



EARTHE

Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module 2 – Communication enhancement

Method 1 – Storytelling workshops

Case study



Module 2 – Communication Enhancement

Case study 1. - Empowering Adult Learners through Storytelling Circles

Related Method - Storytelling Workshops

Context and Background

Organisation: Municipal Adult Learning Centre in Southern Europe

Target Group: Adults aged 25–55 from underrepresented backgrounds, including unemployed individuals and migrants

Scope: Non-formal education program aimed at improving communication, confidence, and employability

Problem / Challenge Presented

Many learners lacked confidence in speaking in front of others, which hindered their participation in job interviews, community events, and even social settings. A significant portion struggled with language barriers and self-expression due to educational gaps or cultural stigma around public speaking. Additionally, many participants had little prior experience with reflective or narrative learning, making it harder for them to organize and communicate personal experiences.

Actions Taken / Method Applied

To address these challenges, the program integrated weekly storytelling circles into its curriculum using the 'Storytelling Workshops' method. The implementation was structured and progressive:

Sessions began with simple icebreakers and listening games to promote group safety and openness.

Facilitators introduced prompts like 'A time I felt proud', 'A difficult choice I made', or 'A lesson I learned', and encouraged learners to brainstorm freely.

Learners were provided with visual aids and worksheets to plan their stories, followed by pair rehearsals with peer coaching.

Participants shared their stories in rotating small groups where active listening and supportive feedback were modeled.

Each session ended with group reflection using guiding questions to build emotional awareness and verbal confidence.

At the end of the 6-week cycle, participants delivered their refined stories in front of the whole group and invited guests, receiving certificates of participation.



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.



Outcomes and Results

Learners became more comfortable speaking in public and sharing their experiences

Increased peer bonding and mutual support within the group, reducing social isolation

Three learners used storytelling techniques during job interviews and reported feeling significantly more prepared

Boosted confidence led to increased participation in other centre activities (e.g. language café, digital skills)

Improved emotional awareness and verbal expression of boundaries, especially among migrant women participants

Lessons Learned

Storytelling encourages not just expression but also listening and empathy

Reflection and repetition help build confidence

Flexibility (allowing fictional or anonymized stories) encourages wider participation.

Key Success Factors

Weekly structure and repetition created continuity and a rhythm of progress

Strong facilitation with consistent emotional safety norms (e.g. 'no judgment', 'confidentiality')

Clear guidelines, structured storytelling steps, and relatable example stories made the method accessible to all literacy levels

Challenges Encountered and How They Were Addressed

Initial reluctance from learners was addressed by offering fictional storytelling and private rehearsals to reduce performance anxiety

Some learners needed visual prompts or example stories to engage—these were incorporated through storyboards and teacher-modeled storytelling

Overcoming deeply ingrained fear of judgment required ongoing trust-building, peer encouragement, and personalized facilitator feedback

Applicability / Recommendations for Educators

Use storytelling as a tool for both **self-expression** and **community-building**, especially in diverse adult groups

Keep prompts flexible and inclusive to allow both personal and fictional narratives

Scaffold confidence by allowing learners to begin with low-stakes sharing (e.g., pairs or trios) before presenting to larger groups

Provide space for debriefing, emotional processing, and self-reflection to enhance the impact of storytelling on personal growth and resilience