

Workshop: "Getting into contact without speaking the same language"

Trainer: Katrin Lüth, free-lance trainer

Workshop content/theme

Looking forward to your school partnership you might be thinking: „This will be great! Our partners are really nice. But not all of us speak a common language?!“

This workshop wants to provide ideas and methods, recommendations and reflection on non-verbal and creative techniques for getting into contact and communication in (international) groups.

Methods/Approach

Safety rules for every encounter:

- Challenge by choice – It is your choice as a participant to challenge yourself as far as you want to go; it is your responsibility as a participant to challenge yourself as far as you can go.
- The Stop Rule – anybody can say stop at any time, when in physical, emotional or psychological danger. Stop ends any activity immediately and does not have to be explained.

Non-verbal "Spots in Movement": Movement when there is music, when the music stops there is an impulse for activity (including drawn instructions)

- Look into the others' eyes carefully
- Shake as many hands as possible
- Touch the four walls of the room
- Find people with the same coloured top --> introduce yourselves
- Imagine a map of Europe on the floor --> stand at your home
- form groups of 6 people --> form a people-pyramid with only 3 legs on the floor

Reflection of activity: What was helpful to understand?

Body language of the instruction, pictures of the instruction, one person understands and the others follow, sometimes one person in the group can translate

More comments:

When addressing a group, who do not have a common language use all channels of communication: visual most of all (pictures, showing what to do, taking part actively in the activity), intonation of the voice.

When addressing a new group use movement, (body) contact, music, colour

Getting into contact is easier when on a personal level or in small groups, when the participants can start from themselves/their own experience (name, date of birth, home, favourites...)

Sorting beam: sort according to the first letter of your name

Stop and go: the group moves and follows the orders "Stop" or "Go"

- The group leader gives orders
- The group gives orders
- Unspoken orders

Reflection of activity: What happened?

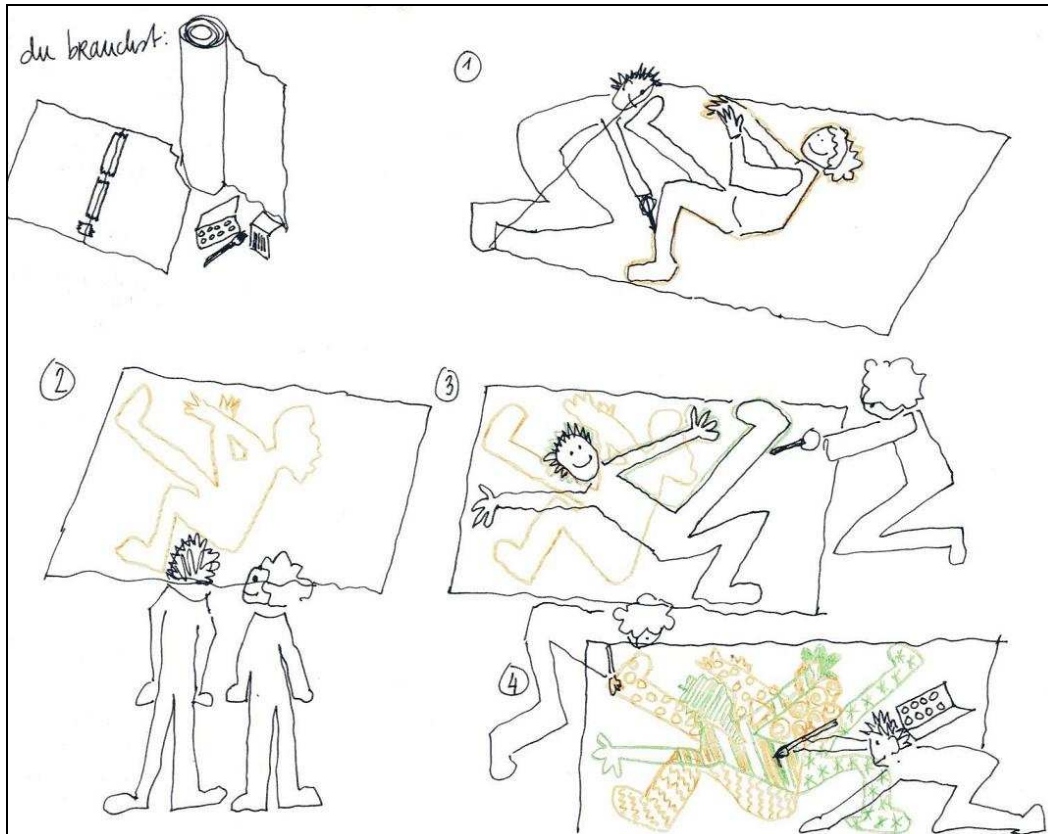
We could communicate without speaking; sometimes I was not "heard", the group did not react; sometimes there were two differing impulses in the group and one was not followed; I cannot see everybody in a group, that makes it difficult to communicate; I cannot see everybody in a group, but others in the group can transfer the message, even to the people behind me; communication grows by transfer from one to the next person in the group

Communication statues: groups sits in a circle, two people in the middle stand in a statue of communication, anybody from the outside can step up to one of the figures in the middle, touch them on the shoulder to release them and change the communication by taking a new position.

Reflection of activity:

Within only a few minutes all kinds of emotions and communication between human beings could be seen: love, hate, friendship, power-relation, ... ; It was difficult to see one person threatening to shoot the other; any range of emotions are always potentially there, just under the surface.

Group picture



Questions for workshop reflection

Students: What is helpful for communication in a group with no common language?

Teachers: Please translate/transfer the information and learnings from this workshop to your classroom reality.

Impressions, Outcome

Outcome Students: What is helpful for communication in a group with no common language?

Be brave! Try to understand each other. When do you feel comfortable. Don't be afraid to ask. Help each other. Have contact. Friendly people. Common language. Listening to each other.

Realize/correcting mistakes (in a friendly way). Learning about each other. Smiling helps when learning. Be honest. It's ok to ask questions!

Outcome teachers: Can we use this?

→ yes: When? After regular lessons, in drama lessons, in foreign language lessons, when students meet for the first time (first week of the year), geography lessons (maps), drawing lessons

→ no: Why? Because we have too many students, they are not interested in activities like these, there are too many things to teach

Collection of activities we experienced in this conference so far, which worked for groups with little common language skills:

Body percussion on the first evening, dancing the waltz, skiing, James Bond game, football, playing cards, eat cheese, puzzles, singing, costumes, trying language (translating), newspaper theatre

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

- on Safety Rules and outdoor initiative problems such as the sorting beam see: Books on adventure or outdoor training e.g. by Karl Rohnke, one of the first developers of initiative problems www.karlrohnke.com
- Spots in Movement, Group Picture developed after: Rabenstein, Reinhold, Reichel, René, Thanhoffer, Michael: Das Methodenset, Band 1: Anfangen. Ökotoxia Verlag, 1985.
This book exists in German only, unfortunately...
- T-Kit 6 "Training Essentials" and T-Kit 4 "Intercultural Learning" download for free: http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/publications/T-kits/T_kits
- Paul Watzlawick on communication, start off at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Watzlawick