ENHANCING EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH SQ4R METHOD AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This study is intended to investigate how EFL secondary students' reading comprehension can be enhanced through the SQ4R method. The design of this study was classroom action research which involved 31 students from class IX-A of one secondary school in Samarinda, Indonesia. Two instruments were used in this study, i.e., an observation sheet and a reading test. The observation data were qualitatively analyzed using the provided checklist, while the data from reading test was quantitatively analyzed by having percentage analysis and categorizing the results into score levels. The results revealed that the implementation of the SQ4R method could enhance the students' reading comprehension achievement. Quantitatively, 18 students (58%) out of 31 passed the KKM (minimum completeness criteria) in cycle 1; meanwhile, in cycle 2, 27 students (87%) out of 31 students passed the KKM. In addition, problems faced by the collaborator-teacher can be solved by the dynamics happening in the two cycles, which results in the betterment of the teaching and learning process using the SQ4R method. The reflection from the two cycles showed that SQ4R can improve EFL students' reading comprehension. As the method's impacts develop, teaching and learning quality changes.

Keywords: *Reading comprehension, secondary school EFL learners, and SQ4R method*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, the problem of insufficient reading comprehension among secondary school EFL students has been a recurrent issue. It occurs because EFL reading development and literacy must be improved for secondary school pupils to have greater academic performance in subsequent years. In the EFL context, having a good reading development and literacy for secondary school students means gaining more reading input-rich circumstances in which extensive reading activities are, among others, reasonably enacted to increase the students' reading attitudes and habits. Several research findings showed the need of

intensifying reading habit to get better reading skills (Satriani, 2019; Erfanpour, 2013; Manan, 2017), the governments' educational agencies and school policy makers supports to extensive reading programs at schools (Firda et al., 2018), the more time allocations and uses of motivating activities to implement extensive reading programs (Endris, 2018), and the positive responses toward extensive reading programs (Salameh, 2017). Therefore, teaching the EFL subject in secondary schools has been a challenging task for secondary school teachers.

Empirically, it is obvious that this challenge, for instance, has been approved by research findings on the EFL reading difficulty faced by EFL learners in secondary schools (Robbayani, 2021) and the difficulty in their listening skills (Nadhira & Warni, 2021). In general, these difficulties might be caused by many factors, among other is teachers' roles in class. There have been more evidence supporting the fact that the teacher's role in teaching and students' achievements have a strong relationship (e.g., Adedigba & Sulaiman., 2020; Goldhaber, Krieg, & Theobald, 2020; Pedler, Hudson, & Yeigh, 2020; Shen et al., 2020; Zaharah, 2014). The teachers' roles in class at the same time can manage learners' affective states when they are learning EFL, for instance, learners' anxiety, which is argued as a major factor that has negative impacts on learning, may occur due to the teachers' role in raising and reducing anxiety, lack of vocabulary, test anxiety, peer anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, inability to comprehend the target language, lack of preparation before the class and limited participation in the class (Alhmadi, 2014; Alrabai, 2015; Rafada & Madini, 2017; Rafieyan & Yamanashi, 2016). In the context of learning reading, in some studies anxiety is proved to intervene achievement (Mohammadpur & Ghafournia, 2015). In a nutshell, teachers' roles might become a panacea in embracing the challenges faced by EFL learners in the classroom, including learning reading comprehension specifically. This notion implies the importance of teaching strategy in teaching reading since it is designed and determined by the teachers. One of the effective strategies for reading is SQ4R. Numerous studies claimed that the SQ4R strategy can be used as an effective way to enhance EFL learners' reading comprehension (Alzu'bi, 2020; Ginting et al., 2021; Khusniyah, 2020; Mohamed Sayed Mohamed, 2020; Nurhidayat & Suwandi, 2021; Başar & Gürbüz, 2017; Khusniyah & Lustyantie, 2017; Herwanis et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2020; Rojabi, 2020). In the SQ4R strategy, learners are not only required to increase reading comprehension by conventional ways in which learners are recognizing global ideas and detailed linguistic features in the text, but also enhance their critical competence where intellectual indigestion is optimized. It is obvious that compared to other strategies, the SQ4R strategy is worth using in reading comprehension for EFL secondary school students (Lombu, Sari, & Prayuda, 2021; Megawati & Fitriani, 2020; Moon & Kwan, 2022; Nurhidayat & Suwandi, 2021). This study intended to investigate how the SQ4R approach can improve the reading comprehension of EFL secondary students.

METHODOLOGY
Subjects
Class IX-A of one secondary school in Samarinda was involved as the research subjects where there were 31 students who learned reading comprehension. There were two instruments used in the study, i.e., an observation sheet and a reading test.

Design and Procedure

The design of this study was classroom action research in which teachers and researchers collaboratively worked on the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, aiming to improve the quality of the learning process in the classroom.

A preliminary study was conducted to aid in accomplishing this research. The purpose of the preliminary study was to analyze, identify, and obtain data related to the factual and real conditions of the problems encountered by the students and teachers in teaching and learning reading activities. The researchers interviewed the teacher before conducting this research and then took the students' scores after the learning process. The problems were identified by interviewing the collaborator-teacher to find out the problems faced by the teacher and students during the teaching-learning process. Afterwards, the researchers gained real data about students' scores in English subjects and reading scores from the teacher.

As is seen in Figure 1, before starting the research, the data from the English teacher at the school were obtained. In this step, the English teacher as the collaborator-teacher was interviewed about the students' problems in reading comprehension to know the common problems faced by the students. In planning the step, the researchers with the collaborator-teacher prepared the learning strategy, designed a lesson plan, and prepared the research instruments (observation sheets and reading test) based on the data. The collaborator-teacher handed in the scores of English subject to the researchers, and then the next step was implementation. It was conducted based on the planning. During this section, the observing step was conducted by collecting the data using the research instruments. The next step was reflecting. It was an analysis activity, interpretation, and explanation of all information obtained from observation of the implementation in this step. If the result of the process met the criteria of success, the research was successful, and the research stopped. But if the result did not meet the criteria of success, the process failed, and it needed some revisions in each step.
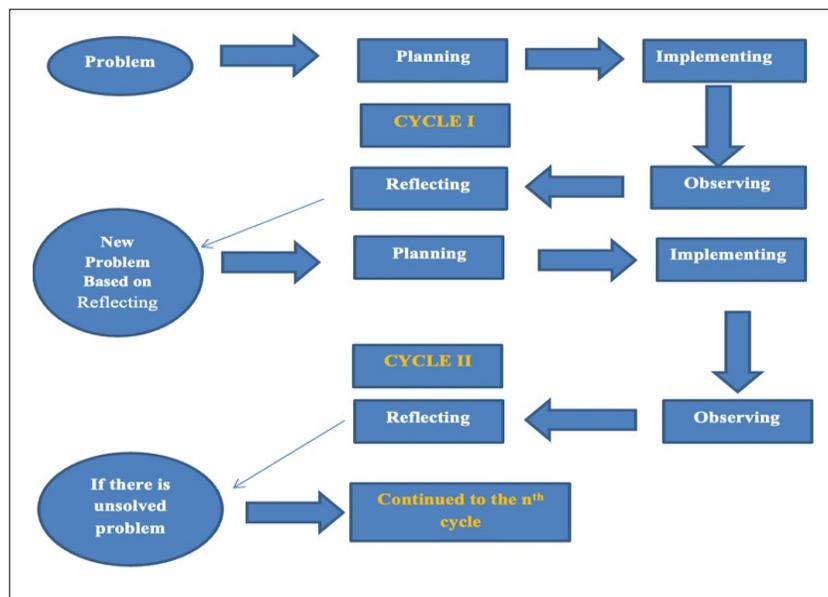

Figure 1. Research cycles

Data Collection and Data Analysis

This research was conducted in Cycle I and II with similar procedures. In Cycle I, the researchers observed the collaborator-teacher's activities during teaching and learning in the class by filling out the observation sheets. The collaborator-teacher taught the students using the SQ4R method to comprehend the text. After the process of teaching and learning was done, the last step was administering a test, which aimed at measuring the students' achievement in reading comprehension. The test was given to the students after discussing the text using the SQ4R method. If all students' scores in cycle I did not reach the minimum criteria of success (i.e., at least 70% of a total number of students), it continued to go to cycle II with a similar procedure. The minimum completeness criteria of English subject for the ninth-grade students of the school is 70.

An observation sheet is a list of things that an observer is going to look at when observing a class. The observation checklist did not only give the observers structures and framework for observation but also served as a contract of understanding with the teacher, who may as a result be more comfortable, and will obtain specific feedback on aspects of the class.

The reading comprehension test was designed based on the topics which were given in the treatments. Some sources of reading comprehension tests from English junior high school books which are available in the school and other sources were selected and designed to be a reading comprehension test as the research instrument. The amount of time for the test and the purpose of the test was appropriate for measuring students' achievement. In this research, the students were required to answer several questions related to procedure text. The themes for the reading comprehension test were based on the school's syllabus such as descriptive, procedure, and narrative text.

Table 1. Questions grid category

No.	Indicator	Question Number
1.	Students are able to identify main idea	1, 11, 16, 21, 26
2.	Students are able to identify purpose of the text	7, 29
3.	Students are able to identify type of the text	2, 6, 14
4.	Students are able to find implied information	4, 8, 10, 15, 22, 27
5.	Students are able to find factual information	3, 9, 12, 17, 18, 24, 28 30
6.	Students are able to consider "refer to" in the sentence	5, 13, 19, 20, 23, 25

The data from the observation were examined qualitatively using the given checklist, whereas the data from the reading test were studied quantitatively using a percentage analysis and grouping the findings into score levels. The reading test results from the first and second cycles were then compared to determine the distinction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

Based on the preliminary study, it was obtained from the data taken from the collaborator-teacher that the students' scores were still poor in reading ability,

especially in procedure texts as it is pictured in Figure 2 where the mean score of the class was 68.38 (see Table 2).
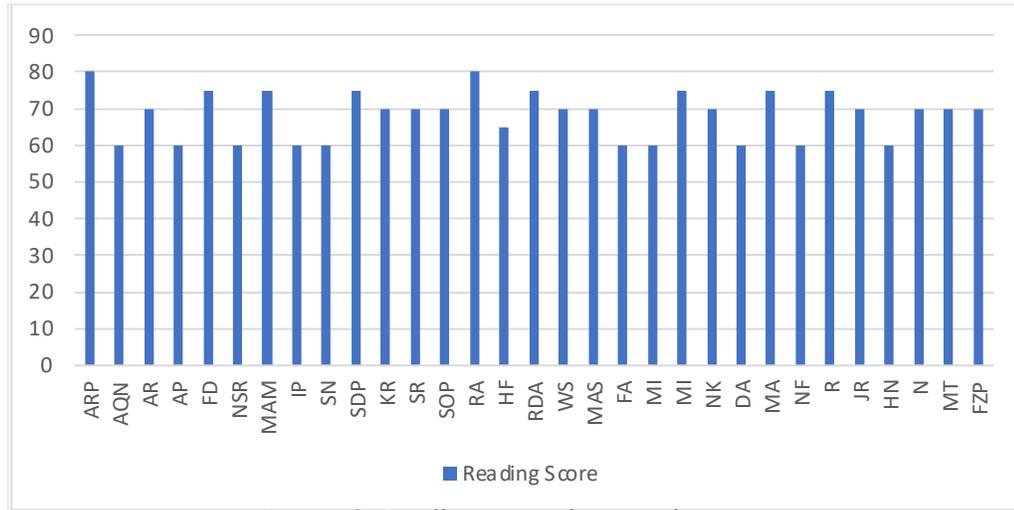

Figure 2. Reading scores in procedure text

The information about students' scores and mean score was used as a starting point to see the development of students' scores and mean scores after the cycles were done. Based on the results shown in Figure 2 and Table 3, those scores and mean scores were below the minimum completeness criteria (the KKM standard) stipulated in school's curriculum and syllabus.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, and variance

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
SCORE	31	20,00	60,00	80,00	68,3871	1,19108	6,63163	43,978
Valid N (listwise)	31							

This circumstance was used by the researchers as a point to start. Obviously, it is shown that the mean score of students in cycle 1 was 68.38 which was below the KKM standard used at the school which was 70. Consequently, an attempt of enhancing the class mean score was a panacea in this matter.

The Milestones of the Learning Activity Trajectory and the Results of the First Cycle

From the result of this preliminary study, an initial reflection was conducted to decide on the whole cycle planning. The researcher together with the collaborator-teacher started the action research by running what has been planned in the research cycle (see Figure 1). The observed class was taught reading materials by the collaborator-teacher, using the SQ4R method. Post-implementation of the planned action, observation was done, which resulted in the fact that technically, the learning process ran smoothly with almost no significant obstacle. However, substantially, there were problems with the way the collaborator-teacher composed the time

management in terms of giving students appropriate portions on the triple parts of learning activities in reading, i.e., introduction, main activity, and closing. The teachers' main activities of teaching reading were focused on only two activities, i.e., survey and asking students questions. In the meantime, the activities of reading, reciting, and reviewing were taught very quickly as the closing part of the teaching (see Figure 3). At the same time, it was also found that the collaborator-teacher only asked questions without explaining the details in the materials comprehensively. This caused students' confusion in many aspects of reading.
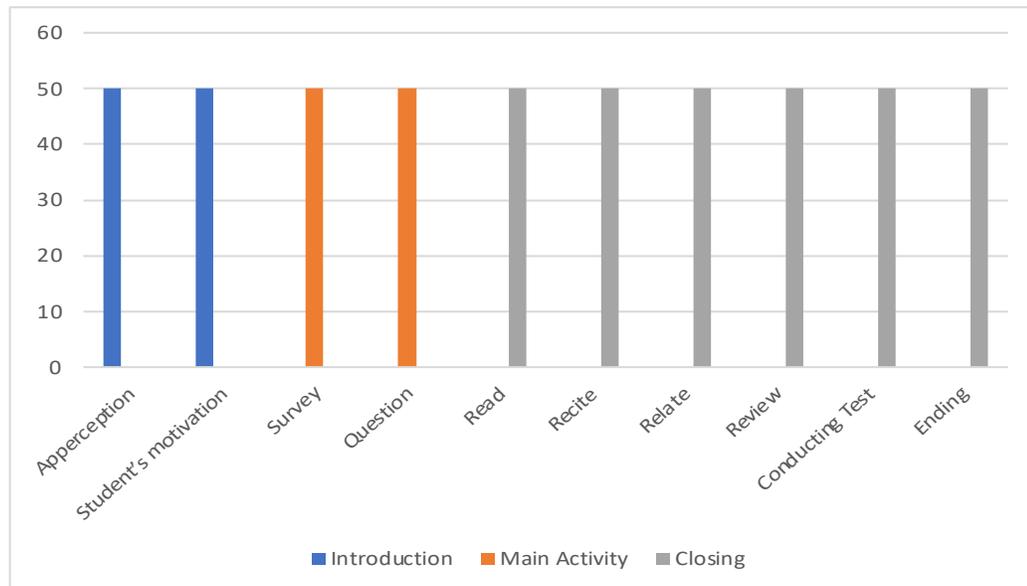

Figure 3. Summary of observation results on the teacher's activities in Cycle I

In addition, in terms of optimizing the details and several aspects of the activities, Figure 3 showed that the teaching and learning process applied by the collaborator-teacher did not accomplish the maximum targeted checkpoints (the checkpoints were counted based on the close-observation checklist).

These factual problems were identified as problems in implementing the research activities, which also affected the results of students' achievement in reading comprehension. As it was seen in Figure 4 and Table 3, the students' achievement reflected what had occurred in the classroom as the factual implementation of the first cycle.

Table 3. Summary of students' scores in Cycle I

Score Level	Category	Number	Percentage
0-49	Very Poor	0	0%
50-69	Poor	13	41.94%
70-79	Fair	4	12.90%
80-89	Good	14	45.16%
90-100	Very Good	0	0%

As shown in Table 3, it was found that there were five score-range categories in Cycle 1. It showed that none of the students got very poor, 41.94% of students got poor, 12.90% of students got fair, 45.16% of students got good, and 0% of students

got very good. It indicates that just 58.06% of students who gained the minimum passing grade (KKM) out of the total number of students, which means that more improvements were still needed in terms of enhancing the number of students who passed the KKM. As it is seen in Figure 3, even though there were more than a half of students who gained scores above 70 (table 2), It means that the overall achievement of the students' reading comprehension still needs to increase to accomplish the KKM.
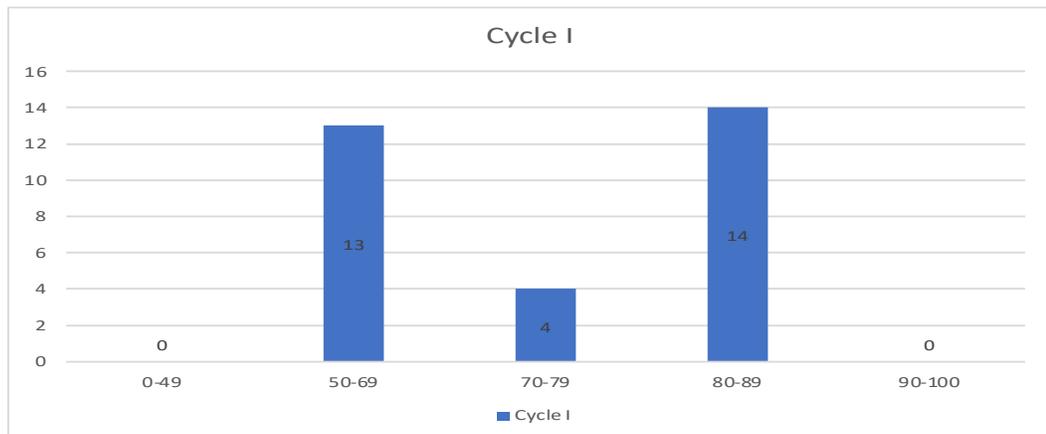

Figure 4. Summary of students' scores in Cycle I

Considering all the problems that occurred in the first cycle, the reflection of this cycle recommended several steps to be stipulated in the second cycle, i.e., 1) selecting different topics, 2) maximizing the details and several aspects in the activities, especially in the main reading activities where the SQ4 method was applied, i.e., by making more activities on reciting, relating, and reviewing the reading materials; and 3) explaining in detail elaboration when the collaborator-teacher asked questions in the survey and question sessions of the main activities.

The Milestones of the Learning Activity Trajectory and the Results of the Second Cycle

On the basis of the reflection recommendation in the first cycle, planned actions were revised and implemented them for the second cycle. In this cycle, the researchers and the collaborator-teacher tried to employ different topics, maximize the details and a number of aspects in the activities, and explain in detail the elaborations when asking questions in the survey and question sessions of the main activities.

Based on the results of the second cycle, it was found that in general the quality of teacher activities and classroom learning process had increased, which indicated that the learning process ran as planned. As it is shown in Figure 4, the teaching and learning process have been maximized in all activities which means achieving the targeted checkpoints in the observation checklist (see Figure 4).
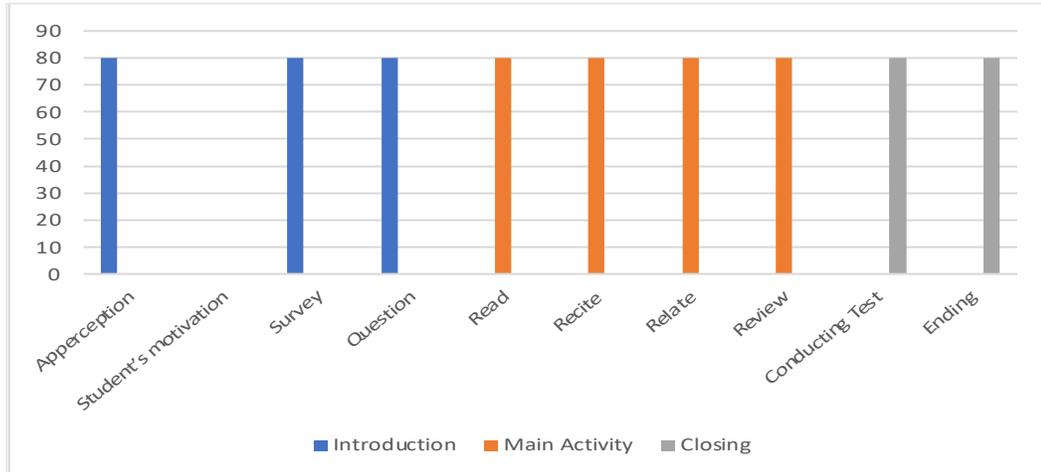
Figure 5. Summary of observation results on the teacher's activities in Cycle II

In addition, the implementation of the SQ4R methods in the second cycle gave almost no problems, and all the triple parts of the reading activities ran properly (see Figure 5). This means the collaborator-teacher was able to run the SQ4R method well after having learned lessons in the first cycle. In terms of the class score, improvement occurred as it is explained in Figure 6. There were 0% of students getting very poor scores (0–49), 12.90% of students obtaining poor scores (50–69), 3.23% of students gaining fair scores (70–79), 61.29% of students getting good (80–89), and 7% of students having very good (90–100). This explains the increase in students' reading comprehension achievement after they went through the second cycle of the planned action.
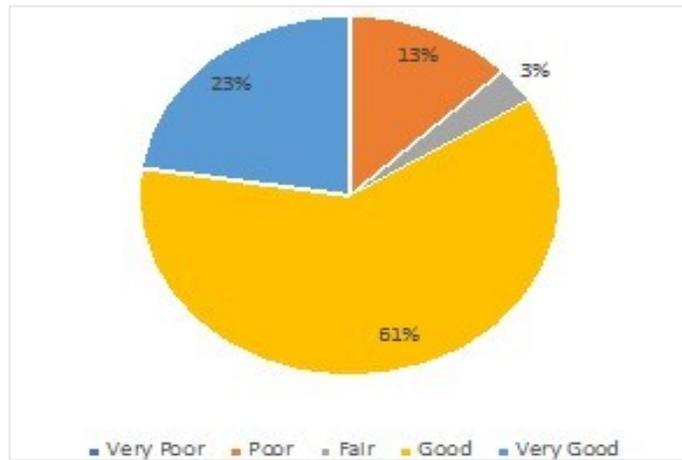

Figure 6. The summary of the student's achievements in Cycle II

Furthermore, the increase of students' scores shows that there was an improvement for students who passed the KKM than those in the previous cycle, which changed from 58.06% in Cycle I to 87.1% in Cycle II (see Figure 7).
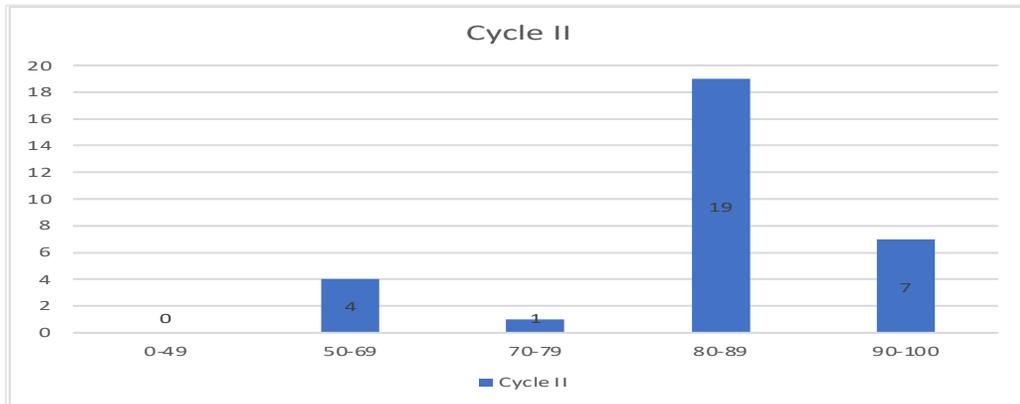
Figure 7. The summary of the students' achievements in Cycle II

Reflections from Two Cycles of Actions

The implementation of the two cycles in this study reflected that changes occurred in both the quality of learning reading using SQ4R method and the EFL learners' achievement in reading comprehension during the implementation of two cycles in this study. By having such changes in both cycles, researchers reflected that the SQ4R method has given advantageous effects on the dynamics of teaching and learning process as experienced by this secondary school EFL learners especially in learning reading comprehension. These advantageous effects were proved both qualitatively and quantitatively. This means that implementing the SQ4R method can enhance the secondary school EFL learners' reading comprehension.

Discussion

The trajectory of teaching and learning process of the SQ4R method implementation in the study happens through an increasing milestone going to the betterment of the learners' achievement in reading. It was detected by the fact that problems and weaknesses resulting from reflection of cycle 1 can be used as improvement in the process of implementing cycle 2. In addition, there is a seemingly tolerable impact of such SQ4R method on the accomplishment of the students' reading comprehension both qualitatively and quantitively. Qualitatively, all problems occurred in the first cycle, i.e., (1) using different topics, (2) maximizing the details and several aspects in the activities, especially in the main reading activities where the SQ4R method was applied, i.e., by making more activities on reciting, relating, and reviewing the reading materials, and (3) explaining detailed elaboration when the collaborator-teacher asked questions in the survey and question sessions of the main activities can be solved in cycle 2. As it resulted in the implementation of cycle 2, the general quality of teacher's activities and classroom learning process had increased. Quantitatively, there has been an increase in the number of students who gained scores that suited those stipulated in the KKM.

These results showed that the implementation of the SQ4R method can enhance the secondary school EFL learners' reading comprehension and indicate the strength of the notion that teachers' roles and strategies are things to be seemingly crucial to consider. It is in line with what some research findings showed, for instance, more evidence supporting the fact that the teacher's role in teaching and students'

achievements have a strong relationship (e.g., Adedigba & Sulaiman, 2020; Goldhaber et al, 2020; Pedler et al, 2020; Shen et al., 2020; Zaharah, 2014). In addition, the SQ4R method can be one good solution to the problems of selecting methods for teaching reading. This is in fact in line with some empirical evidence of the importance of the SQ4R method as one of the effective ways to enhance EFL learners' reading comprehension (Alzu'bi, 2020; Ginting et al., 2021; Khusniyah, 2020; Mohamed Sayed Mohamed, 2020; Nurhidayat & Suwandi, 2021; Başar & Gürbüz, 2017; Khusniyah & Lustyantie, 2017; Herwanis et al., 2021; Simbolon et al., 2020; Rojabi, 2020). Qualitatively, EFL learners under study experienced EFL reading comprehension process by stepping into six phases, i.e., survey, question, read, recite, relate and review. In these phases, they are given lessons and they learned not only reading per se, but also the scientific approach to digest reading messages in the reading texts. This notion is quite important for secondary school students to have better literacy competence; hence critical thinking competence and intellectual indigestion are given as well simultaneously. It is therefore important to say that this notion put the SQ4R strategy more worth-using for teachers than the conventional strategies (Lombu et al., 2021; Megawati & Fitriani, 2020; Moon & Kwan, 2022; Nurhidayat & Suwandi, 2021). Quantitatively, an increasing number of students who got scores above the KKM can be indicators of the notion that teachers' roles in implementing a more scientific strategy in which learners' participation in learning contributes more to the learners' class achievement (Adedigba & Sulaiman., 2020; Goldhaber et al, 2020; Pedler et al, 2020; Shen et al., 2020).

In short, both qualitatively and quantitively, the SQ4R strategy empirically gives more room for teachers to explore students' literacy competence in digesting reading messages from texts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The action research demonstrated that implementing the SQ4R Method can improve students' reading comprehension performance. The test results provide empirical support for the higher achievement. In Cycle I, 18 students (58 percent) out of 31 students passed the KKM, while in Cycle II, 27 students (87 percent) out of 31 students passed. Moreover, qualitatively, obstacles encountered by the collaborator-teacher might be resolved by the dynamics occurring in the two cycles, resulting in an improvement of the teaching and learning process facilitated by the SQ4R technique.

The conclusions from the two cycles indicate that the SQ4R technique can improve the reading comprehension of EFL secondary school students. Moreover, as a consequence of applying the method, the quality of both the teaching and learning processes alters. This provides empirical evidence for the idea that learning reading comprehension utilizing the SQ4R technique has a positive impact in the two cycles of this study. Conclusively, the SQ4R technique had a positive impact on the dynamics of the secondary school EFL students' teaching and learning process, particularly in the area of reading comprehension.

This conclusion indicates the relevance of enhancing the learner's reading comprehension skills. Teachers must maximize their students' potential by guiding and controlling their participation in inquiry situations.

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