

## Reading and Writing Skills of Slow Learner Students in Hulu Langat Guidance Studio Malaysia

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### Abstract

*Purpose:* This study analyzes slow learners' reading and writing skills in Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, Malaysia. The research method used is qualitative. The research was conducted at Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, Malaysia, with participants of 35 students and 3 Hulu Langat Guidance Studio teachers.

*Methodology:* The data collection techniques of this research are observation, interview, and documentation. After gathering the data, data analysis will be carried out, starting with data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity uses source and method of triangulation.

*Results:* The results of this study showed that, of the 35 students at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio for reading ability in recognizing letters and reading them as syllables, words, and sentences as well as reading short texts with correct pronunciation and intonation in reading aspects, scores of 13% or very capable, 16% or capable, 25% less capable, and 46% were unable to master both indicators in reading aspects. On the ability to write obtained 21% or very capable, 29% or capable, 33% or less capable, and 17% or not able to master the indicator moves the index finger to create various forms of lines and circles, copy or imitate letters, words, or sentences from books or whiteboards on aspects of writing.

*Applications/Originality/Value:* The difference between this study with previous research lies in the research respondents, research time, measurement tools, literature used, the theory used, and research results.

### Introduction Section

The literacy culture in Indonesia still needs to improve. The low literacy culture can be seen from the habits of people who prefer to use gadgets rather than read books. Several things factor into the low habit of reading in Indonesia, i.e., the high price of books, the insufficient availability of infrastructure, the poor condition of libraries, the difficulty of reading material (books) to be accessed, not embedding the habit of reading from an early age, and the emergence of digital media which causes low interest in reading (Muslimin, 2018). Developing students' and society's interest in reading is challenging due to the individual's lack of desire, willingness, and encouragement. Student's and society's literacy skills must be possessed to improve the quality of superior human resources. With literacy, a person can communicate, understand information, and read and write well.

Reading is one of the most essential skills that students must master. Reading is a process of understanding letters, words, sentences and text to increase information and knowledge by involving sight and memory (Harianto, 2020). The stages of learning to read begin with recognizing letters, followed by recognizing words, then recognizing sentences, and so forth (Janawati et al., 2022). In the learning process, a student must be able to read well. Students' reading skills are very influential on their success in learning (Hasanah & Lena, 2021). This is because, in the learning process at school, all subject material requires students to understand concepts and theories that can be understood through reading activities. Without the ability to read, students will have difficulty understanding orders or book content and problems following the learning process (Hapsari, 2019).

Furthermore, the ability to read can make students know the information around them and process it into knowledge that can be applied in everyday life. Reading learning must receive special attention, especially from teachers, which is carried out since they are in the lower grades, grades I and II. The success of learning in the lower grades will significantly impact students' learning process in higher grades. Students who cannot read will have lower learning outcomes than students who can read. Environmental factors, including students' background and experience, also influence reading ability (Nurani et al., 2021). Four language skills are interconnected, and the process must be in sequence, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Fauziah, 2022). In addition to reading, writing is the initial stage that must be taught to students.

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According to [Sukirman \(2020\)](#), Writing is expressing ideas, thoughts, or feelings through media on paper, boards, and so on using tools such as ballpoint pens, markers, or pencils. Writing involves linguistic elements that will produce cohesive essays or sentences. Written sentences can be used as a medium to convey messages or as indirect communication tools. Writing is the initial stage after reading that must be taught to students. Students must be capable of writing to express what they see, hear, and feel. By writing, students can also communicate ideas with the vocabulary they learn. Students also learn how to write in a way easily understood by others ([Khalid, 2021](#)).

According to [Winarni et al. \(2022\)](#), writing skills are challenging to understand because you must consider various things in writing, such as vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Writing requires other skills, such as listening, speaking, and reading. Therefore, writing skills need continuous activity ([Dewi et al., 2022](#)). Difficulties can demotivate and inhibit students' writing achievement, leading to a negative attitude towards writing ([Oktora Yogi Sari, 2020](#)).

Unfortunately, not all students can read and write correctly. Some students have difficulty in learning, especially in reading and writing. Students with problems in education and slower in receiving information are called slow learners. Students who are slow learners need several repetitions to understand the material. Moreover, the thinking ability of slow learners is lower than that of students in general, causing students to lack confidence, shyness, difficulty interacting, and socializing. In addition, slow learners also have limitations in language, communication, and expressing their emotions ([Wanabuliandari et al., 2021](#)).

KKN-Dik KI MBKM PTMA is one form of activity carried out by students and lecturers between PTMA to empower and develop Indonesian communities abroad. KKN-Dik is carried out by placing all students in various Guidance Studios in peninsular Malaysia, which aims to bring a real education to Indonesian students who reside in Malaysia. The International KKN-Dik program in Malaysia, in collaboration with ALPTK PTMA, aims to conduct international community service and research and is placed according to the university's division.

Guidance Studio Hulu Langat is one of the Guidance Studios, which is a place of learning for Indonesian students scattered in Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas located at LOT 429 A, Sungai Semungkis Village, Batu 14 Hulu Langat S.D.E. which was established in November 2022 last year. The founder and administrator of the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, who also happens to be the principal, is Zamawi Chaniago, along with several staff members. Still, there are only three permanent teachers with 35 students.

There are still problems related to reading and writing skills at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio. Based on observations at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, the reading skills of most students still need to improve. Some high-level students should have been able to read well but still have difficulties and need help to read well. This is because the Guidance Studio is newly formed, and the students have never received education before, so the students are just starting to learn. Students' poor reading and writing skills are certainly one of the obstacles in the learning process because students will have difficulty following the material. Given that reading is an essential basic skill, it must receive special attention.

Aside from reading, several things must be considered, including learning facilities. Learning activities in the room require sufficient facilities to make the learning process effective. However, the learning process at Hulu Langat Guidance Studio has yet to be effective due to the limited space, which requires students to continue learning only within the confines of a blackboard. In addition, the number of teachers remains at three, and the division of classes is still mixed. There are 2 class mix-ups, i.e., classes I, II, and III in one room (the same room) and IV, V, and VI in the same room (the same room), and only separated by a blackboard. Thus, learning activities are less effective and conducive. This impacts the student's concentration and focus when learning is taking place.

The educational condition of students in primary schools, especially in the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, is far from the target achievement. Teachers must find ways to solve problems related to preliminary reading and writing because it is very crucial. Students will experience learning difficulties if they cannot read and write at an early school age. In everyday life, reading skills are fundamental both in school and the workplace. Therefore, the ability to read and write must be taught from an early age ([Widyaningrum & Hasanudin, 2019](#)).

Several researchers have researched the reading and writing skills of students who are slow learners. Based on [Pratama et al. \(2021\)](#), students who experience slow learning cannot think with an extended focus and have difficulty understanding abstract things, causing students to experience problems. Students categorized as slow learners may find themselves physically present in the classroom but struggle to think in long-term focus.

[Destari & Dafit \(2022\)](#), stated that students who have problems in writing have yet to be able to read well. Hence, they make mistakes in writing texts. In addition, students also need a more extensive vocabulary. Consequently, grade 2 elementary school students have not yet achieved the goal of writing skills. Writing difficulties experienced by students will undoubtedly have an impact on student's abilities in other aspects of language. Writing difficulties for students generally occur due to students' inability to master sentence structure, thus making students lazy in learning.

According to [Olkonemi et al. \(2023\)](#), students in Finland who are between 7 and 8 years old cannot re-read previous sentences when reading for comprehension. Students aged 7 to 8 in reading skills in first grade are later compared to 9 to 10-year-olds. Grade 3 students (8 to 9 years old) and grade 4 students (9 to 10 years old) have no difference in the skill of reading logical and irrational words in a sequence. This study results from a cognitive test that researchers conducted on students in Finland.

Based on [Supriyani et al. \(2022\)](#), From the numeracy literacy research results, slow learner students have differences with their peers, from the effects of literacy assessments still at the letter level and numeracy results still at the one digit level. The results of the identification of reading and writing difficulties from these students include: information can be understood if it is explained repeatedly, it is difficult to recognize letters and rhyme words, many mistakes when reading aloud, severe difficulty when spelling, takes a long time to copywrite, often wrong in writing letters and writing many mistakes / reversed / missing letters.

[Nurfadhillah et al. \(2021\)](#), explained that students who are slow learners have both advantages and disadvantages. The benefits of slow learner students observed: students tend to have more friends, and in the learning process, students are faster in counting. Meanwhile, the disadvantages of slow learner students are observed: students need to catch up in monitoring and responding to events around them. Students are not fluent in reading, and students' ability to read books is poor.

Furthermore, [Putri & Rati \(2022\)](#), stated that students who cannot read are affected by the lack of letter recognition, both mentioning letter symbols, showing letter symbols, and classifying letters. As a result, students cannot follow learning well. Students less skilled in recognizing letters will always have difficulty adjusting during learning.

Malaysia is one of the countries that uses two languages: Malay and English. Using these two languages allows people to be flexible and fluent in pronouncing the vocabulary. However, someone learning a new language will have difficulties, especially in pronunciation and writing ([Tambunsaribu & Galingging, 2021](#)). Students at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, Malaysia, have experienced this. Hulu Langat Guidance Studio obliges all students and teachers to speak Indonesian in the teaching and learning process. Adjusting the language they use daily (Malay-English) and the language that students will learn, Indonesian, is challenging. It is not an easy thing, and students have to learn from grammar, speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Plus, students' reading and writing skills in the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio still need to improve; this problem must be addressed immediately.

According to some of these studies, it can be said that students at Sanggar Bimbingan Hulu Langat experience difficulties in reading and writing skills, so the objective of this study is to analyze reading and writing skills and reading and writing problems experienced by slow learner students at Sanggar Bimbingan Hulu Langat, Malaysia.

## Method

The research method used is a qualitative research approach. This research data collection technique combines observation, interviews, and documentation. Then, after the data is obtained, data analysis will be carried out, starting with data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of this research data uses triangulation of sources and methods. Triangulation of sources is a technique used to verify data by checking the validity of the data that has been obtained. Triangulation of methods is a technique used to get the accuracy of data by comparing information or data ([Syarif et al., 2021](#)). The source of this research is the results of reading and writing tests conducted by researchers on SB Hulu Langat Malaysia students, with participants consisting of 35 students.

The indicators of preliminary reading and writing ([Fauziah, 2022](#)) are in [Table 1](#), and [Table 2](#).

**Table 1.** Indicators of Preliminary Reading

No	Indicators	Score			
		4	3	2	1
1.	Recognize, memorize, and differentiate the letters of the alphabet a-z and read them as syllables, words, and simple sentences.	Recognize, memorize, and differentiate the letters of the alphabet a-z, and read them as syllables, words, and simple sentences.	Recognize, memorize, and differentiate the letters of the alphabet a-z, and read them as syllables and words.	Recognize, memorize, and differentiate the letters of the alphabet a-z, and read them as syllables.	Recognize, memorize, and differentiate a few letters of the alphabet only.
2.	Read short texts with correct pronunciation and intonation.	Read short texts with correct and clear pronunciation and intonation.	Read short texts with moderately clear pronunciation and intonation.	Read short texts with vague pronunciation and intonation.	Read short texts with poor pronunciation and intonation.

**Table 2.** Indicators of Preliminary Writing

No	Indicators	Score			
		4	3	2	1
1.	Moving the index finger to make various line and circle shapes.	Moving the index finger to make various line and circle shapes.	Moving the index finger to make various line shapes and some circle shapes.	Moving the index finger to create only a few line and circle shapes.	Moving the index finger to create only a few line shapes.
2.	Copying or following letters, words, or sentences from a book or the blackboard.	Copying or following letters, words, and sentences from a book or blackboard correctly and tidily, based on the lines in the book.	Copying or following letters and words from a book or blackboard correctly and fairly tidily based on the lines in the book.	Copying or following letters from a book or blackboard correctly is tidy but not yet in the same line as the book.	Copying or following the letters of only a few letters from a book or blackboard correctly is less tidy and does not align with the book's lines.

Description:

Score 4 = Very Capable

Score 3 = Able

Score 2 = Less Able

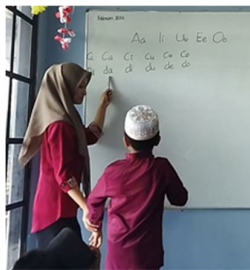
Score 1 = Not Able

## Result and Discussion

During a month-long implementation Program, KKN-Dik International in Malaysia can provide information, knowledge, and experience about the situation. Generally, the problem is dominated by the shallow reading and writing levels at Sanggar Bimbingan Hulu Langat. It can be seen from the observation of indicators of students' ability to read and write:

### Reading Indicator

1. Recognizing, memorizing, and differentiating the letters of the alphabet a-z and reading them as syllables, words, and simple sentences can be seen in [Figure 1](#), [Figure 2](#), [Figure 3](#), [Figure 4](#).



**Figure 1.** Letter Recognition test a-z



**Figure 2.** Reading syllable test

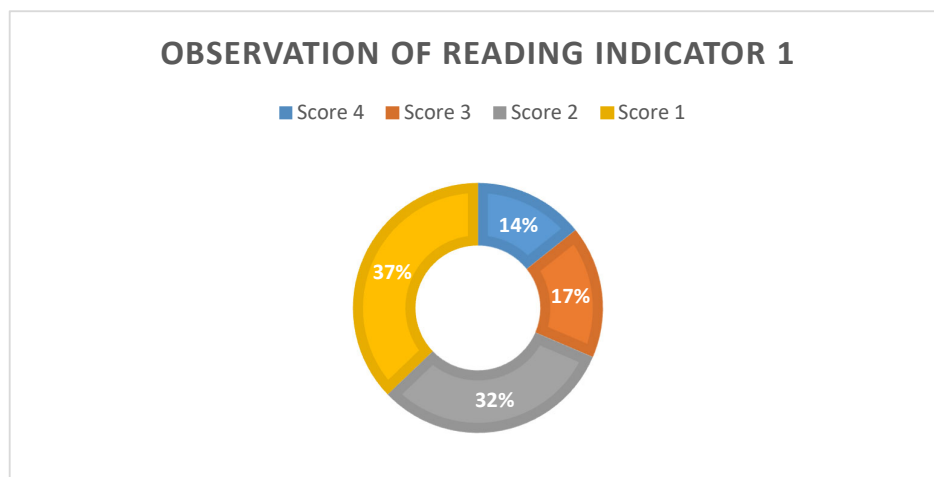


**Figure 3.** Reading syllable test



**Figure 4.** Reading sentence test

The observation chart of the test results of recognizing, memorizing, and distinguishing alphabet letters a-z, reading them as syllables, words, and simple sentences, can be seen in [Chart 1](#).



**Chart 1.** Observation of test results recognizing, memorizing, and differentiating alphabet letters as syllables, words, and simple sentences.

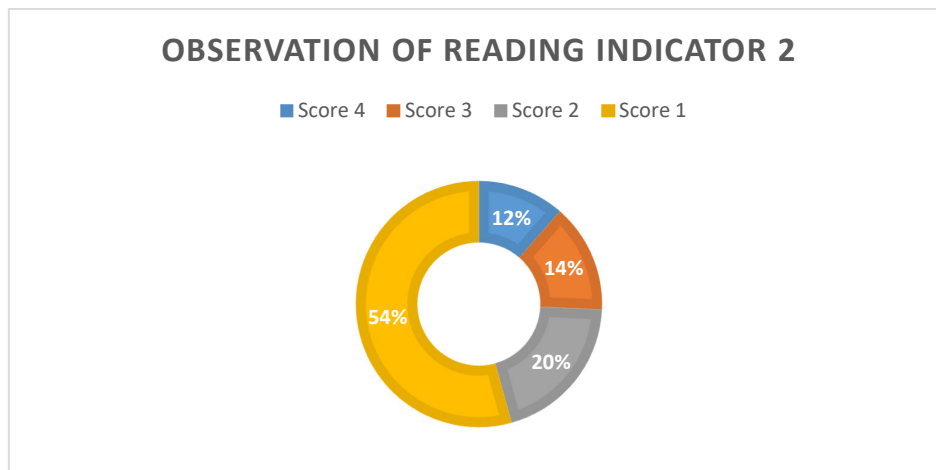
In the available data, out of 35 students at Sanggar Bimbingan Hulu Langat, four as many as 14% with indicator: recognize, memorize, and differentiate alphabet letters a-z, reading as syllables, words, and simple sentences. Students who scored 3 were 17% with indicators: recognize, memorize, differentiate alphabetic letters a-z, and read them as syllables and words. Students who scored 2 were 32% with indicators: recognize, memorize, and differentiate alphabetic letters a-z and read them as syllables. Students who scored 1 were 37% with indicators: recognize, memorize, and differentiate only a few alphabet letters.

2. Reading short text with correct pronunciation and intonation can be seen in [Figure 5](#).



**Figure 5.** Short text reading test

The chart observation of test results of reading short text with pronunciation and intonation can be seen in [Chart 2](#).



**Chart 2.** Observation results of short text reading with pronunciation and intonation

In the available data, out of 35 students at Sanggar Bimbingan Hulu Langat who scored 4 were 12% with indicators: reading short text correctly and clear pronunciation and intonation. Students who scored 3 were 14% with indicators: read short text with clear enough pronunciation and intonation. Students who scored 2 were 20% with indicators: read short text with less clear pronunciation and intonation. Students who scored 1 with 54% with indicators read short text with unclear pronunciation and intonation.

***Students face several reading difficulties:***

- a) Recognize, memorize, and read alphabet letters a-z well.  
Several students still need to memorize the alphabet A-Z, especially the letters Q, R, S, T, V, W, X, Y, and Z.
- b) Read syllables  
Students have difficulty reading syllables that have double consonants. For example, the pronunciation of “ng” and “ny”. For instance, in the syllables “nga”, “ngi”, “nge”, “ngu”, “nya”, “nyi”, and “nyu”.
- c) Read word  
Students need help combining letters and syllables for reading. Students also still spell letters and syllables. The difficulty was visible when students had to read long and complex words. For example, “pendengar” has five syllables: ‘pe,’n’ ‘de’, ‘nga’, and ‘r’. Students still have to spell the syllables one by one to read it.
- d) Pronunciation remains unclear or less suitable

In reading, such as pronouncing the word “mampu”, students can only pronounce “mapu”; there is one alphabet letter that is not legible. For example, in the pronunciation of the letter “F” in “Fenomena” students pronounce “P” as “Penomena”.

e) Students still adhere to Malaysian pronunciation, a Malay and English mixture.

For instance in Indonesian “a” students read “ei”, “c” is read as “si”, “g” is read as “ji”, “q” is read as “kyu”, “u” is read as “yu”, “g” is read as “ji”, “v” is read as “vi”, “h” is read as “eich”, “w” is read as “dabel yu”, and “y” is read as “way” which makes it difficult for students to adapt the pronunciation of Indonesian vocabulary.

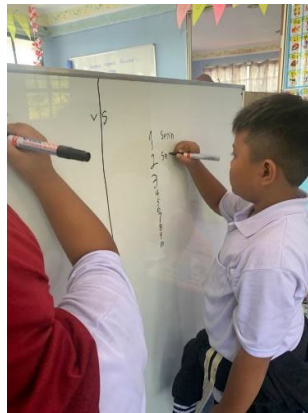
Of some of the difficulties students in Hulu Langat Guidance Studio in reading that can not recognize letters, difficulty spelling, recognizing words or decoding in a text causing students to read slowly and confusion. Students who have reading problems, find it difficult to do the tasks and questions given by the teacher. From the observation, children who have difficulty reading are not able to distinguish letters that are almost the same, the inability to read consonant combinations, and the inability to read one vocal, decapitation of inappropriate words, do not use or pay attention to punctuation signs, so they do not understand the content of the story or text being read. Students are also unable to follow the flow of thought from the text or take meaning from the text. This adversely affects the student's ability to understand the text thoroughly.

In reading the text orally should be with the right intonation and phrasing. Therefore, when reading students must be able to use proper reading techniques in order to understand and remember what they have read. By employing the proper reading techniques, students will not experience reading difficulties (Xin & Yunus, 2020). As the number of students who are avid readers increases, the quality of their writing output will improve. This includes better word choice, the ability to structure writing, increased understandable vocabulary, and the opening up of a broader way of thinking (Nita & Naini, 2022). Assigning tasks is one way for teachers to get students used to practicing reading. Students’ reading habits can improve their reading skills. The effect of assignments given to students can show that students can change reading behavior even though the task is needed, but can offer a willingness to read (Herlina, 2019)

### **Writing Indicators**

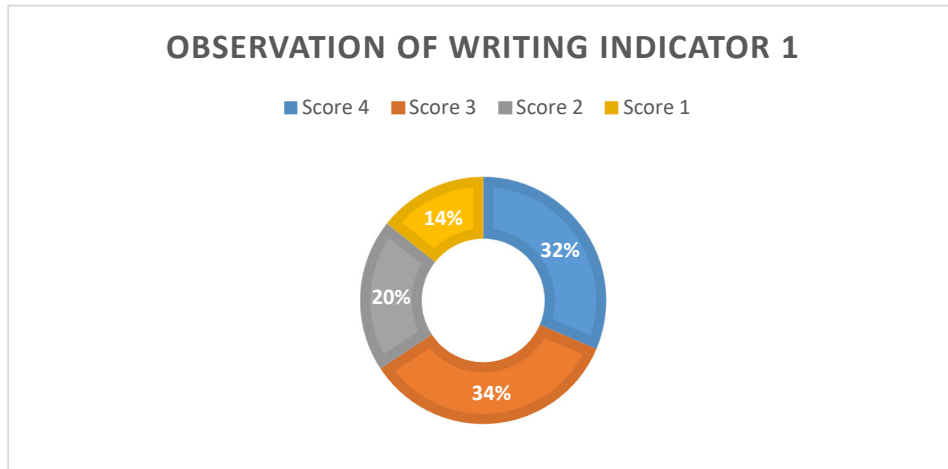
1. Moving the index finger to make different shapes of lines and circles

A figure of the ability to move the index finger test can be seen in [Figure 6](#).



**Figure 6.** Index Finger Movement Ability Test

The observation results of moving the index finger can be seen in [Chart 3](#).



**Chart 3.** Observation Results of Moving the Index Finger

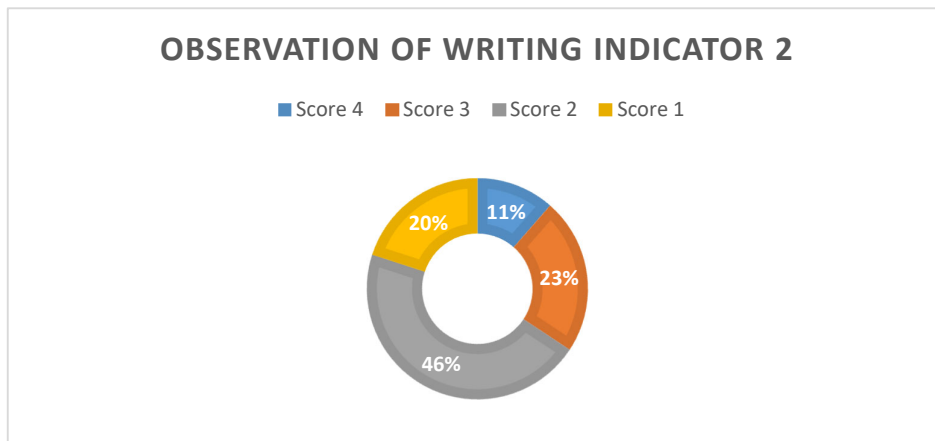
In the data provided, out of 35 students at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, 32% scored 4 with the indicator: moving the index finger to make various line and circle shapes. Students who scored 3 were 34% with the indicator: moving the index finger to make multiple line shapes and some circle shapes. Students who scored 2 were 20% with the indicator: moving the index finger to make only a few line and circle shapes. Students who scored 1 were 14% with the indicator: moving the index finger to make only a few line shapes.

2. Copying or imitating letters, words, or sentences from a book or the board  
The copying or imitating of letters, words, or sentences can be seen in [Figure 7](#).



**Figure 7.** Copying or Imitating Letters, Words, or Sentences

The observation results of copying or imitating letters, words, or sentences can be seen in [Chart 4](#).



**Chart 4.** Observation Results of Copying or Imitating Letters, Words, or Sentences



In the available data, out of 35 students at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, 11% scored 4 with the indicator: copying or imitating letters, words, and sentences from books or the board correctly and neatly according to the lines in the book. Students who scored 3 were 23% with the indicator: copying or imitating letters and words from books or the board correctly and neatly enough according to the lines in the book. Students who scored 2 were 46% with indicators: copying or imitating letters from books or the board correctly and neatly enough but still needing to be according to the lines in the book. Students who scored 1 were 20% with indicators: copying or imitating letters of only a few letters from the book or board correctly, less neat, and not according to the lines in the book.

### ***There are several writing difficulties that students need help with***

- 1) Students have problems moving their index fingers to make lines and circles neatly according to the lines in the book.
- 2) Students cannot correctly copy the letters, words, or sentences from the book or board correctly and neatly according to the size of the letters. Students are accustomed to using capital letters in all words, not only that the placement of capital letters is sometimes wrong, such as “melihat” (see) written as “mELiHaT”. Students cannot write words/sentences (still relying on the teacher's writing on the board).
- 3) Students lack focus when learning and eventually forget what they will write, making them take a long time to write. Thus, in their writing, there are still many letter mistakes in words or sentences; for example, the word “banyak” (many) becomes “banya”, and “sehingga” (so that) becomes “sehinga”.
- 4) Students are not able to read yet, so they are only able to write per-letter.

Students who experience problems related to writing are also difficult to do the tasks and problems given by the teacher. This is in line with the research at the Hulu Langat guidance studio, where students have difficulty answering or writing questions. From the observation found, the problems that dominate are (1) incompatibility in writing words, (2) student writing does not match the lines and spaces between words, and (3) it takes a long time to write, so the processing time is not enough. It is caused by such things as immaturity in memory and motor development, poor visual perception of students, excessive energy, and errors in grasping pencils ([Hanisah, 2022](#)). In this case, it shows that elementary school students have difficulty writing because the letters are messy, the letters are often misplaced, and the font size varies.

Writing practice allows students to improve their skills in holding a pencil and writing down what they think. By practicing regularly, children can develop their writing skills, recognize letters, and memorize letter shapes. Students can improve their basic writing skills by practicing regularly, as stated by ([Tursina, 2021](#)). Teachers are overly focused on materials and activities without seeing whether students can write, and the flexibility of students' hands still needs to be developed to be able to write. Students' fine motor skills may have grown well, but they are unfamiliar with using writing tools, so they still experience difficulties. Students' basic writing skills are still low; this can be seen from some students who have not been able to coordinate the small muscles of their hands in writing, and teachers are also not using other methods that are more effective in writing. Students' basic writing skills are a crucial aspect of their future development.

Several strategies can be used to improve students' writing skills, providing insight for students and teachers about writing difficulties. One of the strategies teachers can use is to provide feedback to students to produce better writing so that it becomes one of the most influential contributions for students to develop more critical writing that is more qualified in the future. Writing is not an instant activity but a progressive skill obtained through several processes. Therefore, the development of this skill has attracted much study and teaching from the early days of language teaching. The results of other studies reveal that writing difficulties experienced by students can come from within students and from their environment; to overcome writing problems, teachers can use media and learning models that can attract students' interest in writing ([Siswati, 2022](#)).



**Figure 9.** Interview

The results of interviews and observations show that students at the newly formed Hulu Langat Guidance Studio struggle with reading and writing. This difficulty can be attributed to several factors, including the background of students who have never received formal education. Additionally, the use of two languages in Malaysia, where students are learning a new language (Indonesian), adds to their challenges as they are just beginning to grasp it. Furthermore, the limited space in the learning environment restricts students to learning within the confines of the blackboard. The studio has only three permanent teachers, and the class arrangements are flexible. Additionally, the availability of whiteboards, which are

essential for teaching, is limited. As a result, learning activities are less effective and conducive, impacting students' concentration and focus during learning.

## Conclusion

The research results at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio show that students have difficulty reading and writing slow learners. Adjusting the language they use daily (Malay-English) and the language that students will learn, Indonesian, is challenging. It is a difficult thing; students have to learn from grammar, speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Moreover, students' reading and writing skills at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio still need to improve. Most students in Hulu Langat Guidance Studio need help with reading and writing. The study results indicate that students' reading and writing skills at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio in Malaysia are far from the target achievement. The challenges faced by students include difficulty differentiating similar-looking letters, pronouncing syllables with double vowels or consonants, and reading disjointedly. The difficulties faced by students at the Hulu Langat Guidance Studio, Malaysia, include difficulty differentiating letters that are similar in shape, difficulty distinguishing letters that sound similar, problem copying or modeling letters, words, or sentences from books or the blackboard, difficulty pronouncing syllables that have double vowels or consonants and difficulty reading words, the challenges faced by students include a disjointed reading process and an incorrect pronunciation process. Teachers play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process as they guide students to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Teachers must overcome students who have difficulty learning to read by providing motivation and direction and accompanying and giving special attention. An alternative way to do this is to offer additional hours. In addition, teachers can hold discussions with parents to address these issues.

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