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AN ANALYSIS OF TWO TEXTBOOKS USED IN THE EFL TEACHING OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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The aim of this paper was to investigate the quality of textbook content in the EFL teaching of preschool children, as well as its quality and susceptibility to practical application in the class. The broader goal of the study was to raise awareness about the characteristics that good teaching materials for young learners should have – so all teachers might use the guidelines proposed in the paper to prepare some additional materials, or to assess/improve the materials they use. In order to obtain credible results, a study was conducted by focusing on the analysis of two textbooks used in Bosnian pre-school English learning centers. The textbooks analyzed were *Playway to English 1– Pupil’s Book* and *Hippo and Friends 2– Pupil’s Book*. The results indicated that good-quality content is present in the EFL teaching of preschoolers and it is mostly suited and adjusted to the level, interest and affinities of the learners. The study conducted leads to the conclusion that a positive shift has occurred in the teaching process. Namely, the traditional teacher-centered and grammar-based approach has been replaced by a more innovative learner-centered and content-based approach. However, considering the fact that the study did not include class observations, the next expedient step that could further contribute to the deeper exploration of the topic might be observations of the practical classes in order to assess the efficiency of the actual application of the content found within textbooks.

Keywords: EFL teaching, preschool children, textbook content

1. INTRODUCTION

Most English language teaching courses these days rely heavily on commercially designed foreign language teaching textbooks in their everyday

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programs. Considering the fact that every now and then publishers release new, improved and updated editions, it comes as no surprise that most course designers and teachers resort to using ready-made designed materials, serving as the heart of course syllabi, a basis for building up language knowledge.

Although many researchers pinpoint a great range of all advantages in using textbooks (e.g. Garinger, 2002; Hutchinson & Torres (in Awasthi, 2006); Litz, 2005) a number of researchers take a more critical stance, identifying drawbacks and weak points that can be encountered in many textbooks, especially if not implemented in the right context, taking into consideration all the peculiarities of a certain setting (e.g. McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Renner, 1997 (in Litz, 2005); Sheldon, 1988). Therefore, this paper will try to critically evaluate textbooks used in the preschool English language learning environment in terms of their content.

Different experts provide different criteria for the assessment and selection of high-quality textbook content and topics; hence there is no consensus on the issue. However, there are some features permeating most authors' writings on the topic (Brown, E. 2004; Cameron, 2005; Celce-Murcia, 1991; Chang, 2007; Gates, Stefel & Molson, 2003; Genesee, 1994; Halliwell, 2004; Hismanoglu, 2005; Moon, 2000; Richards & Rogers, 2010; Smallwood, 2002), which are regarded as being essential and necessary conditions for preschoolers' textbooks and topics included within them: content in line with learners' intellectual and age level; well-knit plot; originality of the story; fantastic elements; capacity to incite wonder; developed and memorable characters; interesting setting; themes based on truth and ethical principles; congruent style and content; colors and shapes complementing the text; a clear and direct style; interesting and captivating illustrations; sets of linguistic patterns such as: parallelisms, alliteration, contrast and intertextuality; capacity to develop empathy and sense of belonging in children, as well as to teach universal moral values.

There is a substantial number of studies analyzing and evaluating young learners' textbooks based on various criteria and producing different results. For instance, Keban (2012) evaluated an English textbook used in the third grade of a school in Malang: *English for Kids Grade 3*, with the aim of analyzing how much the textbook meets the criteria of a good EFL textbook. The author used interviews with 3rd grade teachers and a checklist in order to obtain data. The results showed that around 61% of the textbook conforms to the criteria of a good-quality textbook. Rezaei (2014) used evaluation check-lists to assess the *First Friends* series of textbooks used in Iranian schools, in order to explore whether they meet common criteria in terms of physical layout, organization

and content characteristics. The author found that the design and layout of the books was suitable, but they lacked video CDs and posters. Dickinson (2010) explored the *Let's Go 1* course book with its accompanying materials, relying on a check-list based system, in order to assess whether the materials need changes and adaptations. The author concluded that the examined materials are a valuable asset in teaching, but should be adapted by teachers to exploit all young learners' cognitive potential. Angulo and Miranda (2014) conducted a qualitative study in order to examine the efficiency and suitability of the *Play and Learn* textbook used in Costa Rica. The results indicated that the textbook should include more pedagogical and culture activities and more focus on listening and speaking skills. Kirkgoz (2009) used a questionnaire as a method to assess three English course books used in grade four in Turkey: *Texture*, *Time for English*, and *Trip 1*. The results showed different levels of appropriateness of the textbooks and the author suggested ideas for future revisions of the course books. Sovič and Hus (2016) executed a semiotic analysis of three English textbooks (*Playway to English 1*, *Magic Adventure 2*, *Cookie and Friends*) for young learners in order to assess if symbols used are adjusted to children's cognitive development at their age. Results showed that some corrections in the textbooks are required to make them more in line with learners' cognitive development and visual perception. Nordlund (2016) made a comparative analysis of two English textbooks used in Sweden with a focus on vocabulary: *Good Stuff* and *New Champion*. The results suggested that even though many words correspond to general high-frequency English words, as much as one-third are not found among the 2,000 most frequent English words. Chang (2007) investigated, among other things, how a sample of three textbooks used in Taiwan for teaching young learners (*Power the Kids 1*, *Woody and Me 4*, *Smart 6*) rate when it comes to the criteria of good-quality children's literature, using a check-based system. The results showed that the course books were linguistically and culturally inappropriate.

Young learners' textbooks were chosen as a suitable and important subject of the exploration for this study as well, considering the fact that the early age in a human's life is a highly sensitive and critical period. It is a period when learning is at its prime, and therefore, the process of learning/teaching must be handled delicately and appropriately, maximizing all young learners' cognitive and affective potential, but at the same time being cautious about the nature and steps of this process. For this reason, the present paper aims at exploring what kind of textbook content is employed in the EFL teaching of preschool children and whether it conforms to the criteria of good-quality age-appropriate textbooks.

In order to achieve this, a study focusing on the analysis of English textbooks used in EFL work with preschoolers was carried out. The broader goal of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the content found within the textbooks and its impact on children's acquisition of language knowledge.

The more specific aims of the study include the exploration of the following questions:

- Do the textbooks serving as a basis for the teaching of English to preschoolers contain good quality content?
- Is the content found in the textbooks in line with the needs and interests of the students and is it in accordance with pedagogical and methodological norms?

As a response to the two questions, the analysis of the two textbooks that are used in teaching English to preschool children in Sarajevo was conducted. In this investigation, attention was paid to the texts themselves, illustrations accompanying them and the efficiency and potential effects on children's linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge and development. The points of reference for the study and criteria for examining the content were the writings and theoretical considerations by authors writing on the topic: Appelt, 1985; Beauchat, Blamey and Walpole 2009; Brown, E. 2004; Brand, 2006; Cameron, 2005; Celce-Murcia, 1991; Chang, 2007; Genesee, 1994; Halliwell, 2004; Hismanoglu, 2005; Maley and Duff, 1982; Moon, 2000; Pinter, 2006.

The outcome of the study was expected to indicate the strong points and merits that well-designed textbook content can provide for preschoolers' overall development as well as to define possible shortcomings and limitations of the present manner in which it is being executed. The findings should serve as a stimulus for the wider use of good-quality content in teaching English to young children, as well as an incentive for an even more enhanced approach in its implementation.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Assessment

This particular study will examine young learners' textbooks that are used in the Bosnian context by employing descriptive-evaluative content analysis as its methodological approach.

The crucial criteria, drawn from the writings of the authors mentioned above, to be taken into consideration during the analysis in this paper are:

- the content is imaginative
- it promotes empathy, understanding and compassion for other people's lives and experiences
- it puts the major focus on the lives and experiences of children
- it presents various models of language structure
- it contains repeated and predictable linguistic patterns thus enabling children to grasp linguistic structures of English
- it provides realistic and simple dialogues
- it exposes the students to new illustrated vocabulary within the right context
- it is accompanied by colorful, clear, uncluttered illustrations that serve as decoration and even more importantly, as an aid to the better understanding of the text

When it comes to the textbooks as a whole, they are analyzed according to the following criteria (adapted from Chang, 2007):

- Are the lesson objectives clear?
- Is the language content and the grading and organization of that content appropriate?
- Is the language presented and practiced in meaningful, appropriate and relevant ways?
- Is the balance of skills appropriate?

To what extent do the tasks and activities include authentic communicative interaction?

However, the evaluation of the specific texts within the textbooks is done according to the following questions (adapted from Chang, 2007):

- Is there an appropriate range and balance of genres and text-types?
- Are the dialogues simple and realistic?
- Are the texts that appear in each unit appropriate in terms of the language objectives of that unit?
- Do the texts provide good models of language structure?
- Do the texts include repeated and predictable language patterns?
- Are the illustrations of new vocabulary included in the texts?
- Do the texts focus on the lives and experiences of children?
- Do the texts have imaginative interest and do they encourage empathy with the lives and experiences of others?

Finally, special attention is given to the role and features of illustrations in the textbooks and the questions assessing their efficiency are the following (adapted from Chang, 2007):

- Do the illustrations contribute directly and unambiguously to the understanding of the texts?
- Are the illustrations clear and uncluttered?
- Do the illustrations contain details that might distract learners from the lesson objectives?
- Are the illustrations likely to be attractive and interesting to learners?

2.2. Sample

Hippo and Friends 2 – Pupil’s Book and *Playway to English 1- Pupil’s Book* are the two textbooks analyzed in this paper.

Hippo and Friends 2 – Pupil’s Book, the first international edition of which was published in 2006 by Cambridge University Press, is intended for young A1 basic/beginner-level learners of English, aged 4 to 8, and is used in some Bosnian kindergartens in EFL teaching.

Besides the Pupil’s Book, *Hippo and Friends* comprises a Teacher’s Book accompanied by CDs, photocopiable extras found at the end of the book, flashcards, story posters and puppets. Each Pupil’s book contains worksheets (four per unit: one sticker worksheet, two activity and one story worksheet).

The book contains nine units introducing nine different topics: greetings, school, clothes and routines, autumn, family, carnival, transport and professions, food, animals and holidays. There are also three extra units introducing the children with three major British holidays: Christmas, Halloween and Easter. The major teaching points include greetings (*Hi, See you, Hello, Goodbye*), the identification of objects (vocabulary related to: school, such as: *bag, school, pencils* etc. – Unit 1; clothes: *trousers, shirt, jumper* etc. – Unit 2; autumn season: *tree, leaves, umbrella* etc. – Unit 3; family: *mummy, daddy, sister* – Unit 4; transport and holidays), learning and the revision of colors and numbers (from 1 to 10). The focus is put on learning nouns related to different topics and surroundings and on the natural acquisition of formulaic phrases through stories and songs. There are in total 67 new lexical items introduced as the main language of the units (including the three extra units). In addition to this lexical set, each unit contains revised language that was to be acquired through previous stages of English learning (presented in *Hippo and Friends-Starter* and *Hippo and Friends – Book 1*).

Playway to English 1- Pupil’s Book was published in 2009 by Cambridge University Press and is intended for 4 to 8 years old A1 beginner/starter-level

learners of English. Similarly to *Hippo and Friends*², this textbook has also been used for teaching English to preschool children in Bosnian kindergartens.

Besides the Pupil's Book, the set contains a Teacher's Book, Activity Book, DVD and CDs, Cards Pack and Max, the glove puppet. The book comprises ten units called: *Hello, School, Fruit, Pets, Toys, Weather, Party, Health, Food and Animals*. All of the units contain various forms of texts for children including: chants, rhymes, songs, cartoon stories and sketches. The textbook also offers a myriad of activities, games, mini-dialogues, imitations and pair and group exercises centered on the songs, stories and sketches. The teaching points include: instruction forms (*Give me, Stand up, Close your eyes, Smile, Go away, take a pencil, Write the numbers, etc.*), interrogative structures (*What color is it?, What does ... want?, What's this?, What can I do now?, How many ...are there?, What's the weather like today?, what do you like? What does ...like?*), politeness markers (*please, thank you*), vocabulary related to the topic of the unit (e.g.: Unit *Fruit: apples, bananas, plums, pears*), Unit *Pets: dog, mouse, rabbit, duck, cat...*), words of praise and encouragement (*Wonderful, fantastic*).

3. THE ANALYSIS OF THE TWO BOOKS

3.1. *The Analysis of Hippo and Friends 2– Pupil's Book*

In order to achieve as credible results as possible, the analysis of the book is divided into three meaningful parts. The first part of the analysis focuses on the textbook as a whole, i.e., on its overall organization, content and the skills employed. In the second part a glimpse is taken into the specific forms of texts: their usage, quality and suitability is assessed in detail. Finally, the third part focuses on the illustrations and their contribution to the learning process.

3.1.1. *The Analysis of the Book as a Whole*

Upon a thorough examination of the entire book, it becomes evident that besides the nouns that are put in the central place in relation to other parts of speech, texts include and promote the grasping of high-frequency verbs such as: *to say, to sleep, to thank, to look, to fly, to like, to bring, to have* etc. and high-frequency adjectives such as: *happy, busy, hot, sad, magic*; color adjectives (*red, green, blue, yellow, red*). Texts also present the children with subject pronouns, definite and indefinite articles, as well as possessive adjectives.

The entire textbook places emphasis on interactive learning through stories and songs. Therefore, teaching of English is mainly based on texts adapted to young learners. Each of the units begins and ends with a greeting song. Teachers are recommended in the *Teacher's Book* to follow the identical structure within every unit, paying attention to the book organization.

The first lesson always starts with a song that the children and the teacher sing together with the performer on the CD. In Lesson 2 the teacher presents a story using a story poster as a visual aid while the children are listening to the teacher reading it or from the CD. In the third lesson the song and story are revised through lively activities that demand the children's active participation. In the fourth lesson the children are expected to respond in a simple way to questions or to complete phrases. Finally, the elements of the story and the song are brought together connecting the theme and vocabulary of the entire unit that has been learned and practiced through the five lessons. In the end, the children fold the ready-made worksheets with the familiar story and bring it home.

As can be seen, the units are organized in such a way that they slowly and gradually move from easier and more simple to more difficult and demanding tasks. Children are first encouraged just to listen, then to learn through Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques and engage in various small workshops and only then are asked to produce oral language. Thus, after the focus on developing learners' receptive skills, the emphasis is laid on practicing productive skills

3.1.2. *The Analysis of the Texts*

The stories are major points around which the entire textbook is organized. All stories have the same main protagonist: Hippo. He is a child with whose family and friends we are introduced throughout the stories. His friends are various species of animals: a monkey, a cat and a dog with whose adventures and experiences we are introduced within these short stories. Each of them contains four short passages that roughly follow the following structure pattern: the first passage introduces the story, the main problem or action of the story is represented in the second and the third paragraphs, while the final passage offers a resolution and conclusion.

Therefore, from this structure we see that every story has a plot that is gradually built up, including an opening, a problem that reaches a climax and a final solution and closure. This is an important quality of a good children's story. Most educationalists claim that a good plot is vital in ensuring that stories are interesting for children and that they captivate their attention. Unlike a lot of other "stories" that we find in other textbooks that simply present the learners with a sequence of activities done by the characters, these truly engage the children through a well-knit and yet simple and realistic plot.

The characters in the plot are also adapted to the level of young learners' needs, for the main protagonist is a child personified in the animal of a hippo

who experiences the problems and dilemmas of a typical preschool child. For example: *Hippo cannot find a sock in his cluttered room* (p. 17); *Hippo wants to play, but all of his family members are busy and do not have time for him* (p. 38); *Hippo and his friends are fantasizing about what they will become when they grow up* (p. 53); *Hippo is hiding from his friend* (p. 29). All these “problems” are experienced by young learners as well and therefore they can relate to these stories. However, the characters in the stories are mostly flat and there are not many differences in their behavior and personal traits that would make them all unique and recognizable. Only the character of the cat appears to be slightly different from the others, since in a few stories we see that she likes to sleep a lot and uses every chance to snatch some sleep. Still, in general, the main characters of Hippo and his friends exhibit typical features of young children, which makes them likeable characters with which children can identify. Namely, sometimes they are mischievous (*Hippo hides from his friend* (p. 69); *Cat splashes water on its friends as a joke* (p. 77)), they like to play and fantasize, they like to disguise themselves and pretend to be other persons they like (*they disguise themselves for a party as pirates, a fairy, a clown* (p. 43)), they like their friends, etc.

Apart from providing information about the lives of their imaginary peers and their everyday activities, the Hippo stories promote positive values and attitudes, such as empathy (*when Monkey is sad, children can relate to him* (p. 69), togetherness (*friends are always getting along and playing together in harmony*), work ethics (*before going to sleep Hippo is thinking whether he prepared everything he needed for school the next day* (p. 14)), helpfulness (*Hippo helps each of his family members with their work at home* (p. 37)), family unity (*after finishing all errands, all family members get together and play* (p. 38)), coexistence and tolerance of different individuals (*all of Hippo’s friends belong to divergent species, symbolizing and promoting cordial and honest mutual relationships within a heterogeneous society*). All these positive values are incorporated and promoted through the stories naturally, thus teaching social values to young learners.

Another positive trait of the stories is that they contain humor and comic parts that children find funny and interesting (Zbaracki, 2003). For example, *Monkey is sad because he cannot find Hippo and asks other animals if they saw him and finally when he sits on the rock because of tiredness, the rock moves and he sees that the rock was actually Hippo* (p. 69). Another illustration of good-quality humor is seen in the story *The Pilot* where *animals are discussing what they want to be when they grow up*. Hippo says *he wants to be a pilot*, *Monkey wants to be a doctor*, *Dog wants to be a police officer* and *Cat finally exclaims: When I grow up, I want to...sleep* (p. 55). This relaxed, cheerful atmosphere of stories filled with

comic relief is certainly one of the most significant qualities of the textbook, for it ensures that children are not bored, but have fun and laugh while learning.

Finally, the linguistic aspect of the stories is suited to the principles of adequate children's learning (Ghosn, 2002). It contains a lot of repetition and formulaic expressions. Almost every story includes repeated phrases such as: *When I grow up, I want to be* (pp. 53-54); *I can't find* (pp. 22-23); *What are you doing?* (pp. 37-38); *Now Hippo, Monkey, Dog and Cat are counting: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10!* (p.29); *Will you play?* (pp. 37-38), etc.

Besides formulaic phrases, every story offers new thematic vocabulary which is usually mentioned several times in the text so that children become familiarized with it more easily. Texts also offer onomatopoeic expressions and appealing rhythms and sounds such as: *yum yum* (meaning: *this is so delicious* (p. 62)) or *zzzzzzzz* (*Cat is sleeping* (p. 55)).

Another positive aspect of the organization of the story is the blend of the narrative part and the dialogues. This organizational structure is especially suitable for acting out the story where the teacher can be a narrator, while the children can recite the lines of the dialogue, which are usually repeated many times in the story, thus facilitating the acquisition of these lines and encouraging learners to practice them through fun and interesting dramatic activities. Finally, it is important to note that the language of the story is mostly realistic and authentic: it imitates everyday speech, it uses contractions that are typically used in conversation (e.g. *I can't* instead of *I cannot* (p. 37)).

A great advantage of the textbook is also that the stories are convenient for dramatization and acting out. *The Teacher's Book* offers numerous suggestions and ideas on how to fully exploit the stories through various activities, role-plays and games. All the needed materials are ready-made and inserted into the end of the book in the form of photocopiable extras containing finger puppets, picture cards, drawings and various templates that significantly ease the teacher's task of conducting an engaging class with a myriad of activities.

As previously mentioned, besides stories, each unit is opened with an appropriate song. Every song is designed specifically for every unit and its vocabulary follows the theme of the unit. Thus the story and the song of the same unit promote the same vocabulary belonging to one lexical thematic set. For example, *Unit 4* is presented through a song and story about the family. Thus, family vocabulary is present in both the song and the story (*mummy, daddy, brother, sister, grandma, grandpa*). The story has a lot of repetitions: *will you play, I can help, thank you, Hippo, mummy and daddy/sister and brother are busy*. Fixed phrases are found in the song as well: *this is my family, I love them, there is daddy/mummy*, etc... Thus, through repetitions, both the song and the

story promote learning new linguistic chunks. Besides, simple rhymes and rhythm make the song memorable and thus enable children to archive the new vocabulary in their long-term memory in an easy, fun and enjoyable manner. Also, the songs are designed to be sung with movements, thus enabling children to exploit their kinesthetic potential.

3.1.3. *The Analysis of Illustrations*

In the end, when it comes to stories, illustrations that accompany them must be taken into consideration as well. Every story comprises four passages and is also accompanied by four pictures. They clearly and unambiguously follow the events of the story and facilitate the children's understanding of the text, for all of the major actions mentioned in the paragraphs are illustrated. They are also presented on big story posters that come as part of the *Hippo and Friends* set and thus all children can see it clearly. However, some of the pictures sometimes lack more details and creativity and complexity of shapes. Today children are accustomed to complex and intricate illustrations seen on the cartoons and therefore simplistic images that also mostly use basic colors without a lot of shading and hews can fall short of impressing the children.

3.1.4. *Conclusion*

It can be concluded that the textbook *Hippo and Friends 2* is mostly based on good-quality texts and observes most of the principles of high-quality content. Namely, the language is simple, authentic and the sentences are short and repetitive. The characters are child-like and children can easily identify with them. Similarly, the setting portrays the safety and warmth of home and nature. The plot is finely and clearly structured. The metaphoric representation of the events corresponds to positive and affirmative human values. However, there is always place for improvement and in this case it means that the illustrations could be more imaginative and colorful, the setting of the story could be more creative as well, more fictional and fantastic elements could be used and the plot sometimes could be more adventurous.

An overall assessment of *Hippo and Friends 2 - Pupil's Book* is that the book offers an abundance of interesting content to young learners which they are likely to enjoy. Considering the fact that this book is used in some preschool learning centers in Sarajevo, it can be said that our educational system experienced a great shift towards a modern, resourceful and up-to-date system of teaching English that primarily cares for the interests, needs, condition and abilities of young learners.

3.2. The Analysis of Playway to English - Book 1

3.2.1. The Analysis of the Book as a Whole

The textbook offers stories and songs for each of the thematic units and also a myriad of activities, ideas and methodological steps in the Teacher's book on how to completely exploit the potential of these stories. For instance, children can learn vocabulary efficiently if they are encouraged to actively use a picture dictionary through pair-work games, like the one offered in the Teacher's Book: child A points to a picture and child B names it; child B looks at the picture dictionary for ten seconds and tries to remember as many items as possible. Then they close their eyes and tell child B as many items as they can remember; child A names a picture and child B points to it; both children look at the picture dictionary; child A says the names of all the items except one. (p. 5)

Another suggested way to promote learning new words is through model dialogues with the aid of pictures. Namely, children look at a picture and at the same time listen to a mini-dialogue. They learn to say it themselves and also to change it in a creative way.

The children's comprehension of the story is checked as well. For instance, after seeing a story on DVD, children complete missing pictures with their picture stickers while simultaneously listening to the story on CD. Listening skills are also included. As an illustration, following spoken instructions, they are to draw a picture or put the pictures of the story in the right order. After watching the stories, learners are also expected to listen to words, sequences of words or sentences and to decide which pictures go with what they have heard. Activities also include listening to stories that are slightly different from the ones they have already seen many times on DVD and completing tasks based on them. Also, children are encouraged to use the Max glove puppet and act out a dialogue after they have watched and learned the story. The textbook is designed in such a way that it also compels the children to gain broader knowledge that is not just limited to linguistic competence. As an illustration, children are played a short chant like this:

*A red bike for Linda,
A green bike for Li,
A yellow bike for Benny,
A blue bike for me! (p. 8)*

First, the children listen to the rhyme and color the children's bikes in appropriate colors, then the rhyme is practiced intensively. Then they are

asked to look at a picture with boats and are instructed to color each one of them in a different color. Thus they can make their own chant using the formula with the new picture: *A red boat for Linda, A green boat for Li...* (p. 9)

As presented, the textbook is an adequate resource, accompanied by practical methods and suggestions to teachers on how to successfully organize class around the textbook content. The activities are fun and not overwhelming. They move from easier to more demanding tasks and involve a lot of revision and recycling. They prompt the development of listening and speaking skills, as well of thinking skills, for they ask children to use logic. Finally, they are often done in pairs, or in groups, which has a tremendous significance for young learners' development of social intelligence.

3.2.2. *The Analysis of the Texts*

Playway to English 1 presents three kinds of stories: Mr. Matt sketches (four in total), cartoon stories (six in total) and action stories (seven of them).

The Mr. Matt sketches are short humorous stories that children watch on the DVD accompanying the textbook. Mr. Matt is acted out by a real grown up and he has two children: Danny and Daisy, who appear in every sketch and create comic and eventful storylines.

The sketches are a great source of various kinds of knowledge offered in a fun, interesting and creative manner. First of all, they provide students with many repetitive words and phrases that enter young learners' minds through constant replication in the proper context, for example: *ice-cream, banana, dentist, chocolate, thank you, don't worry*. All of the linguistic forms are short, simple and clearly spoken by the characters in the sketches. The texts contain a lot of humoristic instances. In one instance, in a sketch with a dentist (p. 54), adults act like children and speak typical childish sentences, which children normally find hilarious. In this reversal of roles, the children are acting like responsible adults who are trying to persuade their father to eat healthy fruit instead of candy, while the father is stubborn and whimsical because he does not care about his health, just his caprices. He is an extremely likeable, engaging character who efficiently uses gestures and non-verbal body language together with his text lines. All this, together with a detailed, realistic and varied setting, is a great tool in assisting children's comprehension of the overall story (Cameron, 2005).

Finally, besides having linguistic skills incorporated within a fun, humorous story, the focus seems to be on developing children's extralinguistic skills. As an illustration, the same sketch focuses on the importance of taking care of one's own health and listening to the advice of others instead of relentlessly

and constantly following of their desires. It also challenges commonly accepted prejudices and fears of the dentist that which is usually envisioned in children's minds as a scary, grave and bad persona. Here the dentist is a nice friendly woman who even plays nice relaxing music for her patients and repairs teeth without anyone feeling pain.

The sketch has all segments of a good, well-structured story and in the end, of course, offers a moral and teaches children a lesson about the significance of eating healthy food and taking care of their health. This aspect is a great advantage of the textbook, for, unlike *Hippo and Friends*, it frequently teaches English through the cross-curricular approach, which is often emphasized as an important feature of material for young language learners (e.g. Mitits, L, 2014). Here children are taught about maintaining their health through a story. Besides this instance, some other examples of this content- and language-integrated approach are: making a fishbowl (following instructions to do a craft activity), color mixing (learning which colors are produced from mixing two different colors), making a rainbow (learning the colors of the spectrum and performing an experiment to show how a rainbow is formed), animals (predicting which animals lay eggs). The activity with the animals is a fine example of the superiority of *Playway to English* to *Hippo and Friends* in the aspect of learning about the world, for in the former children are taught about the genuine, real functioning and processes in the animal world, while in the latter, animals are the main protagonists of the stories and behave like humans, with a dog eating cherries and apples while a cat eats salad and oranges. Overall, the Mr. Matt sketches are fine examples of the good use of stories in teaching English, for they promote both linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge within the proper context in a fun, creative and adequate manner to young learners.

In addition to these sketches, the textbook also contains six cartoon stories. These are all funny, light and short stories that children watch on DVD. The cartoons include animals and people alike. They also present children with recurrent formulaic phrases spoken by characters and intended for children to acquire through this intensive exposure. As an example, in the story *The Greedy Monster*, the recurrent phrases are: *Here you are!* and *Give me more!* (p. 22) and in the story *I'm Max*, it is: *What's your name?* (p. 4). As seen from the last example, here, as well as in *Hippo and Friends*, the writers use authentic, conversational contracted versions of phrases. Some others include: *That's OK* (p. 12) or *I've got* (p. 32). Thus, children are being familiarized with authentic everyday forms of the spoken word instead of artificial full versions that can still be found in some textbooks.

It is significant to note that the stories are based on the principle of parallelism, i.e. constant predictable repetitions interrupted by a final surprise. For example, this is finely perceived in the story *The Greedy Monster* (p. 22). The structure of the repetitions (Monster asking for food and children giving food to it, accompanied by the same phrases) is in the end halted by a humorous twist, for *Max put pepper in the apple which caused Monster to sneeze*. Besides being an excellent source of linguistic phrases incorporated into a story with a clear introduction, a climax and a happy, satisfactory resolution, the text also displays some other expedient features of a well-written story. Namely, the story presents a contrast between the good (*Benny, Linda and Max*) characters and the bad one (*Monster*), where eventually the evil character is punished for its greed and unfriendly behavior. This teaches the children about the importance of treating people nicely and it conveys the message that good always prevails over evil. The happy ending depicted in a hilarious way also instigates children's satisfaction and promotes justice, teaching them that *what goes around comes around*.

Finally, it is important to note that the story offers a variety of interesting, onomatopoeic sounds that children enjoy, such as: *Grrrrrrr, Mmmmmmm, Yum-yum*, etc. All the other texts are permeated with these kinds of expressions appealing to children. Just as in the Mr. Matt sketches, these stories promote an integrated, holistic approach to learning language and gaining knowledge about the world. A fine illustration is the cartoon story *The Little Seed* (p. 40) where children are taught how plants grow (with the aid of rain and the sun). Similar to *Hippo and Friends*, where a Hippo puppet is used in class, here the Max glove puppet is a central figure aiding children in learning English in an entertaining way.

Besides stories, there are chants, rhymes and songs which are highly represented in *Playway to English*. All of them are especially written to suit thematic units and to be in tune with the stories and other activities. They are very short and are full of rhythmic repetitions of the words as can be perceived in the rhyme *A cap on the cat* (p. 38): *A cap on a cat - A cap on a dog - A cap on a rabbit - A cap on a frog - Rain, snow or sun - Caps are always fun*

This chant is part of the unit *Weather* and therefore contains vocabulary related to it. The language is simple and not overwhelming. The lines are short and the last words of the lines rhyme (*dog* and *frog*, *sun* and *fun*), thus making it easier for children to memorize the new vocabulary. All of the rhymes and songs are designed in such a way that they can be followed by the mimes and gestures of the teacher and later of the children as well. This principle of learning through the use of chants, songs and rhymes has multiple benefits: it

gives children an opportunity to further develop their kinesthetic intelligence through the TPR approach, including a lot of body movements and gestures; it brings the words and actions together and thus contextualizes the vocabulary and facilitates the learning of the meanings of the words and phrases; it creates an atmosphere of unity and togetherness and creates a bond between the children for they are all participating together in singing and miming.

3.2.3. *The Analysis of Illustrations*

The illustrations are colorful, clear, and they portray in an unambiguous and consistent way the events of the story and thus greatly assist children’s comprehension of the plot.

The colors of the posters are bright and varied, the facial expression and the organization of the setting send clear messages about the mood of the protagonists and the kind of action that is taking place. There is no any extra, unnecessary content obstructing the clarity and precision of the illustrations.

According to the abovementioned points, these images are likely to attract young learners’ attention, for they observe all the rules of an appealing and adequate illustration for young learners (Hladikova, 2014).

3.2.4. *Contrastive table*

As a conclusion, a contrastive table of the features of both analyzed textbooks is given:

Features of the textbooks evaluated

Textbooks analyzed

Hippo and Friends 2- Pupil’s Book

Playway to English 1- Pupil’s Book

Language

The language is simple, realistic, repetitive and in line with the students’ young age. It contains onomatopoeic expressions and contracted versions of grammatical structures. The texts are comprised of narratives and dialogue forms.

The language is authentic, not complex, and it is in accordance with the students’ age and competency level. The texts contain a lot of formulaic expressions, unusual and onomatopoeic sounds. The texts are combinations of narrative and dialogue parts.

Characters

The characters are animals exhibiting the personal traits of children, which enables young learners to identify with them. They are likeable, fun and promote positive behavior. However, most of them are flat characters, and not unique individuals. There are also no evil characters that could be compared to the good ones, which is a shortcoming, for contrast is one of essential means of a good children’s story.

The characters are highly agreeable, humorous and include adults as well as children. There are good and bad characters, which indirectly teaches children good and bad behavior through contrast. They promote affirmative human values. They display a diversity of personalities, which makes them individualistic and interesting.

Plot	All texts have the same structure, being composed of four short passages. The plot has the clear parts of a well-knit story. An introduction, a series of events, a climax and a happy resolution are represented in every piece of writing.	The stories have a well-knit plot with clear introductory, climactic and final parts. Some texts are longer, some shorter, but they all have a high-quality structure.
Setting	Most of the events are happening in and around the house, as well as in nature. Although these are typical places where children spend their time, the setting lacks any portrayal of imaginary or fantastic landscapes.	The events are taking place in the ordinary everyday places of children's lives. The settings are diverse and they portray friendly environments. However, there are not many fantastic or surreal settings from children's imaginations that children's adventurous spirits love.
Theme	The themes are related to the everyday lives of children and they deal with problems with which children can identify. The themes are well selected, for they offer acceptable solutions to problems and thus teach children valuable life lessons.	The themes are easy for children to relate to, for they explore the lives of children and their interaction with adults as well. Through the chosen themes, the texts teach children about the world that surrounds them, thus providing extralinguistic knowledge through a multidisciplinary approach.
Humor	The texts contain humor and a lot of fun incidents. The atmosphere portrayed is relaxed, warm, enjoyable and promotes inoffensive humor.	The textbook contains many humorous situations, remarks and characters. The atmosphere is light and entertaining.
Illustrations	The illustrations clearly portray the events of the story and thus aid in children's understanding. They are colorful, but sometimes lack imagination, originality and details.	The illustrations are in tune with the stories, and the characters' facial expressions aid comprehension. The images are colorful, but they do not include fantastic or extraordinary elements.

As presented, it can be seen that both textbooks have many advantages and their conception is mostly in line with the educationalists' recommendations explained in the former sections of the paper, as well as with the preschoolers' needs and interests (e.g. Appelt, 1985; Brand, 2006; Chang, 2007; Cameron, 2005, etc.). They also have some shortcomings in some aspects, which are presented in detail in the table.

However, as shown, the benefits and advantages of both textbooks greatly exceed their deficiencies and therefore they can be truly effective and adequate means for teaching English to preschoolers if put into the hands of trained, skilled and enthusiastic teachers.

4. CONCLUSION

The teaching of English based on grammar-based exercises which was executed for a long time in EFL teaching (Brown, D., 2007; Celce-Murcia et al.; 1988; Richards & Rodgers, 2010) has, in recent times, given its place to more meaningful communicative approaches in linguistic education. The isolated decontextualized units of a linguistic system as the focus of grammar-based

teaching methods of the past are gradually being replaced by authentic, realistic language and real life-like contexts as settings for the new linguistic methodological tendencies. The objective of the present paper was to investigate whether this is reflected in the designs of the two textbooks used in preschool education in the Bosnian EFL context. The two analyzed textbooks are abundant with genuine, authentic, engaging content that can stimulate a love of learning in young learners, which is one of the crucial long-term goals in any teaching process.

The overall conclusion of the paper might be that teachers first of all must recognize what constitutes high-quality content and to differentiate between artificial snippets and genuine, authentic pieces of writing, in order to exploit the full potential of the teaching process. Great aids for this are high-quality textbooks full of creative, imaginative and efficient pieces of writing, activities and ideas for class. The two textbooks analyzed in this paper (*Hippo and Friends 2* and *Playway to English 1*) offer a variety of texts and activities suitable for the fun, adequate, meaningful teaching of young learners. In most points, they correspond to the requirements for effective and appropriate children's textbook content to be used in EFL teaching. It is a true satisfaction to see that quality textbooks like these are actively used in some Bosnian preschool educational institutions in English language teaching. The only thing that remains dubious is the extent of the presence of these books in EFL teaching for preschoolers in general. However, this is an issue for a completely new study.

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ANALIZA DVAJU UDŽBENIKA ENGLESKOGA JEZIKA KOJI SE UPOTREBLJAVAJU U POUČAVANJU DJECE PREDŠKOLSKE DOBI U BIH

U ovom je radu provedena analiza sadržaja dvaju udžbenika engleskoga jezika namijenjenih djeci predškolske dobi, *Playway to English 1* i *Hippo and Friends 2*, koji su u uporabi u nekim predškolskim bosansko-hercegovačkim centrima za učenje engleskoga jezika. Cilj analize bio je ispitati na kojim se sadržajima uči i poučava engleski kao strani jezik te koliko su zastupljeni sadržaji primjereni dobi korisnika udžbenika i praktično primjenjivi u nastavnome radu. Širi je cilj rada povećati svijest o karakteristikama koje kvalitetni nastavni materijali za malu djecu trebaju sadržavati. U skladu s tim predložene su i smjernice koje mogu pomoći nastavnicima u pripremi dodatnih nastavnih materijala te prosudbi i poboljšavanju onih kojima se već koriste. Rezultati provedene analize pokazali su da je kvalitetan sadržaj dosta zastupljen u podučavanju engleskom jeziku djece predškolske dobi te uglavnom prilagođen interesima i afinitetima djece te dobi. Takvi rezultati upućuju na zaključak da se pojavio pozitivan preokret u nastavnome procesu. Naime, tradicionalni pristup fokusiran na gramatiku i nastavnika zamijenjen je inovativnim pristupom usmjerenim na učenika i sadržaj. U budućim studijama, kako bi se ocijenila efikasnost praktične primjene sadržaja koji se nalazi u udžbenicima, sljedeći značajan korak, koji bi dodatno mogao pridonijeti dubljem istraživanju teme, bio bi uključivanje promatranja i analize nastavnih sati engleskoga jezika.

Ključne riječi: učenje stranog jezika, predškolska dob, sadržaj udžbenika