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### Evaluating Reading Comprehension Ability Through the SQ4R Model

*Evaluación de la capacidad de comprensión lectora a través del modelo SQ4R*

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#### RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo fue evaluar las habilidades de comprensión lectora de los estudiantes de V grado en Indonesia utilizando el modelo SQ4R (Encuesta, Pregunta, Lectura, Reflexión, Recitación, Revisión). Se seleccionó una muestra de población compuesta por 30 estudiantes a través de un muestreo intencional en el SDN Medan Johor. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de observaciones, pruebas previas y exámenes posteriores a la prueba. El objetivo era determinar cómo el modelo había influido en las habilidades de los participantes. Los resultados mostraron que el modelo SQ4R podría usarse en la escuela primaria para motivar a los estudiantes y hacerlos más activos en clase, así como mejorar las habilidades de comprensión de lectura.

**Palabras clave:** Asignatura de Indonesia, comprensión de lectura, modelo de aprendizaje, SQ4R.

#### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper was to assess the reading comprehension skills of V grade students in Indonesia using the SQ4R model (Survey, Question, Reading, Reflect, Recite, Review). A sample population consisting of 30 students was selected through purposive sampling at the SDN Medan Johor. Data was collected through observation, pre-tests, and post-test examinations. The objective was to determine how the model had influenced the abilities of the participants. The results showed that SQ4R model could be used in elementary school to motivate students and make them more active in class, as well as enhance the reading comprehension skills.

**Keywords:** Indonesian subject, learning model, reading comprehension, SQ4R.

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## INTRODUCTION

Governments and other stakeholders around the world strive to invest in the education system to ensure that learners get the right skills needed to succeed in their careers. In addition, there is a consensus among policymakers that quality education is one of the primary factors that can drive a nation in the right path, investment in education means that organization will have access to trained and talented employees who will be able to carry out their duties diligently while also contributing to the development of the country. Furthermore, investment in the education sector ensures that there is a team of experienced individuals who can help organizations to become competitive in the global market through the production of innovative products (Wolsey, Smetana, & Grisham, 2015; Wright & Peltier, 2016). People start to develop the skills needed to succeed in their careers in the early stages of learning. One of the areas that teachers focus on is imparting language skills that can enable students to understand instructions and other concepts that are taught in class (Koch & Spörer, 2017; Muijselaar et al., 2017).

Besides, language teaching gives students an avenue through which they can interact with their peers while also striving to understand and explore their environment (Herlina, 2016). Therefore, it is a critical issue that can determine whether a student will be able to succeed in class or not. Learning how to read is a critical aspect of primary school education in all countries around the world (Ellis & Bond, 2014; Sada & Novita, 2015; Mahdavi, 2014). Students learn how to read so that they can understand literary standards, make sense of what is happening around them, and pass the intended message to other people in the right form (Muijselaar et al., 2017; Ahmad & Ahmad, 2018). Moreover, teachers could develop student's reasoning abilities, creativity as well as moral values by teaching them how to read and understand different subjects. Therefore, the mastery of reading skills and language are among the most important concepts that will determine whether students will acquire quality education.

In Indonesia, just like it is the case with other countries around the world, the ability to read is among the most important skills that students acquire during the start of their learning careers. The ultimate goal of learning how to read is to understand the content that students are exposed to both within and outside the classroom setting. Reading is a cognitive process that requires readers to carefully assess material and determine the meaning of the texts that are before them (Ahmad & Ahmad, 2019; Muijselaar et al., 2017). Also, they are expected to understand how the texts relate to the message that is being passed across to them. Reading activities allow students to grasp the meaning of expressions and words used by authors while also exploring the implied and explicit meanings of texts (Muijselaar et al., 2017; Carretti, Calderola, Tencati, & Cornoldi). It is from such cognitive processes that the learners will be in a position to make valid conclusions regarding the content before them.

Reading and comprehension are some of the vital tools that students require to develop and succeed in the work that they will do in the future. It enables them to gain knowledge about different subjects while also improving their reasoning and writing abilities. A review of available research evidence shows that reading is central to students because it will affect their academic development and language fluency (Muijselaar et al., 2017; Herlina, 2016). It is against this background that researchers strive to examine the various concepts and topics related to the issue of reading (Ahmad & Sahar, 2019). It is important to state that learners require reading comprehension skills so that they can understand what is being taught in class and respond to the cues that teachers may use in the course of their work (Muijselaar et al., 2017). Every student should, therefore, be accorded the chance to read and make connections between what is taught and the things that they are exposed to in their everyday life. Failure to acquire such skills can make it impossible for children to develop their cognitive abilities, practice what has been taught, and recognize different materials that they encounter outside the class setting (Zohar & Barzilai, 2014; Alaa, 2016; Basar, 2017). Taken together, the results of studies done on the subject suggest that the academic career of learners and their success in life can largely be affected by the extent to which they understand the meaning of words and make connections between the reality and what they are taught.

For a person to be able to read, he or she must also know how to comprehend words and listen to what the other person is saying. In this regards, reading and comprehension are considered to be essential yet vigorous processes that will determine the skills that students will acquire at the end of their stay in schools. The brilliant students tend to master academic content quickly and read for fondness as they strive to expand their knowledge base (Poolman, Leseman, Doornenbal & Minnaert, 2016; Connor et al., 2014). Although people tend to differ in terms of their academic abilities, it is also critical to note that comprehension skills and reading ability may not come just by birth. Instead, they are things that can be learned at different stages of life. In an elementary school set up, students usually read and comprehend materials coming from numerous sources (Pressley & Allington, 2014; Silva & Cain, 2015; Stoeger, Sontag, & Ziegler, 2014). Due to the importance of the skills, educators strive to train students and nurture their reading and comprehension abilities from time to time. According to O'Reilly and Sabatini (2014), nurturing students to acquire reading and comprehension skills can improve societal order and enable them to succeed in their future careers. In modern education setups, it is necessary for elementary school teachers to argument teaching methods with other reading opportunities so that learners can get the necessary skills (Bıyık, Erdoğan, & Yıldız, 2017). Furthermore, it may be necessary for the teacher to tailor the reading activities based on the student's abilities and a basic understanding of texts. The primary goal is to make the students become not only better readers but also know what is going on around them through the knowledge of printed or written materials.

From a research perspective, reading and comprehension are rich and wide topics that have attracted the attention of educators, investigators, and policymakers around the world (Poolman et al., 2016; Herlina, 2016; Cain & Oakhill, 2014). Besides, research shows that the two processes may entail addressing vital issues such as challenges in the understanding of acronyms, decoding information, and making relations to the surrounding environment. Educators are always expected to use balanced approaches that will not only provide ways of supporting learners but also enabling them to understand their environment (Shahri, 2015). Herlina (2016) opinioned that teachers may also need to use explicit instructions so that students can develop both theoretical and proactive skills needed to succeed in the current competitive and highly dynamic world. Furthermore, it is imperative to focus on developing methods and interventions that will assist learners in getting four-primary language skills that include speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Kuşdemir, Düşünsel, & Çelik, 2018; Seher, 2017). The skills can be learned through productive or receptive processes depending on different factors such as the age of learners and the education setting. In most instances, researchers show that learners may be less anxious to read extensively and understand what is presented before them. Some focus on reading storybooks, newspapers, or novels for fun (O'Reilly & Sabatini, 2014). Others are engaged in the process only to comprehend classroom instructions or pass their examinations. Despite this being the case, it is necessary to understand how students comprehend things and develop mechanisms that can assist in creating awareness about the subjects and assisting students to be productive and useful members of the society (Worrell et al., 2015; Dewi, 2015).

A person becomes a good reader when he or she can recognize words and sentences in a text, connect the demonstrative and connotative meanings in a passage and determine the meaning of the words that are being presented (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2014). The understanding of the texts should be done after examining the contexts in which they are being used and the intention of the author in utilizing specific expressions and sentences (Altın, Saracaloğlu, & Boylan, 2018; Hellerstein-Yehezkel, 2017; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2014). The author further stated that there are two primary reading skills that students may require to succeed in their tasks. They are predictive meaning skills and the understanding of how words and sentences are used. In both cases, it is imperative to examine the indicators of comprehension that include the grasp of the facts, concepts and definition, determination of the specific meanings of words and phrases, and examination of the discourse in which they are used (Leu et al., 2015; Lim, Eng, & Mohamed, 2014; Lysenko & Abrami, 2014). Others include the theme and topics being explored and drawing accurate conclusions based on what is presented (Erdal & Ali, 2016; Barth & Mcculley, 2015). In this case, reading comprehension is a

complex process that entails unifying different elements related to how texts are presented and understood. There are three primary elements of reading. They include an active constructive process, thought processes before, during, and after reading, and interaction between reader, text, and context (Kaschak, Connor, & Dombek, 2017; Melby-Lervag & Lervag, 2014). Readers must strive to interpret texts in a way that will enable them to grasp and know the topics that authors are exploring and the message that is being passed to the audience (Aberšek, Dolenc, Flogie, & Koritnik, 2015).

Based on the information presented in previous research projects and works, it is possible to conclude that the ability of students to read may depend on a wide range of factors (O'Reilly & Sabatini, 2014). First, it is important for the student to capture discourse content, either implicitly or explicitly. Second, learners should develop the ability to answer questions based on the contexts under which the text has been presented (O'Reilly & Sabatini, 2014; Rosell et al.: 2020). The third factor is that readers should strive to summarize the content and find the underlying meaning in each case. Finally, they should be in a position to make conclusions and retell the passes in their own words without changing the meaning (Ibrahim & Selcuk, 2017; Gulhiz, 2016). In reality, however, not all students can develop such abilities because of a wide range of factors, including cognitive skills and language barriers. Some students can fluently read materials but fail to understand the meaning of the texts and the context in which they are used.

It is undeniable that reading comprehension is a critical language skill that needs to be mastered during elementary schools so that students can successfully transition to other stages of education (Begum & Hamzah, 2017). The lack of reading skills will make it impossible for a student to understand the messages that teachers may be passing across through written texts. In addition, students may not be able to understand texts and passages that teachers used in different classes to enable the learners to develop their academic skills (Hugh & Alan, 2017; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014; Scammacca, Roberts, Vaughn, & Stuebing, 2015). Furthermore, students may become less active in the classroom when the teachers focus only on the content found in textbooks and use conventional teaching methods. In the end, the students may not be able to develop the right comprehension skills and perform optimally in the school activities (McMaster, Espin, & van den Broek, 2014; Muijselaar & de Jong, 2015). Even when the teacher strives to use alternative methods of teaching, such as oral language, the effect of the lack of reading skills will also be felt in classes. For instances, learners will struggle to understand the surrounding environment within the class setting, where charts and figures have been placed to pass specific information. Learning should give students a chance to contribute to the process through which they acquire knowledge (Michelson, 2017; Swanson, Orosco, & Kudo, 2016; Baharuddin et al., 2018; Dalle & Mutalib, 2018; Derlina et al., 2018; Dalle et al., 2017). In addition, it is important for the teacher to create an environment in which students can engage in active learning through a wide range of methods such as the reading of passages and texts in the classrooms. In the current dynamic world, innovative solution such as the SQ4R model has been categorized among the interventions that can be used by teachers to optimize the acquisition of knowledge and improve the reading skills of students. Moreover, it is a framework that may be utilized to determine areas where the students have shortcomings and identify measures that may be undertaken to ensure that they acquire the relevant knowledge. SQ4R is based on the AS3R framework and was designed by Francis P. Robinson to provide an avenue through which teachers can improve student's participation in classroom activities (Risky Ananda, 2015). The model follows the steps of surveying, questioning, reading, reciting, reviewing and writing. In this project, the model will be used to determine the reading comprehension skills of grade V students in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

The purpose of this research was to explore the topic of reading comprehension based on the data collected through the SQ4R method. Therefore, it was imperative to carry out classroom action research to determine how students comprehended the Indonesian language. The sample population consisted of grade V SDN Medan Johor students. The students were selected through the purposive method to assist in gathering the data needed to answer the research questions. The sampling method also enabled the researcher to choose a specific set of students who would complete the project and give reliable and accurate information about their comprehension skills. The study was conducted on the even semester of the academic year 2016/2017 (January to March 2017). The project entailed using the Kemnis and Mc Model design. The approach consists of three major stages of research, which include planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. In each stage, attempts were made to gather the information that could assist in answering the formulated research question.

The first stage of the research was the planning phase. At this stage, the researcher needed to plan and hold a meeting with the teachers to discuss how the study would be conducted. The move was informed by the fact that the success of the project largely depended on the close working collaboration between the students, researchers, and the teachers. During the meeting, the team went through the curriculum and other materials that are used in teaching the selected subject. Also, it was critical to develop a plan that would be used during the implementation phase and select the English learning materials and tools that were necessary during the lessons. Furthermore, the required media, textbooks, and assessment tools were identified. The material was selected based on the purpose of learning as well as the areas that the teachers would focus on when conducting pre and post-test examinations. Finally, the researcher and the teacher agree on the instruments that would be used to observe the students during the process.

The second phase of the project was the actual implementation. Once the plans were agreed on and the materials selected, the next process was to implement the SQ4R project. The involvement of the teacher was required from the start to the end of the implementation phase. First, it was important for the teacher to select and give the reading text based on the learning objectives to be achieved and the competency areas that were being assessed. The students were required to examine the texts and mark the keywords that could assist in understanding the underlying message. The teacher, on the other hand, created a set of questions to be asked during the class based on the passage and the abilities of the learners. Besides, the teacher gave students assignments to determine whether they understood the passage. Students were required to read and respond to questions that have been previously arranged by swapping with a partner and mark things that are understood or making small notes from reading by students to solve problems/informed material based on reading. The implementation phase also entailed relating the passage with things that had been learned in class, checking the answers provided by other students and working in groups to address complex issues. At the end of the process, the teacher worked with the students to review the answers and reflect on what had been learned during the class.

The third stage of the project was the observation phase. Here, the researcher and the teacher observed the students during the implementation of the class action to gather the information that was needed to answer the formulated questions. An observation sheet was created and used to record the behavior and performance of the students during the activities that took place during the class. Furthermore, the teacher strived to determine whether the activities and reactions of the students could show their level of understanding of the material used in the classroom and how their competencies had changed. While carrying out the observations, the teacher needed to examine the suitability of the action plan and how it was changing the abilities and the academic performance of the learners. The primary goal was to collect additional data related to reading comprehension and determine how it could be improved in the research context.

The final part of the study was the reflection phase. Here, it was important to think about everything that had been done during the project and assess the progress that had been made in terms of reading comprehension. Furthermore, the reflection process entailed looking at the way students had performed during the lesson and identifying the critical areas that should be addressed to improve the performance of the learners. By reflecting on the entire project, the teacher and the researchers were able to assess deficiencies that may have affected the performance of students. Moreover, this stage of the project enabled the researchers to test the results and determine some of the critical issues that were influencing how students understood concepts.

## **RESULTS**

The data needed to answer the research question was collected through observation and from the evaluation tests that were done during the project. At the start of the project, students undertook a pretest consisting of 20 items with multiple choices for them to select. The primary goal was to collect baseline data based on how the students read and understood the passages. Besides, the information was collected from the answers that the learners provided when the teacher asked questions.

The change is linked to the use of the SQ4R learning model that created an environment in which students could identify keywords in a text and try to make sense of the content of the passage. The results of data analysis of the tests in the study reveals that there was a slight increase in the student's reading comprehension abilities, data showed that students who can read comprehension on the initial test as many as 8 students with a percentage of 26.66% completeness. In the first cycle, there were as 20 students with percentage completeness of 69.66%. In the second cycle, there were as 26 students with percentage completeness 86.66%. From the data, it is evident that the use of the SQ4R model in the process of reading text reading can increase students' reading comprehension in grade V SD. The trend is attributed to the fact that the teacher assisted them to understand the keywords and concepts in the passage. Besides, the results indicate that the researcher was able to achieve the learning objectives by motivating the learners to be creative and keen on the critical aspects of the passage, including the key phrases. Despite this being the case, it was also evident that some students struggled to understand texts and determined the meaning or message that the author was passing across. In such instances, the teacher has an important duty to allow students to ask questions, make comments, and summarize the activities that have been undertaken during the language or reading lessons (Joseph et al., 2015; Mercedes et al., 2014). Such interventions will improve the level of student involvement in learning and help them to acquire vital reading and comprehension skills (Compton et al., 2014; Droop, van Elsäcker, Voeten, & Verhoeven, 2016; Dalle).

As the project progressed, the students started to become active learners and continued to work with their colleagues to determine the meaning of the critical words and phrases that were in the text. Even in such instances, it was still imperative for the educator to guide the learners in the right direction and assist them by answering their questions while reading the text. Apart from commenting on the answers provided by the students, the teacher was further required to assist them by relating the content of the text to real-life issues. From the data gathered through observation, it was apparent that the action of the researcher was not optimal or categorized quite well, and the students were not accustomed to using the learning model. The trend is partly attributed to the varying learning needs of the students as well as the challenges that they might have faced in the course of the lesson, such as a language barrier.

The results of the study further show that teachers can struggle to have students work in groups when reading texts. In this project, some students completely refused to cooperate with their colleagues while others appeared to be ashamed or displeased with the approach. In such cases, the learners could not get help from each other or borrow ideas that could assist in the answering of the asked questions. When they were required to talk about the meaning of the entire texts, such students struggled or even refused to respond to the

questions at all. As the main instructor in the class, the teacher was forced to motivate the students further and explain to them why it was important to overcome their shyness, fear, and lack of confidence. Moreover, the teacher had to monitor all students, ask questions, and provide examples related to the key concepts to improve their comprehension skills.

## **DISCUSSION**

Reading and comprehension are vital skills that can significantly influence how a student performs in school and their professional careers later on in life (Mustafa, 2016; Narges & Farh, 2015). The skills can determine whether a student will be able to achieve learning goals or not. Furthermore, comprehension is important as it affects the way students respond to instructions from their teachers (Unsworth, Persson, Prins, & De Bot, 2015). Therefore, researchers and education stakeholders are always working to identify and develop interventions that can improve reading competencies among students (Nurul & Ninuk, 2017; Saher, 2017; Santos et al., 2015). One such tool is the SQ4R model that is designed to increase the retention and understanding of written information (Shahri, 2015). Besides, the tool enables students to study effectively and grasp different types of passages that may be used in classrooms to pass a specific message (Shahri, 2015).

The results of the current study show that the SQ4R model can be used to improve reading comprehension skills among grade V Elementary school students. Besides, it was determined that teachers can use the method to not only motivate students but also assist them to understand key concepts in a passage. The findings are in line with those from another study that was done by Herlina (2016) where it was reported that educators could use the framework to evaluate how students understood English language texts. In the project, Herlina (2016) found that 55.55 percent and 83.33 percent of the students scored  $\geq 75$  in the first and second cycle, respectively. The findings are also similar to those from another project by Nasir et al. (2018), which showed that there was an increase in students' reading comprehension from the pre-action result. In the first cycle of complete students is seven people, while the percentage of classical completeness 46.66 percent. In the second cycle, 14 people were considered, and the completion rate was 93.32 percent.

Basar and Mehmet (2017) also conducted an empirical study to examine the effect of SQ4R on reading comprehension ability among elementary school 4th-grade students. The sample consisted of 57 students learning in different branches of the Ataturk Elementary School. The research was done during the 2nd semester of the 2013-2014 academic year. The researcher worked with the teachers to develop the assessment questions and determine the tools that were to be used during the evaluation process. The questions were used in both the experimental and control groups. The data gathered was subjected to sample t-tests and Kruskal Wallis-test methods. The results showed that there was a significant difference in comprehension skills in the two groups. In particular, the students in the experimental groups performed better than their counterparts in their control groups. Based on the findings, it was concluded that SQ4R was an effective tool that can be used in improving learning outcomes in elementary schools. Sari, Marsidin, and Arief (2018) noted that teachers have to create and use effective learning models that can enable students to understand texts and the message being communicated by different authors. The SQ4R strategy has been identified as one of the interventions that can help educators to improve academic outcomes

## CONCLUSIONS

Reading comprehension skills are central to the success of students in the current educational system. The skills are linked to better academic performance and grasp of instructions in the classroom. The purpose of the present study was to examine how the SQ4R strategy could be used to improve comprehension abilities among elementary school students in Indonesia. The results show that the intervention was an effective method through which teachers can improve the involvement of students in learning activities and enable them to grasp texts. The observation results show that the improvement in the first cycle was more pronounced compared to those in the second phase of the project. Further investigations may be required to determine the specific avenues through which the model can be implemented for optimal results to be achieved.

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