



## Tiered Reading Program: A Case Study in Grade Two of A Private Elementary School in Central Java

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**Abstract:** Developing students' reading skills is highly required to be taught to the students from their young age since it affects the students' achievement in learning. One of the private elementary schools in Central Java has been implementing a reading program called "tiered reading" for almost a year. The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the tiered reading program in grade two in one of the private elementary schools in Central Java. Four teachers who taught in four different parallel classes were the participants of this research. This case study utilized teachers interviews, classroom observations during the implementation of tiered reading program and documents collections such as worksheets and story books the teachers used. The data were analyzed by coding, categorizing and developing themes. The data analysis revealed three important themes; contradictory meaning between the teachers' concept understanding and the teachers' teaching strategies in the classroom. Reading for fluency and for remembering are the other emerging themes. The research concluded that the implementation of tiered reading was oriented to mechanical reading skill and literal comprehension reading.

**Abstrak:** Pengembangan keterampilan membaca siswa diharapkan dapat diajarkan sejak usia dini karena keterampilan tersebut berdampak pada pencapaian pembelajaran siswa. Salah satu Sekolah Dasar swasta di Jawa tengah telah menerapkan program membaca berjenjang selama hampir satu tahun. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi penerapan program membaca berjenjang di kelas dua pada salah satu Sekolah Dasar swasta di Jawa Tengah. Empat guru yang mengajar pada empat kelas paralel yang berbeda adalah partisipan pada penelitian ini. Metode penelitian studi kasus ini menggunakan interview guru, observasi kelas dan pengumpulan dokumen seperti lembar kerja siswa dan buku-buku cerita yang dipergunakan. Data dianalisis dengan melakukan pengkodean, membuat kategori dan mengembangkan tema. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan tiga tema yang muncul yaitu makna yang bertentangan antara pemahaman konsep guru dan strategi mengajar guru. Membaca untuk kelancaran dan untuk mengingat adalah tema lain yang muncul berdasarkan analisis data. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah penerapan program membaca berjenjang diorientasikan pada keterampilan membaca mekanik dan membaca pemahaman literal.

## A. Introduction

Reading has an important role in the students' life since it will help the students to understand and explore the world. Reading is as well understood as engaging the students to actively think in order to understand, analyze and reflect a text which is also called as reading skill (Hartati et al., 2020). Trelease (2013) emphasized that reading is the starting point by which the students could understand every subject. One will not be able; for example to understand the word problem if he is not able to read the word problem in Math. He then concluded that reading is the heart of education.

A research conducted by *Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)* towards language literacy, by 2003 achievement of Indonesian students in reading literacy was ranked 39<sup>th</sup> out of 40 countries, in 2006 was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> out of 56 countries, in 2009 was ranked 57<sup>th</sup> out of 65 countries, and in 2012 was ranked 64<sup>th</sup> out of 65 countries (Fuad, 2015). The PISA assessment outcome in 2018 showed that Indonesia was in tenth lowest out of 79 participating countries. The average reading ability of Indonesia's students was 80 points below the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) average. The student's reading achievement was also under the achievement of ASEAN's students (Pusat Penelitian dan Kebijakan, 2021).

Indonesia's students' reading achievement informed by PISA was in line with data revealed by a research conducted by minister of education and culture on the literacy level that resulted index of reading activity, revealed that out of 34 provinces in Indonesia, only 9 provinces (26 %) could be included in the average level of literacy activities, 24 provinces (71%) were categorized as low category and one province (3 %) was included in the lowest category. This means that most of the provinces in Indonesia are in the low level of literacy activity and no province is the high level one (Retnaningdyah, 2019).

Furthermore, Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) 2018 distributed questionnaires to the students to figure out the influencing factors to those students' reading skill and levels of reading literacy activity in each province in Indonesia, The data revealed there are two factors called internal and external factors. Self motivation to learn, resilience, competitive character are included as internal factors while the external ones are learning environment at school, Teachers's teaching practices, learning facilities (Pusat Penelitian dan Kebijakan, 2021).

Reflecting on the findings about the students' reading achievement, influencing factors to the reading achievement and the level of reading literacy activities in each province in Indonesia, Pusat penelitian kebijakan recommended two policies; to activate literacy program for the students and to increase the students' reading interest by developing the teachers' competence. One of the private schools in Central Java has been implementing a reading program named "Tiered Reading". This program was developed and conducted by Program Prioritizing Reform, Innovation and Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia's Teachers, Administrators and Students (PRIORITAS) that was funded by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) Program that collaborating with Indonesian' government to support Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry

of Religion in order to increase access to qualified basic education. PRIORITAS has developed and conducted programs to develop capacities that include training and assistance. Targets of this capacity development program are teachers & lecturers, principals, school committees in seven chosen provinces as PRIORITAS partners include Aceh, North Sumatra, Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java and South Sulawesi. (USAID, 2016).

This research was focused to explore the implementation of the tiered reading program in grade II. The research question that guided the inquiry was “ How was the implementation of tiered reading in grade II at one of the private schools in Central Java? The purpose of this research was to explore the implementation of tiered reading in grade II at one of the private schools in Central Java. Dalman divided phases in reading into beginning or mechanical reading and reading for comprehension (2014).

Mechanical reading is the first phase in order to be able to read fluently. Mechanical reading includes aspects as follows: 1) introduction of the shapes of letters, 2) sound of the letters, and 3) connect the sounds with the print and 4) to read at a slow pace (Dalman, 2014). In the English language, the first phase of reading is called phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is alphabetic sound principles which means the principles of relating the letter and the sound (Melesse & Enyew, 2020). Melesse & Enyew explained that the teachers need to work on phonemic awareness in order to be able to connect prints with the sounds (decoding) (2020). Researches revealed that teachers who use relevant strategies in teaching phonemic awareness of English language at an early age would be able to diminish problems associated with reading and spelling (Melesse & Enyew, 2020).

Mechanical reading is the foundation of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is a complex process because it requires the interaction among word identification, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement. In the other words, if the persons have decoding skills, but are not able to activate their prior knowledge in relation to what they are reading, then they are simply word calling (Harvey, 2013). Reading comprehension required the students not only to understand the contents of the passage but also to analyze or to evaluate and to connect it with the student's prior knowledge or personal experiences (Ardhian et al., 2020). Jitendra & Gajria in Harvey (2013) added that there is a relation between poor reading comprehension with lack of prior experiences or a lower socio-economic environment. This means if the students do not have rich experiences to be connected with what they are reading, the understanding is going to be difficult. Or if the students come from a background which is very different from what they are reading, there will not be prior knowledge to activate. Reading comprehension is going to be difficult too if the students do not have skills to activate the prior knowledge.

Dalman (2014) categorized reading comprehension into four levels which are literal, interpretation, critical and creative reading. Literal comprehension requires that a student be able to capture information that is explicitly stated in a passage. Literal comprehension tasks typically require identifying words, sentences, paragraphs, and detailed elements (Basaba, 2012). The other information that are explicitly stated in the passages include

comparison and sequence aspects, relationship between cause and effect, information related to wh questions such as; what, who, when and literal understanding. Thus the other tasks that can be assigned are to explain the comparison and sequence elements in the passages as well as cause and effect elements (Kamagi, 2020). Basaba (2012) added that literal comprehension which demands word level processing abilities is not sufficient for facilitating comprehension since the cognitive process occurred to recall information or facts in the passage. To make sure whether the students comprehend the passed needs, it is necessary to assign the students to interact deeper with the text by asking questions that are invisible in the passages.

The second level of reading comprehension is interpretation. Interpretative reading is an activity that focuses on interpretation towards the message of its writer or author (Dalman, 2014). This reading involves conclusion making, for example about the main idea of the text, causality, and text analysis such as; finding the purpose of the writing, summary, and interpreting figurative language. Topkin (2018) argued meanings the readers create in the interpretation are individualized. Topkin (2018) then described the interpretation as a thinking process in which the readers interpret the text in ways that make sense to them based on the text they are reading and on their knowledge about literature and the world. Since students bring different background knowledge and experience, their interpretations are individualized.

The word critical means to judge and to distinguish (Ocak & Karsh, 2022). Critical reading is a process of questioning, analyzing, evaluating and interpreting a text in depth and detail. It aims at discovering and evaluating what is beyond the text with deep thinking. In critical reading, readers are expected to study the sources, identify the author's purpose, evaluate these, distinguish the truths, and form their own judgments (Ocak & Karsh, 2022). Wagner argued strongly that the most important ability in an age called the acceleration of information flows, is the critical thinking ability, which includes ways to analyze received information and then to process and to forward to others. Thus, the ability to read critically is essential that has to be developed for the students especially for senior high school students (Hartati, Nurhafni, Ario, Imayanti, & Andrian, 2020).

Creative reading is the highest reading skill since the skills required to reach the creative reading level are more than critical reading (Baki, 2020). Creative reading is associated with new ideas. The readers use the writers' ideas to produce extraordinary, unique and creative ideas. The process of creative reading is to ask divergent questions. Divergent questions are surprising and unexpected questions that require multi-interpretation answers with a broader perspective without focusing on one truth only (Baki, 2020; Priyatni & Martutik, 2020). Creative reading is characterized by interacting and building connections with the text, figuring out the invisible in the text, using imagination and personal experiences to interpret the text. This means that a reader is mentally liberated from the control of the text and the writer and reconstructs the meaning of the text which is called a constructive approach (Ocak & Karsh, 2022). The process of reconstructing the text

requires the readers to activate prior knowledge and connect it with the text in a creative way that results in a new understanding of the text (Baki, 2020).

In keeping with the ideas of invisible information in the text, divergent questions and reconstruction of the texts, Topkin (2018) explained that authors' choices over text structure, grammar, words, ideas and concepts reflect the authors' worldview that are invisible in the texts. Thus Topkin suggested questions to raise in this highest reading level; who wrote this?, why did they write it?, what do they want me to believe?, how are they trying to position me?

In relation with reading strategies, Harvey (2013) noted four of general strategies to improve reading comprehension for primary grade students. Those four strategies are visualization, summarization, making inferences, and making connections to one's own life and experiences. Visualization is the strategy in which the students create mental pictures in their mind while they are reading, or stop at certain points in a reading selection to make the visualizations. Summarization is to write a summary on what they have read. Making a connection strategy is to relate what they have read to their own life. Michele added that each of the four strategies has to be taught with detail and explicit instruction. Furthermore, the teacher has to model the instructions of each of the strategies, provide support practices and independent practice with feedback.

Also, the teacher has to make sure that the students use each one of the strategies correctly. Moore & Lo in Harvey (2013) explained in detail that each time they read a passage and use each of the strategies, they place the appropriate dot next to the passage they read. For example, if the red dot is representative of visualization, and green dot is the representative of summarization, and a student visualized a girl studying during a particular passage, then the student would place a red dot next to the passage. This way will help the teachers to go back and question the students about the strategy they used in order to make sure it is being used correctly.

Another strategy to understand the text is to think aloud. This strategy is to verbalize or to sound orally in the readers; thought while the readers try to understand the text or to answer questions related to the text. This strategy is divided into three steps; pre reading (identify the reading objective and predicts), while reading (raise questions about the texts and things that relating to the topic, identify relevant information, visualize/thing aloud, identify new vocabulary, key word or difficult words, make connection among the texts, identify part of the difficult text and or reread those parts and make inferences) and post reading (make summary, evaluate the text, change from one mode to the other mode, to choose, combine and result multimode texts to communicate certain concepts). This think aloud strategy is recommended for senior high school students (Hartati et al., 2020).

Tiered reading program in one of the Elementary private schools in Central java is a program designed for teaching reading with various learning strategies, using material based on students' needs, and requires responsive teachers. The purpose of this program is to develop the students' abilities and interests in reading which at the end will influence the students' achievement in their academics (USAID, 2016). This program is implemented in

grade one to three as one of their subjects in class and regularly scheduled four sessions in a week. Tiered Reading Program is divided into two type of readings as follows (USAID, 2016).

Big Book is used in the reading together activities. It contains the text with a big font that every student could read. In this activity, the teacher models various reading skills and involves students to read. The skills to be trained in this activity are predicting something, understanding vocabulary and its punctuation, understanding the main idea, and summarizing. Procedures of reading together as follows: 1) Introduce the book: talk about the cover, the title, the author, connect the students' prior knowledge with the topic of the story, predict the story., 2) Discuss all vocabularies and important concepts in the beginning of the story or in the whole reading session., 3) Read aloud and the students listen (and see the illustration)., 4) Read aloud and point to the word., 5) Use the flexible words orally, let the students know that the teacher sometimes stop reading and ask them to complete with the next word. This is to check whether the students follow the activity from the beginning, 6) Get the students to discuss in the small group with three members in each group. Below are things the students can discuss: 1) Who do they pay attention to?, 2) What makes them question?, 3) What do they predict ?, 4) What relationship do they make?, 5) Why do the characters behave in a certain way?, 6) How is the problem solved?, 7) How will the story end?, 8) How do the characters change? (USAID, 2016).

This activity is implemented in a small group with the same level of reading ability (homogeneous). The teacher chooses and introduces a new book and guides each student in reading the book and in understanding the whole text. The strategies implemented in the guided reading are to develop a) pronunciation, b) fluency, and c) understanding. Understanding includes prediction, vocabulary understanding, understanding the sentence being read/the passage and the ability to summarize.

The strategy to pronounce is to support the students to think of ways to guess the meaning if the students find it difficult to pronounce certain words. Strategy to read fluency is to instruct the students to read a book two or three times until the students are able to read the story fluently. If the students are able to read a certain book fluently then the students can start to read the other new book.

The strategy to understand the reading is to ask effective questions. The students then discuss and respond to the reading, for example to the character, setting or the plot of the story. The teacher then guides discussion about the prediction (character, location of the story, time, and the content of the story), vocabulary in story and helps the students to connect with their own life. In order to help the student to understand the vocabulary, the teacher can use the following questions: 1) What are the appropriate words for the reading?, 2) What might be the suitable word for the reading?, 3) What might be the suitable word if seen from the grammar and the structure of the sentence 4) What sounds and letters do you see in the word? (USAID, 2016).

## B. Method

Since the purpose of this research was to understand the process of tiered reading in one of private elementary schools in Central Java, the research question could be well answered by using a case study qualitative research method. According to Creswell the purpose of case study is to figure out or to explain the meaning of a phenomenon or event (Ahmadi, 2016). Methods of collecting the data were classroom observations, interviewing teachers who taught Tiered Reading Program, and documentation.

Triangulation was employed in order to ensure reliability of the data (Lambert, 2012). Triangulation aims to describe the data from two or more sources to answer the research question (Lambert, 2012). Triangulation was employed in this research by collecting data with three different methods; class observations, teachers interviews and documents collection. Flick (2014) explained triangulation in terms of how the data are differently collected which includes; different times, different locations, and with different people. The triangulation proposed by Flick (2014) was also employed in this research.

The data collected were from four different classes, different people and different ranges of time for the observations which started from July, August, September, and October 2016. Each of the researchers contributed in different ways. One of the researchers was a student teacher in a Primary Education Department who was assigned to have an internship in the school where the research was conducted. The internship started from the beginning of July until the beginning of November 2016. One of the tasks as the internship students was to do class observations and to use the data for the final research project. The other researcher was a lecturer who supervised the student teacher to do the required tasks. The supervision was conducted over the skype meetings as well as twice visitation during the students' internship period. Teacher mentors contributed as well in the research by guiding the students to understand the school's context and to explain/clarify the teachers mentor's strategy in teaching tiered reading.

The purpose of data analysis is to describe and to develop a theory based on the phenomenon (Flick, 2014). This research employed teachers' interview data as the primary data. Then the data were coded. Coding is an activity to identify and to develop connections in the data (Flick, 2014). Open coding was used to analyze the interview data. The purpose of the open coding was to describe, to name and to classify the interview data. The codings were assigned to things the researchers thought interesting to investigate deeply. The researcher carefully identified the perspectives in every coded data by taking note of the context of each category. The purpose was to carefully and correctly categorize each of the interesting data. Then each of the categories was used to analyze the classroom observations data as well as the documents. The context of each coding from the classroom observation and documents were also carefully analyzed. Then each category from the interviews, classroom observations and documents weren named with themes. Literature analysis was simultaneously conducted with the data analysis. data collection was stopped after the data had been saturated or until there was no indication of a new category.

### C. Result and Discussion

The result of data analysis revealed three emerged themes: contradictory meaning, reading for fluency, and reading for remembering.

#### *Contradictory Meaning*

A contradictory meaning emerged as one of the themes. This theme was developed by comparing the data from the interviews and the other two datas; classroom observations and documents. This table below shows the contradictory meaning from the three different instruments:

**Table 1.** The comparison data from interviews, observations and documents

Interview	Observation	Document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The goal of tiered reading is to understand the plot of a story</li> <li>● tiered reading is a learning on how to predict something</li> <li>● Understand the meaning of a story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Giving examples how to read fluently</li> <li>● Dictation</li> <li>● Answering the what, who, when, where, and where questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The story book for reading together has illustration pictures for each page</li> <li>● Each page has 4 -5 sentences with the pattern S+P+O+(V).</li> <li>● The story is contextual to the students' life both in reading together and guided reading</li> <li>● The worksheet for guided reading provided questions of which answer already stated on the passage</li> <li>● The worksheet assigned the students to fill the blanks</li> </ul>

From the interviews, the teachers' understanding of tiered reading as a reading activity which aims to develop students' understanding towards a story or text. Meanwhile, the classroom observations showed that the teachers focused on pronunciation, and the right usage of punctuation. The teachers also tended to recall information about the story the students had read. Characteristic of the storybook used in Tiered Reading Program was a simple fact that seemed to be impossible to develop understanding reading.

#### *Reading for Fluency*

Classroom observations were employed ten times in each four different classes. There were 40 classroom observations altogether. One of the themes emerged from the classroom observations was reading for fluency. All learning activities during the observations revealed reading fluency as the goal of both reading together and guided reading.

Instructions of the teachers both in reading together and guided reading emphasized the students to read with correct intonations as well as to know how to use punctuation correctly. Moreover, the setting and plot of the story books used seemed to be difficult to give reading instructions for understanding since no conflicts appeared in the stories. Reading strategies implemented by the teachers were to develop fluency as shown in the following table.

**Table 2.** Reading activities indicated reading for fluency

No	Activity	Observation (Main Activity)	Document
1.	Reading Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers invited the students one by one to read each sentence from the book with correct intonations based on the punctuations used in the story</li> <li>The teachers asked the students reading the story together</li> <li>The teachers instructed the students to take notice on how they used the punctuation when reading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The story book for reading together has illustration pictures for each page</li> <li>Each page has 4 -5 sentences with the pattern S+P+O+(V).</li> <li>The story is contextual to the students' life</li> </ul>
2.	Guided Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher modeled an example of reading with the right way then asked the students to repeat the reading one by one.</li> <li>The teachers asked the students to read individually</li> <li>The teachers instructed all the students to read together</li> <li>The teachers gave feedback on the ways the students read such as wrong intonation and punctuation usage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The story is contextual to the students' life</li> <li>The worksheet for guided reading provided questions of which answer already stated on the passage</li> <li>The worksheet assigned the students to fill the blanks</li> </ul>

### *Reading for remembering*

Another emerging theme from the classroom observations data analysis was reading for remembering. All the instructions given during the phases of reading together and guided reading were to read together and individually the story. These kinds of activities need a recalling process on how to read each word as well as the punctuation. The worksheet used in the guided reading showed that the students were assigned to recall the explicit information in the passages.

**Table 3.** Reading activities indicated reading for remembering

No	Activity	Observation (Main Activity)	Document
1.	Reading Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers invited the students one by one to read each sentence from the book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The story book for reading together has</li> </ul>

No	Activity	Observation (Main Activity)	Document
		with correct intonations based on the punctuations used in the story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teachers asked the students reading the story together</li> <li>• The teachers instructed the students to take notice on how they used the punctuation when reading.</li> </ul>	illustration pictures for each page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each page has 4 -5 sentences with the pattern S+P+O+(V).</li> <li>• The story is contextual to the students' life</li> </ul>
2.	Guided Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher modeled an example of reading with the right way then asked the students to repeat the reading one by one.</li> <li>• The teachers asked the students to read individually</li> <li>• The teachers instructed all the students to read together</li> <li>• The teachers gave feedback on the ways the students read such as wrong intonation and punctuation usage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The story is contextual to the students' life</li> <li>• The worksheet for guided reading provided questions of which answer already stated on the passage</li> <li>• The worksheet assigned the students to fill the blanks</li> </ul>

The results of the data analysis revealed reading fluency was the goal of tiered reading implemented in grade two. Reading fluency is called as a step of beginning reading or mechanical reading (Dalman, 2014). Meanwhile, the results of classroom observations showed that basically the students are able to read fluently. Their performance on reading fluently was good not only in tiered reading class but also in other subjects. Their good performance on reading fluency was clearly seen on their abilities to read aloud such as read clearly, with proper expressions, and without any stammering. This ability might have been influenced by their education background where all of them had experienced kindergarten. The students began their mechanical reading experiences when they were in kindergarten. In kindergarten, the students had been taught two systems of language, like phoneme (sounds of words) and semantics (meaning of words). Thus, they might be able to compose letters to be words (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2017).

The data analysis also showed reading for literal understanding occurred in guided reading activities. Dalman noted that literal understanding is the lowest level of comprehension that only focuses on explicit text (Dalman, 2014). The students are required to simply recall information that has been explicitly stated in a text (Basaraba, Yovanoff, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2013). The skill developed from literal understanding at the Tiered Reading process was the skill to answer the what, who, when and where questions (Kamagi, 2020). Strategies used by the teachers in the process of literal understanding including; asking the students to read a story first and then giving them questions of which answers were explicitly shown on the text. The teachers sometimes used guessing words strategy. The teachers asked the students to guess the words from a story that the teacher covered

using their hands after they had already read the story. Another strategy the teachers used was to show them a picture and then explain the picture to the students. USAID (2016) described in detail strategies to understand the passages, the teacher asks the students to predict which includes character, location of the story, time, and the content of the story. The teacher then guides the discussion about the prediction. It was very seldom the teachers asked the students to look at a picture and then got them to guess a story from the picture. In order to develop students' literal understanding of a text, the teacher has to invite the students to predict a story in ways, for example; showing the students pictures on the books or the title of the books, then asking the students some questions relating to that reading picture or title.

Based on the result of data analysis, it seemed no readings for interpretation, critical, and creative understanding occurred in the process of tiered reading. Dalman Argued that beginning reading or mechanical reading is usually emphasized when the students are in primary level especially in low classes, 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (Dalman, 2014). It is aimed to enable the students to read fluently and the next reading level which is reading comprehension. Echoing Dalman, Santrock noted that the children of 6-7 years old are the ideal age for children to read fluently (Santrock, 2017). Piaget's cognitive development theory proposed children at 2-7 years old are still in the preoperational stage. In this stage, children are not yet able to think abstractly (Slavin, 2015) therefore, on one hand, interpretation, critical, and creative understanding have a theoretical reason for not being implemented in the Tiered Reading process. On the other side, Kieran (1989) disagreed with Piaget's cognitive development. Egan boldly said that children in that age can understand abstract concepts if those concepts are presented in a concrete story model (1989). Resonating with Egan's idea about young children' understanding the abstract concepts, Utami, Amalia, Harun, Prayitno & Qurotul'Ain (2020) mentioned that students in the elementary school need to possess critical reading skills. Their study on the ability of upper-class students in elementary schools to read critically through multimodal text showed that the students achieved good enough skill. Since it is theoretically supported to develop the skills of interpretation, critical, and creative understanding in that young age, it will be worth implementing in the process of Tiered Reading. This might serve as one of the implications of this study.

In keeping with the development of interpretation, critical, and creative understanding skills, the teachers are highly required to have a skill of asking questions. Davoudi & Sadegh (2015) reviewed 40 studies from 2000 to 2014 examining the role of questioning in different academic fields and various educational fields. The finding revealed the students' critical reading was facilitated by the significant role of teacher questioning. The questions that facilitate the students' critical thinking ability were high order questions as mentioned by Bloom's cognitive process (i.e., analysis and evaluation). The classroom observations showed all questions given to the students were typically recalling information. This can be clearly seen from the interrogative words used, such as what, who, when, and where which were characteristic of convergent questions. Convergent question

is a question that generally requires one right answer. This kind of question asks facts or memory (low-level-question) (Jacobsen, Eggen, & Kauchak, 2009). Furthermore, answering convergent question is not sufficient for facilitating comprehension since the cognitive process indicating is to recall information or facts in the passage (Basaba, 2012)

Divergent questions are the questions that can guide students to interpretation, critical, and creative understanding. Jacobsen, Eggen, & Kauchak (2009) defined the divergent question as the opposite of convergent question. The answer for divergent questions is not just one. Divergent questions have many answers since the students have to interact with the text as well as to connect the students' personal experiences with the text. This kind of question can help the teacher to evaluate students' understanding even in a big class. The divergent question used to support students' engagement by allowing some students to answer the same question. The students also can explore and reflect their answers from their point of view.

Besides the skill of asking questions, the development of students' understanding in reading is supported with appropriate learning resources and assessment. The documents showed that the worksheets used in the guided reading provided questions of which answers were explicitly stated on the passages. Another type of worksheet was to assign the students to fill the blanks with the answers the students could find on the passages. The story books used in the reading together were actually interesting not only because the content of the story was contextual to the students' life but also each page had illustration pictures. If the teachers had asked the questions to help the students to predict the story using the illustration pictures, the student would have an opportunity to think deeper than just recalling the information from the passages.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The implementation of tiered reading in grade two classes at one of private schools in central Java was oriented to mechanical reading skill and literal comprehension reading which focused on answering questions beginning with who, what, where and when. The classroom observations showed that during the reading process the teachers instructed the students to read individually and together by paying attention to the punctuation as well as pronouncing the words correctly. The teachers modeled the reading before instructing the students to read. Then the teachers gave feedback on the pronunciation and the punctuation usage. Sometimes, the teachers asked the students to guess the missing word. The literal understanding was implemented by providing questions beginning with what, who, where and when.

The classroom observations revealed that the prediction strategy was not implemented meanwhile the teacher interview showed contradictory. This might be because the teacher had misunderstood the predicting strategy as word guessing. The literature suggested that predicting the characters, location of the story, the content of the story based on the picture or title of the story, will lead to the higher level thinking in which

the students activate the student's personal experience, connect the prior knowledge with the story then reconstruct the story. This way the students are guided to the critical reading.

Suggestions due to the findings of this research is to provide the teachers training about the implementation of the tiered reading program especially to design strategies that develop the student's reading comprehension (literal, interpretation and critical reading). Therefore, classroom action research is suggested to conduct as the teachers develop high order thinking strategies through reading activities. Another research might be to investigate the students' comprehension skills (literal, interpretation and critical reading skills).

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