

Improving Reading Comprehension Skills through the SQ4R Learning Strategy

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Abstract: This classroom action research aims to improve the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka through the implementation of the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy. The study was motivated by the low level of students' reading comprehension skills, as only a small number of students were able to fully understand the content of the reading materials. The research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of the stages of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The subjects of the study were 17 students in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through teacher and student activity observations, as well as reading comprehension achievement tests. The data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the percentages of activity and learning mastery. The findings revealed a significant improvement. Teacher activity increased from 78.66% (good category) in the first cycle to 99.99% (very good category) in the second cycle. Student activity rose from 69.19% (fairly good) to 93.76% (very good). Similarly, students' learning mastery improved from 47.05% in the first cycle to 70.58% in the second cycle. Therefore, the SQ4R strategy proved to be effective in enhancing both the learning process and outcomes of reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in education, serving as the gateway to the acquisition of knowledge. UNESCO reports that the reading literacy rate among Indonesian children remains relatively low compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. This is further supported by the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which ranked Indonesian students' reading ability at 74th out of 79 participating countries, with an average score of 371, well below the OECD average of 487 (OECD, 2023). These data indicate that Indonesian students' reading comprehension skills remain a serious concern that requires immediate attention through innovative learning strategies.

In the context of primary education, reading comprehension skills play a significant role in determining students' success in understanding various subjects (Saputri, 2024).

However, field observations show that many elementary school students still struggle to comprehend reading materials. Preliminary observations at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka revealed that most fifth grade students were unable to identify main ideas, summarize texts, or answer comprehension questions accurately. This issue is reflected in the low learning outcomes in Indonesian language subjects, particularly in reading comprehension, as shown by the students' average scores falling below the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM).

The low level of students' reading comprehension skills cannot be separated from the use of conventional teaching approaches, in which teachers predominantly rely on lectures and assignments without employing strategies that foster critical thinking. Reading lessons are often limited to answering questions after reading a text, rather than engaging students in the process of constructing meaning deeply. Consequently, students become less active, unmotivated, and passive during reading activities. Therefore, there is an urgent need for an innovative, interactive, and systematic learning strategy that can help students enhance their reading comprehension abilities.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy is effective in improving students' reading comprehension. For instance, research by Buulolo et al. (2025) found that the SQ4R strategy successfully improved junior high school students' reading comprehension outcomes after two learning cycles. Similarly, Harahap (2024) reported that applying SQ4R fostered students' motivation and active engagement when reading expository texts. However, most of these studies were conducted at the junior and senior high school levels, while its application at the elementary school level particularly in fifth grade remains limited.

The research gap that arises lies in the scarcity of empirical studies on the effectiveness of the SQ4R strategy in improving reading comprehension at the elementary school level, especially in areas with limited educational resources such as Muara Bungo. Moreover, previous studies have largely focused on learning outcomes, while the aspects of teacher and student activities during the learning process have rarely been examined comprehensively. Hence, this study is necessary to fill this gap and to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of the SQ4R strategy.

This classroom action research was primarily aimed at improving the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka through the implementation of the SQ4R strategy. Additionally, it sought to describe the improvement in both teacher and student activities throughout the learning process. Through reflective cycles, it is expected that the strategy will not only enhance students' learning outcomes but also continuously improve teachers' instructional practices.

Theoretically, this study contributes to enriching the body of knowledge on reading comprehension instructional strategies, particularly the application of the SQ4R strategy at the elementary level. Practically, it provides benefits for teachers as an alternative effective teaching strategy, for students in developing active and meaningful reading skills, and for schools in improving the quality of education. Therefore, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to addressing the issue of low reading comprehension skills

among students while strengthening the culture of literacy within primary education settings.

METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted collaboratively between the researcher and the classroom teacher. The action research model adopted in this study refers to the Kemmis and McTaggart framework, which consists of four stages in each cycle: (1) planning, (2) acting, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting. The research was carried out in two cycles, with the assumption that if the results obtained in the first cycle were not optimal, necessary improvements would be implemented in the second cycle (Rifai et al., 2024).

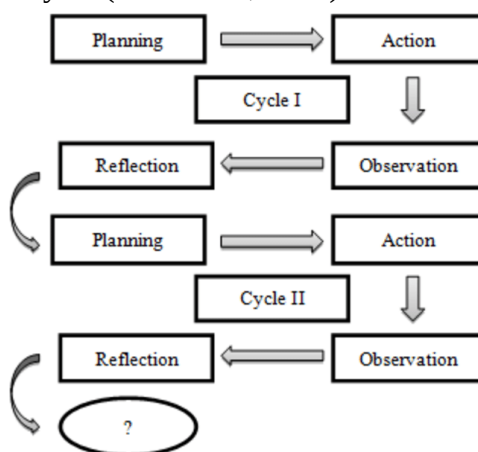


Figure 1. Design of Classroom Action Research (CAR)

The main focus of this study is to improve students' reading comprehension skills through the implementation of the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy. In each cycle, instructional improvements were made based on reflections from the previous cycle to ensure that the learning process became more effective and better aligned with students' needs.

Research Subjects

The subjects of this study were fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka, consisting of 17 students. The object of the study was the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy. The research location was selected based on initial observations that identified a problem of low reading comprehension skills among students, as well as a gap between students' performance and the school's Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM).

Research Procedure

The study was conducted through four main stages:

1. Planning: Developing lesson plans (RPP) using the SQ4R strategy, preparing instructional materials, and designing research instruments.
2. Action Implementation: Conducting reading instruction following the SQ4R (Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, and Review).

3. Observation: Recording teacher and student activities, as well as identifying challenges encountered during the learning process.
4. Reflection: Evaluating the outcomes of each cycle and making necessary improvements for the subsequent cycle.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches. Qualitative data, derived from observations of teacher and student activities, were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Quantitative data, obtained from reading comprehension tests, were analyzed by calculating students' average scores and the percentage of learning mastery using the following formula:

$$\text{Classical Mastery} = \frac{\text{Number of Students Meeting Mastery Criteria}}{\text{Total Number of Students}} \times 100\%$$

The research was considered successful if the following criteria were met:

1. Teacher and student activities during the learning process reached the "good" category ($\geq 80\%$).
2. At least 70% of students achieved the school's Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM), which was set at 70.
3. There was an observable improvement in the quality of the reading comprehension learning process from Cycle I to Cycle II.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of two meetings. Research data were collected through teacher observation sheets, student observation sheets, and reading comprehension achievement tests administered at the end of each cycle. The learning model implemented was the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy, which proved to be effective in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka.

Teacher Observation Results

Based on the observation results, teacher activity showed a notable improvement in the quality of teaching implementation from Cycle I to Cycle II. The average teacher observation score in Cycle I reached 78,66%, categorized as good, while in Cycle II it increased to 99,99%, categorized as very good. The detailed results of teacher observations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Teacher Observation Results

Activity	Percentage Score Category		Average Score	Category
	Meeting			
	I	II		
Cycle I	73,33%	80,00%	78,66%	Good
Cycle II	93,33%	100%	99,99%	Very Good

Based on the table, in Cycle I, teacher activity was in the good category, increasing from 73,33 % in the first meeting to 80,00% in the second. In Cycle II, teacher activity further increased to 93,33% in the first meeting and 100% in the second, both in the very good category. This improvement occurred as the teacher became more proficient in applying the SQ4R strategy, corrected shortcomings identified in the previous cycle, and managed the classroom more effectively. These findings indicate that reflection after each meeting helped the teacher minimize errors and enhance instructional quality.

Student Observation Results

Students' activity in reading comprehension lessons also showed a significant improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II. In Cycle I, the average student activity score reached 69.19%, categorized as *fairly good*, while in Cycle II it increased to 93.76%, categorized as *very good*. The detailed student observation results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Student Observation Results

Table 2: Student Observation Results				
Activity	Percentage Score Category		Average Score	Category
	Meeting			
	I	II		
Cycle I	64,70%	76,47%	69,19%	Good Enough
Cycle II	88,23%	94,11%	93,76%	Very Good

In Cycle I, student activity was still limited, with scores of 64.70% in the first meeting and 76.47% in the second, both falling into the *fairly good* enough category. However, in Cycle II, a more significant improvement was observed, reaching 88.23% in the first meeting and 94.11% in the second, both categorized as *very good*. This improvement occurred because the SQ4R strategy successfully stimulated students' curiosity about the reading materials, encouraged them to ask questions, and guided them to find answers through the reading process. Consequently, the strategy fostered critical thinking, enhanced comprehension, and made learning more active and meaningful.

Reading Comprehension Skills

Students' learning outcome tests were administered at the end of each cycle to assess improvements in reading comprehension skills. The results showed an increase both in the number of students achieving mastery and in the class average scores. Detailed data are presented in Table 3.

Table 1. Teacher Observation Results

Cycle	Completeness		Percentage	
	Mastery	Non Mastery	Mastery	Non Mastery
Cycle I	8	9	47,05%	52,95%
Cycle II	12	5	70,58%	29,41%

Based on the table and chart above, in Cycle I, 8 students (47.05%) achieved mastery, while 9 students (52.95%) did not. After improvements were made in Cycle II, the number of students achieving mastery increased to 12 (70.58%), with only 5 students (29.41%) remaining below the mastery level.

This improvement demonstrates that the SQ4R strategy had a positive impact on students' reading comprehension skills. The Survey stage at the beginning of the lesson stimulated students' curiosity; the Question stage encouraged them to formulate inquiries; while the Read and Reflect stages promoted deeper, more critical engagement with the text. Furthermore, the Recite and Review stages reinforced retention and long-term understanding. Thus, the SQ4R strategy not only enhanced learning outcomes but also fostered active, critical, and meaningful learning experiences for students.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy can improve the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka. This improvement was evident in three main aspects: teacher activity, student activity, and reading comprehension skills as measured by learning outcome tests.

First, in terms of teacher activity, there was a consistent improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II. In Cycle I, teacher activity was categorized as good with an average score of 78.66%, while in Cycle II it increased to 99.99%, categorized as very good. These results indicate that the teacher became more proficient in managing instruction using the SQ4R strategy, particularly in guiding students through structured reading stages. The improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II occurred due to reflective practices conducted by the teacher based on observation results, which helped minimize weaknesses from previous meetings. This finding aligns with Rahmadani et al. (2025), who emphasized that reflection and instructional evaluation are essential components for improving teaching quality.

Second, student activity during the learning process also showed a significant improvement. In Cycle I, the average student activity score was 69.19%, categorized as fairly good. However, in Cycle II, the score increased to 93.76%, categorized as very good. This improvement demonstrates that the SQ4R strategy effectively creates a more active, participatory, and meaningful learning environment. The Survey and Question stages encouraged students to think critically and fostered curiosity toward the texts being studied. This finding is consistent with constructivist theory as proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, which emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through interaction and exploration (Azzahra et al., 2025).

Third, the results of the reading comprehension tests indicated an increase in student mastery levels. In Cycle I, only 47.05% of students achieved mastery, while in Cycle II this number increased to 70.58%. This improvement confirms that the SQ4R strategy helps students better comprehend reading materials, as each stage involves higher-order thinking processes, from understanding information, connecting it with prior knowledge, to recalling and reinforcing understanding through reflection and repetition. This is in line with the findings of Suryaningsih et al. (2025) on reciprocal teaching, which revealed that reading strategies based on questioning and reflection significantly enhance comprehension.

Furthermore, the success of the SQ4R strategy in this study is closely related to its systematic and comprehensive nature. Through the Survey stage, students are guided to grasp the general idea of the text; in the Question stage, they formulate guiding questions that focus their reading; the Read and Reflect stages help them critically understand the content; the Recite stage strengthens memory retention; and the Review stage ensures deeper and sustained comprehension. This strategy provides meaningful learning experiences and helps students retain understanding over the long term.

The findings of this study also have practical implications for Indonesian language instruction at the elementary level. The SQ4R strategy can serve as an alternative model for teaching reading comprehension, as it has proven effective in improving students' skills. Teachers may apply this strategy not only to informational texts but also to narrative and expository readings. Moreover, the strategy can be adapted to other subjects requiring literacy skills, such as Social Studies and Natural Sciences.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the SQ4R strategy effectively enhances the quality of both the learning process and outcomes, improving teacher performance, student engagement, and reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the application of this strategy aligns with the demands of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes critical, creative, active, and reflective thinking skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the classroom action research conducted in two cycles, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Survey, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review (SQ4R) strategy proved effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Sindang III Majalengka. First, teacher activity increased from the "good" category in Cycle I (78.66%) to "excellent" in Cycle II (99.99%), indicating that the teacher became more proficient in managing the learning process by systematically applying the SQ4R stages. Second, student activity improved from the "fairly good" category in Cycle I (69.19%) to "excellent" in Cycle II (93.76%). The SQ4R strategy encouraged students to be more active, critical, and engaged in the reading process, resulting in a more meaningful learning experience. Third, students' reading comprehension skills also improved, as evidenced by the increase in learning mastery from 47.05% in Cycle I to 70.58% in Cycle II. Therefore, the SQ4R strategy not only enhanced the learning process but also significantly improved student learning outcomes. Overall, this study demonstrates that the SQ4R strategy can serve as an effective alternative for teachers in teaching reading comprehension. Moreover, it provides practical benefits by increasing student motivation, promoting active engagement, and strengthening the literacy culture in elementary schools.

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