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TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS (TEYL) AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

Teaching young learners is quite challenging and teachers need to be creative. This research aims to investigate the material used in English teaching-learning process for young learners in 5th grade 5A and 5B classes and in 6th grade 6A and 6B classes of an Elementary school of SDN 2 Kekeri in West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province. The subjects of the study were a teacher and her students. To find the data in question research, the research used two types of instruments that are checklist observation and score rubric. The result shows there are four materials that most student teachers used to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking English through games, worksheets, and role-plays, such as slides, songs, photographs, and drawings. It was found that their average score of 88.25 in 5th grade and an average score of 88.36 in 6th grade. Thus, it can be concluded that their English is in very well category.

Keywords: *English, Education, elementary school, TEYL*

INTRODUCTION

The term "young learner" covers a large chronological age span: from around 3 years of age to 15. Some writers and researchers try to segment learners strictly according to age: 3-to 5-year-olds, 6- to 8-year-olds, and so on. While, as we shall see, children do exhibit different mental and social characteristics at different ages, a strict segmentation is not particularly helpful (Nunan, 2011: 2). As Pinter (2006 as cited in Nunan, 2011: 2-3) points out, all children are unique, and two children at the same chronological age can exhibit markedly different characteristics. Pinter prefers to identify "younger" and "older" learners, as identified in the following:

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Table 1. Young Learners Criteria

Younger learners	Older learners
Children are at preschool or in the first couple of years of schooling.	These children are well-established at school and comfortable with school routines.
Generally, they have a holistic approach to language, which means that they understand meaningful messages but cannot analyze language yet.	They show a growing level of awareness about themselves as language learners and their learning.
They have lower levels of awareness about themselves as well as about the process of learning.	They show a growing level of awareness about themselves as language learners and their learning.
They have limited reading and writing skills, even in their first language.	They have well-developed skills as readers and writers.
Generally, they are more concerned about themselves than others.	They have a growing awareness of others and their viewpoints.
They have limited knowledge about the world.	They have a growing awareness about the world around us.
They enjoy fantasy, imagination, and movement.	They begin to show an interest in real-life issues.

Adapted from: Nunan (2011: 2-3)

Moreover, Syafei also stated that Young Learners are students of Elementary School who are in grade 1 up to grade 6. Their ages range from seven to twelve years of age. They have learned English for about one to four years. From those three statements, we may conclude that Young Learners are students who are studying in Elementary or Senior High School aged 7-12 and they are studying English as a second language for about one to four years. It can be at preschool or kindergarten. But in some cases, they can have no English at all (2016: 6-7).

Furthermore, Ningsih also defined Young Learners as any student who has not yet reached their majority. It includes the whole range of ages and developmental stages of children from infants, young children, and older children. It also explains the enormous physical, emotional, psychological, social, and cognitive differences (2020: 1414).

As an international language, introducing English to elementary school students is a strategic policy since they like to learn something new, including foreign cultures. Indeed, an

important aspect of teaching them English effectively is to create a fun and creative learning atmosphere so that children do not feel pressured when studying foreign languages (Pratiwi et al., 2021: 124).

Teaching Young learners has been happening in Indonesia for many years. In the past, young learners refer to students between five and twelve years of age. Today, young learners started from preschool (3 years) to Elementary school (12 years). Different age is a crucial thing determining the teaching method, emphasizing language competence, and addressing cognitive skills (Imaniah & Nargis, 2017: 20).

Teaching English to Young Learners is guiding and facilitating Young Learners in ages 5-12 years old, for their activities in learning, knowing, understanding, and comprehending ideas, attitudes values, skills, and information of English using tricks and strategies which will be used in changing and redefining their thought forward their daily surrounding situation as foreign languages learners. In a language learning context, children are believed to learn a foreign language more effectively under certain conditions. Therefore, there are some assumptions about language learning that should be considered when teaching English as a foreign language to children, as follow (Syafei, 2016: 3-4):

1. Learning should be fun and natural for children.
2. The language should be first presented through sounds, not written symbols.
3. Children are more sensitive to anything that touches the senses; they react easily to physical objects.
4. Meaning should be made perceptive through concrete objects or by presentation of experience.
5. The idea that teaching should start from what the students already know in order to encourage association processes seems to favor children.

Moreover, Syafei (2016: 4-5) claimed for the successful teaching of English in primary schools, above all, it is essential for the teacher to understand the young learners' characteristics, instincts, and interests in their cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects because this will play a crucial role in how the teacher builds a lesson, how he or she can make sure that the young learners are fully involved in the learning process, how he or she achieves the objectives of a lesson, and how they respond. In this respect, these lines, in the first place, get the English teacher not only to understand the general characteristics of the young learners but also to recognize the qualifications as a primary English teacher.

Ningsih also claimed that Teaching English to young learners has been increasingly established at the primary and even preschool levels (2020: 1414). Sukarno (2008 as cited in Ningsih, 2020: 1415) states that teaching and learning of English in preschool provides the students English language competencies in the golden age. Further he explains golden age is the age that children can learn anything easily. Age has often been considered as a major, determining success in learning a second or foreign Language.

Harmer (2007) describes young learners learn faster and more effectively than any other age group. Cameron (2001) also called the golden age of children as the critical period hypothesis. It is the idea that young children can learn second or foreign language more effectively than adults. It means that young learners can acquire the language easier. They are generally considered to be capable of acquiring a new language easily and with little effort.

According to Brumfit et al. (2003 as cited in Ningsih, 2020: 1415) since young learner love repetition and are very active, teaching them by using some expressive and purposeful media and activities can catch their attention and increase their motivation. Young learners are both curious and willing to learn new things and learn faster than adult learners. Since fun is the key aspect to attract young learners' attention, in teaching English the teacher should be supported by songs, videos, realia, games, cartoons, etc

Nowadays, there are wide varieties of readily-available materials in the stores like coursebooks from all publishers and textbook writers, or picture cards and story books, or interactive language activity CDs. Teachers can always select and choose one or more of those materials and use them in their teaching practices. Some questions like whether the materials are suitable for the pupils' age level, interest, and cognitive development, whether we have to create our own materials or simply buy them, or whether we can afford the money and the time producing or buying the materials might arise. As well as questions about whether teachers should only use the materials from the coursebooks or how many supplementary materials teachers can use in class to support the coursebook material (Diyanti, 2016: 1)

When adapting the materials, we need also to consider whether or not the leaving out of one or two of the units create confusion on the students' part, since coursebook is sometimes the main resource of materials. Make sure our pupils are aware of what they have to do in the lesson. However, when materials need to be more personalized, Spratt et. al.

suggested teachers to provide additional activities for the materials, as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Activities for the English learning materials

Coursebook provides:	Teacher can provide additional:
Situation/context	Warmer
Pictures	Instructions
Dialogues (conversations between two people) and texts	Role-play
Tasks and exercises	Homework tasks

Adapted from: Spratt et al. (2005)

Internet is also a great source of video and audio materials. Free-accessed video site like www.youtube.com provides a great number of videos that teachers can use in their teaching. Youtube provides easily access short videos, kids songs, nursery rhymes, film trailers, short cartoon movies, or self-made and home-made videos that can become invaluable sources for an English classroom. Stories make very good learning materials, particularly picture storybooks. Stories are full of vocabularies as well as authentic English expressions that can be very meaningful for children's learning. Storybooks can be easily found in bookstores with and some can also be freely downloaded from the internet (Diyanti, 2016: 13).

Using these kinds of media in language teaching can be very helpful for very young learners. Therefore, teachers should be patient while teaching English to young learners. Also, when new items are thought to very young learners, enjoyable and practical methods, media and activities should be used. Furthermore, a number of factors affect the success of a Teaching EYL program. These include the choice of the Teaching EYL program model, the presence of appropriately trained teachers, the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, and the continuity of the English curriculum from primary to secondary school.

Supriyanti (2020: 1374) stated that language acquisition is a process that takes place in a child's brain when he gets his first language or mother tongue. According to Chomsky, when children gain language skills, the innateness hypothesis is that humans are born equipped with a tool to speak easily and quickly. Hence, an advantage of learning English from an early age is communicating with a foreign language by the right cognitive side. It is

time golden age to acquire a second language. Furthermore, introducing English to children is necessary to pay attention to the theory of language development.

This part attempts to present the teaching English to young learners, especially in Indonesia. Talking about language teaching in Indonesia will automatically bring us to know the position of English subject in Indonesia. English lesson has been implemented in some schools since 1992, and its position is a local content subject (Zein, 2017 as cited in Mutiah et al., 2020: 1375). In line with it, the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 0487/4/1992, Chapter VIII, states that schools can some basic subjects to their school's curriculum as long as they are supporting the national education goals. Then, the policy has been emphasized by the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 060/U/1993 dated February 25, 1993. It is about the addition of English programs as local content in elementary school, which can be begun in the fourth grade (Mutiah et al., 2020: 1375).

As a part of curriculum, Ministerial Decree No.22 Year 2006, dated May 23rd 2006 states that English is taught from elementary students as a local subject moreover from kindergarten (Hartina et al., 2019: 78). This shows that English becomes a main subject in Indonesian school either from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational school or university level. English plays an important role for students to access and get information while they are in classroom setting or outside the classroom (Mubarok, 2016: 68).

However, based on Curriculum 2013, English is not the local content subject for elementary school students but as an extracurricular. Some consequences should be taken because of the nature of Curriculum 2013 in which creativity is important in the implementation of the newest Indonesia curriculum 2013. Based on the curriculum, the students have to be able to get through the process in understanding the concept they learn. the student teachers should be able to develop the materials based on the students' needs and the activities are supposed to be suitable with the nature of the curriculum. It means that fun activities should be made and the materials should be authentic (Setyaningrum, 2014: 125).

Indonesia attempts to provide innovation through a new curriculum that is the Merdeka Curriculum. In 2022–2024, this curriculum has been used as an option in all schools based on readiness. According to the decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research,

and Technology (Mendikbudristek) of the Republic of Indonesia, number 56 of 2022, regarding Guidelines for Implementing the Curriculum in the Order of Recovery Learning, this curriculum was designed to overcome the learning loss and learning gap that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023: 298).

Ministry of Education and Culture, to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia, is making efforts to reform learning by designing a Merdeka Belajar curriculum which gives schools, teachers and students the freedom to be free to innovate, free to learn independently and creatively (Sherly, Dharma & Sihombing., 2020 as cited in Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023: 98). The concept of Merdeka Belajar curriculum is also the answer to problems in the learning practice process, these educators are facilitated in administration and given freedom in how to design and assess student learning, openness to all obstacles experienced by educators such as making lesson plan (Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023: 98)

METHODS

This study is a qualitative study that was conducted using a case study method. It was conducted in 5th grade 5 A and B classes, and in 6th grade 6 A and B classes of an Elementary school of SDN 2 Kekeri in West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province from July to December 2022 in learning English for young learners. The subjects of the study were a teacher and her students. The sources of the data are informants, events and documents.

There are two classes for each grade. The class consist of 20-23 students for each class. The English learning and teaching process is on Thursdays for students in grades 3A, 3B, 4A and 4B, and Fridays for students in grades 5A, 5B, 6A and 6B. The research was conducted in four classes: 5A, 5B, 6A and 6B in learning English for young learners. The writer chose the 5th-grade and 6th-grade students because they had been learning English for two years. The population of the class is 89 students and the writer took the all sample of the population.

There are three techniques in collecting the data: observation, interview, and document analysis. The observation was conducted eight times on the teaching and learning process which was recorded into field notes, videos, and photographs. The method applied is the provision of material and practice. The basic English material given to students includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening. To find the data in question research, the research

used two types of instruments that are checklist observation and score rubric. In the rubric sore, the assessment is determined from a score 0-100.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Because of the role of English as a global language and its potential for providing education and employment advantages to English speakers, English is being introduced at earlier and earlier ages around the world. Many children now start English as early as age 6 (or 1st grade). While there are many points of view about the best time to start learning another language, there are potential benefits to an early start, especially if optimal conditions occur within the language classroom. TEYL programs can provide more time to learn the language and can lead to better pronunciation and fluency, enhanced intercultural competence, and mental flexibility.

Teachers used television to show videos, PowerPoint slides, and digital games (quizzes and word walls) to motivate students to take an interest in learning English. Then video exhibitions can train brainstorming students. The application of the PowerPoint slide also makes it easier for students to learn the new vocabulary, such as the difference between the writing of a word and its pronunciation in English. The teacher also used a whiteboard to explain the activities done and the speakers to play the listening material in audio. In addition, teachers in the first class, two, and three used the flashcard learning medium to keep students interested in learning. Besides, the teacher also applies a game so that students do not feel that English is a difficult lesson but rather an interesting, fun, and easy lesson. Games also train students to get used to trying, answering, and increasing students' confidence in answering questions (Rahmania & Tyas, 2023:198).

This study found no set standard for how teachers should use the various media types. Based on the observation, the teacher used media such as Bluetooth speakers to support listening activities; picture series made using PPT and shared through students' mobile phones, WhatsApp application, and general conventional media such as paper and whiteboards. In the teacher's perception, media effectively involves students during learning activities.

Language is a skill that needs practice as often as possible. If learners only learn by listening, reading, and writing, it is not guaranteed that they can apply this skill effectively in

daily life. Teachers of English model the acts of speaking, reading and writing by speaking, reading, and writing themselves while the children try to do so.

The more fun the activities, the better they will remember the language materials presented. Therefore, in teaching English to young learners should be enjoyable, interesting, repetitive, and understandable. According to James Asher (1977) as cited in (Prayatni, 2019:109), here are some ideas that can be engaged in classroom activities such as:

- Switch to simple English in the class
- Speak clearly and concisely
- Use enjoyable language-learning games
- Have a sense of humor
- Use body language when necessary
- Get your real objects to the class
- Let them listen to music and watch cartoons in English
- Make a list of classroom language for each activity and prepare to use it during the day
- Use wall charts or posters to help children remember that you are doing English
- Encourage children to use English for routine classroom requests by praising any effort they make
- Make a list of everyday instructions

In this study, the teacher in 5th grade class and 6th grade class managed to get their students to communicate in English. They attempted to deliver the lesson and give instructions in English. Moreover, they did not only use English in the teaching process but also in interacting with the learners outside the teaching-learning process. For example, learner talked to learner during break time and asked their friends daily questions such as:

Wawa : "How's the weather today?"

Nino : "Look outside! It's sunny. Let's play outside."

Through this daily conversation, the learners become familiar with the English language. Even though some students still looked shy to give a response in English, at least they understand what the teacher said.

Musthafa (2010: 124) stated that teachers must use various teaching techniques for short periods of time to avoid boredom on the part of learners. At the same time, keep the

focus on the teaching items from one instructional move to another so that children's learning is ensured. Use activity-based activities and teaching techniques such as TPR, games, and projects. Learning how to use English is accomplished when children use the language to learn about the world; the focus is on the subject matter (e.g., games they like most; favorite activities during the rainy season, etc.)

The growing concern on TEYL is also a rich land for publishers and book writers. Therefore, it is now very easy to get teachers' resource books available everywhere. The books are also equipped with lesson plans which would be very useful for teachers in developing their activities. Here are samples from *My Next Word Grade 1 - Student's Book for Elementary School* (2021) dan *Teacher's Book – My Next Words Grade I* (2021):

Figure 1. Picture for the story

There are invaluable sources of worksheet that teachers can use to enrich their collection. Teachers can directly use the worksheets in the classroom or adapt the worksheet to suit the students' level or age.Therefore these worksheets may also be the sources of inspiration when teachers plan to design the worksheets. Here are samples from *My Next Word Grade 1 - Student's Book for Elementary School* (2021):

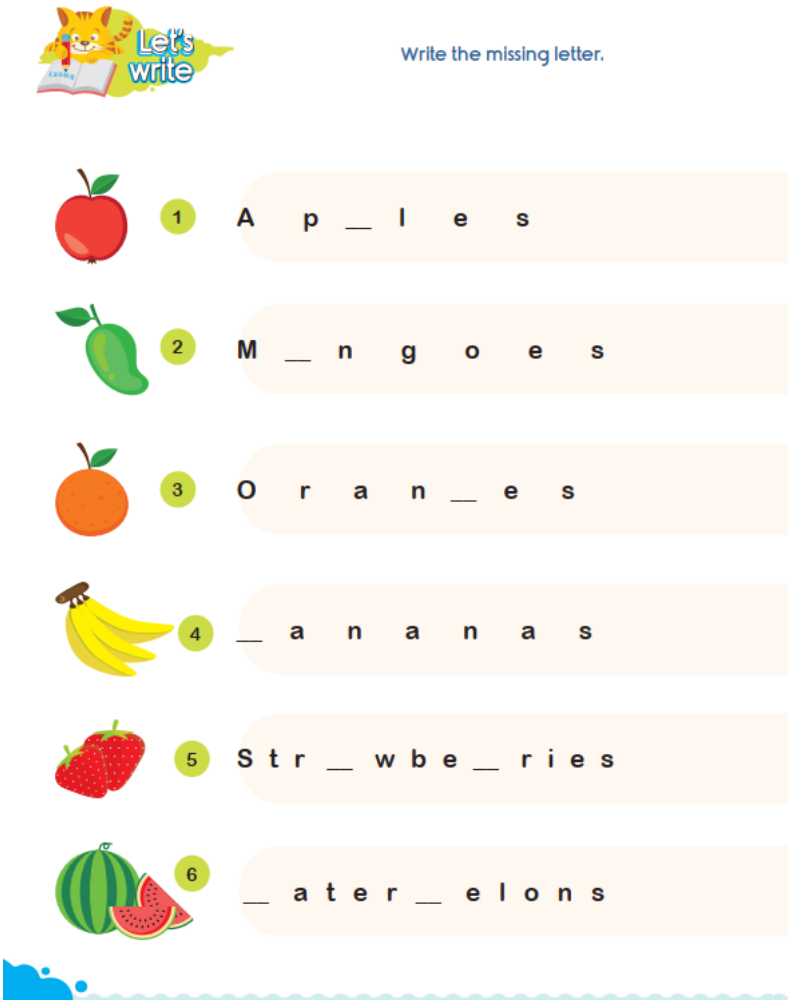
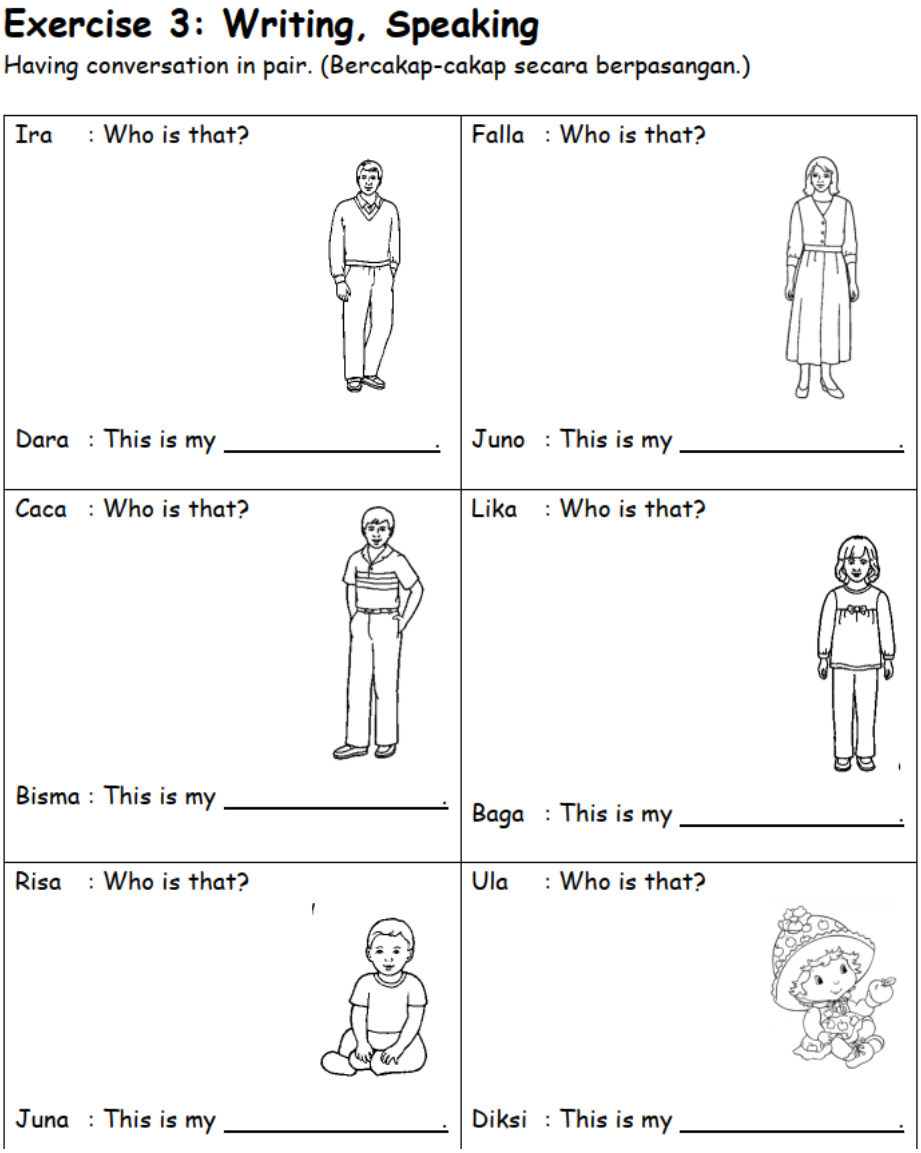


Figure 2. Student's worksheet

Spratt et.al (2005) define coursebook materials as all the materials in a coursebook package that we use in the classroom to present and practice language, and to develop learner's language skills. A coursebook package, they add, usually includes a student's book, a teacher's book, and audio and/or video recordings. Often there is also a workbook or an activity book included in the package. Some teachers have access to a range of coursebooks and supplementary materials to choose, some have to follow a prescribed textbook, and

some others do not use or do not have coursebooks and produce their own materials (Moon, 2003 as cited in Diyanti, 2016: 2).

In this study, English teacher also designed a coursebook materials that can use as guidelines in class activity. That textbooks have grammar summaries, word lists, list of verbs and expressions, exercises/tasks, texts, pictures, language examples complete for four English skills: speaking, reading, writing and listening skills. The course book entitle *English for Beginner* are made for general Elementary students and also specially designed to teach in SDN 2 Kekeri. Here is example of material from the book:



Exercise 3: Writing, Speaking

Having conversation in pair. (Bercakap-cakap secara berpasangan.)

Ira : Who is that? Dara : This is my _____.	Falla : Who is that? Juno : This is my _____.
Caca : Who is that? Bisma : This is my _____.	Lika : Who is that? Baga : This is my _____.
Risa : Who is that? Juna : This is my _____.	Ula : Who is that? Diksi : This is my _____.

Figure 3. Class Activity: Role-play

Children's ability to tell a story can be assessed with the use of illustrations cut away and laminated into a book. It is best to show the entire sequence of the pictures first, and ask for the story, because if children tell the story from page to page, they tend to treat each picture as a separate unit, losing the sense of the connected story in their storytelling. For example, the children could divide pictures of animals into two groups – those which hibernate and those do not. These tasks can integrate learning from other school lessons such as science. An oral presentation can be supported with pictures or objects (Prayatni, 2019:109).

Learning while playing then becomes a brilliant idea to teach young learners for everything children do should make them fun (Setyaningrum, 2014: 129). The feeling of boredom quickly has become one of the children's characteristics, especially in learning activities. Therefore, for the teacher who teaches young children exactly in English subjects, the teacher should have a diverse teaching strategy supported by appropriate teaching media tools. According to the survey result, while teaching English in the classroom, their teachers are always fun when delivering English materials. It means the teacher can provide varied teaching methods, which become enhance students' feel fun and happiness. Further, the teachers invite the students to play some games related to the subject and always use appropriate teaching to enhance English teaching-learning activities in the classroom. Moreover, Akmal et al. (2021: 50) claimed that very young learners possess unique characteristics. They are fun, enthusiastic, energetic, noisy, imaginative, always use their sense, and are quick to learn and to forget.

By applying this fun activity, they will learn English without feeling bored and nervous. The students are glad when they are invited to play games. They will be more confident to express themselves in the classroom. The followings here are the presentation of respondent data based on the score rubric:

Table 3. Respondent Data: 5th grade

No	Student Name	Score
1	AA	85
2	AF	85
3	AS	90
4	AZH	85
5	AN	90
6	AP	90
7	AU	85

8	ACS	85
9	FH	95
10	IR	90
11	KN	90
12	LML	100
13	LH	85
14	MP	95
15	MAH	85
16	MAN	85
17	MAI	85
18	MGI	85
19	MRY	85
20	NAL	95
21	RS	95
22	SAA	85
23	AK	85
24	AM	85
25	AN	90
26	BF	85
27	DIL	90
28	MN	90
29	ES	85
30	FR	85
31	MRS	85
32	MA	90
33	MR	85
34	MRM	85
35	NS	95
36	OAP	95
37	PBA	85
38	QN	85
39	RA	95
40	RP	85
41	RA	85
42	RA	85
43	S	95
	AVERAGE VALUE	**88.25**

The data above shows that results 5th grade elementary students of SDN 2 Kekeri which were assessed using a scoring rubric researcher can report that an average score of 88.25 who got a score 85 as many as 25 students, score 90 as many as 9 students and then score of 95 as many as 8 students and the last score 100 only 1 student.

Table 4. Respondent Data: 6th grade

No	Student Name	Score
1	A	85
2	AF	85
3	AA	90
4	BNK	90
5	FA	90
6	F	85
7	GR	85
8	HM	85
9	HH	90
10	IRS	85
11	IG	90
12	IRA	90
13	LMAF	90
14	MU	85
15	MF	85
16	MFN	90
17	NSH	85
18	NR	90
19	NP	90
20	RA	90
21	SH	90
22	ZZ	90
23	MRA	90
24	AHR	90
25	ALA	90
26	AR	90
27	ANF	95
28	AMR	90
29	BA	90
30	BA	90
31	BU	90
32	DA	85
33	FA	90
34	GPZ	90
35	KF	90
36	HS	90
37	IK	90
38	MA	90
39	MAG	85
40	MDU	85
41	MH	85
42	MUA	85
43	RW	85
44	RS	85
45	ZN	90
46	RQ	90
	AVERAGE VALUE	**88.36**

The data above shows that results 6th grade elementary students of SDN 2 Kekeri which were assessed using a scoring rubric researcher can report that an average score of 88.36 who got a score 85 as many as 16 students, score 90 as many as 29 students and the last score 95 only 1 student.

Table 5. Criteria vocabulary test score

Vocabulary Levels Test Score	Value	Criteria
>=80	A	Very well
>=65-79	B	Well
>=55-64	C	Fair
>=40-54	D	Poor

Adapted from: Firdausiah & Sari (2022)

After the researcher got the general score of the students, then they would refer to the following criteria: 1. If the general score was >=40-54, it could be categorized as poor. 2. If the average value is >=55-64, it can be categorized as fair. 3. If the general score is >=65-79, then it can be categorized as well. If the general score of >=80 can be categorized as very well.

The student's English value in Table 3 generally has a value of 88.25, then it can be categorized as very well. In fact, the average value in 5th grade is 88.25. The student's English value in Table 4 generally has a value of 88.36, then it can also be categorized as very well. In fact, the average value in 6th grade is 88.36. Thus, it can be concluded that their English is in very well category.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes with two findings. The four dominant materials in use respectively were slides, songs, photographs, and drawings. Since they were simple, accessible, and joyful authentic materials that mostly student teachers used to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking English through games, worksheets, and role-plays.

From the outcome that has been researched, it was found that teaching English very well and effectively to the students of SDN 2 Kekeri, and all these English lessons were well received by students. They also seemed very fun and enthusiastic in learning English as showed their average score of 88.25 in 5th grade and an average score of 88.36 in 6th grade.

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