

Boosting Elementary Students' Narrative Reading Comprehension Through Speed Reading in Indonesian Language Learning

Rian Febriani^{1*}, Sri Awan Asri², A. Rahim Suhel³
^{1,2,3}Primary School Teacher Study Program, STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta, Indonesia
*rianfebriani@stkipksumanegara.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to improve students' reading comprehension skills of narrative texts in Indonesian language learning through the application of the speed reading method. The background of this research is the low reading comprehension ability of fourth-grade students at SDN Balimester 03 Petang, particularly in understanding narrative texts, such as identifying the main idea, extracting key information, recognizing characters, plot, setting, conflict, and the moral message conveyed in the text. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, carried out in three cycles. The subjects of the study were 28 students consisting of 14 boys and 14 girls. Data collection techniques included learning outcome tests, observation sheets, field notes, and interviews, which were analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings show a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension skills, as evidenced by the increase in their average scores from the pre-cycle (64.17) to Cycle I (69.82), Cycle II (76.50), and Cycle III (83.50). These results indicate that the implementation of the speed reading method is effective in enhancing students' understanding of narrative texts, while also fostering learning motivation and literacy skills.

Keywords : Classroom Action Research, Reading Comprehension, Speed Reading.

1 INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is one of the fundamental skills that students must master from the elementary level, especially in Indonesian language learning. Reading comprehension is not merely the ability to recognize letters or words, but the ability to construct meaning, interpret information, and connect it with prior knowledge. Snow (2002) states that comprehension plays a crucial role in shaping students' critical thinking, literacy, and communication skills. Students with strong reading comprehension skills are able to absorb information from various sources, process it, and communicate it coherently. Conversely, students with low comprehension often struggle to follow other learning activities that require reading skills as a foundation for understanding subject matter (Cain & Oakhill, 2016). In the current curriculum context, which emphasizes literacy-based learning, reading comprehension becomes increasingly vital as it serves as a prerequisite for success across subject areas.

Observations in Grade IV A of SDN Balimester 03 Petang revealed that 60.71% of students were still in the low category of reading comprehension for narrative texts, with scores below the KKTP (Learning Achievement Criteria) of 75. This indicates that more than half of the students had not yet achieved the expected competency standard. Students were found to have difficulties in identifying main ideas, understanding plot, recognizing characters and settings, as well as identifying moral messages contained in the text. This low level of comprehension is strongly suspected to be influenced by a lack of reading motivation and the limited variation of teaching methods used by the teacher.

The learning process tends to remain conventional, focusing on mechanical reading without applying cognitive strategies that help students understand the content more deeply. This finding is consistent with Chairunnisa (2018), who explained that low reading comprehension skills often stem from monotonous and less interactive learning approaches that fail to stimulate students' interest in reading.

The literature confirms that reading skills serve as a fundamental foundation in basic education. Zuchdi (2008) asserts that reading is a key skill underlying the mastery of other academic competencies. Likewise, Bukhari (2010) highlights that reading ability is the main indicator of students' academic readiness for higher-level learning. In this regard, Indonesian language learning plays a central role because it encompasses both receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (writing and speaking) (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). One of the essential materials in elementary Indonesian language learning is narrative text. Narrative text requires students to understand a sequence of events coherently, including the introduction of characters, setting, conflict, and resolution. According to Keraf (2010), narrative text aims to present a sequence of events chronologically to provide aesthetic experiences and meaningful lessons to readers. Thus, mastery of narrative text is not only academically significant but also essential for students' socio-emotional development as it fosters empathy, imagination, and moral understanding.

To address the low reading comprehension in narrative texts, an innovative learning method that can foster reading interest while training reading speed without sacrificing comprehension is required. One effective approach is speed reading. Dalman (2013) explains that speed reading is a technique that combines reading speed and comprehension through skimming (to grasp general ideas) and scanning (to find specific information). This technique enables students to read more text in a shorter time while still understanding the content. Nurhadi (2016) adds that speed reading also enhances concentration, visual focus, and reading stamina. The study by Wahyuni, Asri, and Ayuningrum (2021) showed that the CIRC cooperative method, which integrates intensive reading and discussion, significantly improves students' reading comprehension. This illustrates that learning approaches emphasizing active student engagement positively impact comprehension development.

In addition, active and scientific-based learning is also essential for fostering students' self-confidence and creative thinking skills, which are key supporting factors for successful comprehension. Dwiprabowo (2017) emphasizes that discovery learning with a scientific approach encourages students to actively seek knowledge, ask questions, explore information, and construct their own understanding. This process provides meaningful learning experiences that help increase students' self-confidence. Confident students are more likely to ask questions, respond, and express the ideas they understand from a text, thereby strengthening their comprehension skills. Thus, active learning improves not only cognitive outcomes but also the affective domain, which is crucial in literacy-based learning.

In conclusion, improving reading comprehension of narrative texts requires an integrative approach: strengthening speed reading strategies to improve both reading speed and comprehension, while simultaneously fostering confidence and active participation through a scientific learning approach. This effort aligns with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning, promotes active engagement, and develops literacy competence as a foundation for lifelong learning

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach using the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which is implemented cyclically through four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). This model was selected because it enables continuous improvement of the learning process based on the reflection

of each cycle. The study was carried out in three cycles with the purpose of improving students' reading comprehension skills through the application of the speed reading method.

The subjects of this research were 28 fourth-grade students of Class IV A at SDN Balimester 03 Petang during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. In the planning stage, the researcher prepared learning tools, teaching materials, student worksheets, and assessment instruments referring to speed reading techniques (Soedarso, 2010). The instructional actions were implemented through speed reading activities integrated with narrative text comprehension exercises, while observations were conducted to monitor teacher and student activities during the learning process.

Reflection was carried out at the end of each cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions and determine improvements for the subsequent cycle. Data collection techniques included learning outcome tests to measure comprehension improvement, observation sheets to assess student engagement, interviews to gather supporting information, and field notes to document the learning process. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to determine score improvement, whereas qualitative data were analyzed through interpretation of observation results, interviews, and field notes.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the speed reading method had a significant effect on improving students' reading comprehension skills in narrative texts. This improvement can be seen from the increase in the students' average scores, which initially reached only 64.17 with a mastery level of 39.29% in the pre-cycle, then increased to 69.82 in Cycle I, 76.50 in Cycle II, and finally reached 83.50 with a mastery level of 85.71% in Cycle III. These results demonstrate that the speed reading method not only helps students read more quickly, but also enhances their understanding of the text, as they are trained to identify key information, main ideas, and narrative elements such as characters, plot, setting, and moral values more effectively. In addition, this method successfully increased students' motivation and engagement during the learning process, as the reading techniques used were more varied and helped to build their confidence in understanding the text. In conclusion, the application of the speed reading method has proven to be effective and relevant as an alternative instructional strategy to improve students' reading comprehension skills in Bahasa Indonesia lessons, particularly in narrative text materials.

3.1.1 Pre-Cycle

At the pre-cycle stage, students' reading comprehension ability was still low. The average class score was only 64.17, and only 39.29% or 11 out of 28 students achieved a score of ≥ 75 in accordance with the learning achievement criteria. Most students still struggled to identify the main idea, understand the storyline, and recognize the characters and moral values contained in the narrative text. These findings indicate that the majority of students read mechanically without fully understanding the content of the text, thus necessitating instructional action to improve their comprehension skills.

3.1.2 Cycle I

In Cycle I, there was an improvement in students' reading comprehension ability compared to the pre-cycle stage. The average score increased to 69.82, and 50% of students achieved a score of ≥ 75 . This improvement indicates that students had begun to understand the speed reading strategy, particularly in identifying the main idea and locating important information in narrative texts. However, their comprehension was still inconsistent because some students read too quickly and overlooked important details. In addition, student participation in discussions remained low, and time management during

the reading process was not yet optimal. Therefore, further adjustments were needed in the next cycle, such as selecting texts with more appropriate reading duration and providing clearer guidance in applying the reading strategies.

3.1.3 Cycle II

In Cycle II, students' reading comprehension skills showed a more noticeable improvement compared to the previous cycle. The class average score increased to 76.50, and 67,86% of the students achieved a score of ≥ 75 . At this stage, students were increasingly able to identify the intrinsic elements of narrative texts—such as characters, plot, setting, conflict, and moral message—more accurately, and they also demonstrated more active participation in classroom discussions. However, several students still required guidance in drawing conclusions from the text in a coherent and in-depth manner. This condition became the basis for further refinement in Cycle III, particularly in strengthening students' ability to summarize and interpret narrative texts more comprehensively.

3.1.4 Cycle III

In Cycle III, students' reading comprehension skills showed a highly significant improvement and successfully reached the expected research target. The class average score increased to 83.50, with 89.28% of students achieving a score of ≥ 75 , exceeding the predetermined success indicator of $\geq 80\%$. At this stage, students were able to comprehend the text more thoroughly, retell the content in a coherent manner, and accurately identify the moral message conveyed. Classroom observations also indicated an increase in students' participation and confidence during learning activities, both in discussions and when answering questions. These results confirm that the implementation of the speed reading method is effective in improving students' reading comprehension of narrative text.

3.2 Discussion

The improvement in learning outcomes demonstrated through the implementation of the speed reading method in Indonesian language learning shows that this method is capable of significantly enhancing both reading speed and reading comprehension. This improvement is not only reflected in the increase in test scores in each research cycle, but also in changes in students' learning behavior, which became more focused, enthusiastic, and confident throughout the learning process. Students became more engaged in reading activities, more active in expressing the content of the text, and more capable of identifying main ideas, key information, and detailed elements of narrative texts more quickly. These findings indicate that speed reading does not simply teach students to read at a faster pace, but also trains them to process information efficiently without reducing the depth of comprehension.

These results are in line with the findings of Wahyuni, Asri, and Ayuningrum (2021), which show that the implementation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method improves intensive reading skills among elementary students. Their study reported an increase in average reading scores from 60 in the pre-cycle to 83 in the third cycle, with mastery learning improving from 33.33% to 88.88%. This improvement is associated not only with cognitive aspects of reading but also with increased active student participation during the learning process. CIRC emphasizes group work, discussion, integrated reading, and rewriting text content—activities that demand high levels of student engagement. Similarly, the speed reading method encourages active participation because students are trained to quickly identify main ideas and communicate them orally or in writing.

Reading comprehension is also closely related to the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete a given task. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences how individuals think, feel, and act when facing learning challenges. Students with high self-efficacy are more willing to engage with difficult texts

and can maintain concentration for longer periods. Yudha (2018) found that increasing students' self-efficacy through problem-based learning led to persistence, active participation, and greater academic resilience. In the context of speed reading, each successful reading experience reinforces students' self-confidence, creating a positive cycle between confidence and reading competence.

In addition to self-efficacy, learning media also plays an important role in supporting students' development of reading skills. Saripah, Asri, and Ulfa (2021) demonstrated that audio-visual media effectively improves early reading skills because it helps students connect written symbols with sound simultaneously. Strengthening early reading skills is crucial as it forms the foundation for higher-level reading comprehension. Students who have difficulty at the decoding stage will struggle to grasp meaning, making advanced strategies such as speed reading less effective. Therefore, speed reading instruction should be combined with strengthened basic reading skills and the use of media that support both visual and auditory processing.

This illustrates that reading proficiency develops through a gradual and interconnected process. Success in understanding narrative texts through speed reading is not merely the result of technique, but also the outcome of strong early reading skills, appropriate media support, and high levels of confidence and motivation. If any of these components is weak, overall reading comprehension may be hindered. Consequently, the implementation of speed reading should be integrated with foundational reading skills, engaging media, and affective reinforcement.

This argument is further supported by Dwiprabowo (2017), who found that discovery learning based on the scientific approach increases student confidence and creative thinking skills. Students who are accustomed to exploring information actively and expressing opinions become more prepared to comprehend texts within limited time. In speed reading, the confidence to interpret meanings quickly is critical to success.

Greater confidence also accelerates reading fluency. Students who hesitate or fear making mistakes tend to read slowly because they constantly recheck what they have read. Conversely, confident students maintain focus on the main ideas, avoid unnecessary detail, and produce more effective comprehension. This relationship between confidence, active engagement, and reading speed aligns with the concept of student agency in 21st-century learning, in which learners take ownership of their learning process.

Additionally, intrinsic motivation plays a vital role. Motivated students willingly persist in reading even when texts are long or complex. Wahyuni, Asri, and Ayuningrum (2021) found that motivation was a key factor in the success of intensive reading activities in cooperative learning settings. Similarly, in speed reading, motivated students are more actively involved in practicing reading strategies, leading to deeper comprehension.

In conclusion, the success of the speed reading method in improving students' comprehension of narrative texts is the result of the synergy of several factors. First, the technique trains students to process information quickly without losing meaning. Second, active participation increases focus and collaboration. Third, self-efficacy builds persistence and confidence. Fourth, instructional media supports foundational reading skills. Fifth, scientific and active learning approaches enhance creative thinking and confidence.

The integration of these elements explains why speed reading is an effective instructional strategy in Indonesian language learning. Beyond improving technical reading skills, it develops learners who are confident, motivated, and literate. In the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes student-centered learning and literacy competence, speed reading is highly relevant. Teachers are expected not only to teach reading techniques, but also to cultivate motivation, confidence, and active engagement to ensure sustained and meaningful comprehension.

4 CONCLUSION

The implementation of the speed reading method proved to be effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills in narrative texts among fourth-grade students of SDN Balimester 03 Petang. This success can be seen from the increase in the average student learning scores in each cycle of the learning process. In the pre-cycle stage, the average score was only 64.17, then increased to 69.82 in Cycle I, rose again to 76.50 in Cycle II, and finally reached 83.50 in Cycle III. This gradual improvement indicates that the speed reading method not only helps students read more quickly but also enhances their ability to understand the content of the text more effectively. The level of student learning mastery also showed a significant improvement, which initially recorded only 39.29% in the pre-cycle, then increased to 50% in Cycle I, followed by 67.86% in Cycle II, and finally reached 89.29% in Cycle III. This development reflects that most students were able to achieve the minimum mastery criteria after the application of the speed reading method. The progression of these learning outcomes can be seen in Figure 1.1, the Recapitulation of Reading Comprehension Ability from the Pre-cycle to Cycle III and Table 1 Recapitulation of Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement.

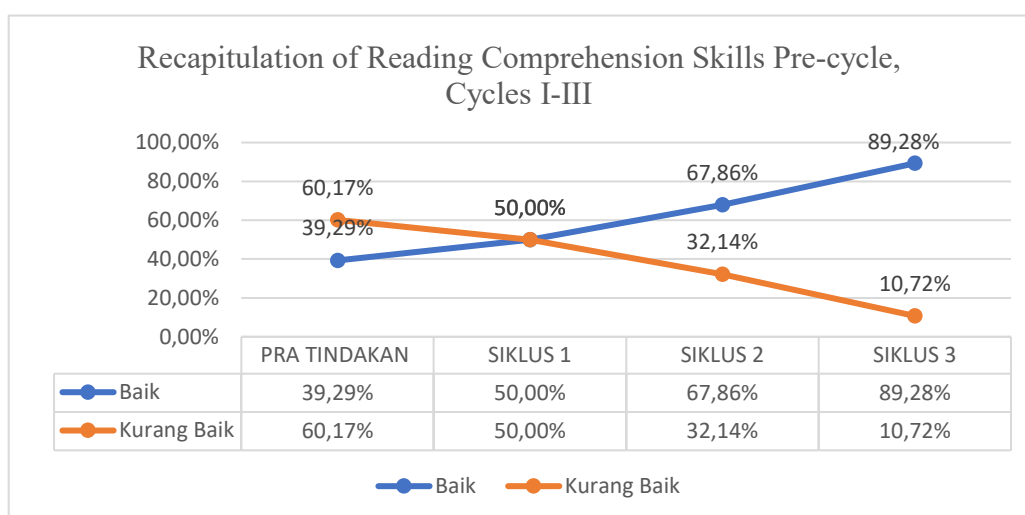


Table 1 Recapitulation of Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement

No	Description	Persentase
1	Pre-Cycle	64.17%
2	Cycle I	69.82%
3	Cycle II	76.50%
4	Cycle III	83.50%

The achievement illustrated above shows that the learning success indicator ($\geq 80\%$) was reached in Cycle III, which confirms the effectiveness of the speed reading method in improving students' learning outcomes, particularly in reading comprehension. The speed reading method not only emphasizes mechanical reading speed but also trains students' cognitive skills in understanding the overall structure of a text. Through repeated practice using techniques designed to identify the main idea and locate specific information, students are trained to focus on key ideas and essential details, as well as to recognize the intrinsic elements of narrative texts such as characters, plot, setting, conflict, and moral values. These abilities are crucial because comprehension of these elements is one of the main indicators used to assess reading proficiency at the elementary school level. In

addition, the speed reading method also helps foster students' interest in reading and builds their self-confidence. Experiencing success in understanding texts within a short time encourages students to continue practicing, leading to sustained improvement in their reading skills. Therefore, speed reading can be regarded as an innovative instructional strategy that not only enhances reading speed but also supports the development of literacy skills, critical thinking, and a positive reading culture among elementary school students.

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