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TRAINING FOR A TRANSCULTURAL WORLD
2012, Volume 5

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the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

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Foreword

This issue asked for contributions focussing on research, models, strategies, and also practical exercises which either break new ground on classic linguacultural divides, or are able to reach beyond static, stereotypical 'cultural differences' and make some headway in improving communication and mutual understanding in an increasingly transcultural and virtual world. As we had such a response, boosted through the active contribution of SIETAR Europe papers given at Krakow "Interculturalism Ahead: Transition to a Virtual World?" (September 2011), instead of our usual 5-6 papers we have 10 but, sadly perhaps, no interview this year.

The first papers in this issue offer specific frameworks or models, all of which move us on from the static cultural-difference models, and chart how the transcultural turn is developing; while those on university training and translation give us a stark reality check. Though there is some light, and much investment in training, especially through foreign study, the picture regarding student perception of the training and of 'the Other', along with actual professional translation highlights the fact that there is still some way to go before we can talk of a real 'transcultural turn' in practice.

We hear much about EU supported initiatives in education and training. In particular there is FREPA a Council of Europe 'Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures' (Daryai-Hansen & Schröder-Sura) and INCA, the "Intercultural Competence Assessment" suite of tools (Cano). From the business world we have a fusion of cultural dimensions with the Reiss Life motives (Konigorski), rhyzomatic (rather than tree diagram thinking) embodied in the analogy with the Mobius strip (Hale); WorldWork's 'International Profiler' (IP) and International Preference indicator' (IPI) (Ewington & Hill) along with a more communication focussed enhancement (Spencer-Oatey and Stadler).

Areas of perception of cultural difference include a German-American study of Facebook (Reeves), the intercultural benefits of EU supported 'Applied Language Europe' (ALE) European university study exchange

(Morón-Martín) and the 'Mobility in Higher Education' project (Cano). With regard specifically to translation and transculturality there is a discussion on the use of corpora and travel insurance texts (Peruzzo and Durán-Muñoz) and a case study on the translation of film titles.

David Katan
Cinzia Spinzi

FREPA –
A Set of Instruments for the Development of
Plurilingual and Inter-/Transcultural Competences

Petra Daryai-Hansen and *Anna Schröder-Sura*

Abstract

The article will present a description and instructions for use of a set of tools that seeks to facilitate learners' continuous development and strengthen plurilingual and inter-/transcultural competences. These tools have been developed within the research project Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA), which has been supported since 2004 by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages. The FREPA is a complement to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio. The tools consist of (a) a comprehensive list of descriptors operationalising plurilingual and intercultural competences in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills, (b) a database of teaching material categorised by the FREPA descriptors and (c) a training kit for users. The article introduces the context of the FREPA project and defines the concept of pluralistic approaches. The FREPA tools will be presented by answering the question as to how the FREPA tools can been used to describe and develop transcultural competences. Finally, the recent perspectives of the FREPA project will be outlined.

1. Introduction

In an increasingly transcultural and multilingual world, the development of plurilingual and inter-/transcultural competences is one of the key educational issues requiring tools for operationalisation and teaching material in the classroom. Education both reflects society and influences its development. Cultural and language encounters characterised by complexity and hybridisation processes are subject to hierarchisations, i.e. inclusive and exclusive practices that are expressed through choices (e.g. the choice between the different varieties of language one has access to,

while speaking to a friend) and representations (e.g. the negative or positive representation of cultural and linguistic hybridity) (cf. Daryai-Hansen 2010, Risager 2012). The cultural and language hierarchisations that are predominant in a society are, in Bourdieu & Passeron's (1970) terminology, produced and reproduced in the educational system. At the same time, the school system – being the key facilitator of learning – has an important role in changing existent practices (cf. Wodak 1997, Bourdieu 1991). By developing learners plurilingual and intercultural competences, the school system can help the learners to critically reflect the existent hierarchisations and to interact in situations of cultural and language contact.

This article will demonstrate how school education can contribute to preparing learners for this complex world and furthermore how the educational system can relate to the multilingual and transcultural context of the learners.

We will present a set of tools developed within the research project *A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA)[1], which has been supported since 2004 by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages. The tools consist of

(a) a comprehensive list of descriptors operationalising (i.e. defining to make operable) plurilingual and intercultural competences in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills,

(b) a database of recommended teaching materials for all levels of learning categorised by the descriptors and

(c) a training kit for users.

All these instruments and materials are available in English and French, and partially in German and Spanish, on the project website.[2] *FREPA*'s target groups are stakeholders in the educational field, i.e. teachers of languages or other subjects, teacher trainers, decision-makers, curriculum designers and textbook writers.

The article introduces the context of the *FREPA* project and defines the concept of pluralistic approaches. The tools will be presented by looking at the example of how to describe and develop transcultural competences. Finally, an outline is given of the recent perspectives of the *FREPA* project.

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[1] In French: Le CARAP – Un *Cadre de Référence pour les Approches Plurielles des Langues et des Cultures*, in German: REPA – Ein *Referenzrahmen für plurale Ansätze zu Sprachen und Kulturen*.
[2] See: http://carap.ecml.at/

2. Contextualisation

The *FREPA* project is in keeping with the overall vision of languages in education and languages for education which the Council of Europe seeks to promote. The first *FREPA* project was part of The European Centre for Modern Languages' (ECML) second medium term programme from 2004 to 2007. The programme addressed the subject of social cohesion and invited the applicants to make a contribution to "a major paradigmatic change" (ECML 2004) embodying "the move towards an overall concept of language education, integrating the teaching and learning of all languages in order to make use of potential synergies" (ibid.).

This paradigm shift is a logical consequence of the way in which plurilingual and intercultural competence is represented by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001, henceforth referred to as CEFR) and is a focus of recent European language policies (cf. Council of Europe 2007, 2010). The first *FREPA* project specified in detail the notion of plurilingual and intercultural competences that was brought forward by the CEFR, developing a list of descriptors considered necessary within the perspective of plurilingual and intercultural education. The *FREPA* project answers the central question in the field of how to operationalise and develop plurilingual and intercultural competences (cf. Byram 1997, Dervin 2010). It offers descriptors to describe these competences, to design teaching materials, to define learning objectives and to develop curricula within the field of plurilingual and intercultural pedagogics.

Today, this reference framework is among the instruments proposed by the Council of Europe on the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*[3] and has been referred to as one of the "most notable" (Lenz & Berthele 2010: 10) "attempts to further dissect and structure intercultural competence" (ibid.). The other *FREPA* tools were developed based on the reference framework in the second *FREPA* project from 2008 to 2011.

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[3] See: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/langeduc/LE_PlatformIntro_en.asp

3. Pluralistic approaches

In contrast to singular approaches, which take account of only one language or a particular culture, the concept of *pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* refers to didactic approaches that use learning/teaching activities involving several (i.e. more than one) language varieties or cultures (Candelier et al. 2007: 7). This conception relies in part on psycholinguistic research into language acquisition in recent decades (cf. Herdina & Jessner 2002), which focus on languages as being part of *one* system (and not of many distinct systems) and promote a 'wholistic' conception of plurilingual competence. According to Herdina & Jessner (2002: 151), 'wholistic' refers to the assumption that a given phenomenon has to be considered as a whole, while 'holistic' – used in other publications – refers to specific theoretical claims about the nature of the whole (for instance that the whole owns properties which its parts cannot be shown to own).

This means that pluralistic approaches reject a 'compartmentalised' view of an individual's linguistic and cultural competence. In this, they follow the way in which plurilingual and intercultural competence is represented by the CEFR. This competence is, as the CEFR points out, not "a collection of distinct and separate competences" (CEFR 2001: 168), but a plurilingual and pluricultural competence encompassing the full range of the languages available to him/her" (ibid.), more precisely: a dynamically evolving competence that includes both all language varieties and (trans)cultural varieties. Fully in line with the consequence drawn from this by the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (Council of Europe 2007: 73), pluralistic approaches consequently take into account all the existing competences developed by the learners within or outside the educational environment, and value *all* cultures and languages, focussing on those which – according to the objectives set by the Council of Europe (2010) – should be integrated in the school context: the language(s) of schooling, regional, minority and migration languages, modern and classic foreign languages. In considering this whole range of competences, pluralistic approaches give cultural and linguistic diversity a proper status in the psychosocial and cognitive processes of teaching/learning (cf. Martinez & Schröder-Sura 2011).

In this way, the *FREPA* represents an essential complement to the current European language policy instruments, and especially to the CEFR and the European Language Portfolios, which to date have primarily

juxtaposed languages, i.e. dealing with them separately, in spite of their own key principle of *plurilingual and intercultural competence* (cf. Candelier, Daryai-Hansen & Schröder-Sura forthcoming).

Today, there are at least four, more or less established pluralistic approaches in the educational field:

1. *The intercultural approach* (cf. Byram 2003), aiming to develop learners "as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity" (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002: 9f) and "to prepare learners for interaction with people from other cultures" (ibid.).

2. *Awakening to languages,* closely linked to the *Language Awareness* movement initiated by E. Hawkins (e.g. 1984), is characterized by the fact that the learning activities are concerned with languages which generally are not intended to be taught at school (cf. Candelier 2003).

3. *Intercomprehension between related languages* deals with several languages from the same linguistic family (Romance, Germanic, Slavic languages, etc.) which are often studied simultaneously. These can be either languages related to the learner's mother tongue, the language of schooling or a language already learnt. Intercomprehensive approaches focus systematically on receptive skills (cf. among others Blanche-Benveniste et al. 1997, Dabène 2002; Meißner et al. 2004). Intercomprehension can also function as a strategy for language awareness-raising and the development of learning competence (cf. Meißner 2011).

4. *The integrated didactic approach* aims to establish links between a limited number of languages which are taught within the school curriculum. The goal is to use the language of schooling to facilitate access to a first foreign language, the experience of which provides a basis and a support to learning a second and third language. But also the support is mutual and can go in both directions (Roulet 1980). Projects such as 'German after English' (Hufeisen and Neuner 2004) explore this idea in the context of *tertiary language learning.*

These approaches to languages and cultures are based on the same principles: they seek, with specific goals in mind, to establish links between a number of different languages and cultures through pedagogical activities. These links are frequently inseparable from each other. *The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* has synthesised the theoretical perspectives offered by these approaches and

has developed a reference framework incorporating the knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be developed by the four pluralistic approaches. For a presentation of the descriptors developed through the systematic analysis of around a hundred publications in the field see: Candelier et al. 2007, forthcoming, Candelier & De Pietro 2011. The database includes teaching materials from the four approaches, which can be found through the database's search function.

4. FREPA – Competences and Resources

The notion of competence carries many different meanings and is used in a great variety of contexts, often quite vaguely. In order to develop the *FREPA*, an operational, clear and coherent concept was needed. Competences were defined as "units of a certain complexity, implicating the whole of the individual and linked to socially relevant tasks in which they are activated; in these situations they signify the mobilisation of different resources which may be internal (coming under knowledge, skills or attitudes) or external (the use of a dictionary, resorting to a mediator …)" (Candelier et al. forthcoming: 12). The complex and situation-specific nature of competences means that they cannot be described independently of the tasks and situations within which they are activated. By contrast, the variety of resources the competences call upon are different for each task and each situation. In this respect they can be at least partly decontextualised, isolated, described and listed. They can also be defined in terms of acquisition and they can be taught and thus developed through teaching activities. These resources are presented in the *FREPA* in the form of descriptors. The difference between competence and resources can be illustrated by an example, concretising at the same time how the descriptors are designed.

In a transcultural, virtual world, it is necessary to develop the competence to manage linguistic and cultural communication in different linguistic and cultural contexts. How can this be operationalised? Let us take the example of three girls, all university students with an immigrant background, living in Denmark, speaking Danish as their first language, and using the linguistic features of the other languages to which they have access. This example is mentioned in Jørgensen et al. (2011), which analyses language use among adolescents in *super-diverse societies*. In their

interaction on Facebook, the girls use a variety of linguistic and cultural features:

> Ayhan 15:20: gracias muchas gracias!! jeg wenter shpæændt gardash ;-)) love youuu… (Jørgensen et al. 2001: 24)

Ayhan, for instance, uses emoticons, English, three words in Spanish and features reflecting – in the authors' terminology – "young Copenhagen speech" (ibid.) ("jeg wenter shpæændt"/I am waiting excitedly). In addition, she chooses the word *gardash*, which according to Jørgensen et al. is a version corruption of the Turkish word 'kardeş' meaning 'sibling', used among young speakers in Denmark meaning 'friend' (ibid., 24). The authors point out that this example shows that the idea of distinct languages is an abstraction: "languages […] are sociocultural or ideological constructions which match real-life use of language poorly" (ibid., 22).

The competence to manage the linguistic and cultural communication in this specific situation requires the activation of several resources in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills by those involved in the interaction. These resources can be described using the FREPA descriptors, for instance:

Knowledge:

| K 12.4	Knows that different cultures are continuously in contact in our immediate environment
K 14.3	Knows that one can have a multiple / plural / composite identity
K 14.6	Knows that one's own cultural identity may be complex (due to personal, family, national history …)

Attitudes:

A-6.2	Valuing [appreciating] linguistic / cultural contacts
A-11.3.3	Taking a view of languages as dynamic/evolutive/hybrid (as opposed to the notion of the "purity of language")
A-16.2.2	Accepting a bi/plurilingual / bi/pluricultural identity
A-16.2.3	Considering that a bi/plurilingual / bi/pluricultural identity is an asset

Skills:

S 6.5	Can activate bilingual or plurilingual communication in relevant situations
S 6.5.1	Can vary / alternate languages / linguistic codes / modes of communication
S 6.5.2	Can produce a text in which registers / varieties / languages alternate functionally (when the situation allows it)

Resources which are mobilised by a specific competence will depend on the context and task, and will vary according to the composition of the participants. Ayhan, for example, would more than likely have to activate other resources and use other linguistic and cultural features as soon as a new participant entered the group.

In a classroom, teachers can work with such resources by assigning different tasks to the learners, for instance using *FREPA* teaching materials that focus on the complexity and dynamic of cultural identity and reflect on a pluricultural identity as an asset. By this means, teaching will contribute to the development of competences via the resources, i.e. the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills they activate (cf. De Pietro & Lörincz 2011: 51). Furthermore, the *FREPA* descriptors can be used to formulate learning objectives, for instance the objective that pupils – where the competence already is latent – learn to "activate bilingual or plurilingual communication in relevant situations" (descriptor S 6.5). The *FREPA* descriptors are also available as *FREPA - Tables of descriptors across the curriculum*. This online graphical presentation with hypertext situates resources along the learner's curriculum. The user can see at what stage of the educational process the development of the resources and their sub-categories is recommended.
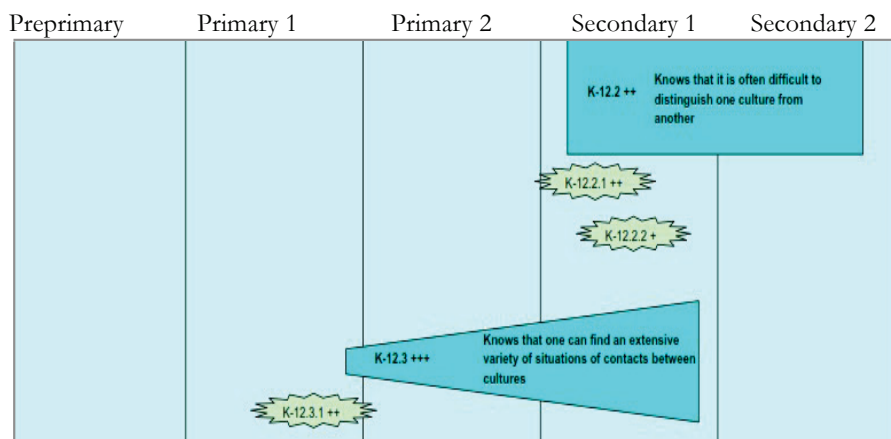
5. FREPA – Online teaching materials

The *FREPA* project provides a database of teaching materials in several languages for putting the development of these resources into practice. There are activities emanating from the four pluralistic approaches and across the curriculum areas for the different levels of the curriculum from Pre-primary to beyond Secondary 2.

The search (simple or multi-criteria) can be conducted according to five criteria:

1. The FREPA descriptors, e.g. "K-13"
2. The pluralistic approach, e.g. "Awakening to Languages"
3. The language of instruction used in the materials, e.g. "Dutch"
4. The theme, e.g. "biography", "cultural diversity", "human body"
5. The level of instruction, e.g. "Primary 2"

The search results in a list of activities. For a better understanding and first orientation, every activity is briefly presented in English and French. In most cases the chosen materials can be directly downloaded.

The following activity taken from the *FREPA* database exemplifies how learners can be trained to develop resources that support them when engaging with and communicating and mediating in a transcultural world. The teaching material, titled "Antonio et Ali", gives learners the opportunity to develop resources to avoid stereotypes, to not focus on differences between individuals/groups and to question a simplified, static view on culture.

Antonio et Ali			
Descriptors			**Approach:**
Knowledge	**Attitudes**	**Skills**	**Level:**
K-10.4.1 K-10.4.3 K-10.5.1	A-11.3.1 A-11.3.4	S-4.1.1 S-7.3.1	**Language of teaching material:** **Duration:** **Thematic key-words:** Prejudice/image of otherness Cultural diversity Feelings

Source	Access
Direction de la Jeunesse et du Sport, Conseil de l'Europe. Activity from the *Kit pédagogique Tous différents-tous égaux* (2nd edition). Online: http://eycb.coe.int/edupack/fr_24.html	Click on Access (or right click and copy URL)

Description of activity
The main objective of this activity is to make learners reflect on their images about others' culture and the possibility of changing these poi of view by removing traditional stereotypes. It is important that, at the beginning, this activity must be presented as an exercise of creating a story in a group. Later, they will know which the real goal is. *In this activity learners have to create a story that begins with "This is the story of Antonio, a young boy from Madrid". Each pupil will add some information to create a story and sometime later the teacher/monitor will create a new character, Ali who is a young boy from Morocco. When the story has finished, they will reflect on the represented stereotypes.* *The instructions are written in English or French but the activity can be done in any language. The preparation of this activity is very easy: some sheets of paper and a ball. Moreover, it is a very flexible activity because you can adapt it to discuss about the stereotypes we have about immigrants, physically handicapped persons or homosexuals.*

Card drawn up by: Marta Ribas, profesora de francés en el I.E.S. de Sitges.
See Appendix for a fuller versión of the activity.

The teaching material that is integrated in the database has to meet one key criterion, ensuring that the *FREPA* database proposes activities that belong to pluralistic approaches: it must be possible to assign to the activities explicit formulated learning objectives taken from the *FREPA* descriptors. Further important criteria have been applied:

1. Ethics
   - The teaching material avoids simplifications, stereotypes and caricatures.
   - The teaching material does not discriminate against specific individuals/groups
2. Content
   - The content of the teaching material is accurate.
   - The teaching material does not exclusively focus on differences between individuals/groups
3. Learning methodologies
   - The teaching material includes metacognitive elements and awareness-raising strategies.
   - The teaching material is centred on the learners' activity and his/her active construction of knowledge, attitudes and skills including his/her previous knowledge and skills.

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6. FREPA – A training kit

For those who are interested to improve their knowledge about pluralistic approaches and the *FREPA* instruments, a training kit has been developed. Teachers and teacher trainers can use it autonomously, working alone or in groups. Furthermore, these materials can be introduced during teacher training sessions. The *FREPA* training kit comprises several modules which are available online:

> -A discovery module conceived around the carrying out of a *FREPA* activity and providing an initial introduction to the principal *FREPA* components, giving a global view about pluralistic approaches, the *FREPA* instruments and navigation on the website.
> -A module centred on language policies in education, giving the opportunity to situate pluralistic approaches and *FREPA* in current orientations in the domain.
> -Two modules orientated to class practice and supporting teachers (a) in managing difficulties/problems (of various types) in the class and (b) planning class and school projects involving languages and cultures.

As both class practice modules are structured in a similar way, we can limit ourselves to the following description, which illustrates the design of first one. The module emphasises that the *FREPA* tools were conceived to tackle difficulties which are linked to the plurality of languages and cultures and from the particular perspective of pluralistic approaches. This means, first of all, understanding what types of difficulties can be managed through the *FREPA* and through tools that complement it before discovering how to proceed. The module proposes five steps:

> 1. Concretisation: How can the problem be described?
> 2. Analysis: Which are the *FREPA* competences and resources related to the problem?
> 3. Choice of descriptors: Which resources (restricted in numbers) seem to correspond in the most reasonable way and most concretely to the problem?
> 4. Choice of teaching material: Does the database suggest activities to make use of the resources?
> 5. Analysis of the material: Is this activity suitable for the context in

which my problem arises? If not, can it be adapted to this context? Or is it possible to develop it further?

7. Perspectives

In its programme, the ECML has launched a two-year mediation project to disseminate the *FREPA* tools in ECML member states. The project is titled *Plurilingual and intercultural competences: Descriptors and teaching materials.* The aim is to organise a dissemination network composed of representatives of the ECML National Contact Points and other interested experts as well to identify specific needs in the different member states responding to their curricular contexts. Furthermore, the members can collect and provide existing teaching materials in their countries, adapt materials to the own context or develop new activities that meet their needs. The objective is to promote the use of *FREPA* by teachers around Europe. The materials that are available can only be adopted and offered in class effectively if teachers receive appropriate training in handling the instruments. Several training sessions are initially scheduled for 2013 to be run in interested countries with the support of ECML's National Contact Points and if necessary the assistance of the project team members. The training sessions will be tailored to the national profile, the curricular and syllabus requirements and the particular needs. All events and publications as well as the involvement of all member states will be presented on the project website.

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Antonio and Ali

It is said that creative work needs to be done in loneliness, have you ever tried to create a story with 10 people or more? Here's an opportunity to try it!

Issues addressed
• Stereotypes

Aims
• To explore the images we have about people from other cultures, social groups etc.
• To be aware of how these images condition our expectations of people who
belong to other groups.

Time: 30 minutes

Group size: 8 - 10. Note: larger groups can be sub-divided

Preparation
• A ball
• Paper and pen for the observer
• Flip chart and marker pen.

Instructions
1. Ask people to sit in a circle.
2. Ask one of them to be the observer. Explain that they have to sit outside the circle and write down the story that is going to be created.
3. Explain to the rest of the group that together they are going to create a cooperative story. For this they are going to use a ball.
4. Then say: " This is the story of Antonio, a young man from Madrid" and pass the ball to a member of the group and invite them to continue with the next one or two sentences of the story, and to then pass the ball to someone else.
5. Continue in this way so that the story is built co-operatively.
6. After 10 or 12 turns ask for the ball and say: "Antonio knows Ali, a Moroccan boy who also has a story" and pass the ball back to someone in the circle and ask them to start telling Ali's story.
7. Bring the activity to an end after about 10 or 15 minutes.

Debriefing and evaluation

Ask the observer to read the notes they took about the stories. Then ask the group to say what the stories of Antonio and Ali tell them about their different lives and follow on with comments about how this relates to the images we have about young men from Madrid and Morocco. Make notes of the main points on flip chart.

Ask where these images come from. Did everyone have similar images of Spain and Morocco? Why? Why not?

Tips for the facilitator

It is best if the story is made spontaneously and with a fast rhythm. In this case the observer may have difficulty in noting everything down. This problem may be solved by having a second observer or by recording the story on a tape.

It is important that the activity is initially presented simply as the creation of a co-operative story. The names of the characters will lead the group to the theme you want to explore. Therefore, if for instance, you want to do some work around immigrants you should choose names traditionally associated with the majority and immigrants. If you want to deal with images of men and women, choose male and female names.

This activity can be adapted to any situation where there is discrimination by setting the scene in the first sentence of the story: "This is the story of Frank, a young homosexual..." or "This is the story of Maria who is physically disabled..." and compare it to the story of somebody from the mainstream in society.

Variations

1. Divide the group into two sub-groups and ask each group to work on only one of the stories. Afterwards, compare the two. This variation has the advantage that the participants do not suspect that the stories are to be compared. It is important that the participants are split into the sub-groups at random.

2. Form two sub-groups and ask each group to draw or write the biography, or an important moment in the life, of one of the characters in the story.

Afterwards compare the two biographies or stories.

Suggestions for follow up

If you like stories and enjoy surprises then read the 'Tales of the World' (page 160).

If Ali was living in Antonio's country, how would he feel being part of the minority, and how would Antonio feel being one of the majority? Try 'Force the circle' (page 85).

Source: *Education Pack "all differen-all equal",* Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe, 2nd edition, *www.eycb.coe.int/edupack/pdf/24.pdf* , pp. 63-64