



## Analysis of Beginning Reading Ability in Lower Grade Elementary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

Beginning reading must be mastered by students. This is because reading ability will influence the learning process and achievement. This research aims to determine the reading difficulties experienced by students using the phonics method. The method used is a case study. In this research, there are five stages, namely determining the problem, designing and research instruments, collection, analysis, and presentation of data. The research subjects were 9 grade 1 students and the class teacher. The results of the reading ability test show that there are four reading abilities in class 1. As for the first stage, one student is in the red stage or reading closed syllables. Two students are in the blue stage or reading closed syllables. Three students are in the green stage, reading syllables with double vowels and consonants. Four students were able to read sentences.

**Keywords:** *Beginning Reading Ability, Elementary School Students, Phonics Method*

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four language skills that students must master. Government Regulation number 19 of 2005 article 6 paragraph 6 states that the curriculum at the primary school level or equivalent must emphasize the importance of reading. Reading skills have a big influence on supporting successful learning at school (Sugiarsih, 2017). Through mastered reading skills, students can read and understand reading, dismiss the assignments given, and the contents of questions, which become the basis for the next

level of reading skills (Mawarni et al., 2022). Reading is a receptive ability, that is, through reading you will obtain messages, information, insight, knowledge, and experience (Susanti, 2022). Beginning reading is recognizing letters and letter sounds to be sounded into meaningful words (Rofi'i & Susilo, 2022). This reading skill must be mastered by lower-grade students (Nurani et al., 2021). This is because initial reading aims to become the basis for developing oral language skills (Septiana Soleha et al., 2021). Beginning reading seeks to enable students to understand and pronounce writing or symbols correctly as a preparation for learning to read further (Evans, 2015).

Conditions in the field, there are still students in class 1 of SDN Randualas 04 who are not yet able to read. Based on the results of observations and interviews with class I teachers, it was still found that students were not yet able to read. The total number of class 1 students is 9 students. Based on the results of the reading ability test, it was found that students' reading abilities started from reading letters, words, and sentences, 3 students were not yet able to read. This situation is contrary to the opinion of (Nurhaq et al., 2020) who stated that students who are in elementary school should already be able to read. This problem must be resolved immediately. This is because if students' initial reading difficulties are not immediately addressed, it will result in students being hampered in participating in the learning process (A. Hasanah & Lena, 2021; S. U. Hasanah, 2020). Therefore, teachers who are trusted to teach in lower grades have a big responsibility so that reading problems can be overcome. Teachers are expected to be able to design reading lessons well so that students enjoy learning to read. Comenius (Suryabrata, 2006) states that the learning materials provided in schools must follow the child's mental development and an educational manner. A method that is quite suitable for playing will make children relax and not worry about overloading their brains, and avoid boredom so they don't like learning activities (Siantayani, 2021).

Previous research was conducted by Prayogo & Citrawati, (2023) who analyzed the initial reading difficulties experienced by lower-grade elementary school students. The research states that students have difficulty reading letters, meaningful words, meaningless words, reading aloud, understanding and listening to reading, as well as difficulties with phonological awareness. Another research conducted by Kusno et al., (2020) analyzed initial reading difficulties in elementary school students. The research results show that the difficulties experienced are caused by students' lack of interest in learning, lack of study guidance, and parental assistance in reading. As a form of novelty, this research presents a different form of reading ability test using the phonics method. Through this method, the forms of initial reading difficulties experienced by lower-grade students will be analyzed. The phonics method is one method that can be used to teach reading skills, especially to introduce the relationship between letters in the alphabet and sounds so that they can translate written text into pronunciation (Novianti, 2021). The phonics method applied in the learning process is carried out by introducing letter sounds into syllables and then into words. This method was chosen to provide a pleasant atmosphere for children (Siantayani, 2021). Each student has a unique character, both psychologically and physically, therefore the strategies and methods applied must be appropriate to the child's condition.

Based on the description above, it is important to analyze students' reading abilities in the lower classes. This research aims to determine the forms of reading difficulties experienced by students. This research was carried out when students entered grade 1 at SDN Randualas 04 so that the results of the research could help

teachers provide information about students' initial reading difficulties, so that teachers could provide follow-up as a form of anticipation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study design. Qualitative research will look at the informant's point of view to explain conditions in the field and discover real conditions as a whole using the researcher's key instruments (Helaluddin & Hengki Wijaya, 2019). The research subjects were grade 1 students who had difficulty reading.

The primary data for this research are subjects who have difficulty reading, namely 9 grade 1 students and the class teacher and homeroom teacher. Secondary data consists of the results of students' initial reading ability tests using the phonics method. Case study research consists of five stages, namely determining the problem, research design and instruments, collecting data, analyzing data, and reporting research results (Yona, 2006). Data analysis techniques using interactive models. According to Milles and Huberman (1992) there are three things in the interactive model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification.

The research procedure begins with determining the problem. Researchers surveyed to find out the conditions or obstacles experienced by students. This stage also carried out regular literature studies to support the research. The second stage is the research design. Researchers together with teachers design reading ability tests that suit students' needs. The third stage is data collection which is carried out through a reading ability test. The fourth stage is data analysis. The data that has been obtained will be analyzed according to the groupings achieved by students. This stage, researchers analyze data based on findings and observations, interviews and documentation. The final stage consists of reporting the research results to the teacher and making a written report.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Description of Early Reading Difficulties in Each Student**

The results of research on reading ability tests using the phonics method will show that each student experiences different difficulties. The reading ability test provides the opportunity to repeat three times to be declared complete. Through the phonics method, students' initial reading abilities will be known. Reading ability is divided into three stages, namely red, blue, and green. In the red stage, students will be tested by reading open syllables. In the blue stage, students will be tested by reading words that contain closed syllables. The green stage is the ability to read words containing double vowels or consonants. The following is a reading ability test using the phonics method.



**Figure 1.** Menu in the phonics method

Students will be tested for initial reading skills at each stage. The first stage is at the red level. At this stage, open syllable reading is presented. Students who can pass the red stage test will proceed to the blue stage. In the blue stage, there will be a closed-syllable reading test. The next stage is the green stage. In the green stage, there will be a test of the ability to read double vowels and consonants. Students who can pass all stages will continue with the sentence reading ability test. On the other hand, if there are students who at the initial stage have experienced more than 50% errors or the teacher often has to repeat the reading material three times, then they will not proceed to the next stage. The following are the results of the student's initial reading ability test.

**Table 1.** Initial Reading Test Results

No.	Student	Red Stage	Blue Stage	Green Stage	Read Sentences
1	AK			√	
2	AA	√			
3	AR				√
4	DM				√
5	FU		√		
6	GM				√
7	HP		√		
8	KA				√
9	WF				√

Based on the research results, students' initial reading abilities can be grouped into four. One student with reading ability is in the red stage. Blue stage two students' reading ability. Green stage reading ability of one student, and ability to read sentences of five students.

AA students are in the red stage. New students can read open syllables. Syllables consist of two letters such as ba, fu, ha, and ku. Students sometimes sound the same syllables incorrectly, such as "ba" and "da", "ma" and "we", "fa" and "vo". Letters that sound almost the same are still confusing for students. The teacher must provide several opportunities for students to correctly pronounce the designated words. The condition of students who have not memorized all the letters creates difficulties when asked to read syllables. In two open syllables, students stutter a little because they have to remember the previous syllable. However, students can pronounce the sounds out loud.

There are two students in the blue stage, namely FU and HP. FU has difficulty with dead syllables such as kol, bel, and zero. Students still feel confused when they have to read by emphasizing the final letter. For example, in the word “Kol”, students still have difficulty turning off the letter “l” so that it is still read as “ko”. Even though he stammers, FU can read some closed syllables such as. “kan”, “pear”, and “make” with repetition three times. In the process of reading two syllables, FU started to get used to reading closed syllables. This is proven by the ability to read “ke-kal”, “kun-ci”, and “ma-kan”. In contrast to FU, HP students are more fluent when it comes to turning off the final letter in closed syllables. Students can fluently read one closed syllable. For two syllables, HP experienced a bit of trouble when he had to repeat syllables that had already been read, such as “me-rah” The initial syllable was repeated and changed to “ma-rah” and “ta-di” was read as “ta-gi”. However, when given time to repeat and remember the words that have been read previously, HP can read fluently.

AK students feel at the green stage, where students can read double vowel and consonant syllables. AK can read fluently words consisting of two or three open and closed syllables. On open syllables, he passed smoothly. Be able to say the words “ma-ta, pa-da, ke-kal, dom-pet”. Three syllables can be read fluently like the words “pe-li-ta, ma-kan-an, a-yun-an”. Students at this stage can already read double consonant letters, such as “ng, ny, kh”. When two consonant letters are given a vowel, AK can pronounce them correctly. Like the syllables “khu, nya, ngo”, for example, “nya-nyi, special”. Vowels and double consonants consisting of three syllables form words that have a little difficulty when put together, such as the words “kha-sa-nah, nya-nyi-an, me-ngo-lah” Sometimes there are syllables omitted. “Kha-sa-nah” is pronounced “sa-nah”, “me-ngo-lah” is pronounced, “ngo-lah”.

AR, DM, GM, KA, and WF students have passed the red, blue, and green stages. All of the students were fluent when reading the letters provided and no one was confused, even though some students previously had difficulty distinguishing letters. Students also fluently read words consisting of open syllables such as “ma-ta, ka-ya, su-ka” and closed syllables “pe-nat, ke-kal, lan-car”. Words consisting of double vowels and consonants can also be read fluently. Like the words, “singing, distinctive, rich, ton-to-nan”. The five students were fluent at the blue stage, and then given a further test, namely reading sentences. Initially, students are provided with simple sentences consisting of two words and three words. All tests can be passed by students. But at the sentence stage that forms the story. Students have a little difficulty answering because they don’t understand the content. They still read flatly without paying attention to punctuation so that the content contained in the reading is not yet understood.

The results of interviews with grade 1 teachers showed that students who experienced difficulties in beginning reading were caused by several factors. Factors that cause reading difficulties experienced by children are internal and external. Internal factors are factors that come from the students themselves, namely physical, physiological, and psychological factors. Meanwhile, external factors come from outside the student, such as the family and school environment (Gustiawati et al., 2020).



Internal factors that hinder students' initial reading difficulties include students' lack of interest in learning. Students are used to playing a lot at school before. During the transition period in grade 1 of elementary school, students are still not carried away by their previous habits so their interest in learning decreases. In the learning process, students pay less attention to the teacher's explanation. The external factor that causes this is the lack of patience of parents in teaching children to read. When parents find it difficult to teach reading because the child takes a long time to understand, the learning process is no longer continued. The delivery of initial reading skills which is left entirely to the teacher will be different from students whose parents also teach them at home.

#### **Forms of Early Reading Difficulty for Lower Class Students at SDN Randualas 04**

Based on Table 1, there are four stages of initial reading ability. The first stage is the ability to read open syllables, the second stage is reading closed syllables, the third stage is reading syllables containing double vowels and consonants, and the fourth stage is reading sentences. The results of the analysis of initial reading difficulties are described as follows.

##### ***Reading Open Syllables***

Based on Table 1, it is known that AA students still have difficulty reading open syllables. New students can read easy rich terms and the letters still belong to the beginning of the alphabet. Students also experience problems pronouncing letters that have almost the same shape and sound. The results of interviews with class teachers obtained data that AA students still had not memorized all the letters. Students sometimes still pronounce the indicated letters incorrectly. Similar letters are also often incorrect, such as "f" and "v". The reversal of letters occurs because the letters have the same shape and sound (phonology) so they are considered the same letter sound (Aprilia et al., 2021).

##### ***Reading Close Syllables***

From Table 1, it is known that FU and HP students are at the blue stage. Students do not experience difficulty reading open syllables, however, when the syllables are added with consonants as consonants, students sometimes pronounce them incorrectly. The final sound of the syllable is removed. For example, the syllable "bel" is read as "be" by removing the letter "l". During the test, the teacher has to repeat almost three times so that the last letter is not removed. Another result is replacing the initial syllable because it must be increased so that the initial syllable is not replaced. The obstacle experienced by students is that combining phonemes into words is still not good. According to Syari'at & Sukartiningsih (2021) students who have difficulty reading and combining phonemes into words indicate that students are not yet proficient in reading at first.

### **Read Double Vowels and Consonants**

Table 1 states that there is only one student who is in the green stage. Students can read syllables that contain double vowels and consonants. Students sometimes still omit these syllables. They think they have to repeat a lot of the words they say and are carried away by everyday language. For example, the word “me-ngo-lah” is pronounced, “ngo-lah”. By the opinion of Oktadiana (2019) stated that one of the difficulties students have in reading is reading diphthongs, vowels, and double consonants.

### **Reading Aloud Fluency**

Five students can read sentences. Students read fluently but still have difficulty recognizing punctuation marks. The students ignore the punctuation marks in the sentences so that when asked again about the contents of the reading, the students have difficulty answering. Information obtained from the class teacher if students do not understand the use of punctuation marks when reading. Fatmasari & Fitriyah (2018) stated that using reasonable intonation, understanding punctuation marks, and being able to read fluently are things that must be considered when reading aloud. The results obtained in the field where students do not understand punctuation marks in reading can be concluded that students still experience difficulties in reading aloud.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the reading ability test using the phonics method, it can be concluded that there are four reading abilities in class 1 of SDN Randualas 04. In the red stage or reading closed syllables there is one student. The student had difficulty distinguishing letters that were almost the same. The blue stage or open syllable reading has two students. The obstacles experienced by students include difficulty turning off the final letters of syllables. Another obstacle is errors in repeating the syllables that have been read. There are three students in the green stage reading double vowels and consonants. The problem that arises is arranging the syllables that have been read when the syllables consist of three syllables. The other four students were able to pass the three previous stages. Four students were able to read sentences. The obstacles faced include difficulty understanding the content of the reading.

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