

Communication and Critical Thinking



THEME BASED ACTIVITY

Erasmus+ Training Course

“Non-Formal Education: an
effective tool for the personal
development of young people”



INTRODUCTION



The main goal of the TBA was to reflect on how Non Formal Education could support proper communication (intercultural, empathic, effective) elaborating new strategies of dialogue, internal and external, developing a set of tools to avoid misunderstanding and supporting the Critical Thinking of individuals and organisations. The introductory part of the session, based on the use of Non-Formal Education approaches and methods, first of all allowed participants to explore the concept of “communication”, to analyse different communication channels and/or communication models, to learn how to deal with redundancy in communication and to develop a systematic way of collecting, interpreting and verifying information as well as to avoid losing the meaning of words and to develop critical listening. In the second part of the TBA, participants explored the transition from communication to critical thinking aspects by exploring their meaning and carrying out a series of activities aimed at improving decision-making, problem-solving and increasing the use of emotional intelligence and effective communication.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TBA

The activities started with an overview about different definitions of “communication” in order to verify the meaning that participants give to it considering as well the very famous statement of Bernard Weber. Then an activity was carried out aimed at understanding the different levels and channels of communication, practising communicating using different channels as well as discovering one's communication preferences (“**Ear, Eye, Mouth, Nose**” - theme: communication channels, communication patterns, senses). At this point, the participants, through a dynamic of Non-Formal Education (“**How tall is Tom?**”), began to reflect on how to make effective the sharing of information by developing a systematic way of gathering, interpreting and verifying information, learning to manage redundancy in communication and developing a common strategy for more effective communication. Last part of this first session was based on the concept/work developed by the educator Franck Lepage (“**La langue de bois - The wooden language**”) in order to reflect on the redundancy of communication, to avoid loose meaning of the words and to start developing a critical way of listening. This activity allowed participants the transition to the second part of the session in which they moved from communication to critical thinking aspects.





The first NFE dynamic that was carried out was connected with the importance to read properly keeping the capacity/ability to think and act under pressure without losing the focus on the specific task (**“Exercise to be done in 3 minutes”**). Then participants realised an activity on how to improve the active listening being able to give feedback and resume concept and stories (**“Exercise A B C”**).



Core part of the session was represented by the use of photography as a communication tool in order to stimulate a reflection on the power of images and to develop critical thinking through the reconstruction of reality behind an image (**“The image as language”**): to the participants have been shown a selection of images without any caption asking them to choose one of them and to write a short story about it by imagining the photo background and representing what they see or feel when looking at it before to introduce them the real contest of the different photos. Through this experience it was possible to reflect on how cultural and personal background influences the interpretation of an image, if words are limiting or enriching the meaning of a photo and which are a photographer's responsibilities in choosing what to show and what to leave out of the frame. Last activity of the TBA was focused on the importance to enhance the body language and to improve group decision and problem solving (**“The 4 seasons of group dynamic”**).



DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION IS THE PROCESS OF CONVEYING INFORMATION FROM A SENDER TO A RECEIVER WITH THE USE OF A MEDIUM IN WHICH THE COMMUNICATED INFORMATION IS UNDERSTOOD THE SAME WAY BY BOTH SENDER AND RECEIVER. IT IS A PROCESS THAT ALLOWS ORGANISMS TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION BY SEVERAL METHODS.

COMMUNICATION REQUIRES THAT ALL PARTIES UNDERSTAND A COMMON LANGUAGE THAT IS EXCHANGED. THERE ARE AUDITORY MEANS, SUCH AS SPEAKING, SINGING AND SOMETIMES TONE OF VOICE, AND NONVERBAL, PHYSICAL MEANS, SUCH AS BODY LANGUAGE, SIGN LANGUAGE, PARALANGUAGE, TOUCH, EYE CONTACT, OR THE USE OF WRITING. COMMUNICATION IS DEFINED AS A PROCESS BY WHICH WE ASSIGN AND CONVEY MEANING IN AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE SHARED UNDERSTANDING.

(Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Psychological Bulletin 117, 497-529.)

DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

THERE ARE 3 MAJOR PARTS IN ANY COMMUNICATION WHICH IS BODY LANGUAGE, VOICE, TONALITY AND WORDS. ACCORDING TO THE RESEARCH, 55% OF IMPACT IS DETERMINED BY BODY LANGUAGE, POSTURES, GESTURES, AND EYE CONTACT, 38% BY THE TONE OF VOICE, AND 7% BY THE CONTENT OR THE WORDS USED IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS. ALTHOUGH THE EXACT % OF INFLUENCE MAY DIFFER FROM VARIABLES SUCH AS THE LISTENER AND THE SPEAKER, COMMUNICATION AS A WHOLE STRIVES FOR THE SAME GOAL AND THUS, IN SOME CASES, CAN BE UNIVERSAL.

(Mehrabian and Ferris, 'Inference of Attitude from Nonverbal Communication in Two Channels' in The Journal of Counselling Psychology Vol.31, 1967, pp.248-52)

COMMUNICATION: THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION THROUGH A COMMON SYSTEM OF SYMBOLS, SIGNS, BEHAVIOR, SPEECH, WRITING, OR SIGNALS.

(Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education)

COMMUNICATION IS THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, OPINIONS AND INFORMATION THROUGH WRITTEN OR SPOKEN WORDS, SYMBOLS OR ACTIONS.

(1995-2002 by Pearson Education)

COMMUNICATION - THE ABILITY TO MAKE UNDERSTOOD WANTS AND NEEDS USING VERBAL LANGUAGE, SIGN LANGUAGE, GESTURES, FACIAL EXPRESSION, COMPUTERS, OR A COMBINATION OF METHODS.

(Riley Child Development Center)

COMMUNICATION IS A MOVEMENT OF MATTER OR ENERGY BETWEEN TWO PARTS OF THE UNIVERSE. THIS MATTER OR ENERGY CAN BE A CARRIER OF INFORMATION.

(Walter Fritz)

Ear, Eye, Mouth, Nose

Theme

communication channels, communication patterns, senses

Aims

- Understanding different levels and channels of communication
- Practicing communication using different channels
- Discovering one's own communication preferences

Group size

At least 5, ideally 20-30; the group number should be divisible in 5

Duration

60 minutes

Materials

Chairs, flipchart paper, A4 paper, pens.

Activity description

Participants are divided into four smaller groups.

Then the plenary will be organised with rows of five chairs.

Row 1	Row 2	Row 3	Row 4	
X	X	X	X	Reading
X	X	X	X	Writing
X	X	X	X	Drawing
X	X	X	X	Describing
X	X	X	X	Miming

The trainer prepares beforehand a series of words on small pieces of paper.

Then one person per team (person 1) receives a word on a piece of paper from the trainer, reads it (in secret), and then goes to Person 2 – first in their group's row, and writes down a description of the word without mentioning the word itself. Person 2 has to guess, without actually saying the word. If the person thinks he/she has guessed, he/she can move to the chair behind. Then Person 2 has to draw the object for Person 3 with the same rules. If Person 3 thinks he/she has guessed, he/she describes the word verbally to Person 4. Again, when Person 4 thinks he/she has guessed right, he/she has to go the last person, and mimes it to Person 5. When Person 5 thinks he/she has guessed, he/she returns to the trainer and says the word. If it's right Person 5 gets another word; if the word is wrong then they have to start again with the first word.

A team wins when they have completed five words and stops when all teams have finished.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start with a short summary of the activity and general questions on how the activity went. Was it enjoyable? Why yes/no? In the feedback the discussion will involve these questions: what was the most difficult stage? What was the most frustrating point?

What was the purpose of this exercise?

Then proceed to a discussion on learning outcomes:



Were communication channels largely different from each other? How? Why?

Was it equally easy/difficult to use various channels of communication?

Which of these channels do we use more/less often? Why?

Source

Intercom TC, Lorenzo Nava, Filiz Ayseli

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HOW TALL IS TOM?

Communication exercise

Objectives To learn the effectiveness of sharing information
To develop systematic way of collecting, interpreting and checking information
To learn how to tackle the redundancy of communication
To develop the common strategy/in future the possible networking of participants

Timeframe 30-40 min for the exercise
40-50 min for the debriefing

Materials Chairs arranged in the groups of 6,
Lots of “telegram” papers
Rules written on the flipchart
2 peaces of information for every participant
(registration paper for postman)





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Communication exercise

Methodology Six players (P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6) sit in a circle with their backs to each other. They must not talk to one another. Their aim is to find how tall Tom is by sending messages to other players in his/her circle. They are sending all their messages via postman , who is standing in the middle of the circle, and giving/getting messages. Postman can not speak either. (His task is to register messages.)

The rules of sending messages:

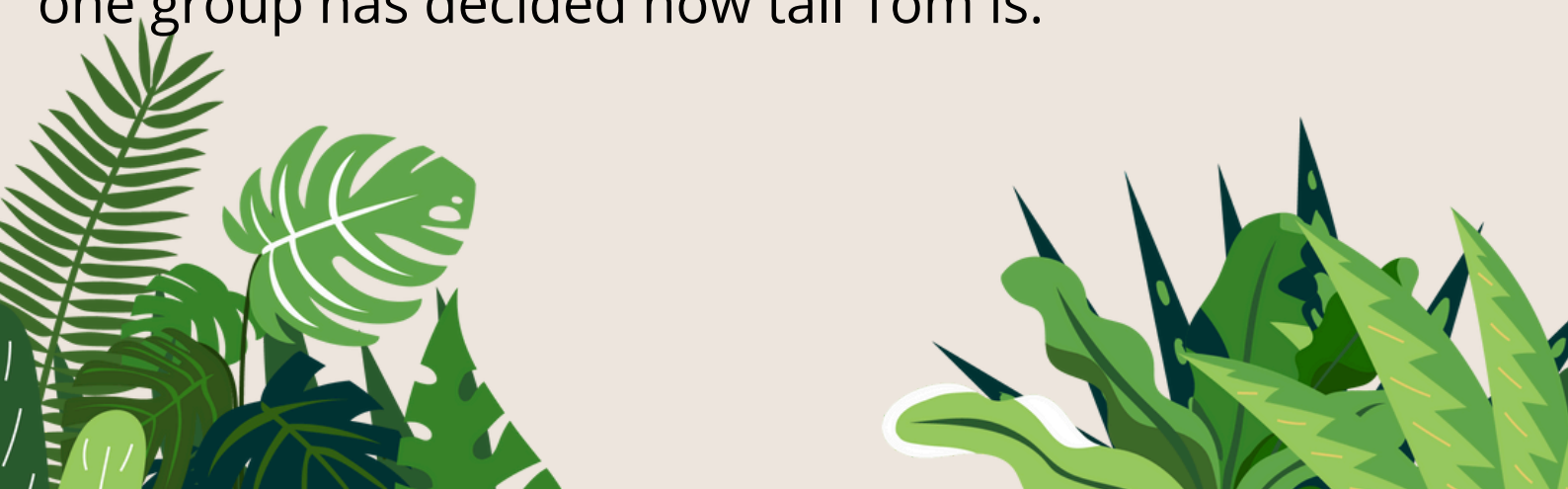
P1 > P5 and then the text of a message

Telegram is addressed to one person only

An other message can't be sent on the same piece of paper

Messages can be sent ONLY through the postman

The game is over after 30 min, or when everybody from one group has decided how tall Tom is.





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Communication exercise

Debriefing questions:

Could your team find a solution? Why/why not?

Did you have strong feelings any time during the exercise?

What made communication difficult/easier?

Was there a common system/strategy at some point?

Can you make a link between this exercise and communication in the youth exchanges?

....





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

You are employed by the YW (Young and Winning) Co. which specialised in making men's suits. It would be an enormous opportunity for the company if it could win the making of the official Olympic outfits for one of the largest national delegations. Tenders have been invited to win the order in which several companies are participating including yours.

To decide the winner of the tender a show has been organised at which the 3 most probable winners will present their collections. The items of the collections will be worn by less well-known local sportsmen selected from various sports so that professional models and the show of the competitor companies would not influence the competition.

Your company instructed 6 employees, including yourself, to gain information about the sizes of the sportsmen asked to participate at the show as among them there may be wrestlers, basketball players, weight lifters or swimmers, etc. Someone has found out who the 12 sportsmen will be invited and also that the particular items of your collection will be worn by a young man called Tom.





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

After this, due to a technical problem, communication between the 6 colleagues who were collecting information broke down and afterwards you could only communicate with each other by telegram.

You know that each of you managed to obtain partial information with the help of which you could find out Tom's height. From his height the designers will be able to draw conclusions as regards his other measurements and thus they can create the suits which will be most advantageous for this particular sportsman which will lead to winning the tender.

Thus the task is to find out Tom's height and give it in writing to the messenger who will forward it to the creative manager of the company. The creative team of designers will start their work when they have the same answers from the 6 responsible persons.





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

You have information about the following 12 sportsmen:

Alfred
Bernard
Charley
David
Mario
Pierre

Tom
Henrik
Ian
Peter
Kevin
Igor





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Six players (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6) sit in a circle with their backs to each other. They must not talk with each other.
2. The messages (telegrams) are taken from the writer of the message to the addressee by the messenger(s). The messenger must not talk either. His task is to register the messages.

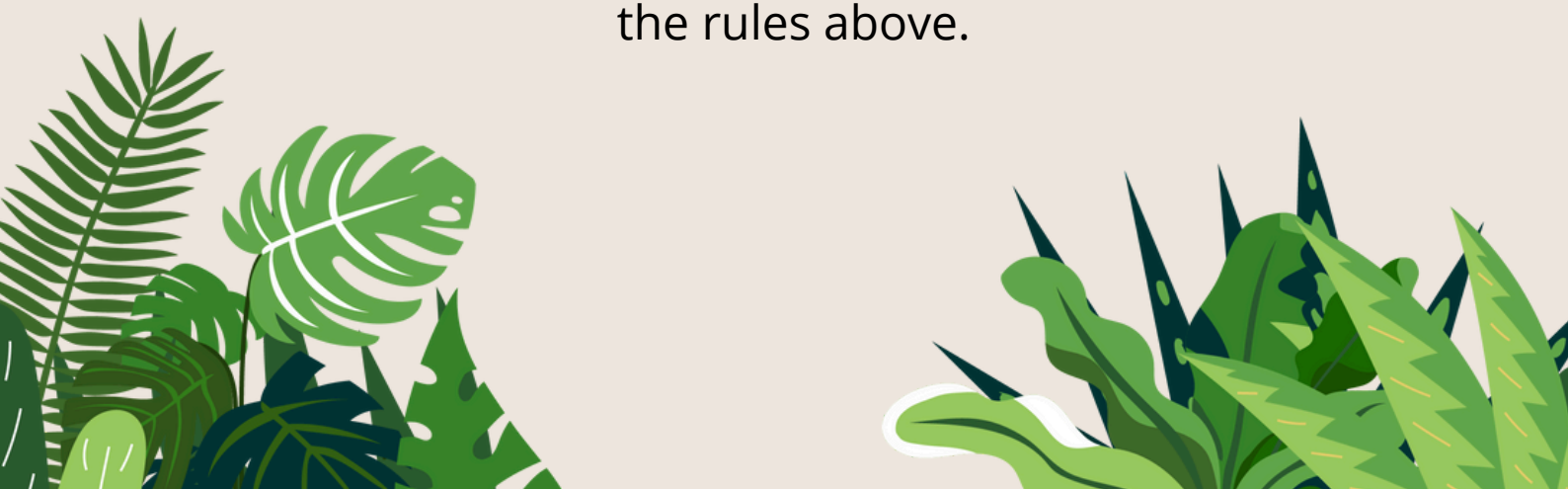
3. The rules of sending messages:

P1 > > > > > > > > > > P5

The text of the message

where the sender of the message is P1 and the addressee is P5.

The message like a telegram is addressed to one person only. Another message cannot be sent on the same piece of paper. To forward it the message has to be written again according to the rules above.





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

4. The game is over
 - a) after 30 minutes
 - b) when everybody has made their suggestions about how tall Tom is (the solution should be addressed and given to the messenger).

The tender is won if everybody has answered the question and all six people have the right answer.





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

X1

HENRIK IS 5 CM TALLER THAN IAN.

DAVID IS 25 CM SHORTER THAN MARIO.

X2

KEVIN IS 7 CM TALLER THAN IGOR.

ALFRED AND HENRIK ARE THE SAME HEIGHT.

X3

MARIO IS 12 CM TALLER THAN PIERRE.

ALFRED IS 1 CM TALLER THAN PIERRE.

X4

IGOR IS 170 CM.

BERNARD IS 23 CM TALLER THAN CHARLEY.

X5

DAVID IS 5 CM TALLER THAN CHARLEY.

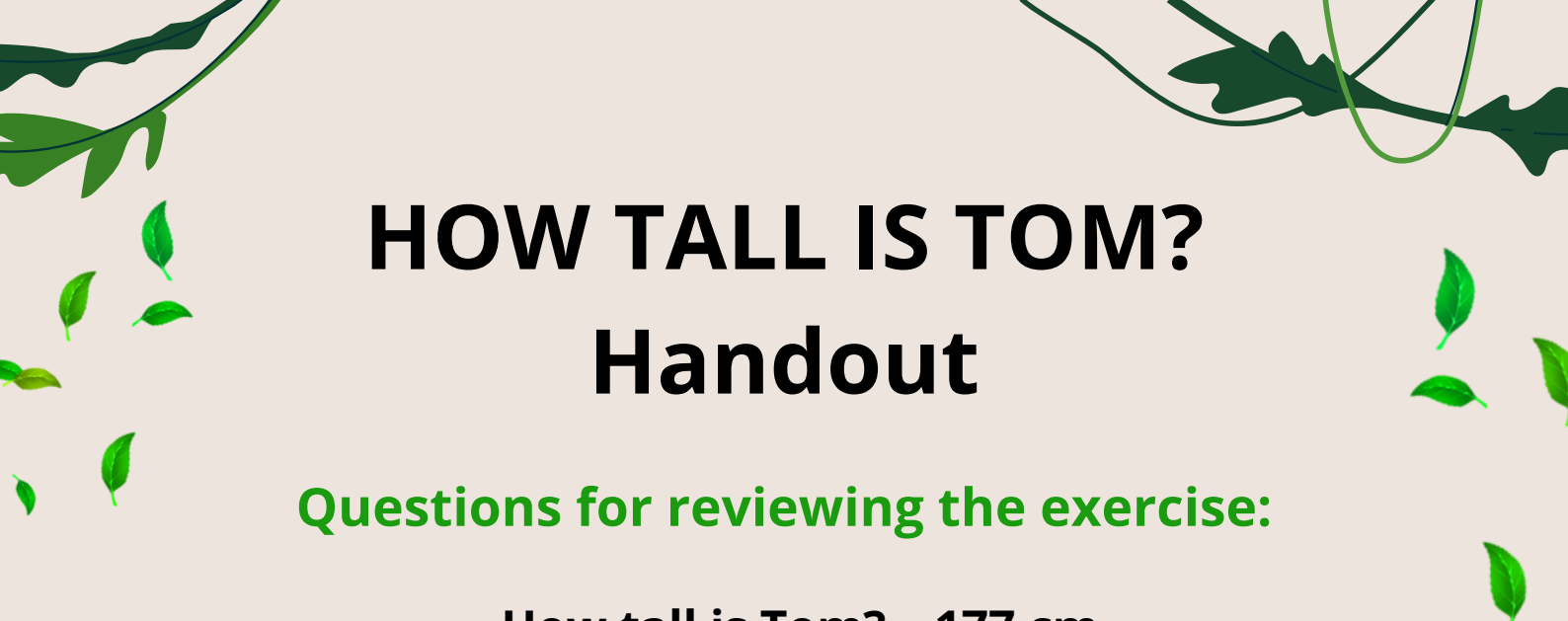
PETER IS 11 CM SHORTER THAN IAN.

X6

BERNARD IS 10 CM TALLER THAN TOM.

PETER IS 10 CM SHORTER THAN KEVIN.





HOW TALL IS TOM?

Handout

Questions for reviewing the exercise:

How tall is Tom? – 177 cm

Why could/could not the team find the solution?

How many messages have been sent?
(Enough - 60-70 – or too less or too many?)

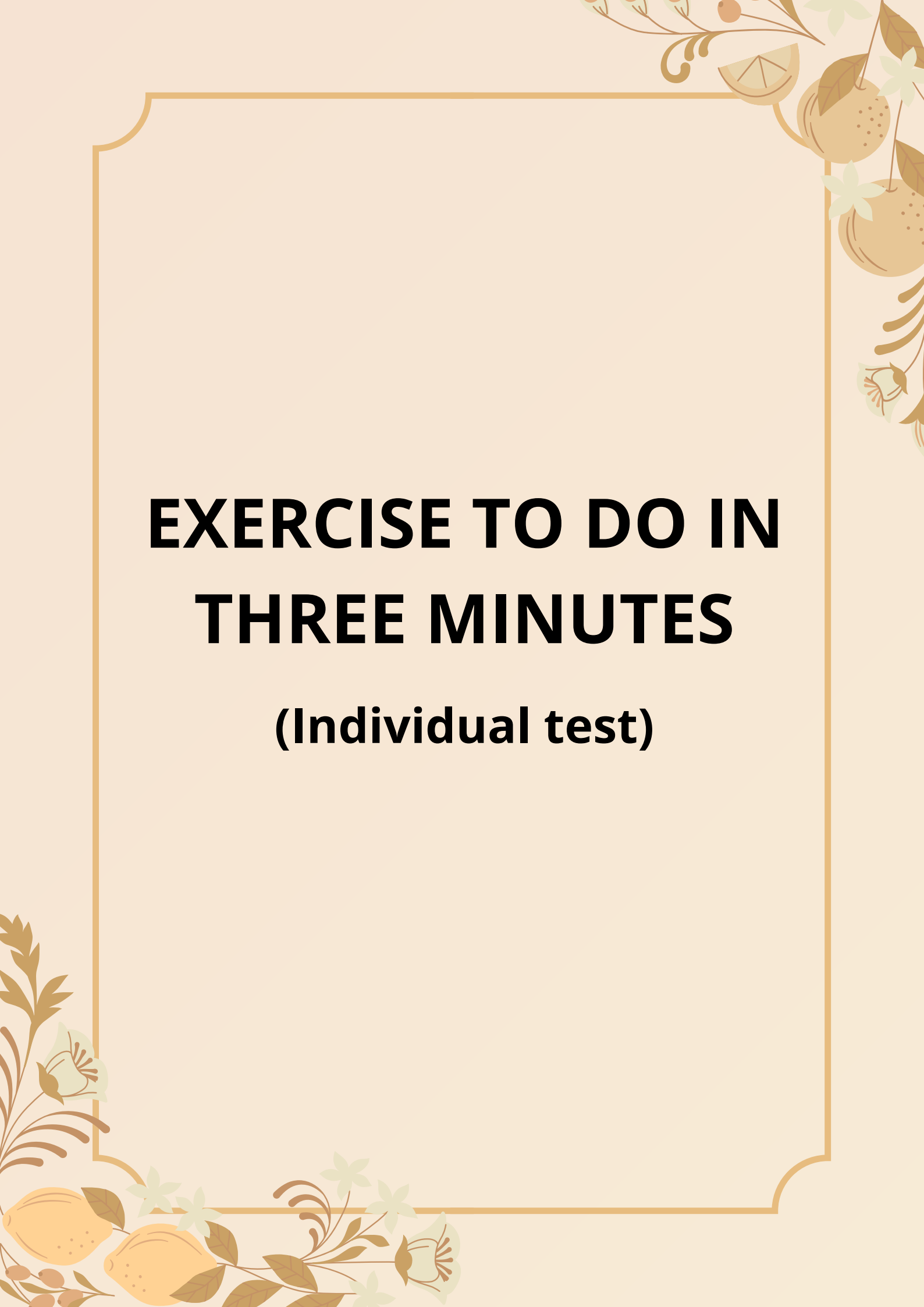
What made the communication difficult and/or easier?

If somebody knew the effective solution, could s/he make it accepted by the team? Why or why not could this person be influential in the team?

Was there any leader of the work? If yes, was there one or several leaders? How have they been chosen?

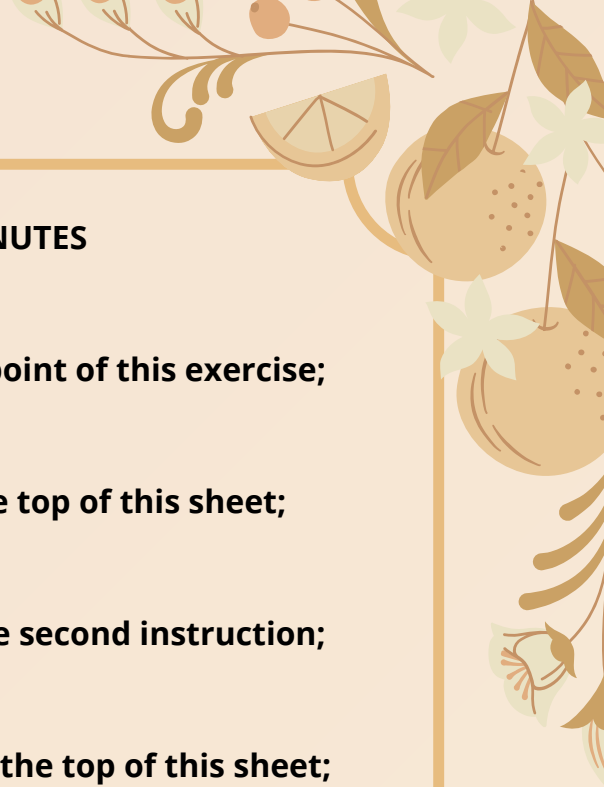
What kind of information management system(s) (collecting – completing - checking information) have they developed and at what stage of the game?



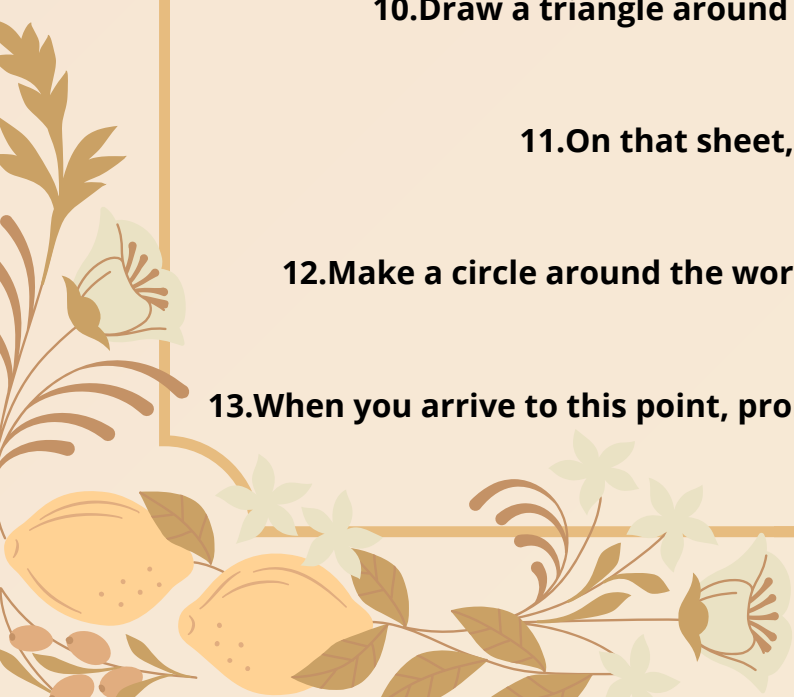
The page features a light beige background with a central rectangular frame. The corners of the frame are decorated with stylized illustrations of lemons, lemongrass, and small white flowers. The text is centered within the frame.

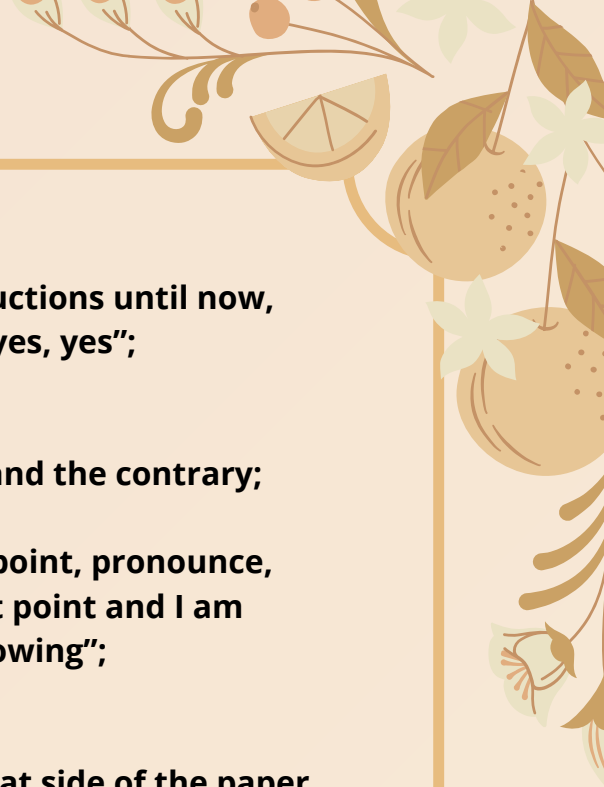
EXERCISE TO DO IN THREE MINUTES

(Individual test)



EXERCISES TO DO IN THREE MINUTES

1. Before doing anything, read carefully each point of this exercise;
 2. Write your name in the right corner of the top of this sheet;
 3. Draw a circle around the word "name" of the second instruction;
 4. Draw five small squares in the left corner of the top of this sheet;
 5. Put an X in each square;
 6. Insert each square in a circle;
 7. Write your name under the title of this sheet;
 8. Next to the title, write.... "yes, yes, yes";
 9. Put an X on the left corner in the low part of the sheet;
 10. Draw a triangle around the X that you just drew;
 11. On that sheet, multiply 79×35 ;
 12. Make a circle around the word "sheet" in the 7th instruction;
 13. When you arrive to this point, pronounce, in a loud voice, your name;
- 



14.If you think that you followed the instructions until now, pronounce, in a loud voice, “yes, yes, yes”;

15.Count, in a normal voice, from 1 to 10 and the contrary;

16.If you are the first person to be in that point, pronounce, in a loud voice, “I’m the first to be in that point and I am a leader in the instruction’s following”;

17.Underline all the numbers which are on that side of the paper.

18.Pronounce, in a loud voice, “I almost finished and I followed the instructions”;

19.Now you’ve finished to read carefully all the points of this test, fill only the second instruction.

Stay in silence avoiding to make the others understanding that you finished the test (the following actions are strictly forbidden: laughing, making disappointment exclamations, verbal and non-verbal expressions of any type)



The image as a language

















AUTUMN

Fruits of the work are picked
People prepare for leaving
Unfinished business has to be dealt with
Acceptance of « the end »
Celebration of results

WINTER

The ground is frozen
Who is who
What can I show
Am I at the right place
No trust yet
Communication on a « safe » level

Stages of Group Dynamic

SUMMER

Trust is high
People can be open
People can take risks
Different kind of (authentic) behaviour is allowed and practiced
High level of co-operation

SPRING

Roles/behaviour are tried out
Trust is building
Anxiety is reducing
A fresh culture is being created



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