



Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

Tool 30 - Selecting pictures and 'realia' for language activities: some guidelines

Aim: To suggest points to bear in mind when selecting pictures and realia for use with migrants and ideas for obtaining and storing them.

A valuable resource

Pictures and realia (real objects) can be an invaluable resource for language activities, especially with learners at elementary levels and children. They can provide:

- a non-verbal stimulus to support interaction between yourself and learners and between learners.
- a means of easily conveying the meaning of new words (vocabulary).
- ways of familiarising learners with features of their new country or community.
- motivation and interest because learners can select and use their own pictures during language activities.

Providing variety

Pictures are available in various forms:

- Photographic images that can be downloaded or shown on the internet, copied from books, cut out from magazines and brochures, or created with one's own camera/mobile phone.
- Drawn or painted images, in cartoon or 'artistic' style, that can be found on the internet, copied, or cut out of comics and other publications such as art gallery leaflets and postcards, or drawn by learners or yourself on paper or on a board.
- Signs and symbols that can be found in public places, on doors (e.g. fire exit, toilets), or as emoticons on mobile phones etc.

Finding suitable objects

Realia are easy to find, for example at home in the kitchen, in an office, in one's own pocket or bag, etc. Pictures of real objects can be used to replace them when necessary.

Suggestions for making your own resource bank

It is a good idea to build up a 'library' of pictures and realia that can be used again and again. If you and your colleagues do this, you should think about how you will store and organise your resource bank so that you can find what you need quickly.

If a laptop, monitor or projector is available, it can be used to display pictures and realia, but realia and pictures that can be selected, shared and passed around can be more motivating and more useful.

Selecting resources with care

As with other resources that might be useful for language support activities, it is important to pay particular attention to the content and quality of pictures and objects used with migrant learners. For example:

1. Are the images sensitive to migrants' experience of life or will they provoke upsetting memories or associations, especially if there are refugees and unaccompanied minors in the group?
2. Depending on your group of learners, are the images suitable and relevant for adults or children in the local context?
3. Is the picture/object relevant and interesting for your learners?
4. Will the images help them to recognise and identify important places and items and learn important new vocabulary?
5. Is the quality good enough? Is it clear and easy to understand, large enough or, in the case of drawn images, clearly recognisable?
6. Is the picture worth keeping/saving? Will it be useful to you or colleagues in the future?
7. Is the cultural context of the picture difficult to understand?
8. Can the picture be used from a legal point of view? Is permission required to download and use it? Does it need printed acknowledgement?

When using images and objects in face-to-face sessions:

9. Are objects clean and safe to handle?
10. Can images be made more durable, for example by sticking them on cardboard?

For further suggestions on using pictures in your language support activities, see Tool 34 – *Ideas for supporting migrants' learning of basic vocabulary: everyday life* and Tool 36 - *Introducing basic vocabulary for expressing opinions and emotions*.