

Analysis of Early Reading and Writing Skills of Grade II Students at SDN Pendem 01

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ABSTRACT

Early reading and writing skills are the main basis for the development of students' literacy in elementary school. However, observation results show that many students in the lower grades still have difficulty recognizing letters, pronouncing sounds, and writing with good neatness and readability. This study aims to analyze the initial reading and writing ability of second grade students of SDN Pendem 01 and identify the factors that affect it. The study used a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation of teachers and 10 students who were selected purposively. The results of the study showed that most students were able to read and write simple words and sentences, but there were still difficulties in distinguishing similar letters (b-d, p-q), understanding the content of the reading, and maintaining the proportion of writing. The main causative factors include limited exercise at home, differences in cognitive and fine motor skills, and learning methods that are still mechanical. Teachers try to overcome these obstacles through the use of letter card media, phonetic exercises, and interesting contextual writing activities. These findings confirm that reading and writing develop in parallel and reinforce each other, therefore, continuous collaboration between teachers and parents is needed in stimulating students' basic literacy in a systematic and fun manner.

Keywords: *reading beginning, writing beginning, elementary school*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation in producing a young generation that is intelligent, qualified, and characterful. At the elementary school level, language proficiency plays a central role because it is the foundation for successful learning in all subjects. The four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing need to be mastered in a balanced way from an early age. Among the four, initial reading and writing skills are key, as these skills determine the extent to which students can effectively follow the learning at the next level (Mumpuni & Afifah, 2022).

Beginning reading focuses on students' ability to recognize letters, spell words, and understand simple sentences, while beginning writing teaches students to copy letters, words, and sentences precisely and neatly. Without a strong literacy foundation, students tend to have difficulty understanding the material at an advanced level, even facing ongoing academic barriers (Mawarensa, 2022).

The reality on the ground shows that many elementary school students still face significant challenges in early reading and writing. Common difficulties that arise include reading influence, letter pronunciation errors, difficult to read writing, and weak visual memory and fine motor coordination (Istiqoma et al., 2023). The causative factors come not only from individual abilities, but also from a less supportive learning environment, limited learning media that are attractive, and a lack of continuous practice both at school and at home (Hidayah et al., 2025).

The results of interviews and initial observations at SDN Pendem 01 show that there is still a variation in literacy skills among grade II students. Most students are able to read and write simple words, but there are still many who have difficulty recognizing letters, pronouncing sounds, and writing with proportional and

legible letter sizes. This condition shows that students' mastery of basic literacy is not evenly distributed, and the learning strategies implemented have not fully accommodated the individual needs of students.

Based on these conditions, the main problem in this study is that the initial reading and writing skills of grade II students at SDN Pendem 01 are not optimal, which can be seen from technical difficulties and understanding the meaning of reading. Previous research has generally highlighted the difficulties of basic literacy in the lower grades, but not many have specifically analyzed in depth the aspects of early reading and writing in a particular educational unit with a descriptive qualitative approach that displays the variation in students' real abilities in the field. Thus, there is a research gap in the aspect of a comprehensive analysis of students' initial literacy skills in different elementary school contexts.

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively describe the initial reading and writing ability of grade II students of SDN Pendem 01, including aspects of letter recognition, sound pronunciation, reading simple syllables and sentences, as well as writing skills from copying to writing sentences independently. Through this study, it is hoped that a real picture can be found about the level of achievement, difficulties, and factors that affect students' initial literacy development so that the results can be the basis for teachers and schools in designing more effective and contextual learning strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early reading and writing skills are the main foundation for children's literacy development in elementary school. Reading is not only the process of recognizing letters and sounds, but also a thought activity that involves understanding meaning and context (Sureni Sureni & Ibn Muthi, 2025). Similarly, writing is not just the activity of copying letters, but is a form of cognitive expression that demonstrates the ability to organize ideas in the form of graphic symbols (Siti Yani & Imam Hanafi, 2024). These two skills are closely intertwined: good reading skills strengthen writing skills, while well-trained writing skills help children understand the structure of the language they are reading (Parapat et al., 2023).

Previous research has shown consistent findings that many students in lower grades still face early reading and writing difficulties. Meo et al. (2021) found that common difficulties included reading fluency, pronunciation errors, and writing that was not read clearly. Meanwhile, Teaching (2025) highlights that writing barriers are often caused by weak fine motor skills and lack of sustained exercise. These results are in line with the findings of Safira Roesi and Hijjayati et al. (2022) which states that the low basic literacy ability is also influenced by the lack of variety in learning methods. However, research by Loyal (2025) offers a different perspective by emphasizing the effectiveness of the Structural Synthetic Analytics (SAS) approach that can help students associate letter symbols with their sounds and meanings.

A comparison of the results of these studies shows two main trends: some studies emphasize the technical and mechanical aspects of reading-writing, while others highlight aspects of learning strategies and environmental support. This study seeks to fill this gap by combining both perspectives through a qualitative analysis that examines students' actual abilities in the context of primary school, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect the success of early literacy.

Conceptually, the relationship between reading and writing skills can be described in an integrative frame of mind. Reading serves as a language input process, where students gain knowledge of symbols, sounds, and sentence structures. Meanwhile, writing acts as a language output process that reflects the extent to which students understand and are able to reproduce this knowledge in writing. In other words, reading and writing are two sides of the literacy process that reinforce each other: reading enriches vocabulary and thinking patterns, while writing trains active and meaningful use of language.

This conceptual framework is the basis for research to analyze the extent to which initial reading skills (letter recognition, pronunciation, syllable and sentence reading) relate to initial writing skills (copying, dictating, and writing simple sentences). Through this analysis, it is hoped that a deep understanding of how the two skills develop in parallel and support each other in shaping the early literacy skills of elementary school students.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of obtaining an in-depth picture of the initial reading and writing skills of grade II students of SDN Pendem 01. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena in a naturalistic way and explore the meaning behind students' learning behaviors. The research subjects consisted of grade II teachers and 10 students who were selected purposively based on various levels of literacy ability (high, medium, and low). Teachers play the role of the main informant, while students are the main source of data related to reading and writing skills.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participant Categories	Sum	Information
Grade II Teacher	1 Person	Provide information about the learning process and student literacy assessment
Grade II Students	10 People	Chosen represents a variety of initial reading and writing abilities
Total	11 People	-

Data is collected through three main techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation.

Table 2. Data Collection Techniques

Technique	Instrument/Procedure	Data Focus
Interview	Interview guide	Teachers' perceptions of students' literacy skills and learning strategies
Observation	Learning activity observation sheet	Students' reading and writing activities in the classroom
Documentation	Teacher's writings and notes	Authentic evidence of the student's abilities and evaluation process

All data is collected during the learning activities to maintain the authenticity of the context. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles & Huberman model which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. However, in this study, the three stages are applied in the context of student literacy.

1. Data reduction was done by summarizing teacher interview transcripts and observation notes to identify common themes such as difficulty recognizing letters, reading syllables, and writing simple sentences.
2. Data presentation is carried out through tables and narrative descriptions that show variations in students' ability to read and write initially.
3. Conclusions are drawn by interpreting the pattern of findings and connecting them with the theory of initial literacy and the results of previous research.

To ensure the credibility of the data, the researcher used the source and method triangulation technique, which is to compare the results of interviews with observations and student written documents. Validity is strengthened through discussions with classroom teachers and re-checking the findings against the original data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the initial reading and writing abilities of grade II students of SDN Pendem 01 varied, with most students being able to read and write simple words and sentences, but there were still those who faced difficulties in the technical aspects and understanding the meaning of reading. These findings are in line with the results of the study Camilia (2025) who identify major difficulties at the early literacy stage, such as reading fluency, pronunciation errors, and writing that is not read clearly.

In the aspect of initial reading, students show good mastery in recognizing vowels and consonants, pronouncing their sounds, and reading simple syllables and words. However, there are still students who have difficulty distinguishing letters with similar shapes such as b–d and p–q, or similar sounds such as b–d and p–f. This difficulty occurs due to the limitations of visual memory and phonemic perception, as stated by Princess (2022), which confirms that the relationship between letter symbols and sounds needs to be trained repeatedly and contextually. Teachers have tried to overcome this obstacle through the use of letter card media and phonetic games, which help students associate letter shapes with their sounds more naturally.

The ability to read simple sentences is also positively developed, although some students still have difficulty understanding the content of the reading due to limited vocabulary and lack of meaningful reading practice. These results reinforce the findings Hammi Roqiba Lubis et al. (2025), which states that learning to read needs to emphasize the aspect of comprehension, not just fluency. Teachers try to overcome this with a strategy of reading together and the use of children's story texts, so that students can more easily understand the meaning of the sentences they read.



Figure 1. Students Recognize and Pronounce Letters During Class Activities



Figure 2. Students Read Simple Sentences

In the aspect of initial writing, most students are able to copy letters and words correctly, but their writing is still not neat and proportional. Common mistakes include inconsistent font sizes and inconsistent spacing between letters. These results are similar to the findings Astuti et al. (2025) which highlights the importance of fine motor training in improving writing skills in the lower grades. Teachers have implemented regular copying exercises and given direct feedback so that students get used to writing with appropriate letter sizes and readable writing.



Figure 3. Student Writing Results Copying Words from the Whiteboard

In dictation-based writing skills, students show basic phonemic understanding, but still often make spelling mistakes such as omitting middle letters or writing letters that don't match the sound. This shows that students' sound analysis skills are still developing. These findings are consistent with the results of the Reading research Early (2024) which suggests that early childhood requires ongoing practice to connect sounds and letter symbols. To overcome this, teachers provide gradual dictation activities accompanied by exercises in listening to simple phonemes and syllables.

The ability to write simple sentences shows that most students still depend on the example given by the teacher. They are able to write sentences with the correct structure if they get a model, but have difficulty when asked to write independently. This condition shows the limitations of linguistic creativity and understanding of sentence structure. Teachers respond to this by providing contextual writing exercises such as writing personal experiences or describing daily activities to practice meaningful sentence formation.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that initial reading and writing skills develop in parallel. Students who have good reading proficiency tend to be faster in writing sentences with the correct structure, supporting the view Nasution (2025) that reading and writing are two skills that reinforce each other in the development of early literacy.

Interpretively, the difficulties that arise in students are caused by three main factors: (1) the limitations of repetitive exercises at home, (2) differences in students' cognitive and motor readiness, and (3) learning methods that still focus on mechanical repetition without strengthening the understanding of meaning. Teachers can overcome this through multimodal and contextual-based approaches, such as sound games, creative writing exercises, and the use of interactive visual media that interest students.



Figure 4. Results of Students Writing Simple Sentences Based on Pictures

Table 3. Summary of Key Findings

Literacy Aspect	Student Conditions	Difficulties Found	Interpretation and Teacher Solutions
Recognize vowels and consonants	80% of students are able to recognize letters correctly	Some students still confuse similar letters like "b-d", "p-q"	Visual difficulties and letter shape perception, teachers use letter cards and repetitive exercises
Reciting letter sounds	Most of them have correctly pronounced the basic letters	Difficulty with sounding letters like "B-D" or "P-F"	Teacher emphasizes repetitive phonetic exercises through the SAS method
Reading syllables and words	Able to read common and simple words	Stuttering on complex words and compound prefixes	Need contextual phonetic training through songs and wordplay
Reading short sentences	Students are able to read with good intonation	Lack of understanding of the content of the reading	Teachers combine reading activities with questions and answers on sentence meanings
Write words and sentences	Some students write with the correct structure	Spelling errors, disproportionate lettering, missing punctuation marks	Teachers provide hands-on feedback and daily copying exercises

Discussion

The results of this study show that initial reading skills develop gradually from letter recognition to simple sentence comprehension. These findings are in line with the results of the study Aprilia et al. (2025) which shows that elementary school students often have difficulty distinguishing similar letter forms and pronouncing certain phonemes. However, the study corroborates these findings with observational evidence that these difficulties also have a direct impact on the ability to write letters in a proportional manner.

Moreover, these results support the view Firdaus (2023) that early literacy requires visual media and phonetic exercises to strengthen the relationship between letter symbols and their sounds. The application of letter cards and chain reading activities carried out by teachers has been shown to help students build stronger phonemic associations.

On the other hand, this study shows that some students still have difficulty understanding the content of reading, especially in sentences with less familiar vocabulary. This expands the findings Pearl (2023) which highlights the importance of relevant context and vocabulary in improving reading comprehension. Teachers at SDN Pendem 01 overcome this by reading contextual stories and asking students to answer simple questions, strategies that are in line with the constructivist approach to language learning.

In the aspect of writing, the results of the study show that students are easier to copy than to write based on dictation or independently. This pattern reinforces the results of the Fadilah et al. (2023) which explains that fine motor skills are one of the important factors in the readability of students' writing. Teachers play an important role in guiding posture, pencil control, and font size consistency.

Difficulties in writing words from dictation also show weak phonological ability and students' short-term memory of letter sounds. This is consistent with the early phonetic theory that the relationship between sound and symbols is still developing gradually in the age of the lower classes. Therefore, teachers are advised to combine dictation exercises with multisensory activities such as writing letters in the air or in the sand to strengthen students' motor and auditory memory.

Learning Implications

These findings confirm that:

- a. Reading and writing skills are two aspects of literacy that develop in parallel and reinforce each other.
- b. The support of an engaging learning environment and real-world practice-based learning methods have been proven to increase student motivation.
- c. Teachers play an important role in providing repetitive phonetic exercises, shared reading habits, and individualized guidance for students who are left behind.
- d. Visual media such as letter cards, word games, and contextual reading materials are effective in helping students understand the form and meaning of words simultaneously.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that although most of the second grade students of SDN Pendem 01 showed progress in their initial reading and writing skills, their level of ability still varied greatly. Most students are able to recognize letters, pronounce sounds, read syllables and write simple words and sentences well. However, there are still students who have difficulty distinguishing similar letters, understanding the content of reading, and maintaining neatness and proportionality of writing. This variability is influenced by environmental factors, learning motivation, and the intensity of practice at home and school.

The implications of the results of this study emphasize the importance of strong collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting the development of children's basic literacy. Teachers need to design more contextual and interesting learning by using visual media, word games, and reading activities together. Meanwhile, parents are expected to provide ongoing support at home through simple reading and writing habits, such as reading stories and accompanying children to copy short words or sentences.

For further research, it is recommended that researchers explore the use of interactive digital literacy media or technology-based literacy intervention programs that can help improve motivation and consistency of literacy practice in elementary school students. Advanced research can also expand the context by involving more schools or comparing the effectiveness of different learning methods in improving early literacy skills.

Credit authorship contribution statement

The first author plays a role in conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, and curation of research data. The second writer is responsible for providing resources, project administration, and assisting in the writing and editing of the manuscript.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors state that they have no conflicts of interest, either financially or personally, that could affect the results of the research and the content of this manuscript. All research processes are carried out independently and objectively without any influence from any party.

Ethical Declaration

All participants have given their consent after receiving a full explanation of their goals, procedures, and right to resign at any time without consequences. This research was conducted by upholding the principles of research ethics and respecting the confidentiality of each participant.

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