

## Description Of First-Grade Students' Initial Reading Ability Based On The Early Grade Reading Skill Assessment (Egra) Test

Novi Safitri<sup>1\*</sup>, Rina Heryani<sup>2</sup>, and Soleh Hidayat<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

\*novisafitri29@upi.edu

**Abstract.** Students' low initial reading ability often hinders their learning. Therefore, it is important to know the extent of students' early reading abilities so that any problems that arise can be addressed early on. This study aims to describe the initial reading abilities of first-grade students. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this study involved 60 students from two schools, as well as two first-grade teachers, to gain insight into the factors that hinder students' initial reading abilities in first grade. The initial reading test used the Early Grade Reading Skill Assessment (EGRA) instrument. The results showed that 80% of students still needed guidance, 12% of students were in the good category, and 8% were in the sufficient category. Based on the EGRA assessment indicators, the highest percentage was in letter recognition ability at 43%, while reading comprehension was the lowest at 8%. Other indicators included reading syllables at 34%, reading words at 28%, listening at 29%, and fluency at 19%. The factors causing low reading skills included students' low interest and motivation to read, insufficiently varied teaching strategies and media, a lack of facilities and infrastructure for reading instruction, and the role and support of parents at home. The implication of this research is to determine students' initial reading abilities and their contributing factors, so that strategic steps can be taken to address the low initial reading skills of elementary school students.

**Keywords:** reading beginnings, EGRA, first-grade, elementary school, literacy.

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### INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology and information flow demands that individuals possess good reading skills. Reading skills enable a person to understand the ideas, concepts, or written information conveyed by others. Reading activity is a process undertaken by an individual to obtain information or messages that the author wishes to convey thru written words (Putri et al., 2023). Reading skills cannot be acquired instantly, but thru a process and practice. Therefore, reading skills need to be learned from an early age. Generally, children are first introduced to reading thru an initial stage called beginning reading. This stage serves as the starting point because it forms the foundation for advanced reading development.

The initial stage of reading instruction in elementary school plays a significant role in the learning process of early grade students. At this stage, students learn to develop reading skills and master the necessary reading techniques, as well as effectively understand the content of the reading material (Wulandari et al., 2022). In the lower grades, students will begin with the initial reading learning stage. This stage is an important foundation for developing further reading abilities, such as reading quickly, reading widely, and reading comprehension. Therefore, teachers have a strong focus on optimizing the development of students' early reading abilities (Chairina, 2020).

In the Merdeka Curriculum, Indonesian language subjects develop receptive language skills (listening, reading, and viewing) and productive language skills (speaking and presenting, as well as writing) (Kemendikbud, 2022). Reading is one of the skills that is taught in a significant portion in elementary schools. This is because all subjects are inseparable from students' reading skills. Reading is the process of processing the meaning found in words or writing. Reading allows students to expand their vocabulary and knowledge. Therefore, early reading ability significantly influences further reading skills. This growth in reading skills requires teacher attention, and starting to read in first grade is the foundation for further learning (Putri et al., 2023).

Ideally, elementary school students are expected to be able to read simple words fluently from texts and/or screenings they watch about themselves, their families, health, and/or their surroundings; and to understand the content of texts and/or screenings they watch about themselves, their families, health, and/or their surroundings. This ideal condition aligns with the demands of the Learning Achievement in Phase A of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the importance of reading literacy as a basic competency that students must possess (Kemendikdasmen, 2025).pratiw Early reading serves as the foundation for literacy, helping children learn letters, string syllables together, understand words and simple sentences, which equips them for learning all subjects.

However, based on research conducted by Pratiwi & Wiarsih (2025) students were found to have difficulties with initial reading, such as not recognizing letters well, omitting or substituting letters, difficulty spelling, adding letters, and reversing letters. Additionally, research conducted by Pertiwi & Pratikno (2024) showed that students still couldn't read well, with some still misspelling. The causes were external factors like parental support, as well as internal factors stemming from the students' own motivation and interest.

This low level of early reading skills serves as the basis for various efforts to improve this ability. Before determining the appropriate teaching strategy, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth identification of students' early reading skills. This step is important so that the learning strategies implemented are truly appropriate to their needs and can effectively overcome the difficulties experienced by students. Thru the process of analysis and identification, teachers can determine which aspects of ability are still weak and identify the most appropriate form of intervention. One way to gain this understanding is by administering initial reading tests or assessments as a basis for designing more focused and meaningful learning. As a teacher,

there are certainly many learning strategies that can be used to improve students' early reading skills.

One of the most frequently used early reading assessments internationally is the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) instrument. EGRA was developed to provide a set of basic reading skills assessments for developing countries in order to monitor early reading status in primary schools. This assessment tool was first implemented in Gambia and Senegal in 2007 (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). Since then, this reading assessment methodology has been adapted for use in over 60 countries, in 100 languages, as of March 2014.

The EGRA instrument was developed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with the aim of evaluating students' reading proficiency at an early level. This instrument is also used to measure the development of reading literacy skills (Sari et al., 2024). In its application, the EGRA method consists of four stages: Exposure (Introduction), Generalization, Reinforcement, and Application. The Exposure stage helps students recognize letters, words, and language structures thru various media. The Generalization stage teaches word patterns and relationships between letters to build better understanding. The Reinforcement stage serves to strengthen students' understanding thru repeated practice, while the Application stage provides opportunities for students to apply reading skills in various situations (Pilu et al., 2020). This assessment is capable of diagnosing various reading difficulties experienced by early grade students. This test is administered individually, with an estimated time of approximately 15 minutes per student, and reviews the following aspects: (1) recognizing letters, (2) reading words, (3) reading nonsense words, (4) reading fluency and comprehension of the reading content, and (5) listening comprehension. (Hasanah, A. and Lena, M., 2021).

Thru this research, it is hoped that the level of early reading ability and its contributing factors can be determined, so that it can be used as a reference for taking strategic steps in making various efforts to improve students' early reading skills in elementary school.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method used is descriptive with a qualitative approach, which was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. According to Sugiyono (2019), the descriptive qualitative method is a research method used to investigate natural object conditions where the researcher is the key instrument. The subjects of this study are 60 first-grade students from two public elementary

schools in Garut Regency. Additionally, two first-grade teachers are involved as supporting data.

### Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

To collect data, in this study the researcher used the EGRA test instrument, as well as the teacher interview instrument. The EGRA test instrument was used to identify students' initial reading skills levels based on the indicators contained within it, including letter reading, syllable reading, word reading, listening comprehension, fluency, and reading comprehension.

The categorization for scoring initial reading skills in the EGRA is as follows:

≥ 80% (≥ 119 points) = Good

60-79% (89-118 points) = Sufficient

< 60% (< 89 points) = Needs Guidance

Interviews were used to determine students' initial reading skills from the teachers' perspective and to gather information about factors contributing to difficulties in teaching students reading skills.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results of Student Reading Tests with the EGRA Instrument

After conducting the test using the EGRA instrument, the test results for all students were as follows:

**Table 1.** Table of Initial Reading Test Results

No.	Nama Siswa	Skor						Total Score	Percentage	Category
		Reading letters	Reading syllables	Reading words	Listening	Fluency	Reading Comprehension			
1	AWM	13	0	0	0	0	0	13	9%	Need Guidance
2	ASMQ	8	0	0	0	0	0	8	5%	Need Guidance
3	ASRNM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
4	AV	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
5	AH	13	4	3	1	0	0	21	14%	Need Guidance
6	AQZ	13	4	3	1	0	0	21	14%	Need Guidance
7	ARN	23	9	10	3	80	2	127	85%	Good
8	FNR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
9	FH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance

10	HFZ	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1%	Need Guidance
11	IMH	9	0	0	0	0	0	9	6%	Need Guidance
12	JPL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
13	KRY	12	1	0	0	0	0	13	9%	Need Guidance
14	MR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
15	MYM	14	2	0	0	0	0	16	11%	Need Guidance
16	MAKA	14	2	0	0	0	0	16	11%	Need Guidance
17	MIK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
18	MJ	8	1	0	0	0	0	9	6%	Need Guidance
19	MRHU	29	9	8	2	59	3	110	74%	Sufficient
20	NRS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
21	RA	16	3	2	0	0	0	21	14%	Need Guidance
22	RZ	14	6	4	2	0	0	26	17%	Need Guidance
23	RN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
24	RABS	29	10	10	3	68	2	122	82%	Good
25	SKZ	25	2	2	3	0	0	32	21%	Need Guidance
26	SSAL	22	2	3	1	0	0	28	19%	Need Guidance
27	VBN	23	10	10	2	82	5	132	89%	Good
28	YSRNM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
29	PN	23	9	10	3	80	4	129	87%	Good
30	AAS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
31	ASU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
32	AAA	19	4	0	0	0	0	23	15%	Need Guidance
33	AHP	13	7	0	0	0	0	20	13%	Need Guidance
34	AAH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
35	CHS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
36	CKK	16	8	9	3	55	0	91	61%	Sufficient
37	EAHF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
38	FM	25	9	6	1	23	0	64	43%	Need Guidance
39	HHH	12	0	0	0	0	0	12	8%	Need Guidance
40	HLMN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
41	INS	27	6	6	2	15	0	56	38%	Need Guidance
42	KHG	28	8	10	2	77	5	130	87%	Good
43	KAQ	12	4	3	1	0	0	20	13%	Need Guidance
44	KGA	27	0	0	0	0	0	27	18%	Need Guidance
45	MAR	29	9	10	2	78	5	133	89%	Good
46	MN	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	13%	Need Guidance
47	MDRS	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	13%	Need Guidance
48	MGG	11	7	9	2	52	0	81	54%	Need Guidance
49	NNH	20	10	8	2	74	2	116	78%	Sufficient
50	NAS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	Need Guidance
51	RAN	17	5	6	3	17	0	48	32%	Need Guidance
52	RAE	27	9	8	2	50	2	98	66%	Sufficient
53	RDY	11	7	5	0	21	0	44	30%	Need Guidance
54	TS	18	8	2	0	0	0	28	19%	Need Guidance
55	TK	17	5	1	3	0	0	26	17%	Need Guidance
56	YSAY	23	1	0	0	0	0	24	16%	Need Guidance
57	ZAP	21	0	0	0	0	0	21	14%	Need Guidance

58	ZMH	14	10	9	3	58	1	95	64%	Sufficient
59	ZAH	11	4	2	3	11	0	31	21%	Need Guidance
60	SNC	25	9	10	2	88	5	139	93%	Good

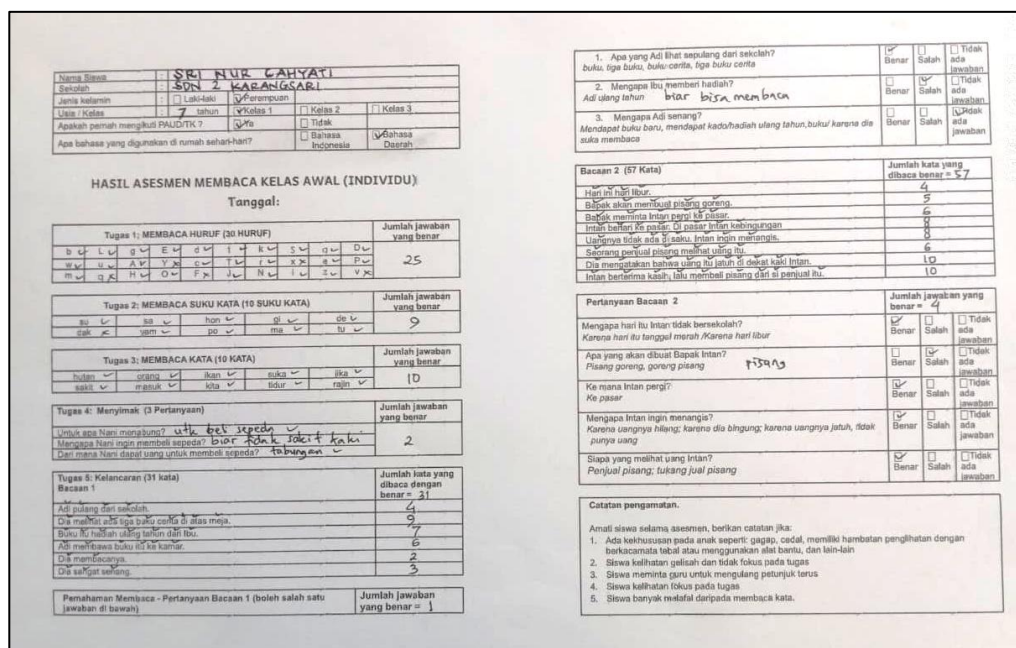
Based on the results of the reading test, the overall average percentage shows that students only scored 25% of the maximum possible score. This indicates a low level of students' initial reading skills. The results of the reading test scores by category are shown in the following table.

**Table 2.** Table of Percentage Categories for Initial Reading Tests

No.	Category	Number of Student	Percentage
1	Good	7	12%
2	Sufficient	5	8%
3	Need Guidance	48	80%

Out of a total of 60 students, 7 students (12%) were categorized as good, 5 students (8%) were in the sufficient category, and the majority, 48 students (80%), were classified as needing guidance. These results indicate that the majority of students are still experiencing difficulties with early reading skills. According to Abidin (2012), initial reading is a very important basic stage in reading instruction because it serves as the foundation for literacy skills in subsequent levels. Difficulties at this stage, such as recognizing letters, syllables, and words, can hinder the overall reading comprehension process.

Here are the results of the EGRA test for one student with a "Good" ability category.



**Hasil Asesmen Membaca Kelas Awal (Individu)**  
Tanggal:

**Tugas 1: MEMBACA HURUF (30 HURUF)** Jumlah jawaban yang benar: 25

**Tugas 2: MEMBACA SUKU KATA (10 SUKU KATA)** Jumlah jawaban yang benar: 9

**Tugas 3: MEMBACA KATA (10 KATA)** Jumlah jawaban yang benar: 10

**Tugas 4: Menyimak (3 Pertanyaan)** Jumlah jawaban yang benar: 2

**Tugas 5: Kelancaran (31 kata) Bacaan 1** Jumlah kata yang dibaca dengan benar = 31

**Pemahaman Membaca - Pertanyaan Bacaan 1 (boleh salah satu jawaban di bawah)** Jumlah jawaban yang benar = 1

**Bacaan 2 (57 Kata)** Jumlah kata yang dibaca benar = 57

**Pertanyaan Bacaan 2** Jumlah jawaban yang benar = 4

**Catatan pengamatan.**  
Amali siswa selama asesmen, berikan catatan jika:  
1. Ada kekhususan pada anak seperti gagap, cadel, memiliki hambatan penglihatan dengan berkacamata lokal atau menggunakan alat bantu, dan lain-lain  
2. Siswa kelihatan gelisah dan tidak fokus pada tugas  
3. Siswa meminta guru untuk mengulang petunjuk terus  
4. Siswa kelihatan fokus pada tugas  
5. Siswa banyak manfaat daripada membaca kata.

**Figure 1.** Picture of One of The Reading Test Results with a Good Category

Based on the image above, on the letter reading indicator, the student scored 25 out of 30 points. This means only a few letters are still incorrect. It appears the student mispronounced the letters Y, x, q, F, and v. These letters are rarely encountered by students and are less familiar to them. In the syllable reading indicator, the student successfully answered 9 out of 10 points, demonstrating a fairly good ability to recognize and combine syllables. Furthermore, in the word reading indicator, the student was able to answer all tasks correctly, thus earning a full 10 points.

For the indicator of listening to a read text, students were able to answer 2 questions correctly, indicating that their ability to understand the content of spoken text still needs improvement. In terms of reading fluency, particularly in tasks 5 and 7, students were able to read the text smoothly, accurately, and without errors, earning a total of 89 points. However, in the reading comprehension indicator, students only answered 1 question correctly in task 6 and 4 questions correctly in task 8, with a total of 5 points.

Overall, the total score obtained by the student is 139 points, which is equivalent to 93%, placing them in the good category. These results indicate that students already possess a fairly strong foundation in early reading skills, although further improvement is needed in listening and reading comprehension to optimize their literacy abilities.

This finding aligns with the opinion of Snow, Burns, and Griffin (2020) in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, which asserts that good reading ability is not only characterized by fluency in recognizing letters and words, but also by the ability to understand the content of the text. They explained that reading is a complex process involving decoding skills (recognizing letter-sound symbols) as well as semantic understanding (text meaning). Therefore, students need to be trained in a balanced way between technical and cognitive aspects of reading.

Additionally, according to Perfetti & Stafura (2014) in their article in *Scientific Studies of Reading*, reading success is influenced by two main components: word identification and text comprehension. Both must be developed simultaneously for literacy skills to improve optimally. Thus, although students already demonstrate good technical reading proficiency, strengthening reading comprehension thru text discussion activities, question and answer sessions, and meaningful reading needs to be continuously pursued.

This opinion is also supported by Duke & Cartwright (2021) in the *Reading Research Quarterly* journal, who emphasize that early reading instruction should not only focus on mechanical

skills, but should also cultivate critical thinking abilities and comprehension of reading content thru interactive and contextual activities.

Here are the results of the EGRA test for one student with a "Sufficient" ability category.

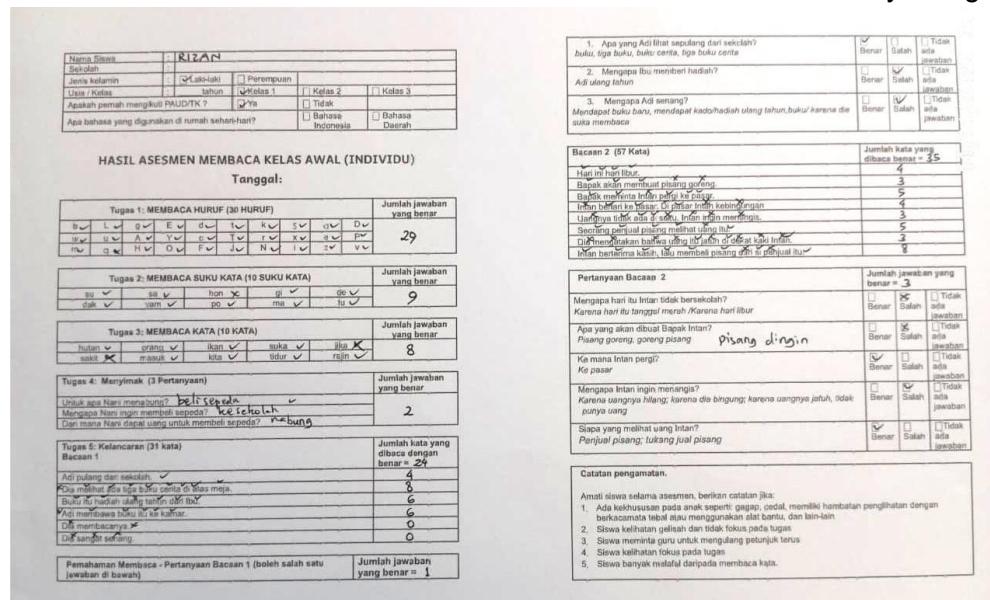


Figure 2. Picture of One of The Reading Test Results with a Sufficient Category

Based on the results of the initial reading test using the EGRA instrument, it was found that in the letter reading indicator, students were able to answer 29 out of 30 points correctly. This result indicates that students have been able to distinguish between uppercase and lowercase letters well, and can recognize letters that have almost similar shapes. In the syllable reading indicator, students also showed good ability by correctly answering 9 out of 10 syllables, while in the word reading indicator, students were able to read 8 words correctly.

In the listening indicator, students were able to answer 2 questions correctly, demonstrating a basic ability to understand the text being read, although there is still room for improvement in grasping the overall meaning of the reading. In terms of reading fluency, students scored 24 points on task 5 and 35 points on task 7, for a total of 69 points. This indicates that the students have become quite fluent readers, although they still need practice to maintain consistent tempo and intonation.

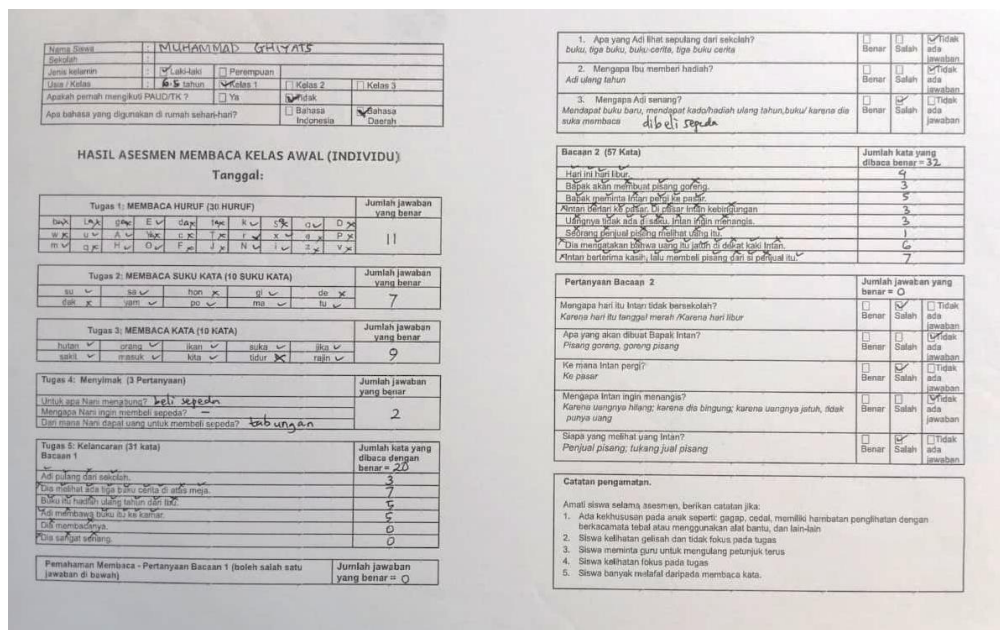
Meanwhile, for the reading comprehension indicator, students were able to answer 1 question correctly in task 6 and 2 questions in task 8, resulting in a total score of 3 points in this aspect. Overall, the total score obtained by students was 110 points, equivalent to 74%. These results indicate that students' early reading abilities are already quite good, especially in letter recognition and word reading, but they need strengthening in listening skills and

understanding the content of the reading so that students' basic literacy skills can develop optimally.

This finding aligns with the views of Cain & Oakhill (2014) in the journal Scientific Studies of Reading, who explain that reading comprehension is the result of the interaction between decoding ability and language comprehension processes. Students who can recognize words well but haven't yet grasped their meaning still need support in cognitive and linguistic aspects to construct meaning from text.

Furthermore, according to Connor et al. (2005) in the Early Childhood Research Quarterly, improving early reading skills requires a differentiated learning approach that adapts to students' initial abilities and learning styles. This approach allows teachers to provide more specific support in areas that are still weak, such as listening and understanding reading content.

Here are some examples of EGRA reading test results for students in the "needs guidance" category.



**Hasil Aesmen Membaca Kelas Awal (Individu)**  
Tanggal:

Nama Siswa: MUHAMMAD GHALYATS	
Seks: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laki-laki <input type="checkbox"/> Perempuan	
Usia / Kelas: 5 tahun <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelas 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Kelas 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Kelas 3	
Apakah pernah mengikuti PAUD/TK? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ya <input type="checkbox"/> Tidak	
Apa bahasa yang digunakan di rumah sehari-hari? <input type="checkbox"/> Bahasa Indonesia <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bahasa Daerah	

Tugas 1: MEMBACA HURUF (30 HURUF)	Jumlah jawaban yang benar
b x l p k g h e i v d a p t k k l s k o v d x w k u v a v h e i k i k t x t x x a x p x m v o p h v o v f e l j k n v i v z x	11

Tugas 2: MEMBACA SUKU KATA (10 SUKU KATA)	Jumlah jawaban yang benar
su v sa v hon x gi v de x dak x jam v po v ma v tu v	7

Tugas 3: MEMBACA KATA (10 KATA)	Jumlah jawaban yang benar
hulu v orang v ikan v akan v bu v saki v masuk v kila v telur x rasi v	9

Tugas 4: Menyimak (3 Pertanyaan)	Jumlah jawaban yang benar
Untuk apa Nani mengunus? <u>beli sepeda</u> Mengapa Nani ingin membeli sepeda? <u>—</u> Dari mana Nani dapat uang untuk membeli sepeda? <u>tabungan</u>	2

Tugas 5: Kelancaran (31 kata)	Jumlah kata yang dibaca dengan benar = 20
Bacaan 1	
Ali pulang dari sekolah.	3
Dia melihat keranjang berisi daging di atas meja.	7
Diaku itu sudah ulangi tahun dari itu.	5
Adi membawa buku itu ke sekolah.	0
Dia memencanya.	0
Dia sangat senang.	0

Pemahaman Membaca - Pertanyaan Bacaan 1 (boleh salah satu jawaban di bawah)	Jumlah jawaban yang benar = 0
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1. Apa yang Adi lihat sesudah dari sekolah? buku, tige buku, buku/cerita, tige buku cerita	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban
2. Mengapa Ibu memberi hadiah? Adi ulang tahun	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban
3. Mengapa Adi senang? Mendapat buku baru, mendapat kado/hadiah ulang tahun, buku/ karena dia suka membaca <u>di buku itu</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban

Bacaan 2 (57 Kata)	Jumlah kata yang dibaca benar = 32
Hari ini hari libur.	4
Bapak akan membeli pisang goreng.	3
Bapak bertanya harga pisang ke tukang.	5
Aman datang ke pasar. Di pasar ada kebugangan.	5
Udangnya tidak ada di situ. Intan ingin membeli.	5
Adanya festival akan membuat suasana.	1
Dia mengatakan bahwa uang itu jatuh di dekat buku Intan.	6
Intan berterima kasih, lalu membeli pisang dari si penjual itu.	7

Pertanyaan Bacaan 2	Jumlah jawaban yang benar = 0	
Mengapa hari ini Intan tidak bersekolah? Karena hari itu tanggal merah /Karena hari libur	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban
Apa yang akan dibuat Bapak Intan? Pisang goreng, goreng pisang	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban
Ke mana Intan pergi? Ke pasar	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban
Mengapa Intan ingin menasnis? Karena sangnya hilang, karena dia bingung, karena uangnya jatuh, tidak punya uang	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban
Sikap yang melihat uang Intan? Perjual pisang, tukang jual pisang	<input type="checkbox"/> Benar <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Salah	<input type="checkbox"/> Tidak ada jawaban

Catatan pengamatan.

Amali siswa selama asesmen, berikan catatan jika:

- Ada kekhilangan pada anak seperti: gagap, cedal, memiliki hambatan penglihatan dengan berkacamata label atau menggunakan alat bantu, dan lain-lain
- Siswa kelihatan gelisah dan tidak fokus pada tugas
- Siswa meminta guru untuk mengulang petunjuk kerus
- Siswa kelihatan fokus pada tugas
- Siswa banyak melafal daripada membaca kata.

Figure 3. Picture of One of The Reading Test Results with a Need Guidance Category

Based on the results of the initial reading test using the EGRA instrument, it was found that the student was only able to correctly answer 11 out of 30 letters in the letter reading indicator. The record results show that the student still frequently makes mistakes in pronunciation, such as reading the letter "b" as "ba" or "l" as "la," which indicates that the student has not fully mastered the distinction between letter names and letter sounds. In the syllable reading

indicator, the student scored 7 points, and in the word reading indicator, the student correctly answered 9 points, indicating that their ability to combine letters into syllables and words still needs improvement.

In the listening indicator, students were able to answer 2 questions correctly, which indicates that their understanding of spoken text is still limited. In terms of reading fluency, students scored 20 points on task 6 and 32 points on task 7, resulting in a total fluency score of 52 points. This indicates that students are still unable to read fluently and consistently. Meanwhile, on the reading comprehension indicator, students did not answer any questions correctly, thus scoring 0 points, which shows that students are not yet able to understand the content of what they read or listen to.

Overall, the student's total score was 81 points or 54%, which falls into the category of needing guidance. These results indicate that students' early reading abilities are still low, particularly in the aspects of letter recognition, fluency, and reading comprehension. Therefore, a more intensive and diverse learning approach is needed, such as phonics exercises, the use of engaging learning media, and repeated reading activities, so that students' reading abilities can develop gradually.

This finding aligns with the opinion of Snow et al. (1998) which explains that reading difficulties in the early stages are generally caused by weak mastery of phonological awareness, word recognition, and reading fluency. Therefore, phonetic exercises and letter-sound-based learning are very important to help students understand the relationship between letters and sounds.

As for the percentage of test results based on EGRA indicators, the following data were obtained.

**Table 2.** Table of Percentage Categories for Initial Reading Tests

No.	Indicator	Percentage
1	Reading letters	43%
2	Reading Syllables	34%
3	Reading Words	28%
4	Listening	29%
5	Fluency	19%
6	Reading Comprehension	8%

Based on the data above, it is evident that students' initial reading abilities are still in the low category across all indicators. The letter reading indicator achieved the highest percentage at

43%, indicating that some students have begun to recognize letters, but still require further practice to recognize them quickly and accurately. The syllable reading indicator reached 34%, while word reading was only 28%, suggesting that students still struggle to smoothly combine letters into syllables and words. Listening comprehension scored 29%, indicating that students are still weak in grasping the meaning of sounds or texts read aloud. Next, reading fluency scored 19%, indicating that students have not yet mastered reading with good intonation, speed, and accuracy. Reading comprehension was the lowest indicator, with a percentage of only 8%, meaning that most students have not yet been able to understand the content of the text they read.

The low scores on this initial reading test indicate that serious attention is still needed, as initial reading skills are the foundation for successful advanced reading. Therefore, further investigation is needed regarding the factors contributing to the low level of early reading.

### **Teacher Interview Results**

Based on interviews with two first-grade teachers, it was found that the learning process, particularly in reading skills, still faces many obstacles. Limited facilities and infrastructure are one of the contributing factors. The availability of literacy facilities such as classroom libraries, reading corners, and age-appropriate picture books is still very limited, even though these are crucial for reading skills. However, in reality, many primary schools, especially in rural areas, still lack these facilities. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2023) show that approximately 40% of elementary schools in Indonesia do not yet have adequate reading rooms. The absence of these facilities makes it difficult for literacy activities in schools to develop optimally.

The lack of interesting children's reading books also makes it difficult for teachers to cultivate students' interest and motivation. In fact, psychological factors such as interest and motivation to learn greatly influence a child's success in reading. Many elementary school students are less interested in reading activities because learning is considered boring or irrelevant to their lives. According to the research findings of Sari and Nugraha (2022), the reading interest of early childhood and elementary school children can increase if teachers present literacy activities that are fun and suitable for children's interests, such as through games and picture books.

Up until now, teachers have used the read-aloud method in their lessons and sometimes combined it with singing to help students recognize syllables, but the results haven't been

optimal due to time constraints and limited learning resources. Monotonous teaching methods make students get bored quickly. Many teachers still use rote or mechanical reading methods without incorporating play, singing, or storytelling activities that are appropriate for children's characteristics. According to research by Nurhayati (2021), the use of contextual methods, such as picture-based reading or project-based literacy activities, has been proven to increase student engagement and understanding in early reading. The lack of method variety prevents children from being naturally stimulated to understand the meaning of words.

Additionally, reading activities are also done after learning and writing activities. Students who have finished writing, while waiting for other students, take turns reading privately with the teacher. This activity is quite effective for seeing the progress of students' reading skills, but in practice, it is often limited by the short amount of time. Each student needs approximately 5 minutes to read individually, which consumes learning time.

The teacher also mentioned that the main difficulties experienced by the students were in recognizing letters and stringing syllables together, which was partly influenced by the lack of variety in learning media. Teachers usually use textbooks and simple images as learning media, but these media are considered ineffective in attracting students' interest. Learning media plays an important role in helping students understand the relationship between symbols, sounds, and word meanings. Unfortunately, many teachers have not yet utilized media optimally and rely solely on textbooks. Recent research by Rahmawati and Sulastris (2023) indicates that using interactive media such as digital letter cards, picture syllable boards, or simple reading applications can significantly improve early reading skills. The lack of creativity in media usage causes students to get bored quickly and lose focus during learning.

Another obstacle for teachers is the low level of support and coordination with parents, as most of them work outside the city, leaving students to live with their grandparents or siblings. The family environment plays an important role in fostering reading habits from an early age. Many parents are still unaware of the importance of family literacy activities, such as reading storybooks aloud, helping children learn to read, or providing children's books at home. A study conducted by Wulandari et al. (2022) showed that parental involvement in shared reading activities significantly impacts the improvement of early reading skills. Conversely, children who grow up in family environments without literacy support tend to experience delays in mastering letters and words.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on early reading skills in first-grade students at two elementary schools in Garut Regency using the EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) test instrument, it was found that students' early reading abilities were still classified as low. Based on EGRA indicators, the results showed that 43% of students could read letters, 34% could read syllables, and only 28% could read words correctly. Meanwhile, the listening indicator reached 29%, reading fluency 19%, and reading comprehension was the lowest aspect with a percentage of only 8%. Overall, looking at the categories of early reading ability, 12% of students were in the good category, 8% in the sufficient category, and 80% of students still needed guidance. These findings indicate that the majority of students are still experiencing difficulties in the initial reading process, both in terms of letter recognition, syllable blending, and comprehension of reading content. This low achievement is influenced by various factors, including students' low interest and motivation in reading, less varied teaching strategies, a family environment that is not supportive of children's literacy, limited reading learning facilities and infrastructure in schools, and minimal use of innovative learning media. Thru the analysis of these results, it is hoped that more appropriate and comprehensive learning interventions can be implemented to improve students' early reading abilities from an early age.

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