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Preliminary exercise: shared story telling by turns, sequels or chain stories

Goal

To promote the enjoyment of storytelling in a playful and easy manner; this preliminary exercise also serves as an initial step to the written form of story telling (see below #2). At the same time, this story-telling exercise also furthers students' oral expression in the heritage language.

Shared storytelling by turns, sequels, or chain stories

1st–6th grade

10–15 minutes



Procedure:

- a) The students sit in a circle (if possible). The instructor or a student relates the beginning of a story in one or several sentences (Example: "It was 3 o'clock in the morning, everything was pitch dark. Very quietly, the front door of the bleak housing block opened.") Prompt: We are going to continue and make up this story together!
- b) The students continue to spin the tale with one or several sentences (maximum five sentences) each. They can take turns randomly or sequentially, row by row. The important thing is that everyone contributes.

Remarks:

- Exciting story beginnings can and should also be collected and brought to class by students. Possible sources include the students' own fantasy and imagination, sentences from books or newspaper reports, pictures or photos depicting exciting or interesting situations.
- A clearly communicated task assignment is indispensable, such as: „we have 10 minutes to create this story and to conclude and round it off with an ending.“
- To ensure that all students engage in this task equally, the teacher can previously hand out two or three buttons or paper strips. Those students who have contributed a sentence can turn in a button or a piece of paper. By the end of the exercise, all students should have turned in their buttons or bits of paper.
- Further possible guideline variations: alternatingly female and male students, or a younger and older child, taking turns.
- Forego corrections as much as possible, so as not to diminish spontaneity. Reduce interventions to clear up unintelligible or inappropriate content.
- Possible continuation: the students compile in writing (alone or in pairs) the commonly created story; then the texts are compared.
- The exercise is also suitable to end a lesson or as an activity to loosen things up during the class.

Variants:

1. Instead of engaging the whole class in this exercise, it can be conducted with just one or two group levels, as long as the activity was well introduced.
2. The "common thread" variation: someone begins to tell the story while holding a ball of wool or string in his/her hands. S/he keeps the beginning of the thread while passing the ball to the next person (or selects someone) to continue the story. As this continues, each participant keeps holding on to the thread while passing the yarn on to the next student. Thus, parallel to the development of the story, a net of threads (as symbolic leitmotif) is being spread all over the class. Simultaneously, it shows which students have not yet taken a turn. (Source: Zopf (1995), p. 67.)