



Poikilingo believes that cracking the social code is as important as vocabulary and pronunciation | Photo source Poikilingo

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## A LANGUAGE LEARNING APP HELPS MIGRANT CHILDREN NAVIGATE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

 EDUCATION

### The app teaches children social and cultural awareness in addition to language skills – helping them to fit in

**Spotted:** Moving to a new country can be disruptive for children. And language is not the only barrier they face. Beyond learning how to speak, read, and understand, young migrants and refugees must navigate social nuances and overcome clashes between their own culture and the culture of their new home. It's important that children are supported through this process – particularly during their all-important formative years. But doing so can be difficult, especially if those around the child are equally grappling with a new environment.

Danish startup Poikilingo addresses this problem with a playful language learning app that focuses on the cultural aspects of the language being learned. Underpinning the app's learning programme is an understanding that 'cracking the social code is as important as learning vocabulary and pronunciation'.

The Poikilingo app provides a customised learning plan that combines different educational activities such as songs, games, and videos. But the most important and unique features of the app are based around a series of animated stories where an avatar of the child navigates situations where they experience a culture clash. This teaches them the skills needed to fit in with their new classmates and fosters a feeling of belonging.

Inclusiveness is a core principle for Poikilingo. The app is highly personalised and adapts the level of difficulty so children can learn at their own pace. This is particularly important for children with special

educational needs. All the content for the app is generated by educational experts and aligned with global frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Practical skills such as financial literacy are also built-in in-line with the recommendations of the World Economic Forum.

At Springwise, we have spotted numerous ed-tech innovations. These include an app that lets students [upload maths problems through their phone](#), and a [mobile-first education platform](#).

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## Takeaway:

Poikilingo is based in Denmark, a country that has a long history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. Denmark was the first country to join the UN Refugee Convention in 1951 and, in 2015, a [peak of more than 21,000 asylum-seekers](#) arrived in the country. Denmark has traditionally been one of Europe's strongest supporters of refugees according to the United Nations – although the issue has become more divisive in recent years. Europe has seen an influx of refugees from countries such as Libya and Syria during the last decade. [According to Unicef](#), between January and August 2021, an estimated 97,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe, a 95 per cent increase compared to the previous year. Of these, 25,000 were children. Educational solutions like Poikilingo are crucial for integrating these children into society, giving them the best life opportunities.