Tool 4.3

Experience emergence

CLARITY Competence Area:

Opening up to diverse climate-resilient and regenerative futures

GreenComp Competence Area:

Envisioning sustainable futures

Why use this tool?

Games and improvisations create spaces where learners experience not-knowing and a widening of possibilities of what may come next. They build competences to operate in situations of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. They also provide us with some training in collectively navigating the multiplicity of possible futures at each given moment. They also integrate playfulness and joy into learning, which is critical to retain knowledge and build skills.

Activity 4.3.2

Improvisational storytelling

Overview

Learners collaboratively write a story about a multitude of futures, through a theatre-based approach based on the 826 model. The learners start the story collectively while the teacher and volunteers write it down and illustrate it. The story eventually splits into two alternatives and the learners split into two groups, where each group further develops their alternative storyline, and the learners independently write and/or draw their end to the story, with all versions of the story can be put together in a book.

Curriculum linkage

Science, History, Mathematics, Language & Literature, Arts and Ethics, Religion & Philosophy

Competences built

Imagination, adaptability, exploratory thinking, futures literacy and collaboration

Prep Work

- Research examples of transformational change that has taken place historically in your local context.
- Look up news articles about children worried about climate change to find a local case.

BASIC INFO

Age range:

6+

Duration:

45 min * 2

Group size:

Up to 60

Level of difficulty:

Basic for learners, but it requires a teacher with some theater/performance experience

Materials/space required:

Paper, pens, colored pens, PC

Location:

Indoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

If theater/performance artists can be involved for the improv storytelling, it could make the experience more lively.

Having volunteers to help write down the stories would also be beneficial.

Steps in the activity

1. Warm up to storytelling
2. Introducing the main narrative
3. Time travel
4. Storytelling
5. Make a book (optional, if you have time)

Step 1: Warm-up to storytelling (5-10 min)

Option for young learners: Ask the learners what their favorite food is and ask them to describe it as if they had super senses (taste, smell, ...).

Option for older learners: Introduce the improv game “One Word at a Time.” This is a fun and easy warm-up exercise that allows learners to get acquainted with improvisation as a method. Learners create a story one word at a time. Learners suggest the words out loud, without raising their hands first. If two or more learners speak at the same time, the group can vote on which word will remain in the story. The game is over when the story reaches a natural conclusion, and the learner who said the first word also gets to say the last word. This game works well for large groups: the more storytellers, the crazier the story will be.

Step 2: Introducing the main narrative (5-10 min)

Option for young learners: Introduce the character of a young person the same age as the learners who is worried about the future (let's call him Ron). This can be a made up character or real person from a news article (not someone the learners know personally). Introduce Ron in an empathic way:

- You understand why he is worried
- You take his worries seriously

Establish that Ron really needs someone to help him imagine futures that he can get excited about. Get the learners excited about helping Ron and then ask them if they want to help. Encourage them to express their desire to help loudly!

Option for older learners: Explain to the learners that improvising stories about the future can help us imagine radically different futures in a fun way. Collective joy and creativity is important for co-creating the future we want.

Step 3: Time travel (30 min)

1. Explain to the learners that you'll go on a time travel so you can explore the world 1000 years into the future, and then tell other people about it in the form of a book with stories about the future.
   a. **Option for young learners:** To prepare for time travel, ask the learners how long 1000 years is. Examples:
      i) Ask them how many days are in a year, how many days are in 10 years, 100 years, and 1000 years. The answer is 365000, approximately.
      ii) Ask them how old their parents were when they were born? How many generations live in a 1000 years? (1000:25=40, meaning their great (great, great, great, great … say great 38 times!!!!) grandchildren may grow up in a 1000 years).
2. Help learners see just how much can change in 1000 years. You can ask the learners to come up with examples of big changes happening the past 1000 years in their local context, and/or give examples of evolutionary and historical change, such as:
   a. **Evolutionary change (slow)**: The Brown bear and the Polar bear split approximately 500 000 years ago, and it took the Polar bear something like *20 500 generations* to adapt to the living conditions in the Arctic.
   b. **Epigenetics (quick)**: When the ocean warms, fish eggs hatch more rapidly. Codfish eggs in six degrees water take 16 days to hatch. If the temperature increases to 10 degrees, the larva will hatch after only 9 days (In comparison, it is the same as five months of pregnancy in humans). This change will affect how genes are expressed in just *one generation*.
   c. **Historic change:** In the 1020s, Vikings roamed the seas in their Viking ships and lived with their farm animals in longhouses. In 1024, The Church was established in Norway and the former nature religion outlawed, ca. **200 years** after the first signs of Christianity in Norway.
   d. **Social change:** In Norway, It took **30 years** of struggle to secure women the right to vote, which they could finally do in 1913.
   e. **To sum it up**: In 1000 years we could have totally different religions, new actors could have been included in our democracy, humans could have super senses and other "crazy" mutations/epigenetic changes could have occurred.

3. Establish the rule that *for now*, we will assume that 1000 years into the future, ***anything* is possible**.
4. **Give learners the opportunity to go into the future:** To travel in time, the learners need to close their eyes and imagine how the world looks 1000 years from now. Ask them if they can see it. When they can see it, tell them they are there and to open their eyes. Ask them to describe the Earthlings (could be any species on Earth) and how they live. Ask the learners to imagine they have super senses and invite them to describe how the future looks, smells, sounds, and feels.

Step 4: Storytelling (45 min)

1. **Establish the ground rules** before asking the learners (as a group) who their main characters are. Let them know that their main characters should:
   a. be a team with one human and one non-human character
   b. be original (not Harry Potter or some Tik-Tok personality)
   c. still be alive by the end of the story
   d. not be exposed or expose others to unnecessary violence
2. **Establish the main characters.** Ask the learners who the main characters are. Help the learners come up with rich characters by asking concrete follow-up questions (How do they look? How old are they? What are their names? How do they know each other?). Use the ideas from step 2 as a starting point if the learners struggle to come up with ideas. Based on the learners' input, help them compile their ideas into 'Frankenstein' characters. Also establish:
   a. the characters' strengths and weaknesses
   b. the characters' 'secret weapon'
   c. the characters' values
   d. the characters' goal
3. **Visualize the characters for the learners.** An illustrator (could be a teacher or learner) draws the characters on a big board/paper as it takes shape.
4. **Optional: Become the characters.** Invite the learners to stand up, close their eyes and try to see the characters in a setting. Invite them to pose as one of the characters. Ask the learners to open their eyes and look around.
5. **Start the story together.** The main characters go on a mission to achieve their goal. The storyteller (teacher or invited actor) asks what the characters do. Continue with questions like: "What did she say then?". A writer (teacher or volunteer) takes notes on a computer, and the text is displayed on a big screen

so the learners can see the story being written in real time. Soon the characters are confronted with a choice, and have to make a decision. Establish two alternative decisions based on what the characters value. Divide the learners in two groups (or more) and give them each their alternative to continue. The story now splits in two (or more if you make smaller groups).

6. **Continue the story in smaller groups**: Let the learners take the story and go wild. A storyteller (teacher or invited actor) helps the group narrate the story and continue to write the story on a computer.
7. **End the story individually**: Remind the learners about the characters' mission. Will the characters' complete the mission and how? Ask the learners to write and/or draw the end of the story individually on paper. Ask the learners to add their signature and collect the papers in the end.

Step 5: Make a book (optional)

8. **Put the stories together in a physical or digital book**, if you have time after class.
9. Optional: a fun homework assignment could include the learners reading the book to someone at home.

Dos and don'ts

Do

- Remember, ***anything* is possible in this future!** This is the main rule. Such a rule comes easy for many learners, especially young children. However, it can be challenging for teachers who are used to teaching about realistic scenarios.
- Adopt a "yes, and" attitude. Show excitement for every idea the learners come up with to encourage their creativity and make them feel proud and confident.
- If a learner suggests an idea that violates the rules, ask the whole group in a curious and non-judgemental way: "Is that in line with the rules?" instead of saying "no".

Adaptations:

- Some learners might find it challenging to imagine the world a thousand years into the future. You can adapt the time span to a hundred years, or any number of years that you think works best for your learners.
- The book could be turned into a manuscript for a play. The activity could be repeated as impro theater, with the learners acting out the story instead of telling it.

- We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

References

This tool is adapted by Climate Creativity from the theater approach-based 826 model practiced by the project Saga skriveliga at Sølvberget Library and Culture Centre in Stavanger, Norway.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.