# English Reading Material for Young Learner: How is It in the Classroom?

Rosmen<sup>1)</sup>, Hermawati Syarif<sup>2)</sup>, Yetty Zainil<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1), 2), 3)</sup>Universitas Negeri Padang

email: rosmen.al.maksum@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, hermawati\_sy@yahoo.com<sup>2</sup>, yettizainil@fbs.unp.ac.id<sup>3</sup>

#### Abstract

This study investigated the English reading materials (ERM) for students of Sekolah Dasar Swasta (SDS: private elementary school) IKAL Medan. The purpose of this study was to assess the relevance of ERM to the needs of SDS IKAL Medan students, particularly Grade IV. This research was conducted as a content analysis study. It was an evaluation of the existing ERM from the existing English textbook, *Grow with English: Book 4*, published by Erlangga, 2015. Also, the theory or principle of effective ERM was reviewed to determine its feasibility. The data for this study came from an investigation of the existing ERM and the teacher interview results. The findings of this study indicated that the existing ERM does not meet Grade IV SDS IKAL Medan learners' needs. In order to address the needs of the Grade IV students at SDS IKAL Medan, it was determined that new ERM were required. Thus, it is proposed that the English teacher should develop a suitable ERM that is relevant to the students' needs and also related to the theory or principles of an effective reading material for English young learners.

Keywords: English Reading Material, English Young Learner, Elementary

#### Introduction

English has become a Foreign Language (EFL) and one of compulsory subject for Indonesian secondary students (Zein et al., 2020). It has been selected as one of the languages of teaching in bi/multilingual schools. Therefore, it is implied that English need to be taught before they attend the secondary. Thus, the teaching of English (English Language Teaching - ELT) for elementary school students (English for Young Learners - EYL) is chosen as one of major *muatan lokal* (Local Content Subject) in some schools.

Due to the children's social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development, as well as their language development, it is necessary to take a distinct consideration (Linse & Nunan, 2005; Shilova et al., 2020). Hence, in order to provide suitable language teaching, we must consider their physical and psychological provisions. Also, it was considered that the number of languages that children learn whether through natural exposure or educational intervention, has consequences for their development (Barac & Bialystok, 2011; Butler, 2022). Thus, to give a suitable instruction, it is deemed necessary to adjust educational experiences to the cognitive development stage of the student.

Reading as a skill that should be acquired by the learners is required to be take in a great consideration. Reading and writing are not acquired naturally, unlike listening and speaking, since the reading and writing skills cannot develop without deliberate practice and training. Thus, in order to enhance children's reading and writing skills they must be instructed frequently and actively with printed materials (Tsuchiya & Pérez Murillo, 2019). In regard with reading materials, it is one of the crucial factors influencing the EFL learners' reading motivation (Kim & Alex, 2021; Kostikova et al., 2020; Pirih, 2019). Further, authentic reading materials was considered interesting and motivate EFL students

(Kung, 2019). Examining the reading materials which were utilized in the classroom in order to develop a suitable reading material for the EYL is deemed necessary. Thus, this study examined the English reading materials (ERM) provided by *Sekolah Dasar Swasta* (SDS: Private Elementary School) IKAL Medan in order to investigate the feasibility.

#### Methods

This study was conducted in SDS IKAL Medan, Jl. Jongkong No. 23-B Medan Helvetia. It analyzed the appropriateness of the ERM attached in English textbook of Grade IV; *Grow with English: Book 4* (Erlangga, 2015). The data sources were the existing documents; there were five reading topics (Figure 1-5) attached in the textbook. Those existing ERM were analyzed by using Evaluation Checklist (Table 1) proposed by Miekley (2005). Further, the English teacher was interviewed in order to realize the needs.

	Table 1 Evaluation Checklis	st				
	ng Material	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
A. Cor	ntent					
1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Compared to texts for native speakers, does the content contain real-life issues that challenge the reader to think critically about his/her worldview?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the text selections representative of the variety of literary genres, and do they contain multiple sentence structures?	4	3	2	1	0
B. Voc	cabulary and Grammar					
1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g., glosses, multi-glosses, appositives)?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are the new vocabulary words presented at an appropriate rate so that the text is understandable and so that students are able to retain new vocabulary?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are students taught top-down techniques for learning new vocabulary words?	4	3	2	1	0
C. E	xercise and Activities					

**Table 1 Evaluation Checklist** 

### Proceeding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Language Pedagogy Padang, 15 November 2022 ISSN: 2809-4808

Are there interactive and task-based activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	4	3	2	1	0
Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?	4	3	2	1	0
Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?	4	3	2	1	0
Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?	4	3	2	1	0
Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	4	3	2	1	0
ctiveness of the Text and Physical Make-up					
Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?	4	3	2	1	0
Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?	4	3	2	1	0
Is the text interesting enough that students will enjoy reading it?	4	3	2	1	0
ext					
Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?	4	3	2	1	0
Does the text coincide with the course goals?	4	3	2	1	0
Is the reading materials appropriate for the students who will be using it?	4	3	2	1	0
Is the text free of material might be offensive?	4	3	2	1	0
Are the examples and explanations understandable?	4	3	2	1	0
Will students enjoy reading the text selections?	4	3	2	1	0
Will the content meet students' felt needs for learning English or can it be adapted for this purpose?	4	3	2	1	0
	activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?ctiveness of the Text and Physical Make-up Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?Does the text coincide with the course goals?Is the reading material appropriate for the students who will be using it?Is the text free of material might be 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#### **Results and Discussion**

Based on the Evaluation Checklist (Figure 6-10), the topics of the existing ERM of Grade IV learners of SDS IKAL were pertained to the students' real-life issues. Yet, there were exclusion of the title (ERM I and II). The plots were unavailable (ERM I, II and III). Only a few sentences of text were provided. Such ERM were insufficient vocabulary rate and varieties. The sentence structures were relatively low. Consequently, learners were hindered to retain the new vocabulary and neglected literacy. Moreover, pre-reading strategies were excluded for all ERM. As a result, learners were unable to activate their schemata properly and unconsciously hinder comprehensiveness.

teadi	ng Material	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
L.Co	ntent					
1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Compared to texts for native speakers, does the content contain real-life issues that challenge the reader to think critically about his/her worldview?	4	3	2	Ē	0
4	Are the text selections representative of the variety of literary genres, and do they contain multiple sentence structures?	4	3	2	1	0
.Vo	cabulary and Grammar					
1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi-glosses, appositives)?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are the new vocabulary words presented at an appropriate rate so that the text is understandable and so that students are able to retain new vocabulary?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are students taught top-down techniques for learning new vocabulary words?	4	3	2		0

1	cise and Activities Are there interactive and task-based		1.5			
	activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?	4	3		Ĩ.	0
4	Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?	4	3	2	1	0
6	Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?	4	3	2	1	0
7	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	4	3	2	1	0
ttr	activeness of the Text and Physical Make-up					
1	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?	4	3	2	1.	0
3	Is the text interesting enough that students will enjoy reading it?	4	3	2	1	0
ont	ext					
1	Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Does the text coincide with the course goals?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Is the reading materials appropriate for the students who will be using it?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Is the text free of material might be offensive?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are the examples and explanations understandable?	4	3	2		0
6	Will students enjoy reading the text selections?	4	3	2	1	0
7	Will the content meet students' felt needs for learning English or can it be adapted for this purpose?	4	3	2	1	0

Figure 6. Evaluation Checklist Result ERM 1

	ng Material	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
A. Co						
1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?	4	3	2	Ţ.	0
3	Compared to texts for native speakers, does the content contain real-life issues that challenge the reader to think critically about his/her worldview?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the text selections representative of the variety of literary genres, and do they contain multiple sentence structures?	4	3	2	1	0
3. Vo	cabulary and Grammar					
1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi-glosses, appositives)?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are the new vocabulary words presented at an appropriate rate so that the text is understandable and so that students are able to retain new vocabulary?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are students taught top-down techniques for learning new vocabulary words?	4	3	2	1	0

1	rcise and Activities Are there interactive and task-based	1					
Ľ	activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	4	3	2	1	0	
2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	4	3	2		0	
3	Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?	4	3	2	1	0	
4	Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0	
5	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?	4	3	2	1	0	
6	Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?	4	3	2	1	0	
7	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	4	3	2	D	0	
Aur	activeness of the Text and Physical Make-up						
1	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?	(4)	3	2	1	0	
2	Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?	4	3	2	1	0	
3		4	3	2	) 1	0	
Con	text						
1	Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?	4	3	2	1	0	
2	Does the text coincide with the course goals?	4	3	2	1	0	
3	Is the reading materials appropriate for the students who will be using it?	4	3	2	1	0	SY
4	Is the text free of material might be offensive?	4	3	2	1	0	
5	Are the examples and explanations understandable?	4	3	2	1	0	
6	Will students enjoy reading the text selections?	4	3	2	1	0	
7	Will the content meet students' felt needs for learning English or can it be adapted for this purpose?	4	3	2	1	0	

Figure 7. Evaluation Checklist ERM 2

Readi	ng Material	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
1. Co	ntent					
1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Compared to texts for native speakers, does the content contain real-life issues that challenge the reader to think critically about his/her worldview?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the text selections representative of the variety of literary genres, and do they contain multiple sentence structures?	4	3	2	1	0
3. Vo	cabulary and Grammar					
1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the new vocabulary words presented in a variety of ways (e.g. glosses, multi-glosses, appositives)?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are the new vocabulary words presented at an appropriate rate so that the text is understandable and so that students are able to retain new vocabulary?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are students taught top-down techniques for learning new vocabulary words?	4	3	2	1	0

1	cise and Activities Are there interactive and task-based						
Ĩ	activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	4	3	2	1	0	
2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0	
3	Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?	4	3	2	1	0	
4	Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0	
5	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?	4	3	2	1	0	
6	Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?	4	3	2	1	0	
7	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	4	3	2	1	0	
Atte	activeness of the Text and Physical Make-up						
1	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?	4	3	2	1	0	
2	Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?	4	3	2	1	0	
3	Is the text interesting enough that students will enjoy reading it?	4	3	2	1	0	
Cont	ext						
1	Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?	4	3	2	1	0	
2	Does the text coincide with the course goals?	4	3	2	1	0	
3	Is the reading materials appropriate for the students who will be using it?	4	3	2	1	0	
4	Is the text free of material might be offensive?	4	3	2	1	0	
5	Are the examples and explanations understandable?	4	3	2	1	0	
6	Will students enjoy reading the text selections?	4	3	2	1	0	
7	Will the content meet students' felt needs for learning English or can it be adapted for this purpose?	4	3	2	1	0	

Figure 8. Evaluation Checklist ERM 3

Readi	ng Material	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
A. Co	ntent					
1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Compared to texts for native speakers, does the content contain real-life issues that challenge the reader to think critically about his/her worldview?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the text selections representative of the variety of literary genres, and do they contain multiple sentence structures?	4	3	2	1	0
3. Vo	cabulary and Grammar					
1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?	4	3	2	1	0
2		4	3	2	1	0
3	Are the new vocabulary words presented at an appropriate rate so that the text is understandable and so that students are able to retain new vocabulary?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are students taught top-down techniques for learning new vocabulary words?	4	3	2	1	0

1	cise and Activities Are there interactive and task-based	1	155	-		1
	activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?	4	3	2	1	0
6	Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?	4	(3)	2	1	0
7	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	4	3	2	1	0
ttra	activeness of the Text and Physical Make-up	10				-
1	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Is the text interesting enough that students will enjoy reading it?	4	3	2	1	0
ont	ext					
1	Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Does the text coincide with the course goals?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Is the reading materials appropriate for the students who will be using it?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Is the text free of material might be offensive?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are the examples and explanations understandable?	4	3	2	1	0
6	Will students enjoy reading the text selections?	4	3	2	1	0
7	Will the content meet students' felt needs for learning English or can it be adapted for this purpose?	4	3	2	1	0

Figure 9. Evaluation Checklist ERM 4

	ng Material	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Totally Lacking
A. Co	ntent					
1	Is the subject matter presented either topically or functionally in a logical, organized manner?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the reading selections authentic pieces of language?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Compared to texts for native speakers, does the content contain real-life issues that challenge the reader to think critically about his/her worldview?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the text selections representative of the variety of literary genres, and do they contain multiple sentence structures?	4	3	2	1	0
3. Vo	cabulary and Grammar					
1	Are the grammar rules presented in a logical manner and in increasing order of difficulty?	4	3	2	1	0
2		4	3	2	1	0
3		4	3	2	1	0
4	Are the new vocabulary words repeated in subsequent lessons to reinforce their meaning and use?	4	3	2	1	0
5		4	3	2	1	0

1	Are there interactive and task-based	1				
-	activities that require students to use new vocabulary to communicate?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Do instructions in the textbook tell students to read for comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Are top-down and bottom-up reading strategies used?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Are students given sufficient examples to learn top-down techniques for reading comprehension?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Do the activities facilitate students' use of grammar rules by creating situations in which these rules are needed?	4	3	2	Ŀ	0
6	Does the text make comprehension easier by addressing one new concept at a time instead of multiple new concepts?	4	3	2	1	0
7	Do the exercises promote critical thinking of the text?	4	3	2	1	0
tin	activeness of the Text and Physical Make-up					
1	Is the visual imagery of high aesthetic quality?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Are the illustrations simple enough and close enough to the text that they add to its meaning rather than detracting from it?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Is the text interesting enough that students will enjoy reading it?	4	3	2	ï	0
ont	ext					
1	Is the reading material appropriate for the curriculum?	(4)	3	2	1	0
2	Does the text coincide with the course goals?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Is the reading materials appropriate for the students who will be using it?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Is the text free of material might be offensive?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Are the examples and explanations understandable?	4	D	2	1	0
6	Will students enjoy reading the text selections?	4	3	2	1	0
7	Will the content meet students' felt needs for learning English or can it be adapted for this purpose?	4	3	2	1	0

Figure 10. Evaluation Checklist ERM 5

Furthermore, the ERM were meet the criteria for the simplification, but substantially they were inappropriate. The topics have been representing daily activities and the text are comprehensible. Yet, they were separated into speaking, listening, and writing activities. They also did not reflect the sequential context of a single unit in a complete series, and images representing the story's stages were neglected. In result, it is difficult for learners to remember the drills, whereas the entire activity sequences of the lesson (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) possibly build learners' prior knowledge. As a consequence, due to the disorganized chronological order of the lesson's activity sequences, it is difficult for the learners to

comprehend the text. In teaching these ERM, because of the incapability of learners to properly activate their schemata, the teacher was more actively involved.

In order to realize the ERM was meet with the needs of the learners, interviewing the teacher was conducted. The teacher was informed that a story or narration of the learners' daily activities were believed suitable for Grade IV learners of SDS IKAL Medan. It was accordance to the teacher's answer when he asked about "What ERM are suitable for Grade IV learners?", he said that:

Cerita tentang kehidupan sehari-hari seperti tentang waktu dan aktivitas sehari-hari, dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris itu bagus buat siswa kelas IV.

(A story about daily activities, such as about time and learners' activities, is good for the ELT of Grade IV students.)

In order to attract learners, pictorial ERM material was required. Referred to teacher's answer, when he was asked about the next criteria, he said that:

Disertai gambar untuk menarik perhatian siswa

(Attached pictures in order to attract learners' intension)

About the text length, two paragraphs or less than 400 words was considered appropriate. Based on the teacher's answer, when he asked about "What about the text length?", he said that: *Bila dalam bentuk paragraf, dua paragraf, atau jangan lebih dari 400 kata, kalau lebih terlalu panjang.* 

(When it is a paragraph, two paragraphs, or less than 400 words, because it is too long if it is more than 400 words.)

Conclusively, based on the interview result, pictorial story or narration of learners' daily activities written in less than 400 words was considered appropriate for Grade IV learners of SDS IKAL Medan. Thus, those data confirmed that pictorial story or narration relate to something that is familiar to the learners and provide in numbers of words were deemed required. However, the existing ERM were negated those items. Even the topics were suitable for the learners, yet there was very lack of vocabulary enhancement due to the slight number of words provided in the text. Also, vocabulary pre-teaching as one of three pre-reading strategies was absence. While, in reading processes, pre-reading task which were provided in the text un/consciously possibly release the tension, suggesting joy and provoke comprehensiveness.

#### Conclusion

After analyzing the data, the current ERM are incredibly inappropriate. Because of the absence of the title, it is difficult for students to comprehend the text and to thoroughly hindered to activate their schemata. (ERM I and II). The picture represents the story was excluded. The plots were unknown (ERM I, II and III). There were few forms of dialogue presented. Such ERM were limited vocabulary rate and varieties. The sentence structures were short. Consequently, learners were hinder to retain the new vocabulary and stranded literacy. Moreover, pre-reading strategies were excluded for all ERM. Thus, it is recommended that English teachers provide learners with a sufficient ERM based on their educational experiences and needs. Also, reviewing studies deal with the criteria of effective instructional materials was deemed necessary in order providing a suitable ERM for EYL, especially SDS IKAL learners.

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#### Appendix 1

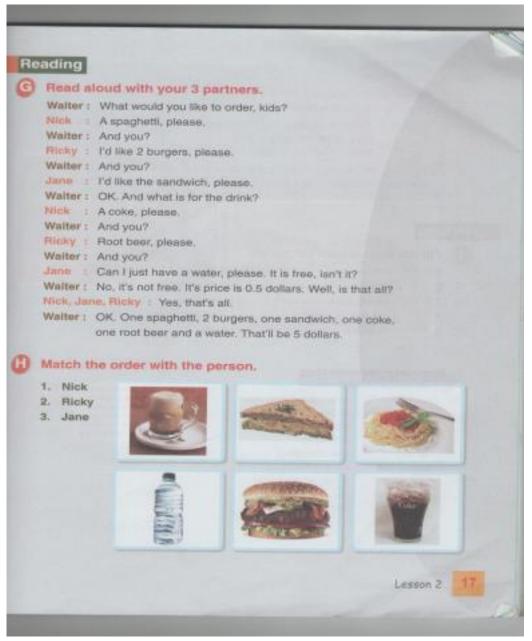


Figure 1. Existing ERM 1

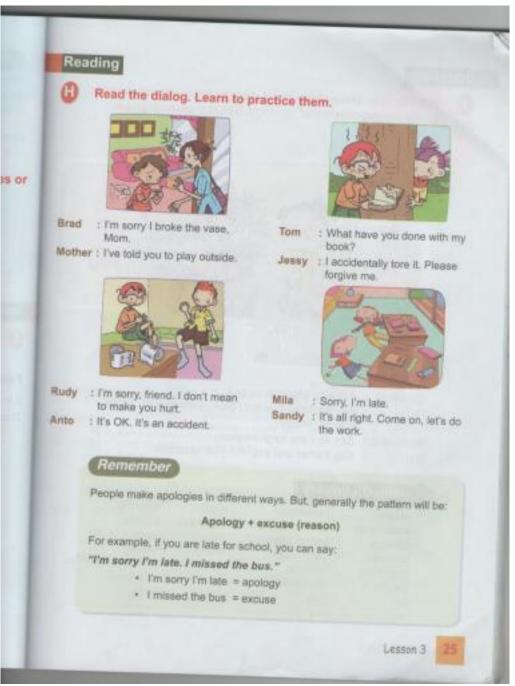


Figure 2. Existing ERM 2

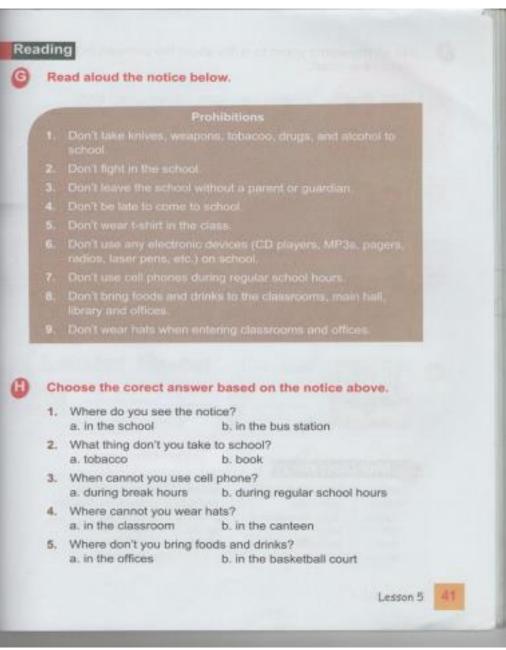


Figure 3. Existing ERM 3

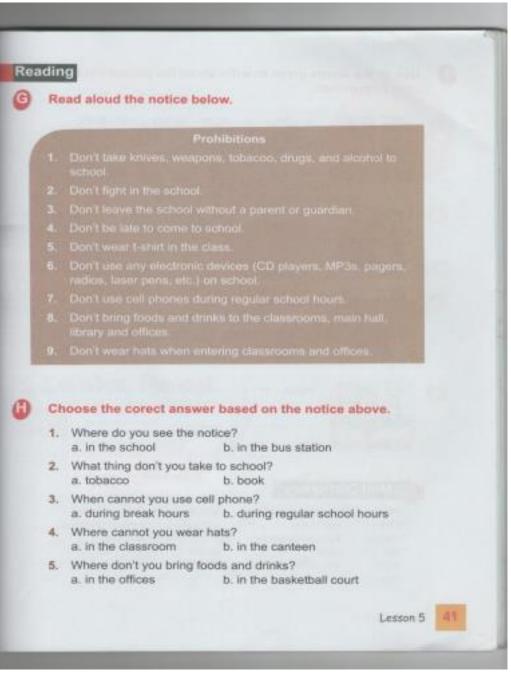


Figure 4. Existing ERM 4

## Reading Read the text below. **BIRTHDAY PARTY** My classmate, Ririn, is holding a birthday party tonight. She invites everyone in the class. Ririn wears a long blue dress and some make-up. She looks beautiful like a princess. The party is great. Her parents are there too. They look nice. There are lots of foods. They taste delicious. There are many flowers in the room. They look nice and smell good. Everyone feels happy in the party. I feel happy coming to her party. Tick (v) under the world TRUE if it is true or FALSE if it is false. TRUE FALSE 1. Ririn is holding a farewell party. 2. She looks very sad. 3. She wears green dress. 4. Her parents don't come in the party. 5. Her dress and make-up look beautiful, 6. The foods taste delicious. 7. There are no flowers in the party. 8. Everyone feels happy in the party.

Figure 5. Existing ERM 5