

Analysis of Students' Beginning Reading Ability in Phase A at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstract: Students' skills in beginning reading are a determining indicator for developing further reading skills, many elementary school students still experience difficulties in beginning reading. This study aims to analyze the reading skills of grade 1 students at MI Ats-Tsauroh. This research used qualitative methods. Data was collected through observation, reading test activities to grade 1 and 2 students of MI Ats-Tsauroh, and interviews with grade 1 and 2 teachers. The data that has been collected is then analyzed in depth regarding the reading ability of phase A students. The results showed that 62% of students could read, indicating that most students have developed basic reading skills. However, 38% of students still cannot read fluently, suggesting that many students may need additional support in their reading development. Then, 70% of students can read independently, which shows that most students have good independent reading skills. However, 30% of students are not fully fluent in independent reading. Internal factors in independent reading obstacles include low student motivation, low intelligence, and poor learning motivation. External factors include the surrounding environment, less supportive parents, and teacher limitations in reaching all students in learning. Therefore, additional efforts are needed from schools, teachers, and parents to improve students' reading skills more evenly. Keywords: Ability; Reading Skill; Phase A Student

Abstrak: Keterampilan siswa dalam membaca permulaan merupakan indikator penentu untuk mengembangkan kemampuan membaca lebih lanjut, banyak siswa sekolah dasar yang masih mengalami kesulitan dalam membaca permulaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kemampuan membaca siswa kelas 1 di MI Ats-Tsauroh. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, kegiatan tes membaca kepada siswa kelas 1 dan 2 MI Ats-Tsauroh, dan wawancara dengan guru kelas 1 dan 2. Data yang telah terkumpul kemudian dianalisis secara mendalam mengenai kemampuan membaca siswa fase A. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 62% siswa dapat membaca, yang menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa telah mengembangkan kemampuan membaca dasar. Namun, 38% siswa masih belum dapat membaca dengan lancar, menunjukkan bahwa banyak siswa mungkin membutuhkan dukungan tambahan dalam perkembangan membaca mereka. Kemudian, 70% siswa dapat membaca secara mandiri, yang menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki keterampilan membaca mandiri yang baik. Namun, 30% siswa belum sepenuhnya lancar dalam membaca mandiri. Faktor internal dalam hambatan membaca mandiri antara lain motivasi siswa yang rendah, intelegensi yang rendah, dan motivasi belajar yang kurang baik. Faktor eksternal meliputi lingkungan sekitar, orang tua yang kurang mendukung, dan keterbatasan guru dalam menjangkau seluruh siswa dalam pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan upaya tambahan dari pihak sekolah, guru, dan orang tua untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa secara lebih merata. **Kata Kunci:** Kemampuan; Keterampilan Membaca; Siswa Fase A

Introduction

Education is a systemic and continuous process that creates quality and qualified humans. Education is a practice of freedom and humanization, namely the process of humanizing humans; through education, people can understand social systems and oppression and equip themselves to act to change the situation. Education is a basic human need that must be fulfilled to improve a person's experience (Ganarsih et al., 2022). In all forms of learning activities at school, reading is one of the fundamental and essential skills because reading is considered a determinant of success in students' learning activities (Hasanah & Lena, 2021). Madrasah Ibtidaiyah emphasizes language development, particularly in the context of basic education (Hanisah et al., 2024).

Reading is the most essential thing in education. Reading has an important role in life; a person will find it straightforward to access information if he can read (Rahadini et al., 2020). Reading means translating and interpreting symbols and letters into a language the reader creates (Faradina, 2017). Reading is the starting gate for children to continue developing and mastering knowledge in the educational process. Reading is important as the principal means for children to fulfill their curiosity (Hanisah et al., 2024). Reading ability is one of the determining factors and also the key to a student's success in the learning process (Nurdiyanto et al., 2024). Students' skills in beginning reading will be a determining indicator for developing advanced reading abilities. Many students acquire knowledge through reading. The knowledge students gain is obtained from the teaching and learning process at school and can also be obtained from the reading process in everyday life (Pepe, 2024). Therefore, reading and understanding texts' contents is an important prerequisite for mastering and improving students' knowledge. However, in reality, students have very little interest in reading; data from Unesco states that Indonesia is in second place in terms of literacy at the global level; this explains that the reading interest of Indonesian people could be higher. According to Unesco in the World's Most Literate Nation Ranking conducted by Central Connecticut State University in 2016, Indonesian people's interest in reading is only around 0.001% (Aulannisa et al., 2024), meaning that for every 1,000 residents, only one person has an interest in reading (Rusniasa et al., 2021), then according to BPS data the reading literacy activity index in Indonesia in 2024 will still be low, namely around 38.1% (Universitas Pertamina, 2024) or sometimes they just read without understanding or comprehending the contents of the reading. With reading activities, it is hoped that children will automatically recognize and understand that reading indicates something essential in their development process (Yani, 2019).

Beginning readers are how someone can pronounce language accurately and clearly. Beginning reading aims to search for and obtain information in a reading and understand the content of the reading. According to Soejono, (1983), the aim of beginning reading is to introduce students to letters in the alphabet as a sign of sound or sounds, train students to change letters into sounds, know the letters in the alphabet, and sound them out in a short time of practice (Fajrin, 2020). Beginning reading aims to allow the lower grades to read two sentences fluently and precisely (Ernalis et al., 2016). Beginners' reading skills certainly face many difficulties. This difficulty certainly differs from one child to another. Children with reading difficulty generally have low learning outcomes (Rohmiyati et al., 2024). These challenges often arise from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development gaps essential for beginning reading. Cognitive struggles may involve letter recognition, affective barriers may include low motivation, and psychomotor issues may affect pronunciation or coordination.

Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects are crucial in beginning reading. The cognitive domain focuses on thinking, memorizing, and understanding the substance of a particular theory (Nurbudiyani, 2013). In the context of beginning reading, the effects of cognitive learning refer to the transformation of attitudes or habits within the cognitive area, particularly in recognizing, understanding, and interpreting letters, words, and sentences. This change is not singular but encompasses a series of abilities that develop progressively, from letter recognition and sound blending to comprehending the meaning of texts. These abilities are divided into several levels or stages, reflecting children's cognitive development in mastering beginning reading skills (Nurbudiyani, 2013).

This cognitive development is inseparable from—and unified with—affective development, as motivation, interest, and positive attitudes toward reading significantly determine how much a child can optimize their cognitive potential. In the affective domain, which is closely tied to attitudes and values, affective learning outcomes are demonstrated when a student has sufficient cognitive mastery, such as their feelings toward themselves and their school about reading ability (Hamzah, 2012), as well as their interest, discipline in learning, and respect for teachers (Sudjono, 2006).

In addition to cognitive and affective aspects, psychomotor skills, such as hand-eye coordination, clear articulation in pronunciation, and other physical movements, serve as essential supports in beginning reading. These skills help actualize cognitive understanding and affective motivation into tangible actions, such as reading fluently and accurately. The psychomotor domain relates to action-based skills that develop through the learning process. In beginning reading, this is evident in students' ability to apply cognitive knowledge and affective motivation to practical actions, such as clear pronunciation, hand-eye coordination, and symbol or letter recognition. Its assessment includes tools, work attitude, speed in recognizing letters, and the alignment between physical movements and comprehension of meaning (Magdalena et al., 2021).

A student will only be able to read if the student knows a letter; a student will be able to speak well and correctly if the student can read. Therefore, reading is a process of recognizing letters, recognizing words, and then recognizing sentences, which will have implications for one's knowledge and speaking ability (Mawati, 2024). In practice, many students still need help with reading; the cause is that errors in teaching are too rigid, which makes reading difficult. They also need help arranging letters, have limitations in memorizing upper and lower case letters, and lack imagination or creative thinking when reading. Dislike of reading cannot be separated from the influence of the environment, family, and society, as well as the experience of learning to read at school, which generally does not provide motivation and stimulus to stimulate interest in reading (Septiadi et al., 2024). Several studies have also been conducted to explore the reading skills of elementary school students, but each target or research location has different problems. The results found that reading ability can be overcome with interactive learning media, and literacy activities can create students' interest in reading (Aulannisa et al., 2024; Wibawa & Titik, 2021). Then it was also found that the problem of the lack of reading ability of low-grade students tends to be the same, the lack of varied learning methods, so more varied learning methods are needed so that it is hoped that students will be enthusiastic in participating in learning to read at the beginning, and the results of the study also show that the sentence scramble method is effective for increasing students' enthusiasm in learning so that their ability to read at the beginning increases (Febriani & Nisa, 2024).

Furthermore, research Pramesti, (2018) shows that the inhibiting factors of beginning reading ability at low-level elementary schools are intellectual and environmental, lack of motivation from the family and low student interest in reading. Therefore, special attention from teachers is needed for students with difficulties in beginning reading, and cooperation between teachers and parents is needed to improve students' reading skills. Then there are still low-grade elementary school students who still have many difficulties in beginning reading, such as not recognizing letters, not recognizing syllables, not being able to read words per word, diphthongs, clusters, diagrams, vowels, and consonants. There are also other difficulties, such as repetition and understanding the meaning of words (Rahma & Dafit, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to provide additional hours, give more attention, and teach students to recognize letters with creative techniques, such as letters made into songs to students who have difficulty reading at the beginning. Students can also be trained by writing sentences and reading the writing.

It was then found that most grade 1 elementary students had difficulty reading; some did not recognize letters. It is caused by monotonous methods, such as lectures, often causing students to feel bored and lack understanding of the material presented (Arianto et al., 2024). The application of the singing method proved effective with the increasing enthusiasm of students in the teaching and learning process and the significant increase in the average test scores conducted at the end of each learning cycle. The results consistently improved students' beginning reading skills from cycle to cycle. It is also in line with the results of research by Ernalis et al., (2016), which states that the main factor in the problem of beginning readers is that proper and monotonous reading learning has not been implemented. It makes students more quickly bored with learning.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to understanding early reading skills, several gaps remain unaddressed. First, studies like Aulannisa et al., (2024) and Febriani & Nisa, (2024) primarily focus on the use of media or teaching methods without holistically analyzing the interaction between internal factors (motivation, intelligence) and external factors (family environment, teacher's role). Second, research by Pramesti, (2018); Rahma & Dafit, (2021) identifies inhibiting factors but lacks measurable quantitative data to validate the severity of students' difficulties or the effectiveness of proposed solutions. Third, while Arianto et al., (2024) successfully improved reading skills through the singing method, their study was limited to general elementary schools and did not test its application in madrasahs, which have distinct socio-cultural characteristics. Additionally, no prior research has categorized reading abilities in detail (accuracy, voice clarity, spelling) as primary indicators, as done in this study.

This study addresses these gaps with three key novelties. First, the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah context is selected as a unique setting previously unexplored, where

religious, cultural, and parental involvement factors play critical roles in learning. Second, this research identifies inhibiting factors and maps the complex interaction between internal and external factors through the triangulation of qualitative data (teacher-parent interviews) and quantitative data (reading test scores). Third, structured reading ability criteria (accuracy, voice clarity, spelling) are used as primary indicators, complemented by innovative solutions such as the "60 hours of smart reading without spelling" guidebook tailored for madrasah students. It differs from previous studies that generalize reading ability criteria.

Based on the explanation presented, the problems of beginning reading for elementary school students include not recognizing letters, not recognizing syllables, not being able to read words per word, diphthongs, clusters, diagrams, vowels, and consonants. Then, the beginning reading ability of elementary school students is influenced by various factors such as learning methods, family factors, environment, and internal motivation.

This research analyzes students' reading abilities in phase A at MI Ats-Tsauroh. This study aims to analyze students' reading ability in phase A at MI Ats-Tsauroh from various aspects such as accuracy in reading, accuracy in voice clarity, clarity in pronouncing letters, accuracy of word order, and spelling accuracy.

Method

Research is a method of thinking used to answer and find a way out of a problem. This research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is based on postpositivism philosophy, which examines the condition of natural objects, where the researcher acts as the main instrument (Sugiyono, 2019). Research can be qualitative if someone searches for and explores information by presenting the actual conditions at the research location (Setyawan, 2024).

The method used in this research is a case study. Case study research is research about humans (groups or individuals), events, and settings in depth; this research aims to get an in-depth picture of a case being researched (Sugiyono, 2019). In this research, researchers will explore hidden data about students' reading abilities in phase A.

The data in this research was obtained from primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained from research informants, namely Class 1 Home Teachers, Class 1 Students, and Students' Parents. Meanwhile, researchers obtain secondary data through visual documents and scientific journals. This research uses interviews, observations, and tests as data collection techniques. Observations were made on teachers, students, and parents, as well as activities at school related to initial reading abilities and difficulties faced by grade 1 students. Activities were limited to student activities related to reading only. Then, interviews were conducted with the Class 1 Home Teacher, namely Dyah Purwandari, S.Pd, representatives of Class 1 students, and the student's parents. Then, the test was carried out on class 1 students, with 22 students, and class 2 students, with 19 students.

The results were then analyzed using the triangulation analysis technique from Miles and Huberman (2014): Data Collection, Data Reduction, Data Presentation, and Conclusion Drawing. The criteria used as indicators of students' reading ability are as follows:

Table 1. Criteria of Student's Reading Ability		
Category	Rating Level (%)	
Very Capable	80 < Score ≤ 100	
Capable	60 < Score ≤ 80	
Capable Enough	40 < Score ≤ 60	
Incapable	20 < Score ≤ 40	
Very Incapable	0 < Score ≤ 20	
Modified from: (Arikunto, 2019)		

Modified from: (Arikunto, 2019)

Result and Discussion

Result

In this section, researchers have identified various categories of students' reading abilities in Phase A (classes I and II) at the Ats-Tsauroh Madrasah School, Serang City, and examined them through several aspects, namely: a) reading accuracy; b) sound clarity; c) clarity in stating letters; d) stringing words together; and e) accuracy in spelling. So, from the research results that have been researched and processed by researchers, it can be seen that the reading ability of class I students in the aspect of reading accuracy has an average score of 73%, which means "capable," voice clarity is 59% which means "capable enough," clarity in saying letters is 100% which means "very capable," stringing words is 64% which means "capable." Spelling accuracy is 50%, which means "capable enough." These results show that the overall average obtained in class independent reading ability is 69%, which is categorized as "capable."

Meanwhile, the results for class II students show an overall average of 55%, which is in the "capable enough" category. In the aspect of reading accuracy, class II students got an average result of 42% (capable enough), sound clarity 42% (capable enough), clarity in pronouncing letters 100% (very capable), composing words 47% (capable enough), and accuracy spelling by 42% (capable enough). These results show that the overall average obtained in class II independent reading ability is 55%, which is categorized as "capable enough." So, combined, the reading ability of class I and II students can reach an overall average of 62% and is categorized as "capable." The distribution of combined data results from Phase A students (classes I and II) can be described in the following table:

Table 2. Reading Ability Results for Phase A Class I and Class II			
Aspect	Average Percentage	Category	
The Aspect of Accuracy in Reading	58%	Capable Enough	
The Aspect of Accuracy in Voice Clarity	51%	Capable Enough	
The Aspect of Clarity in Saying Letters	100%	Very Capable	
The Aspect of Word Arrangement Accuracy	56%	Capable Enough	
The Aspect of Accuracy in Spelling	46%	Capable Enough	
Overall Average	62 %	Capable	

These results show that although most students have sufficient reading skills, some still experience difficulties, especially with reading accuracy, sound clarity, and spelling accuracy. This means that as many as 38% of students in Phase A do not yet appear fluent and are still classified as unable to read fluently.

Independent-level reading ability was also analyzed in this study. Class I students showed an overall average of 68%, which falls into the "capable" category. Meanwhile, class II students have an average of 72%, also in the "capable" category. The following is a table of the distribution of independent-level reading ability results for Phase A (classes I and II):

Table 3. Independent Level Reading Ability Results for Phase A Class I and Class II		
Aspect	Average Percentage	Category
The Aspect of Accuracy in Reading	67%	Capable
The Aspect of Accuracy in Voice Clarity	71%	Capable
The Aspect of Clarity in Saying Letters	70%	Capable
The Aspect of Word Arrangement Accuracy	72%	Capable
The Aspect of Accuracy in Spelling	71%	Capable
Overall Average	70%	Capable

Phase A students' independent reading ability reached an average of 70%, indicating that most students already have good independent reading skills. However, 30% of students still need help to read fluently at an independent level. However, this research also found various obstacles that affected students' reading abilities. Based on information obtained during interviews with class I and II teachers, there are many obstacles faced by both students, both internal and external factors. Therefore, teachers have implemented several strategies to overcome internal factors, such as carrying out guided reading habits starting with pronouncing the alphabet, arranging syllables, arranging like words. and to overcome external factors, teachers use innovative media such as a reading reference book with the title "60 hours of smart reading without spelling". This reference book is one of the teachers' efforts to implement learning strategies as a solution, as well as implementing guided reading habits from letters and syllables to words. The hope of implementing these efforts is to develop learning strategies and minimize existing obstacles.

Discussion

By looking at all aspects of grade 1 reading ability, the research results show that the average reading ability in class 1 is 69%, which is in the Capable category. Meanwhile, class 2 got an average score of 62% in the Able category. So when combined between class 1 and class 2, the independent reading ability in phase A at MI Ats-Tsauroh Serang City is 62%, which is classified as Capable. The purpose of reading in the lower grades is mechanical. The research results show that although most students have sufficient reading skills, some still need help in several aspects, such as reading accuracy, sound clarity, and spelling accuracy. This means that as many as 38% of students in phase A still need to become fluent in reading.

Then, in reading ability at the independent level, class 1 students showed an average score of 68% and were included in the Capable category. Then, class 2 students had an average score of 72% and were also in the capable category. So, the overall reading ability at the independent level of phase A students at MI Ats-Tsauroh Serang City is 70%, which shows that most students already have good independent reading skills. However, 30% of students are still not fluent in their reading skills at an independent level.

Then, various obstacles or problems were discovered that affected students' reading abilities, both internal and external factors. This is also in line with research by Suarsih, (2023), which states that internal factors can be the leading cause of initial reading skills, such as low interest and intelligence. Then Rahmi & Dafit, (2022) also said that students who do not have a strong desire and do not want to try or have self-motivation that makes it difficult to achieve their desires will find it challenging to achieve initial reading skills. Based on research results obtained from teachers in classes 1 and 2 through interviews, Teachers had implemented several strategies to overcome problems in students' internal factors, such as psychological barriers that

hinder motivation. Research indicates various psychological factors influence students' learning motivation, particularly in early reading. Internal factors such as intelligence, talent, interest, and age can significantly affect reading difficulties and motivation (Mahendra & Saputri, 2024).

Additionally, psychological and emotional states, including self-confidence and peer interactions, play a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to engage in reading activities (Mahendra & Saputri, 2024). To address these challenges, teachers have adopted strategies that align with theories of motivation, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, expectancy theory, self-determination theory, and selfregulation theory, which are highly relevant in educational contexts (Nasution et al., 2023). For instance, teachers can enhance motivation through rewards, praise, and appropriate consequences, which have been shown to positively influence students' engagement in learning (Maharani & Winahyu, 2024). Furthermore, both internal factors (e.g., personal interests and goals) and external factors (e.g., learning environment and teaching methods) significantly impact student motivation (Nasution et al., 2023). Family support, community involvement, and the use of electronic media also play a vital role in shaping students' motivation levels (Djalia, 2022). Given the significant influence of internal and external factors on student motivation, teachers must adopt diverse and engaging teaching strategies. Teachers have implemented various learning methods to foster a more interactive and supportive learning environment in response to these challenges.

However, teachers still prepare initial reading in collaboration with various learning methods such as global reading methods, guided reading habits by mentioning the alphabet, innovative and interactive media. This is effective in increasing students' interest and beginner reading skills. It also explained that students' lack of interest in reading is the main obstacle to learning, especially in lower grades (Hanisah et al., 2024). According to (Maslow, 1943), the need for self-actualization, such as developing one's potential through learning experiences, can be achieved through engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, enjoyable learning is important in motivating students to learn, especially reading (Susantini & Kristiantari, 2021).

Then, there are several external obstacles, such as a family environment that is less supportive and causes students' learning motivation to read to be low. The teacher's inability to reach all students to learn simultaneously is a significant obstacle in teaching reading to Phase A students at MI Ats-Tsauroh Serang City. This research aligns with the results of this research Utami & Dewi, (2015), which explains that the social environment has the most substantial influence on reading activities, namely literacy habits at home and parental involvement. Another similar statement was that parents at home influence children's psychology in beginner reading activities, and motivation and support from parents will foster students' interest in reading (Windrawati et al., 2020). This is also in line with the research results of Muslih et al., (2022), which explain that the role of parents is very influential in guiding their children in learning to read, primarily if implemented at home using simple methods; it can further improve students' reading abilities.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research on the analysis of reading ability in phase A, it was found that in the results of observations, students' ability in phase A was still classified as very low regarding the achievement of initial reading skills; this lack of achievement was due to several factors such as age maturity, parental involvement, low interest in reading, unfamiliarity read independently. Overall, students in phase A showed various abilities in recognizing capital letters, which was quite good, understanding sounds, and connecting simple words into sentences. However, they were still halting and unclear in sounding them out. If this ability is not achieved, educators can involve learning methods using innovative media, such as more innovative and interactive ones. As reference material, the research results provide implications for parental support to be more active and intense in guiding and helping children get used to reading at home. It is hoped that initial reading skills in phase A will be better. As an implication of the results of this research, it is recommended that educators and parents are more active in providing enjoyable and meaningful reading stimulation, primarily through reading materials that suit their children's interests and environment and using engaging media. Continuous support from family and school is key in helping students better master beginning reading skills.

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