Story boxes

Description:

- A story box is a case filled with different small objects (e.g. a snowman, a toy car, an airplane, a crocodile, Lego bricks, a piece of paper, a tennis ball, etc.).

- The children choose one or more objects from the box (e.g. a snowman, an airplane) and create a story with these items. They decide which item to start with (e.g. the snowman) and a child starts tells a short story about the selected object. This may be a description of what he/she sees (e.g. "*The snowman has blue eyes". "And a red nose."*); it may be a description of an action (*"Snowman is sad. He melts in the sun."*), etc. A second child continues the story, connecting to what has been said before (*"Snowman sees an airplane. He gets in and flies to a cold place."*); then a third child (*"To the refrigerator." "No, he visits the Eskimos."*)

- If necessary, children are supported by the teacher in structuring the story, in interlinking different ideas, etc. (T: "*Sarah wants him to live in refrigerator and Tommy, you want him to go and visit the Eskimos. Can't he do both?*" Tommy: *"Yes, yes! First he goes to the refrigerator. He doesn't want toy stay there. He is all alone there. Than he flies to see the Eskimos.*")

- If children are new to this activity, it may help them to be given a "start-up" sentence by the adult (e.g. *"Once upon a time …"*; *"today, snowman is sad …"*)

- The story may be written down or recorded.
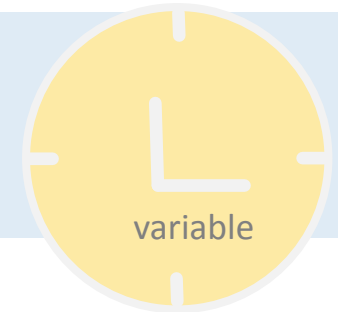

☑ Active language learning	☑ Holistic language learning
☑ Meaningful language learning	☑ Focus on language learning as a process
☑ Relying on linguistic repertoires	

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Didactic comment:

- One single story box allows children to create hundreds of stories, depending on the objects themselves, their number, and the order in which they appear in the story. E.g. a story starting with the little monster and its quest for identity (*"Am I an owl?" "No, because you cannot fly." "You are pink." "You have legs."*) is different from the one placing the owl at the centre of action, looking for its mummy (*"Have you seen my mummy?";"Yes, over there…".*)

- The possibilities of creation are unlimited: boxes applying to specific thematic areas (e.g. animals, food), boxes containing main characters of a story, boxes containing a conglomeration of different objects, etc.

- Boxes may contain various items (animals, vehicles, construction bricks, beads, etc.) or items belonging to one thematic area (e.g. animals).

Variation(s):

Story boxes offer a huge range of possibilities to create stories respecting interests, talents and needs of the children:

- Structure of the stories: several small independent stories; one main story with either several main characters or parallel storylines; etc.;

- Number of objects: a small number of objects chosen by the children; one object per child (leads to very elaborated stories)

- Monolingual versus multilingual stories: Children use their home languages to create a story (e.g. "Do you speak "snowmannish"? Let's see who speaks a language which Jimmy understands…"); bilingual stories are created with one ore several main characters speaking different languages (e.g. English and German).

- Parallel stories with the same basic story line but different main characters.

- Personal story boxes: Children create their own story boxes with objects, which are of value to them.