



## **EMERGENT WRITING OF EARLY CHILDHOOD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract:**

This research is motivated by differences in the pros and cons of introducing writing to children in early childhood education institutions and the encouragement from parents so that their children can have the ability to write so that it is not uncommon for teacher to be in the wrong position. This research aims to look at the readiness of children in writing skills and the introduction of writing skills in early childhood education by teacher. Descriptive qualitative is the method used in this study. The choice of this method is to provide an in-depth description and description of the introduction of writing skills in early childhood, especially in group A children aged 4 – 5 years. Participants in this study were 18 children in group A and 3 class teachers in group A. Data collection in this study used observation and interview. Interviews were conducted directly and openly with 3 class teachers. The data collected by the children was analyzed using the Clark and Braun thematic analysis technique. This study found that in the first semester in group A, they did not have the readiness to introduce writing skills so the children's teacher introduced writing skills in the second semester. There is no readiness in this child because the child's fine motor development has not developed properly, so the main focus is on the achievement target, namely on the development of children's development, especially fine motor skills. This achievement target and media are different from the previous year, this is due to the lack of habit of writing in the home environment, the role of parents, and the collaboration of teacher with parents.

**Keywords:** *Emergent Writing, early childhood, early childhood education, teachers*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early literacy is a set of basic abilities that are considered the foundation for children's development in reading skills. These skills will develop effectively through spoken language, phonological awareness, concepts in print, knowledge of letters, and writing (Wilcox et al., 2020). Literacy skills in early childhood are an important determinant of school success in reading and writing skills starting from the basic education level and continuing at the secondary education level (Carroll et al., 2019). Writing skills can support the acquisition of knowledge in children related to subsequent reading skills so writing skills are a small component but have an important role in developing literacy in early childhood (Hume et al., 2016). Strengthened by Piasta et al. (2020) Writing is an important activity in the classroom for early childhood because it supports the integration of language development and early literacy skills, especially children's reading skills. This can also be seen from the report of the National Early Literacy Panel which describes that writing is a component of early literacy skills component which has a relationship as a determinant of further development (Riordan et al., 2021). Seeing the importance of writing skills to the development of early literacy,

writing activities in schools play an important role.

It is important that adults, especially teacher, need to define the purpose of writing skills in children so that teacher can provide appropriate writing activities for early childhood (Westerveld et al., 2015). Writing is an activity in making patterns or writing in the form of words, letters, or symbols on a surface using a pencil or pen (Nurbiana, 2021). Then according Beaty (2013) and Hidayati (2023) At first the child does not distinguish between drawing and writing activities because both convey a meaning. For them holding crayons, pencils, and markers is an activity that is used for drawing and writing and this becomes one of the initial efforts for children to try to write early which is included with the picture. But different from Hall et al. (2015) who describe writing as an activity to express ideas, feelings, opinions, and views in printed or written form writing is a place for children to communicate or express their interests and needs to someone.

But unfortunately, when people talk about writing in early childhood education, people see that writing is an activity to form letters which is the main focus, even though the recognition of these letter shapes is also an important process, teacher need to create or shape writing activities as a place for children to communicate and develop understanding of print (Thomas et al., 2020). In Hall et al., (2015) and Pelatti et al. (2014) show that the child's involvement in writing is between once per day. Then, the direction in writing done in schools focuses on knowledge such as fine motor skills and letter formation rather than the meaning-making processes involved in writing, such as interpersonal communication, and recording ideas. One of the activities that are often carried out at school is learning to write names or form individual letters. So, teacher should not think that just because children cannot write letters, they cannot experiment with the writing process. When a child makes a scribble on a piece of paper, don't think that the scribble has no meaning but that the scribble has a meaning which will develop as a written text (Bingham et al., 2017). According to Cassano & Schickedanz (2015) and Susanto (2017) the child will start by making small marks on the page of paper that may not resemble a letter or an image, but if done consistently, the streaks will become a pattern. After the child begins to be able to make a pattern, the child begins to make a symbol that resembles a letter.

The stages of expressing strokes in writing can help children practice forming letters and lead to understanding the relationship between sounds and words (Bingham et al., 2017). One of the earliest forms of writing that children will write is writing names, writing children's names in early childhood education is related to letter knowledge, word recognition, and phonological awareness (Puranik et al., 2018). Children's writing done in early childhood education will determine their knowledge and understanding of letters so that children who use letters in their writing know more letters and learn letters faster than children who do not use letters in their writing (Lonigan, 2015). Then writing activities can help and support the development of other skills, especially knowledge of letters to communicate. Thus, early mini-writing becomes important for developing early literacy in early childhood so these writing skills must be integrated into the learning environment in early childhood. In this study, the researchers were interested in seeing the readiness of children in writing skills and the introduction of writing skills in the early childhood education environment by teacher.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Descriptive qualitative is the approach used in this study. This descriptive research is not intended to obtain data in the form of statistics but to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from participants whose behavior is observed in depth (Creswell, 2014). This descriptive qualitative approach is expected to provide an in-depth description and description of the introduction of writing skills in early childhood, especially in group A children who are 4 years - 5 years old. This research was conducted in one of the kindergartens in Purwakarta. The choice of kindergarten as the research location was because the school had introduced calistung, reading, and writing

arithmetic from an early age, from 4 years old to 6 years old. In addition, it is located at the center in Purwakarta Regency so the facilities in supporting learning are very adequate for the learning process. Participants in this study were children in group A with a total of 18 students and three class teachers in group A. Then, data would be collected using observation sheets and interview sheets. Interviews were conducted openly with class teachers with the aim that participants could provide views and descriptions more openly. Meanwhile, researchers made observations of learning activities, especially in the activities of introducing writing skills given by teacher to early childhood. The data that has been collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques from (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis technique is divided into six stages which include data recognition, obtaining the initial code, finding themes, reviewing themes, naming, and generating reports.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of the analysis of data collected from interviews and observations, the researcher found several themes related to early childhood writing skills, such as children's writing skills, media for introducing writing skills, and factors for recognizing writing skills in children of this age.

### **Early Childhood Writing Ability**

The writing ability of children in semester one in group A has not yet developed because their fine motor development has not yet developed. So teacher train fine motor development first for children before carrying out writing activities. Several pre-writing and pre-holding pencil stages carried out by teacher include tearing, squeezing, inserting grain, folding, and cutting. After the child can pass this stage, the child can start practicing holding a pencil. This can be seen from the results of interviews conducted by the first educator, Ms. Cica.

*"Children's fine motor development hasn't developed properly so I'm focusing on this development. The stages that I did were the pre-holding pencil and pre-writing stages in this first semester. Ripping, squeezing, inserting seeds. This activity can help train children's fine motor skills even though the process takes around 3-4 months."* (Interview I, Ms. Cica)

The process of pre-holding a pencil and pre-writing require a long time, teacher need about 3 to 4 months to train children's fine motor skills. So in this first semester, teacher focus learning activities on fine motor development as an effort to train children to get used to holding a pencil. Some of the activities that are often carried out by teacher in this first semester include cutting, folding, and finger painting. This is like the expression of educator two, Mrs. Nila.

*"In semester 1, the activities focus more on developing fine motor skills such as folding, cutting, and painting because these activities are related to fine motor skills."* (Interview II, Mrs. Nila)

In the second semester, children begin to be able to hold a pencil well because their fine motor skills have begun to be trained, so teacher begin to give children simple letters for them to imitate these letters. Teacher will provide letters that do not have indentations such as letters b, d or s so that teacher will introduce letters that are easy to imitate such as letters i and o. In addition, to imitate it, the educator does not directly give one word but starts from one letter, then two letters, then one word. This can be seen from the interviews conducted by educator three, Ibu Lulu.

*"I started with the easiest letters, like the letters o and i, because they are straight, there are no curves like the letters b or s. After the child can write these letters I will start with more complex letters. Then, from one letter to two letters, it will increase to one word. For example, balls, eyes."*(Interview II, Mrs. Lulu)

Judging from some of the excerpts above, it is clear that to introduce writing skills to children, teacher need to look at the readiness of children to hold a pencil and write, especially in fine motor development. When a child's motor development is well

developed, teacher begin to be able to introduce writing to children, but when fine motor development is not well developed, teacher need to provide some stimulus through activities that can develop children's fine motor skills. The stimulus that needs to be passed by children before holding a pencil and writing is through folding, tearing, squeezing, finger painting, and cutting activities.

This is reinforced by Suggate et al (2018) manipulation of small objects, inserting beads, moving objects, or pairing a coin is a stimulus to develop children's fine motor skills. Because fine motor skills include the use of small objects and the control of weaving, paper folding, and rocking activities by using small muscles such as fingers, hands, arms, and eye-hand coordination (Hurlock, 2015; Sujiono & Sumantri, 2014). Added by Duman (2019) This significant fine motor development includes the behavior of holding, grasping, tearing pictures, cutting, and gluing during early childhood education. Controlling these objects can help children to gain new experiences with the surrounding environment and can have an influence on their motoric development at school, especially in drawing, copying, and writing skills. In addition, this fine motor development has an important role in the academic growth and academic success of children. because when the child's fine motor development goes well, the child can write or draw letters and shapes (Sundari et al., 2019).

Holding a pencil is a basic component to start introducing writing skills to children. For children to hold pencils, crayons, or markers is an activity that is used to draw and write. This is one of the first efforts for children to try to write early which is included pictures (Beaty, 2013). After the child can hold a pencil well, the teacher will start giving simple words to the child for them to imitate. This is in line with Nurbiana (2021) that the child's initial effort to be able to write can be seen from the child's readiness in the child's fine motor skills in the form of holding a pencil after the child can hold a pencil, the child will make a scribble and as it develops, the child will be able to write better. Added to Hall et al. (2015) and Pelatti et al. (2014) when children are often trained to make a stroke this will help children to form recognition and formation of letters. In addition, children will be able to draw first before they try to write because through drawing children will generate ideas for writing (Byington & Kim, 2017).

#### **Achievement Target Introducing Writing Ability**

Teacher have an achievement target in writing ability. The achievement target is different every year because it adjusts to the conditions of each child's development so that teacher determine an achievement target according to the conditions that occur and do not force the will so that children have the same writing abilities as the previous year. Seeing the conditions of the children that are different from the previous year so that the achievement target is not for the child to be able to write a word or a short sentence but to make letters bold and imitate letters. This can be seen from the words of the first educator, Ms. Cica.

*"For the specific target in writing, most children must be able to imitate letters. However, if the child has not been able to imitate the letters, then the achievement target is to make the letters thicker."* (Interview I, Ms. Cica)

In contrast to the previous year when children were able to write more complex words consisting of several words or write sentences. Even so, teacher will not force conditions in the previous year to current conditions. When teacher impose their will, they are afraid that teacher will make them not interested in this writing activity. Following the expression uttered by the third teacher, Ms. Lulu.

*"In the previous year, two abilities could be achieved, for example, children could write words spelled out by teacher and could write sentences well, but again, judging from the condition of the children in the class, I as an educator could not impose my will like the previous year, so I gave my achievement targets. in the form of children being able to imitate letters or simple words."* (Interview I, Mrs. Lulu)

Based on the description above, teacher do not force their will to make an achievement target that is not by the conditions of child development and growth. What's more, the writing skills that appear in early childhood will vary from one child to another so the results of writing abilities also vary in their children(Puranik et al., 2018). The achievement targets expected by teacher include bold letters and imitating simple letters. This is in line with Bingham et al. (2017)teacher can introduce the ability to write to children through pictures, and scribbles using dots, circles, or shapes. This shape can be a letter or random letters that have meaning. This achievement can be achieved when teacher can encourage children to like writing activities(Lonigan, 2015).

### **Media Introduction to Writing Ability**

The introduction of writing skills using learning media makes it easier for children to absorb the information provided by teacher. In one of the Kindergartens in Purwakarta Regency where the research took place, several media were used to introduce writing skills to children. In the first semester, teacher introduce them through things that are fun for children such as games, pieces of origami paper, sand, stones, limbs, and blackboards. As stated by the first educator, Ms. Cica in her interview.

*"In the first semester, I used media with the help of tools or without tools, such as through games and limbs. For example, writing on the sky, writing on the feet, writing the letter i or the letter o on a friend's body. The choice of media is because games make writing activities more interesting for children. Not infrequently, I also use sand or stone media as a medium for children to write."* (Interview I, Ms. Cica)

Even so, it is not uncommon for teacher to provide LKS to give children the opportunity to make meaningful doodles to children. This meaningful doodle is not just a doodle but a way for teacher to find out how a child's motor development is feeling and how far it is.

*"Teacher give LKS to children as a medium for children to make doodles. Then, the educator asks the child to pick up the crayons."*(Observation I, Mrs. Nila)

Then teacher will use other media to improve writing skills in the form of LKS, notebooks, pencils, and magazines. This media is used when the child can hold a pencil so this media is used at the beginning of the second semester by teacher. This can be seen from the results of the following observations.

*"Mrs. Cica divided notebooks to each child and asked the children to take the writing pencils in front."*(Observation I, Ms. Cica)

*"Ara started to take a pencil in front and opened a notebook which contained several words (eyes, balls) that Ara needed to imitate."*(Observation II, Fig)

Apart from using notebooks, teacher also use other media available in class, such as magazines. This was revealed by the third educator, Ms. Lulu.

*"When writing, usually children go through the magazines that are already in class and you can see that the children have not been able to write the letters az. If the child can and completes the letter a, the child will continue to write the next letter. (Interview I, Mrs. Lulu)*

The media used by teacher in introducing writing skills to group A children are in the form of LKS, notebooks, pencils, magazines, pieces of paper, and crayons. This is in line with Bingham et al. (2017) The media that are often in demand and used by teacher in writing activities are in the form of pencils, markers, crayons, or white chalk, various papers, and tools to form a letter. The choice of crayon media in drawing activities can generate interest in learning in children because children do not feel that they are being introduced to the ability to write by teacher. Added by Beaty (2013) at first the child cannot distinguish between drawing and writing activities because both convey a

meaning. For children holding crayons, markers, and pencils is an activity that is used to draw and write even though drawing is an initial effort to write.

The blackboard is also a medium for teacher to introduce writing to children by writing a few letters on the blackboard. This is in line with Bingham et al. (2017) that teacher can show children when they want to introduce letters to children through the blackboard and explain to children how the sounds and shapes of these letters are. In addition, writing skills can be used without tools but can use limbs as learning media, such as legs, arms, and back. Children can make writing on these limbs using their hands or other media. In addition, children can use their fingers to write letters in the sky and sand. Not only that, but through games, teacher can also introduce writing skills to children. The introduction of this writing ability can be done when children play socio-drama, and teacher can discuss things related to their roles. For example, while they were at the post office, teacher can ask whether teacher need to sign packages or letters sent by children. By involving children in this conversation, they can ask children to sound words and identify letter matches with sounds (Thomas et al., 2020).

### **Factors Affecting Writing Ability**

Based on the results of the interviews, shows that the factors that influence the ability to write are not only from within the child but other factors can hinder the ability to write in children, such as the home environment because children have the most time at home to get to know writing ability. In addition, adults who are near children also have a role that is no less singular in guiding, and training children so that learning that has been done at school can be repeated at home, but if adults do not participate in the introduction, then optimizing children's development, especially in writing skills not maximal. This writing ability needs to be done repeatedly following the principles of writing where children need to use the same form repeatedly so that children get used to it (Beaty, 2013).

Added by Nurbiana (2021) that the family environment or home environment is the first and foremost environment for children so the family environment becomes a model for children to behave so that children need someone who can be used as an example or role model in terms of writing so that they have an interest in a growing interest in writing. However, based on the results of the interviews that have been conducted, it is explained that parents do not play an active role in guiding their children in introducing literacy, especially writing skills, which makes them less interested in writing.

*"Children's fine motor skills in holding a pencil are not trained at home so this becomes an obstacle at school." (Interview I, Ms. Cica)*

*"Yes, this child's writing ability has not yet developed because the parents are not involved in the process of developing children's motor skills because parents think that it is the responsibility of the teacher at school." (Interview I, Mrs. Nila)*

Even though teacher are not the only ones who play an important role in writing skills, parents also have an important role in training and guiding their children to have good writing skills. However, there is no collaboration between teacher and parents to make this target well achieved. Parents' non-involvement in the development of writing skills is because parents are sometimes busy with their tasks so when their children ask to study together, parents refuse.

*"The lack of maximum writing ability of children in semester one is caused by a lack of cooperation with parents." (Interview I, Mrs. Lulu)*

*"If the mother is busy, the child asks to study, so the mother raises her hand when asked to teach her child." (Interview I, Ms. Cica)*

*"So the problem of developing children's writing skills lies with the parents, not the children." (Interview I, Ms. Cica)*

In addition, there is also a need for collaboration between teacher in schools so that there is harmony in the targets to be achieved. So, teacher need to provide reports on the progress of their children to other teacher. This is evident from the results of an interview with educator one, Ms. Cica.

*"Classroom teacher reports regarding the child's condition such as the child has started to know vowels and consonants, after that the child begins to understand his name even though the child cannot write it himself but they know his name."*(Interview I, Ms. Cica)

*"We also among teachers will provide reports on the condition of parents and children's achievements in writing so that other teachers are ready and have no difficulties when the child is in group B."*(Interview I, Ms. Cica)

This writing ability can be influenced by several factors. The factors that affect children's writing skills include the home environment, the role of parents, the collaboration of teacher with parents, and the collaboration of teacher with other teacher. When parents do not provide support or help children in introducing writing skills, it can hinder children from mastering these abilities. Though according Carroll et al., (2019) parents who often encourage their children to develop writing skills can improve children's expression using signs and letters. In addition, whether you like it or not, parents are required to be role models for their children by providing guidance and direction as teacher at school so that teacher and parents can complement each other and help solve a problem or difficulty faced by children, especially in writing (Baiti, 2020). This is different from Nurbiana (2021) who said that several factors influence writing skills such as motivation, family environment, and learning media.

## **DISCUSSION**

The ability to write depends on the readiness of the child's motor skills, especially their fine motor skills, but in the first semester, the child's motor development has not developed properly so to be able to write letters or words, children experience difficulties. Then according Beaty (2013) when children experience difficulties and are not interested in writing activities, do not force them but can invite children to experiment with other media. This is in line with Suggate et al (2018) children who are forced with writing activities will hurt other developments, such as reading ability. So that the development of fine motor skills has an important role in the academic growth and academic success of children. because when a child's fine motor development goes well, the child can write or draw letters and shapes (Sundari et al., 2019). Holding a pencil is the first step for children to be able to write letters or words. Fine motor development is already interesting, especially in holding a pencil, so teacher begin to provide a stimulus for simple writing activities, such as giving directions to form a scribble, or image because this scribble is the first step in the writing stage (Bingham et al., 2017). Several stages in writing do not directly form a letter pattern but rather the scribble stage, the repetition stage, the random writing stage, the name writing stage, and the short sentence writing stage (Susanto, 2017). This achievement can be achieved when teacher can encourage children to like writing activities (Lonigan, 2015).

The media used by teacher in introducing writing skills to children does not directly use pencils and notebooks. Instead, teacher use several media that can develop children's fine motor skills, such as paper, painting tools, origami, sand, stones, seeds, and blackboards. This media is used in the activities of squeezing, tearing, sticking, matching, holding, and inserting objects into a place. Besides that, it is not uncommon for teacher not to use media in the introduction of writing because teacher use the child's body parts such as hands, feet, and back as well as through games and songs. After the child's fine motor development develops, the educator begins to introduce the child to pencil-holding activities with the aim that the child has started using a pencil to form an image so that in the second semester, teacher use media in the form of LKS, notebooks, pencils, magazines, pieces of paper, and crayon. This is in line with Bingham et al. (2017)

the media that are often in demand and used by teacher in writing activities are in the form of pencils, markers, crayons, or white chalk, various papers, and tools to form a letter.

Even though the child has started to carry out writing activities by forming a letter or word from simple to complex, some children are not yet ready for fine motor development because their hands emit a shaking response which makes the child unable to complete the task completely. This is influenced by several factors that not only come from within the child but also come from outside the child, one of which is adults, teacher, and parents. The lack of habituation and the role of parents in introducing writing skills make this activity foreign to children (Hurlock, 2015; Nurbiana, 2021; Santrock, 2012). This lack of parental role is caused because parents are busy so this busyness limits the time of parents and children. In addition, the collaboration between teacher and parents is not going well because some parents are of the view that learning activities, especially in the introduction of reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, are the responsibility of teacher at school. Though according to Piasta et al. (2020) when parents participate in this writing activity it can increase children's achievements in academic or non-academic. In addition, parents do not only participate but parents need to encourage children to develop their writing skills so that children can increase their expression in using signs and letters (Carroll et al., 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Teacher needs to pay attention to the readiness of children's motor development, especially children's fine motor skills before introducing writing skills. Readiness in developing fine motor skills can be done in the first semester through various activities, such as crumpling paper, inserting grain, cutting, sticking, throwing objects, and finger painting. This activity can help coordination between the eyes and hands of the child because when the child's fine motor development is well developed, it is the right time to introduce the ability to write, especially in holding a pencil. The learning media used by teacher in the first semester and the second semester are different. In semester one, teacher introduce them through things that are fun for children such as games, pieces of origami paper, sand, stones, and limbs as well as a blackboard while in the second semester use blackboards, LKS, notebooks, pencils, magazines, scraps of paper, and crayons. Then, the readiness of children in writing skills depends on several factors, such as the home environment, the role of parents, the collaboration of teacher with parents, and the collaboration of teacher with other teacher.

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