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## EFA, Morocco November 2021- March 2022

### Eileen Flinter

1. **Motivation for volunteering** – I have done a placement with P&P which I really enjoyed and got a newsletter from P&P, attended an e-meeting with some lovely people in various parts of the world and thought this was a good way of escaping the dark and miserable days of a second covid winter.
2. I had **no preconceptions** of e-volunteering but the pandemic had made me aware of online teaching – from ex-colleagues still in the game – and learning – as a grandparent of school age girls.
3. I chose Morocco as I have stayed briefly in the High Atlas and am quite interested in North African countries. Dates worked fine for me – see above.
4. The written information was very helpful and following the initial meeting I watched some of the videos about teaching online from previous participants and used the lesson planner one gentleman had devised every week. This gave me a structure which I was glad of, as a real teacher I rarely wrote a full lesson plan – often just one word (not at all sorry, Ofsted) but I quickly realised e-teaching needs to be very closely planned – which was not fun but good discipline for me. From the outset, Dianne was approachable, plain speaking and enthusiastic so she qualifies as most useful of all.  
**Advice** – Every single week I spent far longer on planning than I ever spent professionally.
5. I sent quite a bit of stuff to Baddia, the housemother – worksheets for homework and some resource sheet I had used during the session. Far too many to attach but I will email samples separately. Baddia was equal help and encouragement.
6. By chance I found the British Council English for Kids website with lots of lovely and great stuff – this was around week 4, I highly recommend this material, which can be downloaded easily. By another chance, I found out the day before my last session that the British Council has a Teen section – I found this accidentally on You tube, grrrh – REALLY REALLY Good little role play videos for older students – which my girls were and they had politely endured I can sing a Rainbow and similar little videos aimed at year 1-3 primary kids – sorry!

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7. I bought how to teach online books and worksheets which proved not at all helpful as the activities assumed a level of English and cultural awareness that these girls had not acquired. **Advice** – don't buy them.
8. Quite a bit of the material in books and online – showing clothes, fashion styles, homes and household appliances, locations (eg the beach) and family activities were completely outside the experience of and, sometimes, inappropriate for the girls I was teaching. Of course, many YouTube commentaries were in American accents with a nice big yellow bus taking affluent children to and from school.

**Advice** – Look in Magazines/weekend supplements for pictures showing diversity of people and situations.

9. Jitsi was relatively easy to access and use – I had a 'how to' sheet but, as usual had to try stuff for myself. I discovered early on that in the top right hand corner a little box showed 'Flip' which meant that I could show writing the right way round, but this box never appeared on my iPad when I did a couple of sessions from Spain using that.

I was foxed by the Video playing for several weeks and was scared of using it for fear of messing up the whole session. With the help of another crib sheet and just practising it I did manage eventually and was really sorry I hadn't managed earlier as sometimes the session had seemed like a monologue by me – I was bored, let alone them. I never figured how to delete a saved video and since I messed up and put a couple of useless ones on the list and couldn't add more than five this was a nuisance but I managed to do fairly speedy instant links. Everyone has different abilities with tech and, as I say, Jitsi is OK. I know more than I did at the start.

**Advice** – don't panic, experiment during the week and ask for help.

10. **Successes.** I took on board advice from P&P that the students might vary from session to session – I had a couple of regulars in practice and a couple of drop ins. So I **themed the sessions** and was pleased when I discovered the British Council stuff that the themes mostly overlapped with ones I thought useful (colours, families, weather, numbers etc) and gave me a couple of more ideas (housework!) I had an overall idea of what each of the 12 sessions might cover but **planned each lesson in detail only in the week before delivery**. I started each time with a short revision and ended with a summing up – whenever the technology allowed.

#### **Disappointment and Challenges.**

The bulk of my teaching in the UK was in a college with a majority of ethnic minority (in the UK not East London!) students – mostly from South Asia. I have a good idea of culture and practice, particularly for girls but, constrained by the e part of the project, it was difficult to get the girls to talk at all, let alone freely. They share a computer and I was sitting at my terminal – the latter being not my style anyway. They are lovely and smiley girls, eager to learn but it was difficult to get them to answer a question or even to repeat a phrase or word individually and I failed completely to get them to ask me a question. The **lack of interaction** was frustrating – I would have given a lot for them to be naughty or tell me they didn't understand something. It was too one sided and although I did some things better over time, I'm still not sure what I could have done very differently here. I'd do session one differently – more confidently apart from anything else this time. I'd like to sit in on a good lesson. ( **Note from people and places – the girls are rarely encouraged to question or express an opinion at home – it is an important part of EfA's work to help develop the girls self confidence – and indeed the house mothers tell us regularly that the more the girls interact with volunteers the more confident they become**)

There was only one session where **the WIFI connection** was really erratic. It was impossible to have any continuity of sound or vision. The girls sat patiently and stoically, Baddia flicked switches – I think I saw more of her than them that day until I finally cracked – to their amusement- and said we'd leave it for the day. I emailed Baddia later and sent some work for them – I think it was weather related.

As a person who has never had to teach actual English, a huge disappointment I **ought** to mention **though** is that it's hard **enough** to **cough** and then think it all **through** to what a solution **could look** like.

In the event, I ducked this challenge, ignored explanations of spelling versus pronunciation and just tackled whole words whilst envying the Spanish.

## Conclusion

For me, this was a positive experience and more challenging than I anticipated in terms of time and effort. I really liked the girls who, I am sure are far from shy in real life and the communication with Baddia by what's app and emails was fun and encouraging. I did OK – with room for improvement. There was a lot of learning on the job – about the audience, the methodology, the resources, the IT capabilities and its shortcomings, thanks to Dianne for ongoing help here. As with most things, and all teaching, a sense of proportion and humour is helpful as is the medic's motto – first, do no harm. I know more than I did about all the above – especially, I am now aware of the existence of some more unknown unknowns.

P&P have done well and served both their markets in difficult times, staying ahead of the game, as usual. Let's hope for less of the difficult times, sometime soon – for now, good luck with the next foreseeable challenge which I'm sure you are all busy working on even now.

Thanks.

Eileen Flinter  
March 2022

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