

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

Reshaping SPEAK's Model to Foster Migrant Connection and Strengthen the Organization's Sustainable Growth

M. E. S. Rente - Understanding Newcomers Through Migration Trends, Barriers to Inclusion and Expectations for Integration

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Abstract

The work project investigates how SPEAK can reshape its integration model to foster social connections among migrants while enhancing its long-term sustainability. By combining a literature review, a mixed-method approach and a benchmarking analysis, this research identifies the critical organizational challenges. Strategic frameworks were applied to prioritize these issues. Based on the findings, a dual language group model is proposed. Complementary strategies, including participant engagement, volunteer recognition, and structured progression, are presented to reinforce SPEAK's mission. The proposed model balances accessibility with operational resilience, positioning SPEAK as a scalable and inclusive solution to migrant integration.

M. E. S. Rente contributed to the project by conducting a contextual and theoretical analysis of migration, focusing on global and national trends, integration challenges, and the role of civil society. This included a literature review on migration classifications and policy frameworks, as well as the design and interpretation of a user survey that explored newcomers' expectations and willingness to engage in socially impactful language learning.

Keywords: Learning, Migrants, Migration, Integration, Language, Barriers, Community, Newcomers, Connections, NGO, Foreign

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	4
List of Tables	6
List of Abbreviations	7
GROUP PART (Student A: M. B. Crispim + Student B: M. E. S. Rente + Student C: M. V. Waingankar + Student D: P. Keles).....	8
1. Introduction	8
2. Strategic Insights and Framing Solutions to Key Challenges	11
2.1. Understanding Challenges Through Data Research	13
2.2. Meeting Diverse Needs by Offering Paid Online and Free Offline Language Groups for Two Target Groups	14
2.3. A Subscription-Based Model for Inclusive Growth and Financial Sustainability	16
2.4. Insights from the SPEAK Team and Buddies	18
2.5. Buddies and Ambassadors Model for Long-Term Retention	20
2.6. Participant Engagement and Retention Initiatives	26
2.7. Redefining and Testing SPEAK's New Homepage.....	28
2.8. Validation of Having Two Types of Language Groups and Monthly Subscription Model	31
3. Implementation Strategy, Execution Plan, and Work Project Constraints	33
3.1. Implementation Strategy	33
3.2. Timeline for Implementation, Execution, and Impact Assessment	47
3.3. Work Project Constraints	49
4. Conclusion	50
INDIVIDUAL PART (Student B: M. E. S. Rente).....	55
1. Literature Review	55
1.1. Migration Concepts, Classifications and Global Trends.....	55

1.2. Migrants' Integration, Social Impact and the Role of Civil Society	61
2. Key Findings from Field Research.....	67
References.....	71
Appendices.....	76

List of Figures

Figure 1: Journey 1 – Challenges Identification and Validation	11
Figure 2: Journey 2 – Solution Development and Validation	11
Figure 3: Excerpt from the Homepage – Type of Language Groups' Description	36
Figure 4: Excerpt from the "Learn More" Pages of Free and Paid Language Groups	36
Figure 5: Excerpt from the Homepage – SPEAK's Mission.....	37
Figure 6: Excerpt from the Homepage – "Join as a Volunteer" Section	37
Figure 7: Excerpt from the "Be a Volunteer" Page	38
Figure 8: Excerpt from the Buddies' Personal Dashboard	39
Figure 9: Excerpt from the Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard	40
Figure 10: Main Reasons for Migration to the European Union (%)	76
Figure 11: Evolution of Foreign Residents in Portugal (Number of Individuals)	76
Figure 12: Most Represented Nationalities Among Immigrants in Portugal (Number of Individuals)	77
Figure 13: Evolution of International Protection Requests in Portugal (Number of Requests per Year).....	77
Figure 14: Proportion of Participants Who Reported Discrimination in Portuguese Public Services for Being Immigrants (%)	78
Figure 15: Nationalities of Participants Who Reported Experiencing Discrimination in Portuguese Public Services (%)	78
Figure 16: Main Types of Discrimination Perceived Against Immigrants in Portuguese Public Services (%)	79
Figure 17: Age Distribution of Participants (Number of Respondents)	80
Figure 18: Nationalities of Participants (Open-Ended Responses).....	80
Figure 19: Current Occupation of Participants (%)	81
Figure 20: Country of Residence of Participants (Open-Ended Responses)	81
Figure 21: Participants' Experience Living in a Different Country from Their Country of Origin (%).....	82
Figure 22: Interest in Learning the Local Language While Abroad (%)	82
Figure 23: Preferences for Informal and Social Language Learning Settings (%).....	83
Figure 24: Main Motivations for Joining a Language Course (Multiple Answers).....	83

Figure 25: Main Reasons for Dropping out of a Language Course (Multiple Answers).....	84
Figure 26: Willingness to Pay for a Socially Impactful Language Class (%)	84
Figure 27: Monthly Amount Participants are Willing to Pay for Language Classes (%).....	85
Figure 28: Interest in Exclusive Events for Regular Participants (%)	85
Figure 29: Perceived Usefulness of an App for Language Learning (%).....	86
Figure 30: Preferred Channels for Class Reminders (%).....	86
Figure 31: Perceived Motivational Effect of a Reward System (%).....	87
Figure 32: Interest in Accessing Pre-Made Learning Materials (%)	87
Figure 33: Willingness to Donate Via SPEAK’s Platform (%).....	88
Figure 34: Preferred One-Time Donation Amounts to Support Free Language Classes (%).....	88
Figure 35: Prototype of SPEAK’s Website Homepage Illustrating the New Structure of Language Learning Groups	89
Figure 36: Understanding of SPEAK’s Class Model Based on the Website Prototype (%).....	89
Figure 37: Perceived Clarity of SPEAK’s Class Model Explanation in the Homepage Prototype (%).....	90
Figure 38: Revised Website Homepage Prototype Designed to Improve Communication of SPEAK’s Language Learning Group Structure	91
Figure 39: Clarity of Class Model Explanation in Updated Prototype (%).....	91
Figure 41: SPEAK’s Website Homepage.....	94
Figure 42: Free Language Group Page	98
Figure 43: Paid Language Group Page	99
Figure 44: "Be a Volunteer" Page	101
Figure 45: Participants’ Personal Dashboard.....	103
Figure 46: Participants’ Personal Dashboard – “See Group Details” Button, Language Group’s Schedules	105
Figure 47: Buddies’ Personal Dashboard.....	106
Figure 48: Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard.....	108
Figure 49: Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard – “Join the Event” Button, Upcoming Event Details	110

List of Tables

Table 1: Financial Analysis – Pessimistic Scenario	93
Table 2: Financial Analysis – Moderate Scenario.....	93
Table 3: Financial Analysis – Optimistic Scenario	93

List of Abbreviations

AIMA: Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum

EU: European Union

IOM: International Organization for Migration

KPIs: Key Performance Indicators

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAC: Participant Acquisition Cost

PALOPS: Portuguese-speaking African countries

PLNM: Portuguese as a Non-Native Language

SEF: Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras

UN: United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

GROUP PART (Student A: M. B. Crispim + Student B: M. E. S. Rente + Student C: M. V. Waingankar + Student D: P. Keles)

1. Introduction

Migration in the 21st century is a phenomenon that goes far beyond the physical act of relocating from one country to another. It encompasses a broad spectrum of social, emotional, cultural, and economic transitions that individuals and families must navigate as they seek to establish new lives in unfamiliar environments. For many migrants and refugees, these transitions are accompanied by a set of profound challenges that can significantly hinder their integration into host societies. Among the most pressing of these challenges is the language barrier, which frequently acts as a gatekeeper to essential services, employment opportunities, education, and social interaction. Language is not only a tool for communication but also a critical factor in achieving inclusion, empowerment, and a sense of belonging (Holanda 2021).

Equally important in the integration process is the ability to form meaningful social connections. Building relationships with locals and other migrants enables individuals to access information, receive emotional support, and participate more actively in the civic and cultural life of their new communities. Research has consistently shown that integration is not a unidirectional process but a dynamic exchange that requires mutual engagement from both newcomers and host populations. Despite this understanding, many integration initiatives continue to focus narrowly on institutional and policy-level interventions, often overlooking the interpersonal dimension that is essential for migrants' long-term well-being and societal participation.

This work project explores these issues through the case study of SPEAK, a community-led, social tech organization founded in Portugal in 2014. SPEAK's mission is to build inclusive communities

by connecting locals and migrants through informal language learning and cultural exchange. Operating in over 30 cities across multiple countries, SPEAK applies a peer-to-peer model in which volunteer Buddies facilitate language groups and Ambassadors organize social events. This structure encourages active participation, challenges stereotypes, and promotes diversity as a societal strength. However, despite its strong mission and growing reach, SPEAK faces a range of internal and external challenges that limit its effectiveness and scalability. These include the absence of a Financial Sustainable Model, difficulties in retaining participants and volunteers, a lack of structured progression in its educational offerings, and insufficient communication of its value proposition through digital platforms. This work project is guided by the following central question, “How can SPEAK’s model be reshaped to foster migrant connections while ensuring long-term sustainability and inclusion?”. The challenges explored throughout this work project emerge directly from this inquiry.

To investigate these challenges, this research draws upon a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including semi-structured interviews with key organizational stakeholders, benchmarking analyses of comparable initiatives, and surveys targeting current and potential participants. Analytical frameworks as the RICE Scoring Model and the Impact versus Effort Matrix were used to evaluate and prioritize the identified problems. The research identified two main priorities for intervention, the need for a sustainable operational model and the imperative to improve participant and volunteer retention. These findings informed the design of a new model for SPEAK’s language groups, proposing a dual structure in which paid online language groups support the free sessions for financially or socially vulnerable individuals.

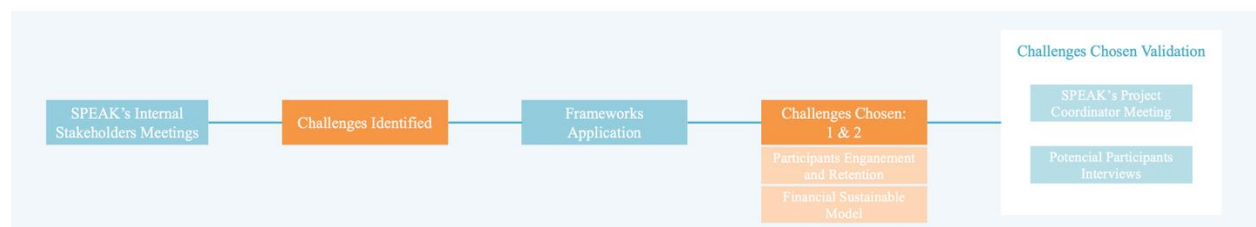
Additionally, the proposed solution introduces a level-based payment model aligned with SPEAK’s six-week course structure, thereby increasing clarity and accessibility for users. To

further enhance engagement, the work project presents several complementary strategies. These include the introduction of certificates of completion, structured peer-sharing practices, the development of an Alumni Network, and the improvement of volunteer recognition and progression systems. These components aim not only to strengthen the organization's financial sustainability but also to foster a deeper, more consistent connection between SPEAK and the communities it serves.

2. Strategic Insights and Framing Solutions to Key Challenges

This sixth section outlines the comprehensive process undertaken to identify, prioritize, and address the key organizational challenges faced by SPEAK. The approach combined qualitative and quantitative data collection with iterative stakeholder engagement and multiple validation stages, resulting in the development of a refined dual language group model. This process unfolded across two major journeys, each corresponding to a different phase of the project.

Figure 1: Journey 1 – Challenges Identification and Validation



The first journey (Figure 1) began with an internal meeting with SPEAK's stakeholders. The challenges identified through these discussions were then subjected to structured prioritization using strategic frameworks. This evaluation enabled a data-informed refinement of the work project's focus, resulting in the selection of two core challenges (Section 2.1) for initial solution development: Participant Engagement and Retention, and the need for a Financial Sustainable Model. These challenges were then further validated through a follow-up meeting with SPEAK's Project Coordinator and some interviews with potential participants.

Figure 2: Journey 2 – Solution Development and Validation



The second journey (Figure 2), Solution Development, was initiated with the first two challenges confirmed. The first solution proposed was the Dual Language Group Model (Section 2.2 and 2.3), designed to simultaneously address both challenges chosen in the previous phase. This proposal was validated through Survey 1 (Section 2.1.1), along with interviews with a SPEAK Founder and two Buddies (Section 2.4).

Following this, the Development Phase was expanded to include a third challenge, Volunteer Engagement and Retention that arises based on the received feedback and shared concerns (Section 2.4), during the Dual Language Group Model Solution Validation Phase. The solution was then updated to include volunteer recognition mechanisms (Section 2.5) and the new SPEAK's operational model reflected in Website Changes (Section 2.7). The Dual Language Group Model and Volunteer Retention and Engagement updates were validated during another Validation Phase, including a meeting with SPEAK's Project Coordinator (Section 2.8) and Survey 2 to validate those Website Changes (Section 2.7.2). From that validation culminated the final solution, where the Dual Language Group Model was updated (Section 2.8), as well as the referred Website Changes that were improved and validated through Survey 3 (Section 2.7.3).

This two-journey process resulted in the final solution integrating all three elements: the updated Dual Language Group Model, the Volunteer Engagement and Retention Component, alongside Website Changes reflecting SPEAK's new operational model.

2.1. Understanding Challenges Through Data Research

Following the identification of SPEAK's core challenges through internal stakeholders meetings and their prioritization based on frameworks results, two primary focus areas were selected for further development: the establishment of a Financial Sustainable Model and the Enhancement of Participant Retention and Engagement. These challenges emerged as the most pressing from both a strategic and operational perspective and will serve as the foundation for the solutions proposed in this work project.

A Financial Sustainable Model is essential for SPEAK's long-term viability. A sustainable model would enable the organization to expand its team, invest in digital and educational tools, and reduce its current dependence on fluctuating sponsorships. Without stable funding, operational growth and program consistency will remain limited. Similarly, improving Participant Retention and Engagement is fundamental to SPEAK's mission of social integration. Increased retention would enhance community cohesion, maximize the impact of each language group, and improve volunteer experiences.

During the meetings with SPEAK's Internal Team and former Buddies, it was highlighted that these issues are persistent concerns that affect not only SPEAK's scalability but also user outcomes and internal motivation among volunteers. Later in the process, Sustaining Volunteer Engagement was additionally included in the primary challenges to be addressed.

This work project will focus on developing actionable, evidence-based strategies that respond to SPEAK's most critical needs, establishing a robust financial foundation and improving participant and volunteer retention and engagement. These challenges are central to the organization's capacity to scale, remain mission-aligned, and continue generating long-term social impact.

2.2. Meeting Diverse Needs by Offering Paid Online and Free Offline Language Groups for Two Target Groups

In response to the first two prioritized challenges, this proposal introduces a dual language group model for SPEAK. The solution aims to align the organization's operational model more closely with its core mission, to foster inclusive, supportive communities through language and cultural exchange. At the same time, it introduces a structure capable of sustaining the organization's long-term growth. The proposed model establishes two types of language groups: paid, online sessions for individuals with greater financial means and free, offline sessions for socially and economically vulnerable participants. This segmentation is intended not only to respond to diverse learner needs but also to create a cross-subsidization mechanism in which paid language groups generate financial resources to sustain the free ones.

The paid online language groups are designed for financially stable newcomers, as international students or professionals, who may not urgently need to learn the local language for survival but are interested in doing so to enhance their social experience and build a local network. These participants often prefer flexible, digital solutions that accommodate their work or academic schedules and are familiar with virtual learning environments. As reported in recent studies, online platforms offer appealing levels of convenience and accessibility for time-constrained individuals (Meticulous Research 2024). This segment will benefit from structured, informal sessions with a social focus, reinforced by occasional in-person events to facilitate deeper community-building. Importantly, SPEAK's digital platforms, including its website and social media channels, will be used as the main touchpoints to promote these online, paid groups, while also communicating the impact of their participation, to help fund free sessions for individuals in need.

On the other hand, free offline language groups are tailored for vulnerable groups, including refugees and low-income migrants who require in-person instruction to meet basic integration needs. These individuals often face linguistic barriers that hinder their access to employment, public services, and education. In-person sessions offer a more accessible and emotionally supportive learning environment, particularly for those unfamiliar with online education platforms or lacking adequate digital resources. According to the OECD (2021), face-to-face environments enhance social cohesion and participant motivation, especially among migrant learners.

Furthermore, research highlights that in-person settings support accountability, human connection, and long-term engagement, critical factors for vulnerable populations (Abamosa 2021). The success of this offline component hinges on establishing partnerships with schools, community centers, local councils, and NGOs. These partners will play a vital role not only in providing physical spaces for language groups but also in promoting the participant and volunteer programs to each target audience. Since digital promotion may not effectively reach all members of this group, alternative outreach methods, including printed materials such as flyers and posters distributed through trusted institutions, will be used to ensure awareness and accessibility.

By integrating these two language groups' structures, SPEAK is better positioned to pursue its mission while securing its financial future. The model meets the unique needs of two distinct user profiles: those seeking informal, social learning opportunities and those in urgent need of linguistic and emotional support to navigate life in a new country. This dual structure transforms SPEAK's language groups model into a mission-aligned, inclusive, and scalable framework, reinforcing both its social impact and operational resilience.

2.3. A Subscription-Based Model for Inclusive Growth and Financial Sustainability

To complement the proposed dual structure of language groups, this section introduces a subscription-based payment model as a strategic solution for SPEAK's long-term financial sustainability. The goal is to create a funding mechanism that not only secures a more stable revenue stream for the organization but also reinforces the inclusive values embedded in SPEAK's mission.

The subscription model would be applied specifically to the paid language groups, allowing participants to contribute financially in a consistent and predictable manner. This approach aligns with modern consumer behaviors, particularly among SPEAK's target demographic. Young adults, who represented a significant portion of the first survey respondents, are widely accustomed to monthly subscriptions for services such as media, education, and digital productivity platforms. Survey results suggest that this demographic prefers flexible, purpose-driven consumption models and is more likely to support initiatives that combine personal benefit with social impact.

Importantly, this approach does not position language groups as a traditional product to be consumed. Rather, it reinforces a model of reciprocal value creation, where participants understand that their monthly contribution enables others, specifically, vulnerable migrants and refugees, to access free in-person language education. This value-for-value proposition resonates with the ethical motivations of SPEAK's target audience and has the potential to transform payment from a transactional exchange into a form of active civic engagement.

Survey data supports this direction (Appendix 2). More than three-fifths of respondents expressed a willingness to pay for informal language groups taught by native speakers if the proceeds helped fund free access for those in need. Only one-fifth of participants stated they would not be willing

to contribute financially, while the remaining respondents selected “Maybe,” indicating an openness to the idea. The findings also confirm the community’s financial capacity, more than half of the respondents were employed, while an additional third identified as students, two groups that are familiar with subscription formats, even if at different price points.

Respondents who were open to payment indicated a preferred contribution range between €20 and €30 per month. This aligns well with SPEAK’s operational costs and represents a price point that balances affordability with perceived value. Moreover, it reflects a desire not just to receive educational services, but to participate in a model of collective social responsibility.

When contrasted with traditional donation models, the subscription system is notably more attractive to SPEAK’s audience. Only one-quarter of survey respondents said they would be willing to make donations directly to support SPEAK’s mission. This disparity suggests a shift in how individuals prefer to contribute rather than passive giving, they favor mechanisms that combine personal utility with broader impact.

In conclusion, the introduction of a subscription-based payment system offers both financial stability and mission alignment. It is responsive to the behavioral patterns, economic capacity, and ethical priorities of SPEAK’s audience. Most importantly, it enables SPEAK to sustain and expand its operations while reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility and inclusive growth.

2.4. Insights from the SPEAK Team and Buddies

In addition to analyzing first survey data, this work project incorporated qualitative feedback from SPEAK's Internal Team and former Buddies to further evaluate the feasibility and inclusivity of the proposed dual language group model. These meetings were conducted to present and discuss the introduction of two types of language groups: paid online sessions and free offline sessions. The conversation provided valuable insights not only on participant engagement but also on the evolving needs and expectations of volunteers, particularly the Buddies who facilitate the language groups.

SPEAK's Internal Team responded positively to the core idea of introducing paid language groups as a way to strengthen the organization's financial structure. They also agreed that requiring payment for some sessions might enhance participant accountability and reduce dropout rates, two major concerns that have historically affected language groups' consistency. The suggestion that individuals who pay for a service tend to value it more and participate more regularly was seen as both intuitive and well-supported by SPEAK's operational experience.

However, Internal Team members emphasized that volunteer engagement, especially for Buddies, was a critical and often under-addressed aspect of program sustainability. One notable data point shared during the meeting was a sharp decline in the number of active Buddies, from approximately 120 in the first quarter of the year to only around 60 in the second. This dramatic drop underscored a growing retention issue among volunteers, raising concerns that the proposed model, while strong on the participant side, did not yet offer adequate structural or motivational support for the volunteers who are central to delivering the sessions.

To further investigate this concern, one of the qualitative interviews conducted was with a former SPEAK participant who later became a Buddy. This Buddy described the experience as highly rewarding, especially due to the informal, welcoming nature of the language groups and the opportunity to connect with diverse learners. However, the Buddy eventually stepped back from the role due to the time commitment required to prepare lessons, particularly in the absence of standardized teaching materials, and the demotivating experience of low participant attendance. Buddy's experience echoed many of the systemic challenges identified by the SPEAK team, as limited resources for volunteers, inconsistent language groups' attendance, and a lack of formal recognition. The Buddy expressed support for the idea of introducing paid groups, noting that financial commitment might increase participant reliability and improve all Buddies' experience overall. However, it was also stressed that this would not be sufficient. Volunteers need to feel valued and supported in tangible ways, through mechanisms such as streamlined language groups' materials, recognition programs, and more robust onboarding and mentorship systems.

These discussions highlighted a central insight, volunteer engagement must be treated as an equally critical pillar of SPEAK's sustainability strategy. While increasing participant retention is vital for the success of language groups, the same level of attention must be given to the volunteers who lead them. Without a motivated and well-supported group of Buddies and Ambassadors, the long-term delivery of learning sessions and events will remain at risk. The integration of team and volunteer perspectives thus reinforces the importance of designing a solution that balances the needs of participants with the well-being of those facilitating the learning process. Addressing retention and engagement holistically is essential to SPEAK's ability to scale impact while preserving the values of inclusion, empathy, and collaboration at the heart of its mission.

2.5. Buddies and Ambassadors Model for Long-Term Retention

Volunteers play a vital role in ensuring the success of SPEAK's language learning and community-building activities. Buddies and Ambassadors' contribution enables SPEAK to deliver free and accessible programs while nurturing inclusive communities. However, as mentioned in the previous section, the organization faces a common challenge experienced by many volunteer-based initiatives maintaining long-term volunteer engagement.

SPEAK's Internal Team and former Buddies' interviews conducted throughout this research revealed that many volunteers join SPEAK with enthusiasm, but some disengage over time due to a perceived lack of structure, growth opportunities, or formal recognition. The absence of defined pathways for development or consistent feedback can result in a loss of motivation and, consequently, a high turnover rate. This not only impacts the continuity of participant experience but also places additional strain on coordinators tasked with recruiting and onboarding new volunteers.

To counteract these issues, a structured retention strategy that empowers, recognizes, and supports Buddies and Ambassadors is essential to foster lasting commitment and institutional knowledge within SPEAK's community.

2.5.1. Tiered Structure for Buddies

A structured, tiered model is proposed for SPEAK's Buddy role to create meaningful progression opportunities and deepen volunteer commitment. Each level introduces additional responsibilities and leadership expectations, allowing volunteers to grow within the organization while remaining aligned with SPEAK's core values of collaboration and inclusion. The titles designated to each

level reflect both the community-based ethos of SPEAK and a degree of professionalization suitable for listing on a LinkedIn profile or resume.

The initial level, Language Buddy, describes volunteers who lead language sessions using SPEAK's resources and teaching philosophy. These individuals are responsible for ensuring inclusive and supportive learning environments that prioritize group engagement and intercultural connection. Upon completing at least three full language group cycles, maintaining strong participant feedback, and demonstrating initiative within the community, Language Buddies become eligible for advancement.

Participant feedback will be gathered systematically through short, structured surveys administered in the middle of the language group, on the third week, and at the end, on the sixth week. These surveys will be designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights into the language groups' experience. Participants will be asked to rate the session on a five-point Likert scale across core indicators, including the Buddy's communication clarity, engagement style, and ability to foster a welcoming environment. A sample question may include "How would you rate the overall performance of the Buddy so far?", having 1 as very poor and 5 as excellent. With an average rating of at least 4 out of 5, the Language Buddies are eligible for the next level. Additional questions may assess how comfortable participants felt speaking during the session and whether they felt included. To supplement numerical ratings, the survey will include optional open-ended fields for written feedback. These insights will be anonymized and reviewed after each feedback survey, with Buddy's average rating used as a formal metric in their performance evaluation. To progress to the next level, a Buddy must maintain an average rating of 4 out of 5 or higher across at least two completed group cycles. This continuous feedback mechanism ensures a participant-

centered approach while supporting the professional development of volunteers within SPEAK's tiered model.

The second level, Mentor Buddy, includes all responsibilities of the Language Buddy role while adding a peer-support dimension. Mentor Buddies informally guide newly recruited volunteers, offering insights on classroom dynamics, time management, participant interaction, and feedback. To qualify for the Mentor Buddy, after reaching the referred requirements, Language Buddies should demonstrate their interest to their Mentor to be promoted.

The final tier, Lead Buddy, is designed for experienced volunteers who demonstrate leadership qualities and an interest in shaping SPEAK's educational approach. In addition to their ongoing mentorship responsibilities, Lead Buddies contribute to the revision and development of teaching materials and play an active role in onboarding and training new Buddies. Eligibility is based on a minimum of one year of continuous involvement, experience mentoring at least two Buddies, and a demonstrated commitment to pedagogical improvement. Peer nominations and endorsements are encouraged to reinforce transparency and merit-based progression.

By formalizing the Buddy role into progressive stages, SPEAK not only promotes volunteer retention through personal development but also reduces reliance on staff-led training by empowering volunteers to share their knowledge. This structure strengthens internal capacity and aligns with SPEAK's goal of building autonomous, community-led integration ecosystems.

2.5.2. Recognition and Reward System

To complement the tiered progression system, a structured rewards strategy is proposed to acknowledge and incentivize both Buddies and Ambassadors. While many volunteers are

intrinsically motivated by SPEAK's mission, providing tangible and symbolic recognition reinforces their value and encourages ongoing participation. The proposed system involves both non-monetary and experiential rewards tailored to the realities of a non-profit environment.

Volunteers who demonstrate consistent engagement, measured by the number of language groups led or events organized, would become eligible for a variety of rewards. These may include small-value gift cards, such as vouchers or cinema tickets, discounts at partner restaurants or bookstores, and SPEAK-branded merchandise. Additionally, certificates of participation, personalized LinkedIn recommendations, and internal shoutouts offer recognition that is especially relevant for volunteers who are students or early-career professionals seeking to enhance their curriculum.

This system is designed to be inclusive and achievable, ensuring that volunteers feel acknowledged for their ongoing efforts. Moreover, establishing partnerships with local businesses and cultural institutions could help SPEAK source rewards in a cost-effective and community-aligned way, reinforcing local collaboration and visibility.

2.5.3. Buddy of the Quarter and Ambassador of the Quarter Programs

Beyond long-term progression and material incentives, the introduction of Buddy of the Quarter and Ambassador of the Quarter recognition programs provides a timely, community-centered method for celebrating exceptional volunteer contributions. While language groups typically follow a 6-week format, this quarterly recognition aligns with SPEAK's operational rhythm, allowing enough time to observe consistency across different language groups and activities.

These initiatives are intended to spotlight volunteers who consistently demonstrate commitment, leadership, and positive energy in their roles. The selection process would rely on a combination of objective and subjective indicators.

For the Mentor Buddies, the process includes the number of language groups facilitated during the period, evidence of initiative or community support, and peer nominations. Additionally, the survey to collect feedback about language groups would serve a dual purpose, evaluating the Mentor Buddies and selecting the Buddy of the Quarter, since it is the one with the highest score on the feedback surveys mentioned before.

For the Ambassadors, the selection process is based on the number of events organized and hosted, as well as on the feedback received from events participants. The Ambassador of the Quarter is the volunteer with the highest number of events, together with the most positive feedback.

Both the Buddy and the Ambassador of the Quarter could be publicly recognized on SPEAK's digital platforms, including the website, social media, and newsletters. Additionally, a symbolic reward such as a digital certificate or voucher can be provided. This recognition not only motivates volunteers but also fosters a culture of appreciation and peer encouragement.

2.5.4. Long-Term Impact and Sustainability

Together, the tiered Buddy model, structured rewards, and recognition initiatives form a comprehensive retention strategy that aligns with SPEAK's mission and operational realities. This system addresses known volunteer engagement challenges by offering progression, recognition, and community, while remaining cost-effective and adaptable to local contexts. The model enhances internal leadership, reduces onboarding pressure on staff, and promotes the sharing of

knowledge across the organization. By equipping volunteers with opportunities to grow, contribute, and feel valued, SPEAK not only fosters long-term commitment but also strengthens its capacity to scale effectively and sustainably.

As SPEAK continues to grow and evolve, this approach provides a flexible foundation that can be refined based on feedback and localized practices. It encourages continuous improvement, creates positive social dynamics, and reinforces the organization's identity as a collaborative, inclusive, and empowering platform for integration.

2.6. Participant Engagement and Retention Initiatives

Enhancing participant retention and engagement is essential for ensuring the long-term success of SPEAK's language learning programs. While much emphasis has rightly been placed on volunteer support mechanisms, equally important are participant-centered strategies that enrich the learning experience and foster a stronger sense of community belonging. To address the persistent issue of irregular participation and limited post-program engagement, a set of targeted initiatives is proposed. These measures aim to deepen participants' connection to SPEAK, incentivize consistent involvement, and extend the relationship beyond the course duration.

A key initiative involves the formal introduction of a Certificate of Course Completion, to be awarded to participants who fulfill a minimum attendance requirement, proposed at 75% of scheduled sessions. This certificate would serve both as a token of personal achievement and a practical asset for learners who wish to demonstrate their language learning experience in academic or professional contexts. More than symbolic recognition, the certificate incentivizes regular participation, which in turn contributes to stronger group dynamics and enhances the overall classroom experience. A more consistent attendance rate benefits not only the learners themselves but also the Buddies, whose motivation depend on stable participation to plan and deliver engaging sessions. Attendance could be easily tracked by the Buddy at each session, ensuring minimal administrative burden while maintaining accountability.

Recognizing the need to sustain engagement beyond the conclusion of the course, the establishment of an Alumni Network is also recommended. This initiative would maintain a structured channel of communication between SPEAK and its former participants, counteracting the common issue of disengagement after course completion. The Alumni Network could be

implemented through low-maintenance channels such as a mailing list or private chat online group, where curated content, such as advanced language resources, local cultural events, and informal practice opportunities, can be shared. This post-course engagement would continue to support participants' integration journeys while also generating value for SPEAK. A connected alumni base offers opportunity for volunteer recruitment, event promotion, and potentially even financial support through small-scale donations. By maintaining this relationship, SPEAK reinforces its long-term impact and supports a cycle of continued participation and community involvement.

These initiatives, the Certificate of Completion and the Alumni Network, form a cohesive strategy to improve both the experience and outcomes of SPEAK's programs. Together, they strengthen internal group dynamics, foster long-term loyalty, and extend the organization's reach and relevance beyond the language group.

2.7. Redefining and Testing SPEAK's New Homepage

As part of the development and evaluation process of the SPEAK's dual language group model, a prototype of the organization's homepage was created. The objective was to assess whether the message regarding the two distinct types of language groups, paid online and free in-person, was effectively communicated. This validation process was carried out in two complementary phases: first, through qualitative feedback from SPEAK's Project Coordinator, and second, through a targeted user survey (Appendix 3). Following this, a revised version of SPEAK's website homepage was developed, and a follow-up survey (Appendix 4) was conducted to determine whether the clarity and perceived value of the model had improved.

2.7.1. SPEAK's Internal Feedback

Initial feedback on the homepage prototype was collected during a meeting with SPEAK's Project Coordinator. While the general structure and aesthetic of the layout were positively received, a key issue identified was the lack of clarity surrounding the two types of language groups. SPEAK's Project Coordinator pointed out that the current version focused heavily on the paid model, potentially alienating individuals seeking free language groups. This lack of visibility risked discouraging the most financially and socially excluded individuals from proceeding with the registration process. A key recommendation that emerged was to include two separate and clearly labeled boxes or call-to-action sections on the homepage, one for paid online language groups and another for free in-person language groups, to ensure that both pathways were equally visible and accessible.

2.7.2. Survey Feedback

To complement the internal perspective, a survey was conducted to evaluate the clarity of the message presented in the homepage prototype. When asked to identify the language groups model that best described SPEAK based on the layout they reviewed, the results were generally positive. Four-fifths of respondents correctly understood that “SPEAK offers paid online language groups and free in-person language groups. The revenue from paid sessions helps fund the free ones.” Moreover, three-fourths of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the model was clearly explained. However, two-fifths expressed disagreement, which reinforced the concerns raised during internal feedback. Together, these findings indicated that while the main idea was understood by a majority, there remained significant room for improvement in terms of message clarity and accessibility.

2.7.3. Follow-Up Survey Feedback

After implementing the suggested changes based on the initial internal and user feedback, notably the addition of clearly separated call-to-action boxes for free and paid language groups, a second survey was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the updated homepage design. This follow-up survey was shared with the same group of respondents who participated in the initial validation phase to ensure consistency in evaluation.

The results showed a marked improvement in message clarity. When asked whether SPEAK’s dual language group model was well explained in the revised prototype, more than three-fifths of respondents selected “Strongly Agree” and almost one-third selected “Agree”, totaling ninety-three percent positive agreement. Only six percent responded “Neutral” and “Disagree”, each one with three percent, and no respondents selected “Strongly Disagree”.

These results suggest that the revised homepage effectively addressed the initial concerns regarding the visibility and clarity of SPEAK's dual language group model. The improved layout helped communicate not only the existence of two types of language groups but also the social impact of participating in the paid option. This outcome reinforces the value of iterative design grounded in user feedback and supports the continued use of user-centered approaches in future communication strategies.

2.8. Validation of Having Two Types of Language Groups and Monthly Subscription Model

To assess the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed solution, including the dual model of online paid and offline free language groups, as well as the monthly subscription payment model, a second validation meeting was conducted with SPEAK's Project Coordinator. This conversation provided critical insights that helped refine the proposed structure, ensuring alignment with both operational realities and user needs.

Regarding the dual language group model, the Project Coordinator expressed support for the core idea of offering free language groups in an offline format, noting its potential to build stronger community ties and provide emotional support for participants, particularly those in vulnerable situations. However, it was also emphasized that limiting the free language group offering exclusively to in-person sessions could inadvertently exclude migrants who are part of the target group but are unable to attend physical language groups due to geographical constraints or personal preferences. Some individuals in need may reside far from urban centers or may be more comfortable with digital environments, suggesting that online access should not be completely excluded from the free offering.

As for the monthly subscription model, SPEAK's Project Coordinator acknowledged its value as a mechanism for generating sustainable income and recognized its acceptance among the target audience, as demonstrated in the earlier survey findings. Nevertheless, concerns were raised about potential confusion in implementation. Specifically, since SPEAK's language groups are structured in six-week levels, a monthly billing cycle may not align well with the actual format.

From a user perspective, paying per language course rather than per month was identified as more intuitive and operationally manageable.

In response to this feedback, the core structure of online paid and offline free language groups will be retained, as it continues to reflect the diverse needs and socioeconomic realities of SPEAK's participant base. However, an online alternative will also be offered for free language groups, targeting individuals who belong to the intended demographic but cannot participate in face-to-face sessions due to distance, work constraints, or other barriers. This addition broadens the model's inclusivity while preserving its intent of fostering community-based learning.

In parallel, the original monthly subscription model will be adapted to a level-based payment system. Under this revised approach, participants enrolling in paid language groups will make a one-time payment per six-week course level. Those wishing to continue will pay again only if they proceed to a subsequent level, as the goal is to complete the journey of all language group levels. This structure aligns more naturally with the course design, offering greater transparency and ease of understanding for participants, while also preserving the organization's ability to generate recurring income sustainably.

The validation process underscored the value of the proposed model while highlighting practical improvements that enhance its inclusivity and user experience. By offering both online and offline access for free language groups and shifting to a level-based payment scheme for the paid option, SPEAK is better equipped to meet participant needs and support organizational sustainability in a coherent and mission-aligned manner.

3. Implementation Strategy, Execution Plan, and Work Project Constraints

3.1. Implementation Strategy

3.1.1. Understanding the Financial Impact of Paid Language Groups

Paid language groups are designed to generate a stable source of income to support SPEAK's mission. In this financial analysis (Appendix **5: Analytical Frameworks**

Appendix), three scenarios, Pessimistic, Moderate, and Optimistic, are developed to evaluate potential outcomes. When conducting the calculations for these three scenarios, the number of volunteers and the language groups' fee were held constant in alignment with this work project's objectives, while the average duration of volunteer engagement and the number of participants

were treated as variable inputs. The calculations were based solely on Portuguese language groups, under the assumption that each volunteer leads only one language group at a time.

The fee for the language groups is €30 per language group, which lasts for 6 weeks. This price is determined proportionally according to survey results that indicate people are willing to pay between €20 and €30 as a monthly fee.

In Portugal, the number of volunteers in 2023 and 2024 was 566 and 422, respectively. According to SPEAK's website, they are present in 11 cities across the country. Based on SPEAK's internal data, 60 volunteers were set per year for each scenario in Lisbon.

The number of language groups per year and the generated income per year will be calculated through the two following formulas: $\text{volunteers' stay duration} / \text{language group's duration} \times \text{number of volunteers}$, and $\text{language group price} \times \text{number of language groups per year} \times \text{number of participants per class}$, respectively.

In the Pessimistic Scenario (Appendix 8, Table 2:), the duration of volunteers' stay in the organization is 1.5 months, leading only one language group, resulting in 60 ($1.5 \text{ months} / 1.5 \text{ months} \times 60 \text{ Buddies}$) language groups per year. The number of participants for each language group is 4, which is the minimum number of participants for a language group to open. In this scenario, the extra income is €7,200 ($\text{€}30 \times 60 \text{ number of language groups per year} \times 4 \text{ number of participants per class}$).

In the Moderate Scenario (Appendix 8) the duration of volunteers' stay in the organization is 6 months, leading 4 language groups, resulting in 240 ($6 \text{ months} / 1.5 \text{ months} \times 60 \text{ Buddies}$) language groups per year. The number of participants for each language group is 7, which is the

median since the number of participants can be between 4 and 10. Based on calculations ($€30 \times 240$ language groups per year $\times 7$ participants per class), extra income will be generated per year with paid language groups is €50,400.

Lastly, in the Optimistic Scenario (Appendix 8), the duration of volunteers' stay in the organization is a year, which is equivalent to repeat the experience 8 times, resulting in 480 (12 months / 1.5 months $\times$ 60 Buddies) language groups per year. The number of participants for each language group is 10, which is the maximum number of participants for each language group. Based on calculations ($€30 \times 480$ language groups per year $\times 10$ participants per class), extra income will be generated per year with paid language groups is €144,000.

While the proposed solution generates revenue, it also introduces an expenditure component through the Buddy and the Ambassador of the Quarter Programs, which aim to enhance volunteer engagement. Under this program, the top-performing Mentor Buddy and Ambassador of each quarter will be selected and rewarded with a voucher. The value of the voucher was decided as €15 on average, and 8 vouchers will be given each year for 4 Buddies and 4 Ambassadors, which will create an expense of €120 per year per city. Regarding the impact of this expenditure on the scenarios, no cost will be incurred in the Pessimistic Scenario, as volunteers do not remain for three months. In contrast, in the other two scenarios, an annual expenditure of €120 is projected. The remaining income can subsequently be allocated by SPEAK to various operational needs, such as providing resources for language groups and events or increasing the number of employees, which will increase the operational success of the organization.

This financial analysis demonstrates that paid language groups can serve as a sustainable revenue stream for SPEAK while maintaining alignment with its mission. Depending on volunteer

retention and participant numbers, the initiative yields varying levels of surplus income across different scenarios. Moreover, the integration of a modest incentive program supports volunteer engagement with minimal cost. Overall, this model provides both financial stability and strategic flexibility to invest in the organization's continued growth and impact.

3.1.2. Recommendations for Website Revisions to Better Reflect the New Dual Language Group Model

Given the newly proposed model and corresponding changes, updating the website is essential to ensure prospective participants, volunteers, and other stakeholders can clearly understand and engage with the revised structure.

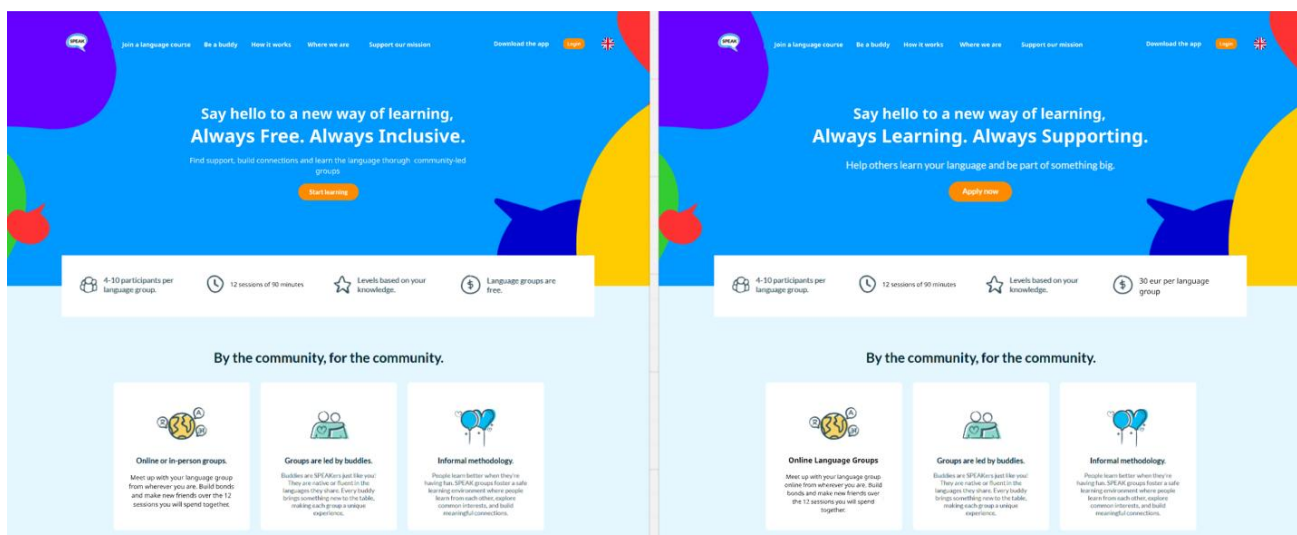
The main page (Appendix 9, Figure 40) should clearly state two distinct types of language groups, including information about each target audience, and presenting what participants may expect when enrolling in a language group (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Excerpt from the Homepage – Type of Language Groups' Description



Through the “Learn More” option provided for each type of language group, users should be able to access dedicated pages offering detailed explanations of the structure. These two pages will largely mirror each other (Figure 4) and the current website’s “How it Works” section, both presenting the respective participant journey.

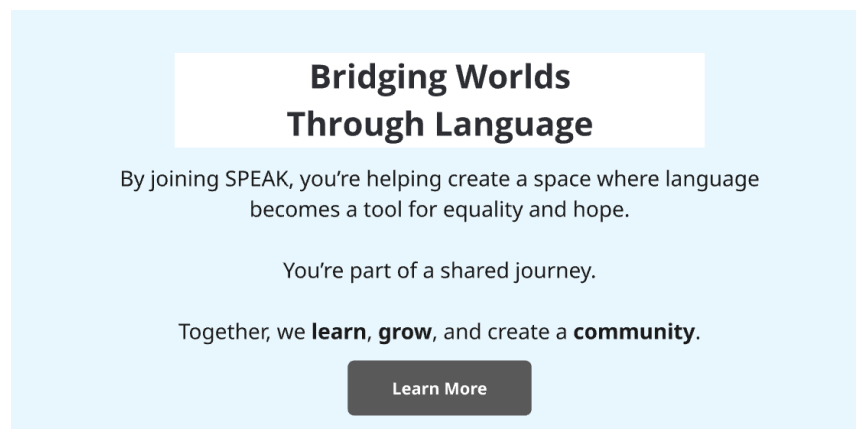
Figure 4: Excerpt from the "Learn More" Pages of Free and Paid Language Groups



The page for free language groups (Appendix 9, Figure 41) will emphasize community support and belonging, whereas the page for paid language groups (Appendix 9, Figure 42) will highlight the enjoyable learning experience and the opportunity to make new friends.

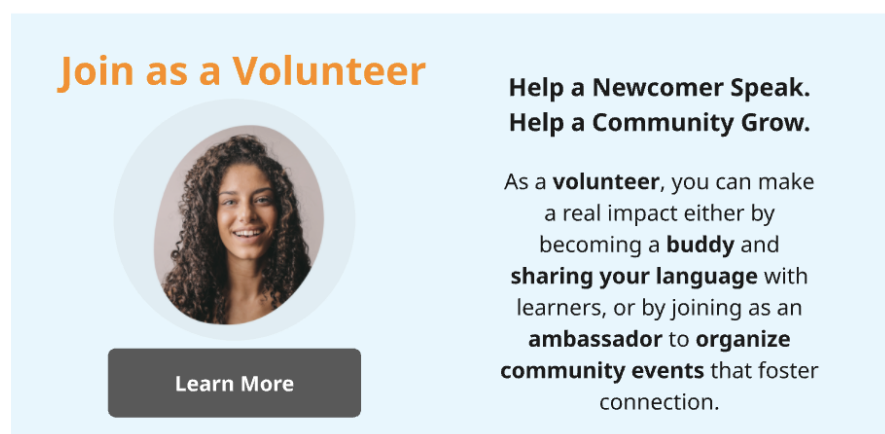
The mission of SPEAK should also be prominently featured on the main page (Figure 5) reflecting the idea of using language as a bridge to build inclusive, equal, and supportive communities, where participants may learn and grow together.

Figure 5: Excerpt from the Homepage – SPEAK's Mission



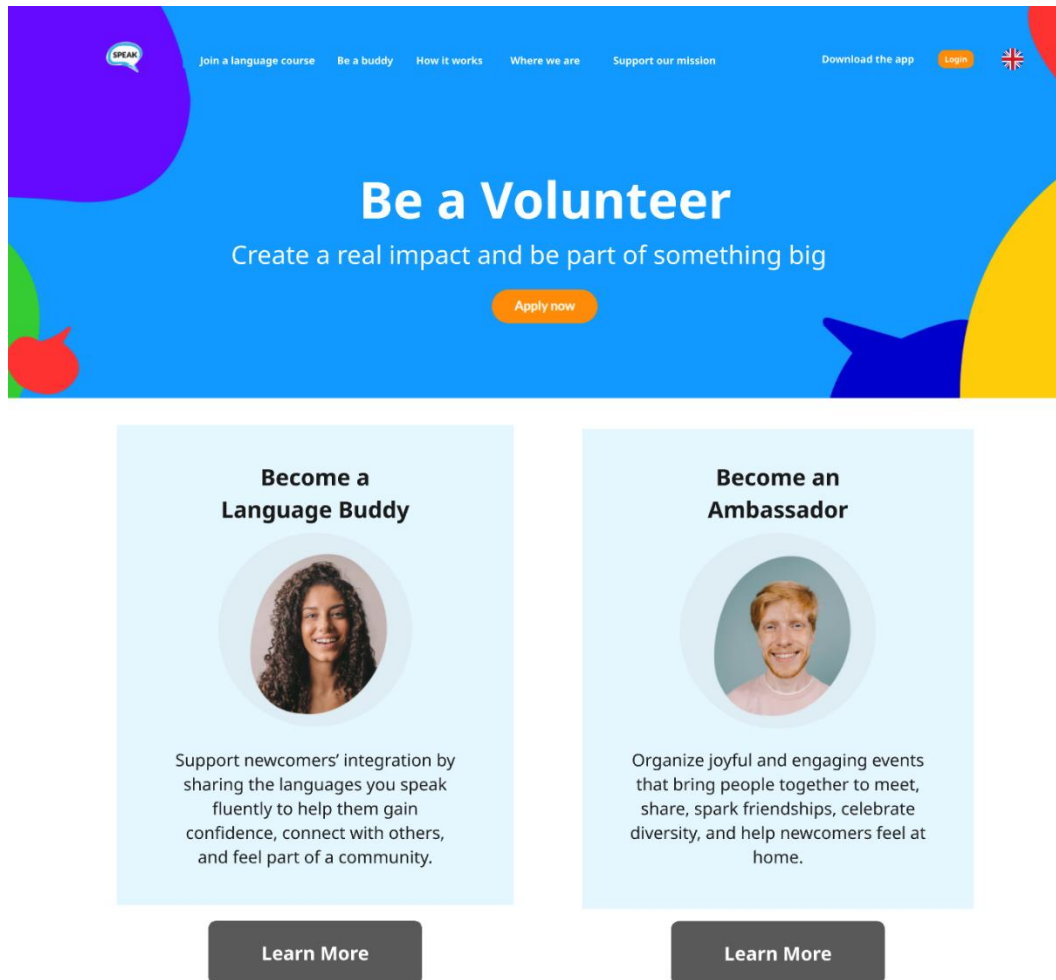
Still on the website's homepage, the introduction and the distinction between the two categories of volunteers, Buddies and Ambassadors, should also be presented to encourage user engagement to become a volunteer (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Excerpt from the Homepage – "Join as a Volunteer" Section



For users seeking further information, a new page (Appendix 9, Figure 43) will be developed, via the “Learn More” button, that directs them to a detailed explanation of both volunteer roles (Figure 7). Users will then be able to navigate to the relevant sections to access detailed information about each role and proceed with their application either as a Buddy or as an Ambassador.

Figure 7: Excerpt from the "Be a Volunteer" Page



Upon logging into the website, users will be directed to dashboards tailored to their respective roles, such as participants, Buddies, or Ambassadors, ensuring a user-specific experience aligned with their engagement within the platform. Their personal dashboard will include a personal journey, different for each role, the language groups available and, upcoming and past events.

The participants' dashboard (Appendix 9, Figure 44) will prominently display the language groups they are currently enrolled in at the top of the page. A designated button will enable users to access detailed information about each group they are part of. Beneath this section, users will encounter the option to become a volunteer, followed by a list of available language groups they can join, and finally, upcoming events in their city. From the top of the dashboard, users can also access their profiles, accessing their profile details, activity history, and a timeline reflecting their engagement in language groups and events.

The Buddy dashboard (Appendix 9, Figure 46) will include a timeline (Figure 8) that outlines the user's current level, levels already completed, and those remaining to be achieved, presented alongside their profile information.

Figure 8: Excerpt from the Buddies' Personal Dashboard

The screenshot displays the SPEAK Buddy dashboard. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the SPEAK logo and buttons for 'Join a language course', 'Be a buddy', 'How it works', 'Cities', 'Support our mission', 'Download the app', and 'Profile'. Below the navigation bar, a greeting 'Hello, [Buddy Name]!' is shown. The main content area is divided into three sections. The left section shows a profile card with a placeholder for a photo, the name 'Buddy Name', and details like 'Lisbon' and 'Member since 19 Feb'. The middle section, titled 'Buddy Journey', features a progress bar with three stages: 'Language Buddy', 'Mentor Buddy', and 'Lead Buddy'. The 'Language Buddy' stage is completed, and the 'Mentor Buddy' stage is partially completed, with a button 'I am a Mentor Buddy!' below it. The right section, titled 'Host a Language Group', contains a form with fields for 'Language', 'Level', 'Start Date', 'Language Group Days', 'Schedule', 'Location' (with radio buttons for 'In-Person' and 'Online'), and 'Language Group Materials' (with an 'Upload Here' button). A 'Submit' button is at the bottom right of the form.

SPEAK Join a language course Be a buddy How it works Cities Support our mission Download the app Profile

Hello, [Buddy Name]!

Buddy Name
Lisbon
Member since 19 Feb
Edit profile

Buddy Journey

Language Buddy Mentor Buddy Lead Buddy

I am a Mentor Buddy!

Host a Language Group

Language
Start Date
Language Group Days
Schedule
Location
☐ In-Person ☐ Online

Level
Description
Language Group Materials
Upload Here

Submit

Positioned below the timeline, volunteers will also find the option to create a language group, a list of the ones available, and the upcoming events across the country.

The Ambassador dashboard (Appendix 9, Figure 45) will present the user's personal information in conjunction with a list of upcoming events with detailed information. The lower section of the page will feature a chronological record of past events that the user has either organized or attended. Moreover, there will be a designated compartment that offers the option to create and host an event (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Excerpt from the Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard

The screenshot displays the 'Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard' for the SPEAK organization. The top navigation bar includes the SPEAK logo and several buttons: 'Join a language course', 'Be a buddy', 'How it works', 'Cities', 'Support our mission', 'Download the app', and a 'Profile' button with a flag icon. Below the navigation bar, a greeting reads 'Hello, [Ambassador Name]!'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a profile section with a circular placeholder for an 'Add photo', the text 'Ambassador Name', 'Lisbon', 'Member since 19 Feb', and an 'Edit profile' button. Below this, it shows 'Events hosted' with a count of 0 and 'Nationalities met' with a count of 0, along with a 'SPEAK passport' icon. The right column is titled 'Create a new Event' and contains a form with fields for 'Title', 'City', 'Address', 'Date', and 'Schedule', each with a corresponding text input area. A large 'Description' field is also present. At the bottom of the form, there is a 'Cover Photo' section with an 'Upload Here' button and a 'Submit' button.

3.1.3. Strategic Alliances for SPEAK's Mission Expansion

A strong communication plan is essential to ensure the successful expansion and visibility of SPEAK's dual language group model. This plan involves building strategic partnerships with a range of institutions that can both facilitate language learning delivery and contribute to SPEAK's

attractiveness through non-financial incentives. Effective communication will be central not only to increasing participation and volunteer engagement but also to reinforcing the organization's identity and mission.

Given the dual nature of SPEAK's model, it is important to engage with differentiated partners according to the needs of each format. To deliver free in-person language groups, the availability of accessible and welcoming physical spaces is crucial. For this purpose, the focus should remain on local institutions providing physical spaces and reaching a wide range of communities, particularly migrants and newcomers.

In this context, partnerships with local schools, parish councils, and universities are particularly strategic. These institutions often have underused facilities during evenings and weekends that can be leveraged to host inclusive, community-based sessions. In return, SPEAK offers these institutions the opportunity to contribute to social impact in their local area, reinforcing their community engagement mission. In particular, establishing partnerships with local schools plays a particularly relevant role within this strategy. In addition to offering accessible facilities for in-person language groups, they act as trusted intermediaries for reaching migrant families and younger participants. By supporting the dissemination of information and facilitating contact with younger migrant populations, schools become active partners in local integration efforts. Their involvement also strengthens the credibility and acceptance of SPEAK's activities within the broader community.

For the online format, partnerships with higher education institutions and international student organizations are essential. These partners can support the dissemination of paid online language group offers among students, particularly international and exchange students, who may prefer

flexible, digital formats of language learning. Universities also represent a pool of potential buddies interested in combining skill development with socially meaningful experiences. Career fairs represent an additional high-impact channel for outreach, especially among university students and recent graduates. Participation in such events allows SPEAK to present its social mission, recruit potential buddies, and promote its language learning offer. Furthermore, this setting aligns with the personal development aspirations of many students, offering an opportunity to combine civic engagement with skills such as communication, facilitation, and intercultural awareness.

In parallel, the communications strategy should encompass partnerships that offer cultural and social incentives to increase buddy engagement and retention. Collaborations with theatres, museums, cinemas, and other cultural institutions can provide vouchers or free access to cultural events as a form of recognition and appreciation for volunteers. These incentives not only reward contributions but also reinforce SPEAK's mission of promoting social and cultural inclusion.

Beyond cultural institutions, SPEAK can also engage with small businesses, such as cafés, bookstores, and co-working spaces, to establish mutually beneficial partnerships. These businesses gain visibility and local engagement, while SPEAK's community benefits from enriching, low-cost incentives. Together, these collaborations foster a supportive ecosystem around the organization, reinforcing volunteer motivation and participant satisfaction.

3.1.4. Communication Strategy for Expansion and Engagement

Different stakeholder groups interact with SPEAK differently and are motivated by distinct needs and expectations. Accordingly, message design must reflect these differences while maintaining

alignment with SPEAK's overarching purpose of building inclusive communities through language and cultural exchange.

In terms of format, a multi-platform strategy combining physical outreach with digital engagement is recommended. Offline materials, particularly posters and billboards, should be developed using clear visual identifiers and straightforward messaging. For maximum impact, the posters must be placed in strategically relevant locations. Free language group posters should appear in targeted locations as integration support centres, and other community access points frequented by newcomers. Messaging should be welcoming and include direct sign-up instructions, using multilingual content where possible. In contrast, paid program posters should target learners in academic and professional environments such as universities, libraries, and co-working spaces. These materials should foreground the flexibility, accessibility, and social contribution embedded in SPEAK's paid offering.

Volunteer recruitment requires a similarly targeted approach. Posters and flyers designed to attract volunteers should be placed in higher education institutions, language clubs, and international student communities. A combined poster featuring both roles, with distinct visual or textual divisions, can be used to efficiently communicate volunteer pathways while preserving message clarity. The message of the recruitment for the Buddies would emphasise the peer-learning aspect, personal development, and leadership skills. For Ambassador recruitment, the focus should be on event planning, intercultural experiences, and the opportunity to strengthen local networks.

Online communication should reinforce and extend the reach of the physical campaign. Social media platforms, especially Instagram and Facebook should be used to maintain an active and engaging online presence. Content must differentiate clearly between program types and roles,

using consistent terminology and direct calls to action. A structured content plan should include rotating themes, free programs, highlighting accessibility and social bonding; paid programs, emphasising flexibility and impact; Buddy stories, illustrating volunteer experiences; and Ambassador activities, showcasing community leadership. The use of platform features such as story highlights, video reels, and user-generated content will further support visibility and engagement. Each post should link directly to relevant landing pages to minimise friction in the user journey.

Information architecture must be designed to reduce confusion and promote intuitive navigation across all channels and materials. The terminology used to describe the different offerings must be applied consistently across the website, posters, and social media captions. Visual branding should remain uniform, while the content strategy must accommodate the unique motivations and concerns of each audience segment. By ensuring coherence across its communications, SPEAK can foster better understanding, drive informed participation, and ultimately strengthen its capacity to deliver on its mission.

3.1.5. From Implementation to Impact through a KPI Model

The effectiveness of the proposed solution must be evaluated not only by its implementation but by its ability to generate meaningful and measurable outcomes. To ensure the alignment between SPEAK's mission and the operational strategies introduced in this work project, a structured framework of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is defined. These indicators are designed to monitor the initiative's financial viability, participant engagement, volunteer retention, and overall social impact. By tracking both quantitative metrics and qualitative outcomes, SPEAK will be able

to assess the value generated through its dual language group model and adjust its approach as needed.

Two financial metrics are proposed to evaluate the economic viability of the redesigned SPEAK's dual language group model. Monthly revenue from paid online language groups will provide an immediate indication of the financial return generated by the online format and help determine whether the pricing model and communication efforts effectively attract paying participants. In parallel, participant acquisition cost (PAC) will measure the total marketing and outreach expenditures divided by the number of new paying participants acquired. This metric is crucial for assessing the efficiency of SPEAK's growth strategy and ensuring that marketing investments generate a sustainable return.

Two key metrics will be tracked to understand the engagement and retention dimension. The average attendance rate per group captures the consistency of participation, which is a strong predictor of the quality of the participant experience and the effectiveness of learning. The completion rate of language groups reflects the proportion of participants who attend at least 75% of sessions to be considered as having completed the course. Together, these metrics offer insight into participant motivation, program design, and overall satisfaction.

The percentage of Buddies returning for a second cycle and the percentage of Ambassadors hosting their second event offer a clear view into volunteer retention and help identify potential areas of improvement in support structures. In addition, a volunteer satisfaction score, collected through periodic feedback surveys, will offer qualitative insights into the perceived value, challenges, and motivations of volunteers. These indicators are critical to SPEAK's ability to maintain an active and motivated volunteer base over time.

SPEAK's core mission of social inclusion and community building is best evaluated through social impact indicators. The number of individuals accessing free language groups provides a direct measure of how many individuals from underserved backgrounds are being reached through the organization's efforts. Complementing this, the percentage of free group participants reporting an increased sense of belonging captures the qualitative impact of the program on participants' emotional and social integration. This data, gathered through post-course surveys and informal feedback, is key to validating the inclusive and empowering nature of SPEAK's model.

Together, these KPIs represent a comprehensive framework for evaluating the multidimensional impact of SPEAK's redesigned language groups' structure. Their consistent monitoring will allow for data-driven decision-making and provide evidence of the organization's ability to deliver on its social and financial objectives sustainably and inclusively.

3.2. Timeline for Implementation, Execution, and Impact Assessment

A calendar must be prepared for the implementation plan, outlining the necessary actions and presenting them within a timeline that reflects the three different phases. Each one will outline the specific actions and timelines for implementation. The first phase will involve the preparatory steps required to enable the implementation of the proposed solution. The second phase will focus on the actual implementation of the proposal, while the third and final phase will consist of evaluating the solution based on predefined KPIs.

Before entering the Implementation Phase, SPEAK must complete the key steps required to ensure the feasibility of the new model and to effectively reach and engage both volunteers and participants. During this phase, all necessary preparations for implementing the solution will be carried out, including the establishment of strategic partnerships and the update of the communication channels such as SPEAK's official website and social media. The Pre-Implementation Phase will begin in July and last for two months, leading into the second phase of the plan.

The Implementation Phase refers to the stage during which the proposed solution is put into practice, accompanied by communication campaigns that are launched in advance to introduce the initiative to the target audience. The communication plan will be launched in September and will continue throughout the term, aiming to encourage potential participants and volunteers to take action by accessing SPEAK's website, social media platforms, or other communication channels to join the community either as volunteers or participants.

Since the beginning of the campaign, SPEAK will allow participants to pre-enroll in the dual language group, which will start in October, to allow sufficient time for the communication campaigns to reach the target audience. From that point onward, SPEAK will transition to the proposed solution. In the Evaluation Phase, the impact of the implemented proposed solution should be measured by the KPIs previously outlined in the preceding section.

3.3. Work Project Constraints

A notable limitation of this research lies in the geographic scope of its validation processes. Although SPEAK operates in over 30 cities across various regions, the surveys and interviews conducted for this work project primarily involved participants and stakeholders based in Portugal. Consequently, while the identification of organizational challenges benefited from international input, including contributions from stakeholders in countries such as Lithuania, the development of proposed solutions was predominantly informed by the Portuguese context. These solutions are therefore intended, in the first instance, to be implemented within Portugal, with potential for adaptation to other locations following appropriate contextualization.

The financial calculations were based solely on Portuguese language groups, assuming each volunteer leads one group at a time. The preferences and willingness to pay for language groups, as well as motivations for volunteering and participation, might differ significantly in other countries or communities where SPEAK operates. Therefore, the proposed financial model and engagement strategies may require adaptation and further validation before implementation in other locations.

The reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews also presents a limitation, as responses can be subject to biases. Although measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the depth of understanding could be enhanced by future observational studies or experimental designs in diverse settings.

4. Conclusion

This work project aimed to explore how SPEAK, a community-led social tech organization, could reshape its integration model to better foster social connections among migrants while ensuring its long-term sustainability. The central research question focused on how SPEAK would overcome existing operational challenges without compromising its mission of inclusion and accessibility. To address this question, the study adopted a multi-method research design combining a literature review, semi-structured interviews, online surveys, and benchmarking analysis. These were complemented by strategic decision-making tools, the RICE Scoring Model and the Impact versus Effort Matrix, to prioritize the most critical organizational gaps. Through this comprehensive approach, the work project developed a proposed solution aligned with SPEAK's values.

Several challenges that currently limit SPEAK's capacity to scale its impact and maintain long-term organizational resilience were identified. The primary issues identified include Governance Model, Overlapping Stakeholder Roles, Financial Sustainable Model, Participation Retention and Engagement, Sustaining Volunteers Engagement, and Lack of Efficient Partnerships.

Despite each challenge presenting important concerns, through potential participants' interviews, surveys, and the use of the frameworks, it was proved that Financial Sustainable Model and Participation Retention and Engagement are the core challenges that need to be addressed immediately. During the development of solutions for the two selected issues, it became evident, based on stakeholder interviews and feedback gathered during the solution validation phase, that Sustaining Volunteer Engagement also plays a critical role and requires it to be addressed. As a result, this challenge was integrated into the solution design process to ensure a more holistic and effective response.

In response to the first two most pressing challenges, a dual language group model was initially proposed. This model introduced paid online language groups for participants with greater financial means, alongside free offline language groups designed for vulnerable individuals requiring in-person support. The structure was conceived to reflect diverse user needs while establishing a mechanism whereby paid sessions would generate income to sustain SPEAK financially.

The paid online format was tailored for international students and professionals seeking flexible, informal learning environments that support socialization and cultural exchange. Meanwhile, offline free sessions targeted refugees and low-income migrants, providing them with emotionally supportive, community-based environments crucial for integration. After the feedback received from SPEAK's Project Coordinator, it was decided that it will provide an online option also for the free language groups. While the primary focus remains on supporting participants through in-person sessions, an online option will also be made available for those who, due to constraints such as distance or scheduling conflicts, are unable to attend physically but still require access to the free language groups.

To further reinforce the financial base, a monthly subscription model was initially proposed for the paid language groups. However, internal feedback and validation meetings with highlighted a misalignment between monthly subscription and the six-week course format. In response, the model was refined into a payment system, where users would pay once per language group which contains six weeks, in a form of a more user-friendly and clearer model.

The validation process also revealed that volunteer engagement, together with the first two prioritized challenges, was critical to long-term program sustainability. Stakeholder interviews and feedback from SPEAK's Internal Team and some Buddies indicated a high volunteer turnover

linked to lack of recognition, structure, and development pathways. In response, the solution framework was expanded to include a tiered system for Buddies, complemented by recognition programs and light-touch incentives such as certificates and mentorship. Additionally, a reward system was implemented, with Buddy and Ambassador of the Quarter Programs.

To support Participant Retention and Engagement, a Certificate of Completion was introduced to incentivize regular participants attendance, as well as an Alumni Network to maintain post-language group engagement and promote a continuous integration support.

While the proposed model offers a comprehensive response to SPEAK's most pressing challenges, several limitations must be acknowledged. Insights and proposals are grounded in the specific context of SPEAK's operations in Portugal and may not be directly transferable to other countries with different governance structures or user demographics. The full impact of the work project limitations can only be assessed through continued iteration and real-life application, even with a proposed model grounded in empirical insights.

To assess the financial viability under different operational scenarios, projections were developed using Pessimistic, Moderate, and Optimistic assumptions regarding participant numbers and volunteer duration. In the Moderate case, the model could generate over €50,000 annually in Lisbon, which is an amount that could meaningfully subsidize the organization's sustainability, recruitment, and the provision of free language groups. However, these forecasts depend heavily on successful volunteer onboarding and participant engagement, underscoring the importance of ongoing outreach, incentive programs, and efficient onboarding systems.

To reach the potential of the proposed dual language group model, SPEAK should adopt a phased implementation approach. The proposed calendar outlines three sequential phases, Pre-Implementation, Implementation, and Evaluation.

The Pre-Implementation Phase, beginning in July, will focus on foundational tasks such as updating the website and communication materials, establishing strategic partnerships, and preparing internal teams. This phase will prepare the ground for a smooth start of the new model by ensuring that both digital infrastructure and outreach campaigns are in place.

The Implementation Phase, starting in September, will involve launching targeted communication efforts from particularly through social media and institutional networks to raise awareness and drive pre-enrollment in both paid and free language groups as well as volunteering. The language groups will start operating in October after being given enough time for communication efforts and reaching target groups.

Evaluation of the solution will be grounded in a comprehensive KPI framework designed to track financial performance, user engagement, volunteer retention, and social impact. Key indicators will include monthly revenue from paid online language groups, participant acquisition cost (PAC), average attendance rates, course completion rates, volunteer return rate, volunteer satisfaction, participant satisfaction, and the number of participants becoming volunteers. Together, these metrics will offer a well-rounded view of the model's financial viability, program effectiveness, and overall contribution to SPEAK's mission of fostering inclusive and sustainable communities.

Looking forward, SPEAK should also explore the scalability of this model across other cities and countries. While the current proposal is based on the Portuguese context, further improvements

can be localized with appropriate cultural and operational adaptations. Continued investment in user-centered design, digital accessibility, and data-informed decision-making will be essential to refine the model over time. By systematically testing, evaluating, and iterating on its new structure, SPEAK can build a more resilient, inclusive, and scalable model for community-based language exchange.

INDIVIDUAL PART (Student B: M. E. S. Rente)

1. Literature Review

1.1. Migration Concepts, Classifications and Global Trends

This section provides a comprehensive overview for understanding migration and integration, offering key conceptual, legal, and geopolitical insights relevant to the research. It begins by clarifying core definitions and classifications of migration, including distinctions based on geography, duration, cause, and legal status. Recognizing the complexity of contemporary mobility, the section also examines how international bodies distinguish between migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers under legal and humanitarian frameworks.

Following this conceptual framing, the analysis shifts toward global migration trends, highlighting the rising number of international migrants and forcibly displaced individuals. Particular attention is paid to recent patterns in Europe, where geopolitical conflicts and socio-economic factors continue to shape migration flows. The section concludes with an overview of Portugal's national approach to migration and asylum, emphasizing the country's transition from a nation of emigration to a growing destination for newcomers. By mapping these evolving patterns, the section provides crucial context for understanding the challenges and opportunities that integration initiatives, such as those proposed in this work project, aim to address.

1.1.1. Defining Migration Concepts and Classifications

Migration consists of the movement of people from one geographical location to another, either within a country or across international borders, to reside temporarily or permanently in the new location (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR 2025). This concept

encompasses various types of human mobility across geographic and political boundaries and can be classified according to several criteria, depending on the stakeholders involved.

One of the possible criteria is geography. Internal migration is the relocation within the same national boundaries, and international migration is the movement to a foreign country (UNHCR n.d.). There are two complementary perspectives on international migration: emigration and immigration. Emigration refers to the act of leaving one's country of origin or habitual residence to settle elsewhere, viewed from the standpoint of the country of departure. Conversely, immigration denotes the act of entering and settling in a different country, as seen from the perspective of the host nation. Both are referred to as a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months. Accordingly, an emigrant is an individual departing their country of origin to reside abroad, while an immigrant is someone arriving in a new country to live there permanently (European Union, EU statistical office Eurostat 2025).

Regarding duration, temporary migration refers to a limited stay, typically not exceeding 6 months, often linked to labour, under contracts, or study purposes (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, SEF 2010), whereas permanent migration is long-term or indefinite relocation. Additionally, circular migration is another form of migration based on duration that enables people to have a certain degree of mobility for immigrants between origin and destination countries, and vice versa (SEF 2011), often to benefit both countries.

Moreover, in terms of cause, migration can be voluntary or forced (UNHCR n.d.) when the movement is based on free will, often for economic, social, political, or educational opportunities, or forced, occasions where the movement happens due to external pressures such as conflict, persecution, or natural disasters.

Finally, when the movement complies with legal frameworks, it is called legal migration. When the movement occurs outside legal norms, as entering or staying in a country without authorization, it refers to irregular migration. These categories, legal and irregular migration, often overlap within what are known as mixed movements which involve both individuals in need of international protection, such as refugees, and others migrating for economic or personal reasons, frequently using the same routes, networks and modes of transport (UNHCR 2016).

1.1.2. Distinguishing Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Legal and Social Terms

The differentiation of both terms is, in fact, important. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR 2016), a refugee is a specific legal category defined and protected by international law, which includes asylum procedures. These measures ensure the respect of their human rights and the safety from being returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. In contrast, migrants are under the destination countries' immigration laws and processes, and they do not face any restriction to return to their previous country of residence (UNHCR 2016).

Refugees are people who were forced to flee their country across an international border because of persecution, war, or violence. They differ from asylum-seekers since their application for international protection has already been processed and officially recognised as such in the host country. Contrarily, asylum-seekers are the ones whose request for protection has not yet been processed, or they may not have formally applied for asylum yet, but they intend to do so. Ethnicity, religion, nationality, political opinions, or belonging to a particular social group (UNHCR 2025) are part of the reasons why people are persecuted and forced to leave their country of residence.

1.1.3. Mapping Global Migration Trends Drivers and Challenges

Migration patterns around the world have reached unprecedented levels. In 2023, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries recorded approximately 6.5 million new permanent immigrants, marking a 10% increase from 2022. Simultaneously, the number of asylum seekers in OECD countries reached a record of 2.7 million (OECD 2024). The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) World Migration Report 2024 highlights that, in 2022, there were 281 million international migrants worldwide, representing 3.6% of the global population. Notably, the number of forcibly displaced individuals (refugees, asylum-seekers, and others) due to conflict, violence, and disasters has escalated to 117 million, the most significant number observed in recent years.

1.1.4. Analyzing European Migration Patterns and Policy Responses

According to global migration trends, the number of international migrants moving to Europe continues to rise. Currently, most immigrants arriving in the European Union (EU) are citizens from non-EU countries. Work, education, and family (Appendix 1, Figure 10) are three of the several reasons why Europe remained one of the primary destinations for people on the move, being the first the main reason for residence permits in 2023. As stated by Eurostat 2024, in the same year, non-nationals accounted for 9% of the total EU population, approximately 41 million people, of which 3% (14 million) of citizens from another EU country and 6% (27 million) from a non-EU country.

Since Russia's military aggression against Ukraine started in February 2022, EU countries have granted temporary protection to displaced people fleeing the conflict. At the end of 2023, around 4.3 million non-EU citizens had benefited from temporary protection status in the EU, with

approximately 98% holding Ukrainian citizenship. Moreover, beyond temporary protection, EU countries continued to grant international protection to asylum seekers from a wide range of regions. Reflecting ongoing global challenges, in 2023, EU countries granted protection status to 410 thousand asylum seekers, representing a 7% increase compared to 2022 (384 thousand). Notably, although Europe receives a significant number of asylum seekers, many refugees from Africa and Asia seek refuge in neighboring countries rather than migrating to Europe (European Commission 2024).

1.1.5. Reviewing the Portuguese Approach to Migration and Asylum

In line with European migration patterns, Portugal has followed similar trends, having been through a shift in its demographic profile in recent years (OECD 2024). Although the country has historically been characterized as a country of emigration, Portugal is evolving from a country of emigration to one that is increasingly becoming a destination for migrants. Since 2019, the country has recorded a positive net migration, with the number of immigrants consistently exceeding the number of emigrants. In fact, according to PORDATA (2023), the number of immigrants has been approximately three times higher than the number of people leaving the country since 2019. By 2023, the number of migrants living in Portugal was around one million residents (Appendix 1, Figure 11), where 76% of the foreign population is from countries outside EU27 (Lopes and Sousa 2024). The largest migrant communities were from Brazil, Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOPS) such as Angola and Cape Verde, as well as the United Kingdom and India (Appendix 1, Figure 12).

About refugees and asylum seekers, Portugal has faced an increase in these numbers as well, presenting in 2023 an increase of 35.3% (Appendix 1, Figure 13) in comparison with the previous

year (Lopes and Sousa 2024). Portugal has received asylum applications primarily from citizens from both the African and Asia continents, from countries such as Afghanistan and Gambia (Lopes and Machado 2023). Despite the proportion of asylum seekers remaining modest when compared to other European countries, Portugal has participated in international efforts to offer protection to individuals fleeing conflict and persecution, showing a gradual increase in requests for international protection (European Council on Refugees and Exiles 2023).

1.2. Migrants' Integration, Social Impact and the Role of Civil Society

This section examines the socio-economic integration of migrants, and the pivotal role civil society plays in supporting this process. It begins by highlighting the substantial contributions migrants make to host countries' economies and social structures, while also acknowledging the persistent barriers they face, including labor market exclusion and systemic discrimination. The analysis then turns to national and European strategies for fostering inclusion, with a particular focus on language learning and institutional support mechanisms. Finally, it evaluates the critical role of non-governmental organizations in complementing governmental efforts and addressing the immediate needs of migrant communities. Together, these insights provide essential context for understanding the broader ecosystem within which integration initiatives operate.

1.2.1. Highlighting Economic and Social Contributions of Migrants

Migrants play essential roles in a country's economy. Foreign workers contribute to addressing labor shortages, sustaining welfare systems, and boosting the host country's economies (OECD 2024). By supporting their families financially, migrants also contribute to the development of their country's economy (UNHCR 2005). Migration acts as a driver of economic development, innovation, and social renewal in host societies.

In 2023, out of the 196.8 million EU working-age population, 11.2 million were non-EU citizens, corresponding to 5.7% of the total. Despite representing a considerable part of the EU's labor market, non-EU citizens still represent a relatively small proportion (European Commission 2024).

However, when compared to the EU, Portugal has a much higher percentage of immigrant employment. Portugal is nowadays one of the most promising countries when it comes to

conditions for foreign people, with its economy being revitalized by immigration, according to the consultancy firm Global Citizens Solutions (2025), which specializes in global mobility. In 2022, Portugal recorded a migrant labor market rate of 76.9%, being in fifth place with one of the highest rates in the EU. Even so, the employment of most foreign workers is still in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, garment making, driving, and assembly, predominantly at non-skilled positions, when compared to native citizens (Oliveira 2023).

While many migrants are concentrated in lower-skilled jobs, efforts are being made to attract highly qualified workers through initiatives such as the EU blue card, a residence permit designed to attract highly skilled professionals to live and work in Europe. In 2023, around 89 thousand qualified non-EU workers received an EU Blue Card. Nevertheless, Portugal is one of the countries with the smallest number of such cards, granting only 26 in 2023 (Eurostat 2024). Based on the available data, while Portugal integrates a significant number of migrants into lower-skilled sectors, its capacity to attract and retain highly qualified non-EU workers remains limited compared to broader European trends.

1.2.2. Identifying Barriers to Labor Market Access and Discrimination Against Migrants

Despite the critical role that many migrants play as essential workers within the economies of host countries, they often face discrimination and exclusion in those societies. This is reflected in the employment rate, with EU citizens having an employment rate of 76.2% compared to 63.1% for non-EU citizens in 2022 (European Commission 2024). Moreover, when analyzing the non-EU employed citizens aged 20-64 years, 40% of them were overqualified, indicating a significant mismatch between migrants' skills and the type of work they perform (Eurostat 2024).

According to the European Commission 2024, several sectors and occupations show disparities in representation among EU and non-EU workers. Non-EU migrants are overrepresented in certain low-wage and manual labor sectors such as Tourism and HoReCa (Hotel, Restaurant, and Cafe/Catering), Construction, Agriculture and Food Processing, Customer Service, and Shared Service Centers. On the contrary, they are underrepresented in sectors requiring higher qualifications, including public administration and defense, education and research, healthcare, and professional and technical occupations.

The primary barrier migrants encounter in integrating into the workforce is their limited proficiency in the Portuguese Language. This linguistic barrier also represents a major impediment to their access to information regarding their rights and compromises their ability to effectively advocate for themselves (Lusa 2022). The lack of knowledge of the host country's language significantly undermines migrants' ability to integrate into broader aspects of the host society. Language learning enables migrants to navigate essential services, such as healthcare, education, and public administration. Moreover, it also promotes autonomy and reduces dependence on intermediaries, being not only a matter of social integration but a foundational requirement for equitable access to the labor market (Holanda 2021).

A considerable proportion of immigrants in Portugal, 81.7% of people surveyed (Appendix 1, Figure 14) reported experiencing discrimination within public services in general interactions with state institutions. National origin plays a significant role, where 91% of those who experienced discrimination were from Brazil, followed by 5.4% from other countries such as Albania, Angola, and Cape Verde (Appendix 1, Figure 15). Additionally, when asked about the type of discrimination most perceived in public services, 59.8% identified xenophobia, 28% linguistic prejudice, and 12.2% racism (Appendix 1, Figure 16). These figures highlight that discrimination

is a multidimensional phenomenon in the Portuguese public sector, shaped not only by legal status but also by origin and linguistic ability (Costa 2022).

1.2.3. Exploring National and European Strategies for Migrant Integration

Discussing migration and refugees inevitably requires addressing the concept of integration. Integration is an essential process for successful migration management, involving mutual adaptation for both migrants and host communities (IOM 2006). It is fundamental not only for social cohesion but also for the overall well-being of both individuals and societies. “A world without migrants would be significantly poorer, both economically and culturally” (UNHCR 2005).

As referred above, the number of migrants and refugees seeking entry into the EU is increasing, and consequently, the EU needs to respond to these individuals. Therefore, the European Commission created an action plan on integration and inclusion for 2021-2027, aiming to strengthen the participation of migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background in all areas of society. Focusing on sectors like education, employment, healthcare, and housing, the plan promotes equal opportunities and social cohesion. It also builds on the experiences of the previous 2016 action plan, adapting to new challenges and reinforcing the principle that inclusion benefits everyone (European Commission 2024).

While the European Union promotes a coordinated approach to migrant integration, individual Member States develop their national strategies adapted to specific national contexts (European Commission 2021). Portugal stands out for adopting a relatively open and inclusive approach. Through policies such as the *Plano de Ação para as Migrações*, introduced in 2024, Portugal has sought to strengthen its integration support. The plan is structured around four main pillars, one of

which is *Integração Humanista que Funciona*. This pillar focuses on reinforcing migrant reception capacities, increasing accommodation for asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, and other vulnerable groups, promoting their professional integration, creating emergency municipal reception centers, and improving access to education and healthcare services. In terms of language, the plan aims to expand the teaching of Portuguese as a Non-Native Language (PLNM) and to provide multilingual resources to facilitate everyday integration (Governo de Portugal 2024).

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Portugal implemented specific measures to protect and integrate migrant communities. The actions included expanding language learning opportunities online and ensuring the continuity of social support programs, which contributed to maintaining educational and health access regardless of migrants' legal status (Oliveira 2023).

1.2.4. Assessing the Role of NGOs in Supporting Integration and Protection

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are independent, not-for-profit entities that operate separately from national governments. Regularly, they are structured as charities and play a key role in addressing issues such as poverty, inadequate healthcare, environmental challenges, and social exclusion (European Labour Authority 2017). A clear example of their indispensable role can be found in the context of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, a legislative framework intended to coordinate migration policies and establish a unified asylum approach in the EU (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs 2024).

Portugal has a strong framework for managing migration and asylum, with the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA) playing a key role. Established in 2023, AIMA is responsible for implementing national and European migration policies, overseeing the entry, stay, reception, and integration of foreign citizens. It operates across the country under the supervision

of the government, ensuring a unified approach to these critical areas (AIMA 2023). However, NGOs also play an essential role in the integration of migrants in Portugal, often filling gaps left by public policies. NGOs are key actors on the ground, usually being the first point of contact for many migrants, providing immediate support in areas such as education, healthcare, and employment (Matos 2019).

2. Key Findings from Field Research

2.1. Validating SPEAK's Model, User Needs and Perception through Survey Results

2.1.1. Class Model Validation Survey

The survey was available for 12 days and collected 205 responses and the information was gathered anonymously.

Responses from part 1 reveal that, among the 205 respondents, the majority were young adults. The largest age group was 18–24, with 100 participants (49%), followed by the 25–34 age group, with 72 participants (35%). The remaining age groups were less represented (Appendix 2, Figure 17). As regards nationality (Appendix 2, Figure 18), 75 individuals (37%) were Portuguese. While this group represented a significant portion of the respondents, the majority (63%) were of other nationalities, pointing to a diverse and internationally representative sample, reflecting the cross-cultural environment fostered by SPEAKS' initiative. Concerning the occupation (Appendix 2, Figure 19), the sample disclosed that most participants were already engaged in the workforce, with 110 individuals (54%) employed, while a significant portion was still studying (35%). A smaller group of 7 individuals (3%) were unemployed, and 16 (8%) selected the “Other” category. About the country of residence (Appendix 2, Figure 20), most respondents, 139 (68%), were living in Portugal, which positions it as the predominant location among the sample. Meanwhile, some participants stated that they are currently living in Canada or Turkey, resulting in a geographically inclusive sample. When asked about international mobility experience (Appendix 2, Figure 21), a significant number of individuals, 141 (69%), had either lived or were currently living in a country different from their country of origin. The fact that they had lived abroad was particularly valuable, as it enabled informed reflections on language learning practices, a central focus of this work project.

Furthermore, data collected from part 2 indicates that 129 of the respondents (92%) referenced interest in learning or improving their knowledge of the local language in the country where they lived or had lived, showing (Appendix 2, Figure 22) a strong motivation to learn languages in multicultural contexts. The sample demonstrated an eminent preference (82%) for informal and interactive learning environments (Appendix 2, Figure 23), suggesting a desire for dynamic and social learning formats. Additionally, the most common motivation to join a language group (Appendix 2, Figure 24) was improving participants integration (99 selections) in the country where they had lived or are currently living, followed by language learning (83 selections), learning about local culture (81 selections), meeting new people (64 selections), and having access to well-structured and useful content (43 selections). When asked about the barriers to course completion (Appendix 2, Figure 25), the lack of time was the most frequently cited reason (90 selections), followed by the lack of structure in the lessons (76 selections), highlighting concerns about course planning. Content perceived as irrelevant (68 selections), not feeling a sense of inclusion (58 selections), and difficulty accessing the classes (47 selections) were other issues selected by respondents, revealing the importance of addressing both pedagogical and social barriers in language learning environments. Respecting participants' willingness to pay for informal language classes (Appendix 2, Figure 26), 93 individuals (66%) reported interest in paying for a course taught by a native speaker, considering that the fee would support free classes for vulnerable migrants and refugees, with only 25 individuals (18%) answering "No". As to the price they were willing to pay per month (Appendix 2, Figure 27), from the 116 participants that answered "Yes" or "Maybe" to the previous question, most respondents indicated they would be comfortable paying either €20 (36%) or €30 (34%), while fewer participants were willing to pay other amounts, such as €10 (14%), €40 (10%) or "Other" (6%). To do with exclusive meetups

(Appendix 2, Figure 28), 71 respondents (50%) said they would be interested in attending such events if they were limited to regular language group participants, underlining the appeal of networking and socializing within the language learning context.

Based on the responses from part 3, it can be observed that 103 participants (73%) would consider it beneficial to have an app that would follow their journey of classes and send them notifications, implying the existence of an interest in digital solutions for language learning (Appendix 2, Figure 29). 57 respondents (32%) demonstrated a preference to receive the class reminders via WhatsApp, and 41 individuals mentioned that it was unnecessary (Appendix 2, Figure 30). The reward system suggestion (Appendix 2, Figure 31), such as badges, levels, or discounts for frequent attendants, was seen as a motivational tool by 86 participants (61%), emphasizing that gamification could help maintain participants' engagement in language groups. In the matter of pre-made learning materials access (Appendix 2, Figure 32), through the app or website, a considerable majority of respondents, 115 (82%), expressed a positive interest in this feature. An additional 21 participants (15%) reported that they might be interested, while only 5 (3%) referenced that they would not find such materials useful. These results suggest a clear demand for accessible, well-structured resources that can complement informal language learning classes.

According to part 4 data, in terms of financial support for free language classes (Appendix 2, Figure 33), 54 of the participants (26%) stated that they would be willing to donate, while 71 (35%) said they would not. A larger portion, 80 (39%), expressed uncertainty about contributing financially to SPEAK, demonstrating the need to strengthen its visibility and its mission promotion through targeted communication efforts. As for the amount they would be willing to donate (Appendix 2, Figure 34), 80 participants (60%) indicated they would donate €10, followed by 27 (20%) who would consider donating €20. Larger amounts, such as €30 and €40, had fewer

responses, with 8 and 5 responses, respectively, indicating a general preference for modest contributions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Visual References Supporting the Literature Review

Figure 10: Main Reasons for Migration to the European Union (%)

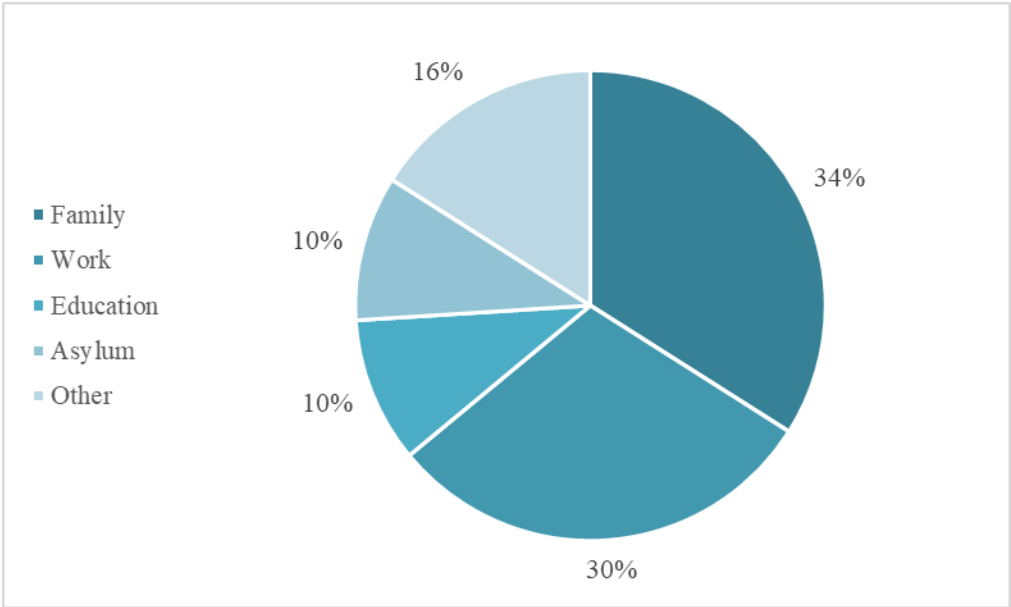


Figure 11: Evolution of Foreign Residents in Portugal (Number of Individuals)

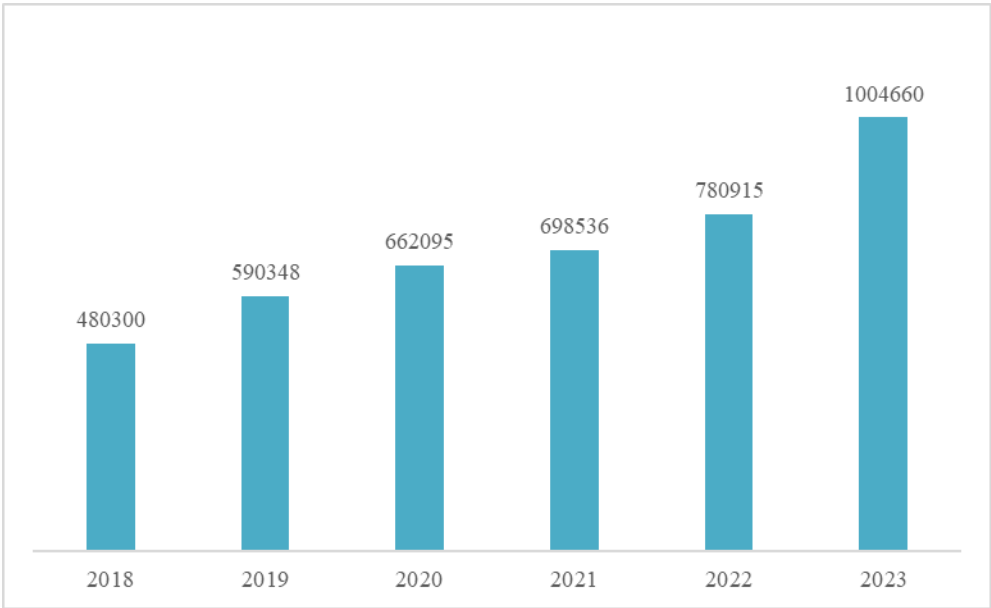


Figure 12: Most Represented Nationalities Among Immigrants in Portugal (Number of Individuals)

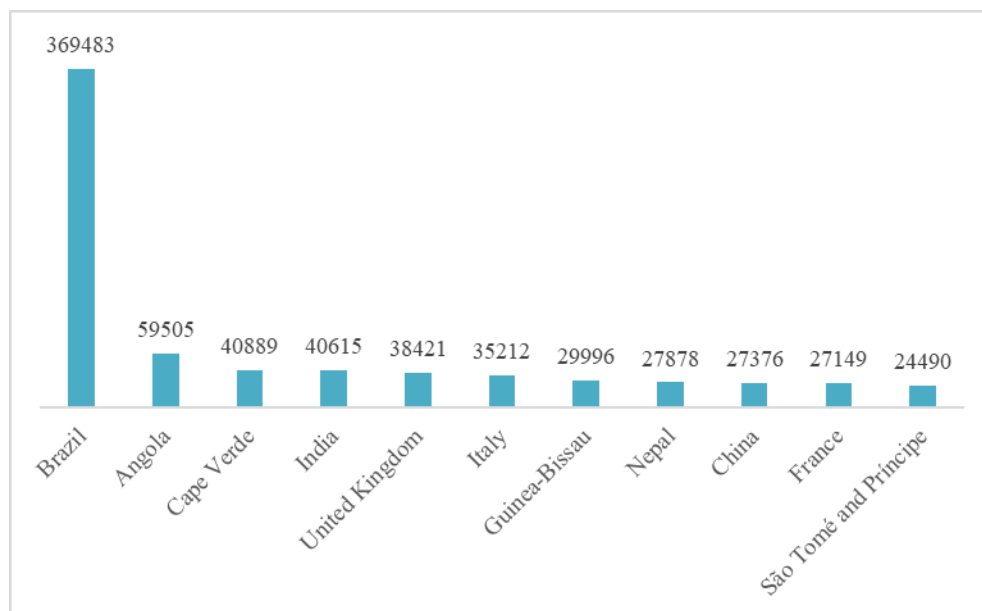


Figure 13: Evolution of International Protection Requests in Portugal (Number of Requests per Year)

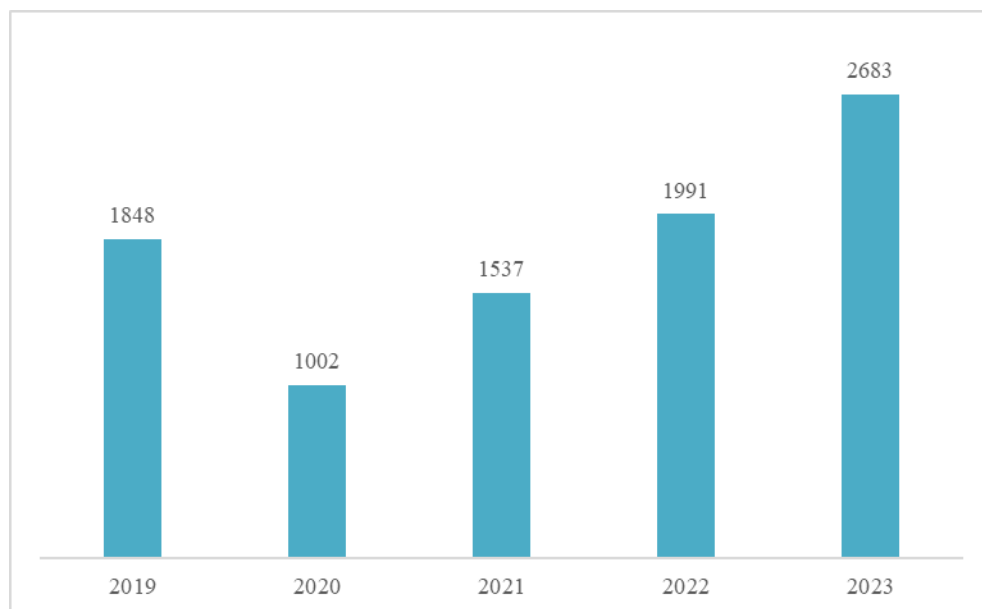


Figure 14: Proportion of Participants Who Reported Discrimination in Portuguese Public Services for Being Immigrants (%)

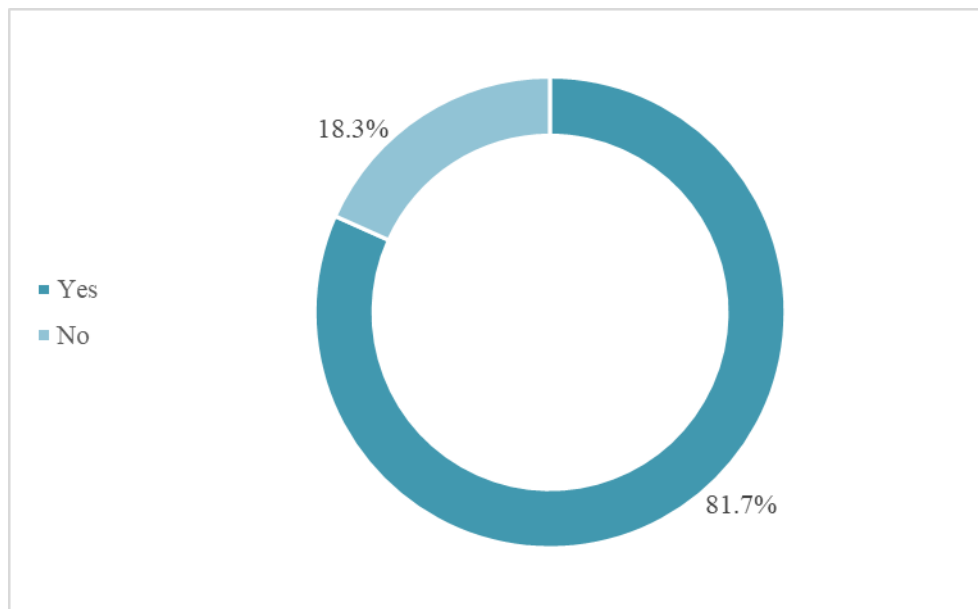


Figure 15: Nationalities of Participants Who Reported Experiencing Discrimination in Portuguese Public Services (%)

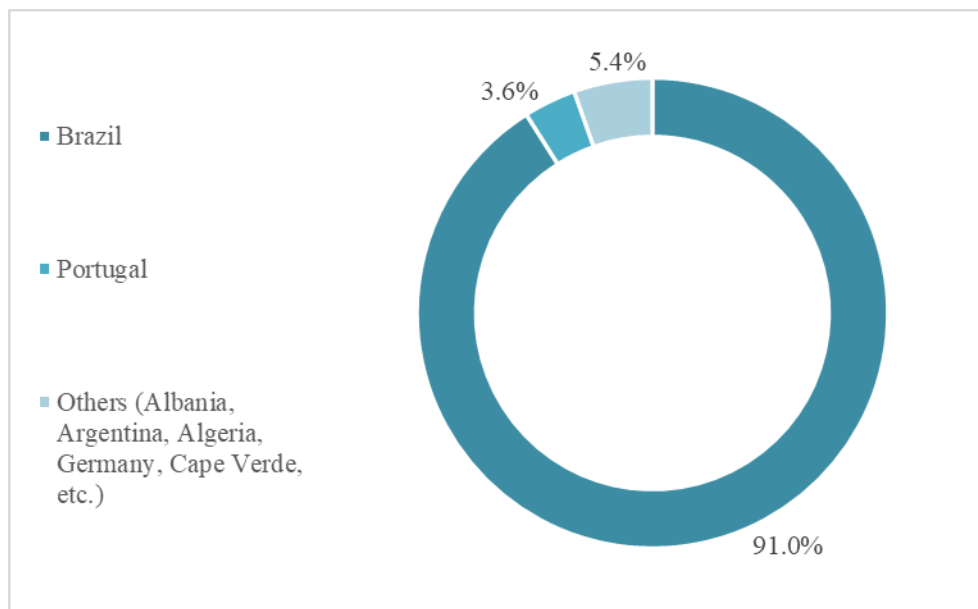
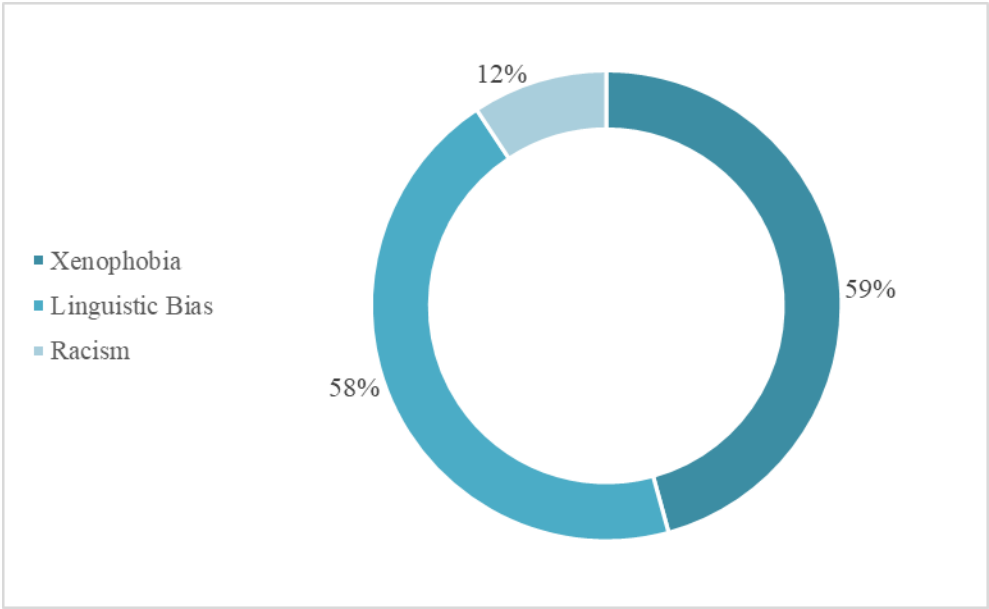


Figure 16: Main Types of Discrimination Perceived Against Immigrants in Portuguese Public Services (%)



Appendix 2: Survey 1 – Language Learning Preferences and Barriers

Figure 17: Age Distribution of Participants (Number of Respondents)

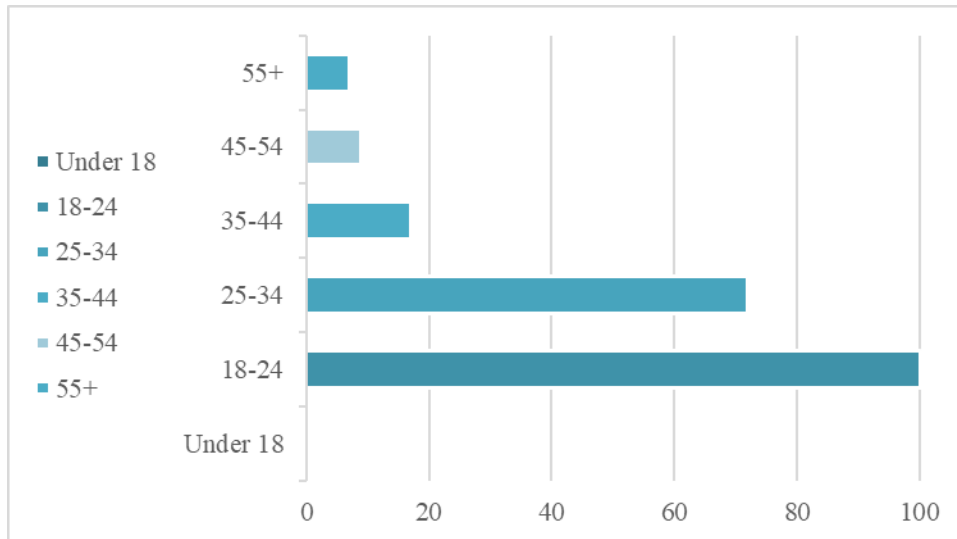


Figure 18: Nationalities of Participants (Open-Ended Responses)

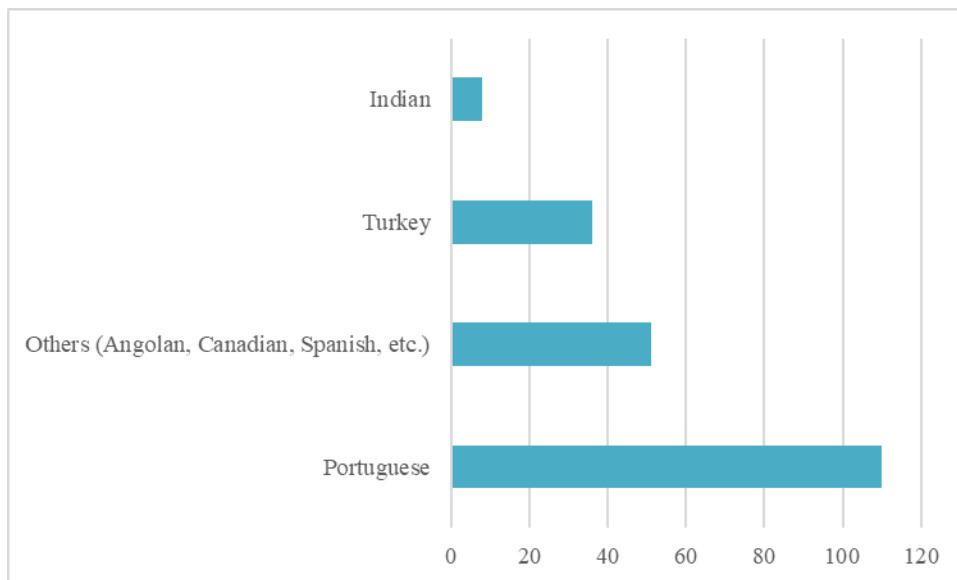


Figure 19: Current Occupation of Participants (%)

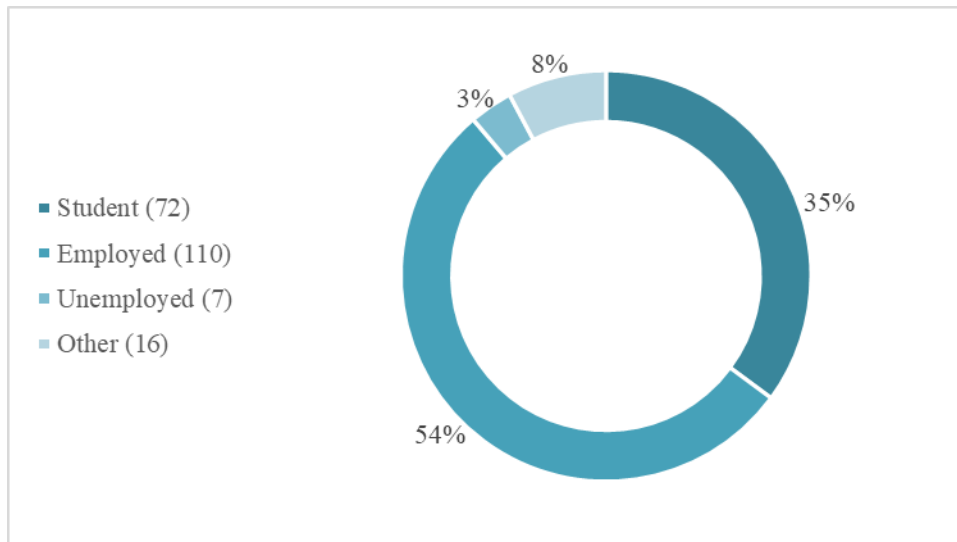


Figure 20: Country of Residence of Participants (Open-Ended Responses)

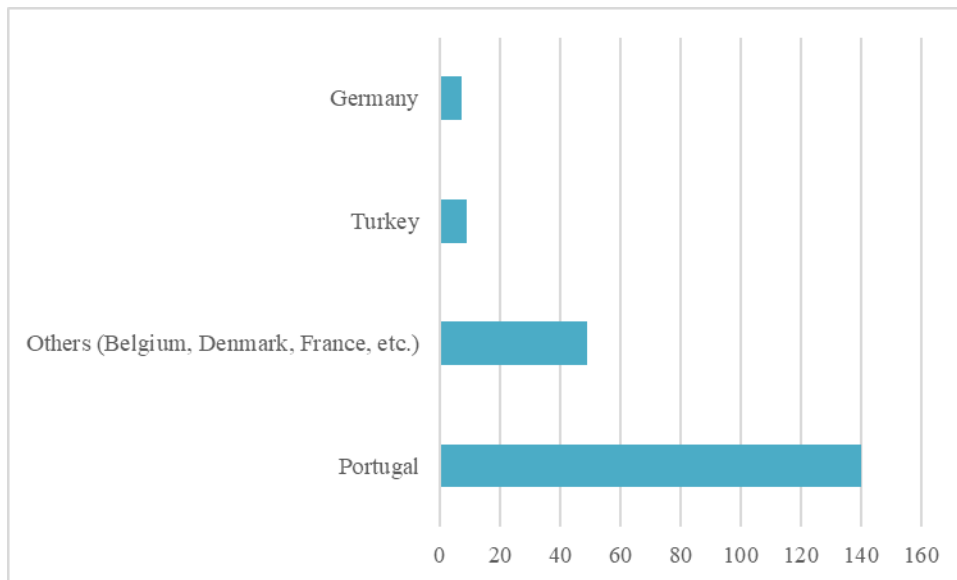


Figure 21: Participants' Experience Living in a Different Country from Their Country of Origin (%)

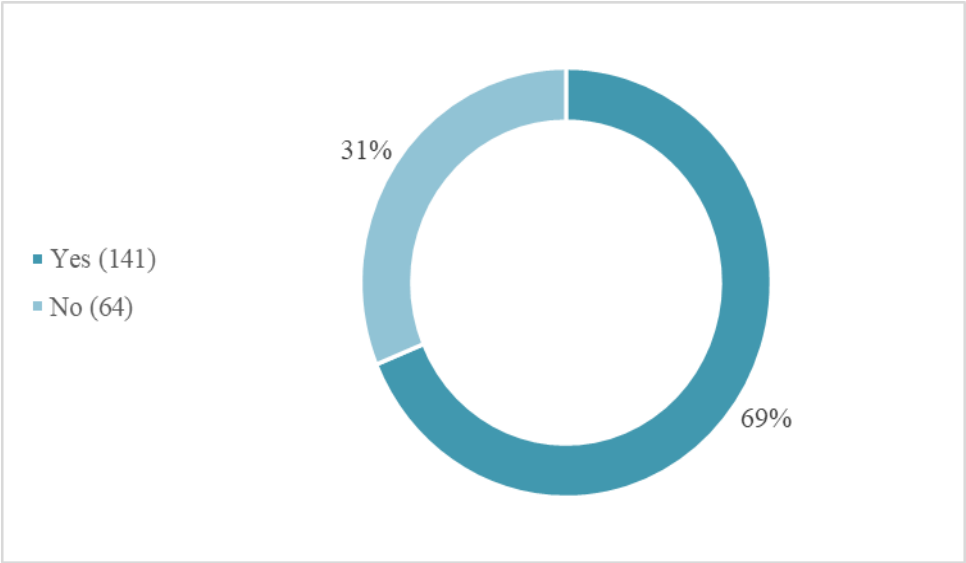


Figure 22: Interest in Learning the Local Language While Abroad (%)

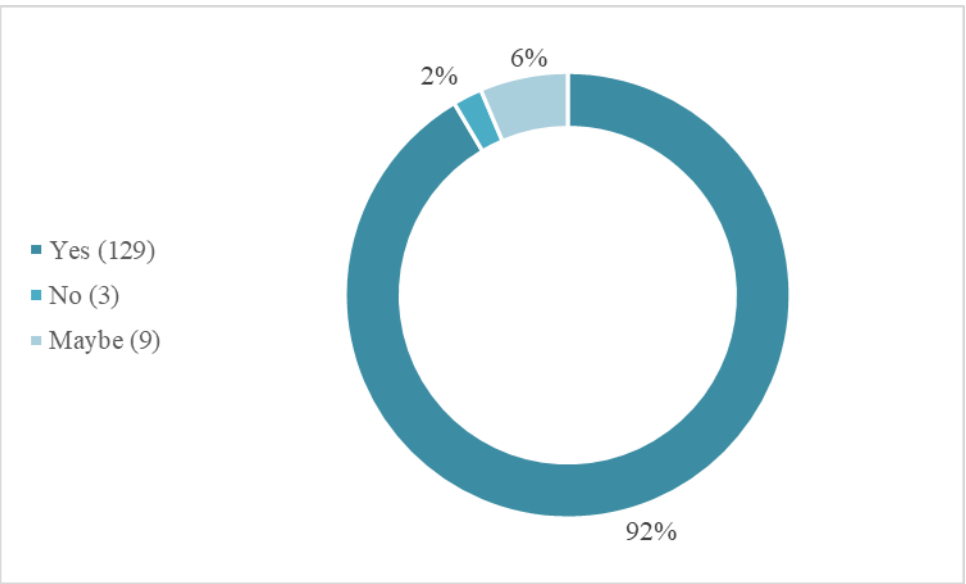


Figure 23: Preferences for Informal and Social Language Learning Settings (%)

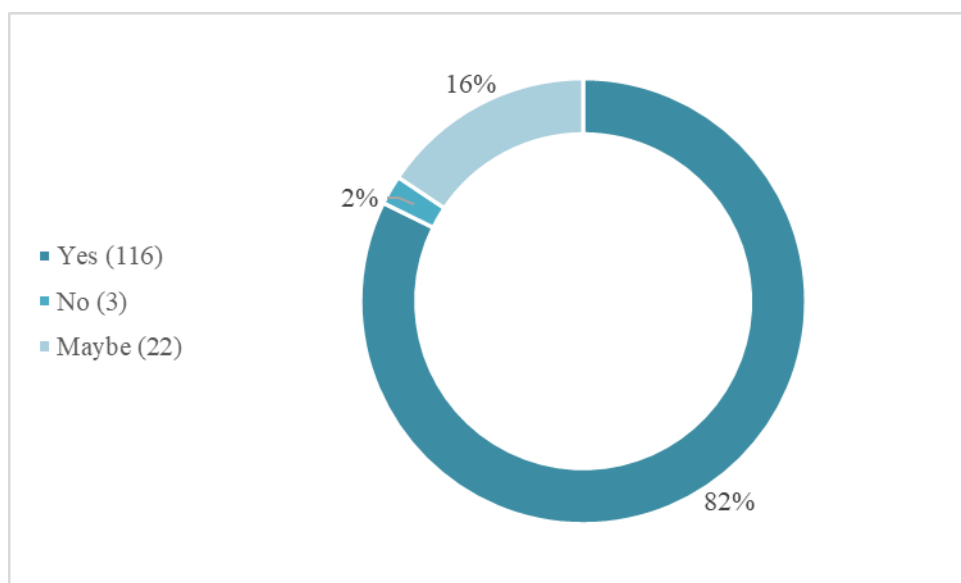


Figure 24: Main Motivations for Joining a Language Course (Multiple Answers)

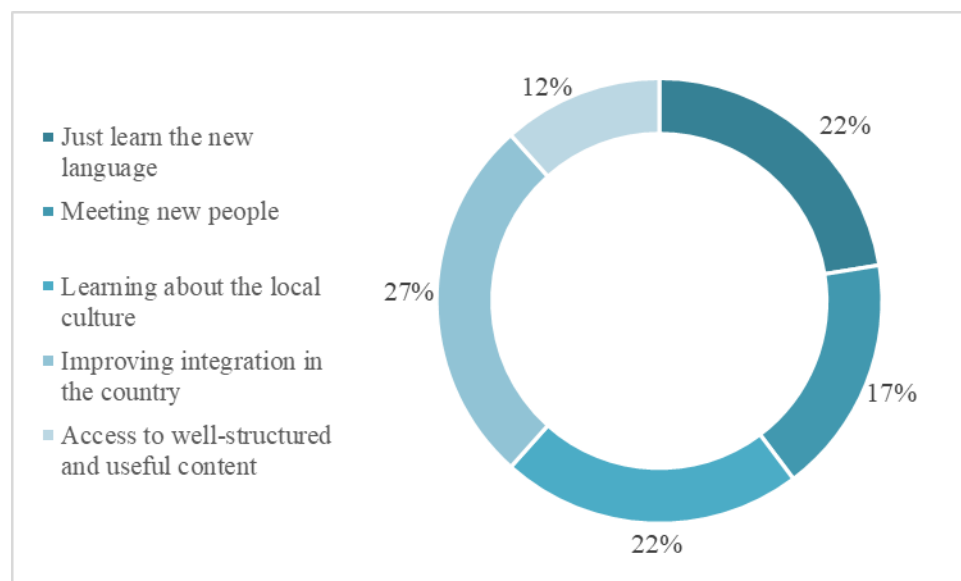


Figure 25: Main Reasons for Dropping out of a Language Course (Multiple Answers)

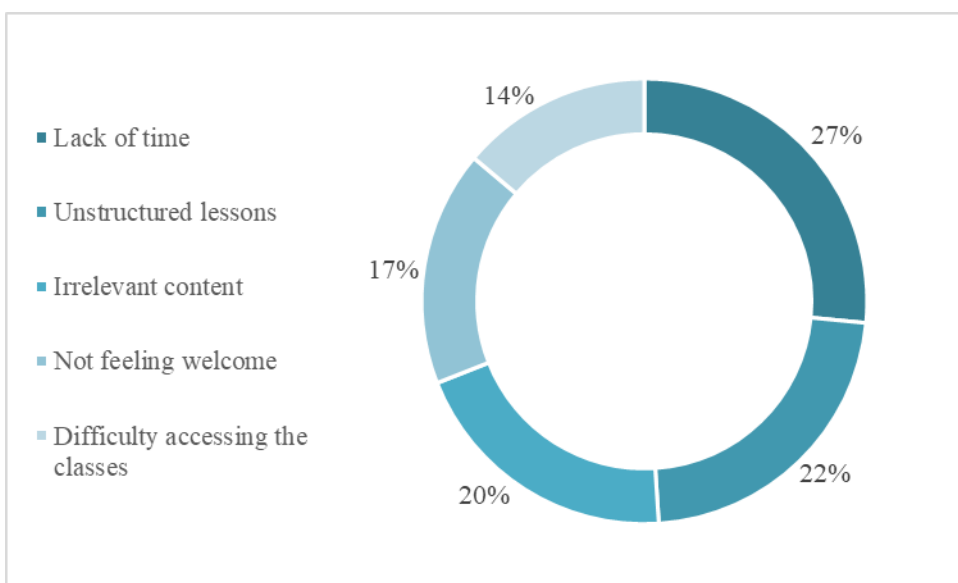


Figure 26: Willingness to Pay for a Socially Impactful Language Class (%)

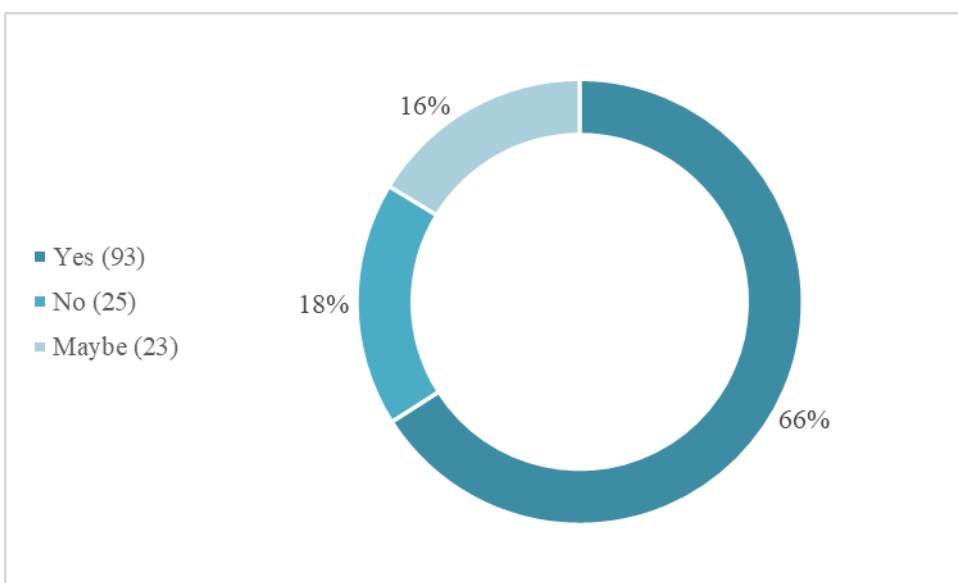


Figure 27: Monthly Amount Participants are Willing to Pay for Language Classes (%)

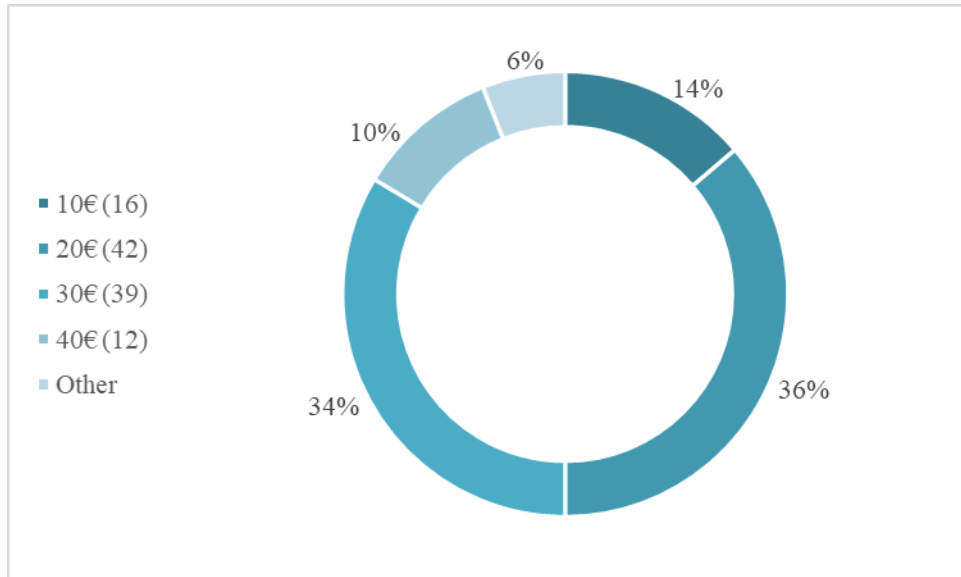


Figure 28: Interest in Exclusive Events for Regular Participants (%)

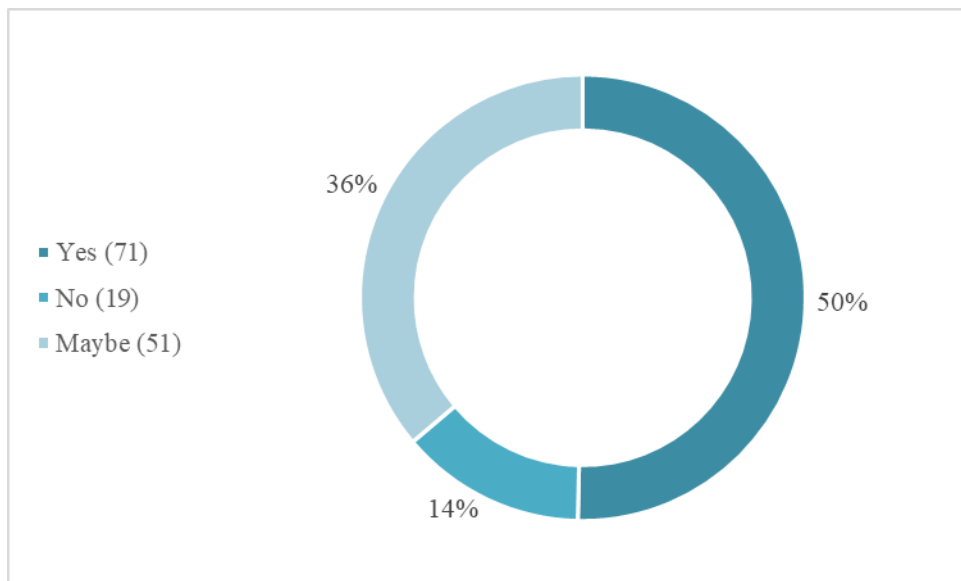


Figure 29: Perceived Usefulness of an App for Language Learning (%)

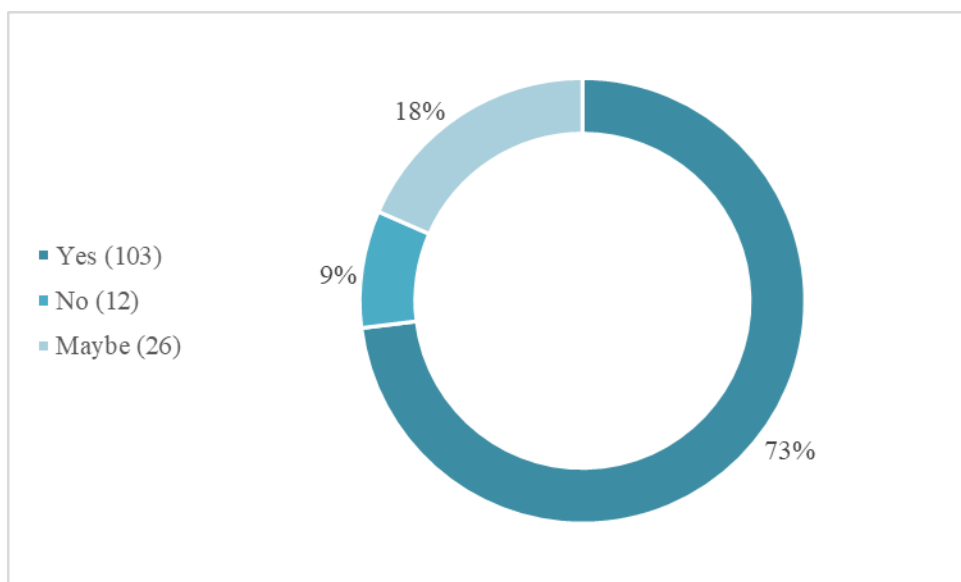


Figure 30: Preferred Channels for Class Reminders (%)

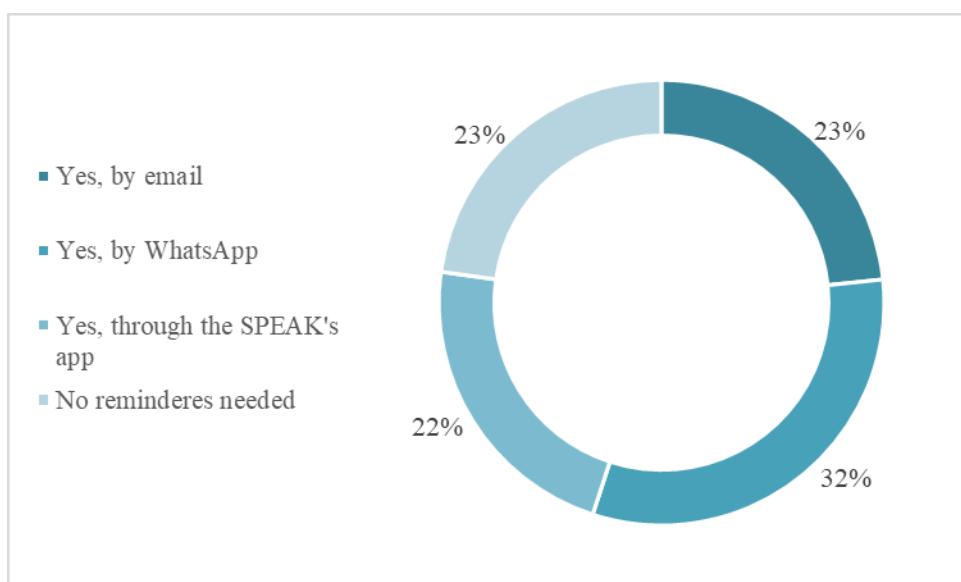


Figure 31: Perceived Motivational Effect of a Reward System (%)

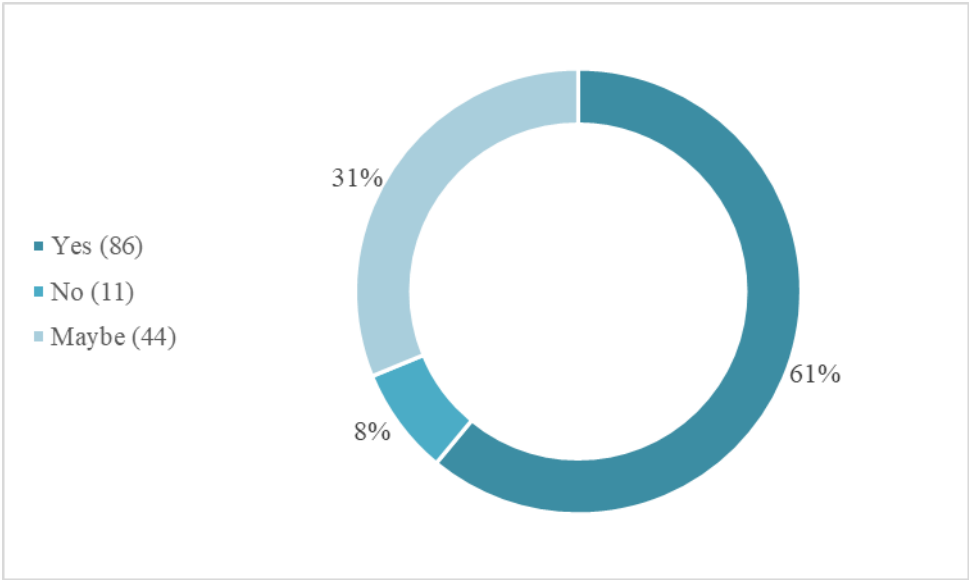


Figure 32: Interest in Accessing Pre-Made Learning Materials (%)

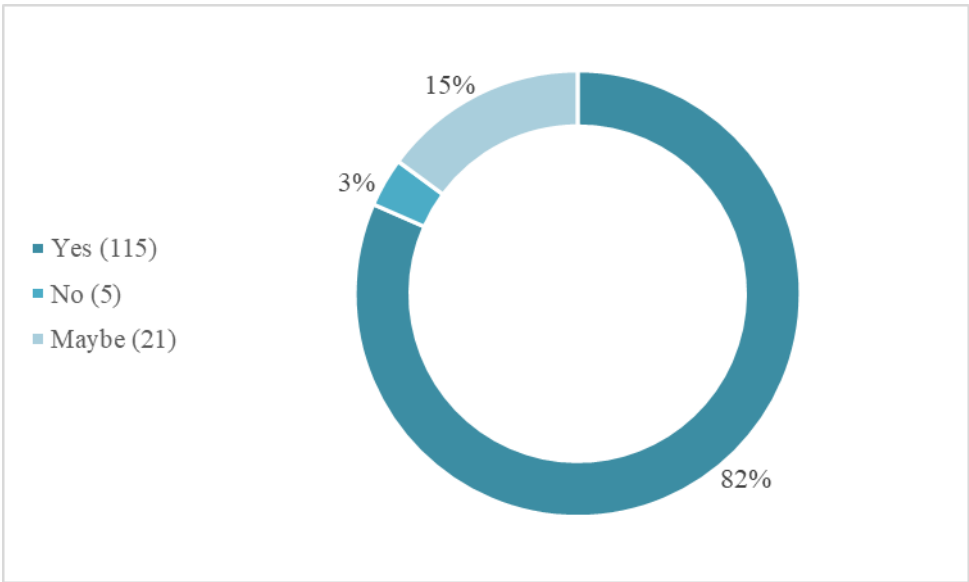


Figure 33: Willingness to Donate Via SPEAK's Platform (%)

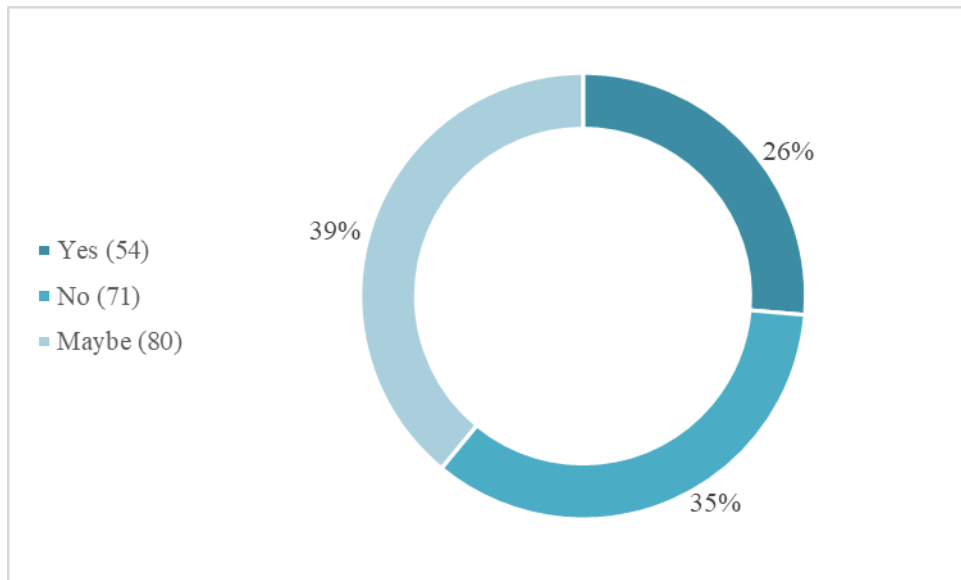
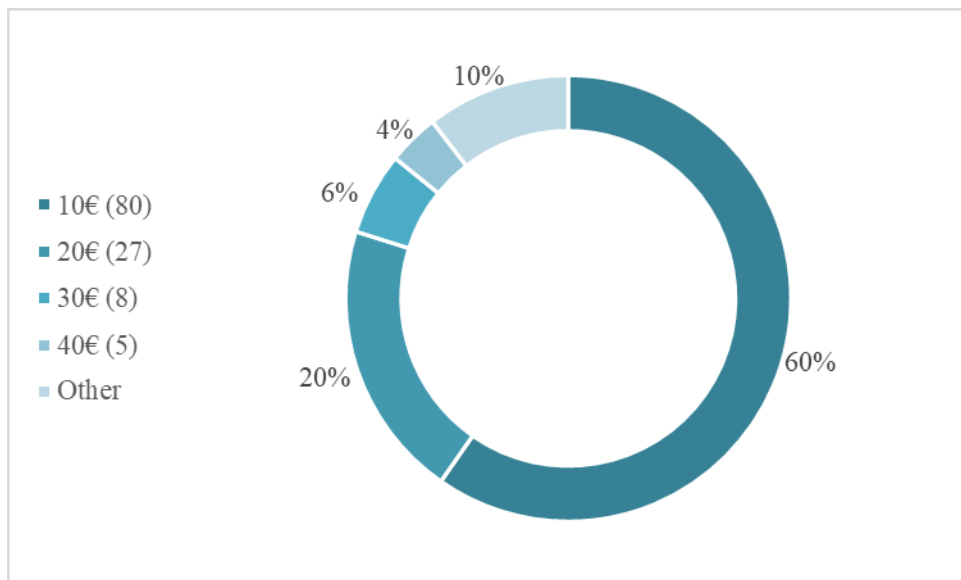


Figure 34: Preferred One-Time Donation Amounts to Support Free Language Classes (%)



Appendix 3: Survey 2 – Evaluation of Homepage Prototype (Version 1)

Figure 35: Prototype of SPEAK's Website Homepage Illustrating the New Structure of Language Learning Groups

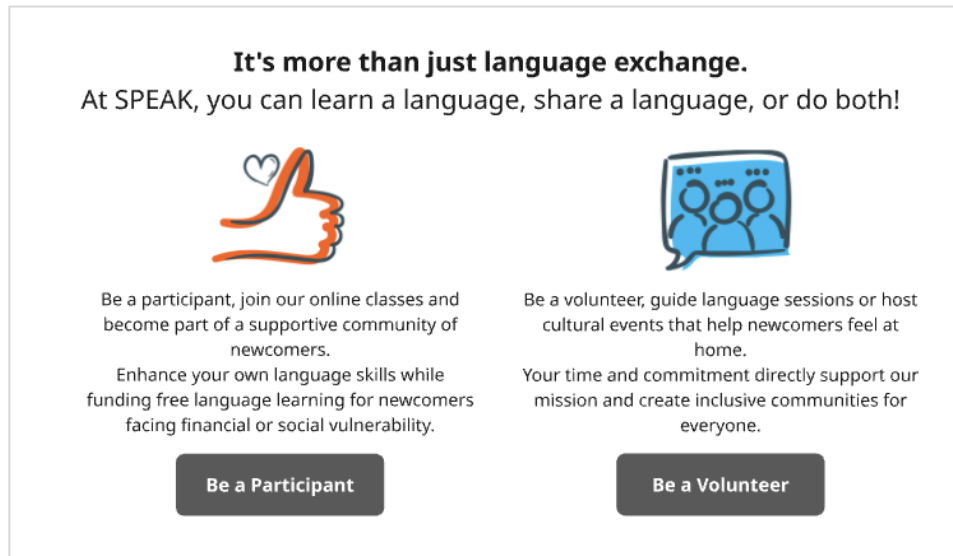


Figure 36: Understanding of SPEAK's Class Model Based on the Website Prototype (%)

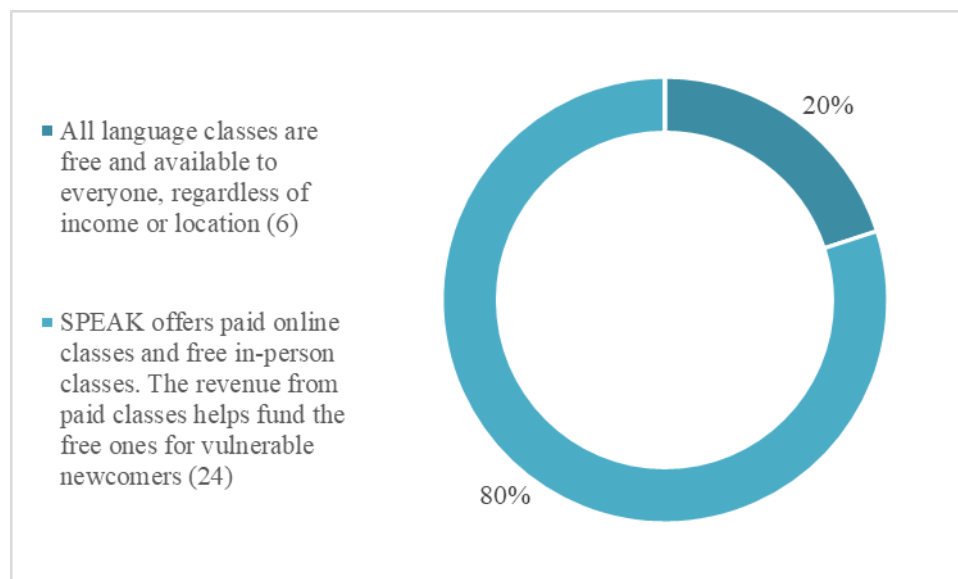
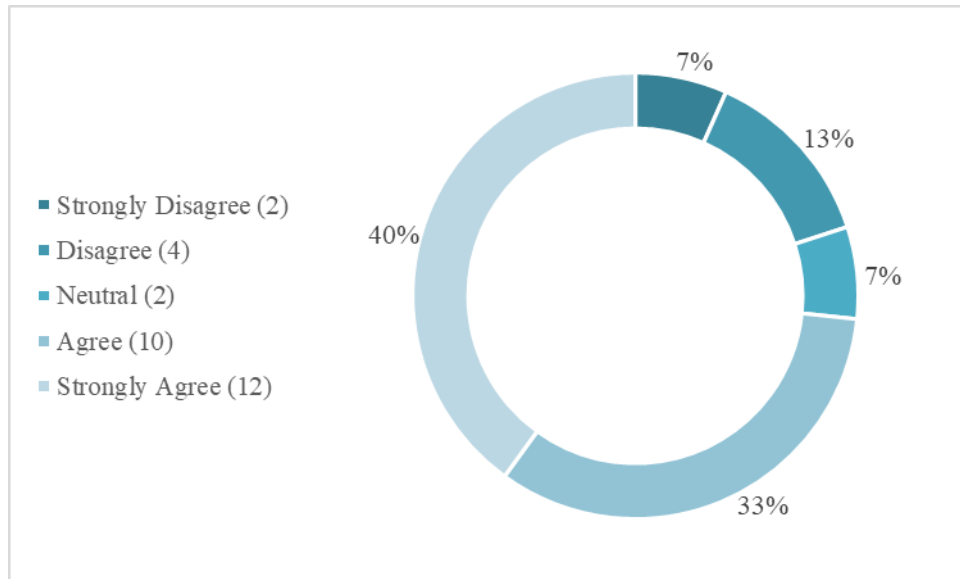


Figure 37: Perceived Clarity of SPEAK's Class Model Explanation in the Homepage Prototype (%)



Appendix 4: Survey 3 – Evaluation of Homepage Prototype (Version 2)

Figure 38: Revised Website Homepage Prototype Designed to Improve Communication of SPEAK's Language Learning Group Structure

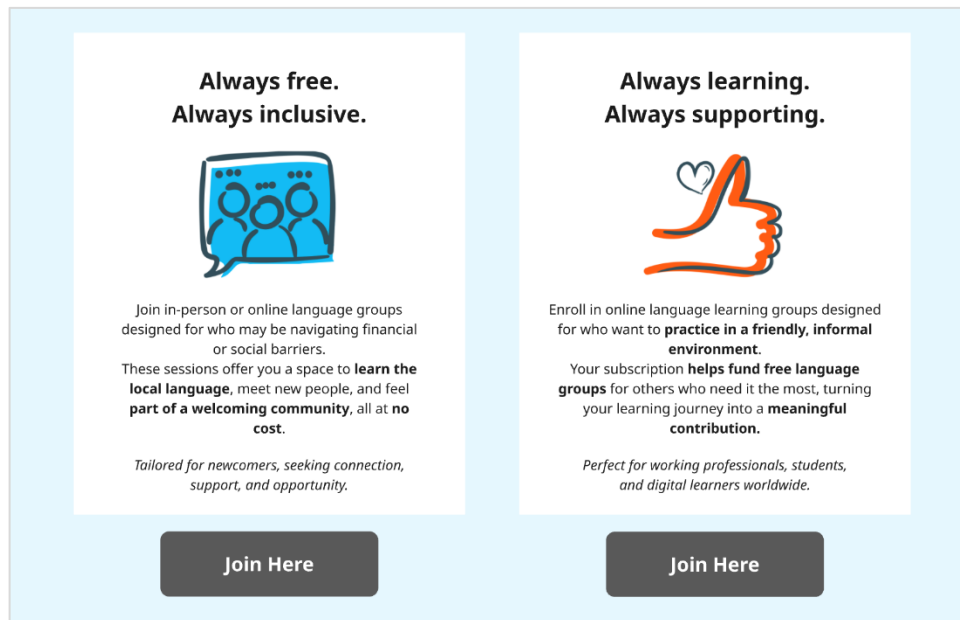
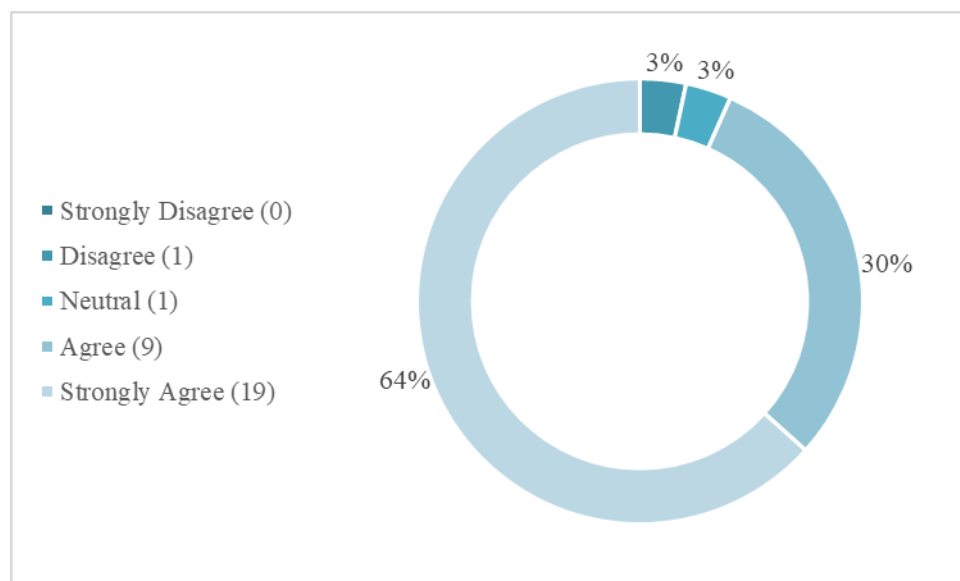


Figure 39: Clarity of Class Model Explanation in Updated Prototype (%)

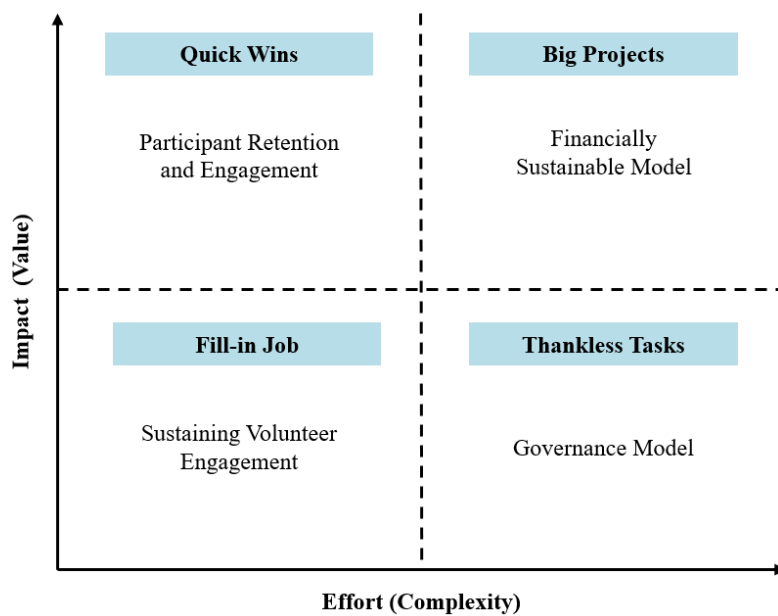


Appendix 5: Analytical Frameworks

Table 1: RICE Method Matrix

Criteria Challenges	Reach (R)	Impact (I)	Confidence (C)	Effort (E)	RICE Score
Government Model	40.00	3	70%	4	21.00
Sustainable Model	100.00	5	90%	4	112.50
Participants Retention/Engagement	100.00	4	85%	3	113.30
Sustaining Volunteer Engagement	60.00	3	70%	2	63.00

Figure 40: Impact versus Effort Matrix



Appendix 6: Projected Financial Scenarios

Table 2: Financial Analysis – Pessimistic Scenario

Pessimistic Scenario	
Number of volunteers per year	60
Volunteer Period (Months)	1.5
Number of language groups per volunteer	1
Number of language groups per year	60
Number of participants per language group	4
Language Group Payment (€)	30
Income Per Year (€)	7,200

Table 3: Financial Analysis – Moderate Scenario

Moderate Scenario	
Number of volunteers per year	60
Volunteer Period (Months)	6
Number of language groups per volunteer	4
Number of language groups per year	240
Number of participants per language group	7
Language Group Payment (€)	30
Income Per Year (€)	50,400

Table 4: Financial Analysis – Optimistic Scenario

Optimistic Scenario	
Number of volunteers per year	60
Volunteer Period (Months)	12
Number of language groups per volunteer	8
Number of language groups per year	480
Number of participants per language group	10
Language Group Payment (€)	30
Income Per Year (€)	144,000

Appendix 7: SPEAK's Website Changes

Figure 41: SPEAK's Website Homepage



Join a Language Group

**Always free.
Always inclusive.**



Join in-person or online language groups designed for who may be navigating financial or social barriers. These sessions offer you a space to **learn the local language**, meet new people, and feel **part of a welcoming community**, all at **no cost**.

Tailored for newcomers, seeking connection, support, and opportunity.

[Learn More](#)

**Always learning.
Always supporting.**



Enroll in online language learning groups designed for who want to **practice in a friendly, informal environment**. Your subscription **helps fund free language groups** for others who need it the most, turning your learning journey into a **meaningful contribution**.

Perfect for working professionals, students, and digital learners worldwide.

[Learn More](#)

Bridging Worlds Through Language

By joining SPEAK, you're helping create a space where language becomes a tool for equality and hope.

You're part of a shared journey.

Together, we **learn, grow**, and create a **community**.

[Learn More](#)

Join as a Volunteer



[Learn More](#)

**Help a Newcomer Speak.
Help a Community Grow.**

As a **volunteer**, you can make a real impact either by becoming a **buddy** and **sharing your language** with learners, or by joining as an **ambassador** to **organize community events** that foster connection.

20+ cities with an in-person SPEAK experience.



Pondicherry



Makiyo



Eindhoven



Rwamwanja



Las Palmas

Can't find your city?

[Join here](#)

[See all cities](#)

Create an inclusive world through language and culture.



Laugh in every language.

Language groups at SPEAK are never boring. With sessions full of games and groups activities, time will fly by.



Create social impact.

Share your language as a buddy to support the social integration of migrants and refugees in your city and around the world.



Make new friends.

Learn from each other, explore common interests and build meaningful relationships with your language group.

Be part of a global **community**.



94k

SPEAKers sharing their culture.

191

Countries represented.

64

Languages shared.

28

Cities where you can experience SPEAK.

[Get started](#)

What SPEAKers are **saying**.



I got so much out of my SPEAK experience. I was on a small group and each session felt so personal, the other participants felt more like family by the end of our sessions. SPEAK sessions are definitely the most relaxed, helpful way to improve my language proficiency.

- Sarah Terracciano (Participant in Madrid)



SPEAK for me it's like travelling without leaving Portugal. I share my culture and I learn from other people's culture. That helps me understand how other people live and how they think too.

- Naky Gaglo (Buddy and participant in Lisbon)



My experience at SPEAK keeps growing since the beginning. I started helping others learn Arabic with my husband, and I also learned Portuguese along the way. Over this 6 years, I have met many of people and learned a lot about new cultures. And that's SPEAK's spirit: to bring the world closer to you.

- Fatema Ammar (Buddy and participant in Leiria)

Promoting a better and diverse world.



Take SPEAK with you in your pocket. Download the app.



Ready to connect with people from all over the world?

Join a global community of 65.000+ SPEAKers today!

Get started



Share your world.

Built with ❤️ and OutSystems.

Experience

How it works
Be a buddy
Be an ambassador
Cities
Take SPEAK to your city

SPEAK

About us
Events
Help center
Partners
Contact us
We are hiring
Donate

Follow us

Facebook
Instagram
Youtube
Blog
LinkedIn
Twitter

Legal & Policies

Terms of Service
Privacy and Cookies
Protection
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Figure 42: Free Language Group Page

[Join a language course](#)[Be a buddy](#)[How it works](#)[Where we are](#)[Support our mission](#)[Download the app](#)[Login](#)

Say hello to a new way of learning, Always Free. Always Inclusive.

Find support, build connections and learn the language through community-led groups

[Start learning](#)

 4-10 participants per language group.

 12 sessions of 90 minutes

 Levels based on your knowledge.

 Language groups are free.

By the community, for the community.



Online or in-person groups.
Meet up with your language group from wherever you are.
Build bonds and make new friends over the 12 sessions you will spend together.



Groups are led by buddies.
Buddies are SPEAKers just like you! They are native or fluent in the languages they share. Every buddy brings something new to the table, making each group a unique experience.



Informal methodology.
People learn better when they're having fun. SPEAK groups foster a safe learning environment where people learn from each other, explore common interests, and build meaningful connections.

Different needs, different levels

Learn a new language from scratch or improve a language you already know.
Whatever your language level is, we have the right option for you.

Basic groups



- Buddies will use a support language you know to help you learn.
- Get to know the basics of the vocabulary, day-to-day expressions and a bit of grammar.
- Learn through a mix of practical materials with fun games and dynamics.

Conversational groups



- Buddies communicate only in the language you are learning.
- Put into practice what you already know, while expanding your vocabulary and knowledge.
- Discuss a wide variety of topics by giving your opinions and debating.

99



Figure 43: Paid Language Group Page

SPEAK

Join a language course Be a buddy How it works Where we are Support our mission Download the app Login

Say hello to a new way of learning, Always Learning. Always Supporting.

Help others learn your language and be part of something big.

Start learning

- 4-10 participants per language group.
- 12 sessions of 90 minutes
- Levels based on your knowledge.
- 30 eur per language group

By the community, for the community.

Online Language Groups

Meet up with your language group online from wherever you are. Build bonds and make new friends over the 12 sessions you will spend together.

Groups are led by buddies.

Buddies are SPEAKers just like you! They are native or fluent in the languages they share. Every buddy brings something new to the table, making each group a unique experience.

Informal methodology.

People learn better when they're having fun. SPEAK groups foster a safe learning environment where people learn from each other, explore common interests, and build meaningful connections.

Different needs, different levels

Learn a new language from scratch or improve a language you already know.
Whatever your language level is, we have the right option for you.

Basic groups



- Buddies will use a support language you know to help you learn.
- Get to know the basics of the vocabulary, day-to-day expressions and a bit of grammar.
- Learn through a mix of practical materials with fun games and dynamics.

Conversational groups



- Buddies communicate only in the language you are learning.
- Put into practice what you already know, while expanding your vocabulary and knowledge.
- Discuss a wide variety of topics by giving your opinions and debating.

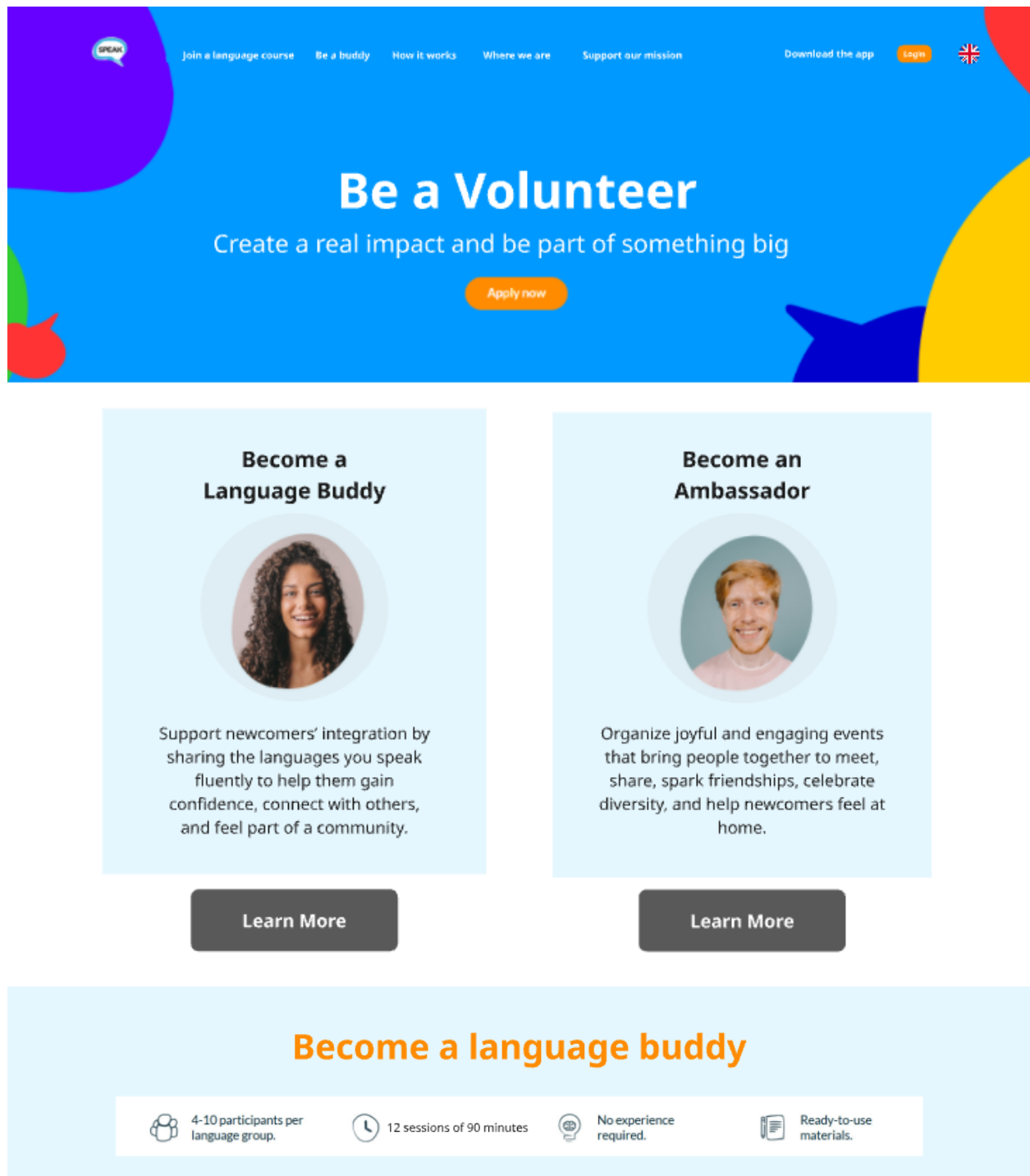
Complete your language journey.

Go from barely knowing a language to sounding just like a local.



[Start learning](#)

Figure 44: "Be a Volunteer" Page



Anyone can be a **Buddy** with a passion for languages, culture and diversity!

Buddies are volunteers who **lead language groups** at various levels and **support participants in learning** and practicing the language.

You can **share your knowledge** with **online or in-person** language groups according to availability and willingness.

[Be a Buddy](#)

An interactive, immersive experience for a buddy



Prepare yourself with our self-service training.

Learn everything you need to know to be an amazing buddy with our quick online training.



Receive compliments from participants.

See the love your participants send you and access all your compliments on your buddy profile.



Get support from the SPEAK team.

We've got your back! You'll have access to guides and materials for buddies, which include ready-to-use activities, tips, and suggestions for each session.

[Be a buddy](#)

Become an Ambassador

Do you have a passion for bringing people together?

We're looking for enthusiastic volunteers like you to become SPEAK Ambassadors! As an Ambassador, you're the heart of our community, creating vibrant experiences.

What you will do?

Organize, design and **host** engaging events that connect current SPEAK members and welcome curious newcomers.

Be a friendly face that helps, **foster our community**, **build bridges** and **spark conversations**.
Meet and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds.

[Be an Ambassador](#)

Figure 45: Participants' Personal Dashboard

[Join a language course](#)[Be a buddy](#)[How it works](#)[Cities](#)[Support our mission](#)[Download the app](#)[Profile](#)

Hello, [Participant Name]!



Add photo

Participant Name

Lisbon

Member since 19 Feb

[Edit profile](#)



Journeys Completed

2



Sessions

0h



Events

1



Nationalities met

5

[SPEAK passport.](#)

Your Language Group Journey

Basic I	Basic II	Basic III	Conversational
Portuguese			
English			



Basic I

Portuguese

Participant

[See group details](#)

0/12 sessions

Upcoming session:

 Mon, 19 May 2025

 18:00 (UTC+01:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London

 [Join online](#)

Materials:

 [Sessão 01. Saudações e Apresentações.pdf](#)

Share your language as a buddy

You can make an impact by being a buddy and sharing any language you are fluent in. Don't worry if you don't have any previous experience, we'll provide support and resources!

[Be a buddy](#)



Your wishlist

[Add languages](#)

Portuguese - Basic I

✕

Language groups

All groups

 In-person groups

 Online groups

Language:

All languages

▼

Conversational Portuguese Mon, Thu 11:00 - 12:30 Start: 07-04-2025 1 spot left	Conversational English Tue, Thu 19:30 - 21:00 Start: 22-04-2025 7 spots left	Conversational Portuguese Mon, Wed 10:00 - 11:30 Start: 05-05-2025 1 spot left	Basic III Portuguese Mon, Thu 17:00 - 18:30 Start: 12-05-2025 1 spot left
Conversational Portuguese Mon, Wed 18:00 - 19:30 Start: 12-05-2025 4 spots left	Basic Hausa Sun, Mon, Fri 12:45 - 14:15 Start: 18-05-2025 11 spots left	Basic I Portuguese Mon, Tue, Wed 18:00 - 19:30 Start: 19-05-2025 6 spots left	Basic III Spanish Tue, Fri 18:00 - 19:30 Start: 20-05-2025 9 spots left

Lisbon events

Upcoming Past

 Afternoon Hike Beginner Friendly Parking Monsanto Acesso Este Campolide April 27th 10:00 27 APR (10 DAYS AGO), 3:00 PM Afternoon Hike Lisbon @Parking Monsanto Acesso Este Campolide 2 attendees Add	 SPEAKNIC 23 APR (14 DAYS AGO), 8:00 PM German and Portuguese Language Exchange Lisbon @Five Pizza + Burger 1 attendee Add	 Language & Culture Exchange Five pizza + burger 15th March 11th 15 MAR, 7:00 PM Language and Cultural Exchange Lisbon @Av. Guerra Junqueiro 12B, 1000-167 Lisboa 1 attendee Add
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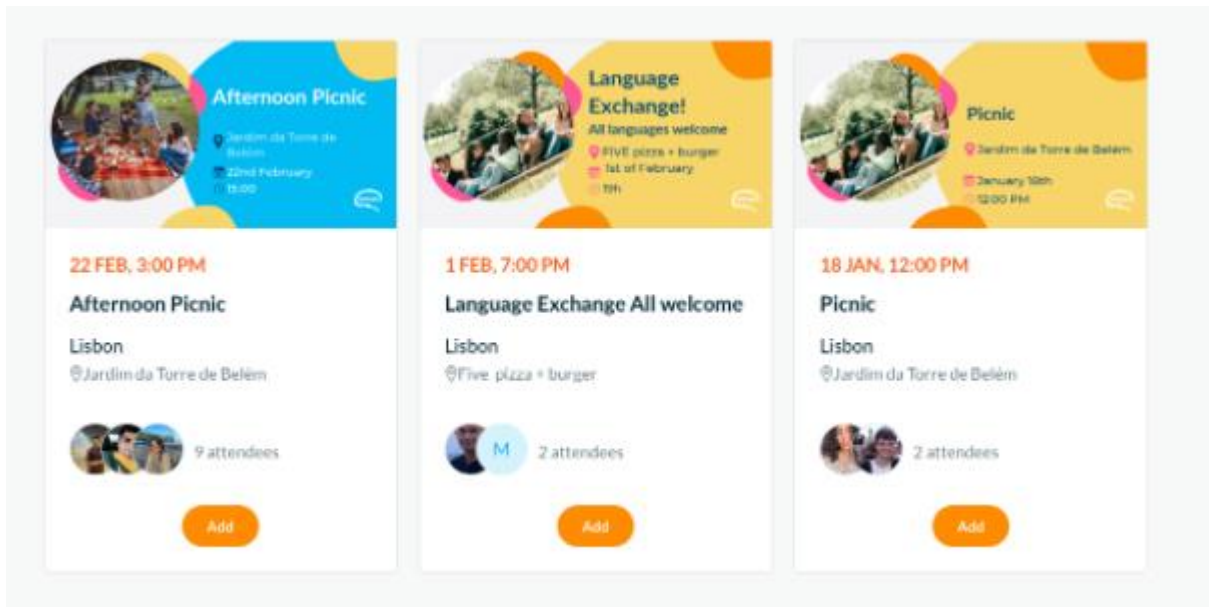


Figure 46: Participants' Personal Dashboard – “See Group Details” Button, Language Group's Schedules

[Join a language course](#)
[Be a buddy](#)
[How it works](#)
[Cities](#)
[Support our mission](#)
[Download the app](#)
[Profile](#)

I'm learning Portuguese Basic I

[Sessions](#)
[Conversation](#)
[Participants](#)

My upcoming sessions

#	DATE	START TIME*	MATERIALS	ATTENDANCE
1	19-05-2025	18:00	Greetings and presentations Download materials.	Join online
2	20-05-2025	18:00	Family and friends Download materials.	Join online
3	21-05-2025	18:00	Animals, numbers and colours Download materials.	Join online
4	26-05-2025	18:00	The city Download materials.	Join online
5	27-05-2025	18:00	Hobbies Download materials.	Join online

My group details

19 May - 11 June
*(UTC+01:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London

Online sessions (Skype)

[Add to Outlook](#)

[Add to iCal](#)

Buddies

Rita Lopes

[Claim Completion Certificate](#)

[Leave Group](#)

6	28-05-2025	18:00	Daily routine Download materials.	Join online
7	02-06-2025	18:00	Weather, seasons and months Download materials.	Join online
8	03-06-2025	18:00	Jobs and professions Download materials.	Join online
9	04-06-2025	18:00	Means of transport Download materials.	Join online
10	09-06-2025	18:00	Food and drinks Download materials.	Join online
11	10-06-2025	18:00	Countries and nationalities Download materials.	Join online
12	11-06-2025	18:00	Health and body parts Download materials.	Join online

Figure 47: Buddies' Personal Dashboard


[Join a language course](#)
[Be a buddy](#)
[How it works](#)
[Cities](#)
[Support our mission](#)
[Download the app](#)
[Profile](#)


Hello, [Buddy Name]!



Buddy Name

Lisbon

Member since 19 Feb

[Edit profile](#)

Sessions
0h

Events
1

Nationalities met
5

[SPEAK passport.](#)

Buddy Journey

Language Buddy Mentor Buddy Lead Buddy

I am a Mentor Buddy!

Host a Language Group

Language

Level

Start Date

Description

Language Group Days

Schedule

Location

☐ In-Person ☐ Online

Language Group Materials

[Upload Here](#)

[Submit](#)

Language groups

All groups

 In-person groups

 Online groups

Language:

All languages

Conversational Spanish

 Mon, Wed
🕒 20:00 - 21:30
Start: **21-04-2025**

🔥 1 spot left

Conversational English

 Tue, Thu
🕒 19:30 - 21:00
Start: **22-04-2025**

🔥 5 spots left

Basic III Portuguese

 Mon, Thu
🕒 17:00 - 18:30
Start: **12-05-2025**

🔥 6 spots left

Conversational Portuguese

 Mon, Wed
🕒 18:00 - 19:30
Start: **12-05-2025**

🔥 10 spots left

Basic Hausa

 Sun, Mon, Fri
🕒 12:45 - 14:15
Start: **18-05-2025**

🔥 12 spots left

Basic I Portuguese

 Mon, Tue, Wed
🕒 18:00 - 19:30
Start: **19-05-2025**

🔥 10 spots left

Basic III Spanish

 Tue, Fri
🕒 18:00 - 19:30
Start: **20-05-2025**

🔥 12 spots left

Lisbon events

Upcoming

Past



27 APR (10 DAYS AGO), 3:00 PM

Afternoon Hike

Lisbon

📍 Parking Momento Acesso Este Campolide



2 attendees

Add



23 APR (14 DAYS AGO), 8:00 PM

German and Portuguese Language Exchange

Lisbon

📍 Five Pizza + Burger



1 attendee

Add



15 MAR, 7:00 PM

Language and Cultural Exchange

Lisbon

📍 Av. Guerra Junqueiro 12B, 1000-167 Lisboa



1 attendee

Add

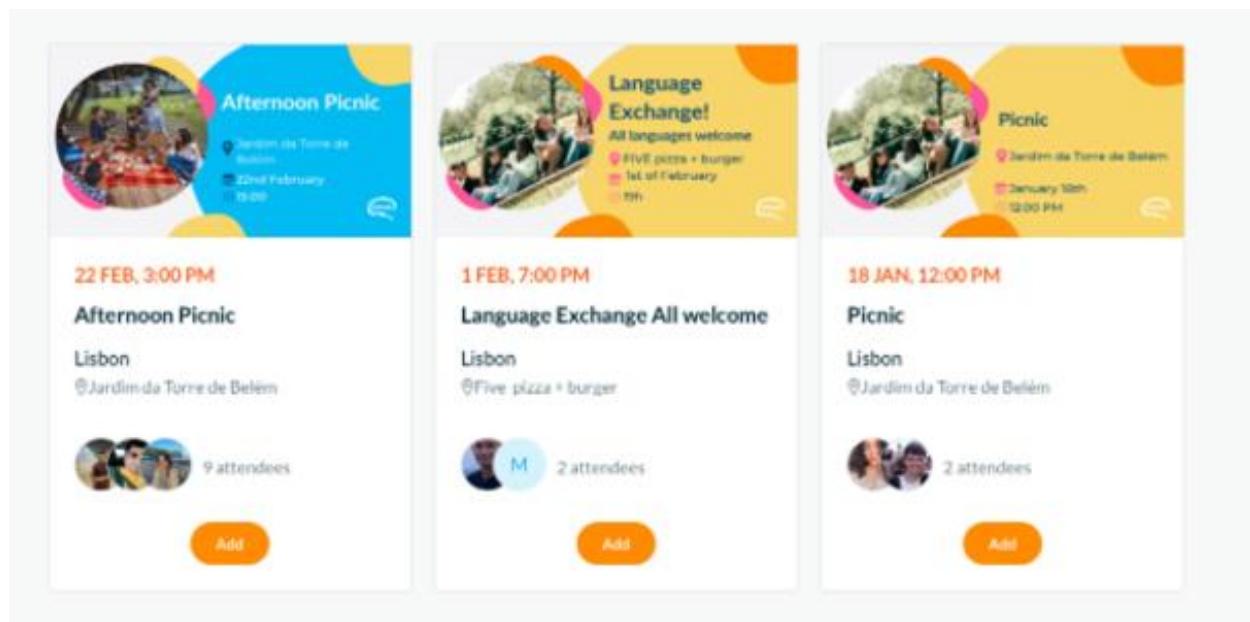
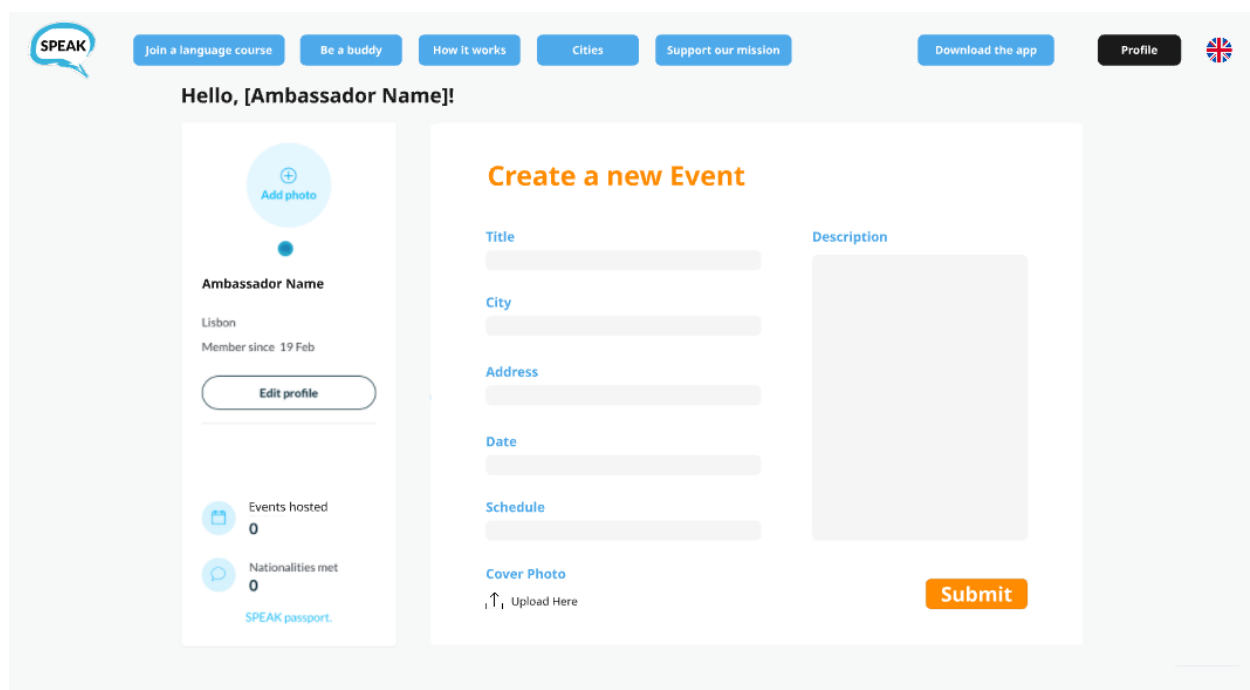


Figure 48: Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard



Lisbon events

Upcoming Events



Language Exchange!
ALL languages welcome
Zenite Bar
10th of May
19:00

10 MAY (IN 2 DAYS), 7:00 PM

Language Exchange - All Welcome

Lisbon
Zenite Bar Galeria

 1 attendee

[Join the Event](#)

Language groups

All groups

 In-person groups

 Online groups

Language:

All languages

Conversational Spanish

Mon, Wed

18:00 - 21:30

Start: 21-04-2025

1 spot left

Conversational English

Tue, Thu

19:30 - 21:00

Start: 22-04-2025

5 spots left

Basic III Portuguese

Mon, Thu

17:00 - 18:30

Start: 12-05-2025

6 spots left

Conversational Portuguese

Mon, Wed

18:00 - 19:30

Start: 12-05-2025

10 spots left

Basic Hausa

Sun, Mon, Fri

12:45 - 14:15

Start: 18-05-2025

12 spots left

Basic I Portuguese

Mon, Tue, Wed

18:00 - 19:30

Start: 19-05-2025

10 spots left

Basic III Spanish

Tue, Fri

18:00 - 19:30

Start: 20-05-2025

12 spots left

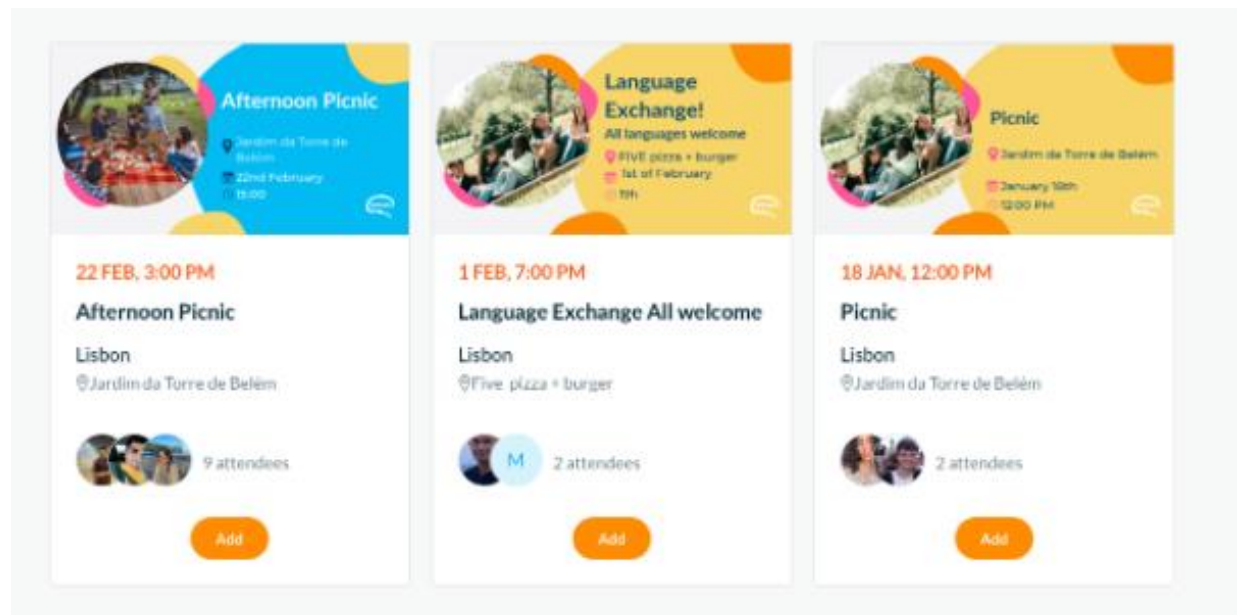
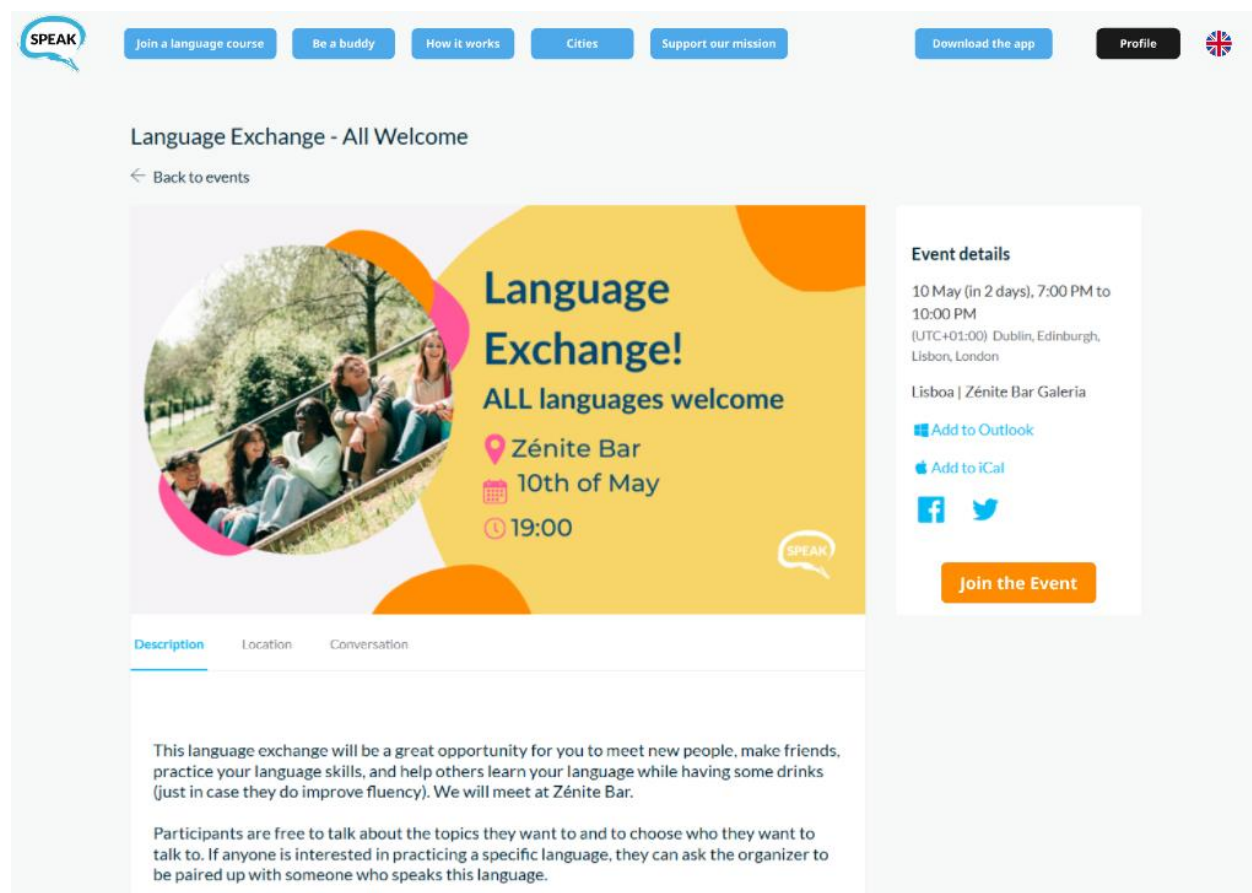


Figure 49: Ambassadors' Personal Dashboard – “Join the Event” Button, Upcoming Event Details



Please join this WhatsApp group, which is the only platform that the organizer can use to contact participants on the day of the event.

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/JA0wcYqNc8j4Z7wyUs1c1G>

The same group will be used in future events.
Join and have fuuun!

Location:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/38%C2%B043'49.9%22N+9%C2%B008'12.4%22W/@38.73054,-9.136777,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m4!3m3!8m2!3d38.73054!4d-9.136777?entry=ttu>

1 people are going.

