

LANGUAGE PORTRAYAL – More courage for multilingualism



screenshots: URL <http://www.univie.ac.at/ie/sprachmittlung/PluS.html>, Verein Frauen aus allen Ländern / facebook (online 2013 07 14)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Language portrayals are a central impulse task for language biographical work.

The method traces back to an idea of Ingrid Gogolin and Ursula Neumann and has been used since then on a larger scale by Hans-Jürgen Krumm from the University of Vienna. At first sight it seems to be a task for children only (starting in primary school settings), but many years of experience show that this introductory activity is equally suitable in settings with adolescents and adults

The activity consists of portraying one's linguistic repertoire by means of colouring a (preprinted) blank human silhouette. Learners act independently in discovering their personal multilingualism using a creative method and a biographical approach.

In order not to predetermine the results too much, it is necessary to give the learners as little instruction as possible. They should be asked to reflect on how they communicate with others in different moments of their (everyday) life, which languages and codes they use in doing so. While they reflect on such situations, the learners ought to associate particular colours with each used language and start to portray their "linguistic self" by colouring the silhouette.

Through this activity notions and feelings about one's own linguistic resources and language practices are expressed visually and simultaneously. As a result, the individual roles of certain languages and dialects, as well as desires in language learning or imagination of future language use can surface and become easier to grasp.

The particular meanings behind language portrayals are accessible only when they are explained and presented by the authors. Therefore each learner should have the opportunity to present her/his portrayal in front of the group.

The aim of this exercise is to create a linguistic portrait of each learner, to visualise the individual language based biographies and to encourage to detect the multilingualism of oneself as of the

others as normality and beyond that as a resource for future (language) learning.

Language portrayals are used as impulse task, be it for language biographical work, be it for conversation classes, be it as an ice-breaker for new groups, be it in diversity-trainings. Other activities on learning languages and multilingualism may follow.

For a more detailed description of the method *Language portrayal*, some concrete examples and other language biographical methods see the following article of Jan Mossakowsky & Brigitta Busch from the University of Vienna **“On language biographical methods in research and education”**
URL http://www.cis.or.at/spracherleben/download/ECP-AT-3-Language_biographical_methods_.pdf
(online 2013 07 16)

Literature recommendation: Peter Siemund/ Ingrid Gogolin/ Monika Eva Schulz/ Julia Davydova (eds), *Multilingualism and Language Diversity in Urban Areas*. Benjamins: Amsterdam/ Philadelphia 2013; URL <http://benjamins.com/#catalog/books/hslid.1/main>

MATERIALS

Preprints of silhouettes

Create your own silhouettes, gender-free and neutral. Offer the learners a choice of silhouettes. Colour pencils for each learner.

Preprint blank female and male silhouettes: URL http://www.oesz.at/content_ext.php?id=233
(see 5.2.2.: female “*Sprachenfigur weiblich(Kopiervorlage)*”, male “*Sprachenfigur männlich (Kopiervorlage)*”)

STEPS

- Distribute preprinted silhouettes, one per person
- Give as little instructions as possible. Providing little guidance serves creativity and increases the potential to reveal the core issues that language learners are concerned with.
- Ask the learners to place the personal legend next to the outline. Each language of individual meaning having its own colour.
- The sketches should then be coloured with the appropriate colours for different areas of the body.
- Oral exercise “*guided tour through the gallery*”: Upon completion, the learners are then invited to present their portraits and why they placed the languages as they did.
- Written exercise “*me & my languages*”: Upon completion, the learners have to write commentaries on their language portrayal. The stories behind the colours and the languages have to be written down.

Aim of the oral and the written task is the individual reflection on the activity and the traceability for the others.

Feedback: Don't forget to actively seek feedback on the activity.

Variations:

Learners are requested to create their own personal silhouette.

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