

## LITERATURE STUDY: THE SQ4R METHOD IN IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION IN STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the SQ4R method in improving students' reading comprehension skills, using a literature review approach. The SQ4R method consists of six strategic steps: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Reflect, and Review. These six stages are designed to foster active engagement of students in the reading process. This study relies on references from various national and international scientific journals, as well as relevant educational books. Based on the literature analysis, it was found that the SQ4R method not only helps students understand the literal content of the text but also strengthens their inferential and critical thinking skills. One of the key aspects of this approach is the Reflect stage, which encourages students to connect the reading material with their previous experiences and knowledge, thereby creating a more meaningful and contextual learning process. In conclusion, the SQ4R method has proven to be effective in strengthening reading comprehension skills and is worthy of being integrated into learning that meets the demands of the 21st-century curriculum.*

**Keywords:** *SQ4R, reading comprehension, learning strategies, literature studies*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension skills serve as a crucial and indispensable foundation upon which all learning activities are built and developed. In the absence of a strong and effective understanding of the text being read, the entire learning process becomes significantly hindered, as students find themselves unable to grasp, adequately process, and correctly interpret the information contained within the text in its most complete form. Gunning (2010) articulates that reading comprehension constitutes an active and dynamic process of meaning construction that unfolds through the intricate interaction between the reader, the text itself, and the surrounding contextual elements that influence understanding. A parallel perspective is provided by Afflerbach et al. (2008), who underscore the fact that the development of reading comprehension skills necessitates the application of various higher-order thinking strategies, which include making inferences, synthesizing disparate pieces of information, and reflecting deeply on the content presented in the text.

Snow (2002) characterizes reading comprehension as an intricate and multifaceted cognitive process that not only encompasses the act of literal reading but also requires the ability to integrate new information with the reader's existing prior knowledge and experiences. This assertion is further reinforced by Duke and Pearson (2002), who stress that the act of understanding a text represents a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between the reader and the text, a process that is influenced by numerous factors such as motivation, specific reading goals, prior experiences, and the diverse strategies employed by the reader during this engagement.

However, in the real-world educational landscape, a considerable number of students

continue to grapple with the challenges associated with achieving a profound and nuanced understanding of the content they encounter in their readings. The findings from the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) conducted in 2016 revealed that the reading literacy skills of Indonesian students remain significantly below the global average, a sobering statistic that highlights the imperative need for a comprehensive reading learning approach that goes beyond merely focusing on word recognition, also known as decoding, and instead places a strong emphasis on enhancing text comprehension as a whole.

One particular approach that has been demonstrated to be effective in cultivating and developing students' reading comprehension skills is the SQ4R method, which is an acronym representing the steps of Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Reflect, and Review. This instructional strategy was initially introduced by Robinson in 1961 as a systematic methodology designed to encourage active reading habits among students, thus fostering a more engaged learning experience. The SQ4R method compels students to engage in more than just passive reading of the text; it encourages them to actively formulate questions, commit the content of their reading to memory, reflect on the deeper meanings contained within the text, and review the most important and salient pieces of information that have been presented. Dole, Duffy, Roehler, and Pearson (1991) assert that this method has the potential to promote critical thinking skills, while simultaneously enhancing memory retention of the material being studied. Grabe and Stoller (2002) also contend that each distinct stage of the SQ4R process plays a vital role in fostering students' metacognitive awareness and promoting active thinking throughout the reading experience.

The comprehensive results of the research conducted by Putra and Haryanti (2022) indicate that students who engage in the learning process utilizing the SQ4R method exhibit a significant and marked improvement in their understanding of both narrative and explanatory texts. Similarly, Rosita (2021) echoed these findings, revealing that the SQ4R strategy has the capacity to enhance students' focus and engagement during the reading process, as students are effectively trained to relate the content of the text to their own personal experiences and prior knowledge.

In the last several decades, the SQ4R method has found widespread application across a multitude of educational levels and has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension skills, encompassing the full spectrum from basic literal understanding to more complex inferential and evaluative levels of interpretation. This assertion is strongly supported by empirical studies carried out by Khusniyah et al. (2017) and Wahyuningsih et al. (2021), which provide compelling evidence that students who engage with texts through the SQ4R approach exhibit a significantly deeper and more nuanced understanding of the material when compared to their peers who are subjected to traditional, conventional instructional methods.

Nevertheless, the application of this innovative educational strategy is not devoid of its own set of challenges and criticisms. A notable critique has been articulated by Zainuddin and Halim (2020), who contend that the effectiveness of the SQ4R method may be compromised when it is implemented within a predominantly teacher-centered learning environment. In the absence of a fundamental shift towards a more constructivist pedagogical model, there is a substantial risk that this method may devolve into a simplistic

procedural routine, thereby overlooking the critical reflective component that constitutes one of its most significant strengths. Furthermore, the constraints imposed by limited time and an overcrowded curriculum frequently introduce significant barriers that hinder the optimal execution of the six distinct stages inherent in the SQ4R process. Given these challenges, it becomes imperative to undertake a thorough and comprehensive literature review to meticulously investigate the potential advantages, limitations, and overall efficacy of the SQ4R strategy within the specific context of reading instruction in educational institutions. This study is intended to synthesize a wide array of research findings and scholarly publications in order to ascertain the degree to which the SQ4R method is effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension abilities, as well as to analyze how this strategy can be effectively integrated and implemented within practical learning environments.

In light of this backdrop, the primary focus of this research endeavor is to systematically address the pivotal question: To what extent is the SQ4R method effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills as revealed through the findings of an extensive literature review? Thus, the overarching objective of this study is to critically explore and rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the SQ4R strategy as a viable learning approach that holds the potential to significantly improve students' reading comprehension outcomes through a detailed and systematic review of existing literature.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This particular research endeavor adopts a qualitative methodology, prominently featuring a literature review as its primary strategic approach. This specific category of investigation is predominantly concerned with the descriptive analysis of a diverse array of theoretical frameworks and empirical data that has previously been disseminated in academic circles, with the overarching aim of thoroughly illustrating and elucidating the phenomenon under examination. In accordance with the insights presented by Sugiyono (2019), it is noteworthy that literature study serves as a methodological tool that emphasizes the exploration of theories, values, norms, and cultural elements that evolve within a distinct social context, which bear a significant connection to the research topic being scrutinized.

The execution of this methodological framework involves systematically compiling data from a variety of pertinent sources, which may include, but are not limited to, scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, comprehensive research reports, and other scientifically relevant documents that are intrinsically linked to the central theme of the study, specifically focusing on the effectiveness of the SQ4R strategy in enhancing students' reading comprehension abilities. The overarching objective of this particular approach is to meticulously identify, analyze, and synthesize the findings that have been articulated in prior studies conducted by various researchers as well as education specialists in the field.

Data collection was meticulously conducted through structured literature searches across several reputable scientific platforms and online databases, which included, among others, Google Scholar, Garuda Ristek-BRIN, DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), and a selection of university repositories that house relevant academic work. In the process of selecting appropriate sources, the researchers established a set of specific criteria to ensure

the relevance and quality of the literature reviewed, stipulating that:

The source must unequivocally address the SQ4R method within the framework of reading instruction. The publication must have been released within the timeframe of 2010 to 2024. The content presented in the publication should be pertinent to the enhancement of students' reading comprehension, particularly focusing on the educational levels ranging from primary to secondary education (SD–SMA). The text should be composed in either Indonesian or English to ensure accessibility to the target audience.

Once the sources had been meticulously gathered, the subsequent analysis phase was conducted utilizing a thematic approach, whereby the information was systematically categorized according to the key themes that surfaced throughout the literature. Among the principal themes that were analyzed are: the structural components and sequential stages of the SQ4R method, the method's influence on the improvement of reading comprehension, its impact on the engagement of student learning activities, and the various obstacles or challenges associated with its practical implementation in real-world educational settings.

Through the adoption of this comprehensive approach, the researcher endeavors to furnish a thorough and critical overview that encapsulates the potential benefits, advantages, and limitations inherent in the application of the SQ4R strategy within the domain of reading instruction in educational institutions. The anticipated outcomes of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the establishment of both theoretical and practical foundations that will facilitate the design of more effective and responsive learning experiences, ultimately addressing the nuanced needs of students as they strive to gain a deeper understanding of reading texts.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Effectiveness of the SQ4R Method on Reading Comprehension of Various Literature**

The findings derived from an extensive array of studies across diverse literature sources unequivocally indicate that the SQ4R approach has consistently demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing the reading comprehension capabilities of students at various educational levels. In a notable study conducted by Komalasari and her esteemed colleagues in the year 2020, which focused specifically on fourth-grade elementary school students, it was observed that there was a remarkable and statistically significant increase in reading comprehension outcomes subsequent to the implementation of this particular instructional strategy. The students involved in this research not only reported finding it significantly easier to discern and identify the main ideas within the texts but also exhibited a heightened understanding of the structural elements of the text, which enabled them to summarize the content of their reading assignments with greater precision and accuracy.

In the realm of English language learning, the SQ4R method is also shown to exert a substantial and beneficial influence on students' ability to comprehend foreign language texts. A research study orchestrated by Megawati and Fitriani in 2020 articulates the notion that this instructional strategy aids students in not only understanding the content of texts written in a foreign language but also bolsters their self-confidence when engaging with reading materials. This positive effect can be attributed to the

unique aspect of the SQ4R approach, which prompts students to formulate pertinent questions prior to engaging with the reading material, thereby rendering the reading process more focused, directed, and profoundly meaningful.

Support for the effectiveness of the SQ4R method is further reinforced by investigative research conducted by Khusniyah et al. in 2017, which uncovered that the application of the SQ4R technique significantly enhances students' reading skills, particularly in dimensions such as literal comprehension, the ability to reorganize information, and the skill to draw implicit conclusions from the text. This particular strategy actively encourages students to engage with the material in a dynamic and interactive manner, as opposed to merely reading passively or mechanically, which is essential for deep comprehension.

Moreover, an insightful study led by Wahyuningsih and her research team in 2021 highlights that the incorporation of teaching materials designed with the SQ4R approach leads to a significant increase in students' active participation, enthusiasm for the learning process, and emotional engagement during reading activities. The recite and reflect stages embedded within this instructional method are instrumental in assisting students to reflect upon and reorganize the information they have absorbed, thereby equipping them with the critical awareness and analytical skills necessary to understand the content of their reading materials more profoundly and thoughtfully.

## 2. The Significance of Strategic Stages in the SQ4R Methodology

Each distinct phase within the SQ4R strategy plays an instrumental role in enhancing the overall comprehension of reading materials, thereby ensuring that learners can effectively grasp and retain the information presented to them. The initial stage, known as Survey, serves a crucial function in enabling students to identify and understand the general structure and thematic outline of the text they are engaging with. During this particular phase, students are actively encouraged to pay close attention to key elements, which include the title, various subtitles, and other significant terminology that stands out within the text. The ultimate goal of this initial stage is to help students develop a foundational framework that facilitates a more coherent understanding of the content that they will be exploring in its entirety.

Following the Survey phase, the subsequent stage is referred to as Question, wherein students are prompted to formulate and articulate questions that arise based on the preliminary information they have gathered. This critical process not only stimulates their innate curiosity but also serves to concentrate their focus as they prepare to engage with the text on a deeper level. As highlighted by Grabe and Stoller (2002), the act of generating questions prior to reading has the effect of activating students' schemata, or their existing knowledge structures, thereby equipping them with a greater readiness to assimilate new information presented within the text they are about to read.

Transitioning into the Read stage, students embark on an active reading journey with the primary objective of seeking answers to the questions they have previously articulated. In this context, reading transcends the boundaries of a passive activity and

becomes an integral component of the critical thinking process that is essential for learning. Following this, they advance to the Recite stage, which requires them to engage in the cognitive exercise of recalling and rephrasing the content of their reading in their own unique words. This particular stage exemplifies the principles underpinning retrieval practice within cognitive learning theory, where active recall activities have been empirically demonstrated to enhance long-term memory retention, as evidenced by the findings of Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel (2014).

What indeed distinguishes the SQ4R approach from other reading strategies is the Reflect stage. In this pivotal phase, students are encouraged to engage in reflective thinking about the content they have just read, thereby making connections between the material and their personal experiences, social contexts, or pre-existing knowledge bases. This reflective process serves to elevate the significance of the reading from a mere academic exercise into a profound learning experience that resonates on a personal level. Robinson (1941), the original architect of this pedagogical strategy, emphasized the paramount importance of reflection as the fundamental core of the knowledge internalization process, ensuring that it is comprehended in a manner that is both deep and comprehensive.

### 3. Consistency with Constructivism Theory

From a conceptual standpoint, the SQ4R methodology is intricately aligned with the principles of constructivist theory, which fundamentally posits that learning is an intricate process of actively constructing meaning through personal experiences and engaging interactions with the surrounding environment. Vygotsky (1978) articulated that genuine learning transpires when students immerse themselves in active engagement with their environments and the various stimuli that provoke their learning. Within the framework of the SQ4R approach, the reflection stage serves as a crucial conduit for establishing meaningful connections between theoretical concepts and the real-life experiences of students, thereby rendering the learning process not only more contextual but also significantly more personally relevant to their individual lives.

Empirical research conducted by Sari et al. (2022) provides compelling evidence that students who receive training in the SQ4R strategy exhibit notable enhancements in their critical and reflective thinking abilities, particularly when it comes to interpreting both expository and narrative texts with greater depth and insight. Furthermore, this instructional strategy cultivates a sense of independence in learners, as they increasingly become accustomed to the practice of formulating pertinent questions, independently seeking answers, and engaging in reflective thinking as an integral part of their habitual reading processes.

### 4. Critical Analysis and Research Implications

Based on an analysis of the literature compiled, the SQ4R method has been proven to have great potential in improving reading comprehension skills among students at various levels of education. However, the effectiveness of this method is greatly influenced by several factors, including:

- a) **Teacher Readiness:** Many teachers are still not sufficiently trained in implementing active reading strategies such as SQ4R. Without proper training and technical guidance, this strategy tends not to be implemented optimally, and may even end up

as a conventional teaching method with little significant impact.

- b) Student Conditions: The implementation of this method requires active student involvement. Therefore, student characteristics such as cognitive ability, motivation, and initial literacy background determine the success of SQ4R implementation.
- c) Curriculum Context and Learning Time: The SQ4R stages require a considerable amount of time. In practice, time constraints are a major obstacle, especially in highly structured learning systems that prioritise curriculum completion.
- d) Suitability of Teaching Materials: Not all types of texts are suitable for the SQ4R method. Descriptive, explanatory, or narrative texts are generally more suitable than procedural or expository texts that are short in length.

While it is widely acknowledged that the SQ4R method has demonstrated significant efficacy in enhancing reading comprehension skills among students, there exist numerous obstacles that persist in the process of its implementation in educational settings. One predominant challenge is the restrictive nature of the learning time available, particularly within a classroom environment characterized by a demanding and rigorous workload that can overwhelm both educators and learners alike. The completion of all six distinct stages of the SQ4R process within a single learning session frequently requires more time than traditional instructional methodologies, as noted in the research conducted by Lombu et al. (2022). Furthermore, the level of competence exhibited by teachers in effectively applying this strategic approach to reading comprehension is an essential variable that influences the successful adoption of SQ4R. A significant number of educators may not possess adequate familiarity with each of the individual stages of the SQ4R method, which can result in a fragmented and inconsistent application of the strategy across different learning contexts. Consequently, it is highly advisable to implement ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, as well as to provide comprehensive SQ4R-based teaching modules or instructional materials, to ensure that this innovative strategy is employed in the most effective manner possible.

From a broader policy perspective, the SQ4R method presents a compelling case for its integration into the Merdeka Curriculum framework, which places a strong emphasis on active learning, project-based educational practices, and differentiated instruction tailored to meet the diverse needs of students. This strategic approach can seamlessly become a vital component of literacy education that is centered on fostering a deeper understanding, encouraging creativity, and promoting reflective thinking among students in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

## 5. Conceptual Model Synthesis

From the results of this study, a conceptual model of SQ4R-based reading learning can be formulated as follows:

### **Input:**

- Students with basic literacy skills
- Teachers who understand active reading strategies
- Relevant and challenging reading materials

### **Process (SQ4R stages):**

- a) Survey: Recognising the overall structure and content of the text
- b) Question: Formulating questions to guide reading
- c) Read: Active reading while seeking answers to questions
- d) Recite: Verbal or written restatement of information

- e) Reflect: Connecting the content of the reading with experience/prior knowledge
- f) Review: Comprehensive review of the content of the reading

**Output:**

- Improved literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension
  - Reflective and critical thinking skills
  - Independence in understanding texts
6. Practical Implications and Recommendations
- a. For Teachers: Teachers need to receive intensive training in applying the SQ4R method gradually and continuously. In-house training and lesson study activities are highly recommended.
  - b. For Schools: Schools can integrate the SQ4R strategy into their school literacy programmes and make it part of the 15-minute daily reading movement.
  - c. For Curriculum Developers: The SQ4R strategy can serve as a pedagogical approach in literacy-based learning aligned with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.
  - d. For Further Researchers: This study opens opportunities for further experimental research testing the effectiveness of SQ4R in different contexts, including with students with special needs or integration with interactive digital media.

**D. CONCLUSION**

The SQ4R methodology represents a remarkably effective approach towards enhancing students' reading comprehension skills, addressing not only the literal understanding of the text but also fostering inferential and reflective comprehension dimensions. This method encompasses a total of six meticulously organized steps, which actively engage students in the learning process, prompting them to think critically about the material and to reflect deeply on their reading experiences. The incorporation of this strategic approach into the educational curriculum, particularly within the realms of literacy and the Indonesian language arts, is strongly advocated for its potential to significantly enrich students' learning outcomes.

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