  -If not, how can you bring them in?

  -How can you get better participation?

- ***Monitor checkpoints***, and summarise – Keep in control of the agenda, tell people what they've achieved and what's next; Summarise often.

- Intervene only if absolutely required.

Tip: Interventions

As a facilitator, there are many situations in which you may need to intervene. Rehearse when and how you'll do this. Keep the lightest of touch. And bear in mind the need to remain objective, keep focus on the desired outcomes, and generally maintain a positive flow.

The most difficult types of intervention are those involving conflict, anger and disagreement. Remembering your role, it's important to focus on the needs of the group, whilst considering the feelings and position of both parties involved in any disagreement.

To keep the event flowing and positive:

- Watch for and close any side conversations. These limit the ability of others to focus, and often people are exchanging ideas that should be brought to the group.
- Keep a close eye on the timing. Be flexible, and balance the need for participation with the need to keep things running efficiently.
- Learn what to do when a discussion isn't reaching a natural conclusion. Is more information needed? When and how will the discussion proceed? Park topics that cannot be concluded, and ensure that action time is scheduled to address these issues.
- Be on the lookout for people who aren't participating fully. Are they experiencing discomfort? What is the source of the discomfort? What can you do to bring them into the conversation?
- Pay attention to group behavior, both verbal and non-verbal. Some of the most damaging behavior is silent, so know how to spot it and stop it effectively.
- Step in and mediate immediately if there are obvious personal attacks. Effective facilitators look for the least intrusive intervention first, so reminding everyone of the ground rules is often a good place to start. Whatever the issue, you can't allow bad behavior to continue so be prepared to take the steps necessary to stop attacks.

Record and Action

Last but not least among the responsibilities of a facilitator is the recording of outputs and of bringing these together, sharing them, and making sure they are actioned.

The key to successful recording of outputs from an event is to be clear about what will be recorded, how and by whom. Make sure people's responsibilities are 100% clear, whether they are yours or others' involved.

Tip:
When we think of a facilitator, it's the recording function part of their role that most often comes to mind. We see a person standing in front of an easel that is packed with paper, with felt pen in hand, and ready to write furiously when the ideas start flowing.

While this is an important function, remember that, for the ideas to flow, the planning, and guiding and controlling functions must be attended to first. You can have all the paper in the world but if your meeting is not well planned, guided, and controlled, you could be facing an empty piece of paper at the end of the event.

When you are recording and actioning, here are some things to remember:

- You are responsible for making sure the participants hear, see, and understand the information that is presented and offered. Make sure you keep an accurate record of what's going on. If in doubt, record now and summarise later.
- Try to use words that the group chooses, and when in doubt, ask them to provide the words for you to record.
- Ensure all decisions and actions are recorded. You may want to use a scribe to do this, so that you can stay focused on the group and the process.
- As you record decisions and actions, check with the group that the information you're recording is a fair and accurate reflection of what's been discussed.
- Remind the group what has been discussed, and keep them focused and moving forward.
- If in doubt, ask for clarification before the discussion moves on.
- Make sure that responsibility for, and commitment to, action, is obtained and recorded when necessary.
- After the event, follow up to ensure that outstanding actions and issues are progressed, and that the proceedings are brought to a successful conclusion.

Key Points:

To be an effective facilitator you must know when to take a leadership role, and when to be neutral and take a back seat. This is a difficult balance to maintain! The key to being proficient in the role is to plan

and guide the proceedings effectively, and remain focused on the group process and outcomes, rather than specific content and opinions involved.

Facilitation is an interesting, rewarding and important role to take on. When facilitating, take time to think about the process and agenda, and learn the skills you need to take the event through to a successful conclusion. Take pride in the role of facilitation, and enjoy watching the ideas, solutions and successful outcomes flow!

Annex A

Ice Breakers

Easing Group Contribution

Ice Breakers can be an effective way of starting a training session or team-building event. As interactive and often fun sessions run before the main proceedings, they help people get to know each other and buy into the purpose of the event.

If an ice breaker session is well-designed and well-facilitated, it can really help get things off to a great start. By getting to know each other, getting to know the facilitators and learning about the objectives of the event, people can become more engaged in the proceedings and so contribute more effectively towards a successful outcome.

But have you ever been to an event when the ice breaker session went badly? Just as a great ice breaker session can smooth the way for a great event, so a bad ice breaker session can be a recipe for disaster. A bad ice breaker session is at best simply a waste of time, or worse an embarrassment for everyone involved.

As a facilitator, the secret of a successful icebreaking session is to keep it simple: Design the session with specific objectives in mind and make sure the session is appropriate and comfortable for everyone involved.

This article helps you think through the objectives of your ice breaker session, and then suggests various types of ice breaker you might use. As a facilitator, make sure your ice breakers are remembered for the right reasons – as a great start to a great event!

When to Use Icebreakers

As the name suggests, an ice breaker session is designed to "break the ice" at an event or meeting. The technique is often used when people who do not usually work together, or may not know each other at all, meet for a specific, common purpose.

Consider using an ice breaker when:

- Participants come from different backgrounds.
- People need to bond quickly so as to work towards a common goal.
- Your team is newly formed.
- The topics you are discussing are new or unfamiliar to many people involved.
- As facilitator you need to get to know participants and have them know you better.

So What's the "Ice"?

When designing your ice breaker, think about the "ice" that needs to be broken.

If you are bringing together like-minded people, the "ice" may simply reflect the fact that people have not yet met.

If you are bringing together people of different grades and levels in your organisation for an open discussion, the "ice" may come from the difference in status between participants.

If you are bringing together people of different backgrounds, cultures and outlooks for work within your community, then the "ice" may come from people's perceptions of each other.

You'll need to handle these differences sensitively. Only focus on what's important to your event. (Remember, you want to break some ice for your event, not uncover the whole iceberg, or bring about world peace!)

And as you move on to design and facilitate the event, it's always best to focus on similarities (rather than differences), such as a shared interest in the event's outcome.

Designing Your Icebreaker

The key to a successful ice breaker is to make sure the ice breaker is specifically focused on meeting your objectives and appropriate to the group of people involved.

Once you have established what the "ice" is, the next step is to clarify the specific objectives for your ice breaker session.

With clear objectives, you can start to design the session. Ask yourself questions about how you will meet your objectives. For example:

- "How will people become comfortable with contributing?
- "How will you establish a level playing field for people with different levels and expectations?

- "How will you create a common sense of purpose?"

These questions can be used as a check list once you have designed the ice breaker session:

"Will this ice breaker session help people feel comfortable, establish a level playing field, etc"

As a further check, you should also ask yourself how each person is likely to react to the session. Will participants feel comfortable? Will they feel the session is appropriate and worthwhile?

Example Ice Breakers

There are many types of ice breakers, each suited to different types of objectives. Here we look at a few of the more popular types of ice breakers and how they can be used.

Introductory Ice Breakers

Introductory ice breakers are used to introduce participants to each other and to facilitate conversation amongst the participants.

What we have in common

The facilitator calls out a characteristic of people in the group, such as '*having children*'. All those who have children should move to one corner of the room. As the facilitator calls out more characteristics, such as '*likes football*', people with the characteristic move to the indicated space.

Match the cards

The facilitator chooses a number of well known phrases, and writes half of each phrase on a piece of paper or card. For example, they write '*Happy*' on one piece of paper and '*Birthday*' on another. (The number of pieces of paper should match the number of participants in the group.) The folded pieces of paper are put into a hat.

Each participant takes a piece of paper from the hat and tries to find the member of the group with the matching half of the phrase.

Names and adjectives

Participants think of an adjective to describe how they are feeling or how they are. The adjective must start with the same letter as their name, for instance, "I'm Henri and I'm happy". Or, "I'm Arun and I'm amazing." As they say this, they can also mime an action that describes the adjective.

Three truths and a lie

Everyone writes their name, along with four pieces of information about themselves on a large sheet of paper. For example, '*Alfonse likes singing, loves football, has five wives and loves PRA*'. Participants then circulate with their sheets of paper. They meet in pairs, show their paper to each other, and try to guess which of the 'facts' is a lie.

Find someone wearing...

Ask participants to walk around loosely, shaking their limbs and generally relaxing. After a short while, the facilitator shouts out "Find someone..." and names an article of clothing. The participants have to rush to stand close to the person described. Repeat this exercise several times using different types of clothing.

The Little Known Fact:

Ask participants to share their name, department or role in the organisation, length of service, and one little known fact about themselves.

This "little known fact" becomes a humanizing element that can help break down differences such as grade / status in future interaction.

True or False:

Ask your participants to introduce themselves and make three or four statements about themselves, one of which is false. Now get the rest of the group to vote on which fact is false.

As well as getting to know each other as individuals, this ice breaker helps to start interaction within the group.

Interviews:

Ask participants to get into twos. Each person then interviews his or her partner for a set time while paired up. When the group reconvenes, each person introduces their interviewee to the rest of the group.

Problem Solvers:

Ask participants to work in small groups. Create a simple problem scenario for them to work on in a short time. Once the group have analyzed the problem and prepared their feedback, ask each group in turn to present their analysis and solutions to the wider group.

Tip:
Choose a fairly simple scenario that everyone can contribute to. The idea is not to solve a real problem but to "warm up" the group for further interaction or problem solving later in the event. The group will also learn each other's styles of problem-solving and interaction.

Team-Building Ice Breakers

Team-building ice breakers are used to bring together individuals who are in the early stages of team building. This can help the people start working together more cohesively towards shared goals or plans.

The Human Web:

This ice breaker focuses on how people in the group inter-relate and depend on each other.

The facilitator begins with a ball of yarn. Keeping one end, pass the ball to one of the participants, and the person to introduce him- or her-self and their aspiration. Once this person has made their introduction, ask him or her to pass the ball of yarn on to another person in the group. The person handing over the ball must describe how he/she relates (or expects to relate) to the other person. The process continues until everyone is introduced.

To emphasis the interdependencies amongst the team, the facilitator then pulls on the starting thread and everyone's hand should move.

Ball Challenge:

This exercise creates a simple, timed challenge for the team to help focus on shared goals, and also encourages people to include other people.

The facilitator arranges the group in a circle and asks each person to throw the ball across the circle, first announcing his or her own name, and then announcing the name of the person to whom they are throwing the ball (the first few times, each person throws the ball to someone whose name they already know.) When every person in the group has thrown the ball at least once, it's time to set the challenge – to pass the ball around all group members as quickly as possible. Time the process, and then ask the group to beat that timing. As the challenge progresses, the team will improve their process, for example by standing closer together. And so the group will learn to work as a team.

Hope, Fears and Expectations:

Best done when participants already have a good understanding of their challenge as a group. Group people into 2s or 3s, and ask people to discuss their expectations for the event or work ahead, then

what they fears and their hopes. Gather the group's response by collating 3-4 hopes, fears and expectation from pairing or threesome.

Topic exploration ice breakers

Topic exploration ice breakers can be used to explore the topic at the outset, or perhaps to change pace and re-energize people during the event.

Word association: This ice breaker helps people explore the breadth of the area under discussion. Generate a list of words related to the topic of your event or learning. For example, health and safety, ask participants what words or phrases come to mind relating to "hazardous materials". Participants may suggest: 'danger,' 'corrosive,' 'flammable,' 'warning,' 'skull and crossbones,' etc. Write all suggestions on the board, perhaps clustering by theme. You can use this opportunity to introduce essential terms and discuss the scope (what's in and what's out) of your training or event.

Burning questions: This ice breaker gives each person the opportunity to ask key questions they hope to cover in the event. Again you can use this opportunity to discuss key terminology and scope. Be sure to keep the questions and refer back to them as the event progresses and concludes.

Brainstorming can be used as an ice breaker or re-energizer during an event. If people are getting bogged down in the detail during problem solving, for example, you can change pace easily by running a quick-fire brainstorming session. If you are looking for answers to customer service problems, try brainstorming how to create problems rather than solve them. This can help people think creatively again and gives the group a boost when energy levels are flagging.

What is Brainstorming?

Brainstorming combines a relaxed, informal approach to problem-solving with lateral thinking. It asks that people come up with ideas and thoughts that can at first seem to be a bit crazy. The idea here is that some of these ideas can be crafted into original, creative solutions to the problem you're trying to solve, while others can spark still more ideas. This approach aims to get people unstuck, by "jolting" them out of their normal ways of thinking.

During brainstorming sessions there should therefore be no criticism of ideas: You are trying to open up possibilities and break down wrong assumptions about the limits of the problem. Judgments and analysis at this stage stunt idea generation.

Ideas should only be evaluated at the end of the brainstorming session – this is the time to explore solutions further using conventional approaches.

Individual Brainstorming

While group brainstorming is often more effective at generating ideas than normal group problem-solving, study after study has shown that when individuals brainstorm on their own, they come up with more ideas (and often better quality ideas) than groups of people who brainstorm together.

Partly this occurs because, in groups, people aren't always strict in following the rules of brainstorming, and bad group behaviors creep in. Mostly, though, this occurs because people are paying so much attention to other people's ideas that they're not generating ideas of their own – or they're forgetting these ideas while they wait for their turn to speak. This is called "blocking".

When you brainstorm on your own, you'll tend to produce a wider range of ideas than with group brainstorming - you do not have to worry about other people's egos or opinions, and can therefore be more freely creative. For example, you might find that an idea you'd be hesitant to bring up in a group session develops into something quite special when you explore it with individual brainstorming. Nor do you have to wait for others to stop speaking before you contribute your own ideas.

You may not, however, develop ideas as fully when you brainstorm on your own, as you do not have the wider experience of other members of a group to help you

Annex B

METIKOS - Roles of the facilitators

Language Cafe Facilitator

The facilitator is very important for the formation of the language café since s/he is the person who organises everything and facilitates the discussion in the session. The facilitator should have the following characteristics:

Characteristics of the facilitator

- Open-mindedness

- An interest in people

- The ability to listen as well as speak

- A willingness to take responsibility for making the Language Café a success

- Should be native speaker or have an advanced level in the language of the café

Once the café is up and running the organiser's role may include some or all of the following:

 Role of the facilitator

- To facilitate meetings e.g. keeping the conversation going, coming up with ideas for café activities

- To use icebreaking techniques and be able to propose new activities

- Be a native/competent speaker of the language of the café

- To liaise with the venue owner

- To make sure that everybody is able to speak but is an effective timekeeper

- To encourage participants to ask questions

- To invite external guests, where appropriate

- To promote the language café in the local area

The above characteristics are similar, more or less, for all the language cafés. For the particular case of the organisation of language café for immigrants, a facilitator should take also into consideration the following:

List of things to consider specifically for immigrants

- **Native Speaker:** The need for a native speaker is far greater in cafés organised for immigrants wanting to learn the culture and the language of their host country than in other types of language cafés. If the facilitator is not a native, at least one native should participate in the café as a participant when possible.

- **Language Teacher**: There is no need for the facilitator or the native speaker to be a language teacher or to have any teaching background.

- **Liaising with immigrants and immigrant associations:** The facilitator of the sessions should be able to liaise with immigrants and immigrant associations in order to attract people in the learning sessions. In the same time, s/he should liaise also with natives willing to participate in these language learning sessions.

CREATING A FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

As explained in the previous sections of the guidelines, one of the main reasons why people are attending the language cafes is to make new friends and meet interesting people. In the case of online

learning, every effort should be made to keep this friendly atmosphere. For this reason, the following activities are proposed:

 Tips for maintaining a Friendly Atmosphere

- Encourage participants to share photos

- Create a facebook page (or in another social media) for your Cyber Language Café and invite all the group members to join

- Encourage the interaction of the group outside the hours of the sessions (for example through chat, blog, forum activities)

- Organise a face to face meeting with the group members if this is possible

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STARTING A TANDEM ®

Matching the participants

The intermediary person or organisation is responsible for matching the participants on the basis of the questionnaires that have been presented in the previous section. The basis for a good Tandem ® is a genuine interest and mutual understanding between the partners, which prompts them to speak, making it easier for them. This is why a careful choice and a personal knowledge of the participants before an intermediation are the most important steps of the intermediation centre. This possibility of making a choice is what distinguishes Tandem ® from a haphazardly made conversation

MONITORING OF A TANDEM ®

Basically, a Tandem® is a device for the participants and after a successful matching, the intermediary should be available in the background or disappear. However, the intermediary should ask the participants occasionally about how satisfied they are. The need for feedback is especially high in the first weeks immediately after starting; later it declines and can be obtained through group meetings where experiences are compared.

! List of things to consider specifically for immigrants

Tandems with immigrants need considerably more monitoring than the other Tandems. The intermediary should contact the immigrant and the native speaker more often to discuss difficulties, problems and solutions.

At least in the first year of intermediation activity, it is strongly advised for the intermediary to organise an appraisal session with both partners together or separately at the end of each Tandem®. It broadens their experience and enables future intermediations to be better.

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR CYBER CAFÉ

The role of the facilitator is exactly as the one described in the previous parts. Moreover, the facilitator in online language learning should have also this additional role.

Role of the Facilitator

- To find and propose to the participants the online sources available and where they can find useful information and material

- To help the participants to overcome any technical problems that they may face

- To organise online activities

- To be able to use electronic sources rather than sources based on paper

- To correcting mistakes in language learning