

2020-1-DE02-KA227-ADU-008006



Creative tools for language learning



Co-funded by
the European Union

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Introduction

The main awareness built in the framework of the Creative FEM-Power project, aimed at intensifying the dialogue with female migrants through creative methods, is that mastering the host country language and accessing its labour market are two key steps of the integration process for all migrants. The curriculum “**Creative tools for language learning**” deals with the first challenge and is meant to introduce **new learning methods** to help migrant women gaining awareness of their own abilities and strengths.

The workshop "Language learning with creative methods" is aimed at migrant women who have already achieved the first language skills of the host country, at least A2 or higher. Participation in the workshop should lead the women to increase their motivation and to acquire further language skills. The special circumstances of migrant women often lead them not to complete or drop out of language courses they have started. This course is also intended to strengthen their personalities and to give them the space to focus on their own person within the workshop. This workshop should serve to strengthen the motivation to learn.

Through the use of creative methods, another technique is introduced to open up to the new linguistic space.

The fact that we have spread a wide range of creative methods, from the theatrical, musical area, as well as the visual arts, gives everyone the opportunity to find a suitable form for themselves.

Through this workshop, the women can become clear about prerequisites they bring with them, try out their communication skills with the other group members and trainers, and draw new ideas on how to grow into the new language space.

This curriculum is divided in four main parts:

1. The description of the workshop and its aims;
2. A brief presentation of participants' prerequisites;
3. The learning outcomes to be achieved;
4. A detailed description of each of the 10 activities composing the workshop.

The “Curriculum” is meant to describe the contents and the objectives of the workshop activities, whereas a detailed explanation of their practical development and implementation can be found in the “**Compendium of methods**”.

Description and aims of the workshop

The workshop “**Creative tools for language learning**” is a **15-hour course**, structured in **20 didactic units**, lasting **45 minutes each**. The target audience of this workshop are migrant women, more specifically migrant women in working-age, with a sufficient knowledge of the language of the country in which the workshop is held (for more details, see the section about the prerequisites).

The optimal location to develop the workshop is a room or a classroom, providing furniture to sit down together, one table or more, as well as some additional empty space to do standing-up activities or divide in groups. Eventually, it may also require equipment to show a presentation, such as a projector, speakers, and sockets. The materials necessary for the workshop are sheets of paper, pencils/pens, a camera to record videos, and a computer.

The optimal number of participants is 10-12 women. To be able to conduct the workshop, trainers should divide the participants in small groups, as homogeneous as possible for what concerns the knowledge of the language of the host country.

The goal of the WS "Creative language learning" is to motivate the participating women to an active use of language by means of creative methods and to use the already learned level with joy. With creative methods, the fear of using the language and the fear of making mistakes should be taken away from the participants. The passive knowledge of the language is to be awakened, so to speak, with the various creative approaches we used.

In this workshop we offer exercises that are discussed and experienced within the group, creative methods that require a lot of self-reflection, but also partner exercises in which the use of the new language is the tool to find dialogues in a playful form, for example in role-playing.

Participant prerequisites

We developed this workshop in accordance with the themes and objectives of the project with the focus to strengthen the willingness to move on in the new language and improve the skills. The participants should possess **three main prerequisites** to be able to take part in the activities:

- 1- They should be women.
- 2- They should have a migration background.
- 3- They should have a knowledge of the welcoming countries language (depending on where the course is held) reaching minimum a A2 level (CEFR levels, see below).

According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages, a person reaching the A2 level of language knowledge can:

- Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).

- Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
- Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

The characteristics of the CEFR levels can be consulted at:

<https://www.eui.eu/documents/servicesadmin/languagecentre/cef.pdf>

It is important to mention that this curriculum can be adapted to different groups of participants. Women with a better knowledge of the language can go into more advanced ways of working with the creative tools, for example much more intensive role-plays.

Tips for the trainers

As a trainer, if you notice that the language knowledge of the participants is lower than requested or expected, you can find alternative strategies and means to facilitate communication and learning. For instance, nonverbal communication, such as communication through images, videos, and sounds, is notably a powerful and universal tool to understand each other when verbal communication encounters obstacles or is insufficient to convey a message. It is always possible to support the various parts of your course with slides or visual contents to enable all participants to gather the main points, even if they do not understand the verbal explanation completely.

Learning outcomes

The objective of this workshop is to produce an impact on participants in terms of self-awareness and knowledge. Indeed, the course aims at generating different **learning outcomes**, which are:

- ✓ Learn new vocabulary connected to language learning and motivation
- ✓ Will be able to tell a personal story from their lives
- ✓ Learn about other participants' backstories
- ✓ Use and practice new words
- ✓ Get a vocabulary book and keep it in the future
- ✓ Learn to express wishes and expectations for the future
- ✓ Empathize with other people by taking on a new role and experience new perspectives
- ✓ Tell parts of their own private life and use new vocabulary in realistic scenarios
- ✓ Express feelings through words using different materials
- ✓ Review own experiences through communication with others and find similarities and differences
- ✓ Learn to circumscribe words, express themselves when certain vocabulary is missing

Workshop schedule

	Contents	Activity	Didactic units
Introduction to the workshop	Presentation of the Project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The activities - Expected results - Expectation of participants - Assessment questionnaire 	presentation with Q&A discussion questionnaire stretching	2
Icebreaking	Engage participants with the goal to feel more comfortable → group feeling	Form sentences Chain of associations	2
Vocabulary book	Create my own vocabulary book, write down new words	Creative writing	2
Find the word	Topics on signs can be chosen or written to express inner self	Associative Story telling	1
Letter to myself	Writing to yourself in the future with expectations for the next year	Self reflection Creative writing	2
Role play	Family situation: creating a script and a description for the roles	Theatrical improvisation	4
Icebreaking games	Relaxing and energizing exercises	Meditation Vocal training (using voice)	1
Word Puzzle	Creating pictures with words and different materials and assembling these to create one big picture	Arts and craft	3
Activity Game	Cards with different expressions that should be explained without using the word	The game activity	2
Feedback	Participants reflect and give feedback	Reflection / expression Green and red cards	1
Total units			20

Activity 1: Introduction to the Workshop

Description

In this unit, the workshop content and the exercises will be explained as well as the expected outcomes. The participants can ask questions and share their expectations. The participants also answer the questionnaire.

Contents

This exercise is designed to help the participants the content of this workshop by listening to a presentation from the adult educators. Then, they can ask questions and share their expectations and feelings about the upcoming workshop.

- What do I want to learn in this workshop?
- What do I expect from the trainers and from the other participants?
- How do I feel about the upcoming activities?

During this activity, the participants will learn what to expect from this workshop. They will learn new vocabulary connected to language learning and motivation. They also interact with each other, ask questions and fill out a questionnaire and learn how to express their expectations.

Tips for the trainers

Prepare a short presentation about the content and schedule of the course (optional: visual aids, e.g. PowerPoint, Poster etc.). Allow the participants to ask questions. If no questions are asked, motivate them to share their thoughts on the workshop and allow them to communicate with each other.

Activity 2: Icebreaking Game

Description

Adults learn best and are most receptive when they are comfortable with the people around them. An icebreaking game helps reducing tension and encourages participation in a group.

The aim of the icebreaking games “Form sentences” and “Chain of associations” is to create a relaxed and positive atmosphere in the group.

The group feeling is strengthened, at the same time the participants are challenged to use their previous language skills and their own vocabulary.

Contents

During the exercise the participants come together in a circle. A word is named and as spontaneously as possible the participants name the word they associate with the previous one.

In the exercise form sentences, a sentence is formed together. One participant names a word and in turn each participant adds another word until a complete sentence has been formed.

During this exercises the participants

- Learn to use new words
- have to spontaneously find the right word in the new language

Tips for the trainers

To make it easier to get started, the trainers can suggest a topic on which words should be found/sentences formed

Each participant should name at least one word

Depending on the time, the sentences formed can also be written down and thus visualised again.

Activity 3: Vocabulary book

Description

Using all the new words the participants have learned during the workshops they create their own vocabulary book. This way they can rehearse the words when they're back at home, on the train or anywhere else.

The vocabulary book can also be used in the future, for language learning courses or at home.

Contents

The participants think about what they have learned in the last exercises. They write down all the words that were new to them and talk to the adult educators and the other participants to find additional important words.

Do they have a particular field or area where they want to learn new words or sentences? Do they already know some sayings or idioms in their country's language that they can share with the others? Which words do they think are especially important?

After writing their own vocabulary book, the participants will be able to use and practice new words. Hopefully they will keep the vocabulary book also in the future.

Tips for the trainers

Provide the participants with a small vocabulary book and a pen. Discuss words that everybody learned during the workshops. Provide them with new words and explanations. Ask them if they want to know words in a specific area or field.

Activity 4: Find the word

Description

Part self-expression, part language-learning, “find the word” explores the inner world through associative storytelling. Keywords are written on signs and can be chosen or added to. Using 1-3 of these keywords, the participants are encouraged to tell a story about themselves or their life, to express their inner self.

Contents

The participants pick 1-3 signs/keywords that they associate with their own life or come up with a keyword of their own that they personally ascribe meaning to.

They explain why they chose these particular words or come up with a personal story using this keyword.

The participants use words to express themselves and share their inner selves.

After the activity, participants will be able to tell a personal story from their lives. They have learned about associative meaning of the keywords and about other participant`s backstories.

Tips for the trainers

Prepare several pieces of paper with keywords. These could be words like “home”, “war”, “journey”, “family” etc. Spread these on a table (or the floor), as well as some additional sheets of paper and pens for participants to add their own keywords. Ask participants to pick 1-3 words that relate to their lives. Encourage participants to discuss keywords amongst each other and with trainers (in terms of meaning/ translations). Ask participants why they picked these particular words, how they relate to them or what meaning the words have for them. Encourage discussion!

Activity 5: Letter to myself

Description

In “Letter to myself” the participants write down their expectations and wishes for the future – be it in terms of work, family, housing, relationships.

The participants will receive their letters at the end of the workshops so that they can re-read them in the future and see how things developed.

Contents

This exercise serves to make the participants reflect on where they stand in life and which direction(s) they want to take in the future. E.g., they think about work – do they currently work or do they want to work in the future? Where would they like to work?

Or; what is their family situation like? Are there aspects that they would want to be different?

In which city are they currently living – do they think they will move elsewhere in the future? Etc.

Participants learn to express wishes and expectations for the future.

Tips for the trainers

Provide pen and paper for each participant and explain the exercise. After everyone is done writing, ask if anyone would like to share their dreams and expectations.

Activity 6: Icebreaking game

Description

Meditation and Vocal training (using the voice)

Contents

The participants sit or lie down comfortably, the light is dimmed. A trainer tells a story to help the participants dream and relax.

During the vocal training, the participants play with their voices. Words and sentences are expressed in different pitches and emotions, e.g. loud, soft, happy, angry, sad, etc.

In this exercise the participants

- Learn to use their voice in different ways
- Express emotions and feelings

Tips for the trainers

Meditation

A pleasant atmosphere should be created (dimmed light, everyone makes themselves comfortable, standing or lying down).

Vocal training

The trainers can give an example so that the participants know how loud or soft to speak.

Activity 7: Role play

Description

The roleplay is designed to encourage interaction, vocabulary learning and reduce communication barriers.

At first, a specific scene with role descriptions will be worked out. The participants and the trainers will act the scene out. Each time, the participants take on a new role.

Contents

Before the actual role play, a script will be worked out. The script includes a description of the story line, a role description for each person and maybe some words and sentences that can be used. The participants can make themselves familiar with the script and ask questions.

The scene described in the script will be played out by all the participants (and the adult educators). After one round, they can share their thoughts or ask for vocabulary that they did not know and/or wanted to use. Afterwards, roles are switched and the scene will be acted out again. This process is repeated a few times.

The participants should be creative and try to come up with new ways to express their feelings in each role. They should help the other participants if they have issues with finding a word. The participants should try to interact with the others in order to create a vivid and authentic play.

At the end participants will be able to empathize with other people by taking on a new role and experience new perspectives. They tell parts of their own private life and use new vocabulary in realistic scenarios. They also interact with others based on a written script and adhere to role descriptions.

Tips for the trainers

Ideas for possible scenes:

- Argument within a family because the kids are playing video games instead of listening
- Celebration between friends because one of them successfully finished school

Activity 8: Word puzzle

Description

During this exercise, the participants use words to create a part of a bigger picture (e.g. part of the European map). To create this picture, they can use various tools, pencils and materials.

The activity helps the participants to play with different words, understand the meaning and show their personal perspective on specific words or phrases.

Contents

This exercise is designed to understand the meaning of certain words and gives the participants an opportunity to review significant events in their life and express their feelings in an artistic and creative way.

They should not be shy. They can use all the tools available, find inspiration from other participants and just be creative. Words should be used that they have a strong connection with (e.g. the words from “Find a word”). They discuss their experiences and what they have learned from them with the other participants.

After the word puzzle, the participants will be able to express feelings through words using different materials and review own experiences through communication with others and find similarities and differences.

Tips for the trainers

Show the participants the materials and tools and explain them in detail, so the participants are able to use all of them. Encourage them to use all the tools and be creative.

Ask participants if they want to discuss their words and the experiences behind it in the group or if they prefer to do so individually.

Activity 9: Activity game

Description

For this game participants discreetly pick a word-card and try to explain this word to the others without saying it. The intention is to come up with synonyms as well as associate meaning to different vocabulary. The rest of the group has to guess the word on the card.

Contents

One person at a time picks a card (without showing the others). Now she has to explain the word on the card, without saying that exact word! They should try to be creative and think of words that are similar or describe situations where they might use this word normally.

Everyone else must now try to guess what the word on the card is.

Participants will have expanded and practiced their vocabulary by having to come up with synonyms. They learned to circumscribe words and express themselves when certain vocabulary is missing.

Tips for the trainers

Prepare a stack of small cards (or sheets of paper) with 1 word on each. If participants struggle to describe word, aid by asking questions about it;

e.g.

- is your word an object? Where can I find it? What colour? Etc.
- Is it something you do? When do you do it?
- Does it describe an object/ something that you do?

Activity 10: Feedback

Description

During this last exercise, the participants can give feedback to the trainers and give their opinion on the whole workshop.

To add some structure, everyone can use green and red cards to write some aspects down. Finally, the participants can explain their views and give feedback.

Contents

The participants and trainers come together in a round.

Everyone reflects on the workshop again, briefly telling what they liked or didn't like so much.

Finally, all participants complete a final questionnaire.