

**Masaryk University Brno**

Faculty of Education

Department of English Language and Literature

**Analysis of Coursebooks  
for Very Young Learners**

Bachelor thesis

Brno 2011

Supervisor:

Mgr. Šárka Dohnalová

Author:

Marta Pasková

**Declaration:**

I hereby declare that I worked on my thesis on my own and that I used the sources mentioned in the bibliography.

Marta Pasková

## **Acknowledgements:**

I would like to express my thanks to Mgr. Šárka Dohnalová for her helpful comments and encouragement during my work on this bachelor thesis.

Marta Pasková

# Content

Content.....	1
I. Introduction.....	4
II. Theoretical Part.....	5
1. Teaching English to very young learners.....	5
1.1. Critical period hypothesis – is younger better? .....	5
1.2. Aims of early language teaching .....	6
1.3. Principles of early language learning .....	7
1.4. Organization of early language learning .....	8
1.5. Summary - Requirements for early language learning .....	11
2. Using coursebooks in teaching English .....	11
2.1. Aspects of using coursebooks in teaching English .....	11
2.1.1. Advantages and disadvantages.....	11
2.1.2. Ways of using coursebooks.....	13
2.1.3. How to choose and evaluate.....	13
2.2. Using coursebooks in teaching English to very young learners .....	15
2.2.1. Specific aspects of using coursebook in early EFL.....	15
2.2.2. Needs of teachers .....	15
2.2.3. Situation on the Czech market.....	15
3. Criteria for coursebooks for very young learners .....	16
3.1. Aims and approaches .....	16
3.2. Layout and design .....	17
3.3. Syllabus.....	17
3.4. Topics.....	18
3.5. Methodology .....	19
3.6. Language skills.....	19
3.7. Teacher’s Guide.....	20
3.8. Parental involvement .....	20

3.9.	Practical considerations .....	20
3.10.	Other criteria .....	21
4.	Criteria table for assessing the coursebooks for very young children .....	21
III.	Practical Part .....	23
1.	Description of the Research .....	23
1.1.	Research methodology .....	23
1.2.	Consultation - questionnaires .....	24
1.3.	Analysis - exploring coursebooks .....	25
1.4.	Result.....	26
2.	Analysis of coursebooks .....	26
2.1.	English coursebooks for very young learners .....	26
2.1.1.	Cookie and Friends .....	26
2.1.1.1.	Description .....	26
2.1.1.2.	Analysis.....	28
2.1.1.3.	Research .....	30
2.1.1.4.	Result.....	31
2.1.2.	Hippo and Friends .....	31
2.1.2.1.	Description .....	31
2.1.2.2.	Analysis.....	33
2.1.2.3.	Research .....	35
2.1.2.4.	Result.....	35
2.1.3.	Here's Patch the Puppy.....	35
2.1.3.1.	Description .....	35
2.1.3.2.	Analysis.....	37
2.1.3.3.	Research .....	39
2.1.3.4.	Result.....	39
2.1.4.	Angličtina pro nejmenší.....	40
2.1.4.1.	Description .....	40

2.1.4.2.	Analysis .....	40
2.1.4.3.	Research .....	42
2.1.4.4.	Result .....	42
2.2.	English coursebooks for young learners .....	43
2.2.1.	Playway to English 1 .....	43
2.2.1.1.	Description .....	43
2.2.1.2.	Analysis .....	44
2.2.1.3.	Research .....	46
2.2.1.4.	Result .....	47
2.2.2.	Mini Magic 1 .....	47
2.2.2.1.	Description .....	47
2.2.2.2.	Analysis .....	48
2.2.2.3.	Research .....	50
2.2.2.4.	Result .....	50
2.3.	Other English coursebooks for very young children .....	51
2.3.1.	Cheeky Monkey .....	51
2.3.2.	Hello, Robby Rabbit .....	51
2.3.3.	My First English Adventure .....	51
2.4.	Other English coursebooks for young children .....	52
2.4.1.	Happy House .....	52
2.4.2.	Little Bugs .....	52
2.5.	Czech coursebook for very young learners .....	53
2.6.	Other English coursebooks .....	53
IV.	Conclusion .....	55
	Bibliography .....	56
	Appendices .....	57

## I. Introduction

As a member of the European Union the Czech Republic follows the educational policy of the Union. One of the educational priorities of EU is teaching foreign languages whereas early language teaching is supported. The Czech Ministry of Education reflected the European policy as stated in *Action Plan for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity (2003)* in its own document *Národní plán výuky cizích jazyků (2005)*. On its basis teaching foreign languages (mainly English) on a preschool level has expanded. Many publishers reflected the need for high-quality materials and provided the market in our country with special coursebooks designed for preschool children.

The main aim of this thesis is to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the aims of teaching English to very young learners?
2. What are the requirements for early language teaching?
3. Do the English coursebooks for preschool children reflect these requirements?

Another objective is to prepare a practical handout for teachers who are considering using a coursebook in teaching English to very young learners.

In the theoretical part we consider various aspects of teaching languages to very young learners and suggest the requirements for teaching English to very young learners.

In the practical part we provide a survey of coursebooks used in teaching English to preschool children. The description and analysis of the coursebooks are supported by a research exploring opinions of teachers who have experience with the use of particular coursebooks in their teaching.

## II. Theoretical Part

In this part we consider various aspects of teaching English to very young learners as well as important issues related to using coursebooks in teaching English.

### 1. Teaching English to very young learners

When adults learn foreign language they usually have a clear motivation for doing it. They need it for their study, employment, communication or at least for their personal development. These reasons do not apply to very young learners. Except for the situations when children are in a foreign country they usually do not need a foreign language for their practical lives.

Assuming children will learn foreign languages later at school we have to ask what the purpose of teaching at preschool level is. The following paragraphs discuss the advantages, principles and aims of early language teaching.

#### 1.1. Critical period hypothesis – is younger better?

Many psycholinguists have explained the advantages of early language learning by proposing a so called “sensitive period” in childhood for language learning. Critical Period hypothesis, originally proposed by Eric Lenneberg, suggested that brain plasticity was only conducive to language learning until puberty. Whilst this strong position has been contested, there seems to be some agreement that there is a sensitive period for acquiring a second language. However, in formal non-English environments, the advantages of younger learners have not been positively proved.

Research shows that “the advantages concern young children’s intuitive grasp of language and their ability to be more attuned to the phonological system of the new language”. (Pinter 2006 : 29) On contrary, older learners have other advantages, e.g. more efficient strategies, more mature conceptual world to rely on and a clearer purpose for learning a new language. “It seems that the advantages older learners enjoy can ultimately compensate for an early start. The only area that is difficult to compensate for seems to be pronunciation.” (Pinter 2006 : 29)

Children’s advantages as language learners are most obvious in informal contexts; they tend to pick up language in everyday situations from other children because they want

to play and make friends. (Pinter 2006 : 29). However, this does not imply in the context of learning English in Czech environment. The only environment that could imitate the English-speaking context can be found in English kindergartens (discussed later).

Stephen Krashen who contributed to the linguistics by his theory of language acquisition also expressed doubts concerning benefits of early foreign language teaching. In his article *Dealing with English fever* (2003) he points out that there is no practical demand for young children who do not live in English-speaking countries to speak English and therefore an early start is less efficient and does not guarantee a native accent.

On the other hand the supporters of early foreign language learning claim that learning languages before starting school is beneficial for the children as it creates positive attitude to other cultures and develops memory and communication skills. It helps take advantage of the children's full potential.

We can agree with Pinter that "although children in non-English environments have limited opportunities to practise the language outside school and no immediate need or clear motivation to use and learn English, introducing children to a new language offers opportunities to widen their horizons and awaken their early enthusiasm and curiosity about languages" (Pinter 2006 : 32) It is therefore desirable to look at the early language learning as a contribution to the holistic development of a child's personality.

## 1.2. Aims of early language teaching

The *Action Plan for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity* introduced by European Commission in 2003 sets the objectives of teaching modern languages to young learners as follows: „It is a priority for Member States to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary school is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language learning are laid“. (2003 : 7)

In the Framework Educational Plan for Preschool Education, the main document for preschool education in the Czech Republic (hereinafter FEP PE) there is only one sentence regarding foreign language learning. It suggests that children should be aware of the existence of other nations and languages and the fundamentals for language learning should

be laid. Nevertheless, the aims of foreign language education should reflect the general objectives stated in FEP PE. These are set out as follows:

The framework objectives: the development of the personality of each child and its learning and cognitive abilities, adoption of values, and acquisition of personal attitudes.

The expected key competencies to be acquired: learning competency, problem-solving competency, communication competency, social and personal competency and professional competency.

Partial learning objectives in the following educational areas: biological, psychological, interpersonal, socio-cultural and environmental. (RVP 2004 : 10)

The pre-primary education is supposed to prepare basic prerequisites for children's further learning.

### 1.3. Principles of early language learning

In 2005 a complex report on respective research, good practice and main principles was published under the title *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners*. According to its conclusion the main principles for language teaching to very young learners are:

- Principles with a clear relationship to the personality of the child and its cognitive functioning – pedagogical cognitive orientation: frequent exposure to the foreign language, taking into account the full range of learners characteristics, encouraging tolerance towards others and providing familiarity with different sets of values.
- General principles related to learning – didactical concepts and instruction: taking into account learning strategies and learning styles of children, providing meaningful context and relevant thematic areas, comprehension precedes production.
- Principles related to language learning – psycholinguistic issues and methodological transformations: holistic language learning, a visual approach and multisensory learning, age-related taking full advantage of the children's physical predispositions.

- Principles unique for early language learning: more comprehension than production, a positive motivation to learning, training of the ear, training of pronunciation, extension and training of the relationship in a foreign language of phonetics and graphemes (Edelenbos, Johnstone, and Kubanek 2005 : 156).

As foreign language learning should form an integral part of the pre-school curriculum, it is important to consider also the basic principles for preschool education as set out in FEP PE (2004 : 8-9):

- the relation (adjustment) to individual educational (physiological, cognitive, social and emotional) needs and abilities of each learner
- experiential learning
- cooperative learning
- integrated learning

Preschool education should offer an environment that is friendly, interesting, inspiring, and rich in content, and where a child can feel confident, safe, joyful and happy. Appropriate methods and forms of work should be used and specifics of children's development should be fully respected. The teachers should provide enough space for spontaneous activities; apply situational learning (using natural situations) and spontaneous social learning based on the principle of natural imitation. The FEP stresses out the importance of balance of spontaneous and directed activities in a form of offered activities from which the child can choose. Individual and group work is supported rather than whole class directed work. Education takes place on the basis of integrated blocks which provide the content of education in natural and meaningful context.

According to the new concept of preschool education it is stressed that education always involves the whole personality of the child and thus the content reflects the child's natural development.

#### 1.4. Organization of early language learning

In the Czech Republic, there are generally four forms of teaching English to very young learners:

- a) English as a special course in the kindergarten, usually in the afternoon, attended by children whose parents want them to learn English or by all children in their last year of kindergarten, taught by an external teacher or a kindergarten teacher
- b) English integrated to the kindergarten program for all children, taught usually by the class teacher, sometimes attended by a native speaker
- c) English as a second language in English kindergartens, usually there is also special time devoted to “learning” English
- d) English as a special course in the language school, usually in the afternoon

English in kindergarten (options a. and b.) is very convenient for parents as they do not have to pay much extra money, and the learning takes place in the kindergarten attended by their children.

English kindergartens (option c.) are now very popular among parents as it is generally believed that children completing their pre-school education in English kindergartens acquire the language in such an advanced level that it will ensure them better future. The teachers are usually native English speakers and there are usually some children from foreign countries. We can speak about “immersion” in these kindergartens, but as a child tends to use his or her first language where possible, especially in the interaction with other children, it cannot be compared with the “total immersion” where using new language is the only possibility to communicate.

As for English kindergartens, there are some significant issues to be considered. The most important aspect is whether the child feels secure in English speaking environment and thus his or her personality can fully develop. This issue is sometimes resolved by having a Czech-speaking teacher working with children together with the native speaker. Another issue is a child’s ability to use his or her first language. There are extensive discussions of this issue held by the specialists. Some of them claim that immersion program does not influence the children’s ability to use their L1. Others warn that the influence of a good model of children’s L1 can be limited and their capability of using L1 properly can be at risk. It depends on specific conditions and individual abilities of each child. Krashen (2003) warns that “strong second/foreign language education should not weaken first language education. The first language can contribute background knowledge and literacy development that

stimulates second language development, and of course advanced first language development stimulates advanced cognitive development.” His message to educators is: “Don’t sacrifice developing the first language and provide the means of continuing to improve after the program ends.” (Krashen 2003)

To summarize: children can benefit from early foreign language acquisition in English kindergartens only if the security of the environment and first language continuing development are ensured. The continuity is another important issue. It should be added that the price of English kindergartens narrows their accessibility to the families with above standard incomes.

English courses in language schools (option d.) are still quite popular among parents who want their children to learn English as an after-school activity. The courses in language schools are usually of a high quality and not as expensive as English kindergartens but more expensive than courses held in normal kindergartens. The main advantage is the continuity offered by language schools even after the children enter the primary school.

Integrating English as naturally as possible into existing preschool programme seems to be the optimal option. As young children learn holistically it makes sense to integrate English into other learning. It fits the idea of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) which is nowadays very popular. Pinter points out that “the class teacher who delivers the rest of curriculum and who has a good knowledge of the children as well as the language is in the best position to succeed. Knowledge of the curriculum means that class teachers can integrate English easily and naturally into the day.” (Pinter 2006 : 41) However, it is often pointed out that language skills of kindergarten teachers are not always sufficient for such concept. Therefore, further language education for kindergarten teachers is organized to meet these requirements. “Teachers need to have adequate proficiency in the language to provide comprehensible input and natural exposure to the target language”. (Pinter 2006 : 41)

The frequency and intensity of exposure to English is another important aspect. “How much English children hear and how often they have opportunities to interact in English is very crucial. It is important that opportunities are created in the classroom for children to be exposed to natural language and to interact with each other. More intensive foreign

language programmes result in better performance. It is better to have 30 minutes every day than just two hours during the whole week". (Pinter 2006 : 39)

### 1.5. Summary - Requirements for early language learning

On the basis of previous paragraphs we can distinguish three main categories of consideration in teaching foreign language to preschoolers: aims, methods and conditions.

The aims of teaching English to very young learners can be summarized as follows

- a) to contribute to the personal development of each child
- b) to lay down the basis for learning foreign languages
- c) to lay down a good attitude to learning foreign languages

The methods have to reflect the needs of learners as well as the process of natural language acquisition.

As for conditions, secure environment, enjoyable activities and attractive materials should be provided.

## 2. Using coursebooks in teaching English

### 2.1. Aspects of using coursebooks in teaching English

#### 2.1.1. Advantages and disadvantages

There are different views on usefulness of coursebooks. On one hand there are some obvious advantages which Harmer (2001) summarizes as follows:

"Benefits: coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control, motivating texts, tapes and other accessories (videotapes, CD-ROMs, extra resource materials, useful web links), attractive, they provide confidence to teachers, detailed teacher's guides – procedures for the lesson in the student's book, suggestions and alternatives, extra activities and resources; students can see the progress and look back for revision." (Harmer 2001 : 304)

Halliwell (2006) states that the coursebook helps the teacher by providing a clearly thought out programme which is appropriately sequenced and structured to include progressive revision; wider range of material than an individual teacher may be able to

collect; security; economy of preparation time; a source of practical teaching ideas. (Halliwell 2006 : 14)

Based on the advantages mentioned by Harmer and Halliwell the importance and effectiveness of using coursebooks in language teaching is unquestionable. However, there is also the other side of this issue. Harmer (2001) explains the restrictions of using coursebooks:

“If used inappropriately the coursebooks can become a rule that has to be used, ... units and lessons often follow an unrelenting format so that students and teachers eventually become de-motivated by the sameness of it all, inappropriate topics.” (Harmer 2001 : 304)

Halliwell also mentions “several things that the teacher can often do better than a book, e.g. providing the spoken word in spoken exchanges; adjusting work in response to the reactions of the children; using communication other than words and pictures to back up language elements; setting up learning activities which encourage learners to talk and profit from interaction.” (Halliwell 2006 : 114)

Does that imply that using a coursebook should be rejected completely? There are some teachers who prefer to work without a coursebook. Harmer (2001) describes so called “do-it-yourself” approach. In his opinion this approach is extremely attractive as it can offer students a dynamic and varied programme based on their needs and the teacher with an exciting and creative involvement. In this case the teacher needs access to a wide range of materials, be able to create their own materials and become syllabus designers in their own right. However, this is very time consuming and runs the risk that “students will end up with an incoherent collection of bits and pieces of material” (Harmer 2001: 305). Halliwell (2006) points out the importance of giving the programme a unifying thread and identifiable purpose and cover the topics and language related to the children’s daily life. When working without a coursebook Halliwell suggests involving the children into the planning.

Every teacher has to consider all these pros and cons and find his or her own way. However, in reality, the decision is usually made by the school and a teacher has to adjust to the situation. Nevertheless, the teacher has got several possibilities how to deal with the coursebook. They are suggested in the next paragraph.

### 2.1.2. Ways of using coursebooks

One way of using a coursebook is to start at the beginning and keep going until the end. This method will probably bore both the students and the teacher very soon. Moreover, it does not provide a possibility to answer the needs of a class.

There are various ways to use the book more creatively, adapting it in various ways to suit the situation. Harmer (2001) suggests four alternatives when the teacher decides that the textbook is not appropriate – to omit the lesson, to replace the textbook lesson with one of the teacher's own more appropriate for the students (may be dealing with the same language or topic), to add activities to extend the students' engagement with the language or topic, or to adapt the lesson, using the same basic material but doing it in his or her own style. This can include replacing, re-ordering or reducing activities. (Harmer 2001 : 305)

Halliwell (1992) suggests that "it is probably a good idea first time through to use a book very much as the author suggests to discover what the book really does or does not do". (Halliwell 1992 : 119) On the other hand she uses the term "shaping a coherent and effective programme around a coursebook" (Halliwell 1992 : 121) which counts with various adjustment of the coursebook to meet the needs of the learners. Halliwell also deals with the aspect of planning the progress through the book. She suggests making a schedule for overall distribution of the work for the year and to be flexible to adjust the plan to the needs of the students. It is very important that the teacher does not only go through the book but rather take care of the real progress of the learners. "Children have to be given enough opportunity to use the language as opposed to just 'covering' it." (Halliwell 2006 : 121)

It is obvious from the previous paragraphs that using a coursebook is not as easy as it might be considered. The less experienced teacher would probably work more closely according to the coursebook while more experienced teacher would prefer using the coursebook more freely and supplement it with other sources. Harmer comes to the following conclusion: "Using coursebooks appropriately is an art which becomes clearer with experience." (Harmer 2001 : 306)

### 2.1.3. How to choose and evaluate

Cunningsworth (1998) states two possible approaches to evaluation of coursebooks – impressionistic overview and in-depth evaluation. The impressionistic overview is based on

“looking through a coursebook and getting an overview of its possibilities and its strengths and weaknesses, noting significant features which stand out.” It gives “a general introduction to the material but it will not necessarily identify any significant omissions in the coursebook or locate any important weaknesses. (Cunningsworth 1998 : 1) Therefore, in-depth evaluation is needed “to examine how specific items are dealt with, particularly those which relate to students’ learning needs, syllabus requirements, how different aspects of language are dealt with, etc.” (Cunningsworth 1998 : 2)

It is suggested to pick out one or two units of a coursebook and analyse them in detail to see the balance of activities and skills contained in a unit, the potential for learner participation, the amount of new language introduced, the amount of recycling, etc. (Cunningsworth 1998 : 2)

According to Harmer coursebook “evaluation” is a judgement on how well a book has performed in fact while the “assessment” of a coursebook is an out-of-class judgement as to how well a new book will perform in class. (Harmer 2001: 301)

“Whether assessing or evaluating coursebooks, we should do our best to include student opinion and comment. Their view of layout, design, content and feel should inform our pre-use assessment and our post-course evaluation”. (Harmer 2001: 301)

Harmer (2001) suggests three stages for assessing the coursebooks: selecting areas of assessment, stating beliefs about areas we want to concentrate on and using statements for assessment for each of the areas.

Halliwell points out that the teacher may not have a really good picture of the coursebook’s suitability until working through it for some time. On the basis of potential strengths of coursebooks generally, she suggests to make a list of questions about a book a teacher is considering. “Completing a chart of such questions for several coursebooks can give a teacher a comparative basis for the decision when choosing a book! (Halliwell 2006 : 114).

Harmer states (1998) that “although choosing a textbook is an important step, it is what a teacher does with such a book once it has been selected that really matters.” (Harmer 1998 : 118)

## 2.2. Using coursebooks in teaching English to very young learners

### 2.2.1. Specific aspects of using coursebook in early EFL

There is a valid question whether it is at all suitable to use a coursebook for teaching English in kindergarten as there are no other areas in preschool education where coursebooks are used (unlike in primary education).

There are generally two approaches to this issue. Some teachers are sceptical on using coursebooks and they rather use their own materials or various materials from different sources for their teaching. Sometimes they base their teaching programme on a ready-made syllabus, but the children learn English similarly to other areas, e.g. with the help of some worksheets / pictures / portfolios, but without a specific coursebook. This approach is low-cost for parents but high-demanding for the teacher.

On contrary, other teachers are very enthusiastic on using coursebooks in teaching English. They believe that colourful and attractive pupil's books help motivate children and give them a special feeling of importance. Some coursebooks also provide a pupil's book in form of tear-out sheets, which makes the work more similar to what they are used to. The teachers also appreciate the well prepared structure and methodology of the courses and a wide range of materials provided by publishers.

### 2.2.2. Needs of teachers

As stated in the previous paragraph there are generally two types of teachers. This paragraph is focused on those teachers who feel the need for support in the form of a ready-made syllabus. These can be both experienced and less experienced teachers. The experienced teachers usually use the coursebooks more freely as they know what works with the class and what does not and have gathered a lot of materials from other sources which they use to replace or enrich the course materials. Less experienced teachers or beginners need more support and they often appreciate detailed lesson plan with clear stages. The teachers with less advanced level of English need the teacher's guide to provide the classroom language and a lot of recorded listening material.

### 2.2.3. Situation on the Czech market

There are generally two types of coursebooks used in pre-school EFL. The first group is coursebooks designed particularly for very young learners of 3 – 5 years. The other group

is coursebooks designed for young learners at primary level, but as British educational system starts primary at the age of 5, they cover the last year of kindergarten in our educational system. Therefore, the first level of these coursebooks is sometimes used in EFL groups of 5-years-old children.

There are four main foreign publishing houses which supply the Czech market with their English coursebooks: Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Macmillan and Longman. Each of them provides at least one course particularly designed for very young children and some of their primary courses are also used at pre-school EFL. In addition, there are several coursebooks of Czech origin and published by minor publishing houses, such as Express Publishing.

Apart from the coursebooks the publishers also offer teachers additional support in form of various seminars, courses and free materials.

### 3. Criteria for coursebooks for very young learners

The aim of this chapter is to set out criteria for the assessment of coursebooks for very young learners. They are based on the principles of teaching English to very young learners as discussed in chapter 1 as well as the aspects of using coursebooks as discussed in chapter 2. The areas of assessment are determined on the basis of Harmer (1998) and Cunningsworth (1998).

#### 3.1. Aims and approaches

The aims of teaching English to very young learners are identified in paragraph 1.1. The aims should reflect the holistic personal development of the children and the need to create a positive attitude to learning of foreign languages. In kindergartens, the aims should also correspond with the general aims for preschool education as set out in the FEP PE.

As for the needs of pre-school children, the course should provide security by well established routines, it should be enjoyable and offer opportunities to move, investigate, have fun, and experience success. Frequent changing of activities is necessary to reflect the children's short attention span.

Natural approach to language acquisition is represented by as much immersion to the target language as possible and providing meaningful interaction in the target language,

i.e. “natural communication, in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.” (Krashen 1989 : 8)

### 3.2. Layout and design

It is important that the coursebook is attractive for the children. It should be colourful and contain a lot of clear pictures. The design of the coursebook is a significant factor of children’s motivation. Moreover, it should also be attractive for the teacher because if he or she doesn’t like the coursebook he or she can hardly pass his or her enthusiasm on to the pupils. However, this is a very individual issue and each teacher has to decide for herself / himself.

The structure of the course should be clear and easy to follow. Usually, a course starts with an introductory unit followed by six or more units focused on a particular topic. Each unit is divided into several lessons which have identical or similar pattern. Stages of each lesson are usually described in the teacher’s book.

Coursebooks are usually composed of a pupil’s book or class book, a teacher’s guide, a class CD, flashcards, and story cards or a story poster. Optionally, there is a puppet of the main character of the course, DVD or CD-ROM and other additional materials. The teacher should consider carefully which components to use according to the particular situation of his or her class and other circumstances.

### 3.3. Syllabus

Harmer (2006) identifies six different types of syllabuses – grammar, lexical, functional, situational, topic-based and task-based. He also mentions multi-syllabus syllabus which combines “items from grammar, lexis, language functions, situations, topics, tasks, different language skill tasks or pronunciation issues.” (Harmer 2006 : 300) The multi-syllabus is often presented in the coursebooks as a syllabus map, overview or summary. This applies to most of the coursebooks for very young children. As they often use topic-focused stories as the base for the programme, they are called story-based syllabuses. The topic-based and story-based syllabuses provide a meaningful context for learning English which is an important requirement for early language acquisition.

Recycling and revision is another important issue. Coursebooks should provide material for constant recycling of the vocabulary and structures both in terms of one level

and in terms of the whole course. Some coursebooks include a revision unit / story / lesson after several units; others recycle the language elements continuously throughout the whole course.

Each unit of the course usually contains key vocabulary. It should be appropriate both in quantity and range. There is no need to overload pupils with a wide range of vocabulary or teach them words which they do not use in L1.

As teaching English should reflect the whole-person development, it is advisable to include cross-curriculum aspect in it. In the environment of Czech kindergartens this aspect is represented by five educational areas of pre-school education specified in the Framework Educational Programme (2004) as follows:

- Biological area – physical development, awareness of their body, learning about body and health, development of gross and fine motor skills
- Psychological area – development of language and communication skills, cognitive functions, imagination, memory, concentration, creative thinking, numeracy development, problem solving, self-awareness, self-control, emotional development, learning skills
- Interpersonal area – development of interactive and cooperative skills, pro-social behaviour, respecting rules, thinking about others
- Socio-cultural area – discovery of their environment (family, home, kindergarten, community, country), learning values, introduction of the world of arts and culture, awareness of other cultures and nations
- Environmental area – learning about nature, environment, continuity and changes, creating positive relationship to the environment (RVP 2004 : 15-31))

#### 3.4. Topics

These educational areas can be also represented by topics which are adequate to the level and age of the children and related to their interest, concern and experience. Possible topics in pre-school education are:

- Biological area – body, clothes, health, food, sports
- Psychological area – feelings, numbers, colours, hobbies (toys)

- Interpersonal area – friends, birthday
- Socio-cultural area – family, house, festivals, school, professions, fairy-tales
- Environmental area – animals, weather, seasons, nature

Another very important aspect of learning is personalization. The children need to feel that everything they talk and learn about is related to them personally.

### 3.5. Methodology

It is very important that the methods used in coursebooks respect the specifics of pre-school children. Learning should be based on experience, cooperation and integration. The method of total physical response (TPR) as well as games, songs, stories, arts and crafts are most suitable for very young children. Interest and active learner involvement are essential conditions for learning and the personal development.

Teachers should take advantage of their rich imagination, ability to imitate, ability to grasp meaning without understanding the individual words, capacity for indirect learning and their instinct for play, fun, interaction and talk.

The methodology should also respect different learning styles and intelligences of the learners. Activities catering for auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners should be designed as well as those suitable for all types of multiple intelligences (verbal/linguistic, mathematical/logical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic).

### 3.6. Language skills

The specific feature of preschool learners is that they have not yet developed reading and writing skills. Therefore, the main emphasis is placed on listening and speaking skills. However, pre-reading and pre-writing skills can be developed as well in the form of various tasks including matching, tracing, mazes, finding differences, completing sequences of pictures, etc.

The course should use the ability of children to imitate and play with sounds and provide high-quality recorded material for listening and pronunciation work. Although it is necessary to respect the “silent period” in language acquisition, there should be enough opportunities to speak for children who are ready to.

### 3.7. Teacher's Guide

The teacher's guide is a necessary component of any coursebook. It should provide the teacher with everything he or she needs for using the course. The principles underlying the material should be set out in the introduction as well as the syllabus overview. Teachers need the guide to be easy to use and clearly organized, comprehensive and supportive. It should provide a lot of practical ideas for teaching.

### 3.8. Parental involvement

One of requirements of pre-school education is parental involvement. The support of parents is essential for the children's effective learning. Therefore it is necessary to keep parents informed about learning and progress of their child and provide them with tools for home revision and practise.

### 3.9. Practical considerations

When choosing a coursebook teachers have to consider a lot of practical issues. One of them is the cost of the course – for children / their parents on one side and for the teacher / school on the other side. Current availability of the components and the prospect of their availability in future are also important.

It is good to know whether the course offers continuity for the next level. Many coursebooks also offer photocopiable or free materials. Some can be included in the teacher's guide or available on internet. A website supporting the coursebook with other materials and discussions can help the teacher use the course even more efficiently.

It helps to find out the extent of the course, e.g. how many lessons it contains and how long they are. Sometimes it is possible to adapt it to the specific situation but if the course is designed for much more intensive work it can be a problem to do it. We can count with approx. 40 weeks for a school year, which means 40 lessons if they are organized once a week or 80 lessons when it is twice. Completely different is the situation when English is integrated to everyday preschool programme.

### 3.10. Other criteria

Up to this point the criteria were quite general and possible to assess by a “neutral” analysis. However, there are other aspects which each teacher has to decide for herself / himself.

Is it suited to the situation?

Is it attractive for the teacher?

Is it flexible enough to allow the teacher’s creativity?

Does it suit to the teacher’s personal style and concept?

## 4. Criteria table for assessing the coursebooks for very young children

The criteria mentioned in chapter 3 are summarized in Table 1. They are translated to the questions for coursebook analysis which is the basic tool for coursebooks assessment in practical part of this thesis.

Table 1 – Criteria for Coursebook Assessment

<b>Areas for consideration</b>	<b>Questions for coursebooks analysis</b>
Aims and approaches	Do the aims correspond with the aims of teaching programme? Do the approaches correspond with the needs of very young learners? Does the author respect the natural approach towards language acquisition?
Layout and design	Is the coursebook attractive for the children? Is it clearly organized? What components make up the total course package?
Syllabus	What kind of syllabus does the coursebook contain? Is the syllabus appropriate for very young learners? Is there adequate recycling and revision? Is the quantity and range of vocabulary adequate? Is there a cross-curriculum aspect?
Topics	Is there a variety of topics that are adequate to the level and age of the students? Does the coursebook cover areas of interest, concern and experience of the children? Is it adequately personalized?
Methodology	Do the methods respect specifics of pre-school children? Does it support active learner involvement? Does it cater for different learning styles and intelligences?
Language skills	Are all four skills (listening, speaking, pre-reading, pre-writing) adequately covered? Is there material for pronunciation work? Is listening material well recorded and as authentic as possible? Are there enough speaking activities?
Teacher's Guide	Is there a good teacher's guide? Is it easy to use and clearly organized? Is it comprehensive and supportive? Does it offer lots of practical ideas? Are the basic principles underlying the material set out?
Parental involvement	Is it possible to use the material for home revision? Does the coursebook include a list of vocabulary with pronunciation and transcription of songs / chants / stories? Is a CD with songs / stories available for each student?
Practical considerations	How expensive is the coursebook for the student / parents? How much will the teacher / school pay for the course materials? Are all the components of the course available in the shops now? Is there any continuity for the next level? Are there any photocopiable materials? Is there any website supporting the coursebook by optional materials / discussion? Does the number of lessons correspond with the number of lessons in the course?

### III. Practical Part

#### 1. Description of the Research

##### 1.1. Research methodology

The aim of the research was to find out whether the coursebooks for very young learners which are available in our country reflect the requirements for early language education as presented in chapter 3. The description and analysis of the coursebooks aim to provide a useful tool for teachers who consider using a coursebook for their teaching.

The research is based on a four-stage procedure suggested by Harmer (1998) for choosing a coursebook:

- a) Analysis – looking through various books and analysing each for answers to the questions prepared in advance
- b) Piloting – trying the coursebook out with the class
- c) Consultation – discussing the material with colleagues who have used it before
- d) Gathering opinions – talking to anyone who might have an opinion

(Harmer 1998 : 118)

I focused on two of these stages - Analysis and Consultation. I analysed the coursebooks according to the criteria suggested in Table 1. and asked teachers who worked with the coursebooks for their opinion.

At first, I identified the coursebooks which are available on the market in the Czech Republic. I examined the selection of coursebooks offered by renowned publishing houses as well as booksellers. The second step was contacting the teachers. The initial purpose was to find the teachers who use these coursebooks and ask for their views. However, I was not successful in this pursuit.

In the next stage I explored general web portals ([seznam.cz](http://seznam.cz), [atlas.cz](http://atlas.cz), [volny.cz](http://volny.cz)) for kindergartens with teaching English. As I expected personal contact with these teachers I chose the kindergartens in Prague where I live. I sent almost 200 emails with the request for participation in the research. Only a very small number of teachers willing to take part in the research replied.

Consequently, I asked teacher educators and publishers for cooperation. Several teachers responded through this contact. Additionally I contacted language schools offering courses for pre-school children, but again with a very little success. The final number of filled-in questionnaires is 12. I met with several teachers and asked them the questions personally; others have sent the questionnaire in written form.

## 1.2. Consultation - questionnaires

The questions were prepared to discover the practical aspects of using the particular coursebook in teaching. They were following:

1. How would you evaluate your overall satisfaction with the coursebook?
2. Why did you choose this coursebook?
3. Do you use the total course package or just some components? (if only some, please name which ones and why not the others – e.g. DVD, flashcards, puppets, CD-ROM...)
4. In your opinion, what are the advantages of the coursebook? What are its strong points?
5. What are the disadvantages / weak points of the coursebooks? What is missing in it?
6. Do you like the Teacher's Book? Is it comprehensible and supportive? Is there anything you miss in it?
7. Is it attractive for children to work with the coursebook? Do they like the pictures, topics, stories, songs, etc.?
8. To which extend do you work according to the Teacher's Book and to which extend do you supplement the program from other sources? (try to express this proportion by a rate, e.g. 70:30)
9. What would you recommend to a teacher considering teaching according to this coursebook?
10. In your opinion, what are generally the advantages and disadvantages of using any coursebook in teaching English to very young children (3-6 years old)?

In several cases I asked additional questions. One part of the questionnaire was formed by questions related to the organization of English teaching in kindergarten or language school where the teachers work. All the questionnaires are enclosed in Appendix 1.

### 1.3. Analysis - exploring coursebooks

In my own research formed by exploring the coursebooks in detail I focused on the coursebooks which were evaluated by the teachers participating in research. The coursebooks they evaluated were:

- Cookie and Friends (4 respondents)
- Hippo and Friends (2 respondents)
- Here's Patch the Puppy (1 respondent)
- Angličtina pro nejmenší (2 respondents)
- Playway to English 1 (2 respondents)
- Mini Magic 1 (1 respondent)

I reviewed the teacher's guides of these courses as well as other components to find how they are structured and what methodology they are based on. I described the main features of the coursebooks and found answers to questions in criteria table no. ... In addition I made a brief survey of coursebooks not included in teacher's questionnaires but offered by publishers and booksellers. These were the following courses:

- Cheeky Monkey
- Hello, Robby Rabbit
- My First English Adventure
- Happy House
- Little Bugs
- Pohádková angličtina s kocourem Vavřincem

I also reviewed coursebooks which are still used but no more supported by their publishers – Zig-Zag Magic, Super Me, Pebbles, Teddy's Train and Here Comes Minibus. It means that not all the components are available and the recordings are usually only on cassettes, not CDs. In practical use in the classroom this is not very convenient and all teachers prefer CDs which are easier to use. The policy of publishing houses is to replace "older" courses by new ones with complete support or to upgrade the course by a new edition. For the teacher, however, this policy means the need to buy the new version of all components after several years which is inconvenient. On the other hand, the advantage of the new editions is that they better reflect new trends in EFL as well as the changing needs

of teachers and learners. In some cases the current availability of all components could not be verified.

#### 1.4. Result

The result of my research is presented in the next chapter in the following structure:

- Description of the coursebook
- Analysis for the criteria set in Table 1
- Information gathered from the teachers
- Summary and conclusion

## 2. Analysis of coursebooks

As it was already explained, the coursebooks used in early EFL can be divided in two main groups – coursebooks designed for preschool children and coursebooks for young children. This division is followed in this chapter.

### 2.1. English coursebooks for very young learners

#### 2.1.1. Cookie and Friends

##### 2.1.1.1. Description

The course is designed for children from 3 to 6 years. It consists of three levels – Starter, A and B.

According to the authors, the main aim of the course is to teach English while focusing on the development of the whole child. The course attempts to work on the physical, intellectual, personal, social, and moral development of the children across five curricular areas:

- Awareness and control of their own body and self - developing gross and fine motor skills, learning about body and face.
- Discovery of their environment and co-operation with others – group work, routines, turn-taking and sharing, learning about animals and weather.

- Language development and communication skills – exposure to new language through stories, songs, rhymes, set phrases, drama, and role play
- Numeracy development – counting from 1 to 6, classifying objects, sequencing, spotting the difference, working out what is missing
- Artistic expression and creativity – art and craft activities, using music, songs and chants for the presentation of language, dramatizing songs and stories.

(Reilly and Harper 2005 : Teacher’s Book B, 7-8)

In Czech version of the Teacher’s Book the objectives are translated to correspond with objectives set out in the Framework educational programme.

The publisher claims that the course is story-based but although stories play an important part of the course I would qualify it rather topic-based. There are 6 main units in each level of the course supplemented by 3-6 festival units. In the Starter level stories are used for revision of previous two units, while in levels A and B a story is incorporated into each unit. The units are organized in a similar way, each one consists of 8 lessons plus one reinforcement and one extension lesson.

The first two lessons of each unit present the new vocabulary (6 items per each unit, 4 items in the Starter level) with flashcards and a unit song. Lesson 3 introduces the story which is repeated in Lesson 4 and acted out in lesson 6. Lesson 5 is focused on worksheet and lesson 7 offers revision of the songs and vocabulary learnt so far in the course. Lesson 8 consolidates and personalizes the language from the unit. An optional reinforcement lesson provides more revision for classes that need more support while an optional extension lesson extends the content of the unit for faster learners.

The structure of each lesson is clearly identified in stages – Cookie’s circle time and Table time (every lesson), Poster time (Lesson 1, 2, 5), Story time (Lesson 3, 4, 6), and Singalong time (Lesson 7). In each lesson children are involved in a number of various games and activities as well as working on a worksheet or a craft during Table time. Classroom management is supported by establishing various routines.

The authors provide a tool for evaluation in the form of a progress report. A possibility of creating a Portfolio of each student is offered as well.

The Class Book available to every child contains 5 colourful tear-out worksheets per unit. Stickers are included in the centre of the book. Working with the Class Book includes colouring, circling, drawing, using stickers, matching, counting, and tracing. The new version of the Class Book has been published recently, which is called Class Book Plus and contains more worksheets (originally included in Parents' Pack "Angličtina na doma") together with a CD containing all songs and stories for home use.

An important part of the course is Cookie puppet. The cat is supposed to always speak English and works as a teacher's helper. The Lulu poster is used for presenting and revising of the language. The flashcards are put into Lulu's pouch. Bank of activities with a puppet, poster and flashcards is included the Teacher's Book. The lesson plans are clearly organized.

Stories are presented with the help of Story cards (8 cards per a story). Class CD contains all songs, chants and stories from the course.

#### 2.1.1.2. Analysis

<b>Areas for consideration</b>	<b>Questions for coursebooks analysis</b>
Aims and approaches	<p>The main aim is to teach English while focusing on the development of the whole child. The course introduces children to English and motivates them through attractive and enjoyable activities. It follows the principal objectives of all pre-school education.</p> <p>The course provides a classroom routine to make children feel safe. It presents activities that challenge and provide opportunities for individual and group success.</p> <p>The language is presented in a meaningful context of stories and songs.</p>
Layout and design	<p>The coursebook is colourful with nice pictures. The characters of Cookie, Lulu and Densel are attractive.</p> <p>The course is clearly organized.</p> <p>The components of the course are: Pupil's Books for each level (the new version of level A and B includes CD with songs and stories), Teacher's Book for each level, Teacher's Pack (Cookie puppet, Lulu poster, flashcards, story cards and posters for all levels), Class CD for each level, Multi-ROM</p>
Syllabus	<p>The syllabus is topic-based. In each unit there is key vocabulary consisting of 4 words per unit in starter level and 6 in level A and B.</p> <p>It is appropriate for very young learners.</p> <p>Language items are systematically revised and built on throughout the</p>

	<p>course, in starter level a story is provided for revision of previous two units.</p> <p>The quantity and range of vocabulary is on lower level.</p> <p>The course develops children across five curricular areas (see above) with cross-curricular references in each unit.</p>
Topics	<p>Is there a variety of topics that are adequate to the level and age of the students?</p> <p>The coursebook covers topics of Colours, Friends, Weather, Toys, Clothes, Animals, Body and Face, Family, and Food which are recycled and developed through the three levels. Festivals are included.</p> <p>In Lesson 8 of each unit the children complete a worksheet personalizing the vocabulary for the unit and being kept in a Portfolio.</p>
Methodology	<p>The methods are appropriate for pre-school children.</p> <p>Children are involved through activities such as miming songs, acting out stories, TPR games, etc.</p> <p>The course takes into account different learning styles but does not consider multiple intelligences.</p>
Language skills	<p>The course is focused on development of receptive skills – understanding instructions and learning key words.</p> <p>The listening material is limited – one song, one story and one optional rhyme per each unit (levels A and B). The routine songs and chants are repeated in every lesson. The Pupil’s Books provide very good material for development of pre-reading and pre-writing skills.</p> <p>No specific pronunciation work is included. It is practised through songs.</p> <p>Listening material is well recorded but very simple.</p> <p>Speaking is limited to repeating and saying individual words and very short structures in games and gradually joining in singing songs.</p>
Teacher’s Guide	<p>The Teacher’s Book is easy to use and clearly organized. It contains very detailed description of each lesson in well established stages including classroom language, materials checklist, new / recycled / passive language and a black and white picture of the corresponding worksheet.</p> <p>It is comprehensive and supportive. It contains a puppet activity bank as well as poster and flashcard activity bank. In each lesson extra activities are included.</p> <p>Teachers are introduced to aims of the course as well as its integration into a pre-school syllabus. Unit and lesson structures are described in the introduction. There are useful ideas for setting classroom environment and routines. Tips for evaluation are included.</p>
Parental involvement	<p>Although the separate worksheets can be taken home they are not usable for home revision. Unit song transcription is printed on the first worksheet of a unit. List of vocabulary is not included.</p>

	<p>The new version of Pupil's Book contains CD with songs and stories which is very convenient for home revision.</p> <p>In level A a zig-zag book is made in each unit which cover the key vocabulary and can be taken home for revision.</p> <p>A progress report is available in Photocopy Master Book to inform parents about a child's involvement in the activities and attitude to learning. The Czech version can be printed out from the website.</p>
<p>Practical considerations (prices in CZK)</p>	<p>Student: Class Book 195 (Starter, A, B) or Class Book with CD 245 (A, B)</p> <p>Teacher: Teacher's Book 460 (Starter, A, B), Class CD 250 (Starter, A, B), Play Pack 1320 (all levels) = 2030, optional: CD-ROM 360, DVD 545</p> <p>All components are available.</p> <p>Starter level is only a very slow introduction to English and is optional. Level A and B are closely linked, songs from level A are repeated in level B.</p> <p>The Photocopy Master Book is included in Teacher's Pack.</p> <p>The website offers several downloadable materials (certificates, songs and reports.)</p> <p>Number of lessons: Starter 41, A 82, B 82 (including extra extension and extra reinforcement lessons and festival units)</p>

### 2.1.1.3. Research

Four teachers answered the questionnaire reflecting on their experience using Cookie and Friends. Their evaluation was positive.

They appreciate nice and engaging stories and songs, adequate vocabulary, attractive story cards and Lulu poster, and especially the Cookie puppet which is loved by children. The teachers also value well-arranged Teacher's Book with detailed plans and its practical spiral binding and Czech version. A teacher who works in kindergarten (questionnaire no. 10) appreciates also the cross-curricular aspect and classroom dynamics of the course. Another teacher (q. 2) evaluates positively also the flexibility of the course. The teacher from language school (q. 5) mentions tear-out worksheets and availability of a component for home use *Angličtina na doma* as other advantages of the course. All teachers are sure that children like the course very much.

As for the disadvantages, only a few issues were mentioned. The teacher from language school (q. 5) would prefer more stories and considers the course too focused on

practicing and revising the vocabulary. Another teacher (q. 4) had to adapt the number of lessons to her situation.

The teachers use the coursebook in different rate to other materials starting with 50% (q. 2) up to 100 % (q. 4). All the teachers recommend the coursebook for use in preschool EFL.

#### 2.1.1.4. Result

The course provides a compact set suitable for teaching English to very young learners. The interconnection with preschool curriculum and the availability of starter level for 3-year-old children make it ideal for use in kindergartens. Well-arranged structure of the course and its thought-out methodology are beneficial for both the teacher and the learners.

It is advisable to add more listening and speaking activities to better cover the development of the children's language skills. Also, the vocabulary can be extended for faster learners.

#### 2.1.2. Hippo and Friends

##### 2.1.2.1. Description

Hippo and Friends is a three-level preschool course for 3-5 year-olds. Its emphasis is placed on interactive learning through songs and stories. The main aims of Hippo and Friends are to teach English in a way that is fun and enjoyable and to integrate English into the pre-school curriculum.

The content corresponds with the needs of young learners. It is designed to develop pre-reading skills, pre-maths awareness and comprehension of context through sequencing and matching. It specifically helps children to develop in the following areas:

- Language - as a means of communication, correct pronunciation and intonation, understanding of stories and instructions, active participation in communication
- Appreciation of music – sounds, silence and music, song, rhythm, volume and pace, movement to music
- Games and movement - awareness of body and movement, gross motor coordination and fine motor skills, spatial orientation, respecting rules, etc.

The course proactively harnesses the natural and uninhibited approach of young children to the acquisition of language. The combination of songs and actions, stories and acting out, activities and games provides a holistic approach to learning. (Selby and McKnight 2006 : Teacher’s Book 1, p. 8)

The vocabulary is taught through a portfolio of songs which are highly memorable and effective, and incorporate a built-in plan for repeating and reinforcing vocabulary. The songs are accompanied with actions to take full advantage of kinaesthetic learning patterns of young children. The stories are short and simple and can be acted out easily. The take-home storybook enables the children to work through the sequence of the language again, reinforcing comprehension.

Each level of the course begins with a Starter unit which revises greetings. In Starter level there are six main topic units and three extra units, in levels 1 and 2 there are nine main topic units and three extra units.

There are five lessons in each unit. Lesson 1 (Sing and learn) - presents the main vocabulary and introduces the unit song. Lesson 2 (Listen and learn) – presents the story with the story poster. Lesson 3 (Do and learn) – revises the song and the story with activities and a worksheet. Lesson 4 (Say and learn) – section “talk time” encourages children to give one-word responses to questions or to complete a phrase. Lesson 5 (Moving on) – draws together the song and story elements, making a storybook to take home. Extra activities (games and craft or other activities related to the unit topic) are included at the end of each lesson.

Stages of each lesson are clearly identified – Hello time, Goodbye time, Song time, Story time, Table time, Talk time and others.

The Pupil’s Book contains four tear-out worksheets per unit – one sticker worksheet, two activity worksheets and one storybook worksheet. Hippo puppet makes an essential part of the course as an invaluable tool for establishing routines in the classroom. Flashcards contain the target language of the course. Ideas for using puppet, flashcards, and games are included in the Teacher’s book. Story posters are used for presentation of the stories. They can also be cut into 4 parts and laminated to form separate story cards.

Photocopiable Extras are available for the teacher to provide additional materials. Audio CD contains all songs and stories as well as a section of useful classroom language.

For evaluation, certain games and activities are flagged by an evaluation icon E to show that they are opportunities for the children to demonstrate what they have learnt.

The course provides ideas for assembly at the beginning of the lesson which cover colours, the days of the week, the weather and seasons. Templates for them are included in the teacher's book. The Teacher's Books presents the syllabus in the Map of the course with a structure of Unit (Name + Topic), Language (Main + Revised), Aims, Procedures, and Main attitudes.

#### 2.1.2.2. Analysis

<b>Areas for consideration</b>	<b>Questions for coursebooks analysis</b>
Aims and approaches	<p>The aim of the course is to teach English in a way that is fun and enjoyable and to provide materials which integrate English into the pre-school curriculum. Linguistic aims are specified in the Map of the course in the Teacher's Book as well as "Attitudes" which are related to other areas of children's development.</p> <p>Holistic approach corresponds with the needs of very young learners and respects the natural language acquisition.</p>
Layout and design	<p>The coursebook is colourful with nice pictures. The main character Hippo and her friends Cat, Monkey and Dog provide an attractive setting of the course.</p> <p>It is clearly organized.</p> <p>The components of the course are: Pupil's Book, Teacher's Book, Audio CD, Photocopiable Extras, Story Posters, Flashcards and Hippo Puppet</p>
Syllabus	<p>The syllabus is song-based and story-based. The structure is summarized in the Map of the Course in the following order: Unit (name and topic), Language (main and revised), Aims, Procedures, Main Attitudes.</p> <p>The syllabus is appropriate for very young learners.</p> <p>The language is revised and recycled throughout the course as well as across the levels.</p> <p>The key vocabulary is represented by 4-6 words per each unit and supplemented by additional vocabulary listed in the list of vocabulary.</p> <p>The cross-curriculum aspect is included.</p>
Topics	<p>Topics cover areas of interest, concern and experience of the children. Apart from traditional EFL topics it includes also Spring, Autumn, Profession and Routines. No specific personalisation is offered.</p>

Methodology	<p>The methods respect specifics of pre-school children – songs + actions, stories + acting out, games and other activities are used.</p> <p>Learners are motivated to be actively involved in interesting and funny activities.</p> <p>Songs with actions cater for aural, oral, visual and kinaesthetic learners.</p> <p>Multiple intelligences are not considered.</p>
Language skills	<p>Listening material is limited to one song and one story per unit + songs for classroom routines repeated every lesson. It is well recorded.</p> <p>The course is focused on the receptive skills and listening comprehension. Speaking is encouraged in the session Talk Time. Pre-reading and pre-writing skills are developed through working with worksheets.</p> <p>No specific pronunciation activities; it is practised through songs.</p>
Teacher's Guide	<p>Teacher's Book is easy to use and clearly organized. There is a detailed plan for each lesson with a list of materials, main and revised language and a colourful copy of the worksheet corresponding with the lesson. It is comprehensive and supportive; it provides classroom language and two extra activities for each lesson.</p> <p>Ideas for using songs, stories and puppet as well as games are included in the Teacher's Book.</p> <p>The methodology is described in the Introduction.</p>
Parental involvement	<p>In the last lesson of each unit, children make "a storybook" which helps them to remember the story and share it at home. The unit song is printed on the back of the first worksheet of each unit.</p> <p>A list of vocabulary with transcription and translation is provided on website. There is also a useful handbook for parents and teachers in Czech which provides a lot of information regarding the course and teaching English to very young learners in general.</p> <p>CD with songs and stories is not a part of a pupil's package.</p>
Practical considerations (prices in CZK)	<p>Student: Pupil's Book 208</p> <p>Teacher: Teacher's Book 450, Audio CD 295, Hippo Puppet 370, Flashcards 450, Story Posters 420, Photocopiable Extras 85 = 2070</p> <p>All the components are available.</p> <p>There is a continuity across the two levels.</p> <p>There is a special book Photocopiable Extras.</p> <p>The website offers a downloadable list of vocabulary with transcription and translation (both key and additional vocabulary are included) and downloadable Manual for teachers and parents in Czech.</p> <p>Number of lessons: 53 per each level</p>

### 2.1.2.3. Research

There were two teachers who evaluated Hippo and Friends in the research. Both teachers use all the components of the course.

One of them is a class teacher in kindergarten who teaches English on an everyday basis (q. 11). She evaluates the coursebook by the grade “very good”. She values a simple and sequenced methodology, nice illustrations, continuous revision and availability of supplemental materials. She thinks the coursebook is suitable for preschool children. As a disadvantage she sees that the Teacher’s Book is available only in English which can be a problem for a beginning teacher. She misses a brief summary of activities in each lesson and considers some games too simple. Both teachers say that children like the material, especially the Hippo puppet and stickers. She uses the coursebook for 60% of her teaching.

The other teacher (q. 9) teaches in kindergarten on a weekly basis. She gives mark “excellent”. She mentions the coherent stories as one of the advantages and is satisfied with the course as a whole. It is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of children. She uses it for 100% of her teaching.

### 2.1.2.4. Result

Hippo and Friends is a very good coursebook suitable for teaching English to preschool children. Where the language load seems to be too low it can be supplemented from other sources. One of special features is dealing with seasons which can be very useful in kindergartens.

## 2.1.3. Here’s Patch the Puppy

### 2.1.3.1. Description

Here’s Patch the Puppy is a two-level course for very young learners of 4 to 5 years of age. Level 1 provides a gentle start and Level 2 is a continuation revising and building on previous level and providing a full range of receptive and productive vocabulary games, slightly longer stories, more complex situations and more varied worksheets.

The main aims of the course are to provide a secure environment for learning, to encourage participation in a range of game types, to accustom children to follow task

instructions in English, to heighten attention and deduction capacity, particularly through store-telling and to prompt simple verbal responses when individuals show readiness. Whole-child development aims relate mainly to gross and fine motor skills, cognitive skills, musical awareness, respect for social and class norms, collaboration and respect for group members. The course aims and evaluation criteria reflect the concern for the wider aspects of education. (Morris and Ramsden 2005 : Teacher´s Book 2, p. 12)

The course reflects and follows the natural language acquisition stages, i.e. receptive ability is way in advance of productive ability and therefore provides lots of comprehensible input and activities for showing understanding as well as opportunities for production of language to prompt those children who are ready to speak. The course provides a bank of routine songs and chants for class management. A lot of emphasis is placed upon establishing clear routines.

The syllabus is made from the following items: Unit aims, Key language (Main receptive language, Focus language, Classroom language, Main recycled language), Main evaluation criteria. Each level is formed by an introductory unit, 6 topic units and 2 festival units.

Each main unit contains eight lessons and has similar pattern. Lesson 1 sets the context and introduces key language and song + games. In Lesson 2 a story is presented with a poster and stickers. Lesson 3 contains action song and games. In Lesson 4, the story is retold and in Lesson 5 a simplified version of the story is used. Lesson 6 of level 2 is focused on Chit chat routine and recycles the songs. Lesson 7 provides application of the new language in new contexts via more physical, lively games, TPR, mime, dance and movement activities. In Lesson 8 children “perform” the two songs of the unit with their press outs.

Each lesson begins with the Starter routine (including Chit chat routine in level 2), followed by other Circle activities and then the Table time activities. Worksheets are an integral part of the language learning process. The lesson ends with the Bye-bye routine. The structure of the lesson is also marked by the use of spinner.

Chit chat routine forms the beginning of each lesson in Level 2. The aim is to establish a “bank” of everyday language that will be useful in many contexts and give the children pride in their own progress and ability to handle common language exchanges.

Classroom language as the most natural source of English is supported by guidance in the teacher’s notes.

In order to foster the involvement of parents the course is specifically designed to link home and school. At the end of each unit, a press out is prepared to remind the children of key vocabulary and help them “perform” the songs for their family. Songs CD is included in the Pupil’s Book for home use. For each unit, a letter to parents / carers is prepared including the words to the songs from the unit and giving a very simple explanation of the unit’s contents.

Pupil’s book contains 6 perforated worksheets for each lesson, press out pages for “performing” the songs from each unit and songs CD. The lesson mini-summary is provided on the back of the worksheet (lessons 1-6). On Class Audio CD there are all the songs, chants, stories as well as many games and some activity language, plus the routine songs and chants, karaoke version included. Patch the Puppy puppet is used in every lesson to demonstrate many of the games and activities. Patch’s box serves as Patch’s home and as a container for the surprise of the Knock, knock! games.

Stories are told with full-colour interactive posters and peel-off stickers. Flashcards are used for vocabulary presentation and practise.

#### 2.1.3.2. Analysis

Areas for consideration	Questions for coursebooks analysis
Aims and approaches	<p>Both language and whole-child development aims are stated in the teacher’s book for each unit. Although they are not linked to specific objectives of FEP they correspond with it.</p> <p>Clear routines established in the course enable pupils to feel secure.</p> <p>The course follows the natural language acquisition stages.</p>
Layout and design	<p>The coursebook is full of colourful and clear pictures. The character of Patch the puppy provides motivation and accompanies children throughout the whole course.</p> <p>It is clearly organized, with a comprehensive structure and stages.</p> <p>The course components are for each level: Pupil’s Book with a song CD, Teacher’s Book, Audio CDs, Classroom Posters with stickers; for both levels: Flashcards, Patch the Puppy puppet, Patch’s kennel</p>
Syllabus	The syllabus is topic- and song-based; apart from the unit song each unit

	<p>contains a story and a story-song. It is appropriate for very young learners.</p> <p>The syllabus structure is: Unit aims, Key Language (Main receptive language, Focus Language, Classroom language, Main recycled language) and Main Evaluation Criteria. Language items are revised and built on continually through each level and also across both levels.</p> <p>The quantity and range of vocabulary is adequate, there are 5-7 new items of focus language in each unit. There are a lot of structures for possible acquisition.</p> <p>The syllabus contains a cross-curriculum aspect.</p>
Topics	<p>The topics are similar in both levels: Body, Clothes, Toys, Family / House, Farm / Wild animals, Food. They cover areas of interest and concern of the children and are close to their experience through the stories where two characters of children are.</p> <p>No specific personalization is included.</p>
Methodology	<p>The methods include action rhymes, TPR, songs and stories appealing to their mentality, the activities are fun and encourage cooperation.</p> <p>The activities encourage participation.</p> <p>The approach and activity types cater for the development of the various intelligences, although they are not namely identified.</p>
Language skills	<p>The first level is focused on receptive skills but there are a lot of opportunities for production of language in level 2 including Chit chat routine. Pre-reading and pre-writing skills are practised on the worksheets.</p> <p>Pronunciation is practised through songs and chants.</p> <p>The listening material is of a high quality and quantity. For each unit there are two songs with karaoke version, a story, a story-song and two more recordings for other activities. Each of the classroom routines has its own chant or song.</p> <p>There are various opportunities to speak for the children who are ready to. Level 2 offers a regular Chit-chat routine covering one useful speaking exchange in each unit and motivating children to speak.</p>
Teacher's Guide	<p>The teacher's guide contains Syllabus guide, useful information about the course, its aims and methodology and detailed plan for each lesson. It is easy to use and clearly organized, comprehensive and supportive. It deals with the coordination with class-tutor where appropriate and supplies the teacher with well-prepared material for evaluation.</p> <p>No "bank" of activities is provided, but there are three extra activities offered in each lesson's plan.</p>
Parental involvement	<p>Each worksheet contains mini-summary of the particular lesson which can help parents to see what the lesson was about. At the end of each unit, children make a "press out" related to the unit and learn to use it for performing of the song or story at home.</p>

	<p>List of vocabulary is not provided. There is a letter for parent / carer prepared to be given to parents after each unit which contains transcript of the two songs together with description of actions learnt by children. As the song CD is a part of Pupil's Book, children can revise and perform at home what they learnt at school.</p> <p>A special tool for home revision and learning is Patch and Robby Show Pack which includes 2 DVDs with stories and songs, 2 puppets of Patch and Robby and worksheets related to the video.</p>
<p>Practical considerations (prices in CZK)</p>	<p>Student: Pupil's Book with Song Audio CD 320.</p> <p>Teacher / School: Teacher's Book 605, Audio CDs 570, Classroom poster 910, puppet + kennel 590, flashcards 690 = 3365</p> <p>Optionally parents / teachers can buy Patch and Robby Show Pack for 1180.</p> <p>All the components are available.</p> <p>The two levels are closely interrelated.</p> <p>There are some photocopiable materials included in the Teacher's Book.</p> <p>No specific optional materials are available but there is a website Onestopenglish where teachers can find useful ideas for teaching English in general (including e.g. worksheets)</p> <p>Number of lessons: 54 per level</p>

#### 2.1.3.3. Research

The coursebook was evaluated by one teacher who works at language school. She is satisfied with it and uses all the components. She also appreciates that CD is available for each child. For faster learners they compress two levels into one school year. She considers the worksheets to be too easy. According to the teacher, the Teacher's Book is well organized. She says that children are keen on learning English with the coursebook. She uses the coursebook for 50% of her work. She recommends the book for little beginners.

#### 2.1.3.4. Result

Here's Patch the Puppy is a very good coursebook suitable for very young learners. It is exceptional with the listening material and Chit chat routine which helps prepare children for real communicative situation in the target language.

#### 2.1.4. Angličtina pro nejmenší

##### 2.1.4.1. Description

The coursebook is designed for children from 4 to 7 years old. It provides an introduction to English through play. It is designed for using both in individual learning and in language courses. The main aim of the course is to prepare children for the regular study of English at school and engage their interest in learning foreign languages. (Zahálková 2004 : 77)

All the material is included in one small book which is divided into 17 chapters according to topics. There are linguistic aims identified for each unit which express what the children should learn. Each “unit” contains one page with a big picture representing the topic, one page of cut-out picture cards with the key vocabulary and one page with suggestions for a teacher and parents how to work with the topic. All instructions are written in Czech. It is based on using the picture cards for various games and exercises, practising mini-dialogues and learning individual sounds and words.

The coursebook is accompanied by a cassette / CD with vocabulary, chants and songs included in the book. The instructions on the recording are carried out in Czech. Most of words and phrases on the recording are translated into Czech.

##### 2.1.4.2. Analysis

<b>Areas for consideration</b>	<b>Questions for coursebooks analysis</b>
Aims and approaches	<p>The main aim of the course is to prepare children for their regular study of English at school. It is stated by the author that the most important issue is creating positive attitude towards learning in general and learning foreign languages in particular.</p> <p>The course is based on learning not acquisition but it follows the stages of speech development – at first the child understands, then repeats and after that can produce a the language.</p> <p>Clear structure is provided.</p>
Layout and design	<p>If the coursebook is not compared with foreign courses, then it is quite nicely illustrated and children like it. But not much creative activities are offered.</p> <p>The course is clearly organized.</p> <p>Only a Class Book and a CD make up the total course package.</p>

Syllabus	<p>The syllabus is topic-based.</p> <p>The syllabus is not appropriate for managing during one year</p> <p>The author suggests revising language items regularly.</p> <p>6 or 12 words are presented in each of 17 units. This load of vocabulary is too difficult for the children of preschool age.</p> <p>Cross-curricula aspect is not specified.</p>
Topics	<p>The topics correspond with interest and experience of the children. However, some words and structures are too complicated for preschoolers (I can see..., present continuous, I'd like...).</p> <p>It is personalized by questions related to each child.</p>
Methodology	<p>The course is based on games such as pelmanism, pointing to pictures and talking about them, repeating chants and songs. TPR is applied only marginally. There is only a little movement in the activities.</p> <p>Children are not much motivated to active involvement.</p> <p>The activities are based mainly on aural and visual methods. It does not cater for different learning styles and intelligences.</p>
Language skills	<p>The course is focused on listening and speaking. The listening comprehension is practised through listening to the recording and to the instructions of the teacher. The development of speaking skills is supported by many opportunities, in each unit the vocabulary is used in specific structures that are related to the topic. Children are expected to repeat a lot of language. No pre-reading and pre-writing activities are included.</p> <p>The course provides practising pronunciation of phonemes which are difficult to pronounce by Czech people.</p> <p>The listening material is well recorded and very easy.</p> <p>Speaking activities are included in every lesson.</p>
Teacher's Guide	<p>There are only teacher's notes included in each unit suggesting various activities related to the topic.</p> <p>The basic principles are mentioned in the letter to teachers and parents at the end of the coursebook.</p> <p>There are very easy processes of language learning followed supported by games and exercises. There are quite a lot of practical ideas, but some of them are repeated too often</p>
Parental involvement	<p>In case each child has his or her own class book, it is very easy to use it for home revision. All instructions for the teacher are included as well as list of vocabulary with transcription.</p> <p>CD is easy to obtain.</p>
Practical considerations	<p>Student: Class Book 107, CD 165</p>

(prices in CZK)	<p>Teacher: Class Book 107, CD 165 = 272</p> <p>The components are available in some shops although not in all of them.</p> <p>The coursebook provides the first stage of the continual program for the whole basic school (grades 1-9)</p> <p>No other materials are available, no internet support.</p> <p>There are only units specified, no lessons. Number of units is 17, each can be divided approx. to 3 lessons = 51</p>
-----------------	---

#### 2.1.4.3. Research

There were two teachers who evaluated this coursebook. Both the teachers work with materials from various sources; this coursebook is one of them. The teacher who teaches in kindergartens (q. 1) likes the comprehensible pictures. She values the topics which can be used flexibly, and activities offered for practising grammar. She uses the recording. She considers the topics too brief and she misses more black and white pictures for possible colouring. The other teacher takes a coursebook as a source of inspiration. She uses the best of a book and builds on it. In her opinion, it is more difficult to work with the coursebook than without it. She recommends the coursebook together with other publications related to early English teaching, e.g. *Angličtina plná her* (Portál) and *Angličtina pro děti* (Infoa). Both teachers prefer their own worksheets.

#### 2.1.4.4. Result

Although the evaluation from the teacher is quite positive, in my opinion, this coursebook belongs to the concept which is already out-dated. It is based on learning rather than acquisition. Although it claims to teach language through play and fun, in comparison with other materials there are not many ideas and it must soon become boring. It can be used as a basis for many other activities but definitely should not be the only source.

The recording is unsuitable as it mixes up Czech and English in a very confusing way. The methodology is not very detailed and does not seem to reflect the needs of preschool children. The only advantage of this coursebook is its low price.

## 2.2. English coursebooks for young learners

### 2.2.1. Playway to English 1

#### 2.2.1.1. Description

Playway to English is four-level course for young learners. It represents an integrated set of material for teaching English starting in the first year of primary school. Its main characteristic is learning through play.

The main aims of the course are to establish foreign language learning as positive experience for the children from the start, to contribute to the development of the intellectual, social, emotional and spatial skills, and to lay foundations for an open and positive attitude to other peoples and cultures. It is focused on the development of listening and speaking skills. (Gerngross and Puchta 2009 : Teacher's Book 1, p. 4)

The course is based on the SMILE approach which stands for the following principles:

- S - skill oriented foreign language learning
- M - multi-sensory learner motivation
- I - intelligence-building activities
- L - long-term memory storage through music, movement, rhythm and rhyme
- E - exciting sketches, stories and games

The syllabus review is provided in the following structure: Topics – Types of text and activities – Vocabulary, phrases and structures. The course is divided into ten topic areas that can be integrated into main curriculum as they contain elements from other subject areas. In addition, there are several CLIL activities.

The main characters of the course are Linda, Benny and Max who appear frequently in the cartoon stories and listening exercises. Max is a fantasy figure who is friends with Benny and Linda and steps out of the material as a glove puppet for various activities in the classroom. The activities are based on interesting and humorous content, stories, rhymes, songs and chants.

Cartoon stories and Mr. Matt Sketches are used as strong motivators and to promote the children's enjoyment. The children watch the story first on DVD, then the mini-dialogues are practised and next a role play is performed. Action stories are performed using the TPR

method. Songs cover the individual topics and consolidate the language presented in each unit. Chants are used to practise pronunciation, intonation and speech rhythm. The course includes tasks involving as many senses as possible to retain them in the long-term memory. Rhymes are presented so that the children simultaneously listen, speak, and perform certain movements.

Strong emphasis is given on outcome in the development of speaking skills; material for self-assessment is provided (a lesson “Show what you can do” is included after every two units).

Teacher’s Book provides information on the structure, components and ways of using the material and also on the desired outcomes and comprehensive notes on the individual lessons. Audio CD provides a rich listening material including all the stories and songs. Apart from Pupil’s Book there is Activity Book available for the children accompanied by CD-ROM. The cartoon stories and Mr. Matt sketches are provided also as a video on DVD. Card Pack contains both flashcards (93 for the level) and story cards (57).

#### 2.2.1.2. Analysis

<b>Areas for consideration</b>	<b>Questions for coursebooks analysis</b>
Aims and approaches	<p>Aims of the course are to establish foreign language learning as a positive experience, to lay foundations for an open and positive attitude to other peoples and cultures, and to contribute to the development of intellectual, social, emotional and spatial skills of the children.</p> <p>Teachers are encouraged to develop routines but they are not included in the lesson plans. Units and lessons have different structure.</p> <p>The approaches are based on very young learners’ abilities gained in a process of learning L1.</p>
Layout and design	<p>The coursebook is colourful and contains two types of pictures – some connected to the main character Max and describing situations from daily life and photos connected to Mr Matt sketches. The Pupil’s Book is well organized as well as Activity Book.</p> <p>Components: Pupil’s Book, Activity Book with CD-ROM, Teacher’s Book, Teacher’s Resource Book, Class Audio CDs, Flashcards, Story Cards, DVD, Max puppet</p>
Syllabus	<p>The syllabus is topic-based, the summary includes types of text and activities and Vocabulary, phrases and structures.</p> <p>The syllabus is more appropriate for children attending school or high-ability</p>

	<p>children in the last year of kindergarten.</p> <p>Revision Show what you can do is included after every two lessons. Regular recycling and revision is implemented into each lesson?</p> <p>The quantity of vocabulary introduced in each unit is not balanced, it ranges from 4 to 12 words and is supplemented by a number of phrases and structures which are more complicated. 93 words represent the active vocabulary of level 1.</p> <p>Each lesson provides a note on cross-curricular integration.</p>
Topics	<p>The topics are: School, Fruit, Pets, Toys, Weather, Party, Health, Food and Animals. They generally cover areas of interest and experience of the children, although they are prepared for slightly older children.</p> <p>Personalisation aspect is not considered.</p>
Methodology	<p>Children learn through play, music and TPR; funny songs, stories and exercises motivate children to be actively involved.</p> <p>The course is based on the SMILE approach (see above) which follows the principles of multisensory learning and stimulation of multiple intelligences.</p>
Language skills	<p>The course develops listening comprehension and speaking skills. Pre-reading and pre-writing skills are developed through some activities in Pupil's Book or Activity Book.</p> <p>Practicing pronunciation is a part of using language in songs, chants, exercises and dialogues.</p> <p>The course provides rich listening material of various types. It is well recorded and quite authentic.</p> <p>The course offers a wide range of opportunities for the children to communicate in English. Pre-communicative exercises (mini dialogues) prepare children for later communicative exercises in games, interviews, dialogues and role-play. Use of English for communicative purposes in the classroom is supported.</p>
Teacher's Guide	<p>The Teacher's Book contains very detailed description of methodology and technology of the course supplemented with theoretical issues of early language learning. The Introduction discusses all aspects of the course.</p> <p>The structure of the course is not clearly explained. The number of lessons per each unit varies from 4 to 11 and the units have no clear structure. Some lessons contain a lot of activities while others only a few. These features make working with the course more difficult.</p> <p>There is a wide range of activities offered by the course.</p>
Parental involvement	<p>The pictures in the Pupil's Book can serve for home revision of rhymes, songs and chants.</p> <p>The list of vocabulary with transcription is available on the website.</p> <p>A CD-ROM with various exercises is a part of Activity Book for home use.</p>

<p>Practical considerations (prices in CZK)</p>	<p>Student: Pupil's Book 315, Activity Book with CD-ROM 210 (optional)</p> <p>Teacher / School: Teacher's Book 555, Class Audio CDs (3) 525, Cards Pack 585, DVD 899, Teacher's Resource Book (optional) 585 = 2564 (3149 incl. TRB)</p> <p>DVD player is needed for presenting videos, however if it is not available, it is possible to play it from Class Audio CD and support the recording by using Story Cards.</p> <p>All the components of the course are available. The original course (first edition) is not supported any more.</p> <p>The coursebook represents the first level of four-year course. Only level 1 can be used in kindergarten as writing is introduced in level 2.</p> <p>Photocopiable materials are included in the Teacher's Resource Book.</p> <p>The website provides list of vocabulary for each level and a special link to Max club where there are several on-line games and activities related to the course.</p> <p>Total number of lessons: 89 (including revision and CLIL lessons)</p>
---	---

### 2.2.1.3. Research

Although this coursebook is designed for English classes at primary schools, the two teachers who participated in the research have a very positive experience using it in kindergartens. Both teachers work as English teachers in kindergartens and use all the components of the course (except of Activity Book in case of teacher q. 3). They give mark "excellent". One of them (q. 8) values the versatility of the coursebook and its potential to prepare children for entering the school. Children like the material. The only disadvantage she mentions is that some songs are too fast. She uses it for 100% of her work.

The other teacher (q. 3) values especially the carefully worked-out methodology based on multiple intelligences. The stories, songs and chants are engaging for the children, they love Max. She sees the problem in the replacement of the material by its second edition as it is quite expensive to buy all the components in their new version. For preschoolers some tasks are too difficult and the course is too extensive for the purpose of weekly lessons. She uses the material for 80% of her work.

#### 2.2.1.4. Result

The coursebook is more suitable for primary schools but it can also be used with more advanced learners of preschool age. As the coursebook counts on more extensive school work, the teachers at preschool level have to decide what they will use from it.

#### 2.2.2. Mini Magic 1

##### 2.2.2.1. Description

Mini Magic is a two-level course for young children learning English. The main aims of the course are to provide pupils with a comprehensive working knowledge of English, to make English interesting, enjoyable and fun and to develop the children's oral and aural skills by providing plenty of opportunities for the children to listen to and speak English.

It is a story-based course. Syllabus overview is formed by the following structure: theme, aims, target language, story language, main receptive language, main attitudes, cross-curricular content.

The stories provide a context for immersing the children in English and create opportunities to use English as the children perform and retell them. They are made up of a simple repetitive framework with an easy and predictable plot. The comprehension of the situation facilitates the comprehension of the language. All new language is introduced in the context of the stories; no pre-teaching is introduced because the story context promotes understanding. The stories relate to children's experience and attract the children's attention. They are fun for the children. A script is provided for each story, along with all the suggested gestures. The story is repeated in many ways and the children are involved and joining in with the words and the gestures. The teacher encourages the children to say the words from the story when they know it well, while the teacher tells the story by doing the gestures. (Esteve and Estruch 2003 : Teacher's Book 1, p. 8)

The course consists of six main units and two festival units. There are 10 lessons in each unit. The approximate structure for each unit: Lesson 1 – telling the story with mime and gesture, no visual aids, new language is presented through the story, Lesson 2 – telling the story with the poster and stickers, Lesson 3 – telling the story with the Big Book, Lesson 4 – practising vocabulary with the aid of flashcards, games and TPR activities, Lesson 5 –

different exposure of the new vocabulary through the song, Lesson 6 – making a mural focused on the new language, Lesson 7 – revising the story by children retelling it with the poster or Big Book and various activities consolidating their understanding, Lesson 8 – consolidating the language through a story song, Lesson 9 – retelling the story with the mini puppet theatre and cut out puppets, Lesson 10 – evaluation to help the children take pride in and be aware of their own progress. Each lesson contains a short routine to play with finger puppets to promote basic English phrases.

The course combines its linguistic content with the cross-curricular themes of the children's education. Cross-curricular themes, such as health education, peace and respect for each other. The course puts a special emphasis on establishing good communication with parents (a letter to parents at the end of each unit outlining the story). Evaluation is a continuous process and the coursebook offers plenty of games and activities which allow to check comprehension and production and an evaluation lesson at the end of each unit to consolidate the content of the units with sticking the appropriate stickers in the correct places, children colour either the happy or the sad Little Elephant to show their enjoyment of the story. A child's self-evaluation sheet for each unit helps each child be aware of their achievements and their progress. A teacher's evaluation sheet records the individual progress and learning process of each child.

#### 2.2.2.2. Analysis

Areas for consideration	Questions for coursebooks analysis
Aims and approaches	<p>The main aims of the course are to make English enjoyable and fun, to encourage children to be interested in English, to use English as an instrument of learning across curriculum. Linguistic aims, main attitudes and cross-curricular content are identified in each unit.</p> <p>Each lesson contains a short routine at the beginning and at the end of the lesson. One TPR activity is included in almost every lesson. Some activities are too long for the preschoolers' attention span.</p> <p>The stories provide a context for immersing the children in English and acquire the language naturally.</p>
Layout and design	<p>The coursebook is attractive; there are nice pictures.</p> <p>It has got a clear structure.</p> <p>The course is made of Pupil's Book, Teacher's Book, Class CD, Flashcards, Poster Pack and Big Book</p>

Syllabus	<p>The syllabus is story-based. Each story contains target language in form of vocabulary (objects and actions) and structures. As the vocabulary relates to the story and covers words from more topics, it is not as clear as in topic-based syllabuses.</p> <p>Is the syllabus is more appropriate for slightly older learners but is possible for children in their last year of kindergarten.</p> <p>The language is recycled throughout the course.</p> <p>Number of vocabulary is approx. 12 items per unit. Some words seem too complicated for preschoolers.</p> <p>Cross-curricular content is presented in each unit.</p>
Topics	<p>Topics cover mainly areas of interest and experiences of the children: friends, greetings, animals, numbers, colours, health, body, actions, numbers, presents, body, toys, house, prepositions, family, going to the beach, Christmas, and Easter.</p> <p>The concept of personalisation is not included.</p>
Methodology	<p>Telling the story using gestures, pictures and songs are the principal methods of the course. TPR activities and games as well as arts and role-play compose the regular part of each unit.</p> <p>Children are encouraged to be actively involved in all activities.</p> <p>The aspect of different learning styles and intelligences is not specifically covered.</p>
Language skills	<p>The course develops the children's oral and aural skills by providing plenty of opportunities to listen and speak English. The recording contains approx. 10 listening items per each unit, including a story, a song, a story song, Finger Friends Routine, instructions for working with the Pupil's Book, and exercises.</p> <p>Pre-reading and pre-writing skills are developed by working with worksheets. Pronunciation is developed through imitation of native speakers in a meaningful context.</p> <p>The material is well recorded.</p> <p>Children participate in speaking through songs, Finger Friends Routines, mini-dialogues, etc.</p>
Teacher's Guide	<p>The Teacher's Book introduces the main principles of the course, there is a Syllabus overview, structure of each unit and lesson plans.</p> <p>It is simple and easy to use. There are five activities in each lesson.</p> <p>No extra activities or ideas are listed.</p>
Parental involvement	<p>The course puts emphasis on establishing good communication with parents through letters to parents at the end of each unit.</p> <p>Children are supported to retell the story with the mini puppet theatre (a scene for the story included in the Pupil's Book) and cut out puppets. They can repeat the story at home in a similar way.</p>

	<p>The coursebook provides a list of vocabulary for parents together with transcription.</p> <p>The CD is not available for students.</p>
<p>Practical considerations (prices in CZK)</p>	<p>Student: Pupil's Book 250</p> <p>Teacher / School: Teacher's Book 545, Class CD 595, Flashcards 630, Poster Pack 1140, Big Book 655 = 3565</p> <p>All the components are available.</p> <p>The continuity is offered by Mini Magic 2 and Story Magic 1-4.</p> <p>No photocopiable materials are included except of evaluation sheets.</p> <p>The website supports the coursebook with a list of vocabulary with transcription and letters to parents in Czech.</p> <p>Number of lessons: 64</p>

### 2.2.2.3. Research

Mini Magic was evaluated by one teacher who teaches preschoolers in language school (q. 6). She chose this coursebook for groups of more advanced learners. Her view is very positive; she appreciates the stories, supporting materials for parents in Czech language and the continuity in Story Magic. There are materials for evaluation and self-evaluation in the course. She sees disadvantages in high price of the course and she misses worksheets, story cards and other supporting materials. She uses the coursebook in 40% of her teaching; she picks out only some ideas. Children like the stories, especially story posters with stickers and the Big Book. She recommends the course for more advanced learners, rather in language schools than in kindergartens.

### 2.2.2.4. Result

Mini Magic offers a very specific way of using stories in teaching language. It is the only really story-based coursebook from all of those included in the research. However, as it can be seen from the analysis, it is more suitable for older learners.

## 2.3. Other English coursebooks for very young children

### 2.3.1. Cheeky Monkey

Cheeky Monkey is a new three-level course for preschool children. It is flexible to be adapted to different teaching situations and styles. Cheeky Monkey, Rory the Lion and their friends are the main characters of the course. The Cheeky Monkey puppet and the stories and songs relate Cheeky's adventures to children's lives and experiences and help them become involved in language and learning.

The special features of the course are Cheeky Monkey playmat representing Cheeky Monkey's town (used for story time), Pupil's book pack which includes Multi-ROM with all stories, games and songs for home practise, and the optional Busy Book with extra worksheets, songs and topics. Story cards, Flashcards, DVD, detailed Teacher's Notes and Class Audio CD are other components of the course.

The course uses story-based approach and many TPR activities. There are six main units with seven lessons each. (macmillan.cz)

### 2.3.2. Hello, Robby Rabbit

Hello Robby Rabbit is an older two-level course for very young children. It is based on stories about Robby Rabbit and his friends. The appealing stories accompanied by related activities reflect the world of young children and hold their interest with songs, chants, rhymes, dances and musical games.

Pupil's Book contains four activity sheets with stickers for each story which develop language skills and other skills such as counting, matching and sequencing. Other components of the course are Teacher's Guide, Class Audio CD, flashcards, story cards, and Robby Rabbit puppet

There are six main units and three festival units in each level. Each of the main units unit has got 8 lessons. (macmillan.cz)

### 2.3.3. My First English Adventure

My First English Adventure is a three-level English course for preschool children. The children come into contact with the new language through Disney characters. The course consists of six main units, three revision units (Playtime) and three festival units. Each unit is

based on different characters and comprises of seven lessons. There are three stories in each level consolidating the language of previous two units.

The course consists of Pupil's book, optional Activity Book (levels 1, 2), optional Song CD (levels 1, 2), flashcards, posters, Teacher's Book, Class CD, optional DVD (levels 1, 2). (venturesbooks.com)

## 2.4. Other English coursebooks for young children

### 2.4.1. Happy House

Happy House is a two-level course for young children which is a part of Happy series and together with Happy Street and Happy Earth cover all levels of primary school. Happy House 1 starts with speaking and listening and is based on stories of a lively family with their three children and their cat and mice living under the floor. This combination offers both familiar and fantastic worlds. Two stories are introduced in each unit together with many songs.

The course focuses on strong skills development, and cross-curricular and cross-cultural aspect. Class Book contains motivating Take-home English projects and the Activity book for the pupils includes a Multi-ROM with games, songs and stories. The course also offers digital classroom resources for the teacher. The Teacher's Resource Pack contains puppets, story cards, masks, a poster, flashcards, Teacher's Resource Book and Evaluation Book. (elt.oup.com)

### 2.4.2. Little Bugs

Little Bugs is a two-level, story-based course for young children. It is designed to develop confidence and competence in using English and to provide solid foundations in language skills to equip children for future study. Little Bugs can be followed by four levels of Big Bugs to comprise a full six-level course.

The stories provide the context for the main learning input in each unit. They vary by type, kind of narrative structure and kind of story characters. The syllabus is organised cyclically in order to provide opportunities to use, rehearse and extend language and learning skills in a range of different contexts. Retelling the stories is the final outcome of each unit.

Although the main focus is on oral/aural work, the initiation of reading and writing skills in English also forms part of the syllabus. This aspect is further developed in Busy Book 1 as optional part of the course. The syllabus also provides socio-cultural aspect and links to other learning areas. There are six main units divided into eight lessons and two festival units. (macmillan.cz)

#### 2.5. Czech coursebook for very young learners

Pohádková angličtina s kocourem Vavřincem is a Czech two-level coursebook for preschool children. It is based on traditional fairy tales that are presented bilingually in a form of comics. The vocabulary and phrases taken from each story are used in activities based on the theory of multiple intelligences. The stories and related activities can be easily integrated into preschool curriculum. The coursebook is accompanied by Audio CD and CD-ROM. (Poslušná a Faltová 2006)

#### 2.6. Other English coursebooks

To make this list of English coursebooks as complete as possible this chapter mentions coursebooks which were quite popular among teachers but replaced by new courses. Although they are no more supported by publishers they contain interesting ideas and concepts which can be used by teachers.

Zig Zag Island and Zig Zag Magic are coursebooks for young learners formerly used also for very young learners. Reading and writing are slowly introduced in level 2. Children join the characters Katy and Tom as they travel around an island inhabited by animals in level 1 and an island occupied by magic characters in level 2. The course offers only Class Book, Teacher's Book and Cassette.

Super Me is a two-level course for children aged 6-8. It is based on aural/oral approach. The action centres around the family, children's imaginary friend, their teddy and their dog. The components of the course are Class Book, Fun Book and Teacher's Resource Pack (Teacher's Resource Book and Story Books 1A and 1B, cassette, flashcards). Each unit has a story in an accompanying Story Book.

Pebbles is a two-level activity-based course for young children that uses traditional stories to motivate children to learn English. It is focused on oral / aural skills. The appealing stories combine fantasy and real life characters. The coursebook includes craft activities,

such as making masks and puppets to use in many lessons. The course consists of a Class Book for pupils, a Teacher's Book with story posters and a cassette. The "About me" book made by children serves as a course summary for children to take home.

Teddy's Train is a two-level course for preschool children beginning English. It uses a metaphor of Teddy and his train taking children to different places. A special train poster is provided for use with flashcards for presenting the vocabulary. The course has low vocabulary load and many songs. The Activity Books for children contain perforated tear-out pages which enable to use the material flexibly to correspond with the general curriculum. The teacher's book contains teacher's notes for both levels. Apart from traditional topics there are units focused on nature, hospital and vehicles.

Here Comes Minibus! is a two-level, story-based course for young children. During this children join a bus ride with Minibus to various places. The stories are familiar to children and provide opportunities for the children to talk about themselves in relation to the topic area. Language is developed through a wide variety of activities including TPR. Children create their own English Album through the course to share with their family.

## IV. Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to find answers to several questions.

### 1. What are the aims of teaching English to very young learners?

The aims of teaching English to very young learners were discussed in chapter 1 of the theoretical part as well as the principles of it and various aspects. The important result is that in teaching English to very young learners we need to focus rather on the development of the whole personality of a child than on learning specific language skills.

### 2. What are the requirements for early language teaching?

The requirements summarized in paragraph 1.4 of the theoretical part identify three areas to be considered – aims, methods and conditions. They are based on the needs of learners, their learning capacity and specific cognitive abilities.

### 3. Do the English coursebooks for preschool children reflect these requirements?

All the English coursebooks included in the research correspond to the requirements for early language learning, except of *Angličtina pro nejmenší*. The coursebooks provide a useful guide for the teachers and enable children to acquire English in a safe and enjoyable environment. It is important that the teachers use the materials creatively and in accordance with the needs of the group.

This thesis is designed to help teachers who are interested in teaching English to very young learners be better oriented and equipped for choosing their way of teaching. The requirements for coursebooks in Table 1 and the description of the criteria in Chapter 3 provide a tool for assessment of any teaching material and method.

## Bibliography

Cunningsworth, Alan: *Choosing your Coursebook*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1998. Print

Halliwell, Susan: *Teaching English in a Primary Classroom*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2006. Print

Harmer, Jeremy: *How to Teach English*. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 1998. Print.

Harmer, Jeremy: *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001. Print

Krashen, Stephen D. *Language Acquisition and Language Education: Extensions and Applications*. New York: Prentice Hall International, 1989. Print.

Pinter, Annamaria. *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006. Print.

### Coursebooks

, and Herbert Puchta. *Playway to English*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Reilly, Vanessa, and Kathryn Harper. *Cookie and Friends*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.

Morris, Joy, and Joanne Ramsden. *Here's Patch the Puppy*. Oxford: Macmillan Limited, 2005. Print.

Perez, Esteve Pilar, and Estruch Roig Vicent. *Mini Magic*. Oxford: Macmillan, 2003. Print.

Poslušná, Lucie and Věra Faltová. *Pohádková angličtina s kocourem Vavřincem*. Brno: Computer Press, 2006. Print

Selby, Claire, Lesley McKnight, and Paula Metcalf. *Hippo and Friends*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Zahálková, Marie. *Angličtina pro Nejmenší*. Praha: SPN, 2006. Print.

## Internet Sources

"Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity." *EUROPA – The Official Website of the European Union*. Web. 20 Apr. 2010.

Edelenbos, Peter, Richard Johnstone, and Angelika Kubanek. *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners*. European Commission, 2006. Web. 20 May. 2010.

"European Commission - Language Teaching - Early Language Learning." *EUROPA - European Commission - Homepage*. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

Krashen, Stephen D. *Dealing with English Fever* In: Selected Papers from the Twelfth International Symposium on English Teaching. English Teachers' Association / ROC. Taipei: Crane Publishing Company. 2003. Web. 20 Mar. 2011.

"Národní plán výuky cizích jazyků 2010." *Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky*. 18 Jan. 2006. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

"Rámcový vzdělávací plán pro předškolní vzdělávání." *Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky*. 2004. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

online catalogues of English coursebooks macmillan.cz, venturesbooks.com, elt.oup.com

## Appendices

1 – Questionnaires

2 – Table of topics

Teaching English to Very Young Learners - CORE ?  
Very young learners create their own learning engaging Documents. IH Certificate in Teaching Very Young Learners (IH VYL) ? IH Certificate in Teaching Very Young Learners Documents. Assessing young learners ? Assessing Young Learners Written by Gwendydd Caudwell Children are very Documents. LP\_Christmas for Very Young Learners Documents. An analysis of the cultural content of six portuguese textbooks Technology. Shapes For very young learners. Documents. The Main Pedagogical Principles Underlying the Teaching of Languages to Very Young Learners Documents. MINI COURSE 2013 Teaching Young Learners. Very young learners? Young learners? Documents. Coursebooks for YL often emphasize nouns because they are easy to illustrate and because often YL don t have literacy skills, so the only words that can easily be featured are nouns. However, language is more than nouns and it is important to include verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions and also different lexical fields (colors, animals, days of the week, food, jobs, etc.) as part of the vocabulary teaching. Picture dictionaries for very young learners show the vocabulary items in different categories and help YL increase their vocabulary knowledge and their use of contextual clues. young learners reflect on their learning process through evaluating their achievement. Cameron, L. (2001). Teaching Languages to Young Learners. Posts about coursebooks written by Sandy Millin. Very young learners. Hubert Puchta introducing vocabulary and using Total Physical Response (TPR) and telling an action story (7 minutes). An American kindergarten teacher working in a French-language immersion school (27 minutes) (via David Deubelbeiss ). and using PPP to teach the functional language of interrupting, followed by an analysis of the lesson stages (28 minutes). Paullo Abreu (?) teaching second conditional (1 hour). Olha Madylus teaching vocabulary and grammar to elementary students as a demo on a CELTA course (15 minutes). Very small groups. Lavender teaching vocabulary (5 minutes). Short clips.