



# Teacher Strategy to Help Second Grade Students with Early Reading Difficulties

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## ABSTRAK

Kesulitan membaca merupakan masalah umum yang dihadapi oleh siswa sekolah dasar kelas awal yang mengalami kesulitan belajar. Kesulitan membaca siswa akan berdampak pada rendahnya hasil belajar siswa dan akan berdampak pada perolehan pengetahuan siswa pada tingkat selanjutnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis strategi guru untuk mengatasi kesulitan membaca awal siswa. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Subyek penelitian ini adalah 1 orang kepala sekolah, 2 orang guru, dan 16 orang siswa kelas II SD. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan cara mereduksi data, menyajikan data dan menarik kesimpulan. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah strategi yang digunakan guru terdiri dari instruksi yang dibedakan, penilaian untuk menentukan perlakuan selanjutnya yang sesuai berdasarkan kebutuhan siswa, dan penggunaan media pembelajaran berdasarkan tingkat keterampilan membaca siswa. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa guru sebagai orang yang bertanggung jawab terhadap siswanya harus menyadari kebutuhannya dan strategi yang paling tepat untuk memenuhi kebutuhan siswa.

## ABSTRACT

Reading difficulties are a common problem faced by early grade elementary school students who have learning difficulties. Students' reading difficulties will have an impact on low student learning outcomes and will have an impact on students' acquisition of knowledge at the next level. The aims of this study is to analyze teacher's strategy to overcome students early reading difficulties. This research is a descriptive qualitative research. The subjects of this study were 1 school principal, 2 teachers, and 16 grade II elementary school students. Data collection techniques using interview techniques, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out by reducing data, presenting data and drawing conclusions. The results of this study are the strategies used by teachers comprises of differentiated instructions, assessments to determine the next suited treatment based on students' needs, and the use of learning media based on students' level of reading skill. It can be concluded that the teachers as someone who is responsible for their students must be aware of their needs and best suited strategies that met students' needs.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The skills required for someone to communicate effectively are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading is the most important aspect of the four skills, especially for a student (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012; Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Reading is a crucial skill for student at the elementary school level and can be taught when children develop the ability to communicate with their environment (Cain & Hattie, 2019; Widyaningrum & Hasanudin, 2019). Teaching reading skills in elementary schools is in accordance with one of the functions of elementary schools to develop students' basic skills, namely reading, writing and arithmetic as the prerequisite for further education (Sparapani et al., 2018; Virania et al., 2022). Students with reading skills will easily understand the instructions in the book and will also easily understand the contents of the book. Reading is an important aspect and activity in acquiring knowledge and information (Hapsari, 2019; Paige et al., 2021; Putri, 2022). This is in line with the first revelation of the Qur'an (96: 1-

5) as interpreted by M. Quraish Shihab that the word “*Iqra*” means the command to read interpreted as to read in general which indicates the urgency of reading for every humankind (Jayana & Mansur, 2021). Students need to familiarize themselves with reading because they can hone their thinking and reasoning skills by getting used to reading. Reading can help people to enlarge their knowledge and get brand new information. Elementary school students' reading ability can be divided into two aspects, students' early reading ability and comprehension reading ability. The aspects assessed in early reading include students' ability to recognize letters, recognize linguistic components (phonemes, words, phrases, clause patterns, and sentences), recognize the relationship between writing and spelling, and students' reading speed (Juhaeni et al., 2022; Putri, 2022). Unfortunately, in Indonesia there are still frequent cases where students can not read well at the age when they should be mastered reading. Students with low reading skills will find it difficult to master various fields of study and have an impact on student learning outcomes, psychology, and social life (Panjaitan & Hasanah, 2018; Saputra & Noviyanti, 2022).

According to the survey conducted by UNESCO, reading interest of Indonesians is dangerously low. It is stated that Indonesia is ranked on the bottom two on literacy with 0.001%. This indicates that only 1 out of 1000 Indonesians are interested in reading (Karim et al., 2023; Sari, 2020). It is proven by many research results which state that students' reading skills in Indonesia are ranked lower compared to other countries. Research from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) which examines the literacy rate of elementary school-age students, states that the literacy abilities of students in Indonesia are still below international standards and occupy the 41<sup>st</sup> position out of 45 countries, what is meant by literacy here is the student's ability to pronounce written symbols into meaningful sounds (Kurniawati, 2020; Widyaningrum & Hasanudin, 2019). Indonesia also participates in the program carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD), namely the PISA program (Program for International Student Assessment). The latest data published by PISA in 2018 shows that Indonesia is still in the lowest position for students' reading ability.

Students who experience difficulties in reading should receive more attention from their learning environment, especially from the teacher, because student learning activities will not be hampered and students will get maximum knowledge. The teacher is one of the components in education that plays an important role in the process of achieving educational goals, the role of the teacher is not limited to being a teacher who imparts knowledge to students, but the teacher also acts as a guide, developer, and manager of learning activities to suit the needs of students so that teacher are expected to bring students achieving the designated learning objectives (Hart et al., 2021; Virania et al., 2022).

Reading difficulty or commonly known as dyslexia is a condition in which students' reading ability does not meet the expected expectations. Dyslexia is a symptom of the difficulties experienced by students in learning components in words and sentences (Melita et al., 2022; Siregar et al., 2022). Reading difficulties can have a negative impact on the student learning process. Students will be feeling burdened when teachers give them some orders in doing assignments, because they will find it difficult to understand the orders and directions given by the teacher. Teacher is someone who has responsibility to guide students individually or classically, both inside and outside the school (Ananda, 2018; Jannah et al., 2022). Therefore teachers are required to guide and help students for their problems by applying good and appropriate strategies to students. Teaching strategies can be interpreted as actions implemented by teachers in learning which are considered more effective and efficient to apply to students especially when dealing with students with reading difficulties.

There are several previous studies conducted regarding the strategies to help students reading difficulties, the research results conducted by previous study showed that teachers were still doing learning in a monotonous manners and factors that affected students reading difficulties come from internal and external, internal factors come within students in the form of cognitive and affective abilities, while external factors come from students' environment (Siregar et al., 2022). Another research conducted by other study also stated that the factors of students' reading difficulties come from student internal and external factors (Septiana Soleha et al., 2021). Regarding the strategies used by the teacher to help students with early reading difficulties, research results by other studies stated that teachers can help students with reading difficulties by using interesting media and various methods, pay special attention, give motivation to students, give remedial, familiarize students to reading, and utilizes reading corners (Juhaeni et al., 2022; Virania et al., 2022).

Based on the research results of the previous studies, it is necessary to present the syntaxes or steps on how teachers conducted the strategies to help students with early reading difficulties. Therefore, this study will present the syntaxes on how the teachers help students with early reading difficulties. So, the difference between this study and previous studies is the focus to present the strategies used by the teacher on a detailed manners including the step by step strategies instead of just mentioning the suitable solution to help grade II students with early reading difficulties in MI Miftahul Falah Siliwangi. Based on the

results of observations made by researchers on grade II students at MI Miftahul Falah Siliwangi, there were three students who had difficulty reading, this caused these students to have difficulty participating in learning and also had an impact on not achieving predetermined learning objectives. Based on the background explanation above, the objective of this research is to know how is the teacher’s strategy to overcome students early reading difficulties.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research type, qualitative research is carried out to understand the phenomena that occur in research subjects and focuses on the process of how the observed phenomena occur and interprets the results of observations in the field according to the research focus that has been determined (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The researcher will analyze and describe findings to draw the conclusion regarding the strategies used by the teacher for students with early reading difficulties in grade II MI Miftahul Falah Siliwangi. The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are made during the learning process which will be focused on the strategies used by the teacher to overcome students' reading difficulties. The subjects or informants for interview of this research are the homeroom teacher of grade II MI Miftahul Falah Siliwangi about how teachers prepare, implement and evaluate strategies applied to students. The data obtained from observations and interviews then strengthened by documents in the form of media used by the teacher, students portofolios, and teachers’ notes. The research instruments are based on the overview of the emergent literacy skills and Response-to-Intervention model (Westerveld et al., 2020). The instrument is presented as show in Table 1.

**Table 1. Research Instrument**

Variable	Indicator	Sub Indicator	Tasks and Steps
Students’ reading difficulties	Word reading skills	1. Phonological awareness (ability to identify sound in syllable, onset-rime, and phonemes)	Teacher ask students the following questions: a. How many syllables in window? b. What is the first sound in lamp? c. How many sounds in lamp?
		2. Alphabet knowledge (ability to name the sound of single letters, digraphs, and diphthongs)	a. Ask students to mention all the 26 alphabets b. Ask students to read “ <i>barang, banyak, syawal</i> ” c. Ask students to read “ <i>baik, jauh, saya, siang, bau</i> ”
		3. Emergent writing (ability to write letters)	a. Ask students to write their full name b. Ask students to write their favourite colors
		4. Rapid automatic naming (RAN) (ability to rapidly name a sequence of letters/digits and pictures/colours)	a. Provide students with a sheet consist of sequence of letters/digits, familiar pictures, colours, or shapes and ask them to mention as many as possible within 60 seconds
Teacher strategies to help students with early reading difficulties	Teachers’ Interventions	1. Instructions 2. Assessments 3. Learning media	Using differentiated instructions Conducted everyday involving all teachers in grade II and parents Using alphabet cards

Data analysis in this research is using interactive analysis techniques. Data in qualitative research is analyzed interactively and continuously until the data becomes saturated. The steps of data analysis in this study include; first, data collection: the data collection stage is carried out by collecting the necessary data according to the research focus (Huberman & Miles, 2012). Data were obtained from data sources using interview, observation and documentation techniques. Second, data reduction: data reduction is done after all the required data has been collected. Researchers will reduce unnecessary data so that the data presented is focused. Third, data presentation: After the data reduction process has been carried out and

has narrowed down to the research focus, the final data presented is in the form of a descriptive narrative containing information related to the focus and research objectives. Fourth, drawing conclusions: Researchers draw final conclusions from research in the form of research reports.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

To know how the teacher help students with early reading difficulties, researchers conducted interviews with the homeroom teacher of grade II and the principal while observation were conducted to see students learn in class and how is their struggle, to observe how is the strategy used by the teachers to help their students on reading. Problems with early reading skills of elementary school age students can be found in various forms. All problems that arise in students who have difficulty in reading at the beginning require appropriate solutions so that these problems can be resolved properly. Teacher, as someone who is responsible for their students, the right strategy must be applied so that learning objectives can be achieved, including the basic goal so that students are able to recognize letters and be able to read well. From the research data it can be seen that the teacher's steps in implementing strategies to overcome students who have difficulty in reading beginning in grade II MI Miftahul Falah Siliwangi are mapped into two themes regarding students early reading difficulties, students word reading skills and teachers' interventions.

Students' reading skills were observed by assessing students' phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, emergent writing, and Rapid automatic naming (RAN). Based on the field observation, there are 2 out of 16 students struggling with word reading, in this article we will name them as student A and student B. Students with low phonological awareness struggle to identify the sound of certain letters, student A has difficulty to distinguish between the sound of letter "b" and "d" while student B struggle with letter "n" and "m", they often read them reciprocated. They also had difficulty understanding that there are types of uppercase and lowercase letters that have the same sound. such as G and g, L and l, R and r, and D and d which cause students to stammer in reading. Low knowledge on alphabet also indicate reading difficulty, both students still can't name most of the 26 letters correctly, including the digraphs such as ny, ng, and sy; and diphthongs such as ia, ai, au, and ay. Failed to name the letters affected them to struggle in emergent writing, as they still made some mistakes even when write their own name. Rapid automatic naming (RAN) of both students is adequately good except for naming the sequence group of letters, when they are provided with pictures or shapes they can rapidly name them as they don't required to read to do the task.

Strategies using by the teacher to help students with early reading difficulties comprises of instructions, assessments, and learning media. The first strategy is using differentiated instructions to ensure all students' needs in the class are met. There are 16 students at grade II MI Miftahul Falah, it means teachers need to have 16 different instructions in order to adjust and support individual needs. The next strategy is assessment that is used for the teacher to determine the next instruction on each student, including determining the right suitable learning media. Assessments for students are conducted everyday involving all the teachers in grade II including the homeroom teacher, and other subject teachers so students reading development will be monitored well, even when at home, teachers are also communicating students difficulties with parents in hope that parents will also help students with reading at home. Since all students have different level on reading ability, students who do not make progress and need more treatments need to be supported. Student A and student B who struggle with early reading are provided with supplemental intervention which means more intense instructions and extra attention. They are provided with learning media such as alphabet cards, and one-on-one instructions that required them to spend extra time practicing reading with the teacher whether it is re-teaching or pre-teaching the curriculum so student A and B could catch up. This supplemental intervention can be provided both within and outside the class.

#### Discussion

Based on the research results, student A and student B in grade II MI Miftahul Falah Siliwangi were struggling with early reading difficulties, one of the factors caused it was because of their low knowledge on alphabets. Students in low grades at the elementary school level must be introduced to the letter a to z. The introduction of the letter a to z is important in low grade elementary schools so that students have the ability to change the symbols of letters into meaningful sounds because it will make it easier for students to read and understand reading texts fluently (Nurani et al., 2021; Putri, 2022). This explains why student A and B in this research were experiencing difficulties on early reading because students who do not master letters will experience difficulties when they enter the stages of learning to read further, and it will affects their ability to follow learning and capture the information presented in the written learning resources (Nordström et al., 2019; Westerveld et al., 2020; Windrawati et al., 2020). In line with the opinion of study

state that mastering beginning reading skills will make it easier for students to acquire more complex advanced knowledge (Heckman, 2008), in other words it can be pictured as “skill begets skill” (Kong & Yong, 2022; Melita et al., 2022; Rofi'i & Susilo, 2022).

Helping students with early reading difficulties is essential because it can help them in the future. Reading skill is an important skill to master because it helps students to obtain information or messages conveyed and acquire new knowledge (Juhaeni et al., 2022; C. P. Pratiwi, 2020; Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020), even reading skills can affect one's achievement in school or at work (Benner et al., 2022; Goux, D., Gurgand, M., and Mauein, 2017), because the knowledge gained through reading will increase one's intelligence and will be able to adapt in the dynamic future. The teachers on site need to help students with early reading difficulties by giving them interventions, because early reading as a prerequisite for mastering further reading skills that will be used to gain more knowledge must continue to be supervised by the teacher (I. M. Pratiwi & Ariawan, 2017; Purnama Sari & Dwi, 2022; Rohman et al., 2022). Teachers interventions in this study were done according to students' needs that is expected to help student in word reading.

The regulation regarding reading skills in students is mentioned in Permendikbud No. 21 of 2016 which states that students are required to have the ability to read. In addition, the importance of learning to read for students is also mentioned in Law number 19 Year 2005 concerning national education standards in article 6 paragraph 5 which mentions the importance of reading, writing, speaking and counting skills in students (Melita et al., 2022; Setiawan, 2021). At the elementary school level there are two stages of reading which are distinguished according to the lower grades (grades 1-3) and higher grades (grades 4-6), namely early reading and reading further. Early reading is a skill that must be mastered from the lower grades level, while continuing reading is carried out in higher grades (Pramesti, 2018; Udhiyanasari, 2019). Reading ability is an achievement that underlies students' success in learning at school, but reading difficulties are also a common problem that is often faced by students at the elementary school level who have reading difficulties (Gowda et al., 2019; Hautala et al., 2020; Laksmi et al., 2022). Learning difficulties experienced by students in high grades are also a consequence of students' initial reading problems that are not handled properly (Denton, 2012; Fuad et al., 2020). Problems regarding word reading difficulties need to be handled as soon as teachers identify students reading difficulties because early treatment will give students advantages to avoid more reading difficulties problems.

Student A and B were experiencing reading difficulties because reading difficulties can be interpreted as an unsatisfactory condition or low reading ability that has not been able to meet expectations according to the age and learning potential of students which is caused by low word processing ability, namely the failure of students to connect written symbols with the sounds produced (Akyol & Boyaci-Altinay, 2019; Capin et al., 2022; Moats, 2019). Reading difficulties can be caused by various factors including students having difficulty recognizing letters and learning motivation from within students (Purnama Sari & Dwi, 2022; Saputra & Noviyanti, 2022). Early reading problems faced by students must be addressed immediately when students are still at the age of the low grade elementary school level, so that the difficulties faced by students will not drag on until they cause problems at the advanced reading stage.

The teacher as someone who is responsible for the success of learning in the classroom must be able to handle the problems faced by students (Kasmar & Anwar, 2021; Maghfiroh et al., 2019), one of which is helping students who have difficulty at the beginning reading level. To overcome the problems that occur, the teacher must apply strategies that are appropriate to the existing problems. Aside from being a facilitator for students to gain knowledge, the teacher also acts as a motivator who is expected to be able to foster student interest in learning. Motivation is very important to do because motivation can lead someone to do something that can lead to the achievement of an expected goal so that learning can be carried out optimally, relevant and fun (Börü, 2018; Moats, 2019; Westerveld et al., 2020). Teachers have a very large influence on the development of their students, including in the aspect of reading (Manizar, 2015; Paige et al., 2021). The teacher must be responsible and assess what is needed by students who experience difficulties in class, including in learning to read and provide appropriate assistance (Paige et al., 2021; Susanti, 2018), so that the teacher's actions will always be different in overcoming problems because adapted to the conditions that occur in students (Faizin, 2020; Rogers, 2019; Virania et al., 2022; Virinkoski et al., 2018). Interventions given by the teacher may be varied to each different students because each students faced different problems that also requires different treatments. The various interventions are delivered by the teacher using different teaching strategies.

Strategy is defined as something that can cause changes to what is happening, other definition of strategy is as a planned way or technique in realizing and carrying out ideas about something so that it can be implemented effectively, focused and get effective results (Taslim, 2022). Teaching strategies are real actions from the teacher or the teacher's practice of carrying out teaching in a certain way, which is considered more effective and more efficient (Fitriani et al., 2021; Jannah et al., 2022). From those opinions,

it can be concluded that strategy in learning is the teacher's actions that are planned and realized in the classroom as a response to conditions that want to be changed to become more effective and efficient.

The effort made by the teacher in overcoming the problem of early reading difficulties in grade II MI Miftahul Falah students is the first step by identifying the problems that exist in students according to the opinion of previous study which states that teachers need to recognize the condition of their students before taking action in learning (Faizin, 2020). Applying strategies according to student problems are in line with the opinion that found the strategies applied must be given according to student needs (Virania et al., 2022). Paying more attention to students in line with the opinion state that a teacher must look at the whole situation class, especially for students who experience difficulties (Susanti, 2018). Working with other subject teachers, communicating student problems to parents, working with parents to overcome problems faced by students in line with that teachers and parents need to work together to support student development (Anjarwati, 2020).

The research results of this study can be used and implemented by the teachers to help students who experience learning difficulties, not only on word reading aspect but in wider and general aspects of learning. This research results are expected to help teachers on applying different strategies to their students who face difficulties in early reading. Despite all the advantages given by this research, there are also limitations in this research such as there is no learning results measurements carried out that measure the effectiveness of the strategies using by the teacher in this research. The future research following this research can be about the effectiveness of the strategies conducted by teachers and how this strategy affected students with early reading difficulties.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study stated that teachers using different strategies to help students with early reading difficulties. The different strategies used by teachers can be performed as follows: Identifying problems faced by students in the early reading learning process, providing treatments according to student needs, working with other teachers, parents and all aspects that support student development. The teacher should be able to provide media that is more diverse and adapted to the character of the students so that students will experience fun learning and most importantly met their needs, it is expected that the output of the efforts made by the teacher will be able to overcome the problems of early reading experienced by students. The use of technology as a learning media is also recommended considering that the current generation of elementary school age students is the alpha generation where they have lived in the era of society 5.0 which are accustomed to technology, the use of technology must be under teacher advisory, or with parental advisory when it is at home.

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