

<https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.49770>

Our World and Let's Go: Analysis and Comparison of Two EFL Texts on Young Learners

Samikshya Bidari

Pinkley, D & Rossi, A. (2014). *Our World Student Book, Volume 1, Part 1*. New York: National Geographic Learning, a Cengage Learning Company. Pages - 175, Price - U\$ - Frazier & et al. (2006). *Let's Go*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. Pages 189, Price - U\$ 93.55



Successful language teaching begins with various factors such as proper lesson planning, selecting materials, developing activities, and adopting effective textbooks. Graves (2009, p. 11) states, "The text is not the course; rather, what the teacher and the students do with the text constitutes the course." Hence, the importance of "trialing" new books cannot be overemphasized. The proper analysis of texts can provide initial ideas to evaluate if the books meet the criteria for teaching. This review compares two EFL textbooks designed for young learners of the third grade with the age range of 8-10 years. The first book is *Our World* (Pinkley & Rossi, 2014), and the second book is *Let's go* (Frazier & et al., 2006). Even though both texts provide multiple opportunities for young learners to develop all four skills, there are notable differences in the approaches and content of the books. Both textbooks offer workbooks, one attached to the main book, and the other one in a separate book to improve writing skills. The uniqueness of those books is both equipped with technological aid, i.e. CD for students to listen and practice pronunciation and sing songs. For writing practice, both provide supporting

workbooks. This review analyzes the texts on four points of comparison from *Designing Language Courses* (Graves, 2000), they are goals and objectives, the context of the texts, type of syllabus, and approach to learning.

The first aspect of comparison is the goal and objectives. Graves (2000) defines goals as an overall statement of the long-term purpose and objectives of a course as a precise direction in which the teaching goals can be achieved. The goal of *Our World* is to educate children with 21st-century skills and to make them knowledgeable and caring citizens of our planet by providing explicit language learning goals. Each unit begins with a two-page picture and clearly-written sentences, "In this unit, I will...", which provides students with a clear understanding of objectives expected to be attained in that unit. *Our World* includes four units, and each unit has a target set on vocabulary and grammar. Each unit allows students to work with a partner and work in groups, encouraging collaborative language learning processes. At the end of the unit, the checklist reads, "Now I can...", ensuring the students, as well as teachers if the goal of the entire unit and objective of each lesson have been achieved.

The overall goal of *Let's Go*, on the other hand, is to improve oral and functional communication skills, promote learner autonomy, develop reading strategies, and practice writing in a workbook. Beginning with the first unit, students are provided with a variety of activities that focus on interactive communication. The vocabulary and the grammatical structure gradually increase in difficulty levels. *Let's Go* includes eight units, each unit has a target set of vocabulary and grammar phases. Each unit comes with an objective and emphasizes a general update of language mainly through vocabulary and expressions and communication within a carefully controlled grammatical syllabus. Each unit is organized around a lesson objective and is divided into four sections to be covered in four lessons: *Let's Start*, *Let's Learn*, *Let's Learn More*, and *Let's Build*. The first part, *Let's Start* builds functional fluency through *let's talk*, *let's sing*, *let's move*. The second part, *Let's Learn*, builds grammatical accuracy and additional vocabulary. In the third part, *Let's Learn* expands more on the language introduced in the previous section, with additional vocabulary and phrases. Finally, *Let's Build* reviews, recycles, and recombines language, which is already learned.

The second point of comparison in the context on which the two texts are based. Context helps in the process of decision-making. It is an important aspect of how textbooks can utilize learning and benefit students. There are several elements of the context that can be understood through analyzing the books. Most of the elements are related to the students' background, proficiency level, age, and cultural background. *Our World* and *Let's go* are both EFL series designed for primary level young learners, more specifically, the third-grade elementary school students. *Our World* is contextualized by real-life situations or language functions. Each unit offers students to see something real with fantastic photography, colorful animated images, videos, and audio CDs. *Our World*, learners experience the world as it is and life as people all over the world live it through authentic contents, and relevant readings. Every lesson is an opportunity for

students to see something real and expand their world and build on communication skills. In addition to balanced skills, the authors have also emphasized vocabulary development and grammar. Each topic allows teachers to add materials to supplement the text as well as students to have more discussions, hence enabling an opportunity for comprehensible input. Activities are scaffolded by meaningful and purposeful steps. Most of the activities are hands-on activities and are enjoyable and exciting to engage the attention of young learners. However, the cost of materials to perform these activities may not be affordable in an economically challenging situation.

On the other hand, *Let's Go* features beautiful full-color illustrations in a bright and attractive format. Creative activities, utilizing a wide range of skills engage young learners in a variety of learning experiences. This book consists of eight units, beginning with the first lesson, students are introduced to a variety of activities and exercises. These are written to cater to engaging interaction with one another in the classroom. This text would be appropriate in a context where there are not enough funds to buy materials for the activities as most of the activities do not require specialized materials. Most activities can be followed according to the instruction provided in the textbook. Therefore, *Let's Go* is very practical and could be beneficial in terms of school with minimum resources or facilities. However, the outlook of the book looks like a traditional children's book.

The third point of comparison is the type of syllabus applied in the texts. The first book, *Our World*, has a thematic syllabus with a total of four-units. The first unit is about classroom objects where the vocabulary of school-related objects and simple questions and answer phrases (such as "What's this? It's a" or "is it a ...?" "Yes, it is" or "No, it isn't") are repeatedly used. The second unit is about the vocabulary of nature, animals, and plants, and the additional target question and answer phrases are leveled up from unit one, and the introduction of singular and plural noun forms are addressed. Here the students learn to question and answer phrases such as, "What are they? They'res or where is the bird? It's on/in/under/by the....". The third unit is about the vocabulary of my family, where the students can learn about questions and answers (such as "How many brothers do you have? I have or who's she? She's my sister) can be practiced repeatedly. The last unit is about the vocabulary of the house, where the students can learn about the name of rooms, furniture, and action verbs. Target questions and answer phrases (such as "Is there a table in the kitchen? Yes, there is. No, there isn't. or Where is your mother? She's in the kitchen") are covered. Besides the main content of the unit, students are provided with the relevant activities, a project, and values of human life that can be taught. For example, values such as, work hard in school, enjoy your nature around you, love your friends and family, tidy your surroundings, etc. can be taught. With the help of a CD, students can practice songs, vocabulary, and other listening strategies. Writing in the workbook portion can enhance reading as well as writing.

In a similar vein, *Let's Go* covers the thematic syllabus as well and comprises eight units. The first unit is about things for school; the target question and answer phrases

do not differ much from the first unit of the first book. The second unit is about colors and shapes, and the third unit is about at the store, the fourth unit is about people at home, the fifth chapter is about birthday and toys, the sixth unit is about the outdoors, the seventh unit is about food, and the last group is about animals. Each unit has at least 12 new vocabularies and four grammatical structure to be covered. This syllabus and content of this book are more detailed and constrained, as the content to be included vast in number, where the teacher cannot show flexibility and bring in their innovative ideas. For listening practice, attached CDs can be a supportive tool, and for the writing practice, the separate workbook is used. However, almost all the units of both the books overlapped each other, but the approach to teaching both the book could be extremely different.

Approach to Learning

The last point of comparison is the approach to language learning. The process of language learning consists of an inductive and deductive approach. An inductive approach involves the students finding, styles, and working out a rule for themselves before practicing the language, whereas a deductive approach comprises the students being provided with a general rule, which is applied to the exemplification of specific style and honed through attempting exercises as well as activities. In analyzing the first text, *My World*, the overall approach is inductive as the hands-on activities, and the exercises demand learning as a process of problem solving and discovery by the students. This text provides effective materials that enhance the critical thinking of young learners. Critical thinking is a higher order of thought that involves analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information. On the other hand, *Let's Go*, incorporates technique from a deductive approach. The content of the text provides proper models to enhance learning setting up the best neutral pathways for language processing. This is the basic approach that has been implemented for years in language teaching.

In conclusion, various aspects of the two texts can be analyzed and compared. There are some similarities between the two texts in terms of context, syllabus, and some of the approaches. What they needed is to be flexible enough to accommodate a variety of students, teachers, and curriculum demands. While there is some logic in the sequencing of topics covered in a text, the suggested topical sequence is for an imaginary class. As, Graves (2000) states, "this text is written for everyone, and this text is written for no one." It is in the hand of the teachers, they can either adopt it or adapt it to bring varieties and uniqueness into their teaching.

References

- Graves, K., & Blyth, M. D. C. (2009). *Teachers, as of course developers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graves, K. (2000). *Designing language courses: A guide for teachers*. USA, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Nakata, R., Frazier, K., Hoskins, B., & Graham, C. (2006). *Let's go*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pinkley, D., Crandall, J. A., Shin, J. K., & Rossi, A. (2014). *Our world*. Singapore: National Geographic Learning, a Cengage Learning Company.

Contributor:

Ms. Samikshya Bidari is from Nepal, currently pursuing M.A, TESOL at Soka University, Japan. With a prior TEFL certification and MBA from Bangalore University, she has many years of teaching experience in Japanese Government Schools. She is now collecting practical pedagogical ideas from Japan to spread it in the schools of Nepal.