

# The Use of Narratives in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners: Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

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**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2017**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:144941>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-03-01**



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J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language and  
Literature – Teaching English as a Foreign Language and  
Hungarian Language and Literature

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Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Draženka Molnar

Osijek, 2017.

## Table of Contents

Summary .....	
Sažetak .....	
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Theoretical background.....	2
2.1. Stories, Narratives and Storytelling – Defining the Terminology .....	2
2.2. Young Learners' Developmental Characteristics .....	3
2.2.1. <i>Cognitive Development</i> .....	3
2.2.2. <i>How Children Learn?</i> .....	4
2.2.3. <i>Early Stages of Learning English as a Foreign Language</i> .....	6
3. Teaching Narratives in Young Learners' EFL Context .....	8
3.1. The Benefits of Using Narratives in Teaching English as Foreign Language to Young Learners.....	8
3.1.1. <i>Building Positive Group Dynamics</i> .....	9
3.1.2. <i>Raising cultural awareness</i> .....	10
3.1.3. <i>Problem Solving</i> .....	11
3.1.4. <i>Skill Enhancement</i> .....	12
3.2. Incorporating teaching English through Narratives into the Croatian Curriculum for Primary Schools .....	13
3.3. Types of Narratives .....	14
3.3.1. <i>Animated Stories</i> .....	15
3.3.2. <i>Drama</i> .....	15
3.3.3. <i>Dance and Movement</i> .....	16
3.4. Choosing an Appropriate Narrative.....	16
3.5. Presenting the Narrative (Teacher's role).....	17
3.5.1. <i>Teacher Versus Machine</i> .....	18
3.5.2. <i>Narrative-Related Tasks</i> .....	19
3.5.3. <i>Materials</i> .....	21
4. Research .....	24
4.1. Aims and Research Questions .....	24
4.2. Participants .....	26
4.3.1. <i>The Interview</i> .....	27
4.3.2. <i>Preparation of the Lesson Plans and Teaching the Narrative-Based Lessons</i> ...	27
4.4. Procedure.....	27
4.4.1. <i>The Interview</i> .....	28
4.4.2. <i>The Narrative-Based Lessons</i> .....	28

4.5. Results .....	29
4.5.1. <i>Results of the Interview</i> .....	29
4.5.2. <i>Results of the Narrative Based Lessons</i> .....	34
4.6. Discussion .....	36
5. Conclusion.....	39
Bibliography.....	40
Appendices .....	44

## Summary

The present paper focuses on the use of narratives as a teaching method in the young learners' EFL classrooms. It investigates the ways in which narratives can be incorporated into the lesson plans, the range of criteria for their appropriate selection and the positive effects they have on the individual learners and the classroom community. A theoretical overview of teaching narratives was offered in the first part of the paper and the additive effect of its application was tested in a young learners' classroom in the second part. Additionally, an interview with the elementary teachers about their experiences and preferences with narratives is presented, and the two example narrative-based lesson plans are created. As a result, detailed guidelines are offered to the EFL teachers who want to incorporate narratives as a teaching method into their young learners' classrooms.

Keywords: narratives, English as a foreign language, young learners, narrative-based lesson plans



## Sažetak

Ovaj se rad bavi pripovijedanjem kao metodom poučavanja na satu engleskog kao stranog jezika s učenicima rane školske dobi. Rad proučava na koje se načine priče mogu uključiti u nastavne sate, koji su kriteriji njihovog pravilnog odabira te koje pozitivne učinke mogu imati na pojedince i cijelu razrednu zajednicu. Prvi dio rada nudi teorijski pregled poučavanja engleskog jezika kao stranog jezika kroz priču, a drugi dodatni učinak njegove primjene u nastavi s učenicima rane školske dobi. Potom slijedi pregled intervjua s učiteljima o njihovim iskustvima i prednostima uporabe priča na nastavi te dva primjerka nastavnih planova utemeljenih na pripovijedanja. Konačno, rad nudi detaljne smjernice i praktične savjete onim učiteljima koji odaberu pripovijedanje kao nastavnu metodu poučavanja u radu s učenicima rane školske dobi.

Ključne riječi: priče, engleski kao strani jezik, učenici rane školske dobi, nastavne pripreme utemeljene na pripovijedanju

## 1. Introduction

Narratives are in many ways part of our everyday lives. Pink (2005: 106) nicely sums it up, by saying: “Our tendency to see and explain the world in common narratives is so deeply ingrained that we often don’t notice it - even when we’ve written the words ourselves.” Narrating a tale from memory is one of the oldest of all art forms and it reaches back to prehistoric times. Bearing in mind the appealing character of narratives, it is no surprise that they are still very much alive today and popular among people of all ages. They even play an important role in education.

The focus of this paper, however, is solely on the narratives suitable for lessons with young learners. The major areas of interest involve two elements – selection and delivery. Some of the questions which will be raised are the following: Why should teachers include narratives into their lesson planning? How should narratives be presented? How should young learners be adequately prepared?

The previous studies (e.g. Gomez, 2010; Scott and Ytreberg, 1990; Isbell, 2002; Nelson, 1989; Berkowitz, 2011; etc.) have already shown that there are many different aspects in which narratives can be used in the young learners' EFL classrooms. The research findings have mostly emphasized the considerable potential narratives may have in fostering young learners' emotional intelligence and gaining insight into their human behavior. This paper, however, will investigate how difficult it really is for less experienced teachers to choose a narrative, prepare the narrative-based lesson and maintain students' initial motivation. Additional questions such as: what are some of the most important things that have to be kept in mind, what are the possible complications and errors, and is it, in fact, worth the struggle; will be answered as well.

## 2. Theoretical background

This part of the paper attempts to resolve some misconceptions regarding the terminology used throughout the sections. It will also give a brief overview of the previous studies on teaching narratives to young learners in the EFL context, as it will serve as a base for the research in the second part of the paper.

### 2.1. Stories, Narratives and Storytelling – Defining the Terminology

People often think of stories and narratives as synonyms. However, if we look up the definitions, we can see that there are some differences between the terms. Oxford dictionary suggests that a story is “an account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment”, narrative is “a spoken or written account of connected events; a story”, and that storytelling is “the activity of telling or writing stories”. Hence, we can say that both narrative and storytelling are the ways of telling, or rather presenting a story. To make the difference between a story and a narrative more clear, here is another definition by Robert Mills (2015: n. p.):

A story is the events that occur, the little girl in the red cloak meets a wolf in the woods. The wolf later pretends to be a little girl’s grandmother and eats them both up. The hunter cuts the wolf open and both the girl and the grandmother emerge unharmed. The narrative is the way these events are told. For a fairy tale like this, the most common method is starting the story with, ‘once upon a time’ then presenting the events in chronological order and concluding with, ‘and they all lived happily ever after’.

Accordingly, a story can be understood as a pile of true or made up facts, and a narrative is the umbrella term to the term storytelling. While storytelling is only a written or spoken presentation of the story, a narrative includes storytelling, as well as any other way in which a narrator chooses to present the story and create a bigger picture. Although Oxford dictionary suggests only the written or the spoken form, there are others like presenting a story through sounds (songs, recorded narration, ambient sounds, etc.), still or moving picture(s) (photographs, drawings, paintings, comics, cartoons, movies, etc.), or even dancing and play.

## 2.2. Young Learners' Developmental Characteristics

Analyzing the previous research has shown that although a large amount of studies talking about narratives, stories, storytelling and other related topics can be found worldwide, scholars have only recently started researching and exploring this area in more depth. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with narratives from the perspective of teaching English to young learners. At the same time, in Croatia, even less scholars have been working on such topics (Dujmović, 2006; Vukojević, 2016). In 2013, a research called *A Study of the Use of Narratives in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners* was conducted in Slovenia. The article reports the findings of a survey, conducted among primary school English language teachers in Slovenia, aimed at revealing their attitudes towards the use of narratives in teaching English as a foreign language to children aged from eight to nine years (3rd and 4th grades respectively) (Fojkar, Skela and Kovač, 2013: 21). The findings speak in favor of using narratives in teaching English to young learners. Nevertheless, mastering how to incorporate narratives into the lessons and how to prepare the learners is still a problematic issue for many teachers. Fojkar et al. (2013) suggest teacher training as a solution.

Knowing who your learners are is a prerequisite for using narratives as a teaching method in the young learners' EFL classroom. Most professionals (e.g. Cameron, 2002; Žigárdyová, 2006; Scott and Ytreberg, 1990; etc.) agree that children from the beginning of their formal education, until the age of eleven or twelve can be considered young learners. According to Žigárdyová (2006), young learners have both adult and childish features and are relatively mature. The next section addresses the developmental characteristics of this particular age group and their possible manifestations in the EFL classrooms.

### 2.2.1. Cognitive Development

One of the most important elements that have to be taken into account when working with young learners, is their cognitive development. Wood, Smith and Grossniklaus (2014: 1) highlight Piaget's argument that children are "not limited to receiving knowledge from parents or teachers; they actively construct their own knowledge." Piaget also adds that children's active learning happens through solving problems and constantly interacting with the world around them (Cameron, 2002). When it comes to choosing the way of presenting a story to young learners, the fact that they learn actively is highly relevant and should prevent teachers from including passive watching of an animated story or similar narratives into the lessons. Isbell (2002) and Chambers

(1966) deal with this matter in more detail. (see section 3.5.1.) Piaget further claims that young learners have already developed their language and memory and, due to the abstract thinking development, are able to use their imagination and engage in make believe (Cameron, 2002).

Vygotsky (1934), on the other hand, claims that the ability to speak also depends on the input that children get from adults talking in front of them or to them. Cameron (2002) agrees with Vygotsky and further explains that the development of child's first language is responsible for a crucial shift in his or her cognitive development. A child uses language as a tool for communicating with the world. Unlike Piaget, who believed that children are progressing on their own, Vygotsky argues that children are active learners surrounded by other people who are here to help them. Those people (parents, family, kindergarten teachers, school teachers and other professionals) challenge children to think and speak about the things that are going on around them. In other words, Vygotsky considers language and the ability to interact crucial in child's cognitive development.

### *2.2.2. How Children Learn?*

Being familiar with the young learners' learning process is yet another factor to consider while preparing a narrative-based lesson plan. There are many theories about what learning is and when it occurs, but most of them say that learning is a process of acquiring new knowledge, experiences, skills, behaviors and values. Vosniadou (2001) argues that in order to be able to acquire something new, children (or future university students) have to pay attention, observe, take responsibility for their own learning and most importantly, they have to understand the material, not simply learn it by heart. Harmer (2007) adds indirect learning to the list. He elaborates on the fact that young learners, especially the ones up to the age of 10, learn not only from teacher's words, but from anything and everything that is going on in the classroom. For that reason, including pictures, sounds, realia and even feelings into the narrative-related lessons is a stimulating and effective way of acquiring new knowledge. In line with the previous research findings, Scott and Yterberg (1990) emphasize the importance of the teaching aids in their work. (see section 4.3.2.)

Harmer (2007) claims that young learners prefer learning through real-life examples because they can understand them easily. To retain and make sense of any new concept or fact, it must be linked in as many ways as possible to their existing body of knowledge. In other words, new knowledge should be based on the previously acquired one. Narratives containing local tales or legends can be useful in this context. Quappe and Cantatore (2005) further discuss the value of learning about one's own culture (see section 3.1.2.). However, one has to be careful not to let the

existing body of knowledge slow down or stop the process of learning. It is, therefore, advisable for children to learn how to reconstruct the existing knowledge in order to be able to understand and conceive the new one. As Vosniadou (2001) succinctly explains, learning in general is a very complex and time-consuming cognitive activity. Among the factors which make learning easier, she addresses the importance of the so-called self-regulation strategies. They are perceived as useful tools in child's leaning organization, error correction and problem solving and can be initiated by a child him/herself or reinforced by the parents or teachers. Vosniadou (2001) continues by saying that narratives, consisting of real-life or imaginative examples, can help learners develop those strategies even further (see section 3.1.3.).

Scott and Ytreberg (1990) differentiate between the two larger groups within young learners' category. The classification is based on their self-reliance at a certain age level. The autonomy is not strictly associated with English proficiency, but rather with their area of interest and imagination. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), children from the first group (aged five to seven) can accomplish many different things: talk about their whereabouts, what they have done or heard, plan activities, argue in favor of something and tell you what they think, use logical reasoning as well as their vivid imagination, a wide range of intonation patterns, and they can understand direct human interactions. Interestingly, they are familiar with the concept of rules and the need for their implementation, but do not necessarily fully comprehend them. Moreover, they tend to understand situations more quickly than the language used and "... respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words" (Harmer, 2007: 82). They perceive physical world through their senses (hands, eyes and ears), are very logical and cannot stay focused for very long. Sometimes children that age have problems differentiating between real-life and fiction, and although they like being in the company of others, they are mostly self-centered and perfectly happy to play on their own. They cannot decide for themselves what to learn and will almost never admit that they do not know or understand something. Finally, five to seven year olds are pretty enthusiastic about learning and like to learn while playing.

The other group consists of more mature children, aged eight to eleven. Their basic concepts and worldviews have already been formed. They can tell the difference between fact and fiction and rely on the spoken word as much as on the physical world. They are able to make some decisions about their own learning and have well-formed opinions on what they like doing. Not only have they developed a sense of fairness but they have also begun to question the grownup's decisions. They are able to work with others and continuously learn from them by asking questions (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990).

Narratives offer numerous possibilities to fit the needs of both age groups. The vivid imagination and the enthusiasm of the first group allows teachers to use narrative-based lessons and engage learners in the learning process without them being aware of it. As far as the second group is concerned, narratives can serve as a useful technique for making the learners think, drawing conclusions or forming opinions. Finally, both groups of learners can be successfully integrated into the follow-up discussions and exchange of creative ideas.

### 2.2.3. *Early Stages of Learning English as a Foreign Language*

The next few sections will discuss the early stages of learning English as a foreign language. Similarly to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, there are some basic developmental stages that every child goes through while learning a foreign language. Teachers' awareness of learners' needs and preferences as well as the developmental stages they belong to contributes immensely to the successful implementation of narratives into the lesson plans. Not all children go through the developmental stages the same way. For some learners the stages last longer and some experience characteristics of more than one stage at the same time.

The first stage is called *the beginning stage*. Paradis, Kirova and Dachyshyn (2009: 2) claim that it starts with the usage of the mother tongue and continue by saying that most young children stop using their "home language" early on because they begin to understand that, in the context of language learning, it is not as effective as speaking English. The problem occurs if two or more learners in the class speak the same language because their ability to understand each other might lead to a prolonged usage of their mother tongue. There is also a possibility of a nonverbal period in this stage, especially in a new setting or among a new group of people. This implies that a child's language use will be reduced to a minimum, until s/he feels completely safe and relaxed. As far as language skills are concerned, the learners prefer listening to speaking and might be considered passive knowledge absorbers. They sometimes use gestures as means of communication and can often be heard rehearsing English phrases under breath. Being asked to mime during the presentation of a story can have a huge impact on learners in this stage as it enhances their memory of new vocabulary or sentence structures.

Then comes *the emerging stage* in which children typically answer with one or two words and repeat the things that they have already heard. The phrases they use are termed "formulaic expressions" and some of the examples are: "what's happening?", "wanna play with me?", "me first", "lookit this!", "no fair!" and "dunno". Although errors are frequent, Paradis et al. (2009) argue that those kind of phrases help children socially interact with their friends and adults working with them and that they serve as a good basis for further learning. Scott and Ytreberg (1990)

continue by saying that the emerging stage is characterized by the intense usage of language skills without being aware of them.

The third stage is called *the developing stage* because a child's knowledge of English develops enough to be able to make more original and spontaneous sentences and run a simple conversation. However, in this stage learners still frequently tend to make errors in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. There are two kinds of possible errors – transfer errors and developmental errors. Transfer errors are common errors some children make that are traceable back to their first language. The developmental errors, on the other hand, have nothing to do with one's mother tongue, but are common for all English language learners. Children often overuse words like the verb "do" because they are not familiar with a more suitable expression (Paradis et al., 2009).

When it comes to learning a foreign language, there is still a lot we do not know. There are many similarities between learning one's mother tongue and learning a foreign language in spite of the differences in age and the time available... Much seems to depend on which mother tongue the pupils speak and on special and emotional factors in child's background (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990: 3-5).

Additionally, Paradis et al. (2009) stress the importance of yet another characteristic of young learners that might have a positive effect on teaching English through narratives. They argue that young learners can understand English much earlier than they are able to use it efficiently.



### 3. Teaching Narratives in Young Learners' EFL Context

In the first section of the paper, it was argued that narratives are the way different stories are being told and that, most of the time, we are not really aware how often we encounter them in everyday life. Rosen (1986, as cited in Combs and Beach, 1994: 464) clarifies that human brain is, in fact, a narrative device. In other words, we keep what we learn about the world around us; what our friends tell us, what we hear on the local news program or read in the books, etc.; in our brain in form of stories. This later helps us remember the information more easily. Since our brains work this way from the moment we are born, it is no surprise that a lot of scholars (e.g. Berkowitz, 2011; Isbell, 2002; Gomez, 2010; Paradis et al., 2009; etc.) agree that narratives facilitate language learning and promote creativity and imagination in young learners.

#### 3.1. The Benefits of Using Narratives in Teaching English as Foreign Language to Young Learners

It has been claimed by many researchers that stories and their presentations have a lot of good qualities and can trigger many different emotions and reactions in a person, no matter what age. According to Chaitin (2003: n.p.)

[p]eople are drawn to stories for a number of reasons: they can entertain us, help us organize our thoughts, fill us with emotion, keep us in suspense, or instruct us in how to live and act. They also often present dilemmas concerning what is moral and immoral behavior.

Carefully selected stories bring joy to the classroom, create a positive atmosphere and consequently make young learners feel relaxed, motivated and willing to learn. Even simple listening to a list of words stimulates imagination and creates pictures and scenarios in a child's mind.

According to Gomez (2010), narratives are especially good learning method in the silent period of learning English, because they allow young learners to acquire language without being “forced” to speak. This chapter will further deal with the positive effects of using narratives on young English language learners.

### *3.1.1. Building Positive Group Dynamics*

Having a narrative based lesson with young learners most of the time means having the whole class sitting and/or working together. Gomez (2010: 33) stresses the social aspect of a narrative based lesson by saying:

Listening to stories in class is a shared social experience. Storytelling provokes a response of laughter, sadness, excitement and anticipation, which can encourage the child's social and emotional development.

Naturally, it does not always work as planned. Young learners' short concentration span presents much of an obstacle, if not a challenge to a less experienced teacher.

Paradis et al. (2009) see the solution to the problem in creating a safe and caring environment and establishing a tone of respect. Learners from different backgrounds are frequently used as an example. Apart from different backgrounds, different opinions and reactions can also be an issue in narrative based lessons. On the one hand, learners should be given need to feel like their opinion on a topic matters and is appreciated, they need to be given a chance to express themselves and show their emotions, but on the other, they need to be given an opportunity to become good listeners and attentive observers. It is very important that children understand when it is a good time to speak and when it is better not to interrupt and to pay attention to something else that is going on in the classroom. Thus, both the respect among peers and the trust between learners and a teacher are created.

According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990) another important element in creating a safe environment is knowing what is going on. Teacher has to inform the learners what their task is and what is going to happen next. In that way, young learners are more relaxed and often start behaving in a welcomed way without being told. Giving learners responsibilities is a good idea, too. If they feel like it is their obligation to make a reading of a story successful, chances are that they will remind a mischievous learner what the rules are. Nelson (1989), Berkowitz (2011), Chambers (1966) and many other agree that eye contact and learners being able to see and hear the person presenting a story are also very important. This goes along with the fact that young learners seek direct teacher's attention. Therefore, arranging desks in a "U" shape or even pushing desks to the walls and putting chairs in a semi-circle in the middle, as well as not having any distracting objects standing in the way of active listening or watching of the story, is a good idea.

Not only do these behavioral habits make narrative based lessons easier and more productive, but serve as a positive repetitive pattern in other classrooms and real life situations.

### *3.1.2. Raising cultural awareness*

It could be argued that an integral part of learning a foreign language is acquiring some familiarity with the culture associated with it. In other words, being aware of how and why certain things are done and in one's culture. Quappe and Cantatore (2005) recognize the importance of cultural awareness in interaction with people from other cultural backgrounds, as well as the potential danger of misinterpretations and inappropriate behaviors in case of its absence. It is evident that raising cultural awareness from a very young age has gained its prominence over the years, and continued to do so mostly under the influence of globalization. In order to increase young learners' cultural and cross-cultural awareness, there are some helpful guidelines at teachers' disposal. The first step, according to Quappe and Cantatore (2005), is to teach your students that it is all right not to know everything about other cultures. Then, the learners need to be taught to be less judgmental and more empathetic towards the people of different cultural backgrounds. Finally, learners need to understand that, although it is perfectly acceptable not to know everything, it is still desirable to be inquisitive and willing to learn. Learners' exposure to various cultural contents makes them more comfortable around different people and in different situations. Only then can learners turn into individuals that are able to celebrate diversity among themselves, as well as outside of the classroom.

While raising cultural awareness, teachers should keep in mind that being exposed to a target culture does not necessarily imply neglecting your own. Fortunately, it is not unusual for the learners at school (or even earlier at home) to be taught about the history of their town, country or people, with some sort of a narrative (e.g. by their grandparents). Through those narratives, children learn how people in their community were living or still live today, what was/is acceptable and desirable behavior and what was/is punishable, bad or dangerous. Also, stories can teach young children about important individuals and their roles in the society, or even what their own role could be in the future. According to Baldasaro, Maldonado and Baltes (2014), this is how stories build communities and preserve cultural identities. In her article about the storytelling, Eder (2007) provides yet another wonderful insight into the life of the Navajo people and their belief that families who were raising their children with native stories were doing a good job.

In addition to what was stated above, having access to narratives originating from different cultures is especially beneficial to young learners as it brings a touch of target culture customs and traditions to their classroom. In that way, children who participate in narrative based lessons might get to listen and learn about a distant culture that they would not have a chance to experience otherwise. Ioannou-Georgiou and Verdugo (2010) claim that stories help children show curiosity

about different cultures and ‘exotic’ people from other parts of the world. Chambers (1966) mentions folk literature as well, and talks about how there seems to be an endless amount of good tales waiting to be told. He also claims that folk literature is especially good for beginner tellers because it started as an oral tradition which makes it easy to retell.

To conclude with Peralta’s (2010) words, the story-telling in the EFL classrooms is, without a doubt, a memorable and magic experience. In such a positive atmosphere, the stories are able to teach children about morality and judgment, but also about history and cultural memories.

### *3.1.3. Problem Solving*

Chambers (1966) claims that presenting a story from the social studies (for example, following a famous historical person) often gives learners an idea of how to deal with real life problems. Thus in lack of a good age-appropriate narrative, a teacher can always present a personal anecdote or a story to help learners cope with a possible future dilemmas or difficult situations. However, one has to be extra careful about selection criteria and learners' age and proficiency level. There is no point in teaching a 9-year-old how to manage money and pay bills, because it is not relevant to the child and he or she will be bored just by listening about it. On the other hand, if we try to teach young learners how to deal with bullying in school through the story about a person who has gone through the similar experience and successfully solved it, they will most certainly enjoy it and will have a lot of things to say in the end.

Isbell (2002) points out the importance of talking about the story (or a problem) that has just been presented to the learners. She claims that sometimes teachers have to highlight the important moral of the story through meaningful questions, for the learners to be able to follow and understand. For the previously mentioned 'bullying in school story', the questions might be: “How did the hero of the story stop others from bullying him or her?” or “What did he or she do when being bullied?” Questions like these provoke learners to think about their own backgrounds and encourage them to share experience with others. Berkowitz (2011: 38) adds that children’s “ability to link cause and effect enables them to understand more deeply the impact of their actions on others”. Because of that, some of the undesirable reactions and behaviors can be avoided. Finally, according to Butcher (2006: 197), being exposed to a story also allows learners’ minds to “think outside the box”. This would require not only self-reflexion and evaluation, but also finding solutions to the potentially upcoming problems. Their ability to identify with the characters is essential for this process. When a child sees or hears how somebody else thinks or reacts in a

certain situation, he or she is more likely to use that experience in real life, and thus prevent potential errors.

#### *3.1.4. Skill Enhancement*

People possess and develop a lot of different skills throughout life and their acquisition starts at a very young age.

The basic four skills, crucial for learning a foreign language, are the so called language skills. This category includes reading, listening, writing and speaking and, according to Harmer (2007), they can be sorted into two different classes – the receptive and the productive skills. Reading and listening belong to the receptive skills because through them, the meaning is being extracted from the speech or the text. Speaking and writing are called the productive skills because learners actually have to produce language on their own. All four skills intertwine in everyday situations and it is therefore equally important to learn them all. Harmer, 2007 suggests several steps within the process of skill enhancement that are easily applicable in a narrative-based lessons: input, output and feedback. The visual and/or auditory input that narratives create in the classroom is very important because it enables learners to create the output using their productive skills. (Harmer, 2007) After output is created either in written or in oral form, the next step should be getting the feedback. In such a young age, it is usually better if learners get the feedback from their teacher, although getting it from their fellow students or even talking about their work themselves is possible, too. Harmer (2007) points out that getting and understanding feedback enables the learners to improve their skills even further.

When having narrative based lessons in mind, it is not too difficult to incorporate the above listed skills into a lesson. Listening skill, for example, can be practiced by listening to the story itself, whether it is presented by the teacher or by a machine (TV, CD, DVD, computer, etc.). It can also be blended into discussions in the way that learners have to listen to each other's opinions and examples, and understand what is being said. These sort of activities include practicing another language skill - speaking. Learners can be asked to verbally predict what might happen in the story, to describe some pictures or realia that are connected to the content of the story, or to state their opinion or conclusion after the presentation is finished. It might be difficult to maintain an active discussion with young learners simply because they are not proficient English users yet, but a teacher can always start small by guiding them through the simple sentence formation. Some of the ideas for successful reading practice are as follows: introducing a story, reading a story, describing the characters or the setting, reading your partner's summary of opinion on the story.

Apart from writing a summary or an opinion on a piece of paper, writing skill can be practiced through a key-words spelling game or by asking the learners to fill in the gaps on the written version of the story.

Aside from the language skills, there is another important group of skills which can be acquired through narratives. They are called *the life skills* and they incorporate a large number of other different skills. Scholars Birrel Weisen, Orley, Evans, Lee, Sprunger and Pellaux (1994) all worked together on a document dealing with educating children and adolescents about the life skills. They claim that life skills are abilities that help individuals deal effectively with everyday challenges. This, according to Birrel Weisen et al. (1994) includes decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy and coping with emotions and stress. All these elements are essential for child's normal functioning in everyday situations. Presenting a story that already promotes such skills makes it easier for the teacher to prepare his/her learners for adulthood.

### 3.2. Incorporating teaching English through Narratives into the Croatian Curriculum for Primary Schools

Aside from being aware of all the positive effects that narratives can have on young learners, it is important to know how to incorporate them into the Curriculum. Everything that is taught in Croatian primary schools is monitored through several documents including the National Frame Curriculum (*Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum za predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje te opće obvezno i srednjoškolsko obrazovanje*) and the Syllabus for Primary Schools (*Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu*). In Croatia, English is learned as a foreign language from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary school, since 2003 (Culej, 2012). In the National Frame Curriculum (2011) some of the expected learning outcomes listed under the listening skill are cultural awareness, and the ability to recognize different values such as how to be a good friend or how to collaborate with others. Narratives and their accompanying activities can serve as a wonderful tool in reaching some of the above mentioned learning outcomes.

Dujmović (2006) claims that there are three main ways in which narratives can contribute to English language learning and the whole school curriculum. The first one is using stories to reinforce children's conceptual development. The second way includes using stories to develop thinking strategies (e.g. problem-solving), strategies for learning English (e.g. guessing the meaning of new words), and study skills (e.g. organizing work). The third and most interesting

way is using stories to develop other subjects in the Curriculum. Some of the mentioned subjects are Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Music and Drama.

Syllabus for primary schools deals with “the language items you are going to teach and the order in which you introduce them” (Dujmović, 2006: 79). This includes vocabulary, grammar, language functions and structures, pronunciation and different skills. All of this, according to Dujmović (2006), can be taught through narratives, as well. He claims that 6 or 7 stories could be used as a replacement for the coursebook throughout the school year, to teach the syllabus. The authors of the Syllabus for Primary Schools (2006) agree that narratives can be beneficial for young learners and recommend including at least 2 picture books, short novels or fairy tales per school year, depending on learners' age and proficiency level.

### 3.3. Types of Narratives

In 2013, the *National Literacy Trust* published the article “A Guide to Text Types” enlisting the following genres: lists adventures, mysteries, science fiction, fantasies, historical fictions, contemporary fictions, dilemma stories, dialogues, play scripts, film narratives, myths, legends, fairy tales, fables and traditional tales. All of those genres have a few things in common. They mostly start with an opening where characters are introduced, followed by a complication, climax, and a resolution at the end. Still, not all narratives have this kind of structure, which makes them unpredictable. Some of the most common language features are that they are usually written in past tense, they are told in first or third person, in most of them there are heroes and villains, and they contain connectives like “later that day”, “once”, “meanwhile at the castle” or “suddenly”. (“A Guide to Text Types”, 2013)

Excepting the simple telling or reading of the written text of a story, narratives can be presented in the form of comics, picture books, pictures without the textual reference, one picture accompanied by verbal narration, recorded narration, recorded narration with background sounds and/or music, in form of music with lyrics, drama performance, slide-projection of several pictures, drawing(s), dance, or even cartoons and movies. There are probably even more options than listed. Here are some of the most unusual, but not less interesting ones:

### *3.3.1. Animated Stories*

Learning English in a different way, makes it feel like playing a game to young learners. In her study “Exploring the value of animated stories with young English language learners”, Rana Yıldırım (2014) suggests that learning English through animated stories is easier for EFL learners, because they can connect words with images on the screen and therefore understand meaning more easily. Not only do learners enjoy watching animated stories, but they also use them as the replacement of the existing coursebooks to make the experience more enjoyable. As a result, learners are able to catch characters' names and characteristics, important events, some dialogues and the ending.

Another good element is that the new vocabulary and grammar in the stories are automatically put into a certain context, which makes it easier for young learners to memorize. However, when choosing an animated story, teacher has to be careful not to pick an animation with bad sound quality, too fast dialogues, boring scenes or too difficult topic for young learners' age (Yıldırım, 2014).

### *3.3.2. Drama*

Although not used frequently, drama is one of the most effective ways of learning English. First of all, young learners are using their imagination, and being asked to imagine a new situation, or even the whole world, is undoubtedly very interesting to them. It gets even better when they get to act like one of the characters in it. Demircioğlu (2010) points out the fact that when learning English through drama, young learners are not asked to memorize words in isolation. As stated earlier, either visual or auditory context makes it easier for children to understand and learn new words. With drama, students can learn actively, they use language for a concrete reason which is therefore more relevant, shy students do not feel intimidated because they know exactly what to say and when to say it, and it allows children to learn more about social interactions and cooperation. Fuentes (2010) argues that drama also helps practicing pronunciation and fluency, requires the usage of at least three skills, and most of all, it is fun and everybody can do it (Fuentes, 2010).



### 3.3.3. *Dance and Movement*

In her work “Dance the story: Creating non-verbal storytelling”, Hoadley gives both physiological and psychological reasons for integrating movement into the classroom: “Everyone moves. Humans are made to move. We all feel better when we move and stretch. Mind/Body connections happen when we move in certain ways and brains cells are born.” This is just one of the arguments Caroline E. Hoadley speaks in favor of dance as a learning method in her interpretive dance lesson plan, called “Dance the Story: Creating Non-Verbal Storytelling”. When a teacher notices that his/her students are no longer concentrated, asking them to move can be very useful in order to wake them up. Hoadley (“Dance the story: Creating non-verbal storytelling”) claims that kinesthetic learning means that muscles have memory. When talking about narratives and language learning, it can be extremely good to connect a story with movement or even dance, because if repeated frequently, young learners can recall a word they are looking for by remembering or being shown the movement connected with it. Dancing also increases motor skills and body awareness. Even in the silent period young learners can be asked to mime or dance the narrative being told by the teacher or colleague, repeat her/his movements, or to tell the story by moving so that other learners and/or teacher have to guess what the story is.

Individual creative movement challenges each student to analyze, improvise, and create on his/her own non-verbally. Through interpretive dance, students analyze thoughts, words and ideas using improvisation, and create their own movement in order to communicate meaning non-verbally (Hoadley, “Dance the story: Creating non-verbal storytelling”).

### 3.4. Choosing an Appropriate Narrative

Sometimes, choosing an appropriate narrative for young learners is a very long and tiring process. There are a lot of elements that teachers have to take into account and base their decision on. One of the first dilemmas is whether to choose an authentic or simplified version of the story. Gomez (2010) further explains that while the authentic version of the story is full of “real” language, simplified version can be easier to understand. The choice pretty much depends on what the teacher’s goal for that particular lesson is. Ellis and Brewstwer (1991) claim that stories can be used to further practice some language structures (e.g. polite asking for something), grammar units (e.g. past simple as the most common narrative tense), vocabulary elements within certain topics (e.g. animals), or something similar. If everyday language is targeted, it is usually better to

choose an authentic text. Ellis and Brewstwer (1991) also agree that through stories, learning can be made more fun and memorable.

Further, in his *Input hypothesis*, Krashen (1985) addresses the importance of the  $i+1$  formula. He explains that “ $i$ ” from the formula is the knowledge that the learners already possess. If the text is too simple and learners are constantly dealing with the familiar topics in the same ways, it can become boring for them. In order to prevent that and keep them interested, some words, phrases, aspects of grammar or topics should be new every time. This is the “ $+1$ ” element which gives learners something to work with and enables their progress. According to Ioannou-Georgiou and Verdugo (2010), teachers should look for a narrative that presents targeted grammar, vocabulary and formulaic speech in a meaningful and structured context that supports comprehension of the narrative and its content. A lot of narratives contain many repetitions of certain phrases, like for example the one in the story of Rapunzel: "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair." (Grimm, 1812: 2), which helps learning a lot as well.

Lastly, but in no way less important, Chambers (1966) believes that even a professional storyteller cannot tell all the stories. He claims that if the teacher decides to present the story by him or herself, it becomes even harder to choose one. Not only does the teacher have to think about the above listed criteria, but he/she should also search for the story that would suit his/her style and personality. In other words, the teacher should be able to tell the story so that it effects the listeners (learners), attracts their attention and provokes reaction. This is only possible if the teller him/herself has been moved by the story. According to Thornley (1968), to find such a story, vast reading background and a wealth of experience is required.

### 3.5. Presenting the Narrative (Teacher’s role)

After the narrative is chosen, it has to be presented to the learners. However, Chambers (1966) reminds that before presenting the narrative, another vital step has to be taken into consideration, namely the preparation. He claims that it should never be just a presentation for the sake of presenting, but a unique, creative experience for both listeners and the presenter. Fojkar et al. (2013) raise an issue of teachers preferring reading the story over telling it, because storytelling is much more time consuming and demanding. Teachers, when presenting the story themselves, often make a mistake of memorizing the text. According to Chambers (1966), a better way to do it is to make an outline with the story structure on a piece of paper or cards and “learn” it that way. Schwartz (1989) quotes her student Anthony, who talks about the process he underwent when

preparing himself for telling a story. He elaborates on how he reorganized the chosen story and pinpointed the most important events to be able to tell it in his own words, about the importance of using his hands, movement and facial expressions, and about how he improved his telling by listening to other story-tellers. He also mentions using different voices when portraying different characters in various situations, which can be very important when it comes to keeping your learners' attention. Similarly, Scott and Yterberg (1990) believe that for young learners, words are often not enough. According to them, a teacher then has to point, mime, use facial expressions or build something in order to clarify the meaning of the words. Sometimes even translation is a good tactic, but pictures, realia and videos are more preferred. Still, Berkowitz (2011) warns about pictures and videos which, although they support young learners' literacy development, can stop children from creating their own mental images and consequently stop imagination growth. Nelson (1989: 387) describes how all these elements of presenting a narrative influence his young listeners:

The children's faces are transfixed the whole time I am telling this story. They... can easily follow the sequence of the story, ... often mouth the words to themselves and many say those words right along with me. Every time I tell this particular story, I am astounded by the degree of compassion and empathy children have for the tailor (the main character).

In order to develop their storytelling skills or presenting the stories in any way, beginner teachers and new storytellers should practice with a partner teacher, non-professional or even in front of the mirror to get an idea of what they should improve and what their presentation is going to look like.

### *3.5.1. Teacher Versus Machine*

A teacher who has a lot of professional knowledge and who understands the cognitive and social processes of teaching and learning English as a foreign language is well prepared and able to help learners go through that process. Chambers (1966) mentions technology as a great improvement for the classroom. Recent advances in exploiting innovative gadgets make teaching better and preparation at home or presentation in class easier. Some of those gadgets are computers, laptops, slide projectors, overhead projectors, TVs, CD players, etc. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), the problems begin when teachers teach in low resource classrooms in which they do not have all the necessary equipment. On the other hand, Chambers (1966), worries that

too much technology might endanger one of the oldest arts in the world, storytelling. Chambers (1966: 715) further claims that because of all the abilities that “mechanical storytellers” have, teachers do not feel competent enough and avoid personal storytelling. Having background music and sounds effects, animations and moving pictures are just some of the perks of a “mechanical storyteller” (Chambers, 1966: 715). Isbell (2002), as well as Chambers, thinks of storytelling as one of the most effective narratives. She talks about the personal interaction, co-creating and active participation which, however, are impossible if the “teller” is a computer or a radio. Chambers (1966) continues by arguing that story-telling should never be the same twice as it is when recorded on a CD or on Youtube, but a unique one-time experience that depends both on the teller and on the young learners. Body language and voice are another two strong assets of the live storyteller. Miming and using different intonations and volume of the voice can help young learners dive into the story and absorb even the smallest details.

It turns out that even though machines have a lot of advantages when it comes to special effects, teacher as a storyteller can (due to his/her emotions and personal bond with the listeners) create a lot more powerful and memorable experience for young learners.

### *3.5.2. Narrative-Related Tasks*

Having in mind the previous argument that narratives can be a good base for practicing all four learning skills that have to be practiced with young learners (reading, speaking, listening and writing) and can even be transformed into plays or told through dance, it is evident that a lot of different fun tasks can be created in order to help students learn from narratives. Without a doubt, technology can play an important role in storytelling. However, the role of the teacher in the EFL classroom is irreplaceable.

In order to present the narrative well, there are several steps that the teacher should take into consideration. The first step is preparing the students for a narrative and giving them some background. Gomez (2010) explains that a teacher has to provide learners with tools for constructing the meaning of the story, such as relating the story to their personal life and experience, giving them the context, introducing the main characters and providing cultural background. This can be done by asking them short questions about the main topic of the narrative, by showing them a picture or a video and asking them to predict what comes next, by letting them brainstorm words that they connect with the topic of the narrative, or some other similar activity. It is sometimes good to pre-teach rhymes and songs before telling a story because it familiarizes

learners with the vocabulary, pronunciation, possible collocations and theme. On the other hand, children “find abstract concepts such as grammar difficult to grasp” (Harmer, 2007: 82). Therefore, there is no point in pre-teaching grammar to young learners. The better approach would be inviting students to actively explore different grammar units and their accompanying examples. Such an approach would fully engage the motivated students and encourage the less motivated ones to use their potential to the fullest. Consequently, it would facilitate subconscious acquisition of grammar and avoid unnecessary explanations and translations. That, however, does not mean that the teacher cannot explain something shortly if a student asks. (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990)

The next step is the presentation of a story itself, either by a teacher, a CD/DVD or the Internet. There are several possibilities in choosing an appropriate narrative: it can be long or shortened version of the same story and it can be told with or without props (puppets, realia). If a teacher is presenting the narrative, s/he can choose whether or not to interact with young learners via simple questions or simply inviting them to chant or mime with him/her. Although this entirely depends on the teacher’s choice, many authors (e.g. Berkowitz, 2011; Nelson, 1989; Chambers, 1966; Gomez, 2010; etc.) agree that better learning results can be achieved when young learners are involved in the presentation of the narrative. Apart from that, the teacher should read or talk slowly and clearly to make it easy for young learners to understand the text and to give them enough time to think about it and form pictures in their minds. Furthermore, it is important to pay attention to the level of concentration of the children. Even though concentration can quickly be lost, it is usually not difficult to regain their attention. Vandewater (2015) suggests saying something funny or unexpected, using a special sound or total silence which confuses learners and gives them a clue that something is going on, simply changing the tone of your voice, or even turning the situation into a game by saying, for instance: “If you are listening to me, grab your nose!” as the means of attention attracting. However, attention depends on how interesting the activities are as well. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) point out that working in lots of different ways while concentrating on different skills is desirable (reading a comic, watching Youtube videos, listening to songs, etc.), as is bringing extra materials or realia to the lesson. Moreover, setting a pre-listening task helps learners stay concentrated and enhances the motivational level throughout the activity. As far as the classroom organization is concerned, it can vary between a whole class work, group work, pair work or individual work. Afterwards, the learners would be required to repeat what they have learned or heard. It is a good way of keeping them motivated and interested. It also might be a good idea to repeat the story several times to give young learners a chance to memorize the details and familiarize themselves with the plot and character names. Even though

complete translation is considered "the last resort", Gomez (2010) claims that some key words or phrases might seek further explanation so that students can understand the basics of the narrative.

As a post-activity, according to Saucedo (2005), learners can be asked to draw a picture of the story which they can later describe. Moreover, they can be asked to recognize individual vocabulary items based on the way they sound, their written form or even pictures. Additionally, they can be asked to recognize and repeat phonological patterns (rhyming, alliterations or middle sound – hat/pat; cat/car, train/rain), compare the story to another one, or make puppets by taking pictures of characters directly from the story or drawing them on their own. Role-playing with or without puppets is another option, and writing sentences to describe pictures (or the events from the narrative) with or without corrections like letter formation, capitalization or punctuation is possible as well. Re-telling the story is usually the most productive activity. It can be done using the ready-made pictures from the book, the clues from other resources, or puppets as characters.

To sum up, Saucedo (2005) claims that it is important to pay attention to the fact that each narrative-related lesson has to consist of a pre-task, during-task, planning report and follow-up activity. As an example, she suggests that learners listen to a story (or watch it) in the pre-task, re-tell the story as a during-task activity, draw pictures from the story and describe them in the planning report, and make changes to the characters, setting or the end of the story in the follow-up activity.

### *3.5.3. Materials*

When choosing or making storytelling materials, teacher has to consider learners' area of interests. Almost anything in the classroom can be turned into a learning material, even without printing, drawing or searching on the Internet. This includes the blackboard/whiteboard, billboards, furniture, different objects and realia.

Before hearing/seeing the narrative, learners can be familiarized with the context and the characters through pictures, soundtracks or a short videos. If the chosen story is too long and it has to be split into two or more parts (lessons), it is advisable to remind learners of what has happened before. That can be done simply by repeating what has been said/shown, or the teacher can make a poster/draw or find a picture so that young learners can see what has happened and visualize the previous events in their heads. Writing the most important events (after being named first) on the blackboard is also an option, although the sentences must not be too long.

Posters or pictures are powerful presentation techniques whenever created properly. With that in mind, one should strive to meet the high standards of a good poster design making it

aesthetically and contextually appealing. In the young learners' EFL setting the former would refer to the visually-related aspects such as layout, clarity and readability. More specifically, there can be only one picture as a cover or a sum-up of the story, several pictures following the most important events of the story, or even sort of a picture book with text underneath each photo. Realia is always a good choice (if possible to bring to class) because young learners, as it was already mentioned, learn best if they can directly touch, see, hear and/or smell the object that they are dealing with. (Gomez, 2010)

If a teacher decides to make a narrative-related worksheet and use it with young learners, the most important thing according to Röken (2015) is knowing what he or she wants to achieve with it. A decision has to be made on whether this worksheet is supposed to help learners focus on the topic or the genre of the narrative, on the characters and their role, on some specific problem and the possible solutions, or maybe on some vocabulary or grammar elements. The next aspect to consider is the structure. There has to be a headline that contains general information explaining what the worksheet is about. Instructions are also very important and since they are intended for young learners, they should be as short, simple and clear as they can be (e.g. “Listen and draw!”, “Read and connect!” etc.). Having in mind a type of question being asked, the worksheets should be provided with enough space left for the answers to be written down, especially in case of an opinion asking question, or a comparison task. It is always helpful to add an example underneath the instruction which will make it easier for young learners to understand what they have to do. Including the pictures is a good idea as well. Since most young learners are not proficient readers yet, sometimes making tasks based on pictures, circling, underlining, coloring and/or drawing is better than dealing with a text. Röken (2015) also mentions the importance of the worksheet being “up-to-date”. He goes on by explaining that this is important when it comes to the advancement of technology or lifestyle changes. Also, materials should be age-appropriate, and there should not be a big difference in the topics between the tasks, if there are more of them. The last very important element is learners’ level of knowledge and their level of cognitive development. This means that the worksheet should be challenging enough so that it is interesting to the learners and that they learn something new from it, but not too complex or it might take too much time or make students want to give up.

A good coursebook is a prerequisite for a successful narrative-based lesson. Not only does it support the classroom with additional materials, but it also presents a better resource for the teachers to choose the appropriate narrative from. On the contrary, if the coursebook is not well picked or is unsuitable for the learners, narrative-based lessons become more of a challenge. Under the circumstances, teachers may choose to draw or write stories by themselves or invite learners

to help create materials as they go along. Although entertaining for all participants, it can be somewhat time-consuming. To shorten the preparation period, ready-made materials can always be taken from the Internet or 'borrowed' from other resources. Apart from already mentioned, the handmade materials can be reused countless times and in many different ways and contexts.



## 4. Research

This study was conducted in two parts and results were analyzed against the previously elaborated theoretical background on using narratives teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. The two parts of the research are as follows: an interview conducted with a group of elementary teachers who had been asked about their experiences with narratives in class with young learners and two example narrative-based lessons which were analyzed and explained into detail. The first example lesson was constructed as one of the first teaching experiences within the university course called School Practicum, and the second one was created after almost a year of teaching, with more experience, practical knowledge and awareness of learners' needs. In the following chapter the aims and the procedures of both parts of the research will be presented, participants will be described, and results will be elaborated on.

### 4.1. Aims and Research Questions

The main aim of this paper is to create guidelines to help teachers navigate through the process of incorporating narratives into their classrooms. Teachers' perceptions and experience as well as firsthand experience will be evaluated against the previously collected theoretical data.

More specifically, the aim of the first part of the research – the interview, is to determine to what extent experienced teachers agree with what theory suggests and what their preferences are on using narratives in the young learners' EFL classrooms. The interview is divided into 4 major parts and each of them deals with one of the 4 research questions:

RQ<sub>1</sub> Do teachers use narratives in the EFL classrooms, and if so, how often? Is the implication of narratives time-consuming?

RQ<sub>2</sub> What are the sources of narratives and narrative-related materials? Are they 'borrowed' or self-created? What are the criteria for choosing a narrative?

RQ<sub>3</sub> How can young learners help making the materials? Is it, in fact, worth spending the time in class?

RQ<sub>4</sub> How do narrative-based lessons help young learners?

Based on the previous discussion on research findings on the issues underlying the use of narratives, the following hypotheses are made:

H<sub>1</sub> EFL teachers use narratives, but not as often as they should due to the lack of time.

H<sub>2</sub> Teachers mostly ‘borrow’ the materials from the Internet or other resources and the most important criteria for choosing a narrative is the complexity of the text.

H<sub>3</sub> Young learners are able to help with coloring, cutting, gluing or writing simple sentences and it is worth spending time because they greatly benefit from it.

H<sub>4</sub> It is expected that young learners, when exposed to narratives, learn not only about the content of the story, but acquire new vocabulary, grammar, language, skills, cultural knowledge and even knowledge about being a part of the classroom community.

The second part of the research aims to show two narrative-based lesson examples based on completely different learning outcomes among two different age groups (5,5-6,5 and 9-10 year olds). It also investigates the effectiveness and benefits of the chosen presentation techniques and the selected material. The main research questions are:

RQ<sub>1</sub> What were the criteria for choosing the stories and tools for each of the lessons?

RQ<sub>2</sub> Did the one year of experience play a role in lesson planning and realization of the second lesson?

RQ<sub>3</sub> How effective were the tools chosen for the lessons and was the aim of each lesson achieved?

RQ<sub>4</sub> What were some of the difficulties for the beginner teacher during the lessons

RQ<sub>5</sub> What is the learners’ opinion on learning English through narratives, and is there a difference between the opinions of two different age groups?

Based on the above-stated questions, the hypotheses are as follows:

H<sub>1</sub> The major set of criteria involves learners' interests, their knowledge of English, the complexity and length of the text, learners' age and maturity.

H<sub>2</sub> The gained experience made planning and realization of the second lesson easier.

H<sub>3</sub> The chosen tools are effective, and that the aim of each lesson could be achieved in the given period of time.

H<sub>4</sub> The most difficult task for the beginner teacher is staying on top of the situation in the classroom and delivering the lesson according to the initial lesson plan.

H<sub>5</sub> Learners of any age love stories the same and that anything unusual, like working with narratives in class, makes learning English fun and engaging.

## 4.2. Participants

Since the research was conducted in two parts, there were two major groups of participants. The first group which took part in the interview consisted of 7 more or less experienced teachers. Their experience in teaching English to young learners varied from 2 years to 12 years. Six of the participants are currently employed in elementary schools in Croatia, whereas one works in a high school, but had nearly 5 years of previous experience working in an elementary school. All of the participants were female, and the average age of the group was 34. Later in the text, this group will be called *Group A*.

The second group comprised of two different subgroups. The first subgroup consisted of 27 learners aged 9 and 10. As third-graders in the 1<sup>st</sup> Elementary school in Čakovec they had been learning English as an obligatory school subject since the first grade. There were 11 male and 16 female learners in the class. Later in the text, this group will be called *Group B1*. The second subgroup, *Group B2* included 11 learners aged 5,5 to 6,5. 3 of the learners were female, and 8 of them were male. They were all part of an elective course of English language learning for preschoolers in the private school Studio Žerjav. For 6 of the learners this was the first year of learning English, and for 5 of them, it was the second year.

## 4.3. Methodology

In order to answer the main research questions, the relevant literature had to be studied and the necessary information had to be collected. The purpose of reading a narrative and the related literature was to prepare the teacher for conducting the lessons and enable her to compose a list of quality questions for the interview with the teachers. The sources of literature were various, from published books to articles found on the Internet, containing a lot of different perspectives and advice for young teachers.

The next step towards achieving the aim of the research was composing the questions for the interview. Then, the lesson plans had to be written so that they met the learning targets and literature suggestions, and after that the questionnaires for collecting the learners' feedback had to be composed. In the end, the lesson plans and the teaching of the lessons were compared with teachers' suggestions from the interview, and the conclusions about the successfulness and effectiveness of the lessons were drawn.

#### 4.3.1. *The Interview*

The main research method for the first part of the research was the interview as it offered more detailed analysis of the longer answers provided by the teachers in *Group A*. The final version of the interview contained 15 questions. It started with the general questions about the years of experience and teachers' feelings about the job, and then went on with the more detailed ones. At the end of the research, teachers' answers (along with the results of the questionnaires) were used as guidelines for determining how successful and effective the two lessons were (see Appendix 1).

#### 4.3.2. *Preparation of the Lesson Plans and Teaching the Narrative-Based Lessons*

In the second part of the research, the lesson plans were conducted and the narrative-based lessons were taught. Within this instrument, literature served as the basis for creating the lesson plans. The main aim of the lesson with *Group B1* was to encourage learners' participation while describing people and animals using "can", "is" and "has got" structures. The story used was "How does Harold become a hero?" from the *New Building Blocks 1*, a coursebook for the first grade of elementary school. The aim of the lesson with *Group B2* was to teach the students how to listen to a story and how to behave during a presentation of a narrative. For the purpose of demonstrating a good listening atmosphere, the learners were exposed to a level 1 Pearson Kids Readers story called "Peter Pan comes to London".

The questionnaires were used with both groups of learners named *Group B1* and *B2* (see Appendix 7 and Appendix 8). The questionnaires consisted of 2 personal questions, requiring learners to write their age and years of learning English; and of 4 lesson-related questions. All of the questions were written in Croatian so that it would not interfere with the potential comprehension problems. In the lesson-related questions, learners had to state their level of agreement by circling a number on a three-point Likert scale. 3 meant that they agreed completely, and 1 that they did not agree at all. The only other difference between the two questionnaires was the third question.

#### 4.4. Procedure

The process of preparing for the research began way before the actual research took place. The first step was collecting the background knowledge from different sources. Reading through scholars' research findings (Gomez, 2010; Ellis and Brewster, 1991; Krashen, 1985; Georgiou and Verdugo, 2010; etc.) made it clear that learners' interests, learning targets or the lesson goals, the complexity of the text and the tasks, the context of the story and other beneficial elements like

rhymes, presence of the repetitive phrases and an interesting topic, had to be taken into account when choosing a narrative for young learners. Useful tips, like the one claiming that teacher presenting a story him/herself is much more beneficial to young learners than the story being presented by a machine (Isbell, 2002; Chambers, 1966), that using body language, facial expressions and different voices largely improves the experience for the students (Schwartz, 1989), that young learners learn best when they are firsthand involved in the process of learning (Piaget, Vygotsky), or that words are often not enough for them to fully understand the lesson (Scott and Yterberg, 1990), made preparing narrative-based lessons much easier and more productive.

#### *4.4.1. The Interview*

After collecting the data, the construction of the interview questions began. When they were completed, each participant was interviewed individually, their answers were recorded and turned transcribed. Notes were then analyzed, compared and conclusions were drawn.

#### *4.4.2. The Narrative-Based Lessons*

The lesson plan with *Group B1* begins with a warm-up activity where learners were asked to follow the instructions and act it out. Thus, the structures “can”, “is” and “has got” were introduced in a sentence. Afterwards, learners were put in groups and asked to describe the animals using the same verbs. The next activity required some reading practice and retelling of the story. A poster with pictures of the characters, were used as visual prompts. The learners were instructed to attach the appropriate picture as the story progressed. The poster served as a helpful tool in retelling the story, whereas the additional comprehension tasks allowed further reinforcement of the target structures (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3).

At the beginning of the second lesson with *Group B2*, learners were encouraged to talk about their reading experience and their love for listening to stories. The opening discussion also revealed their familiarity with the story of Peter Pan. Before the actual story-telling, the English names of the main characters were revised and the new vocabulary was introduced. The discussion on what it means to be a good listener was visually supported by an anchor chart on the whiteboard. The main ideas were written around it. Learners listened to the story twice, second time being instructed to mime with the teacher and to repeat some phrases. When the story ended, learners were instructed to work on memory and comprehension tasks or to play with realia (Peter Pan’s

red feather that magically came out of the story). At the end of the lesson, learners were asked to express their creativity by drawing their favorite scene from the story (see Appendix 4, Appendix 5 and Appendix 6).

After each lesson, learners were given the questionnaires and asked to respond to the statements. To avoid the potential misinterpretations of less proficient readers *in Group B2*, the questions were read out loud and translated into Croatian. Finally, the questionnaires were collected, analyzed and compared with the other group.

#### 4.5. Results

In this part of the paper, both results of the first part (the interview) and the second part of the research (the questionnaires) will be displayed.

##### 4.5.1. Results of the Interview

Two out of seven (29%) interviewed teachers have been working with young learners for three or less years, four of them (57%) between three and nine years, and one (14%) has almost twelve years of experience (Figure 1). All of the teachers confirmed that they like working with young learners very much and think of it as a very creative and rewarding job, even though it can be, as they put it, challenging and sometimes rather difficult.

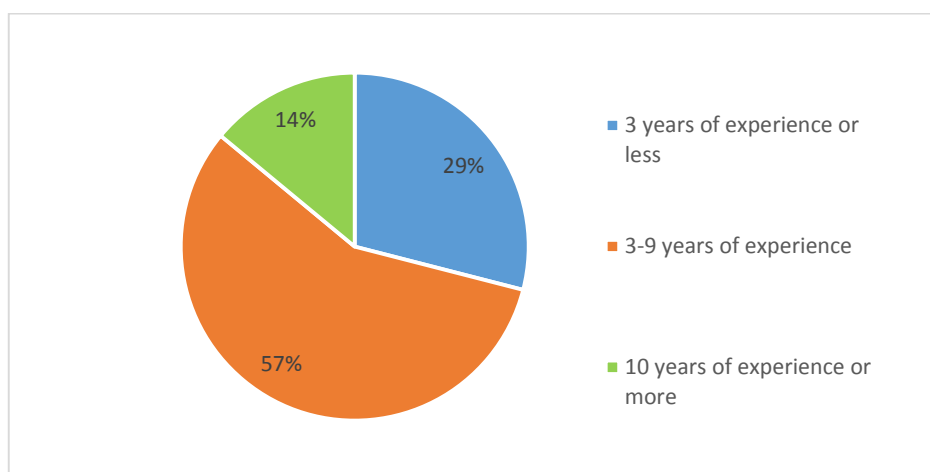


Figure 1: Years of experience

When asked how much time it takes for teachers to plan a lesson, and to compare that time with how long it took when they were beginner teachers, all of the interviewees agreed that it took

much longer when they were just starting to work as teachers. The time needed for planning a lesson varies between half an hour and hour and a half (Figure 2). It has been claimed by one of the less experienced participants that regardless of the years spent working with young learners, she still considers herself a beginner teacher.

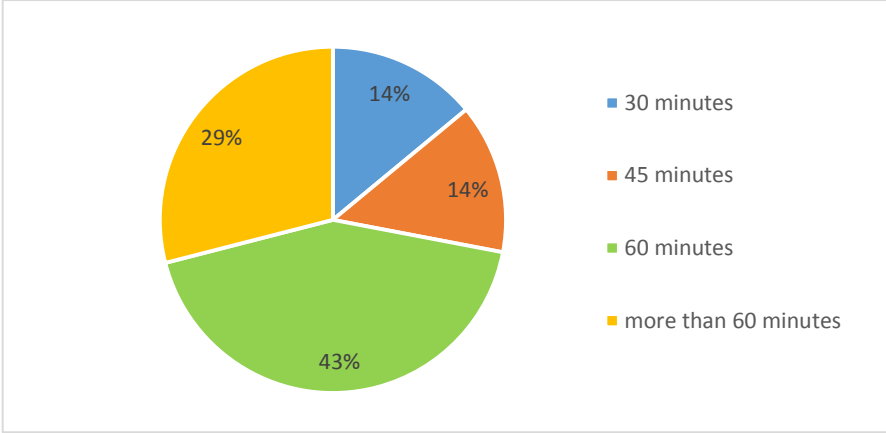


Figure 2: The amount of time needed to plan a lesson

All interviewed teachers use narratives and story-telling in their classroom with young learners; some of them often, while others rarely. Three teachers claim to use narratives in almost every second lesson. “I find it creative and helpful, especially in learning a foreign language, because young learners can be easily entertained IF you know what their interests are.” (Participant 1, 2016). The other participant states that she uses stories whenever time allows it, which is perfectly understandable knowing how time consuming it can be. Two teachers use narratives rarely, and one teacher says the following: “Weeks can go by without using a narrative in a lesson plan, but then comes a week when a narrative is used twice, three times a week.” (Participant 2, 2016). Five out of seven teachers (72%) incorporate narratives into the whole 45' lessons trying to use as many different activities as possible. One of the participants (14%) says that she spends only a few minutes on narratives per lesson, probably having the concrete story-telling in mind, without any pre- and post-activities. Only one participant (14%) recommended a double lesson to complete a story (Figure 3).

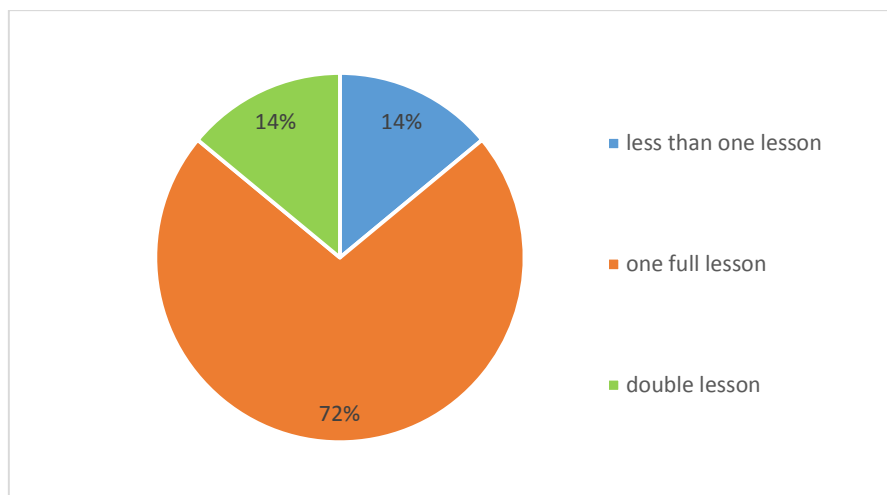


Figure 3: The amount of time spent teaching narratives per lesson

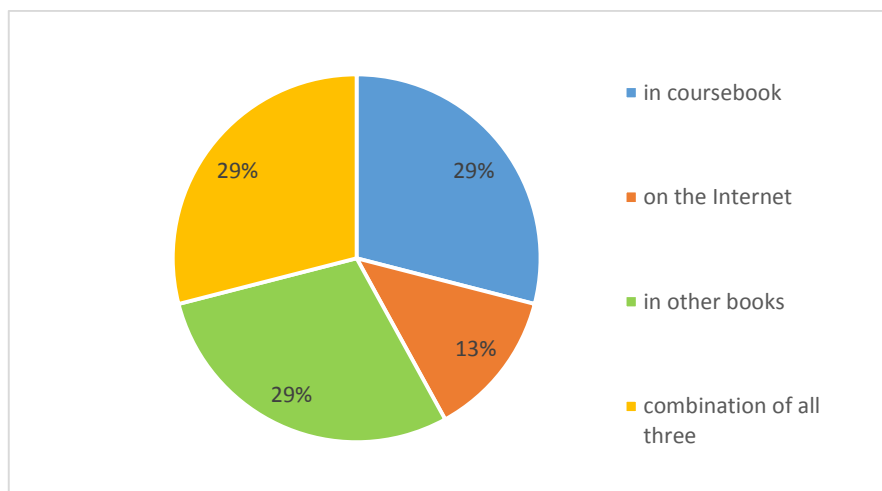
All of the participants listed (with a few differences) the same kinds of activities that they like to do with their learners. Listening to a CD or a teacher presenting a narrative, reading a story from the coursebook, role-reading, guided comprehension, acting with puppets, role-playing, reading comics, drawing, and even making a poster or a comic were mentioned. Four teachers emphasized the importance of using different activities all the time, arguing that young learners easily lose concentration and interest if there is no element of surprise. It seems that young children enjoy acting more than anything. Equally so they like analyzing, pretending and showing that they can do something better than their class-mates. However, teachers have to be careful not to let the situation get out of control and last too long. Appropriate and well thought role distribution facilitates learning but also maintains the initial motivation and discipline. One of the teachers recommends making posters because learners are very proud of their work, and having it on the wall is a great accomplishment for them. To reduce time needed for making posters, a teacher can ask learners to prepare and bring already cut materials (pictures, drawings, etc.) to the lesson.

Only two teachers (29%) are happy with their coursebook and its creativity, and both of them use *New Building Blocks*. One of them continues by saying: “There is a problem with at least 2 students in one class – they check the next lesson at home and tend to spoil it for everyone else, so I highly recommend to find other materials as well, simply as an element of surprise” (Participant 1, 2016). The other five teachers (71%) think that their coursebooks are not creative enough, and if they want a perfect story-telling material, they have to make it on their own or find it somewhere else. One of the teachers (13%) looks for the materials strictly on the Internet, trusting only school websites and already established authors; and another one sticks to the books and prefers the older ones because:



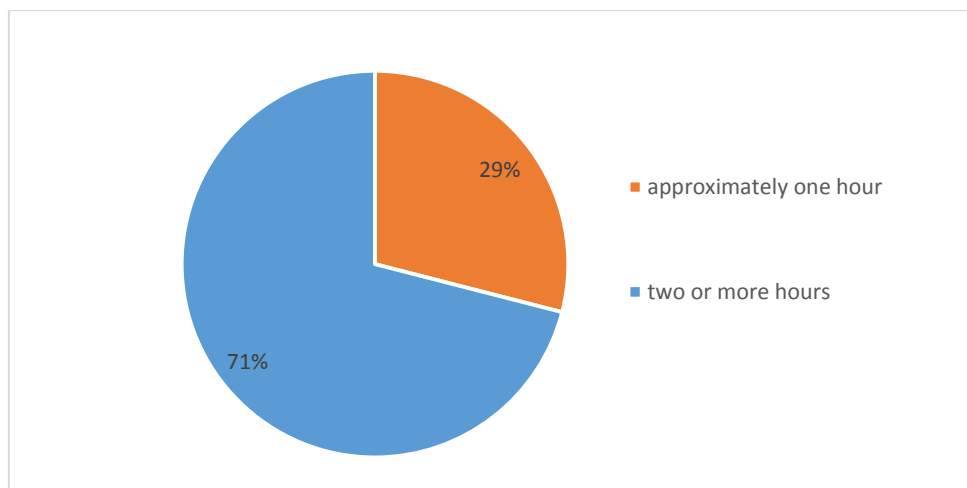
Authors did not have Google or many different teaching sites that charge each download, back then. They had tons of ideas and turned them into a book. If it is a good one, it also has illustrations, an explanation of how to use the same activity at different levels of knowledge, and examples that can help you (Participant 3, 2016).

Two remaining teachers (29%) like combining their coursebooks, the Internet and other resources when preparing a narrative-based lesson for their learners. Sometimes the text is already in the coursebook but additional pictures or the script needs to be provided somewhere else (Figure 4). Finally, if the teachers are familiar with the topic, they are more than welcome to create their own materials.



*Figure 4: Material resources*

When asked how long it takes to make a good story-related material, all of the teachers agreed that it is a long process. Two teachers (29%) said that it takes them around an hour, and five teachers (71%) mentioned a couple of hours if they want the material to be really appealing and reusable (Figure 5). It is a bit harder to make a material that can be used with more different levels and age groups, but according to them, it is worth the struggle. They also listed some of the things that they pay attention to when making story-related materials. They suggest that it should be child friendly, age-appropriate, not too complicated, interesting, connected to the story, and not just made to be fun. “It must have a creative display entirely different from the one in the book/workbook; and it must be achievable to all the students in your class, no matter what knowledge level they are at.” (Participant 1, 2016)



*Figure 5: Time needed to make a good story-related material*

What seems to be a unanimous opinion is that the main difference between young learners and a bit older ones is that the younger children are not afraid of their own mistakes and love to be called to perform in front of the others. Unlike young learners who would not mind to do almost anything, older students try not to be as “visible”. They tend to sit quietly and pretend to read or write something so that a teacher does not pick them for a task. However, even between young learners there are groups of children who do not like to talk in front of the others, especially not in a foreign language. What you can do then is to have a lot of patience and make their tasks more demanding and gradually longer. If you show them that they can do what you ask them to, they will gain confidence and be willing to cooperate.

As for learners’ participation in preparing story-telling materials, three teachers provided a negative answer because, according to their experience, it would be time consuming. On the contrary, the other four respondents disagree promoting learners' active participation in materials creation. They suggest coloring, cutting pictures, writing words or simple sentences, or even coping with more complicated tasks at home.

When asked about the elements in a narrative-based lesson they have to pay most attention to, the majority mentioned time and diversity of the tasks.

Finally, when it comes to the benefits young learners have from working with narratives, it depends on the teacher him/herself. The participants have listed different things, from reading and listening skills to vocabulary and fluency. The following answer sums it up:

I believe that the teacher has to decide what the purpose of using narratives in a certain lesson is. Topics are usually divided into two or even three lessons and each can be about something else. Focus does not have to always be on listening, for

example. There are many different activities that can be used and sometimes it is even good to tell your students what the goal of a particular lesson is, because then they focus on that particular goal even more (Participant 2, 2016).

#### 4.5.2. Results of the Narrative Based Lessons

The present section will present a descriptive analysis of the results obtained by the questionnaires.

When asked about their previous exposure to the story-telling in English, 20 learners from *Group B1* (74%) said that this was not their first time, and 7 learners (26%) claimed it was. In *Group B2*, the results point to a completely different situation, with 8 learners (73%) saying they have never listened to a story in English, one learner (9%) not being sure, and only 2 learners (18%) with some experience with stories in English. The results obtained are understandable because learners in *Group B2* are considerably younger than learners in *Group B1* (Figure 1).

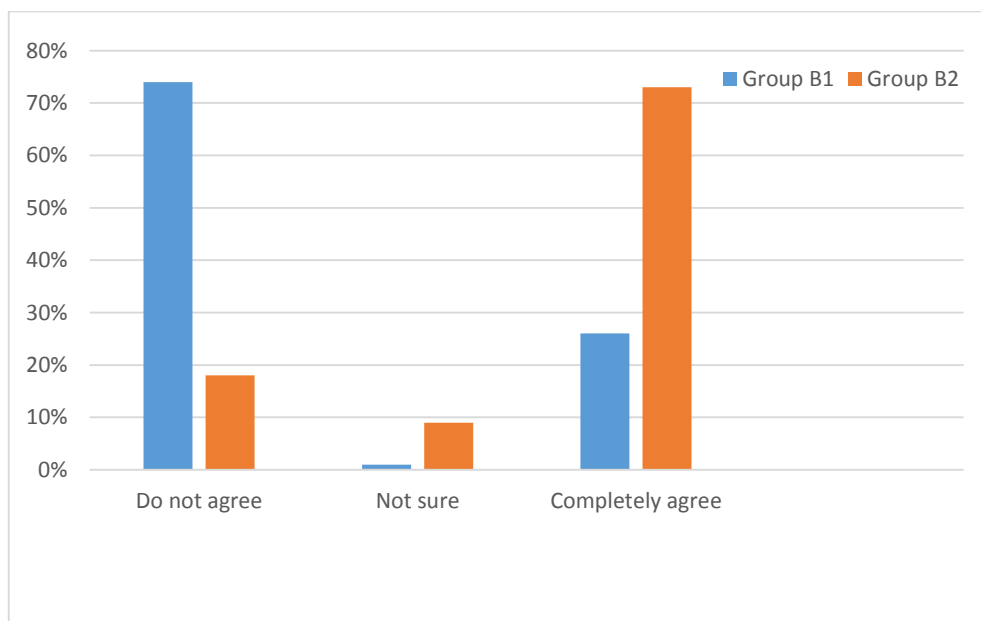
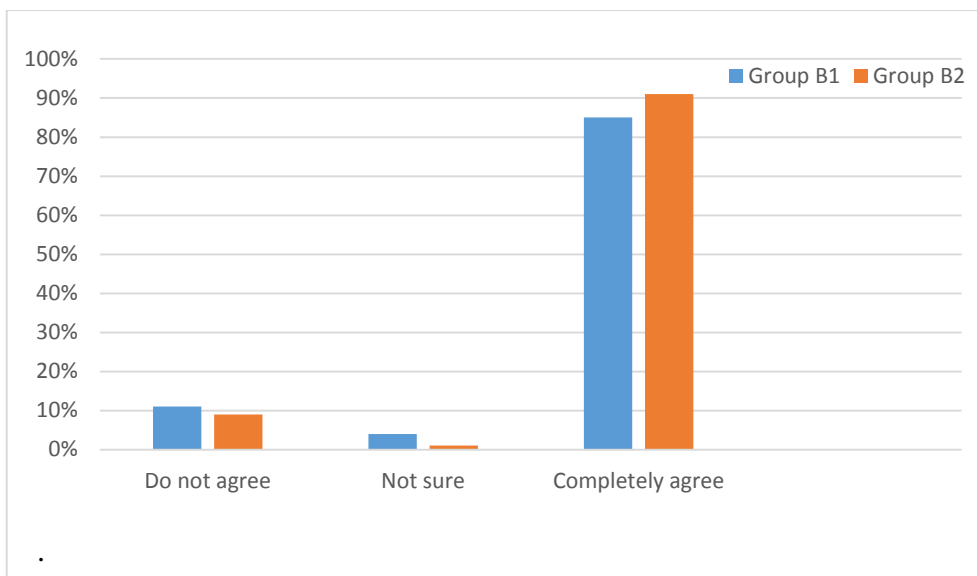


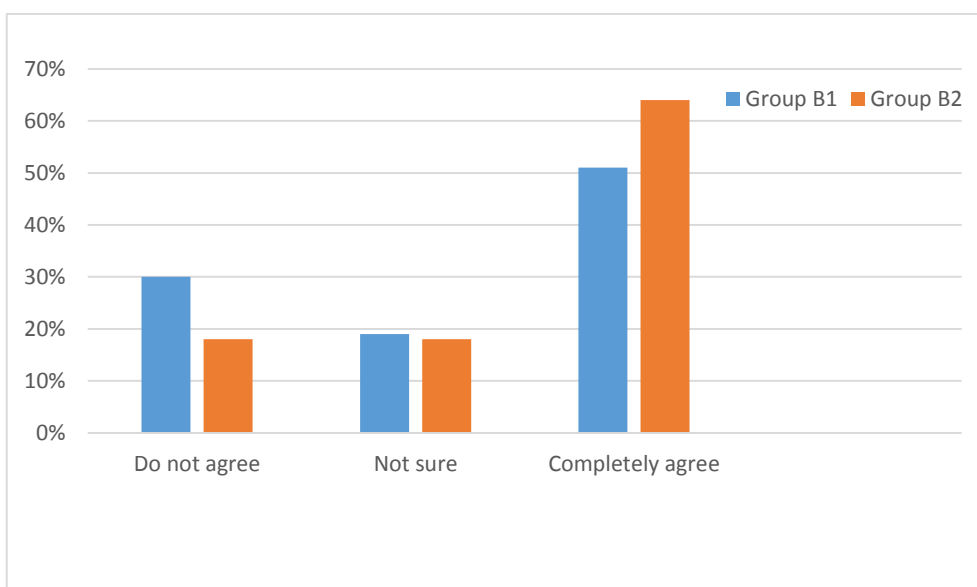
Figure 1: This is my first time listening to a story in English.

23 learners from *Group B1* (85%) and 10 learners from *Group B2* (91%), agree that learning English through stories is fun. One student from *Group B1* (4%) is not sure, and for only 3 students from *Group B1* (11%) and 1 from *Group B2* (9%) listening to a story was not as fun (Figure 2).



*Figure 2: It was fun learning English through a story*

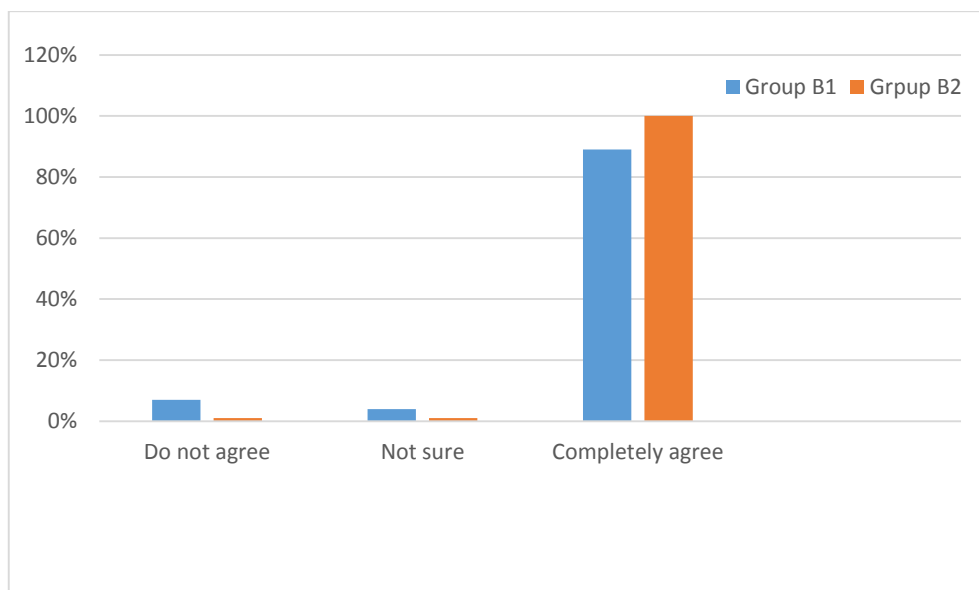
8 learners in *Group B1* (30%) and 2 learners in *Group B2* (18%) did not find it easier to acquire new knowledge or vocabulary by learning through a story and 5 learners in *Group B1* (19%) and 2 in *Group B2* (18%) could not decide. However, the majority (14 learners in *Group B1* (51%) and 7 in *Group B2* (64%)) believed that stories helped them with learning and understanding (Figure 3).



*Figure 3: I believe that it is easier to acquire new knowledge/words through stories.*

Finally, Figure 4 provides most positive answers to the last statement. All of the learners in *Group B2* (100%) and a vast majority (24 learners (89%)) in *Group B1* would like to learn

through stories more often. Only one learner in *Group B1* (4%) is indecisive, and 2 (7%) from the same group do not think this is the best option for them.



*Figure 4: I would like to learn English through stories more often.*

#### 4.6. Discussion

The qualitative type of data obtained from the interview confirmed most of our initial hypotheses. The interviewed teachers argue that even though narrative-based lessons are time-consuming and can be rather difficult to organize, they are beneficial for young learners. They also point out that the positive effects brought up in the theoretical part, are indeed visible among the students. It is not easy to use narratives often, the results revealed that teachers include them in their lessons every once in a while. As for the teaching materials, a common viewpoint is that coursebooks do not provide an adequate input for a narrative based lesson. In need, teachers often explore secondary resources, mostly the Internet and/or another (story) book. The criteria for choosing the materials, again, depends on the teacher, but some conditions are universal – materials have to be age-appropriate, challenging enough and they need to have a clear purpose. Although the amount of time required for preparing narrative materials during lessons is quite considerable, young learners' active participation in the process is strongly encouraged. The benefits are numerous: developing different skills, learning about culture, spending quality time together, working as a team and learning something new.

After getting familiar with what the criteria for choosing narratives should be, the two narratives from the example lessons were chosen based on the following: the level of difficulty of the text itself; the topic that was interesting and close to the learners, a story that could provoke

discussions and have a lot of different follow-up and preceding tasks; the elements like the repetitive phrases that allowed young learners to participate; and that was suitable for and dear to the teacher. Because of the reasons listed in the “Teacher versus Machine” chapter, and simply because the direct teaching experience was targeted, it was decided that the teacher was going to be the teller and the presenter in both cases. The presentation included both visual and auditory stimuli, as well as different voices and a lot of miming. The fact that young learners have to be involved to be able to learn was taken into account as well. They were allowed to play with realia, put pictures on the poster, make their own examples and brainstorm ideas.

Having one more year of experience made a huge difference in time needed for planning the second lesson and making/finding the materials. It allowed predicting the potential problems and thinking of possible solutions in advance. Working with the same students for a longer period of time (*Group B2*), allowed the teacher to incorporate some of their individual needs into the lesson. There were simply less surprising situations that could throw the lesson off track. In the first lesson, two activities were undoubtedly well accepted by the learners. The first one was the group activity in which learners had to write their own sentences on a given topic. It allowed them to show their competitiveness and helped building the spirit. The other activity was working with the poster (attaching the pictures). Learners genuinely enjoyed listening for clues and connecting pictures with meaning. The most successful part of the second lesson was presenting the characteristics of a good listener. Some of the learners had already been familiar with the concept and it helped them a lot and allowed them to participate equally. The most fun activity for learners, however, was enchanting the other learners with the magic feather. They were also similarly engaged while drawing their favorite moment from the story. The additional “Fun and Games” worksheet was a bit too complicated for some of the learners, but it was on the *i+1* level for most of them. The majority enjoyed the challenge, and the ones that had hard time completing the tasks were asked to do as much as they could.

The tools used in both of the lessons were highly effective for the reason that they were appealing to a lot of different learning types. Visual types had pictures from the poster and the art from the picture book or word cards to help them, auditory types could listen to the story, different background sounds and onomatopoeias produced by the teacher, verbal types could play with words and sentence structures, kinesthetic types could play with realia (e.g. the red feather) and the logical types could engage in reasoning, debating and explaining (e.g. rearranging the pictures to create the rest of the Peter Pan story). Creating the classroom organization which would incorporate individual and team work would be beneficial for both the intrapersonal and interpersonal learning type.

Discipline, although not a huge problem, was the biggest issue during both lessons. In the first one, it was because of the high number of students, their excitement and because the teacher did not know them very well. In the second lesson learners were engaged most of the time, except when the two students started wiggling and talking to each other during the telling of the story. Still, they were quickly interrupted, asked what they did wrong and reminded of the rules by other learners. The situation showed that being corrected by classmates is sometimes even more effective than being disciplined by the teacher. Also, this is when the appeal of the story helped a lot, since it kept the students engaged and interested. Another difficulty with *Group B2* was the language. In some parts of the lesson, especially during the discussions, it was challenging to use English. However, all the most important good-listener-characteristics were translated into English and repeated with the learners (e.g. ears listening, eyes watching, mouth waiting to talk, legs crossed, etc.). During the second lesson, learners did not seem to have hard time understanding. In a few occasions, some instructions had to be rephrased and explained into more details, but translation was not necessary.

As expected, the majority of the learners from both groups enjoyed the narrative-related lessons and would like to participate in them more often. The research has shown that there is no big difference in feelings toward narratives between the two age groups, but more between children from different backgrounds and the different learning types. Not everyone is an auditory or visual type of a learner and therefore the effect of storytelling cannot be the same. Additional difficulty is noticed among the learners who have not yet been exposed to the experience of story-telling.

In the end, with the help of the acquired background knowledge and the advice taken from the more experienced teachers, the main goals of both of the lessons were achieved and the lessons were successful. With *Group B1*, learners' ability to form the "can", "is" and "has got" sentences was confirmed by checking the tasks from the coursebooks and workbooks; and with a bit of help and reminding, *Group B2* learned how to listen to a story and how to behave during a presentation of a narrative.

Any of the difficulties and complications listed above can be the reason why many teachers, even the more experienced ones, avoid using narratives in their classrooms. Still, giving narrative based lessons a chance can be beneficial for both learners and teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that there are a lot of different ways of presenting a story, all of which, if used properly, can greatly help young learners in their English language acquisition. Amongst many positive sides of using narratives in the classroom with young learners, the most significant ones are raising students' intercultural awareness and tolerance, developing their language and life skills, teaching them how to solve problems and how to be a model member of the class and the society. Being exposed to stories helps learners get familiarized with the new situation depicted by the story and allows them to concentrate on other elements like the story itself, new language input, etc.

The research confirmed that, although important, theory is in no way all-powerful when it comes to teaching. Practical knowledge comes with experience and takes time. For that reason, beginner teachers should not become frustrated if their narrative-based lessons are not perfect. Mastering gradually improves with age and experience but always leaves a room for improvement.

The choice of the narrative should depend not only on learners' knowledge and abilities, but on the teachers' individual characteristics and preferences as well. Tasks should be diverse, interesting, they should have clear purpose and should be formed around interesting and thought-provoking topics. Moreover, a careful selection of the learning materials would enable all the different learning types to experience the narrative in the way that suits them best.

Having in mind that our brains already function as narrative devices, it can be concluded that narratives are a great way of engaging young learners in learning English. It also provides them with opportunities to explore and learn in new and interesting ways. The fact that all children, no matter the age, gender or background like stories very much helps a lot, too. Nonetheless, the most positive characteristic of narratives is that they can be used and reused numerous times, for a lot of different purposes and in a lot of different contexts.

Finally, because of the limitations of this study regarding the number of the participants as well as the fact that there were only two different age groups of young learners examined, the results obtained in the study may not be completely reliable. Thus, it may be useful to repeat this research in the future including more different age groups and more experienced teachers. Getting to know the learners would enable the researcher to get more realistic results or to adjust the lesson to meet specific learners' needs. Some suggestions for further investigation would include making the materials for narrative-related lessons, using narratives in teaching English as a foreign language to older students, using technology etc.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview with the teachers teaching English as a foreign language to young learners

1. How long have you been working with young learners? Do you find it difficult? Do you enjoy working with young learners? Why yes/no?
2. How much time does it take to plan a lesson for young learners? Did it take longer when you were a beginner teacher?
3. Do you use story-telling or other forms of narratives in your classroom? If yes, how often?
4. How much time do you spend working with narratives in one lesson? Does it sometimes take more than one lesson to finish?
5. What type of narrative-related activities do you usually use? (Listening to a story/reading a story/watching animated stories/making posters/acting/etc.)
6. Do coursebooks provide enough story-related material or you need to make it/find it on your own?
7. Do you make narrative-related materials (write stories/draw pictures/make posters/etc.) on your own or you use other resources (Internet/books/magazines/fellow teachers)?
8. How long does it take you to make a good narrative-related material and what do you have to pay attention to?
9. What are your criteria while searching for narrative-related materials on the Internet/in a book/magazine/etc.?
10. Do your learners enjoy listening to/telling/retelling stories and do they participate voluntarily?
11. Have you ever asked your young learners to help you make the materials? How can they help?
12. Is it worth spending time on preparing the materials with young learners?
13. Do narratives help your learners improve their knowledge of English language? Which aspects of language are mostly improved? (skills, vocabulary, grammar, etc.)
14. Is there any difference between the amount of participation, enjoying the activity and areas being improved, between the learners of different age and level of knowledge?
15. In your opinion, what are the most important things that teachers should have in mind or pay attention to during a narrative based lesson?

### Daily Lesson Plan

**Date:** May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 (90 min)

**Student/mentee:** Petra Bence

**Mentor:** Jelena Prprović

**School:** 1. Osnovna škola Čakovec

**Literature (Coursebook):** New building blocks 3

**Class:** (+ number of learners): 27 students, 3<sup>rd</sup> year of elementary school, beginner level, 3<sup>rd</sup> year of learning (4<sup>th</sup> year for some students)

**Topic of the lesson:** How does Harold become a hero?

**Type of the lesson:** Presentation and practice

**Aim of the lesson:** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to describe people and animals by composing “can”, “is” and “has got” sentences on their own.

**Objectives (aims):**

**Cognitive (knowledge):** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to use previously acquired vocabulary (emotions, animals from the zoo, body parts and clothes), they will expand their knowledge about animals and will be able to identify which characteristic belongs to which animal (e.g. which animals can swim or run fast), they will be able to demonstrate retelling of the story in their own words (and memorize some repetitive phrases) and they will be able to compose “can”, “is” and “has got” sentences.

**Functional (skills):** By the end of the lesson, students will build their reading, listening, memorizing, retelling and writing skills; and they will master their performance skills (control over body, pitch, tempo, dynamics, mines and gestures)

**Affective objectives/aims (attitudes):** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to demonstrate empathy for the characters in different situations, they will be motivated for active participation during the lesson, and will use their imagination during the process.

**Prior knowledge required (topics and / or content):** animals that live in the zoo, verbs (can, is, has got, to swim, to run, to talk, etc.), body parts, clothes

## LESSON OUTLINE

Lesson stages/timing	Aims (individual tasks)	Procedure (short description of steps)	Methods and techniques	Classroom organization	Teaching aids	Comment
<p><b>1. INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p><b>6 minutes</b></p>	<p>Ls get to know the T</p> <p>Ls warm up, express feelings and state of mind</p> <p>Ls have fun, develop logical thinking, practice attentive listening and following instructions</p> <p>Ls are exposed to the written form of "can", "is" and "has got" sentences</p>	<p><b>Step 1 (6')</b></p> <p>T greets students and introduces herself.</p> <p>She asks Ls how they are feeling today. ("Okay, good, sleepy, happy, hungry, etc.")</p> <p>T starts a game similar to "Simon says" by giving an instruction to Ls: "Everybody who is happy, stand up!" (Ls who are happy, stand up and wait for further instructions.) T continues: "Everybody who has got a red T-shirt, clap your hands!" Lastly, T instructs: "Everybody who can swim, touch your nose!"</p> <p>For each instruction that T gives, she asks a L who responded to say his/her name, and she writes a sentence on the blackboard:            (Name) is happy.            (Name) has got a red T-shirt.            (Name) can swim.            T circles the verbs with different colors.</p>	<p>playing a game, responding to instructions, Q&amp;A</p>	<p>whole class</p>	<p>blackboard</p>	<p>T asks Ls not to write down the sentences yet.</p>

<p>2. MAIN PART</p> <p>82 minutes</p>	<p>Ls practice reading comprehension, and translate previously acquired vocabulary</p>	<p><b>Step 2 (2')</b></p> <p>T asks for a volunteer to translate the 3 sentences from the blackboard. ((<i>Ime</i>) <i>je srečan/sretna</i>, (<i>Ime</i>) <i>ima cvetnu majicu</i>, (<i>Ime</i>) <i>zna može plovati</i>.)</p>	<p>reading, translating</p>	<p>whole class, individual work</p>	<p>blackboard</p>	
	<p>Ls have fun, form groups, develop logical thinking, recall previously acquired vocabulary and solve the task</p> <p>Ls demonstrate teamwork and provide written description of the animals by applying acquired facts about the given animal and appropriate sentence structure</p>	<p><b>Step 3 (4')</b></p> <p>T walks around and asks each L to take a piece of paper with a letter on it, from her hat. (The letters are H, G, M, L and P.) Then Ls are asked to find a desk with a picture of an animal whose name begins with the same letter that they've got, and to settle down. There should be 3 groups with 5 children and 2 groups with 6 children.</p> <p><b>Step 4 (18')</b></p> <p>T explains that each group is going to get a piece of blank paper on which they, as a group, have to write 6 sentences describing the animal that they have. 2 sentences for each verb from the blackboard.</p> <p>T also asks Ls to start their sentences with "he" or "she", rather than with the name of the animal.</p> <p>T distributes the papers. (e.g. for the lion. He can run fast. He can roar. He is strong. He is the king of the jungle. He has got a</p>	<p>mingling</p> <p>writing, playing a game</p>	<p>whole class, individual work</p> <p>group work</p>	<p>pieces of paper with letters, pictures of animals</p> <p>papers with sentences, pictures of the animals</p>	



<p>Ls practice using pronouns, fluent reading and listening to differentiate, develop logical thinking and practice identifying required vocabulary</p>	<p>tail. <b>He</b> has got big teeth.)</p> <p>T asks each group to read their sentences and members from the other groups have to guess which animal it is. When they guess correctly, the group shows their picture.</p>				
<p>Ls develop logical thinking, and practice detecting details and differentiating between the beginning letters of the words</p>	<p><b>Step 5 (2')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls to take their books and to sit facing the blackboard.</p> <p>While they are settling down, T puts a poster with 4 blank pictures and the headline "How does Harold become a Hero?" on the blackboard.</p> <p>T asks learners to guess which of the five animals could be named Harold and helps by instructing them to look at the first letter of the name. ("Harold the Hippo")</p> <p><b>Step 6 (4')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls to open their books on page 66 and to look at the text. She explains that she is going to read the text and Ls have to follow with their fingers.</p> <p>T changes a few words in the text to another</p>	<p>guessing, concluding</p>	<p>whole class</p>	<p>poster</p>	
<p>Ls practice paying attention, concentrating and reading comprehension, and improve</p>		<p>reading, correcting the mistakes</p>	<p>individual work, whole class</p>	<p>books</p>	

<p>pronunciation of individual words</p>	<p>similar ones to make Ls follow and correct her, and to make sure that they are understanding the text. (e.g. Instead of saying "Pinky the Parrot is special, too." T says "Pinky the Crocodile is special, too.")</p>			<p>books</p>	
<p>Ls practice fluent reading and reading comprehension</p>	<p><b>Step 7 (3')</b> T asks Ls to read with her this time.</p>	<p>reading</p>	<p>individual work, whole class</p>		
<p>Ls practice fluent reading, listening for information, and create a visual for the first part of the story</p>	<p><b>Step 8 (6')</b> T asks a volunteer from each group to read a part of the story which is connected to the animal that they had. (Ls are still sitting with their groups.) Another L from the same group has to stand up, get to the blackboard and glue the picture of their animal onto the first picture of the poster.</p>	<p>reading, listening, working with a poster</p>	<p>whole class (individual work)</p>	<p>books, poster, pictures of the animals</p>	<p>T can put duct tape at the back of the pictures in advance, so that gluing doesn't take too much time.</p>
<p>Ls develop reading comprehension, identify and recall animal characteristics and reproduce vocabulary, practice constructing "is" sentences</p>	<p><b>Step 9 (6')</b> T asks Ls to open their workbooks and do the task 1. In this task, they have to tick the right characteristic for each of the 5 animals in a table, and then rewrite the same words into the 5 sentences about these animals. (The words are: tall and thin, funny, strong and brave, special, and happy.)</p>	<p>working on a task, ticking</p>	<p>individual work</p>	<p>workbooks</p>	

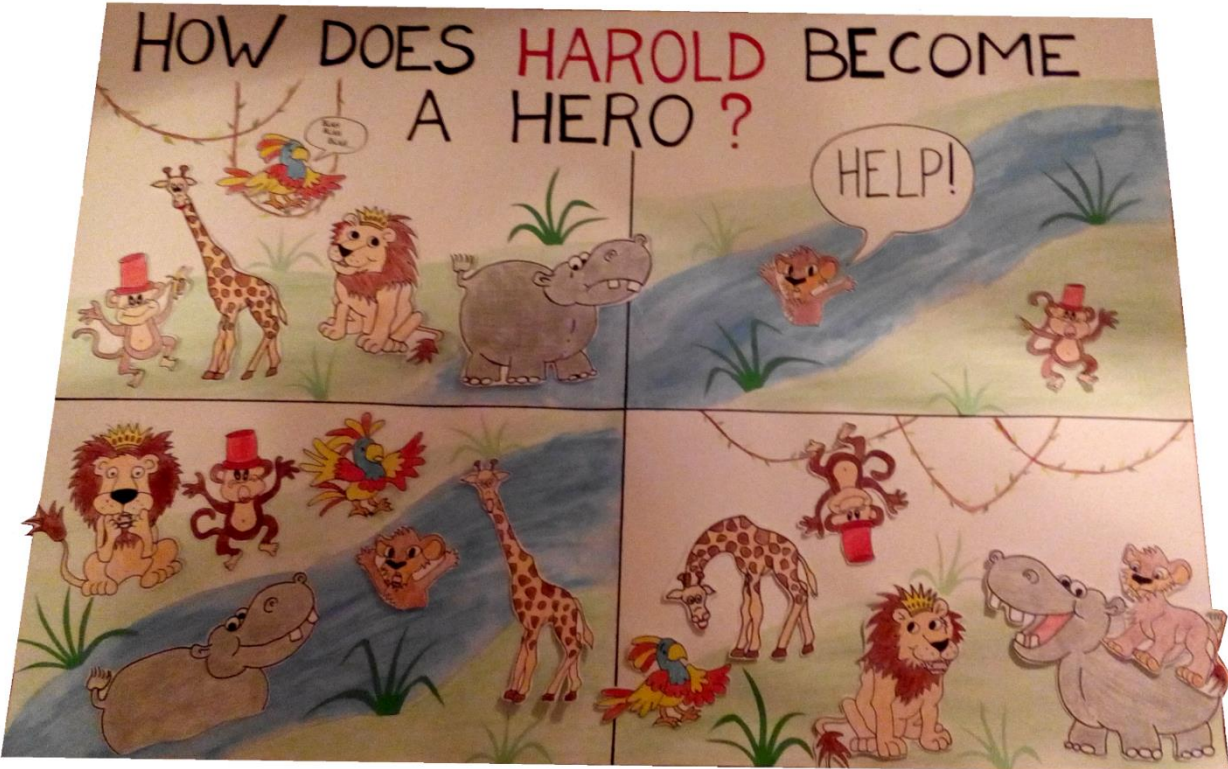
<p>Ls practice listening comprehension and create visuals</p>	<p><b>Step 10 (6')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls to close their books, pack their things and go back to their original seats.</p> <p>She explains that now they are going to hear the rest of the story, but she needs another volunteer to come to the blackboard and glue more pictures of the animals on the poster as they appear in the story.</p>	<p>working with the poster, telling the story, listening</p>	<p>whole class (individual work)</p>	<p>poster</p>	<p>T knows in advance which Ls are better with English and if nobody volunteers, she asks one of those Ls to try and show the others that it is easy.</p>
<p>Ls practice speaking and retelling, and develop memory and concentration</p>	<p>She asks if anybody would be willing to start the story by retelling the beginning (description of the animals) which they were reading. T explains that they are allowed to use their own words to talk, and promises that she and the rest of the Ls will help.</p> <p>The L retells the beginning.</p>				
<p>Ls are exposed to the rest of the story; Ls develop listening skill, practice listening comprehension and create visuals</p>	<p><b>Step 11 (8')</b></p> <p>As a reward to the L who did a good job retelling the beginning of the story, T calls him/her in front of the blackboard to replace the previous L and continue putting pictures on the poster.</p> <p>T continues telling the story and mimes simultaneously.</p>	<p>working with the poster, telling the story, listening</p>	<p>whole class (individual work)</p>	<p>poster</p>	

Ls practice speaking and retelling, retell the story using physical movement and repetitive phrases, develop memory, concentration and listening comprehension	<b>Step 12 (5')</b> When the story is finished, telling starts again (with another L retelling the beginning). T encourages Ls to mime with her and finish her sentences. <b>Step 13 (6')</b> Finally, T asks Ls to retell the story. Different Ls are required to retell different parts of the story and they volunteer to continue telling. T mimes with the Ls and in that way helps them if they get stuck.	working with the poster, retelling the story, listening, miming	whole class (individual work)	poster	If T sees that Ls have difficulties with retelling, she can retell the story again with Ls only miming.
Ls practice speaking and retelling, and develop memory and concentration	<b>Step 14 (3')</b> T asks Ls to do the task 2 in their workbooks. They have to circle the correct word describing the animals, in order to complete the "has got" sentences. When Ls are done, they check the answers together. <b>Step 15 (6')</b> Then T asks Ls to do task 3 in their workbooks. In this task they have to first match parts of the "can" sentences and then rewrite them.	working on a task, circling	individual work	workbooks	
Ls practice constructing the "can" sentences		working on a task, matching,	individual work	workbooks	

	and develop listening comprehension	When Ls are done, they check the answers together. <b>Step 16 (3')</b>	writing on a task, circling	individual work	books	
	Ls practice constructing the "is", "can" and "has got" sentences and develop listening comprehension and memory	Finally, T asks Ls to do the task 1 in their books on the page 67. They have to circle one of the two given words in the sentences, which correctly describe the animals and situations from the story. The sentences contain all of the three pre-taught verbs. When Ls are done, they check the answers together.	working on a task, circling	individual work	books	
<b>3. CONCLUSION</b>	Ls construct and discuss opinions, develop listening comprehension and fluency	T asks Ls who their favorite animal from the story is and why. Ls volunteer and answer.	speaking, Q&A	whole class		
<b>2 minutes</b>	Ls practice speaking and retelling, and develop memory and concentration	T asks Ls to retell the story one more time. Everybody has to mime and to make it more interesting, she interrupts Ls after a few sentences and asks sb else to continue The activity can be repeated more than once if necessary.	working with the poster, miming, (re)telling a story, listening	whole class (individual work)	poster	
<b>EXTRA ACTIVITY (4 minutes)</b>						

<b>HW</b>	Ls develop memory and practice constructing the "is", "can" and "has got" sentences	Ls have to do the task 4 in their workbooks to further practice the formation of the "is", "can" and "has got" sentences. They need to fill in the gaps with those verbs.	working on a task, writing	individual work	workbooks	
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Appendix 3: How does Harold become a hero? – Poster



### Daily Lesson Plan

**Date:** Apr 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 (60 min)

**Student teacher:** Petra Bence

**School:** Studio Zerjav, Cakovec

**Literature:** Disney – Peter Pan Comes to London

**Class:** (+ number of learners): 11 students, pre-school, beginner level, 1<sup>st</sup> year of learning

**Topic of the lesson:** Storytelling – Peter Pan

**Type of the lesson:** Presentation and practice

**Aim of the lesson:** By the end of the lesson, students will have discussed and applied the rules of behaving during the presentation of a narrative, and practiced listening to a story in English.

**Objectives (aims):**

**Cognitive (knowledge):** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to recognize, reproduce and translate new vocabulary (bed, bedroom, house, London, Never Land, old, young and feather), they will be able to recall and use some words and phrases they have previously acquired (e.g. sleeping, stand up, turn around, jump, clap, fly, book, good listener, quiet voices, no talking, etc.), and will be able to recognize some interesting facts about the World Book Day.

**Functional (skills):** By the end of the lesson, students will develop their listening, speaking, reading, writing and motor skills.

**Affective objectives/aims (attitudes):** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to demonstrate how to be a good and patient listener, and how to be an exemplary member of the group.

**Prior knowledge required (topics and / or content):** giving instructions (verbs of motion), the Simon says game, Croatian version of the story Peter Pan (not crucial)



## LESSON OUTLINE

Lesson stages/timing	Aims (individual tasks)	Procedure (short description of steps)	Methods and techniques	Classroom organization	Teaching aids	Comment
1. INTRO- DUCTION  <b>5 minutes</b>	Ls discover that it is the World Book Day, list their reading preferences, listen to others and get motivated for the lesson	<p><b>Step 1 (3')</b></p> <p>T greets the Ls and asks them if they know what event is being celebrated today. (“<i>The World Book Day</i>”)</p> <p>T writes the date and the headline “World Book Day” on the whiteboard.</p> <p>T introduces the topic ‘Storytelling’ by asking Ls about their reading preferences and favorites. Ls raise their hands and answer the questions.</p> <p>T questions Ls about their previous exposure to the storytelling in English and the experience they gained from it (<i>Was the first encounter with listening comprehension in English fun/difficult?</i>).</p> <p><b>Step 2 (2')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls if they are familiar with the story “Peter Pan” and who their favorite character is.</p> <p>Ls raise their hands and answer.</p>	Q&A	whole class	whiteboard	Croatian language is used when necessary because Ls are not yet fully fluent in English.
	Ls exhibit previous knowledge on Peter Pan by recalling the name and the content of the story, and naming their favorite characters		Q&A	whole class		

<p><b>2. MAIN PART</b></p> <p><b>45 minutes</b></p>	<p>Ls exhibit previous knowledge on Peter Pan by recalling facts, terms, and characters' names; Ls practice coloring</p> <p>Ls practice logical thinking, develop memory and practice drawing</p> <p>Ls practice concentration, attentive listening and noticing</p> <p>Ls identify the characters</p>	<p><b>Step 3 (4')</b></p> <p>T explains that today they are going to read a Peter Pan story called "Peter Pan comes to London".</p> <p>T distributes the worksheets and gives Ls instruction to point at the characters one by one and then color them. (e.g. <i>Can you show me where Peter Pan is? Great! Now color him, please.</i>)</p> <p><b>Step 4 (3')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls if they know who is missing on the picture. (<i>Tinker Bell</i>)</p> <p>Ls draw and color Tinker Bell on the picture.</p> <p><b>Step 5 (2')</b></p> <p>Ls are instructed to come and sit in a circle on the carpet in front of the whiteboard.</p> <p>T sits with them and opens the book on pages 2 and 3.</p> <p>T asks Ls to look at the photo and try to find the characters (Wendy, John and Michael.) Ls volunteer, point to the characters and show them to their classmates.</p>	<p>working on a task, listening, coloring</p> <p>finding and recognizing elements on a picture</p>	<p>whole class, individual work</p> <p>whole class</p>	<p>worksheets, colored pencils</p> <p>worksheets, colored pencils</p> <p>picture book</p>	<p>If necessary, T can help by saying that the person missing is Peter's friend.</p>
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	<p>Ls practice observing</p> <p>Ls acquire new vocabulary by being able to recognize written form of the words, to translate them, repeat them individually and recall them afterwards</p>	<p><b>Step 6 (8')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls what the kids are doing. ("sleeping")</p> <p>T asks Ls if they know where children are sleeping. ("In the bed") The Ls who know the answer, raise their hands and T puts a "BED" flashcard on the whiteboard.</p> <p>Then T asks Ls in what room the children are. ("In the bedroom") She repeats the action with the "BEDROOM" flashcard.</p> <p>After that, T asks Ls where the bedroom is. ("In the house") Ls answer and T puts the "HOUSE" flashcard on the whiteboard.</p> <p>The same thing is repeated with the question "Where is the house?" ("In London"), and T leads Ls to the correct answer by showing them the cover page of the picture book and pointing to the title "Peter Pan comes to London".</p> <p>T also mentions the English name for "Nigdzieńska" – "Never Land".</p> <p>Lastly, T shows Ls pictures of an old lady and a young girl and teaches them the meaning of words "young" and "old". She also puts the flashcards on the blackboard.</p>	<p>learning new vocabulary</p>	<p>whole class</p>	<p>whiteboard, flash cards</p>	
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	<p>Ls explain and discuss how to be a good, focused and patient listener, practice attentive listening and listening and comprehension, speaking and logical thinking</p> <p>Ls get familiar with the story, develop listening comprehension and demonstrate good listening skills</p>	<p><b>Step 7 (4')</b></p> <p>After pre-teaching the vocabulary, T and Ls discuss the concept of a "good" listener and the importance of patience and attentive listening in storytelling.</p> <p>She guides them through the process of identifying the main characteristics of a good listener (e.g. sitting still, watching and listening to the storyteller, not playing with their hands or tools, not talking to each other, not interrupting, etc.)</p> <p>T puts a drawing of a boy sitting on the floor and showing the characteristics of a good listener on the whiteboard, and they describe him once again, together. T writes the main ideas around the boy.</p> <p><b>Step 8 (5')</b></p> <p>T asks Ls to take their listening pose, and tells the story to them while showing the pictures from the picture book.</p> <p>T uses different voices, miming and dramatic pauses to keep the learners interested and focused.</p>	Q&A	whole class	whiteboard, drawing of a boy	<p>If necessary, teacher calms a misbehaving L down by looking at him/her or taking an item from him/her without interrupting</p>
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	<p>Ls develop listening comprehension, listening for information and memory, and practice spelling by rewriting the words from the whiteboard</p>	<p><b>Step 9 (4')</b></p> <p>When telling is over, T asks Ls if they remember where Peter Pan and Tinker Bell are from. ("Never Land") Ls answer and T writes the word on the whiteboard.</p> <p>She also wants to know where children are from. ("London") T writes this word on the whiteboard, as well.</p> <p>Then T redistributes the handouts from earlier attached to the clipboards, so that Ls are able to write on them. She asks Ls to write the answers to the questions that they just answered together. (tasks 3 and 4)</p> <p>T walks around, checking what Ls write.</p> <p><b>Step 10 (5')</b></p> <p>T retells the story, but this time Ls have to mime with her and repeat some repetitive phrases like "Peter Pan and children <i>fly and fly</i>".</p>	<p>Q&amp;A, working on a task, writing</p>	<p>whole class, individual work</p>	<p>worksheets</p>	<p>g the story. T could later ask the other Ls to comment the previously mentioned behavior patterns and offer some corrective guidelines on becoming a better listener</p>
	<p>Ls retell the story using physical movement and repetitive phrases</p>		<p>storytelling listening, miming, repeating</p>	<p>whole class (individual work)</p>	<p>picture book</p>	

	<p>Based on illustrations, Ls exhibit team spirit, memory enhancement and logic while organizing the story in a chronological order</p>	<p><b>Step II (5')</b></p> <p>As telling is finished again, T asks Ls to stand up and look at the whiteboard. She puts mixed pictures of the rest of the story (parts that were not included in the picture book) on the whiteboard. Ls' task is to put the pictures in order as they happened in the story.</p> <p>T and Ls briefly discuss what happens in each picture, while putting them in order.</p> <p><b>Step 12 (5')</b></p> <p>When the activity is finished, T goes to pick the picture book up from the carpet and when she does, there is a red feather underneath it. T acts surprised and shows it to the Ls saying that it is the feather from Peter Pan's hat. She explains that it was able to fly out of the book because it was sprinkled with fairy dust and now it is magical.</p> <p>T passes the feather to the learners to study it and when each L has had it in his/her hands, T takes it back asking them if they want to see some of the Peter Pan's magic.</p> <p>T starts the game by saying "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo I can fly and so can you!"</p> <p>T asks Ls what else they could do with this feather. ("Jump, clap, turn around, etc." – words that they</p>	<p>working on a task, putting pictures in order, Q&amp;A</p>	<p>whole class</p>	<p>whiteboard, pictures</p>	
	<p>Ls have fun, develop imagination and creativity by working with realia</p>		<p>playing a game, giving instruction s, speaking, listening</p>	<p>whole class</p>	<p>red feather</p>	<p>Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo is a phrase</p>

	Ls practice giving and following instructions and play a game	know from the game "Simon says")				which Ls are already familiar with and have used several times in English lessons.
3. CONCLUSION 10 minutes	Ls develop memory, practice opinion forming and drawing, and have fun  Ls practice appropriate work ethics and polite behavior, and demonstrate awareness of cleanliness and tidiness	<b>Step 13 (10')</b> T asks Ls to draw their favorite scene from the story. T distributes blank papers and colored pencils. Ls draw. T walks around asking Ls about the scenes they are drawing.  When they finish, Ls clean the classroom and form the line in front of the door, so they are ready to leave the classroom.	drawing, Q&A	individual work	blank papers, colored pencils	

<p><b>EXTRA ACTIVITY (5-15 minutes)</b></p>	<p>Ls have fun, develop logical thinking and motor skills, and practice spelling by recognizing the written form of the newly acquired words</p>	<p>T asks Ls to turn the other page of their worksheets and to do the fun tasks connected to the story about Peter Pan (extracting appropriate letter strings in order to identify newly acquired words, practicing logic and orientation, drawing and coloring).</p>	<p>working on a task, drawing, coloring, word search</p>	<p>individual work</p>	<p>worksheets</p>	
<p><b>HW</b></p>	<p>Ls find and list interesting facts about London</p>	<p>Ls have to find out (from their parents) one interesting thing about the city that children in the story are from – London. The topic of our next English class is London and each L will get to share his/her interesting fact.</p>	<p>Q&amp;A</p>	<p>individual work</p>		





# Peter Pan comes to London



- 1. COLOR THE CHARACTERS!
- 2. WHO IS MISSING? DRAW TINKER BELL!
- 3. WHO LIVES IN LONDON?

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- 4. WHO LIVES IN NEVER LAND?

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Appendix 6: A good listener - Anchor chart



Appendix 7: Questionnaire for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learners

Upitnik za učenike 3. razreda osnovne škole

Ovaj upitnik dio je istraživanja o primjeni priča u nastavi engleskog jezika. Molim te da pažljivo pročitaš pitanja i odgovoriš na njih tako da zaokružiš svoje mišljenje. Hvala na sudjelovanju!

Dob: \_\_\_\_\_

Godina učenja engleskog jezika: \_\_\_\_\_

Na pitanje odgovaraš zaokruživanjem jednog broja na skali od jedan do tri.

1	2	3
uopće se ne slažem	nisam siguran/sigurna	potpuno se slažem

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Prvi put u životu slušam priču na engleskom jeziku.       | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Bilo je zabavno učiti engleski kroz priču.                | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Vjerujem da je uz pomoć priče lakše naučiti novo gradivo. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Volio/voljela bih češće učiti engleski kroz priče.        | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Appendix 8: Questionnaire for the group of preschool students

Upitnik za predškolsku grupu učenika

Ovaj upitnik dio je istraživanja o primjeni priča u nastavi engleskog jezika. Molim te da pažljivo poslušаш pitanja i odgovoriš na njih tako da zaokružiš svoje mišljenje. Hvala na sudjelovanju!

Dob: \_\_\_\_\_

Godina učenja engleskog jezika: \_\_\_\_\_

Na pitanje odgovaraš zaokruživanjem jednog broja na skali od jedan do tri.

1	2	3
uopće se ne slažem	nisam siguran/sigurna	potpuno se slažem

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Prvi put u životu slušam priču na engleskom jeziku.      | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Bilo je zabavno učiti engleski kroz priču.               | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Vjerujem da je uz pomoć priče lakše naučiti nove riječi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Volio/voljela bih češće učiti engleski kroz priče.       | 1 | 2 | 3 |