Mike: it’s a pilot programs for almost a year where we connect people from refugee backrounds with volunteers.

It’s through whatsapp, we connect them to a partner and play a game.

They only send one or two messages a day.

They do an activity for a few weeks then they get connected to another volunteer.

For another partner for another activity that’s the loop part of chat loop.

We have 2 games, chat for ten, choose a topic and chat for 10 turns.

The other is 20 questions.

Simple game but a really fun and good way to practice a language.

In the future we want to add new game.

Aslam: So how to you do this all.

Mike: It’s all through whatsapp. In the future we’ll build an app to connect everyone but for now it in whatsapp.

Jonathan: How do you find volunteers?

Mike: Thy’re just good people, they’re people with compassion. They’re motivated my religion, someone who loves god and loves people. Compassionate people.

What chatloop does is find people who have that compassion who don’t have that time. It finds a way to connect people.

Jonathan: how many volunteers?

Mike: 47 trained volunteers over Australia and the world.

I went to the uq volunteers facebook page, then I set up a webpage to find more people.

I trained them through a chatbot on facebook messenger, I was able to automate the training.

Jonathan: Why did you choose games? Why only 5 minutes a day?

Mike: Well the 5 minutes is because they only send 1 or 2 messages a day. They can send more if they want too. But they idea is its asynchronous conversation because people dont have the logistics. Just send when you have a spare moment. It gets rid of all those scheduling problems.

Meg: Have you got anything back from the users.

Mike: there’s verbal feedback, and there’s watching their behavior.

The whole point of this is trying to develop a habit of using a little bit of English every day.

Learning a language is like fitness is something that you should do a bit of every day not all in one hit.

There’s a relation between a persons proficiency and how much they want to communicate, advanced speakers want to chat more beginners have a harder time.

Low level learners can get overwhelmed.

Meg: hwo do you know what the language level the refugees are?

Mike: we give them a ranking between 1 and 3. It’s difficult to do properly but we take a ballpark approach.

Aslam: How to you rate them?

Mike: I talk to them and ball park it personally. I take them through that process.

Jon: Do the refugees have any other exposure to English?

Mike: Yeah, it’s not designed to be a complete solution to language learning. A lot of them do other courses in English.

The use chatloop to compliment that learning. They learn the theory in class and they use chatloop to implement that.

Aslam: How long to these interactions last?

Mike: Depends how much they talk, can range from an hour to 2 weeks.

We pair them up for the duration an a single activity and that activities duration depends on their motivation.

Aslam: Do people learn better when you talk to someone? But you chosen the text approact.

Mike: We send a billion texts a day, it’s a major form of communication, if youre learning a language you absolutely need to learn how to write in that language.

There is a focus on speaking but there’s also reading, listening and writing. Someone should be competent at all those.

The text and audio messages act as a stepping stone to speaking flutently.

Plus text is convenient, for some people it’s that or nothing. It’s a lot harder to find people to speak with compared to text with.

What you need to be careful of is a thing called the silent period where…

To learn a language you need to be exposed to that language a lot. You need the be exposed to the language and comprehending it. It’s about pouring comprehensible input over the person and letting the brain do what it does best.

Alsam: We need to look at methods to allow users to keep absorbing the language.

Mike: Learners don’t necessarily know about learning and want to try talking right away. It depends what they want.

Just need to make sure that what speakers are doing is comprehensible.