

The meanings in Language

Key message

Extremists and violent groups use the language as a key tool to promote their discriminatory values and behaviours. It is fundamental to be aware of the influence of language in transmitting stereotypes and understand how we can make use of it to change these effects.

Key words: stereotypes, language, social influence

Summary

Language, which is cultural and learned, allows us to transmit not only information and knowledge but also culture, values, behaviours, etc. As Language and thinking are inseparable, they can also favour the transmission of stereotypes. It is essential to observe the evolution of language according to several social situations (e.g. the migratory and refugees' phenomenon) and be aware of the social connotations and effects reflected through it.

Module	Group size	Group age	Duration
• Prevention	• small • medium	• 12 - 15 • 16 - 19 • 20 - 24	• 30 min

Purpose

- Observe the evolution produced in Language linked with migratory movements.
- Analyse the social connotations of the terms related with migration.
- Be aware of the discriminatory effects caused by language in many occasions.

Description

This activity is focused on the term "migration" and migratory movements, but it can be adapted to any other term and issue.

Step 1: Before starting the activity, it is advised to prepare a short introduction on migration in Europe after the Second World War (see handouts)

Step 2: Introduce the activity commenting to the youngsters they will work with different meanings of a unique term. Organise groups (5-7 people). Distribute a list of words with the corresponding template to be fulfilled (see handouts below).

Step 3: In the activity template, participants will put the term they choose in the first column, its meaning in the second column and their positive or negative assessment regarding this term in the third one. A unique assessment is allowed for each term. In case of discrepancies among the group each participant will choose a term and argument his/her positive or negative assessment.

Step 4: Each group choose a spokesperson who will explain to the others the process followed and

the findings obtained by comparing the meaning of the different terms (*Do you know all the listed words? Do you think there are the same words? How hard has it been to assess each of them? etc.*).

Step 5: Make a pool about the connotations assigned to one or another term and why this occurs: *A British person who's living in a yacht in Marbella is a migrant?, What is the difference between being a foreigner and a migrant?, Symbolically, does have the same prestige a person who migrate to South America and an migrant from nowadays? Can we consider a person "illegal"? What consequences may have to be illegal in somebody's life?*

(Optional) to be addressed in further sessions: Ask to the young participants to choose one of the terms mentionned in a list and, either individually or in pairs, to seek out a person who would meet with the meaning of it. Describe his/her life before emigrate and his/her new life experience. Make a pool in the next session.

Materials needed

Paper, pen, dictionary, handouts »template and list of words« (the words included are orientative and can be changed by others according to the thematic: gender stereotypes, racism etc.)

Advice for Trainer

Focus group

Source / Literature

Link of interest about the "return of migrants" in recent Europe:
<http://blogs.20minutos.es/latino/2008/05/30/europa-busca-fuerza-trabajo-desechable/>

Handouts

HANDOUT: THE MEANINGS IN LANGUAGE



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