

An Analysis Of First-Grade Students' Beginning Writing Skills In Elementary Education

¹Selda Carnelia, ²Kasmawati, ³La Sisi

^{1,2,3}Universitas Sulawesi Tenggara, Indonesia

¹carneliaselda@gmail.com ²kasmawatidullah268@gmail.com

³lasisilapadaku@gmail.com

ABSTRACT : This study aimed to describe the beginning writing skills of first-grade students, identify the difficulties they experienced, and examine the strategies used by teachers to address these difficulties at an elementary school in South Konawe Regency. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with the study conducted from March to April 2026. The participants consisted of a first-grade teacher and students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, beginning writing assessments, and documentation, and were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that students' beginning writing skills were generally satisfactory, although more than five students continued to require intensive assistance. The main difficulties involved forming vowel and consonant letters correctly, writing simple sentences, applying capitalization and punctuation, maintaining handwriting neatness, and spacing words appropriately. Some students also required additional time to complete writing tasks. These difficulties were associated with limited writing practice, insufficient habits of reviewing completed work, and inadequate mastery of basic writing conventions. To address these challenges, the teacher implemented routine writing practice, individualized guidance, demonstrations of correct writing, engaging instructional media, and continuous encouragement. The study concludes that although the overall level of beginning writing skills was satisfactory, targeted and sustained support remains necessary to strengthen students' foundational writing abilities.

Keywords: Beginning Writing; Writing Skills; First-Grade Students

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the fundamental language skills in elementary education and plays an important role in supporting students' academic and literacy development. Through writing, students learn not only to communicate ideas, experiences, and information in written form but also to organize thoughts, develop language awareness, and express meaning systematically. In the context of elementary education, writing skills are developed gradually, beginning with the mastery of beginning writing as the foundation for more complex literacy competencies. Therefore, the achievement of beginning writing skills is an important prerequisite for students' subsequent development of reading, writing, and broader academic abilities.

Beginning writing is primarily introduced in the lower grades of elementary school, particularly in Grade 1. At this stage, students are expected to develop basic

competencies, including recognizing and reproducing letter forms, writing letters and words, arranging simple sentences, using capital letters and punctuation, applying appropriate spacing, and producing legible handwriting. These competencies involve the integration of cognitive, linguistic, visual, and fine-motor abilities. Consequently, beginning writing should not be understood merely as the mechanical activity of producing written symbols but as a complex foundational literacy process that requires continuous practice, systematic guidance, and learning experiences appropriate to students' developmental characteristics.

The development of beginning writing skills is also closely related to the quality of instructional processes and learning media used in elementary classrooms. The transformation of learning media in elementary education has created opportunities for teachers to provide more varied, interactive, and meaningful learning experiences that correspond to students' learning needs (Kasmawati et al., 2025). The use of appropriate visual and digital media can support students' attention, facilitate the presentation of abstract concepts, and provide learning experiences that are more engaging for young learners. Kasmawati et al. (2023), for example, demonstrated the development of Prezi-based KOH Link learning media as an effort to provide innovative learning support in elementary education. Although the study focused on science learning, its findings reinforce the broader importance of appropriately designed instructional media in supporting the learning process at the elementary level.

In language learning, beginning writing requires particular attention because students are still developing the basic skills necessary to translate ideas and language into written symbols. Common difficulties include incorrect letter formation, confusion between similar letters, inconsistent use of capital letters, inappropriate word spacing, incorrect punctuation, and untidy or illegible handwriting. Some students may also experience difficulty copying words, writing according to examples, and composing simple sentences. These difficulties may be associated with limited writing practice, insufficient fine-motor development, weak mastery of letter-sound and symbol relationships, limited concentration, and inadequate instructional support.

The development of beginning writing is also connected to the broader development of literacy skills. Students who have difficulty mastering foundational writing skills may encounter challenges when they are required to express ideas, construct sentences, and produce more complex written texts. Saputra et al. (2025) demonstrated the relationship between critical reading ability and Indonesian language achievement among elementary school students, indicating that language competencies develop as interconnected skills. Similarly, writing instruction should be viewed as part of an integrated literacy process in which students gradually develop the ability to understand, organize, and express language in written form.

Previous studies have shown that beginning writing remains a significant challenge for elementary school students. Damayanti et al. (2021) found that many students continued to experience difficulties in letter formation, word spacing, and handwriting neatness. Siregar and Ramadhan (2023) likewise reported that students' beginning writing abilities remained relatively low, particularly in writing letters, copying words, composing simple sentences, and applying punctuation correctly. Furthermore, Mila Hanifa et al. (2022) concluded that first-grade students' writing ability is influenced by fine-motor readiness, the learning environment, and the instructional strategies implemented by teachers. These findings indicate that difficulties in beginning writing are multidimensional and require instructional responses that consider students' individual characteristics and learning needs.

The development of writing instruction also requires the use of appropriate learning approaches and media. Saputra and Parisu (2024) emphasized the role of digital comics as visual media in supporting narrative writing instruction for elementary students. Visual media can provide concrete stimuli, contextualize learning content, and assist students in organizing ideas before expressing them in written form. In addition, Dewi and Saputra (2025) highlighted the importance of Indonesian language writing instruction oriented toward literacy competencies. This perspective emphasizes that writing instruction should not focus solely on the technical accuracy of written symbols but should gradually develop students' ability to use language meaningfully and functionally.

Nevertheless, the use of innovative media and literacy-oriented approaches must remain aligned with students' developmental stages. For first-grade students, beginning writing instruction still requires direct modeling, repeated practice, gradual scaffolding, and individualized feedback. Teachers therefore have an important role in identifying the specific writing difficulties experienced by students and determining appropriate strategies to address them. The integration of appropriate learning media, contextual activities, demonstration, guided practice, and continuous feedback can provide more meaningful support for students who have not yet mastered beginning writing skills.

Preliminary observations conducted at SD Negeri 2 Konda, South Konawe Regency, indicated that several first-grade students continued to experience difficulties in beginning writing. The difficulties identified included problems writing certain consonants, inconsistent use of capital letters, inappropriate spacing between words, and a lack of handwriting neatness. Of the 32 first-grade students, approximately 60% were able to write neatly, whereas approximately 40% continued to demonstrate various difficulties in beginning writing. These conditions indicate that beginning writing skills among first-grade students require further examination to identify the specific forms of difficulty and the factors that may contribute to them.

Although previous research has examined beginning writing difficulties among elementary school students, there remains a need for studies that provide a comprehensive description of students' actual writing abilities while simultaneously analyzing the specific difficulties they experience and the strategies implemented by teachers to address those difficulties. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining beginning writing skills among first-grade students through an analysis of writing performance, the types of difficulties experienced, and the teacher's strategies for overcoming those difficulties. Such an approach is important because identifying the specific characteristics of students' difficulties can provide a stronger basis for designing appropriate instructional interventions.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) describe the beginning writing skills of first-grade elementary school students; (2) identify and analyze the difficulties experienced by students in beginning writing; and (3) describe the strategies implemented by teachers to address these difficulties. The findings are expected to contribute empirically to the development of beginning literacy instruction in elementary schools and provide practical information for teachers and schools in designing more appropriate, systematic, and developmentally responsive writing instruction. In addition, the study may serve as a reference for future research concerning beginning writing, literacy development, instructional media, and innovative language learning in elementary education.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth description of first-grade students' beginning writing skills, identify the difficulties they experienced, and examine the efforts made by the teacher to address those difficulties. The study was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Konda, South Konawe Regency, during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The participants consisted of the first-grade teacher and first-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Konda. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants considered capable of providing relevant information in accordance with the research focus. The classroom teacher was selected because of their direct involvement in teaching beginning writing, while the students served as the primary participants in assessing beginning writing skills and identifying the difficulties experienced during the learning process.

The data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through classroom observations, interviews with the classroom teacher, and the results of students' beginning writing assessments. Secondary data were obtained through documentation, including students' written work, instructional materials, student

records, and other relevant documents. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, assessment, and documentation to obtain comprehensive evidence and enable comparison among different sources of information.

The researcher served as the primary instrument or human instrument and was supported by observation guidelines, interview guidelines, beginning writing assessment instruments, and documentation. Observations were conducted to examine the implementation of beginning writing instruction and students' activities during the learning process. Interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding the difficulties experienced by students and the strategies used by the teacher to address these difficulties. The beginning writing assessment was used to identify students' abilities based on predetermined indicators, while documentation was used to complement and corroborate the findings obtained from the other data collection techniques.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing the information obtained from observations, interviews, assessments, and documentation. The reduced data were then presented descriptively to facilitate the identification of patterns and findings related to students' beginning writing skills and difficulties. Conclusions were subsequently drawn and verified continuously by comparing the findings with the available evidence.

The trustworthiness of the data was established through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the teacher, students' writing results, and relevant documentation. Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained through observations, interviews, assessments, and documentation. This process was carried out to ensure the consistency, credibility, and validity of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

A. Beginning Writing Skills of First-Grade Students

The results of observations, interviews, beginning writing assessments, and documentation indicated that first-grade students demonstrated varying levels of

beginning writing proficiency. Most students were able to recognize and write vowel and consonant letters. They were also able to copy words and simple sentences based on examples provided by the teacher. However, several students continued to experience difficulties in maintaining handwriting neatness, spacing words appropriately, using capital letters, and applying punctuation marks.

The assessment results showed that most students were able to complete simple beginning writing tasks, although the level of performance varied. Some students required more time to complete the tasks and demonstrated difficulties such as repeatedly erasing their work, writing letters with inconsistent sizes, and arranging simple sentences. These findings indicate that beginning writing skills had developed, but several foundational aspects still required further practice and guidance.

Classroom observations also showed differences in students' participation during writing activities. Students who actively participated in learning activities and practiced writing more frequently generally demonstrated better writing performance. In contrast, students who were less active and required more assistance tended to experience greater difficulties in letter formation, handwriting neatness, and writing speed.

Table 1. Observation Findings on Students' Beginning Writing Skills

No.	Observed Aspect	Findings
1	Writing vowel letters	Most students were able to write vowel letters correctly.
2	Writing consonant letters	Several students still formed certain consonant letters incorrectly.
3	Handwriting neatness	Some students demonstrated inconsistent letter sizes and irregular handwriting.
4	Word spacing	Several students had difficulty applying appropriate spacing between words.
5	Capitalization	Some students did not consistently use capital letters at the beginning of sentences or proper names.
6	Copying sentences	Most students were able to copy simple sentences, although several students completed the task slowly.

Table 1 presents the results of observations regarding the beginning writing skills of first-grade students. The findings indicate that most students had begun to master

the basic components of beginning writing, particularly writing vowel letters and copying simple sentences. However, several students continued to experience difficulties in forming certain consonant letters, maintaining consistent letter size, applying appropriate spacing between words, and using capital letters correctly. These differences indicate that students' beginning writing skills were not yet evenly developed. The findings also show that students require continuous practice and teacher guidance to strengthen their mastery of each beginning writing indicator systematically and progressively. In addition, the variation in students' performance suggests the importance of providing learning activities that accommodate differences in students' abilities and learning readiness.

B. Students' Beginning Writing Difficulties

The findings revealed that students experienced difficulties in several aspects of beginning writing. The most frequently identified difficulties involved forming certain letters correctly, controlling the size of letters, maintaining handwriting neatness, applying word spacing, and using capital letters appropriately. Some students also required more time to complete writing assignments and showed hesitation when asked to write independently.

The data further indicated that the difficulties were associated with both internal and external factors. Internal factors included limited fine-motor control, difficulty maintaining concentration, weak hand-eye coordination, and low confidence when completing writing tasks. Some students also experienced difficulty holding and controlling a pencil properly, which affected the neatness and legibility of their handwriting.

External factors were related to the learning environment at home and at school. The teacher's interview indicated that some students had limited opportunities to practice writing at home and did not consistently receive parental assistance. Limited reading and writing activities outside the classroom also appeared to reduce students' familiarity with words and simple sentence structures.

Table 2. Factors Contributing to Students' Beginning Writing Difficulties

No.	Factor	Findings
1	Fine-motor skills	Some students experienced difficulty controlling the pencil and forming letters consistently.
2	Concentration	Several students easily lost focus during writing activities.
3	Confidence and motivation	Some students showed hesitation and lacked confidence when asked to write

		independently.
4	Writing practice at home	The frequency of writing practice outside school was limited for some students.
5	Parental assistance	Not all students received consistent assistance with learning activities at home.
6	Reading and writing habits	Limited literacy activities outside school reduced students' familiarity with words and simple sentences.

Table 2 shows that students' beginning writing difficulties were influenced by several interconnected factors. Fine-motor development was an important factor because some students still had difficulty controlling the pencil and forming letters consistently. Limited concentration also affected students' ability to complete writing activities effectively. In addition, low confidence and limited motivation caused some students to hesitate when writing independently. The frequency of writing practice at home and the availability of parental assistance also varied among students. These findings indicate that beginning writing development is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by students' individual readiness and the support they receive in their home environment. Therefore, the identification of writing difficulties needs to consider both student-related and environmental factors.

C. Teacher Strategies for Addressing Beginning Writing Difficulties

Observations and interviews showed that the teacher implemented several strategies to address students' beginning writing difficulties. The first strategy involved providing regular writing practice during learning activities. The exercises were arranged gradually, beginning with letters and syllables, followed by words and simple sentences.

The teacher also provided individualized assistance to students who experienced greater difficulties. This assistance included demonstrating the correct way to form letters, guiding students while writing, correcting errors directly, and providing feedback on students' written work. Individual guidance enabled the teacher to respond to differences in students' abilities and learning needs.

In addition, the teacher used various instructional media, including letter cards, pictures, lined whiteboards, and illustrated worksheets. These media were used to make writing activities more concrete and engaging. The teacher also provided verbal encouragement, praise, and positive feedback to strengthen students' confidence and willingness to participate in writing activities.

Table 3. Teacher Strategies for Addressing Beginning Writing Difficulties

No.	Teacher Strategy	Implementation and Outcome
1	Providing regular writing practice	Students received continuous opportunities to practice letters, words, and simple sentences.
2	Providing individualized assistance	Students with specific difficulties received more focused guidance.
3	Demonstrating correct letter formation	Students were guided to understand and imitate appropriate letter forms.
4	Providing encouragement and positive feedback	Students' confidence and willingness to participate in writing activities increased.
5	Using instructional media	Writing activities became more varied, concrete, and engaging.
6	Providing immediate correction	Students were able to identify and gradually correct errors in their writing.

Table 3 illustrates the various strategies implemented by the teacher to address students' beginning writing difficulties. Regular writing practice provided students with continuous opportunities to develop their skills gradually, beginning with simple writing activities and progressing toward more complex tasks. Individualized assistance enabled the teacher to respond to the specific difficulties experienced by each student. Demonstrations of correct letter formation helped students understand the appropriate writing process, while immediate correction allowed them to recognize and improve their errors. In addition, encouragement and positive feedback helped strengthen students' confidence and motivation. The use of instructional media also made writing activities more varied, concrete, and engaging for first-grade students. The combination of these strategies indicates that effective beginning writing instruction requires consistent practice, direct guidance, emotional support, and learning media that are appropriate to students' developmental characteristics.

Overall, the results indicate that first-grade students' beginning writing skills were developing, although the level of mastery varied across students. Most students were able to write vowel letters and copy simple sentences, while several students still experienced difficulties in consonant formation, handwriting neatness, word spacing, capitalization, and writing speed. These difficulties were influenced by individual

factors, such as fine-motor ability, concentration, and confidence, as well as environmental factors, including writing practice and parental support at home. The teacher responded to these difficulties through regular practice, individualized guidance, demonstrations, positive reinforcement, immediate feedback, and the use of instructional media. These findings demonstrate that systematic and continuous support is essential for strengthening students' foundational writing skills.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the beginning writing skills of first-grade students were generally developing, although several students continued to experience difficulties in specific foundational aspects. The differences in students' writing abilities demonstrate that beginning writing develops gradually and is influenced by students' individual readiness, fine-motor development, previous learning experiences, and opportunities for practice.

The difficulties identified in this study included incorrect letter formation, inconsistent handwriting size, inappropriate word spacing, and inconsistent capitalization. These findings are consistent with Dalman (2022) who explains that beginning writing involves several fundamental abilities, including forming letters correctly, writing legibly, applying appropriate spacing, and using capitalization and punctuation according to language conventions. Students who have not mastered these aspects require continuous practice and systematic guidance.

The findings also support the study by Damayanti et al. (2021) which reported that elementary school students commonly experience difficulties in letter formation, word spacing, and handwriting neatness. Similarly, Siregar and Ramadhan (2023) found that students with low beginning writing proficiency experienced difficulties in copying words, composing simple sentences, and applying punctuation and capitalization correctly. The similarity between these findings suggests that difficulties in beginning writing remain a common challenge in the lower grades of elementary education.

The present study further indicates that beginning writing difficulties are influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include fine-motor development, concentration, hand-eye coordination, and students' confidence in completing writing tasks. These findings are consistent with Hanifa, Chandra, and Syam (2025) who explain that students' ability to master beginning writing is influenced by fine-motor readiness, the learning environment, and teacher instructional strategies. Students with better fine-motor coordination generally have greater control over pencils and are better able to produce neat and legible handwriting.

In addition to individual factors, the family environment also plays an important role in the development of beginning writing skills. Limited writing practice at home and insufficient parental assistance may reduce the opportunities students have to reinforce

the skills acquired at school. This finding indicates that the development of beginning writing should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of the teacher. Consistent support from parents and the provision of literacy activities at home can strengthen students' learning experiences and help them practice writing more frequently.

The teacher's strategies in this study demonstrate the importance of systematic and developmentally appropriate instruction. Regular writing practice enables students to repeatedly practice the formation of letters, words, and simple sentences. Through repetition, students gradually become more familiar with written symbols and develop greater control over their writing movements. This is particularly important for first-grade students, who are still in the early stages of developing foundational literacy skills.

Individualized assistance was also an important strategy in addressing students' writing difficulties. Students do not develop writing skills at the same rate; therefore, a uniform instructional approach may not adequately address the needs of all learners. Through individual guidance, the teacher can identify specific problems experienced by students and provide appropriate assistance. Demonstrations of correct letter formation and immediate feedback help students recognize errors and gradually improve their writing performance.

The use of instructional media also contributed to the learning process. Letter cards, pictures, lined whiteboards, and illustrated worksheets provided visual and concrete support for students who were still developing their understanding of written symbols. This finding is relevant to Kasmawati et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of transforming learning media in elementary education to create more varied and meaningful learning experiences. Similarly, Kasmawati et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of developing innovative learning media to support elementary students' learning processes.

The use of visual media is also relevant to the development of language and writing skills. Saputra and Parisu (2024) highlighted the role of digital comics as visual media in supporting narrative writing instruction among elementary students. Although the present study focused on beginning writing rather than narrative writing, both studies demonstrate that visual stimuli can support students' understanding and engagement in language learning. For first-grade students, visual and concrete media can help connect letter forms and written words with meaningful learning experiences.

The findings are also consistent with the literacy-oriented perspective proposed by Dewi and Saputra (2025) who emphasize that Indonesian language writing instruction should be directed toward the development of literacy competencies. Beginning writing instruction should therefore not be limited to the mechanical reproduction of letters but should gradually prepare students to use written language to communicate meaning. The mastery of basic writing components, such as letters,

words, spacing, capitalization, and simple sentences, serves as an essential foundation for more advanced literacy development.

Furthermore, Saputra et al. (2025) demonstrated the importance of language competencies in supporting students' academic development. Their study concerning the relationship between critical reading ability and Indonesian language achievement reinforces the view that language skills are interconnected. Difficulties in beginning writing may therefore influence students' future ability to express ideas, understand written language, and participate successfully in broader literacy activities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that beginning writing development is shaped by the interaction of student characteristics, teacher instructional strategies, learning media, writing practice, and family support. The improvement of students' beginning writing skills requires continuous and systematic practice accompanied by individualized guidance and constructive feedback. Collaboration between teachers and parents is also important to ensure that students receive consistent opportunities to practice literacy skills both at school and at home.

Thus, beginning writing instruction in the first grade should be implemented through a gradual, repetitive, supportive, and developmentally appropriate approach. Teachers need to identify students' specific writing difficulties and provide differentiated assistance according to their needs. Schools and parents should also support the development of early literacy by creating an environment that provides students with regular opportunities to read, write, and express themselves. Through these collaborative efforts, students' foundational writing skills can be developed more optimally as a basis for their subsequent academic and literacy development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the beginning writing skills of first-grade students were generally developing satisfactorily, although the level of mastery varied among students. Most students were able to write vowel and consonant letters, copy words and simple sentences, and complete basic writing tasks. However, several students continued to experience difficulties in forming certain letters, maintaining handwriting neatness, applying appropriate word spacing, using capitalization, applying punctuation, and constructing simple sentences. These findings indicate that beginning writing remains a foundational literacy skill requiring systematic, continuous, and developmentally appropriate instruction.

The difficulties experienced by students were influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors included fine-motor development, concentration, learning readiness, confidence, and mastery of foundational writing skills. External factors included limited writing practice at home, insufficient parental assistance, and

the lack of consistent literacy habits in students' daily lives. These findings demonstrate that the development of beginning writing skills is not determined solely by classroom instruction but is also influenced by the learning support provided by families and the surrounding environment.

To address these difficulties, the teacher implemented several strategies, including routine writing practice, individualized guidance, demonstrations of correct letter formation, the use of engaging instructional media, immediate feedback, and continuous encouragement. These strategies supported the gradual development of students' writing abilities, particularly in letter formation, handwriting neatness, word spacing, capitalization, and punctuation. The findings emphasize the important role of teachers in identifying students' individual writing difficulties and providing appropriate instructional support based on their learning needs.

This study contributes to the development of Indonesian language instruction, particularly in the area of beginning writing at the elementary-school level. The findings may serve as a reference for teachers in designing more systematic and varied literacy instruction, for schools in strengthening early literacy programs, and for parents in providing continued writing support at home. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples and multiple schools, as well as to examine the effectiveness of specific instructional approaches or learning media in improving students' beginning writing skills.

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