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# Implementation of Reading Classes to Assist Students with Reading Difficulties at SDN 2 Ngetal

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**ABSTRACT**

*The abstract should concisely describe the content and scope of your paper and identify the objective(s), its methodology and its findings, conclusions, and implication of study. This research aims to describe the implementation of the reading class program in helping primary students who experience reading difficulties, identify the supporting and inhibiting factors, and analyze its impact on student reading sub-skills at SDN 2 Ngetal. A qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach was utilized. The research informants consisted of the school principal, lower-grade class teachers, and seven students facing reading challenges. Data were collected via structured non-participatory observations, semi-structured interviews, and comprehensive documentation tracking. The collected data were processed through analytical stages encompassing data reduction, explicit coding, structural data display, and conclusion verification. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and technical triangulation combined with rigorous member checking. The findings revealed that the reading class program was systematically executed through structured stages of diagnostic mapping, individualized treatment execution, and tiered scaffolding adaptations. The targeted pedagogical assistance and scaffolding strategies significantly enhanced students' decoding accuracy, reading fluency, and comprehension. Factors driving program success included solid institutional policy commitments, continuous teacher dedication, and highly interactive physical media modifications. Conversely, temporal limitations and situational variations in target focus acted as administrative constraints. This research concludes that a structured and differentiated reading class operationalized through continuous scaffolding can serve as a potent remedial model to eradicate foundational literacy blockages in basic education settings.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is a highly vital fundamental skill for elementary school students as it serves as the core foundation for constructing, assimilating, and understanding various fields of knowledge across multidisciplinary boundaries. Reading is not merely defined

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as a mechanical activity of visually pronouncing language sound symbols, but rather an active cognitive process that involves linguistic integration, background experience, and deep meaning interpretation. In the theoretical landscape of basic pedagogy, reading ability is classified progressively starting from early literacy in lower grades to reading comprehension in higher grades. Mature early reading skills are characterized by the mastery of decoding automaticity, letter recognition, accurate syllable pronunciation, fluency of intonation, and understanding of simple sentences. According to Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural postulate, the development of children's literacy skills does not occur in a vacuum, but is activated through meaningful social interaction and targeted guidance from adults or more competent peers within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Although the urgency of basic literacy has been universally agreed upon as a primary determinant of academic success, empirical realities at the national level still show highly concerning disparities. Referring to the 2022 international report of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the reading ability of Indonesian children is still classified as low, with approximately 70% of students scoring below the OECD average and experiencing cognitive dysfunction in identifying the main idea of a simple reading text. This literacy anomaly is also clearly reflected at the local level of basic education units. Based on initial observations conducted by researchers at SDN 2 Ngetal, Trenggalek Regency, a crucial phenomenon was discovered where several lower-grade students experienced serious obstacles in early reading. Initial identification revealed that 7 students (4 boys and 3 girls) faced difficulties in distinguishing visually similar letters, spelling basic syllables, pronouncing sentences without stuttering, and lacked contextual reading comprehension.

To respond to these literacy problems, SDN 2 Ngetal initiated an innovative program called the reading class as a form of specific pedagogical intervention outside classical learning hours. The reading class is designed as a structured remedial program that provides individualized and continuous guidance for students indicated to have reading delays. Based on literature exploration, previous studies conducted by Yusnan et al. (2023) and Lisnawati and Onde (2023) mostly focused on identifying types of early reading difficulties, mapping the causes of dyslexia, and implementing the school literacy movement (GLS) on a macro level without specifying instructional interventions based on remedial classes. Therefore, the research gap and novelty of this study lie in conducting an in-depth, contextual, and systematic examination of how the implementation of the reading class as a structured pedagogical intervention program integrates scaffolding guidance strategies based on Vygotsky's theory to alleviate early reading difficulties at SDN 2 Ngetal, along with a comprehensive analysis of its supporting factors, inhibiting factors, and its concrete impact on improving students' reading sub-skills.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is developed theoretically and methodologically by positioning the research variables within the framework of primary education epistemology. The literature structure is organized alphabetically based on the scientific writing principles of the 7th Edition of the American Psychological Association (APA 7th Edition). The concept of a reading class is defined as a structured instructional

environment specifically formulated to isolate reading barriers through a series of repetitive stimulation exercises, the use of tiered concrete media, and direct modeling by class teachers. The implementation of this program is designed to bridge the gap between students' actual abilities and their potential abilities. Analysis of reading disabilities in elementary school children confirms that reading difficulty is a neurological-linguistic processing disorder that affects the automaticity of phoneme and grapheme recognition, manifesting in sound omission errors, word substitutions, and text comprehension barriers.

### 2.1. Scaffolding Theory and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The intervention model in this reading class is fully guided by the sociocultural constructivism theory pioneered by Lev Vygotsky. This theory states that children's higher cognitive functions grow and develop through social interaction mediation and language-based guidance. The core of this concept is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the dynamic space between the actual development level determined by independent problem-solving ability and the potential development level achieved through collaborative guidance with a facilitator or expert (Vygotsky, 1978). The bridging of this cognitive gap is operationalized through scaffolding strategies, which are conceptualized as the provision of temporary, strictly structured instructional assistance at the early stages of learning, and gradually reduced as the students' internal competence and independence increase (Tohari & Rahman, 2024; Wardani et al., 2023). In the context of early reading instruction, scaffolding implementation manifests in the form of providing phonic cues, breaking down complex syllables, guided verbal repetition, and using tactile-visual props.

### 2.2. Early Reading Sub-Skills: Accuracy, Fluency, and Comprehension

Reading skills represent a complex integration of various language sub-systems that are mutually dependent on each other. According to theoretical studies, the construct of reading ability is divided into three main operational indicators:
a) Decoding Accuracy: The reader's skill to pronounce or recognize words correctly according to their written form, without substitution, omission, or addition of sounds/words (Apriana, 2021). This indicator includes the ability of visual discrimination of alphabet letters and accurate integration of phonemic sounds.
b) Reading Fluency: The ability to read text smoothly, automatically, at a stable pace, and using intonation and prosody that reflect an understanding of language syntactic structure (Ali & Asrial, 2022). Reading fluency is a critical indicator signifying that a student's cognitive capacity is no longer depleted merely by spelling letter by letter.
c) Reading Comprehension: A higher-order cognitive process to extract, construct, and synthesize meaning from written texts contextually (Erni et al., 2025; Susanti & Zahro, 2022). These three aspects are linearly related; dysfunction in the ability to decode written codes automatically will degrade fluency, and poor fluency absolutely hinders the achievement of full text comprehension.

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## 3. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. This approach was selected to explore deeply, intensively, and contextually the phenomenon of implementing the reading class program in a natural setting at SDN 2 Ngetal (Abdussamad, 2021). The presence of the researcher in the field acts as the primary instrument (human instrument) in collecting, filtering, coding, and analyzing empirical data (Waruwu, 2023). Primary data sources in this study were determined purposively (purposive sampling), involving the School Principal as the policy maker, two lower-grade teachers (grade I and grade II) as instructional implementers, and seven lower-grade students identified as experiencing reading difficulties (4 grade I students and 3 grade II students). Secondary data sources were derived from student learning portfolio documents, track records of daily literacy diagnostic assessments, reading class implementation journals, and visual documentation (Sulung & Muspawi, 2024).
Data collection techniques were operationalized systematically using three main methods: (1) Structured non-participatory observation using observation guide sheets to observe teachers' instructional behavior, scaffolding application, tactile interaction with media, and students' affective responses (Pratiwi et al., 2024); (2) Semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and the seven student subjects to explore deep perspectives regarding experiences, psychological barriers, and literacy competence transformation (Ardiansyah et al., 2023); (3) Written and visual documentation to track administrative validity and rekam records of students' actual learning progress. The data analysis technique adopted the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data reduction (including assigning specific text codes such as IRC for Implementation of Reading Class, SF for Supporting Factors, IF for Inhibiting Factors, and IRC-I for Impact on Reading Capability), data display in the form of thematic narrative matrices, and drawing conclusions through verification (Saleh, 2017; Susanto et al., 2024). Data trustworthiness was strictly controlled through source triangulation, technical triangulation of data collection, extension of field observation time, increased analytical persistence, and conducting confirmatory member checks with key informants to eliminate researchers' subjective interpretation biases (Mekarisce, 2020).

## 4. FINDING

Based on the results of data collection through structured observation, in-depth interviews, and portfolio document searches at SDN 2 Ngetal, comprehensive empirical data was found regarding the instructional implementation of the reading class program. This intervention program was conducted routinely every Saturday morning after joint gymnastics activities, utilizing the lower-grade classrooms and the school library. Learning implementation was based on the results of the initial reading diagnostic assessment integrated into the School Environment Introduction Period (MPLS), where teachers mapped visual mastery of letters A-Z and number symbols. Through the daily mapping results, teachers applied a differentiated instruction approach by dividing the seven students into three different cognitive difficulty levels, supported by the use of varied tactile-visual media. Results of ability cluster observation and student response dynamics see in Table 1.

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The findings from confirmatory interviews reinforced the validity of the observation data. Class teachers explained that individual guidance interventions were carried out patiently by applying a taxonomy of assistance from high to low levels. The School Principal emphasized institutional commitment by facilitating the procurement of advanced technological equipment in the form of Interactive Flat Panels (Smart TV) and scheduling periodic teacher evaluation meetings at least once a month. From a psychological aspect, the seven students expressed great enthusiasm and a loss of inferiority or social discrimination, because they realized they were guided in a safe, supportive classroom atmosphere, surrounded by peers who were mutually struggling to cross their basic literacy barriers.

**Table 1.** Results of Ability Cluster Observation and Student Response Dynamics

| Learning Need Cluster | Student Subjects | Initial Barrier Characteristics | Interventions & Specific Media | Response Dynamics & Technical Progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cluster I: Letter & Basic Syllable Decoding** | BB, CN, DA | Recognizes isolated alphabetic letters but fails to spell basic words. Experiences visual disorientation with similar letters ("j", "g", "y"). | Flannel letter cards, magnetic reading boards, direct phonic articulation exercises. | Student CN was active in arranging flannel letters on the reading board. BB showed high persistence in repeating the spelling of visually similar letters phonetically. DA utilized peer tutoring when the teacher was assisting other groups. |
| **Cluster II: Complex Syllable Sentence Fluency** | IA, LA | Able to spell simple words but reads long sentences faltingly. Phonological barriers in double consonants ("nga", "nya", "gg"). | Tiered reading guidebooks, interactive syllable cards, Smart TV (Interactive Flat Panel). | Student IA brought independent practice books from home to keep practicing while waiting for their turn for guidance. LA experienced speech tying (twisting) when pronouncing long words like "memanggang" but recovered after intensive articulation repetition. |
| **Cluster III: Text Story Reading Comprehension** | TU, WY | Reads story texts very fluently and quickly but experiences cognitive dysfunction in understanding abstract vocabulary meanings and story message content. | Illustrated fable storybooks, Interactive Flat Panel, short text summary writing (1-2 paragraphs). | Student TU had a high learning grasp speed, capable of practicing text moral message analysis after being given modeling. WY focused on isolating difficult words ("menderam", "getir") through a repeated reading strategy. |

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## 5. DISCUSSION

The implementation of the reading class program at SDN 2 Ngetal proves the operational success of Vygotsky's scaffolding theory in alleviating basic literacy blockages in elementary school-aged children. Based on instructional analysis, the action of lower-grade teachers separating students based on specific weakness levels (decoding, fluency, comprehension) is a concrete manifestation of differentiated instruction principles. Teachers actively modified learning content, processes, and products based on each child's ZPD map. When students in Cluster I (BB, CN, DA) experienced cognitive disorientation in distinguishing similar letters like "j" and "g", the teacher did not issue punishments, but rather lowered the learning abstraction level using tactile media in the form of flannel cloth letter cards attached to reading boards (Rahmawati et al., 2025). This action provided a strong external cognitive structure aid (scaffold), helping to bridge the children's visual perception limitations before they were able to perform mental abstraction independently.

From a linguistic and psychocognitive perspective, early reading dysfunction in Cluster I and Cluster II stems from weak phonological awareness, specifically in decoding grapheme symbols into synchronous phoneme sounds. The inability to pronounce double consonants like "nga" and "nya" has a direct implication on low reading automaticity, causing students to read haltingly (disfluency). According to Cognitive Load Theory, when all of a child's mental energy is depleted merely to spell and arrange letter by letter, there is no working memory capacity left in the child's brain to process the meaning or essence of the read sentence text. This explains why Cluster II students were able to vocalize words but failed completely when asked to explain back the contents of the reading text. The reading class intervention breaks this weakening chain through guided repeated reading techniques using Interactive Flat Panels, which empirically are proven to significantly increase students' decoding automaticity (Permatasari et al., 2025).

For students in Cluster III (TU and WY), the barrier shifted from the mechanical domain (decoding) to the higher-order semantic comprehension domain (reading comprehension). The failure to grasp metaphoric messages such as the phrase "the dawn breaks as if bringing wrath" indicates that students require cognitive scaffolding in the form of vocabulary building and contextual interpretation modeling. Teachers intervened by providing illustrated fable storybooks, guiding students to track the plot line, and requesting them to summarize the text into a brief narrative writing of 1-2 paragraphs at the end of each session. This integrative approach effectively transformed students' skills from mere "mechanical reading" into "meaningful reading", which is highly crucial to support their learning readiness in understanding other more complex subject matters in higher grades (Ali & Asrial, 2022; Lestari et al., 2024).

Ecological analysis of the program indicates a deterministic synergy between internal and external supporting factors. The instructional leadership of the School Principal, manifested in the provision of a conducive library physical environment, Interactive Flat Panels, flannel cloth, as well as monthly routine teacher coordination meetings, acted as a macro support system that guaranteed program sustainability (Prasetyaningtyas et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2021). Furthermore, the utilization of asynchronous communication technology via the WhatsApp application between teachers and parents proved effective in aligning the monitoring of children's reading activities at home, minimizing literacy regression effects due to the lack of domestic stimulation

(Lanoko et al., 2025; Perwitasari & Setyawan, 2022). Nevertheless, the program's effectiveness was still constrained by administrative barriers in the form of highly limited time allocation (only Saturdays post-gymnastics) and focus distortion due to the hyperactive behavior of some students (Carmila & Ramadan, 2023). The pedagogical implications of this study reinforce that a structured reading class program is not merely an additional activity, but an essential remedial model capable of improving accuracy, fluency, comprehension, while simultaneously fostering students' self-efficacy and affective social solidarity among learners (Rohmah, 2024; Rosmidar et al., 2025).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the reading class program at SDN 2 Ngetal is empirically proven to be a highly effective and targeted remedial intervention model in alleviating early reading difficulties among elementary school students. Through the application of structured guidance strategies based on students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) maps and the integration of differentiated learning approaches, this program successfully isolated and resolved specific basic literacy barriers. The positive impact of this program manifested linearly in a significant improvement of students' three reading sub-skills: students who experienced letter visual disorientation are now able to perform decoding accurately; students who initially read haltingly achieved reading fluency automaticity; and advanced-level students succeeded in constructing deep and contextual text meaning comprehension. The program's success was strongly driven by school leadership commitment, teachers' creativity in modifying tactile-visual media, and active digital-based communication with parents, despite still facing daily time allocation constraints in its operationalization.

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations are formulated for stakeholders. Elementary school teachers are advised to continuously increase the intensity of individual guidance and expand the variety of educational word-game-based media to maintain students' affective engagement during the intervention process. For school management, it is recommended to formulate formal, written reading class regulatory policies into the operational curriculum documents of the education unit, optimize the management of illustrated storybook procurement with varied text literacy leveling, and design periodic written evaluation reporting systems to ensure measurable school literacy achievements objectively on the education report card. Lastly, future researchers are advised to develop continuous research by applying quasi-experimental designs or classroom action research (PTK) to test the comparative effectiveness of this reading class model across a wider student sample population.

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