

## Analysis of early reading difficulties in second grade students at SD N Karangtengah I Giricahyo, Purwosari, Gunungkidul

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to describe the early reading difficulties experienced by second-grade students at SD N Karangtengah I Giricahyo, Purwosari, Gunungkidul, identify the contributing factors, and formulate solutions to address them. The research employed a qualitative descriptive method using observation, reading tests, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which included data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicated that early reading difficulties were characterized by slow letter recognition, errors in distinguishing similar letters, and weak phoneme-letter association skills, which affected reading fluency and text comprehension. The Egra test revealed that 37.50% of students were in the low category, while only 12.50% were in the very good category. The contributing factors included low motivation and interest in reading, lack of parental support, and technical barriers such as spelling difficulties and letter differentiation. Additionally, ineffective teaching methods worsened the situation. The proposed solutions included regular reading activities, the implementation of the phonics method to enhance phonemic skills, additional tutoring, and active parental involvement in supporting children's literacy. Schools were also encouraged to provide literacy facilities such as reading corners and integrate literacy activities before lessons. The synergy between teachers, parents, and schools was key to improving students' early reading abilities.

**Keywords:** early reading difficulties; second-grade elementary students; phonics method; reading motivation; parental involvement

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### INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy plays an essential role in the early stages of formal education, particularly at the elementary school level. This skill not only serves as a tool for understanding cross-disciplinary learning content but also serves as a key foundation for building an individual's capacity to engage in lifelong learning. Reading is not just a skill, but also a gateway to acquiring information and knowledge. A high literacy rate not only indicates a nation's progress but also supports the intellectual development and critical thinking of individuals (Ginting,

2021: 78). Therefore, improving reading skills is a primary focus in the global education system, including in Indonesia, with the goal of ensuring that every student has sufficient reading skills to understand various disciplines (Hewi & Shaleh, 2020: 56).

Various studies indicate that many students face challenges in developing reading skills in the early stages of learning. Based on the results of these studies, these obstacles are generally classified into two main groups of causes: intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors (Saliza, 2021: 55). Intrinsic factors relate to an individual's internal conditions, such as low intellectual capacity or limited support from the family environment, which should contribute to developing reading habits from an early age. These limitations often result in students' literacy skills lagging behind their peers. On the other hand, extrinsic factors encompass aspects of the student's external environment, such as social influences from interactions with peers (Saputri, 2019: 33). Within this framework, close collaboration between educators and parents is a strategic component in helping students overcome literacy barriers, especially in second grade. Parents play a vital role as primary facilitators in strengthening a culture of literacy at home (Aryani & Fauziah, 2020: 125). Teachers can contribute by providing guidance on appropriate mentoring techniques and reporting on students' progress or any problems they encounter during the reading and writing process.

This research took place at Karangtengah I Public Elementary School, located in the Giricahyo area, Purwosari District, Gunungkidul Regency. The school was selected based on the lack of previous studies specifically examining a similar topic in the same context. The research focused on second-grade elementary school students, who are developmentally in a crucial transition phase in basic literacy skills. At this stage, children begin to shift from reading as a phonetic process to understanding meaning conceptually. Based on Piaget's cognitive development theory framework, as proposed by Handika and colleagues (2022: 126), second-grade students are in the concrete operational stage, a stage where understanding information is more effective when linked to concrete, real-life experiences. Therefore, reading teaching strategies at this stage ideally integrate learning materials with the students' environment, through the use of media such as picture books and other visual aids. Furthermore, active teacher involvement and parental involvement are crucial elements that can strengthen student support in overcoming various obstacles during the reading development process.

Based on observations of second-grade students at Karangtengah I Elementary School in May 2024, researchers identified several challenges in their early reading skills. Some students had difficulty correctly pronouncing letters, and some even misrecognized letters. Furthermore, many students still struggle with spelling, tend to guess incorrect spellings, and have difficulty distinguishing between similar letters. Observations also revealed that some students struggled to string letters together to form meaningful words. Of the eight students in the class, five exhibited signs of reading difficulties.

Based on the observations, it was found that the limited availability of learning media to support reading instruction was a barrier to the learning process, even though the school provided facilities such as a Reading Corner. Furthermore, the lack of parental involvement in assisting children in developing reading skills at home exacerbated the situation. Parents play a vital role in supporting the reading learning process because they can provide direct guidance outside the school environment.

The family's socioeconomic status also influences students' accessibility to reading resources that support literacy development. Children from families with low socioeconomic status are more likely to Students generally face obstacles in obtaining appropriate and relevant reading materials to improve their reading skills. If barriers to early reading are not

addressed promptly, they have the potential to have long-term impacts on students' academic success, particularly in the learning process at subsequent levels of education. Reading difficulties are generally understood as a condition in which individuals experience obstacles in achieving learning objectives, particularly in the realm of basic literacy. Therefore, educators have a pedagogical responsibility to identify the various causal and inhibiting factors that influence students' reading and writing abilities (Maryani, 2019: 111). In the early stages of elementary education, reading difficulties can be characterized by a number of indicators, such as the inability to recognize letters, read syllables or words, lack of skills in reading complete sentences, and poor comprehension of the content of oral reading.

This study specifically aims to uncover the profile of early reading difficulties experienced by second-grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School, Purwosari District, Gunungkidul Regency. In addition, this study also examines the factors underlying these problems and formulates alternative solutions that can be implemented to help students overcome literacy barriers at an early stage.

## METHODS

This research was designed using a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The study was conducted at Karangtengah I Public Elementary School, located in Giricahyo, Purwosari District, Gunungkidul Regency, starting in May 2024. Data collection was carried out by combining various techniques, namely observation of teaching and learning activities, tests to measure students' beginning reading skills, in-depth interviews with second-grade teachers and students concerned, and the collection of relevant documentation. The research instruments used included observation forms, specially designed test tools, interview guidelines, and other supporting documents to enrich the data. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, this study applied comprehensive triangulation, which included triangulation of data sources, data collection techniques, and data collection time. The data analysis process refers to the interactive model introduced by Miles and Huberman, with stages including data collection, data simplification (reduction), presentation of results, and systematic drawing of conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

In this study, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) test was used as an instrument to identify early reading difficulties in second-grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School. The test took place on May 27, 2024, involving eight students. The EGRA assessment covers five main aspects: letter recognition, syllable reading ability, word reading ability, sentence fluency, and listening skills related to oral comprehension. The results of this test will be presented comprehensively, both overall and in detail based on each aspect measured, as described below.

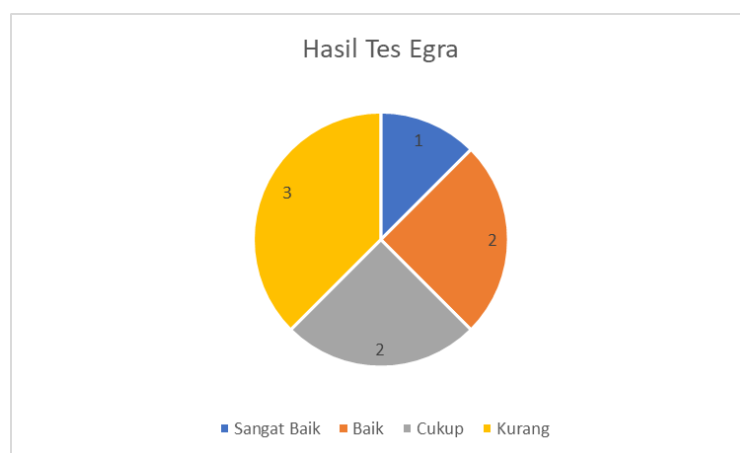
Based on the EGRA test results data presented in the table (Table 1) and graph (Figure 1), it can be seen that of the eight second-grade students at SD Negeri Karangtengah I Giricahyo, one student (12.5%), namely student number 7, managed to achieve the highest score of 5 with a value weight of 100, so it is included in the very good category. Two students (25%), namely students number 2 and 6 obtained a score of 4 with a value weight of 80, which is included in the good category. Then, two other students (25%), namely numbers 3 and 4 obtained a score of 3 with a value weight of 60, so it is included in the sufficient category.

Meanwhile, three students (37.5%), namely numbers 1, 5, and 8 obtained a score of 2 with a value weight of 40, which is included in the poor category. Thus, the majority of students (37.5%) are in the poor category. This data visualization can be seen in the following pie chart.

**Table 1.** Egra Test Results for Students Overall

No	Overall Egra Test Results					Total Score	Value	KTG
	Getting to Know Letters	Reading Syllables	Reading Words	Reading Fluency	Listening (Listening Comprehension)			
1	0	0	1	1	0	2	40.00	Not enough
2	1	1	1	0	1	4	80.00	Good
3	0	0	1	1	1	3	60.00	Enough
4	1	1	0	1	0	3	60.00	Enough
5	0	1	0	0	1	2	40.00	Not enough
6	1	0	1	1	1	4	80.00	Good
7	1	1	1	1	1	5	100.00	Very good
8	1	1	0	0	0	2	40.00	Not enough

Source: Research Findings, 2024



**Figure 1.** Overall Egra Test Results for Students

## Discussion

### Early Reading Difficulties of Second Grade Students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School

The research results show that the initial reading difficulties experienced by second-grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Public Elementary School negatively impact their literacy skills. This is reflected in the slow pace of letter recognition and the students' difficulty associating letters with their corresponding sounds. Many students struggle to distinguish similar letters, such as "b" and "d," which hinders reading fluency and text comprehension. This impacts broader literacy skills, reduces reading interest, and risks hindering academic development. Causes include a lack of mastery of basic literacy skills, minimal family support,

and unengaging teaching methods. The impact on students includes low self-confidence and motivation to learn, which worsens their reading skills. This is supported by the results of the reading ability test for second-grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Public Elementary School, which found that the majority of students were in the "poor" category.

Early reading difficulties experienced by second-grade students generally indicate an inability to recognize words fluently, which in turn hinders reading fluency and text comprehension. Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level, especially in the lower grades, is designed to develop four aspects of language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the early reading phase, students are introduced to various activities, including letter recognition and pronunciation, syllable spelling, word reading, and the construction and reading of simple sentences.

Although the curriculum expects second-grade students to have achieved reading fluency, many remain in the early reading phase. This is due to a shift in learning focus toward strengthening more advanced aspects, such as accurate intonation in reading, understanding the use of punctuation (periods, commas, capital letters), and recognizing sentence structure in reading texts. Therefore, although technical reading skills have been established, strengthening deeper reading skills remains a top priority.

At this stage, reading instruction in second grade places greater emphasis on mastering intonation, pronunciation, expression, and the correct use of punctuation. Punctuation serves not only to mark sentence structure but also to regulate intonation and pauses, facilitating comprehension. For example, a period marks the end of a sentence, while a comma separates elements within a sentence, such as lists or numbers. Mastering these aspects not only supports reading fluency but also improves students' comprehension of the text they read.

In addition to the use of punctuation, training in intonation and expression is also an important focus. Correct intonation makes reading more lively and helps students better grasp meaning. Therefore, even though students have acquired reading skills, they still need to strengthen advanced skills to read expressively and understand the content in depth.

Dalman (2020: 66) states that beginning reading is a basic skill that must be mastered as a foundation for advanced reading skills. This stage is mechanical, yet crucial in building students' initial knowledge for effective Indonesian reading. Furthermore, early reading instruction also contributes to improving students' oral language skills, which is an integral part of overall language development.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that although second-grade students are able to read, they are still in the early reading stage, which focuses on strengthening the technical aspects of reading and understanding language rules. Various obstacles that arise can be caused by both internal and external factors. Therefore, the attention and active role of teachers and parents are needed to accompany and support the process of developing children's reading skills, so that difficulties can be minimized and their reading skills develop optimally.

#### Factors Causing Early Reading Difficulties in Second Grade Students of Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School, Purwosari, Gunungkidul

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the factors contributing to the early reading difficulties of second-grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School, Purwosari, Gunungkidul, are low motivation and interest in reading, as well as a lack of parental support. Some students exhibited laziness and lack of engagement in learning. Technical difficulties, such as spelling and letter differentiation, also presented obstacles. Regular reading practice two to three times a week resulted in slight improvements, with some students becoming fluent readers and more accurate in letter differentiation. Parental support

significantly influences reading ability, with children who receive more parental attention tending to perform better. At school, appropriate facilities and teacher approaches also support the development of students' reading skills. Despite differences in parental support, students still managed to adapt socially. A consistent approach to reading practice at school can help reduce students' reading difficulties, provided they receive support from parents and teachers.

The main obstacles to early reading mastery can be categorized into two groups: intrinsic and extrinsic factors. This aligns with Udhiyanasari's (2019: 55) view that reading difficulties in children are generally caused by these two factors. Intrinsic factors stem from students' internal conditions, such as low memory capacity and the ability to effectively grasp lessons, which impact students' difficulty in receiving and responding to learning materials presented by teachers. This opinion is further supported by Dwi L, Ibrahim, Amin, and Kasiyun (2021: 11), who explain that internal factors inhibiting early reading include a lack of enthusiasm for learning, variations in memory capacity between individuals, differences in the speed of understanding material, and minimal learning motivation from within the students themselves.

On the other hand, extrinsic factors relate to the student's environment, particularly the family and school. The role of parents within the family environment is crucial, but often the guidance and attention provided is suboptimal due to their busy schedules. This situation causes children to spend more time playing than learning to read. Therefore, effective time management by parents to accompany and guide their children in learning early reading is crucial. The presence of parents during the learning process is crucial, as their absence can lead to delays in the development of children's reading skills. Furthermore, a lack of motivational support from parents also contributes to a decrease in children's motivation to learn and master reading skills. School environmental factors include supporting facilities such as available resources and infrastructure. Although a library exists at the school, its use for reading activities is not yet routine. Furthermore, the second grade classroom lacks a reading corner that could serve as a dedicated space to support student literacy activities. This aligns with Yani et al.'s (2021: 31) finding that external factors inhibiting early reading development are factors originating from the family and school environments. Consistent with this opinion, external factors inhibiting students' early reading skills can originate from both the family and school environments. The family environment plays a crucial role in the development of children's reading skills, as the family is the first place where children receive support and stimulation in the learning process. Factors such as a lack of parental attention or encouragement for reading, a lack of learning resources at home, and a lack of interactions that support language skills can hinder children from developing early reading skills.

Furthermore, factors originating from the school environment also contribute. A lack of adequate facilities, such as a variety of reading materials, and an inappropriate approach to teaching reading can exacerbate students' reading difficulties. The teacher's role is crucial in creating an approach that is appropriate to students' learning needs and in providing consistent and effective guidance. If students don't receive the proper support from their school environment, their reading difficulties will become increasingly difficult to overcome.

Therefore, external factors from the family and school significantly influence students' early reading abilities. Optimizing these two factors can improve students' reading development and reduce existing barriers.

**Solutions to Overcome Factors Causing Beginning Reading Difficulties in Grade II Students of SD N Karangtengah I Giricahyo, Purwosari, Gunungkidul**

The study found that efforts to address early reading difficulties in second-grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School included regular reading activities during and outside of class, the use of the Spelling Method for phonemic skills, additional tutoring, and encouraging student participation in class. Parents were involved through meetings and WhatsApp groups, while literacy activities such as pre-class reading and classroom reading corners supported student development. Comprehensive support from teachers, the school, and parents, coupled with regular practice and a supportive environment, played a crucial role in improving students' early reading skills.

Students' success in early reading skills is the primary foundation that determines their development into advanced reading skills. Early reading is not just about recognizing letters and words, but also the process of developing basic skills that enable students to understand written symbols as a means of communication. Early reading instruction is designed to enable children to recognize and associate written symbols with their corresponding sounds, and to understand them in the broader context of language.

However, the journey to this success is often fraught with challenges. Common errors include an inability to visually recognize letters, errors in reading words, and inaccurate pronunciation of sentences. These errors not only affect students' reading fluency but also their ability to pronounce sound symbols correctly. Errors in these early stages can have a systemic impact, causing obstacles in comprehending more complex reading at later levels.

The inability to recognize letters is often caused by a lack of visual and phonemic practice. Children who are not accustomed to seeing and sounding letters tend to experience confusion in associating sounds with written symbols. Furthermore, difficulties in reading words can be triggered by an inability to break words down into simpler syllables. For example, words with complex letter combinations often pose a challenge for students to pronounce correctly.

In the early reading stage, students learn to recognize letters, spell letters into syllables, and then form words into complete sentences. Aspects of early reading skills in lower grades include recognizing letter shapes and linguistic aspects such as phonemes, graphemes, words, phrases, clause patterns, sentences, and so on. Early reading instruction emphasizes technical aspects, namely accuracy in pronunciation, correct use of pronunciation and intonation, reading fluency, and clarity of voice when reading. Thus, it can be concluded that the process of learning to read early includes letter recognition, spelling letters into syllables, words, and sentences, accompanied by a focus on accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, intonation, and clarity of sound when reading.

Addressing these challenges requires a structured approach and consistent support from the school and family environment. Teaching methods that strengthen phonemic skills, such as reading exercises using the Spelling Method, can help students better recognize the relationship between written symbols and sounds. Furthermore, involving parents in reading activities at home can provide additional stimulation that accelerates student progress. With effective instruction and ongoing support, students can overcome these errors and develop better reading abilities. This not only strengthens their basic literacy skills but also paves the way for broader intellectual and academic development in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The research findings revealed several important things, namely: (1) the initial reading difficulties experienced by second grade students at Karangtengah I Giricahyo Elementary School, Purwosari, Gunungkidul, were characterized by slow letter recognition abilities, frequent errors in differentiating letters that had similar shapes, and low ability to associate

letters with the correct sounds. These conditions resulted in disruptions to reading fluency and understanding of text content. Based on the results of the EGRA test, 12.5% of students were included in the very good category, 25% in the good category, 25% in the sufficient category, and 37.5% in the poor category. (2) Factors causing initial reading difficulties included low motivation and interest in reading, minimal support from parents during the learning process, and technical obstacles in spelling and letter separation, which were exacerbated by learning methods that were less interesting for students. (3) Proposed problem-solving efforts included implementing routine reading activities, applying spelling methods to strengthen phonemic skills, providing additional guidance, active parental involvement through intensive communication, and providing literacy facilities such as reading corners and literacy activities before lessons began. Effective synergy between teachers, parents, and schools is a determining factor in the success of implementing this strategy.

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