Learning Difficulties in Beginning Reading for Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Reading skills in the early grades play an important role as the basis or foundation for successful academic activities. However, there are still many students who need help learning to read. The research to analyzing the difficulties of beginning reading. To describe the factors that cause learning difficulties in beginning reading. To explain solutions that can be used in overcoming learning difficulties in beginning reading. This research uses qualitative research methods with phenomenological design. The place and time of the research was Tungalsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta Indonesia. The subjects of this research were teachers, guardians, and second-grade students. A credibility test was used to test the validity of the data obtained. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis technique with flow method. The results showed that students' difficulties in beginning reading are recognizing letters, not being able to string syllables, and so on. Factors that influence learning difficulties in beginning reading, namely: lack of student interest in learning, lack of parental attention, and so on. Alternative solutions to early reading difficulties include; teachers holding additional hours for students who still have difficulty learning to read, teachers paying special attention to students who have difficulty reading, and so on. In this research reveals the factors and alternative solutions used by teachers in overcoming elementary school students' reading learning difficulties.

Keywords: learning difficulties, beginning reading, primary school

Introduction

Learning difficulty is a condition where students experience obstacles in the learning process, so they cannot achieve maximum learning results. However, learning problems still need to be handled appropriately and are often underestimated. This problem requires special and prompt intervention so that students can complete their schooling properly (Hartati Rismauli, 2022; Rahim et al., 2023; Rahman, 2023).

Learning in elementary schools has yet to fully overcome the learning difficulties experienced by students, especially in the problem of students' reading difficulties which teachers often overlook. Reading is the process by which a reader obtains the message conveyed by the author through written media (Aprinawati, 2018; Bawamenewi, 2021; Kurnia, 2017; Satriaman et al., 2019). Reading activities are influential and important in obtaining all the information that is developing today, so reading skills must be improved. (Dewi, 2019) expresses the opinion that reading activities are crucial for the continuity of all kinds of learning processes because various knowledge is conveyed easily, requiring students to have reading skills. This is also the opinion (Susilowati et al., 2023) that reading is one of the skills students need in all learning activities at school.

Reading activities in elementary school are divided into beginning reading and advanced reading. Beginning reading is the stage of learning to read for early-grade elementary school students, namely grades I and II (Zahra et al., 2021). Reading skills have an important position and influence further skills. Through this beginning reading process, it is hoped that students will recognize letters, syllables, words, and sentences and be able to read in various contexts. Meanwhile, advanced reading is carried out in higher grades or grades III, IV, V and VI (Marlina, 2014 & Silfiyah et al., 2021).

The results of previous research suggest that by reading the beginning, the student's cognitive process is taking place to find out every meaning written in it. Early reading is done by introducing written language, recognizing letters, and spelling. In these activities, students carry out activities to voice the symbols of language sounds (Mabunga et al, 2019; Rahma & Dafit, 2021). The initial stage of beginning reading is when students are introduced to the alphabetical letters from A/a to Z/z. The letters need to be remembered and pronounced according to their sound. After students are introduced to the shape of the alphabet and pronounce it, the next step is introducing them to spelling syllables, reading words, and reading short sentences (Maria, 2023 & Wardani et al., 2020).

Students start learning to read when they are five to six years old. Some children have indeed learned to read earlier than their friends but it can be seen that the ability of children is very different some have earlier capture than their friends and vice versa, new children can be said to have difficulty reading at the age of seven or eight years because in general children at that age can read independently without the help of others. There are still some students who are unable to read, such as at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta, grade 2, there are students who are unable to read. This inability can affect the learning process and learning outcomes at school.

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Learning difficulties greatly influence students in carrying out learning in elementary schools and teachers must be able to have strategies for handling children who experience learning difficulties, especially in reading. Teachers often approach students who have difficulty learning to read so that the child is helped and stays focused on learning and is not left behind by other friends (Maghfiroh et al., 2019).

The results of previous research related to learning difficulties have been widely conducted. The research results (Akyol & Boyaci-Altinay, 2019) in Turkey, concluded that students often make reading errors such as skipping, adding, misreading a word, and connecting certain sounds. This study also revealed that when appropriate methods and techniques are used to overcome the problem of reading difficulties, the student's reading skills can be improved. The research results (Morgan, 2014) in the United States concluded that an effective teaching approach will help learning and lead all students to do their best work. The results of research by (Norudin, 2018) in Malaysia show that children with dyslexia have difficulty reading and identifying letter names, inaccurate word reading, spelling errors, and letter reversals especially between b-d, m-n, v-y, q-p, and v-u, hesitation and confusion in identifying letter names and word reading, and also the inaccurate orientation of writing alphabet letters. The results of a study by (Mirza, 2022) in Bangladesh also concluded that reading is a segmentation of a text and the intellectual approach that teachers should have ideas about various genres of text is important for their environment. In order to achieve language targets, children should be nurtured early to learn letters phonetically and be introduced to different word groups.

The results of previous research suggest that educators or teachers must know and understand how to handle children with learning difficulties in beginning reading at elementary school. In this study, the author intends to describe the early reading skills of children with learning difficulties at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta a based on observations and findings in the field.

Based on this description, the research objectives in this article are threefold. (1) To analyze the difficulties of learning to read. (2) To describe the difficulties of beginning reading for grade 2 students of Tungalsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta. (3) To explain the solutions provided by teachers to overcome the difficulties in beginning reading of grade 2 students of was Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta.

Methods

Research Approach

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with a phenomenological design. One of the characteristics of qualitative descriptive research is to explore a social problem or phenomenon and develop a specific understanding of the phenomenon (Dafit & Ramadan, 2020). Qualitative research is research to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects descriptively through words and language (Adlini et al., 2022 & Fadli, 2021). This research design is phenomenology. Phenomenological research design is a view of thinking that emphasizes human subjective experience (Nuryana et al., 2019). Meanwhile, according to (Rorong, M. J., 2020) phenomenology is an experience-oriented research design to reveal special phenomena. From the above statement, qualitative research is a phenomenon formed in descriptive words. Meanwhile, phenomenological design is research by understanding the meaning of events about individuals or groups of greetings in certain situations.

Location and Object

This research was conducted at Tungalsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta, road. Sere I, Pajang, District. Laweyan, Surakarta City, Central Java School Year 2023. This location was chosen because it refers to the phenomenon that occurred when the researcher made observations.

Collection and Validity Data

The subjects of this research are the second-grade teacher or guardian of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta second-grade students of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta who have difficulty learning to read at the beginning, and parents or guardians of second-grade students who have difficulty learning to read.

Data collection techniques were conducted by observation, interview, and documentation. According to (Sutama, 2019) data collection techniques in qualitative research are interviews, observation, and documentation methods. Learners carry out learning activities in class, researchers analyze the reading difficulties experienced by students. To obtain data, researchers conducted observations and interviews to analyze the reading difficulties experienced by students.

Data validity uses triangulation of sources and methods. According to (Creswell., 2018), Triangulation of sources and methods is combining two or more research methods, data sources or theoretical approaches in a study. Triangulation was carried out to strengthen the research findings. The data analysis technique uses the flow method. According to (Sutama, 2019) the flow method is a data analysis technique through several stages including data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The stages of data analysis are as follows:

1. Data collection

   In this case, the researcher collects research data through interview results, observation, and documentation in the field objectively.

2. Reduction data
   Reducing data means summarizing, selecting key points, focusing on important things, and looking for themes and patterns.
3. Data presentation
   Data presentation is an organized set of information that allows concluding and taking action.
4. Drawing conclusions
   Concluding is the final stage in data analysis, where the data compiled is compared to conclude.

Result and Discussion

Beginning Reading Difficulties

After conducting observations, interviews with grade 2 teachers, students, and student guardians, as well as reviewing documentation, data related to the difficulty of beginning reading among grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School in Surakarta were obtained. Based on the analysis of 27 students, 6 students faced difficulties in beginning reading. Based on the analysis of beginning reading in grade 2 students of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta are classified as not good. There are still many students who look difficult for some students who need help with reading beginning.

The following are the difficulties faced by grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta. a) Difficulty memorizing letters, there are still students in grade 2 of Negri Tunggulsari II Surakarta Elementary School who have yet to memorize various alphabetical letters, which is one of the obstacles for them to read. Based on the observations and interviews, students who do not recognize letters have difficult memories and genetic influences from their parents. b)Not yet able to string syllables, some grade 2 students need help stringing syllables. The initial process of reading is stringing syllables such as: ba, bi, bu, be, bo, ca, ci, cu, ce, co, da, di, du, de, do, ka, ki, ku, ke, ko and so on (Rafiqa, 2020). At this stage, some learners still find it difficult to remember and assemble syllables, but there are already some learners who can know letters. c) Reading word by word, and learning difficulties in reading word by word are also experienced by grade 2 students of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta. Learners are unable to read the next word they stop after reading the word. This is usually due to failing to master decoding skills, understanding the meaning of words, and lacking reading fluency. This is also the opinion of (Arslan & Nalinci, 2014) a skilled decoder is a reader who can read isolated words quickly, accurately, and silently.

Furthermore, the difficulties that still very often occur in beginning reading in grade 2 students at the Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta are: a) Not yet able to read diphthong letters, grade 2 students also have difficulty reading diphthong letters. Students who have difficulty pronouncing diphthongs usually also have difficulty with double phonemes such as /ng/, /ny/, /kh/, /ai/, /au/, /oi/ and so on, for example the phoneme /ng/ they recognize letters with [en] or [ge] then pronounce it as [en-ge], [neg], [nege] (Yuliana, 2017). Reading activities, if done regularly, will facilitate their reading. Not yet able to read consonant letters and vocal letters, it can be seen that some grade 2 students have not been able to read consonant letters. b) Difficulty pronouncing consonant sounds is accompanied by pronouncing letters that symbolize consonant letters. If children can only mention vocal letters, the lack of mastery of consonant letters is because the teacher explains by demonstration and the tools used to introduce consonant letters are not diverse (Zahra & Irdamurni, 2021). Grade 2 students are also sometimes unable to distinguish several vowels and consonants symbolized in one letter, therefore they are not yet fluent in reading because they have yet to combine vowels and consonants. It was also conveyed (Pertiwi, 2016) that the child's ability to combine 1 vowel letter and 1 consonant letter depends on the child's knowledge of the sound of vowels and consonants because the child's knowledge of letters is not much so it is difficult when combining or pronouncing letters. c) Incorrect paraphrasing, some grade 2 students often make beheadings (stop reading) at inappropriate places or do not pay attention to punctuation, especially commas.

It is also evident that the abilities hindering students in beginning reading include the following: a) Not yet able to write, the impact of learning difficulties in beginning reading is that some grade 2 students still have difficulty writing. In writing letters in words or sentences, many letters still need to be added. For example, the word "kotor" becomes "koto" the word "minggu" becomes "mingu". b) Difficulty distinguishing letters, some grade 2 students of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta still need help distinguishing letters whose pronunciation and shape are almost the same. Some students who have difficulty distinguishing letters are between the letters "b-d, p-q, w-m, n-u" (Yani, 2019). Because the pronunciation or shape of the letters are almost the same.

Based on this explanation, the difficulties in reading grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta are very diverse. Starting from difficulties in recognizing letters, students have not been able to string syllables, difficulty reading word by word, students have not been able to write, difficulty distinguishing letters, students have not been able to read diphthongs, difficulty reading consonant letters, and difficulty reading vowels, as well as incorrect paraphrasing.

Factors of Students' Reading Difficulties

Based on the analysis data obtained, several factors exist in students' beginning reading difficulties. One of the factors causing reading learning difficulties includes both external and internal factors. Based on the data obtained by the researcher, in his research on the factors that cause learning difficulties in beginning reading in grade 2 students of Tunggulsari II State

Elementary School, Surakarta, 6 factors cause students to experience difficulties in beginning reading. The following are the factors contributing to difficulty in beginning reading for grade 2 students at Tungalsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta:

a. Genetic factors usually occur in children who experience dyslexia or learning disorders characterized by reading difficulties. Dyslexia is one of the factors characterized by students' difficulties in reading and writing.
b. Students are lazy to learn, students need more motivation when learning they tend to have their abilities and the learning provided by the teacher is less varied so students get bored quickly.
c. Learners find it difficult to concentrate when learning, there is no desire in children to learn they still receive outside distractions and do not focus on themselves to learn. Children with dyslexia and learning difficulties also find it difficult to accept orders, so they are often considered to have concentration problems.
d. Students prefer to be busy or play alone or with friends because the teacher's method is less fun. The teacher's lack of assertiveness also makes students underestimate the teacher.
e. Lack of parental attention in teaching reading to children. Parents do not facilitate children in learning to read, such as providing interesting reading, because they rely on textbooks only.
f. The teacher's handling of early reading learning difficulties is less attractive to students. In adjusting how to handle reading learning difficulties, teachers have methods, but these methods are also sometimes difficult for students to accept well because students have different ways of learning.

Reading is one of the language's receptive processes, stringing words into understood meanings. Reading has several stages, namely beginning reading, then continuing with advanced reading with a higher level of difficulty with advanced reading. However, some students have difficulty reading or stringing words, and there are several factors experienced by students in learning to read at the beginning. The factors experienced are diverse in general external factors, namely factors outside the student's ability and internal factors or factors within the student.

It can be concluded that the internal factors in the difficulties of beginning reading of grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta, namely, genetic factors usually occur in children who experience dyslexia or learning disorders characterized by reading difficulties, students are lazy to learn, students have difficulty concentrating, students prefer to be busy or play alone or with their friends because the teacher's method is considered less fun. External factors in the difficulties of beginning reading of grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta, namely, lack of attention by parents and the teacher's method in learning to read are less attractive to students.

This is according to statements from the teacher or homeroom teacher of grade Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta. As stated (Pfost, 2015) when learning to read and write, a person must acquire a certain set of rules or standards about how written symbols relate to spoken language so there are various influencing factors. This is the opinion (Widyaningrum & Hasanudin, 2019) that there are several influencing factors, namely first, behavior, children who have low concentration or whose attention is easily distracted; second, perception, namely children who have difficulty distinguishing letters. This theory shows that the factors that cause difficulties in learning to read begin from within students, especially in behavior.

Alternative Solutions to Reading Learning Difficulties

Several solutions were provided by teachers in overcoming the learning difficulties of grade 2 students of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta, including the following:

a. Teachers provide extra hours for learners who have difficulty with beginning reading.

The teacher's first solution is to provide additional hours after school for students who have difficulty learning to read at the beginning. As when the researchers made observations on October 26-27, 2023. During after-school hours, the teacher asked the five learners to learn to read individually. According to (Anggraeni, 2019) this program is often called curricular, because it provides remedial teaching to students with reading difficulties.

b. Teachers pay special attention to learners who have difficulty learning to read at the beginning.

The second solution the teacher provides in overcoming children's learning difficulties in reading in grade 2 is giving more attention to children. As stated (Mardika, 2019) the strategy carried out by teachers in overcoming students' reading learning difficulties is to continue to patiently provide guidance starting from the basics until children are able to read fluently and make learning media to increase interest in learning. Based on the results of observations in class 2, researchers saw the special treatment given by teachers to the five children who had difficulty learning to read. The attention given to the teacher that some students write the wrong letters during the learning process, and then the teacher helps guide them to write the letters correctly, such as correcting the writing "manga" to "mangga".

c. The school organizes literacy activities every Tuesday morning before the school day.

The teacher's third solution is to hold reading literacy every Tuesday morning before learning activities. Based on the results of observations, researchers saw that on Tuesday mornings the teacher carried out literacy activities that differentiated between students who had difficulty learning to read and those who had read fluently, namely the reading book. The reading book for students who have difficulty learning to read is the AISM book with teacher guidance and then those who have read fluently are fairy tale books. From literacy activities, there are many benefits from activities for all students. This is also the opinion (Wijayanti et al., 2023) that the literacy movement can have a good impact, namely maintaining students' interest in reading, increasing fluency and understanding, by listening, reading, speaking, writing, and selecting information).

d. Using the AISM (Anak Islam Suka Membaca) reading book

The fourth solution by the teacher is the use of AISM books. Based on the results of observations, teachers use

learning media in the form of AISM books for children who have difficulty learning to read at the beginning. The implementation of beginning reading, namely with AISM media, is carried out individually or privately, so that the teacher is easier to give reading scores whether continued or repeated. This is also in accordance with the opinion (Daryanti, 2022) that applying AISM media which is almost the same as the iqra method teaches children to read by combining vowels and consonants without spelling.

Students acquire good reading skills when the teacher effectively packages reading learning. Then, the teacher must be able to play a role in arousing students' motivation to learn to read and prepare interesting reading sources. This is by the opinion (Diansyah et al., 2019) that "teachers have a strategic role in improving children's reading skills. This strategic role involves the teacher as a facilitator, motivator, learning resource, and organizer of the learning process. However, it is known that learning to read to children is more challenging than expected. Their reading abilities are also very different in one class; some are able to read quickly, but some are also difficult or experience obstacles. This reading difficulty is called dyslexia, which comes from the Greek language, which means reading difficulties. Common characteristics of children with dyslexia are difficulties in processing phonology, spelling, and speed of visual-auditory response (Irdamurni et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The learning skills of beginning reading of grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta can be concluded that the students' beginning reading is "not good". This is because many students still have difficulty reading, and there needs to be special handling for children who have difficulty reading. The difficulties in beginning reading include: 1) difficulty in recognizing letters, 2) difficulty in stringing syllables, 3) difficulty in reading word by word, 4) difficulty in writing, 5) difficulty in distinguishing letters, 6) difficulty in reading diphthongs, 7) difficulty in reading consonant letters, 8) difficulty in reading vowels, and 9) incorrect paraphrasing.

Factors that influence the difficulties of beginning reading of grade 2 students at Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta are very diverse, but teachers try to provide strategies in handling difficulties in beginning reading because grade 2 is a transitional period in reading in the next class, the reading required is advanced reading. The following are factors in student reading difficulties including 1) lack of interest in learning grade 2 students at school, 2) lack of attention from parents or guardians of second-grade students, 3) genetic factors or dyslexia, 4) students who have difficulty concentrating, 5) lazy learners, and 6) the method given by the teacher is less attractive to students.

From the factors in the difficulty of reading the beginning of second-grade students, the teacher handles various solutions, and the success of handling reading difficulties is expected in the continuity of learning. The following is applied in handling the learning difficulties of beginning reading in class 2 of Tunggulsari II State Elementary School, Surakarta, namely 1) teachers hold additional hours for students who still have difficulty learning to read, 2) teachers pay special attention to students who have difficulty reading, 3) schools hold literacy activities every Tuesday morning before learning activities begin, 4) teachers use the book Anak Islam Suka Membaca (AISM) in facilitating student reading.

Acknowledgement

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