Analysis of Beginning Reading Skills of 2nd Grade Students at Integrated Islamic Elementary School Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl Mataram

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Abstract: Reading proficiency is a foundational skill in elementary education, significantly influencing students' academic success and personal development. This study investigates the initial reading abilities of 2nd-grade students at Integrated Islamic Elementary School Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl, an institution that combines general and religious education. The research identifies key areas for improvement and evaluates the effectiveness of current teaching methods. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, the study assesses three main indicators: pronunciation accuracy, reading fluency, and voice clarity. Data were collected through reading tests and teacher questionnaires. Results reveal significant challenges, with most students rated as "Poor" or "Fair." Factors such as inconsistent phonetic teaching, insufficient reading practice, and unsupportive learning environments contribute to these difficulties. Recommendations include enhancing phonetic instruction, increasing reading practice, and fostering a supportive reading environment. This study provides insights for developing effective literacy programs in similar educational contexts, aiming for holistic improvements in students' reading skills.

Keyword: Initial reading abilities; Phonetic instruction; Reading fluency; Islamic elementary education

Introduction

Reading ability is foundational in primary education, significantly impacting students' academic success and personal development (Abid et al., 2023). Reading is not merely the activity of understanding text; it is a complex skill that involves word recognition, contextual comprehension, and the ability to verbally express the content of the reading (Barbero, 2022; Smejkalova & Chetail, 2022). In Indonesia, the challenge of improving early reading skills is substantial, especially in elementary schools with diverse backgrounds and educational focuses (Yusuf et al., 2023).

SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl is a primary educational institution that integrates general education with religious education, particularly in Quran memorization and comprehension. The school is committed to providing holistic education to develop well-rounded and morally upright individuals. However, like many other schools, SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl faces challenges in ensuring that all students achieve adequate reading skills early in their education.

Based on teacher interviews, initial findings indicate that many second-grade students at SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl have low reading abilities. This low reading ability is a primary concern as it can affect students' overall academic performance, hinder

their ability to comprehend lesson material, and reduce their confidence in learning. Moreover, poor reading skills can impact other literacy skills, including writing and speaking, which are crucial for advanced education and daily life.

Various studies have identified effective methods to improve early reading skills. The phonetic approach, which emphasizes teaching the relationship between letters and sounds, has proven highly effective in helping students recognize and pronounce words correctly (Srikandewie, 2021; Nusrina, 2021). Context-based approaches, on the other hand, encourage students to understand and interpret texts based on the context of the story or information presented, thereby enhancing comprehension and reading fluency (Ilahude et al., 2021; Utami, 2023).

The use of technology in reading instruction is also becoming increasingly popular. Learning aids such as interactive reading applications and educational games can enhance student motivation and provide instant feedback, which is crucial for effective learning (Hurwitz & Vanacore, 2022). Reading intervention programs, such as additional classes and individual tutoring, have also shown positive results in improving the reading skills of lagging students (Whitney & Ackerman, 2022).

Despite the numerous solutions identified in the literature, there is an urgent need to understand the effectiveness of the methods applied in the specific context of SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl. One significant gap is the need for empirical data on how existing approaches are implemented in this school and their outcomes. Additionally, there is a need to identify whether the methods used suit the unique needs of students in a school with a dual focus on general and religious education.

This study assesses the early reading abilities of second-grade students at SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl. The primary objective is to identify areas for improvement and provide recommendations based on the research findings. The study also aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching methods used at this school and identify intervention strategies that can significantly enhance students' reading abilities.

This research offers a new contribution by providing specific insights into reading abilities in a school focusing on religious and academic education. Additionally, the study will analyze three main reading indicators: pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and voice clarity. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities in improving early reading skills in schools with unique characteristics like SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl.

Based on the above discussion, this research is expected to significantly improve early reading skills among students at SD-IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl and other schools with similar educational focuses. By gaining a deeper understanding of the existing challenges and opportunities, appropriate improvement measures can be implemented to ensure that every student possesses adequate reading skills as a foundation for their future academic success and personal development.

Method

This study employs a quantitative descriptive design with a testing approach to assess the initial reading abilities of second-grade students at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl. The research population includes all second-grade students at the school, utilizing total sampling to ensure accurate representation. The research instruments consist of a reading test to evaluate three main indicators: pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and vocal clarity. Each indicator is assessed using a structured rating scale. Data were collected through tests conducted at the beginning of the academic year, involving direct teacher assessments of student reading performance. Subsequently, the data were categorized based on Table 1.

Additionally, questionnaires were distributed to teachers to gain insights into the teaching methods and the challenges faced in reading instruction. Data analysis was performed descriptively to determine the distribution of test scores and reading ability categories. The analysis results were used to identify areas needing improvement and to provide recommendations for strategies to enhance reading skills. This evaluation provides a solid foundation for understanding students' reading abilities and directing more effective interventions.

Table 1. Classification of Early Reading Abilities

Score	Category
80-100	Very Good
66-79	Good
56-65	Fairly Good
46-55	Poor
<45	Very Poor

Result and Discussion

Reading ability is a fundamental aspect of primary education, significantly influencing students' academic success and personal development (Abid et al., 2023; Karunatne & Navaratne, 2023). Reading encompasses not only text comprehension but also word recognition, contextual understanding, and the ability to express the content of the reading material (Amalia, 2023; Smejkalova & Chetail, 2022; Barbero, 2022). In Indonesia, challenges in enhancing early reading skills are

considerable, particularly in primary schools with diverse educational backgrounds. These challenges include teaching methods, learning media, and the involvement of parents and the school environment (Yusuf et al., 2023; Asfiran et al., 2022; Nurmahanani et al., 2021; Kurniawati, 2021). SD IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl, an institution combining general and religious education, also faces these challenges. This study aims to assess the early reading abilities of second-grade students at the school, identify areas for improvement, and provide research-based recommendations to enhance students' reading abilities significantly.

Based on the analyzed test results, the early reading abilities of second-grade students at SD IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl show significant variation. Most students fall into the "Poor" category (42.5%) and "Satisfactory" category (32.5%), with only a few in the "Good" (22.5%) and "Very Good" (2.5%) categories. These data reflect substantial challenges in developing early reading skills at this school. To understand better, let us review the three indicators assessed: pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and voice clarity.

Pronunciation accuracy is the student's ability to pronounce words correctly according to the phonetic rules of the language used (Irwan et al., 2023). In the context of SD IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl, the importance of pronunciation accuracy extends to both Indonesian and Quranic recitation. Test results indicate that many students struggle with this aspect, contributing to low reading scores. Factors influencing pronunciation accuracy include phonetic teaching methods (Moxon, 2021), lack of practice (Rallon, 2022), and an unsupportive learning environment (Kosasih, 2021). Inconsistent or ineffective phonetic teaching methods can make it difficult for students to associate letters with correct sounds (Abdulwahid, 2023). Additionally, the lack of oral reading practice in Indonesian and Quranic recitation can decrease pronunciation accuracy. An environment that does not support proper and regular reading practice can also be a hindering factor (Canonici, 2022).

Several strategies can be implemented to improve pronunciation accuracy. First, the implementation of more intensive and consistent phonetic teaching methods can help enhance students' pronunciation accuracy (Asrul & Husda, 2022). Second, increasing the frequency of oral reading practice in class, including group and individual reading sessions, can give students more opportunities to practice and improve their pronunciation (Hermida, 2022). Third, creating a supportive environment, including providing appropriate reading materials and encouraging reading practice at home, can offer additional support for students to improve their pronunciation accuracy (Moxon, 2021).

Reading fluency refers to the student's ability to read text smoothly and without hesitation. Fluency includes speed, accuracy, and expression during reading. Data show that many SD IT Tahfidzul Quran An-Nahl students struggle with reading fluency, affecting their text comprehension. Factors influencing reading fluency include exposure to texts, teaching methods, and students' motivation and interest in reading. Lack of exposure to various types of texts can hinder the development of students' reading fluency. Teaching methods that focus on something other than fluency, such as repetition and rhythmic reading, can also reduce students' reading ability. Moreover, low motivation and interest in reading can reduce students' reading time, negatively impacting their fluency.

Several strategies can be applied to improve reading fluency. First, increasing the quantity and variety of texts students read, including fiction and non-fiction, can give them more opportunities to practice and improve their fluency (Cruz-Zambrano et al., 2023). Second, implementing exercises focusing on reading fluency, such as repeated reading and rhythmic reading, can help students develop their reading speed and accuracy (Babadjanova, 2022). Third, strategies to increase students' motivation and interest in reading, such as engaging in reading programs and rewarding achievements in reading, can encourage students to read more and improve their fluency (Siahaan et al., 2023).

Voice clarity measures how clear and understandable students' voices are when reading text. This includes aspects of volume, intonation, and articulation. Test results indicate that many students need help with voice clarity, which can be due to a lack of practice speaking and reading in public (Kaharuddin et al., 2023). Factors influencing voice clarity include speaking practice, confidence, and teaching methods. Lack of public speaking practice can reduce students' voice clarity when reading. Low student confidence can affect their voice clarity when reading in front of others (Yook, 2022). Additionally, teaching methods that do not emphasize the importance of intonation and articulation can negatively impact students' voice clarity (Moxon, 2021).

Several strategies can be implemented to improve voice clarity. First, increasing the frequency of speaking practice in front of the class can help students develop their voice clarity (Putri & Gaffar, 2023). Second, supportive approaches encouraging students to speak and read in public, including providing positive feedback, can help build their confidence (Yook, 2022). Third, integrating intonation and articulation exercises into the reading program can help improve students' voice clarity (Moxon, 2021).

These three indicators influence each other in shaping students' early reading abilities. For instance,

good pronunciation accuracy can improve reading fluency, as students who pronounce words correctly tend to read more fluently (Rallo, 2022). Conversely, low reading fluency can affect voice clarity, as students who struggle with reading tend to speak less clearly. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to simultaneously improve these three indicators (Putri & Gaffar, 2023).

Effective teaching methods are crucial in enhancing reading abilities. Phonetic approaches should be prioritized to improve pronunciation accuracy. Additionally, context-based approaches can help students better understand texts and read more fluently. Teaching should include intonation and articulation exercises to enhance voice clarity. Good teaching methods do not focus on one aspect alone but simultaneously include exercises involving pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and voice clarity (Ou et al., 2021).

A supportive learning environment is essential for improving students' reading abilities. Schools should provide various engaging reading materials appropriate to students' skill levels. Moreover, creating a reading culture at school and home can increase students' motivation and interest (Novridewi et al., 2023). A supportive environment includes adequate facilities, such as a well-stocked and comfortable library, and support from teachers and parents to encourage regular reading practice (Ismiyani, 2021).

Consistent and regular practice is crucial for improving all aspects of reading ability. Students should be given opportunities to read aloud in class individually and in groups (Putri & Gaffar, 2023). Additional reading programs and individual tutoring can help lagging students (Ling & Toran, 2023). Structured and continuous practice will help students gradually and consistently develop their reading skills (Suryani et al., 2023).

Parental support enhances students' reading abilities (Nicholas et al., 2023). Parents can help by providing reading materials at home and encouraging their children to read daily. Parental involvement in school reading programs can also provide additional encouragement for students. Support from home increases reading frequency and provides a positive and supportive learning environment.

Collaboration between teachers, students, and parents is needed to achieve optimal results (Kamala, 2022). Teachers should provide clear and directed instructions and constructive feedback to students. Students should actively participate in reading exercises and strive to improve their skills. Parents should support their children at home by providing reading materials and motivating them to read daily. Good collaboration between all parties will create a supportive

learning environment and promote the development of students' reading abilities.

The findings of this study indicate that many students still need to improve their reading proficiency level. This underscores the need for more effective, focused interventions to enhance reading skills. One approach that can be implemented is a reading intervention program tailored to students' individual needs. This program may include intensive tutoring, additional practice, and technology to help students develop reading skills.

Furthermore, there is a continuous need to evaluate and adjust the teaching methods employed. Teachers should periodically assess the effectiveness of their instructional methods and make necessary adjustments to ensure that all students can achieve adequate reading proficiency levels (Long et al., 2022). Technology in reading instruction can also serve as an effective tool for enhancing students' reading skills. Interactive reading applications and educational games can increase student motivation and provide instant feedback, essential for effective learning (Mize et al., 2022).

Guidance and psychological support programs can also aid students facing reading difficulties. Students who struggle with reading feel frustrated and lose confidence. Guidance and psychological support programs can help them overcome these issues and build self-esteem. Strong emotional support from teachers and parents is also crucial in helping students overcome their reading barriers (Yang et al., 2022).

By implementing these strategies, the early reading skills of students at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl are expected to improve significantly. This improvement will impact their overall academic performance and lay a strong foundation for their future literacy development. Additionally, better reading skills will help students understand and appreciate other learning materials, including religious subjects, which are a primary focus at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl.

Beyond efforts within the classroom, schools can also adopt literacy programs that involve the entire school community (Archibald et al., 2023). For example, a "One Book One Month" program where each student is required to read and summarize one book every month, this program can encourage students to be more active in reading and provide opportunities for them to share their reading experiences with peers. Technology such as e-books and online learning platforms can also offer various learning methods, which might be more appealing to students growing up in the digital age (Major et al., 2021).

The importance of collaboration between school and family must be addressed (Pancaud et al., 2021). Parents should be encouraged to participate in their children's learning process actively. Schools can

organize workshops or seminars for parents to equip them with the skills and knowledge to support their children in learning to read at home (Shek, 2021). With synergy between school and home education, students will receive more comprehensive support in developing their reading skills (Deslandes et al., 2023).

Schools also need to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to support the success of reading improvement programs. This evaluation should include the assessment of students' reading abilities and the effectiveness of the teaching methods and intervention programs implemented. The evaluation results can be used as a basis for continuous adjustments and improvements in teaching strategies (Lazarus, 2021).

Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of various programs and interventions implemented. Longitudinal studies that track the development of students' reading abilities over time can provide deeper insights into the strategies' effectiveness. This research can also help identify additional factors influencing students' reading abilities, such as individual differences, family background, and social environment.

In the long term, success in improving the early reading skills of students at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl will positively impact the overall quality of education. Students with good reading skills will be better prepared to face academic challenges at higher levels of education (Abid et al., 2023). They will also be better able to access a broader range of information and knowledge, which will aid in their personal and professional development in the future (Mombekova & Rapisheva, 2023).

Therefore, improving early reading skills is not solely the responsibility of teachers and schools but involves the entire educational community, including parents and the wider society. Investing in early literacy education will provide sustainable benefits for students and society. Hence, it is important to continue supporting and strengthening efforts to improve students' reading skills, particularly in schools focused on religious and academic education, such as SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl.

This research provides a comprehensive view of the reading proficiency conditions of second-grade students at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl. By understanding the factors affecting reading skills and identifying effective strategies for improvement, it is hoped that the school can implement more targeted programs with significant impact. Additionally, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for other schools facing similar challenges in improving their students' reading abilities.

Finally, improving reading skills can take time to achieve. It is a process that requires dedication, collaboration, and continuous effort from all parties involved. With a strong commitment and the right strategies, we can help every student reach their full potential in reading and prepare them for future success. This research is an important first step in the long journey to improve the quality of education and literacy at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl, and it is hoped that it can inspire similar efforts to enhance education elsewhere.

We can design holistic and integrated interventions by recognizing the importance of each indicator—accuracy, fluency, and clarity of voice—and understanding how each indicator interrelates. Improved pronunciation accuracy through consistent phonetic practice can promote reading fluency, enhancing vocal clarity when students read. Each improved component will positively impact the others, creating a beneficial feedback loop in the reading-learning process.

Moving forward, SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl should continue to develop and adapt their teaching methods based on these research findings. The school can adopt best practices from the literature and apply them according to their students' local context and unique needs. By doing so, they will enhance their students' reading skills and equip them with the necessary skills for academic success and broader life achievements. The school community's support—teachers, students, parents, and society—is key to achieving this goal. Working together, we can ensure that every student has the opportunity to grow and succeed in their academic journey.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the early reading skills of second-grade students at SD IT Tahfizul Quran An-Nahl still face significant challenges, particularly in pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and vocal clarity. Most students fall into the "Insufficient" and "Adequate" categories, indicating a need for more effective interventions. Contributing factors include inconsistent phonetic teaching methods, a lack of oral reading practice, and an unsupportive learning environment. Strategies such as improved phonetic teaching methods, regular reading practice, and better environmental support are essential to enhance these skills. Collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, along with appropriate technology and intervention programs, can help improve students' early reading abilities. With a holistic and continuous approach, students are expected to achieve better reading skills, supporting their academic success and personal development in the future. This research provides a strong foundation for developing literacy improvement programs in schools with similar characteristics.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest

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