IDENTIFICATION OF BEGINNING READING DIFFICULTIES IN CLASS II PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

Abstract. This research aims to determine: 1) the difficulties faced by students in beginning reading, 2) teachers' efforts to overcome students' beginning reading difficulties, and 3) factors that cause difficulties in beginning reading. This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The research subjects were 14 students in class II of SD Inpres Bumi Sagu. Data was collected using observation, interviews and document study techniques. The data analysis used is data condensation, data presentation and drawing conclusions/verification. The results of this research show that the difficulties experienced by students in beginning reading are that they do not know letters, are slow in reading, students cannot yet read, letters and words are often confused, and have difficulty spelling. The factors that cause students to experience difficulty in reading at the beginning are internal factors which include the child's psychology and external factors, namely the family environment and the learning environment at school. The teacher's efforts to overcome this problem are by applying the EGRA teaching method, spelling method, sound method (phonic), syllabic method (silabel) and the method of the word institution.

INTRODUCTION

Learning difficulties are a condition where students cannot complete learning achievements and/or learning objectives optimally, caused by factors such as sensory motor, social, emotional disorders, inappropriate learning, ineffective curriculum (AUSPELD, 2022). Learning difficulties are certain obstacles faced by students in achieving learning outcomes (Muhammedi et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Zidan (2023) states that learning difficulties are a systematic lack of mental ability which causes a lack of academic ability which is characterized by an inability to read, write and calculate. Learning difficulties in this context are students' lack of success in achieving academic achievements in accordance with the learning plans and achievements that have been designed by the teacher (Sukendra at al., 2024). Learning difficulties tend to occur more in two academic abilities, namely writing and reading in the language area, while in the mathematics area they are found in the aspect of number operations (Widana et al., 2023). In this research, the learning difficulties

referred to are more focused on difficulties learning to read, and are specifically aimed at beginning reading difficulties.

Reading is one of the four language skills, namely: reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. According to Dalman (2017) reading is an activity or cognitive process that attempts to find various information contained in writing. This means that reading is a thinking process to understand the content of the text being read. Reading difficulties can be interpreted as a student's lack of ability to read and interpret what is being read. In this context, students cannot understand the information contained in the text they are reading and this results in a lack of academic ability. Reading also has stages that need to be carried out in order to fully master or understand the text being read, the process starts from a lower stage called initial reading (Purnadewi & Widana, 2023).

Reading is the initial activity carried out when students are introduced to learning concepts. Kuntarto in Yani (2019) "*preliminary reading is an activity for a person (child) to start an activity with the introduction of letters through symbols. Specifically in the cognitive process, initial reading is done by using symbols and sounds in simple sentences.*" Beginning reading generally starts from the early grades of elementary school and kindergarten, no later than when the child is in the second grade of elementary school, the child begins to learn vocabulary and then learns to read and write that vocabulary." In line with this, Dalman (2017) states that "*preliminary reading is the initial stage for someone to be able to read. Beginning reading is considered to be lower in the rankings. Beginning reading is an initial skill that must be mastered and learned by readers.*" Beginning reading is the initial stage before someone can read. Significantly, beginning reading is where someone can learn to read by learning to recognize letters, spelling from syllables to words (Alpian, 2020). Thus, initial reading is an activity carried out by students at the beginning of their activities as lower grade students to understand the meaning of symbols in the form of letters arranged in text.

On the other hand, beginning reading is an academic ability for students in the lower grades of elementary school. Beginning reading is a learning experience that emphasizes the introduction of letter language symbols, word recognition according to good and correct language rules, the ability to understand and pronounce writing according to correct intonation (Arnisyah et al., 2022). As a learning experience, initial reading aims to enable students to recognize letters, syllables, words, sentences and context (Kusno et al., 2020). Meanwhile, a slightly different view states that early reading is more focused on literacy, meaning students can change written symbols and pronounce them into sounds that have meaning (Anggraeni et al., 2019). Based on the description above, beginning reading is a learning experience in the lower grades of elementary school which is related to how students recognize letter symbols and sounds, arrange letters into syllables and arrange syllables into words, arrange words into sentences, interpret a series of words (sentences) and sound symbols (letters, syllables, words and sentences correctly.

Referring to the description of initial reading as mentioned above, the indicators for initial reading are 1) knowing letters; 2) spelling syllables; 3) spelling words; 4) spell sentences; 5) interpret sentences; and 6) sound out letters, syllables, words and sentences. This research limits the study and identification of initial reading difficulties to five indicators, namely recognizing letters, spelling syllables, spelling words, spelling sentences and sounding out letters, syllables, words and sentences. This was done based on the results of pre-research observations and interviews which revealed that in general students' initial reading

difficulties, the percentage of students who could not read was still quite high. So identification focuses on recognizing letters, spelling and sounding letters, syllables, words and sentences. Interpreting the meaning of the sentence or text that is read can be done if the student's initial reading ability has reached the good and very good category. Reading and writing difficulties experienced by students will certainly affect student achievement. Students who have reading difficulties are usually characterized by symptoms; 1) slow in doing assignments, 2) illegible/not neat writing, 3) lack of interest and motivation in learning, 4) achievement achieved is low or below average (Muammar, 2023).

Analysis of reading difficulties is very important for teachers to monitor and analyze the initial reading abilities of lower grade students in elementary schools. However, reading ability is a basic ability that is the main capital for students to be able to understand other knowledge. Students who have difficulty in reading find it difficult to achieve learning achievement. This is supported by research results which reveal that there is a significant influence between reading ability and learning achievement (Karyati, 2021; Yolanda & Quro, 2022). Therefore, analysis of reading difficulties has a very important role in the development of student learning at higher grade levels. Beginning reading analysis is very important, as the first step in conducting studies to find the right solution for students who have difficulty in beginning reading. Apart from that, specifically, the problem of reading difficulties is the teacher's responsibility and definitely requires attention from the school and the students' parents. Valid data about the types, causes and levels of initial reading difficulties is urgently needed so that teachers, schools and parents of students can synergize and collaborate to find and implement appropriate solutions for students who experience initial reading difficulties.

METHOD
This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological design which aims to produce valid and comprehensive information and data about the initial reading difficulties experienced by second grade elementary school students. The phenomenological design is relevant to the research focus which aims to see and hear more closely and in detail about students' beginning reading difficulties, identify the causes and reflect on the solutions currently used. an individual's explanation and understanding of his or her experiences. This research was carried out at the Inpres Bumi Sagu Elementary School with class II students as research subjects. The unit of analysis was 14 students in class II who had initial reading difficulties. In this case the researcher used a purposive sampling technique to determine the unit of analysis.

The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews and document study. The research instrument is an observation sheet used to collect data about the level and type of initial reading difficulties experienced by students. The interview guide is intended as a data collection tool regarding the factors that cause initial reading difficulties from the teacher's perspective and at the same time reveal solutions that have been implemented to overcome student difficulties. Meanwhile, to collect document study data, a data collection tool is used in the form of a list of document analysis notes. This instrument is used to record the results of analysis of documents used by teachers in initial reading learning. The documents analyzed are the curriculum, learning tools, teacher notes about students' reading progress and other relevant documents. Data analysis uses an interactive qualitative data analysis model which consists of three stages of analysis, namely data condensation, data

presentation and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles et al., 2014). Miles et al's interactive model can be described as follows;
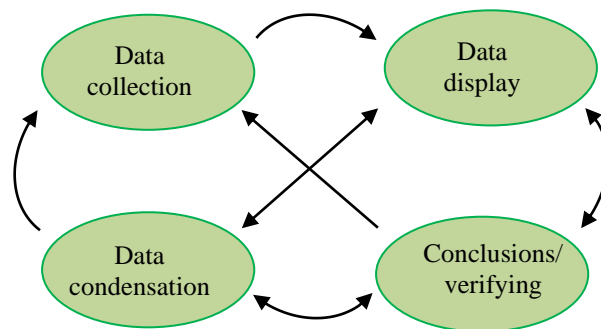
Image 1. Interactive Data Analysis Model (Miles et al., 2014)

Any incoming data will be analyzed interactively and has the potential for data collection multiple times if the data collected and analyzed does not yet show an answer to the problem formulation/research question. Data will always complement each other at each stage of analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Research result
In this scientific research, researchers revealed significant findings regarding students' difficulties in beginning reading in class II of SD Inpres Bumi Sago. This research makes an important contribution to both schools and the public regarding the difficulties experienced by students in beginning reading which have a major influence on the learning process and in achieving learning goals. Students who experience difficulty reading at the beginning will find it difficult to adapt in the learning process, of course this is the main dilemma for teachers which hinders the achievement of effective learning and this difficulty certainly affects both student interest and learning outcomes. Based on the results of observations made by researchers in class II of SD Inpres Bumi Sagu, there were 14 students who had difficulty reading at the beginning. This was also confirmed by the results of interviews with class teachers and students who experienced these problems. Research findings related to the type and level of students' initial reading difficulties can be described as follows.

Early Reading Difficulty
First; The initial reading difficulties experienced by second grade students at SD Inpres Bumi Sago are related to letter recognition. There was one student who did not know letters at all. SS students don't know letters at all, so that when learning takes place the students in question only carry out activities that are not related to the learning activities planned by the teacher. The student just draws, sometimes disturbing other friends who are studying. Interviews with teachers revealed that students who did not know the letters always talked to their friends when studying and never paid attention to the information and knowledge conveyed by the teacher. Observations during learning, apart from showing difficulty in reading, revealed that students sitting in the SS student boat were unable to participate in learning activities properly because they were distracted by the activities carried out by SS.

Second; There are students who don't know the letters completely. This means that students who fall into this category only know a few letters, some know a few letters, some know most of the letters and some only know vowels. There are four students who fall into this category. MR who only knows the letters a, d, s, p, o, i. There are also IA students who know quite a lot of letters, namely a, e, i, o, u, w, r, t, y, s, g, h, j, k, x, c. while RS recognizes the first letters of the alphabet, namely a, b, c, d, e, f, g. The interesting thing in this category is that there is one student who is semi-autistic (SR) but already knows the vowels a, i, o. It's quite interesting when compared to SS, who is a regular student but doesn't know any letters at all.

Third; Difficulty reading the beginning of combining consonant letters. This difficulty was experienced by six students, namely MS, MR, NA, HH, IA and RS. Observation results revealed that there were 6 students who experienced difficulty in reading because of the combination of consonant letters in the words they read. The consonant combinations in question are like k in the final word, ng in the word teach, ny in the word real, sy in the word condition, mb in the word competition and so on. When they found words that had a combination of consonants, these six students read in a low voice, it was even indicated that the students skipped words that had a combination of consonants in them.

Fourth; letters are often mixed up. The research also found that among students who already knew all 26 letters, there were six students who were often confused in differentiating between letters that had similar symbols/shapes and sounds. The letters that are often confused when reading are f, v, and p; between p and q; between b and d. In general, students with this difficulty, based on observation results, do not really interfere with personal learning activities, because students may only have difficulty distinguishing between letters in one word. However, these six students can already read other words, although not very fluently. Students who fall into this category are ZS, BM, F, AS, AK, MA.

Fifth; students are very slow in spelling one word. There are three students who, even though they are already students, are still struggling in reading, namely MA, NA and ZA. Based on the location of these difficulties, it shows the characteristics of children who have difficulty learning to read, especially in beginning reading. The description of this difficulty lies in the student's speed in reading each word. In other words, the spelling process still tends to be slow compared to his fellow class II students who are already fluent in beginning reading. Students who have difficulty reading begin with spelling difficulties, even though they already know all the letters but still have trouble spelling. Nasih calls out the letters one by one and combines them into syllables and then the syllables combine into words.

Research findings for reading difficulties based on the data description above, show that there are three students who have more than one type of difficulty. For example MR, RS, IA who have difficulty in recognizing letters (don't know the letters completely and have difficulty reading words that contain consonant combinations), NA who have difficulty combining consonants and spelling words, and MA whose letters are often mixed up and also have difficulty spelling.

Factors Causing Early Reading Difficulties

First: Internal factors. Based on the results of observations and interviews, researchers found that students who experienced difficulty reading at the beginning had personal anxiety and were classified into psychological factors which included social, emotional and adjustment maturity. The observation results showed that 1 student, namely SR, had special features or better known as an autistic child who had difficulty controlling his emotions, so he needed special treatment or guidance. Some students such as SS, BM, ZS and HH sometimes feel less confident because their friends usually bully them to the point where they are embarrassed to go to school. This finding was reinforced by the results of interviews with class teachers, who stated that generally students who had difficulty reading at the beginning were always restless in class, less calm and had several social and emotional problems. The results of observations in class mean that students who have difficulty reading make class noise. There were those who disturbed their friends, some even walked around the class and came in and out of the class, some of the students, namely RS, IA, BM, F, SS, SR and MR. This was confirmed by the statement of the teacher and several of his friends who stated that these students often made class noise.

Second: Based on the results of interviews with both teachers and students, researchers found that these students were influenced by external factors which included environmental factors, namely family, economics and the student's learning environment. Economic problems are the background for the ridicule of friends in this case bullying and the lack of support from parents for their children who have difficulty reading is one of the factors hampering students' reading process which parents/families should motivate and encourage students to learn. Students who are economically weak and whose parents are busy working have unstable and poorly controlled study time. Learning conditions at home implicitly have an impact on learning at school. Thus, economic factors and busy parents as well as bullying are the causes of initial reading difficulties in class II students, and are causal factors that originate from outside the student (external factors).

Efforts to Overcome Beginning Reading Difficulties

Efforts made by teachers to overcome students who have difficulty in beginning reading are based on the results of interviews about how to overcome students' difficulties in reading in class II SD Inpres Bumi Sagu, class teachers apply individual teaching methods to students who have difficulty reading beginning, namely by applying the EGRA method by the class IIA homeroom teacher and the alphabet method, sound method, word method and syllable method by the class IIB homeroom teacher.
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Discussion

Reading difficulties in lower grade elementary school students are often found. Difficulty recognizing letters, difficulty distinguishing letters, letters are often mixed up, difficulty reading consonants and leading to difficulty spelling are recurring problems for teachers in lower grades. Reading and writing are two academic skills in the lower classes which are always the reason for learning difficulties in this group (Husein, 2020; Sudarmika, 2021). Reading difficulties are basically part of the learning difficulties that are often found in students in the early grades of elementary school (Sutrisna et al., 2024). Reading difficulties, especially beginning reading difficulties, are generally the first problems faced by students in the lower grades of elementary school. There are students who already know the letters completely and can even read, although they cannot be said to be fluent. However, various difficulties faced by students in lower grades often trigger students' slow learning, including

the emergence of initial reading difficulties (Setyaningsih et al., 2020; Widiastuti, 2019). Students who have difficulty reading are certainly worrying, especially if they are already in class II but have not yet mastered letters. In fact, elementary school students since grade I have to know letters, because the introduction to letters is given when students are still at the early childhood education level. Reading is the basic foundation that students must master, because without the ability to read students will experience difficulty learning in other areas of knowledge. When initial reading skills have been mastered well, these skills can become the basic capital for mastering other subjects.

Students' inability to recognize all letters, recognize some, difficulty reading consonant letters, difficulty spelling and letters are often mixed up as research findings are in accordance with research conducted by Subini as characteristics of initial reading difficulties (Istiqomah et al., 2023; Wardani et al., 2020). Recognizing the characteristics of students who have difficulty in beginning reading is an important effort and action to recognize as early as possible students who have difficulty in beginning reading. The sooner it is identified, the sooner teachers, schools and parents can create learning programs to overcome students' difficulties in beginning reading. It must be remembered that prolonged early reading difficulties can have long-term impacts on students' academic abilities.

Beginning reading is one aspect of skills that must be mastered by students. Beginning reading difficulties as per the research results can be categorized into two, namely internal factors and external factors. If these factors are explained further, there are environmental factors, teachers' teaching methods and methods in accordance with research conducted by previous researchers (Masitoh et al., 2023). External factors that influence students' difficulties in beginning reading can be caused by new friends, new teachers and a new school environment (Meo et al., 2021). Bullying has now occurred even since students were still in lower grades. Therefore, bullying as a finding in this research is supported by previous research (Soleha et al., 2022) which previously stated that a sense of superiority in some students due to the various advantages they possess encourages them to bully students who in their perception do not have the same standards. This is one of the external factors that makes students experience difficulties in learning to read at first. Students need to adapt to new friends, teachers, and the school environment so that they feel comfortable and safe in learning.

On the other hand, internal factors are factors that originate from within a person or the individual himself. These factors usually take the form of attitudes and traits inherent in a person. Research findings show that students who tend to be quiet and have difficulty interacting with other friend experience difficulty in beginning reading. Moreover, in the class there is one student who has his own special characteristics (autism) and this needs to be handled specifically by the teacher. Autistic students need to receive intensive attention with an individual approach and guidance so that they get through the early elementary school years without much difficulty. Internal factors as found in research need attention from teachers, schools and parents. This description is supported by previous research on the difficulties faced by students in the lower grades of elementary school (Kurniawati & Nurjaman, 2023). Internal factors require a special approach and require quite a long time to resolve. Actions must be taken slowly so that students can fix internal problems within themselves. Beginning reading difficulties in students can be triggered by conditions within

the student himself or by other things outside the student, be it certain individuals, the environment or social and economic background (Hasanah & Lena, 2021).

In an effort to overcome students' difficulties in beginning reading, as a teacher of course you have different methods to solve these problems. The choice of method is not only in accordance with the wishes of the teacher in using it, but must be conditioned on the situation of the student who is experiencing the problem. To overcome initial reading difficulties in class II students, the class teacher at SD Inpres Bumi Sagu applies the EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) method. This method was developed by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) PRIORITAS (Prioritizing Reform, Information and Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia's Teachers, Administration and Students) in collaboration with the Indonesian government to improve the quality of access to basic education in Indonesia. One of the focuses of the USAID PRIORITAS program is improving the reading skills of early grade students. To help teachers and schools improve the reading ability of early grade students, USAID PRIORITAS assesses the reading ability of early grade students using an instrument called EGRA. The EGRA method can diagnose difficulties experienced by children in early grades in reading. The EGRA test is carried out individually and takes approximately 15 minutes for each child. The EGRA method is believed to be able to improve initial reading abilities in lower grade elementary school students, this has been confirmed by research conducted by previous researchers. The accuracy and capability of the EGRA method in identifying students' reading difficulties while providing options for resolving the difficulties students face in beginning reading (Hasanah & Lena, 2021; Sepyantari et al., 2021).

Beginning reading methods commonly used by teachers using books, sheets of paper containing letters to teach students who have difficulty reading include the spelling/letter method; in this method where students say letter sounds or spell letter by letter (Jamaris, 2015). Next is Sound Method (phonics); This method is actually a reading method where "*teachers teach children how the letters sound and mix the sounds together to form words*" (Puspitasari et al., 2018). Next, the method used is the Syllable method; This method is known as the syllable method. The process of this learning method begins with the introduction of syllables such as: ba, bi, bu, be, bo and so on. These syllables are arranged into meaningful words for example: ba-tu, ba-ta (Gading et al., 2019), and Kata Method; This method is known as the institutional word method, which is one of the basic reading techniques and uses the word decomposition method in practice (Nurani & Mahendra, 2019). In addition to implementing the EGRA method, teachers, schools and parents need to anticipate the factors that cause students' initial reading difficulties. By taking early action on the factors that cause student difficulties, triggers will be reduced so that students' initial reading difficulties can be minimized.

CONCLUSION
Based on the results of research that has been carried out at SD Inpres Bumi Sagu, it can be concluded that the initial reading difficulties experienced by students are as follows: not being able to recognize letters well, some letters are often confused, having difficulty reading consonant letters, students not being able to spell, students not yet able to read syllables and words. The factors that cause initial reading difficulties experienced by class II students at SD Inpres Bumi Sago are the child's psychology as an internal factor, the family environment and the learning environment at school as an external factor. Students who experience difficulty need concentration to learn to understand the basics of reading or in

other words, beginning reading. Meanwhile, the efforts that teachers have made to overcome students' difficulties in beginning reading in class II of SD Inpres Bumi Sago are using the EGRA method to diagnose beginning reading difficulties as well as an approach to learning beginning reading. The EGRA method is not the only method that can be used to overcome students' difficulties in beginning reading. What is more important is to eliminate the causes of initial reading difficulties in students, especially external causes. Parental support and the participation of the school support children's enthusiasm for learning and pleasant classroom conditions can increase students' motivation and interest in learning.

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