



## Analysis of Beginning Reading Ability of Second Grade Elementary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the early reading ability of second-grade students at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency. Early reading ability constitutes a fundamental foundation for mastering more complex language skills. This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach using a survey design, involving 20 students as research subjects. Data were collected through an early reading test comprising 20 word items, direct classroom observation, and documentation. Data analysis utilized quantitative descriptive techniques by converting obtained scores into percentages classified according to criterion-referenced assessment criteria. Results indicated that students' early reading ability falls within the Good category, with a mean test score of 12.8 and a mean observation score of 10.4. A total of 60% of students were categorized as Good to Very Good, while 40% remained in the Adequate and Need Guidance categories. Primary difficulties included pronunciation of consonant cluster letters (*ng, ny*), halting reading fluency, and low confidence in reading aloud. This study recommends implementing systematic phonics-based instruction, habituated reading aloud practices, and creation of a

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supportive literacy environment to improve the early reading ability of all students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process directed toward optimizing the development of learners' potential, abilities, and characteristics in pursuit of educational goals, encompassing personality development, social competence, academic continuation, and occupational readiness (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). Elementary education, as a cornerstone of the national education system, plays a fundamental role in building core competencies among students, particularly at the primary school level, which serves children between the ages of 7 and 12 years. In accordance with Article 6, Paragraph 1 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, all citizens aged seven years are required to participate in basic education.

Among the foundational competencies to be cultivated at the primary level, reading occupies a position of paramount importance. Reading ability constitutes an integral dimension of language competence, functioning as a principal medium of communication for expressing ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Among the four recognized language skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, reading serves as the essential key to unlocking knowledge. Students who possess reading competence are equipped to decode written texts and comprehend their meaning, thereby facilitating the broader learning process. From a scientific standpoint, Castles et al. (2018) affirm that reading acquisition is a complex developmental process requiring deliberate instruction grounded in evidence-based approaches, and that the ability to decode written symbols is the most critical prerequisite for literacy development.

Reading ability is broadly classified into two categories: early reading ability and advanced reading ability. Early reading pertains to a student's capacity for symbol-level literacy, recognizing written symbols and accurately vocalizing their phonemic correspondences, while advanced reading involves discourse-level literacy, encompassing comprehension of textual content and the extraction of meaning. For learners in the lower elementary grades (Grades 1–3), typically aged 7–9 years, instructional emphasis is placed on early reading as a prerequisite for progression to higher-order reading stages. Early reading constitutes the most foundational tier of literacy development, defined by the capacity to recognize letter forms, understand linguistic elements, decode grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and read at a measured pace (Ehri, 2020; Hoover & Tunmer, 2018). Hoover and Tunmer (2018) further articulate that the simple view of reading frames reading comprehension as the product of decoding ability and linguistic comprehension, meaning that deficits in early reading directly impede broader academic literacy.

Despite the critical importance of early reading, classroom realities reveal persistent challenges. Based on interviews conducted on February 27, 2025, with the second-grade teacher at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency, several reading difficulties were identified among students, including difficulty spelling letters or halting reading caused by inadequate memorization of the alphabet; mispronunciation of words; poor reading fluency; unclear phoneme articulation and intonation resulting from insufficient letter recognition; and difficulty reading consonant cluster letters such as *-ng* and *-ny*. The classroom teacher attributed these difficulties, in part, to insufficient parental guidance at home, particularly among Grade 2 students who had undergone distance learning during the pandemic period and consequently experienced a measurable decline in academic knowledge and skills.

Based on mid-semester assessment data for Grade 2 at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency, for the 2024/2025 academic year with a cohort of 20 students, it was established that a number of students scored below the established Minimum

Competency Standard (KKM) of 70, with only 2 students achieving the required passing threshold. Accordingly, a systematic identification of the extent of students' early reading ability in the instructional context is essential for formulating appropriate pedagogical strategies to address the reading difficulties of students with low early reading competence. Lonigan and Milburn (2017) demonstrate that phonological awareness and letter knowledge constitute the most significant predictors of subsequent literacy development, underscoring the urgency of targeted early intervention.

This study aims to describe the early reading ability of second-grade students at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency. Theoretically, the findings are expected to enrich the scholarly knowledge base and serve as a reference for subsequent investigations. Practically, this study is intended to provide an evaluative framework for improving the quality of early reading instruction and motivating all students to achieve optimal reading proficiency.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach utilizing a survey design. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research is characterized by the use of numerical data analyzed through statistical methods. This approach was selected to obtain an objective description of students' early reading ability through direct measurement using an instrument developed in accordance with established early reading ability indicators.

Descriptive research aims to portray a phenomenon or condition as it naturally exists, without applying specific treatments to the research subjects (Arikunto, 2010). In the context of this investigation, the survey was conducted to collect data on students' early reading ability through the administration of a reading test comprising items designed to assess letter recognition, pronunciation of letters in initial, medial, and final word positions, and reading of words containing consonant clusters, without variable manipulation or

specific instructional intervention. This approach is consistent with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) framework for quantitative survey research in educational settings.

### **Research Subjects and Location**

The research subjects comprised 20 second-grade students at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province. Subject selection was conducted purposively, with the criterion of students who exhibited difficulties in early reading ability based on low Indonesian Language subject scores. The entire population of second-grade students was included as research subjects, given the limited class size and homogeneity of difficulties observed. The study was conducted over a period of 14 days, from August 23 to May 8, 2025, at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency. The selection of this research site was based on the existence of a documented, real-world problem pertaining to the early reading ability of second-grade students, necessitating thorough identification and analysis to formulate appropriate instructional solutions.

### **Research Instruments**

The primary instrument was an early reading ability test comprising 20 word reading items. Reading, as conceptualized by Dalman (2017), involves the vocalization of written language symbols at sufficient volume to enable accurate pronunciation and clear, fluent articulation without halting. The test instrument was designed to assess students' ability to read individual letters (b, d, n, m, h) in initial, medial, and final word positions. Scoring employed a dichotomous scale, assigning a score of 1 when the student correctly read the target word and a score of 0 when unable to do so. Supplementing the test, a teacher observation sheet was utilized to assess students' early reading ability based on seven primary indicators, each rated on a 0–2 scale, in addition to documentation comprising student progress records, student work samples, and audio or video recordings of reading sessions.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data were collected through three primary techniques: reading tests,

observation, and documentation. The reading test was administered by asking each student to read 20 word items prepared in the research instrument, with the researcher directly recording individual performance. Oral reading tests serve to assess reading competence, enhance students' mental focus, and elicit questioning behavior regarding comprehension difficulties. Direct observation was conducted to examine how students recognized letters, syllables, and simple words using short text passages. Primary data were obtained through individual field-based reading tests with the research subjects, while secondary data were gathered through a literature review encompassing official documents, textbooks, and academic journals relevant to the research topic.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Data derived from the early reading test were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis. According to Sugiyono (2019), descriptive analysis is employed to characterize research phenomena through the processing of numerical data, enabling identification of trends in students' achievements. Each test item was scored 0 for an incorrect response and 1 for a correct response, with the total score calculated as the aggregate of all items completed by the student. Scores were converted into percentages using the formula:  $P = (\text{Obtained Score} / \text{Maximum Score}) \times 100\%$ . The resulting percentages were classified into four categories based on criterion-referenced assessment criteria (Arikunto, 2010): Very Good (16–20), Good (11–15), Adequate (6–10), and Need Guidance (0–5). Percentage distributions for each category were presented in tabular form and subsequently interpreted to address the research focus regarding the level of students' early reading ability and the nature of encountered difficulties.

### **Data Validity**

To ensure the validity of the collected data, the researcher employed triangulation techniques. Triangulation involves the systematic cross-verification of information from multiple sources to establish the credibility of research data (Sugiyono, 2019). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing observation data with documentary evidence, contrasting participants' public and private

statements, and cross-referencing data obtained from multiple informants. Technical triangulation was achieved by verifying data derived from identical sources through different collection techniques. The researcher applied multiple data collection methods, observation, reading tests, and documentation, cross-referencing them to generate valid and reliable conclusions regarding the early reading ability of the second-grade students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency, with the participation of 20 second-grade students as research subjects. Data collection was conducted through two primary instruments: an Early Reading Test comprising 20 word items, and a Teacher Observation Sheet with 7 indicators of early reading ability, each scored on a 0–2 scale. The reading test was administered by asking each student to read 20 simple reading items; each correct response received a score of 1 and each incorrect response received a score of 0. Observation was conducted concurrently to assess the technical and affective dimensions of students' reading behavior.

### Early Reading Ability Based on Test Results

The early reading test results revealed considerable variation in ability levels across the student cohort. Of the 20 students assessed, 5 students (25%) were categorized as Very Good with scores ranging from 16–20, 7 students (35%) were categorized as Good with scores ranging from 11–15, 6 students (30%) were categorized as Adequate with scores ranging from 6–10, and 2 students (10%) were categorized as Need Guidance with scores ranging from 0–5. The mean test score was 12.8, placing the cohort within the Good category. Complete data are presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Summary of Students' Early Reading Test Results

Score Range	Category	Number of Students	Percentage
16 - 20	Very Good	5	25%
11 - 15	Good	7	35%

6 - 10	Adequate	6	30%
0 - 5	Need Guidance	2	10%
Total		20	100%

Notes: Mean score = 12.8 (Good category)

These results indicate that the majority of students have developed adequate early reading skills; however, 2 students require intensive guidance due to significant difficulties in decoding letters and simple words. This finding aligns with Oktaviyanti et al. (2022), who assert that early reading ability constitutes a critical foundation for the acquisition of more advanced language skills, and that students who have not yet mastered this competence require targeted support and dedicated instructional attention.

#### Early Reading Ability Based on Observation Results

Observation results conducted by the classroom teacher revealed a pattern broadly consistent with the test findings. Of the 20 students observed, 4 students (20%) were categorized as Very Good with scores ranging from 12–14, 8 students (40%) were categorized as Good with scores ranging from 9–11, 6 students (30%) were categorized as Adequate with scores ranging from 6–8, and 2 students (10%) were categorized as Need Guidance with scores ranging from 0–5. The mean observation score was 10.4, also falling within the Good category. Complete data are presented in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Summary of Students' Early Reading Observation Results

Score Range	Category	Number of Students	Percentage
12 - 14	Very Good	4	20%
9 - 11	Good	8	40%
6 - 8	Adequate	6	30%
0 - 5	Need Guidance	2	10%
Total		20	100%

Notes: Mean score = 10.4 (Good category)

These observation results indicate that the majority of students already

demonstrate competence in distinguishing letters, forming words, and reading simple sentences. Nevertheless, more detailed observation reveals that several students continue to experience pronounced difficulty in pronouncing consonant cluster letters such as “ng” and “ny,” and exhibit reduced confidence when asked to read aloud before the class.

### Analysis of Ability Based on Specific Indicators

To obtain a more comprehensive picture of students’ early reading ability, a detailed analysis was conducted for each assessed indicator. This analysis encompassed reading basic letters, letters in varying word positions, consonant clusters, reading fluency, and confidence in reading aloud. The results demonstrate that students’ competence varies substantially across these dimensions, with specific strengths and weaknesses as detailed in **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Matrix of Early Reading Ability Results

Aspect Assessed	Test Indicator (Item)	Example Letters/Words	Strengths	Weaknesses	Percentage/Category
Reading Basic Letters	1-2	B, D	Most students correctly identified letters	Some students confused certain letter sounds	±65% Good-Very Good
Reading letter “b”	3-7	<i>Baju, Besok, Sabun, Sabit, Arab</i>	Able to read “b” in initial, medial, and final positions	Mispronunciation occurred in medial/final positions	±65% Good-Very Good
Reading letter “d”	8-10	<i>Delima, Sedih, Ahad</i>	Most read correctly	Some confused pronunciation of “d” in final position	±65% Good-Very Good
Reading letter “n”	11-13	<i>Nangka, Indah, Jalan</i>	Many students read fluently	Halting when “n” appears in medial/final position	±40% Adequate/Need Guidance
Reading letter “m”	14-16	<i>Masuk, Sama, Ayam</i>	Generally correct	Minor difficulties with	±65% Good-Very Good

Reading letter "h"	17-19	<i>Hasil, Sehat, Angkuh</i>	pronunciati on Most read correctly	"m" in final position Hesitation, especially with medial "h"	±40% Adequate/Need Guidance
Reading consonant clusters	20	<i>Sungguh</i>	Some correctly pronounced "ng"	Primary difficulty: pronunciation of "ng" and "ny"	±40% Adequate/Need Guidance
Reading fluency	–	Simple sentences	Able to read simple sentences	Some still read haltingly	±40% Adequate/Need Guidance
Confidence in reading aloud	–	Short reading texts	Some students read boldly in front of class	Many remained shy or lacked confidence	±40% Adequate/Need Guidance

Based on Table 3, students demonstrate competence in reading basic letters such as B and D, as well as letters "b," "d," and "m" in various word positions, with approximately 65% achieving the Good to Very Good category. This reflects a relatively stable mastery of fundamental decoding skills among the majority of students. However, competence declines notably for letters "n" and "h" in medial and final positions, with only approximately 40% achieving satisfactory performance. A more pronounced decline is observed for consonant clusters "ng" and "ny," where approximately 40% of students continue to experience difficulty. Similar challenges are evident in reading fluency, with some students still reading haltingly, and in confidence in reading aloud, where a portion of students display hesitation and reluctance to read before the class.

### Discussion and Implications of Findings

The research findings demonstrate that the early reading ability of second-grade students at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency is at a reasonably adequate level overall, with approximately 65% of students situated within the Good to Very Good category. This attainment indicates that early reading instruction at the school has been sufficiently effective, particularly in developing foundational

skills such as letter recognition, single consonant pronunciation, and reading of simple words. The acquisition of these fundamental competencies is of critical importance, as emphasized by Oktaviyanti et al. (2022), who assert that early reading ability constitutes the cornerstone for developing more complex language skills at subsequent stages of learning.

Nonetheless, 40% of students remain in the Adequate and Need Guidance categories. The primary difficulties are concentrated in the pronunciation of consonant cluster letters such as “ng” and “ny,” halting reading fluency, and low confidence in reading aloud. This finding is consistent with Ehri’s (2020) phonics theory and the synthesis by Castles et al. (2018), which affirm that grapheme-phoneme correspondences, particularly for consonant clusters, require explicit instructional intervention and structured, intensive practice. Without appropriate intervention, students will continue to experience decoding difficulties that impede overall reading development.

The Simple View of Reading, as advanced by Hoover and Tunmer (2018), posits that reading comprehension is the product of decoding ability and linguistic comprehension. Accordingly, if students’ decoding skills remain underdeveloped, reading comprehension will be commensurately impaired. This is further reinforced by Kim’s (2020) hierarchical model of reading, which demonstrates the interdependency of word-level and language-level skills in constructing reading competence. Seidenberg et al. (2020) additionally highlight the critical challenge of bridging reading science and classroom practice, underscoring the need for teachers to translate evidence-based findings into concrete instructional strategies.

Beyond technical dimensions, the research findings also underscore the salience of affective factors in early reading. This condition is consistent with Vygotskian sociocultural theory, as referenced by Salawati and Suoth (2020), which emphasizes the significance of social interaction and supportive learning environments in cognitive development. Research by Sugiarti et al. (2025) demonstrates that enjoyable instructional methods, such as singing, can

simultaneously enhance early literacy and cultivate students' reading confidence. Similarly, Wulandari et al. (2025) confirm that systematic phonics-based approaches are highly effective in supporting students in the lower performance categories, while Lonigan and Milburn (2017) establish that phonological awareness and letter knowledge are the most predictive factors for subsequent literacy success. Ahyana and Fihayati (2025) further affirm the importance of creating a school literacy environment that habituates and motivates students to engage with reading.

The practical implications of this study indicate that teachers need to design more varied and responsive instructional approaches, emphasizing four primary strategies: implementing structured systematic phonics practice, establishing incremental read-aloud routines, applying cooperative instructional strategies such as paired reading, and cultivating a rich and stimulating literacy environment. With appropriate and sustained intervention, it is anticipated that all students can achieve optimal early reading competence and develop the foundational skills necessary for continued academic literacy growth.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the early reading ability of second-grade students at SD Inpres 16, Sorong Regency falls within the Good category, with a mean test score of 12.8 and a mean observation score of 10.4. A total of 60% of students were categorized within the Good to Very Good range; however, 40% of students remain in the Adequate and Need Guidance categories. The primary difficulties identified are in the pronunciation of consonant cluster letters, reading fluency, and confidence in reading aloud. Targeted instructional interventions based on systematic phonics instruction, habituated reading aloud practices, and the creation of a supportive and engaging literacy environment are essential to enhance the early reading ability of all students and ensure equitable access to foundational literacy skills.

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## Declarations

- Author Contribution : F. D. Yable: Conceptualization, Writing – Original Draft, Data Collection, and Visualization; I. E. Saputro: Writing – Review & Editing, Formal Analysis, and Methodology; Selfiani: Validation and Supervision.
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