

CASE STUDY ON ACADEMIC TUTORING: WRITING LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AMONG SECOND-GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research is a case study of a second-grade student, identified by the initials KGLH, combined with an in depth literature review regarding the potential causes of the student's difficulties and possible solutions within the framework of academic guidance services. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the homeroom teacher, observations of learning activities, and an analysis of the student's written work. The findings from the interviews and observations indicate that the subject experiences mechanical difficulties in writing, characterized by the incorrect use of capital letters, errors in letter sequencing, illegible handwriting in terms of both form and size, and the omission of periods at the end of sentences. These challenges stem from a tendency to rush and a lack of focus when listening to the teacher's instructions. Proposed solutions for K include: one. providing more opportunities for writing practice, and two. utilizing learning media or methods that help the student recall letters in a more meaningful way. The intervention involves a planned collaboration between the teacher and the parents, incorporating "scaffolding" or gradual support and the use of interactive visual media within both individual and group counseling sessions. Through this synergistic collaboration involving the homeroom teacher, the school counselor, and active support from parents at home it is expected that the writing difficulties experienced by K can be gradually overcome.

Keywords: Learning Problems, Writing Difficulties, Elementary School, Guidance and Counseling, Case Study.

INTRODUCTION

The learning process is an integral part of education, as it involves interaction between teachers and students to achieve established learning objectives (Darsyah, 2023). In this process, a teacher's role extends beyond merely delivering subject matter; they also serve as guides and mentors, helping students acquire knowledge, develop skills, and cultivate positive attitudes. According to Durisa et al. (2025), teachers are also expected to be creative and innovative in fostering a learning environment that is engaging, enjoyable, and stimulating. In reality, however, the learning process does not always unfold as expected. Some students may become bored, lose interest in the lesson, fail to pay attention to the teacher's explanations, or even grow drowsy and fall asleep during class. Such conditions can hinder a student's ability to grasp the material and negatively impact their learning outcomes. Consequently, teachers must remain attentive to the various difficulties students encounter during the learning process in order to identify effective strategies to optimize that process (Chan et al., 2019).

According to Nurkholidah (2023), a common challenge for students in the lower grades (such as third grade) is difficulty with early-stage writing. These writing issues include unbalanced letter forms, text that drifts off the lines, omitted letters, incorrect letter formation, slow writing speed, a lack of spacing, and handwriting that is unclear or illegible. Furthermore, such writing difficulties are not limited to the lower grades; Nisa et al. (2025) note that similar challenges also arise among fifth-grade students. Issues observed in the fifth grade include errors in the use of capital and lowercase letters, difficulties with consonant clusters and diphthongs, a lack of spacing, and confusion between letters that share similar shapes or sounds. In another study, Amalia and Bakhtiar (2024) found that third-grade students still struggle to distinguish between uppercase and lowercase letters; they also exhibit slow writing speeds, inconsistent letter sizing, and difficulty holding writing instruments. Amalya et al. (2026) analyzed second-grade students and identified writing challenges related to forming letters, distinguishing between similar-looking letters, constructing simple sentences, using uppercase and lowercase letters correctly, and applying punctuation.

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher with the class teacher, a second-grade student identified by the initials KGLH was noted. K is an active student who participates well in school activities and possesses strong social skills, interacting easily with peers and the surrounding environment. Despite this active engagement, K faces certain challenges in the learning process specifically regarding writing skills. K's handwriting is relatively untidy and difficult to read compared to that of most classmates; the letters are often unclear, the sizing is inconsistent, and the overall neatness requires improvement. These difficulties hinder K's ability to provide written responses, particularly when completing assignments that demand precision and legibility. Given this, the writing difficulties experienced by K warrant further investigation.

Learning difficulties represent an issue that requires attention within the realm of education. Such difficulties arise when students encounter obstacles in understanding course material, participating in learning activities, or achieving expected learning outcomes. Ismail (2020) examines student learning difficulties within the context of active learning in schools. The study outlines several stages for identifying and addressing these difficulties: (1) identifying students suspected of experiencing learning difficulties; (2) pinpointing the specific areas where these difficulties occur; (3) determining the underlying causes; (4) proposing potential forms of assistance; (5) establishing strategies to overcome the difficulties; and (6) conducting follow-ups on the assistance provided. These stages demonstrate that addressing learning difficulties involves more than merely recognizing that a student is struggling; it requires a comprehensive process encompassing observation, investigation into the causes, the formulation of solutions, and the evaluation of the interventions applied.

LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Learning problems refer to conditions experienced by students when they encounter obstacles in the learning process, making it difficult to achieve intended learning goals optimally. According to Aulia (2025), these obstacles can stem from within the student such as a lack of motivation, interest, ability to comprehend material, or emotional issues or from the external environment, including unsuitable teaching methods, limited learning resources, or a lack of support from family and the school environment. Learning problems are not exclusive to students with low academic ability; they can also affect students with above-average academic performance. As noted by Siregar (2026), strong academic ability does not necessarily guarantee that an individual will be free from difficulties during the learning process. Therefore, learning problems should be understood as diverse conditions that require interventions tailored to the specific causes and needs of each student.

Meanwhile, according to Djamarah (as cited in Ma'ruf, 2020), learning difficulties vary in both form and severity. These difficulties can range from mild to severe, may be specific to certain subjects or affect multiple subjects, and can be either temporary or persistent. Based on this, it can be concluded that "learning problems" encompass various conditions that hinder the smooth progression of the learning process, while "learning difficulties" specifically refer to situations where a student struggles to understand, master, or meet the demands of learning tasks. According to Ritonga et al. (2025), students who experience writing difficulties may require more time to complete written assignments or struggle to express their thoughts in writing. In a classroom setting, such difficulties can impact a student's ability to take notes, answer written questions, or construct paragraphs. However, untidy handwriting or a slow pace in completing assignments does not automatically indicate dysgraphia. As Azizah (2020) points out, teachers should observe recurring patterns of difficulty, the progression of a student's writing skills, and other potential contributing factors. To support students, teachers can provide writing exercises in a gradual manner, utilize worksheets for letter formation, offer clear writing examples, and create opportunities for students to express their ideas orally before putting them into writing. Teachers may also adjust the writing workload to suit individual student needs, without compromising the intended learning objectives.

According to Amalia, R.A., et al. (2024), writing difficulties must be distinguished from writing errors that naturally occur during the learning and developmental process. Students who occasionally misspell words, use punctuation inconsistently, or have untidy handwriting do not necessarily have a learning disorder. As noted by Fahira, N. (2025), teachers should observe whether these difficulties occur repeatedly, persist over a significant period, and hinder the student's learning activities. Therefore, analyzing writing difficulties cannot be based solely on the final written product; it must also take into account the student's writing process, their understanding of instructions, their ability to convey ideas, and the development of their skills over time. In this context, writing difficulties are understood as obstacles that students encounter while developing writing skills appropriate for their developmental stage. According to Maliada, N.A.A. (2026), these difficulties may relate to mechanical aspects such as letter formation and word writing or linguistic aspects, such as sentence construction, spelling, and paragraph development. This understanding serves as a foundation for identifying specific types of writing difficulties more effectively and determining the appropriate instructional support to meet each student's needs. Research by Mashlahati (2023) indicates that early writing difficulties among elementary school students may include trouble distinguishing between letters that look or sound similar, inconsistent use of spacing, and unstable letter sizing. In general, the various forms of writing difficulties can be described as follows:

a. Difficulties with early writing are typically related to foundational writing skills, such as forming letters, copying words, spacing words appropriately, and maintaining a consistent letter size. Students experiencing these challenges may write slowly, mix uppercase and lowercase letters, or produce text that is difficult to read. Research by Niswati, Witono, and Setiawan involving second-grade elementary students also highlights issues with the use of uppercase and

lowercase letters, disproportionate letter shapes and sizes, and improper pencil-holding techniques.

b. Difficulties with spelling and punctuation: These challenges are characterized by errors in spelling words, the incorrect use of uppercase letters, and the misuse of periods, commas, and other punctuation marks. While students may be able to express ideas orally, they may struggle to transcribe them using correct linguistic conventions. Such difficulties can render writing unclear and diminish the accuracy of the information being conveyed.

c. Difficulties in constructing sentences and paragraphs occur when students are unable to develop ideas in a coherent, logical sequence. For instance, a student might be able to recount a series of events verbally but struggle to organize them sequentially in writing. A study by Harimurti and Irawan (2025) on narrative writing skills among fifth-grade students identified challenges in expressing ideas, structuring paragraphs, applying spelling and punctuation rules, selecting vocabulary, and building self-confidence during the writing process.

d. Writing difficulties associated with dysgraphia: dysgraphia is a term used to describe a learning difficulty that affects writing skills. These challenges may manifest in letter formation, the legibility of the text, writing speed, or the overall organization of written work. In their article, "Analysis of Writing Learning Difficulties (Dysgraphia) in Fifth-Grade Elementary Students," Nurfadhillah et al. discuss the characteristics of writing difficulties in fifth-grade students and emphasize the importance of employing instructional strategies tailored to each child's specific needs. It should be noted that not all students whose handwriting is untidy or who write slowly have dysgraphia. Teachers need to identify such difficulties through observation and by examining the students' work.

Difficulties in writing are not always attributable to a single factor. Such obstacles may relate to a student's abilities, learning experiences, instructional methods, and environmental support. Research by Mashlahati (2023) indicates that challenges in early writing can stem from internal factors such as fine motor skills, visual perception, memory, interest, and motivation as well as external factors, including parental attention and the learning environment. Similarly, a study by Qadaria et al. (2023) on the factors contributing to poor writing skills among fourth-grade students highlights internal factors (fine motor skills, visual memory, interest, and motivation) alongside external factors, such as parental attention and the home environment. Given that learning difficulties are experienced not only by students with lower academic ability but also by those performing above average, teachers must employ individualized approaches tailored to the specific causes and needs of each student (Djamarah, as cited in Ma'ruf, 2020).

A highly effective initial solution involves creating a conducive learning environment at school and fostering collaboration between teachers and parents at home, which helps boost students' internal motivation and interest in learning. To specifically address early-stage writing difficulties such as an inability to distinguish between letters, inconsistent letter sizing, incorrect pencil grips, or irregular spacing teachers can implement a strategy of gradual, technical guidance. As suggested by Ritonga et al. (2025) and supported by findings from Niswati et al., teachers can provide specialized letter-tracing sheets, offer clear visual examples of writing, and facilitate the development of children's fine motor skills. Furthermore, adjusting the volume of written assignments and allowing flexible completion times is crucial to ensure that students do not experience emotional distress. When students struggle with spelling, punctuation, or the construction of sentences and paragraphs, the approach can focus on separating the "idea generation" phase from the "technical writing" process.

Teachers can allow students to express their ideas orally before committing them to writing (Ritonga et al., 2025). To build confidence and help children structure their compositions coherently, tools such as mind maps, visual outlines, and curated vocabulary guides can be used to support the writing process before students attempt to compose a full piece (Harimurti & Irawan, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a case study and literature review employing a descriptive method. It aims to clearly describe the writing difficulties experienced by a student (referred to as 'K'), the suspected causes, and potential solutions that could be provided through academic guidance services. Data were collected via interviews with the homeroom teacher, followed by observation and documentation. The interviews were conducted to gather information regarding the specific nature of the student's writing difficulties, the suspected underlying factors, and the instructional strategies previously implemented by the teacher. Observations were carried out to examine the writing instruction process and the specific difficulties encountered by K during these activities. Additionally, documentation involved collecting samples of K's written work to identify specific errors.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and categorizing information related to the student's writing difficulties. Subsequently, the data were presented as a descriptive account to ensure a clear understanding of the nature of the difficulties and their contributing factors. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the findings from the observations, interviews, and documentation. Through these stages, the research aims to provide a clear overview of the writing difficulties faced by student K and their suspected causes. Furthermore, a literature review was conducted to identify potential solutions that could assist the teacher in developing a plan for providing academic guidance services to student K.

RESULTS

Based on interviews with the class teacher, it is understood that, in general, the students' writing skills are quite adequate, with more than 50% having achieved a good level of writing proficiency. Nevertheless, the school's policy requiring the use of cursive script presents a distinct challenge for some students, as well as for the teachers guiding them in the classroom. The primary obstacles identified by the teacher relate not only to the final written output but also to the mechanical aspects of fine motor skills specifically, pencil-holding technique and the overall neatness of the writing. This issue is further compounded by a lack of additional writing practice at home. To address this, the teacher employs a dictation method, which allows for an assessment of the students' writing proficiency by observing whether they include all the necessary letters; relying solely on copying tasks often results in students omitting certain letters.

According to an interview with the second-grade homeroom teacher, a student named K is highly active in school activities and possesses strong social skills, interacting well with peers. K is sociable, engages effectively with the surrounding environment, and builds positive social relationships with classmates. However, despite this active nature, K faces certain challenges in the learning process specifically regarding concentration and precision when completing assignments. At times, K lacks focus, failing to pay close attention to instructions or to read questions in their entirety. Consequently, K tends to rush to provide answers without fully grasping the questions, which often leads to errors in the work. Furthermore, the teacher noted that K struggles with writing skills. K's handwriting is considered untidy and difficult to read compared to that of most classmates; this is evident in the lack of clarity in letter forms, inconsistent sizing, and a general need for improvement in overall neatness. This difficulty may affect K's ability to provide written responses, particularly when completing tasks that require precision and legibility. Given this information, the writing difficulties experienced by K warrant further investigation.

The following are the personal details of the research subject:

Table 1. Subject's Personal Data

Student Identity	
Initials	KGLH
Place and date of birth	Palembang, 20 November 2017
Age	8 Years Old
Gender	Male
Education	2nd grade of elementary school

The researcher conducted classroom observations to assess the physical environment, the learning atmosphere, and K's learning behavior. Additionally, the researcher interviewed the homeroom teacher to understand the teacher's concerns regarding K, gather information on the history and progression of K's challenges, learn about the interventions previously attempted by the teacher, and explore potential underlying causes for the difficulties K faces.

Observations revealed that K shares a desk with a female classmate known for being quite mischievous and prone to seeking attention from those around her. Throughout the lesson, the teacher who employs a student-centered approach with individualized instruction effectively engaged and stimulated K. However, at times when the teacher's attention was directed elsewhere, K would chat with her desk mate or play with her stationery instead of completing her assigned tasks. Shortly thereafter, she would quickly finish the work, approach the teacher at the front of the class, and submit it for correction and feedback. The teacher consistently encouraged K to take her time, exercise patience when reading and interpreting questions, and ensure her handwriting remained legible to others. When among her peers, K experienced no difficulty socializing; she appeared friendly, cheerful, and enthusiastic in her interactions. Furthermore, in terms of social adjustment, K is known for being highly sociable, amiable, and adaptable in her interactions with peers. The social environment within the classroom is also very supportive; her classmates demonstrate a high level of tolerance never judging, mocking, or belittling her and are always happy to offer assistance whenever K encounters obstacles or difficulties in completing her school assignments.

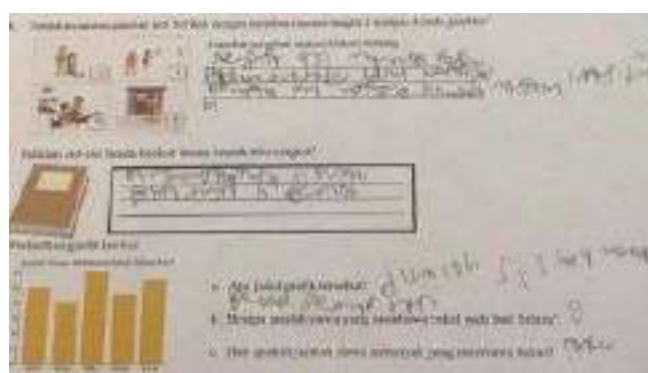


Figure 1. Sample of Student's Writing with the Initials K

DISCUSSION

Based on observations and interviews conducted with the subject, KGLH (K), it was found that the primary challenge faced by the subject lies in writing skills specifically, an inability to produce neat and legible text. For primary school students, writing skills serve as a fundamental cornerstone; as noted by Mashlahati (2023), students at the primary level are expected to master four core language competencies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills act as a foundational resource for the development of a student's cognitive abilities, social skills, and character (Magdalena et al., 2021). The difficulties experienced by K are categorized as challenges in early-stage writing. K faces technical, mechanical issues, such as the incorrect use of capital letters, errors in the arrangement of letters within words, disproportionate letter sizing and shaping, and the omission of periods at the end of sentences. These findings align with research by Niswati et al. (2023), which explains that common writing issues in the early grades include inconsistent letter proportions and unclear letter forms, both of which hinder readability.

The difficulties experienced by K stem from an interplay between internal and external factors within the school environment. As noted by Cahyono (cited in Ma'ruf, 2020) and further supported by Qadaria et al. (2023), learning difficulties are influenced by one's motivational state and the surrounding supportive environment. Internally, K tends to lack focus, is easily distracted by external stimuli such as chatting with a seatmate and often rushes to complete tasks without fully reading the instructions. Externally, a lack of guidance and consistent writing practice at home is a primary reason these challenges persist. K relies solely on the limited practice provided at school, without any ongoing reinforcement from parents at home. This aligns with the perspective of Inggriyani and Pebrianti (2021), who emphasize that writing proficiency requires cognitive mastery, continuous practice, and sufficient experience to enable an individual to express their ideas in a structured manner.

This indicates that the writing difficulties experienced by K do not necessarily point to a severe cognitive impairment or permanent dysgraphia; rather, they represent challenges in the development of fine motor skills and concentration that require targeted intervention. According to Ritonga et al. (2025), teachers should distinguish between learning disorders and typical developmental errors by implementing scaffolded exercises, using letter-tracing guides, and adjusting the workload of assignments.

To address the initial writing difficulties experienced by subject K such as disproportionate letter shapes and sizes, errors in word arrangement, and issues with the use of capital letters and punctuation a primary solution involves gradual fine-motor skills exercises. Teachers can utilize tracing sheets and three-lined writing paper to help improve the neatness and legibility of K's handwriting. To manage internal factors like a lack of focus or a tendency to rush, teachers can break tasks down into smaller, manageable steps and incorporate interactive, kinesthetic activities. This approach leverages K's active nature and preference for outdoor or hands-on activities, helping to boost motivation and focus without causing undue pressure (Cahyono in Ma'ruf, 2020; Qadaria et al., 2023 in Ritonga et al., 2025). Regarding external factors, consistent practice at home is essential. Since writing requires sustained habituation (Inggriyani & Pebrianti, 2021), parents should provide regular guidance dedicating 10–15 minutes daily while offering positive reinforcement (Qadaria et al., 2023). Furthermore, teachers can adjust the volume of writing tasks without compromising the core curriculum, while also fostering a classroom environment where students like K can support one another in maintaining focus during lessons.

CONCLUSION

Based on a literature review, a student identified by the initial 'K' experiences difficulties with early-stage writing. Observed challenges include issues with the placement of capital letters, errors in the sequence of letters within words, illegible letter forms and sizes, a lack of concentration when listening to the sounds of letters, the omission of periods at the end of sentences, and general errors in word spelling. These difficulties are likely attributable to a delay in the development of writing skills and insufficient writing practice. Cognitively, however, student K performs quite well in following classroom instruction. Potential solutions for student K include: 1) providing more opportunities for writing practice, and 2) utilizing learning media or methods that assist K in recalling letters. As a form of intervention and follow-up, providing academic support through both individual and group approaches that incorporates non-projected visual media (such as word flashcards and sentence-building games) has proven to be an effective strategy. This structured intervention aligns with the six-stage framework for addressing learning difficulties proposed by Ismail (as cited in Ma'ruf, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of offering alternative forms of assistance and conducting follow-up evaluations. Through synergistic collaboration between the classroom teacher and the school counselor, combined with active support from parents at home, it is expected that the writing obstacles faced by K can be gradually overcome without diminishing the student's learning motivation or self-confidence at school.

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