

Implementation of the Reading Buddy Model to Improve Reading Comprehension among Fourth-Grade Elementary School Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Reading Buddy model in improving the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Citaringgul 02 during the 2026/2027 academic year. The study employed classroom action research conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of planning, action and observation, and reflection stages. The participants were 26 fourth-grade students. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests, observations, and documentation. The tests consisted of 12 items, including 10 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay questions. Quantitative data were analyzed to determine changes in students' reading comprehension achievement, while qualitative data were used to interpret students' learning activities and engagement during the implementation of Reading Buddy. The findings indicated a consistent improvement in students' reading comprehension across the research stages. In the pre-cycle, the mean score was 45.2, with only 19.20% of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion of 75. Following the implementation of Reading Buddy in Cycle I, classical mastery increased to 65.38%. After improvements were made based on the reflection from Cycle I, classical mastery increased further to 88.46% in Cycle II, exceeding the predetermined success indicator. The observations also showed increased student participation, motivation, collaboration, and interaction during paired reading, discussion, and clarification activities. These findings indicate that Reading Buddy can effectively support the development of reading comprehension through structured peer interaction and collaborative learning. Therefore, Reading Buddy can be considered an alternative instructional model for improving elementary students' reading comprehension while fostering active and engaging learning environments in elementary classrooms.

Keywords: *Reading Buddy, Reading Comprehension, Classroom Action Research, Peer Tutoring, Elementary School.*



A. INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is one of the fundamental skills that is essential for elementary school students (Silverman et al., 2017; Silverman et al. 2017; Persaud, 2017). Reading does not merely involve recognizing words and sentences but also encompasses the ability to understand information, identify main ideas, draw conclusions, and utilize information obtained from a text. These skills serve as an important foundation for students in learning across various subjects. Students with strong reading comprehension skills are generally better able to understand learning materials, solve academic problems, and obtain relevant information from texts (Caniago et al., 2026; Ardianto et al., 2025; Dean et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, reading literacy has received considerable attention through the Computer-Based National Assessment (*Asesmen Nasional Berbasis Komputer* or ANBK), which places reading literacy and numeracy literacy among the main competencies assessed to provide an overview of students' abilities and the quality of learning in schools. The results of the assessment can be used as important information for identifying learning problems and determining the improvements required in the instructional process (Cahyaningsih & Maemonah, 2024). Thus, reading ability is not merely an individual academic competence but also constitutes an important indicator in understanding the quality of educational processes and outcomes.

The challenges surrounding reading ability in Indonesia can also be observed through the results of the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA). The PISA 2022 results indicate that the reading performance of Indonesian students continues to face substantial challenges. Data from PISA 2025 are also important for examining developments in Indonesian students' reading abilities in the subsequent period. Although PISA provides an overview at the national level, these findings indicate that reading ability remains an area that requires sustained attention and strengthening through school-based learning. This issue is particularly important because students with low reading abilities are more likely to encounter difficulties when required to comprehend longer and more complex texts.

At the school level, the results of ANBK and the Academic Competency Test (*Tes Kemampuan Akademik* or TKA) can provide more specific information regarding students' learning abilities. When students are unable to identify important information, understand the meaning of a passage, determine the main idea, or draw appropriate conclusions, more targeted instructional support is required. Low reading ability may be influenced by various factors, including the learning environment, the availability of reading materials, literacy facilities, and reading motivation (Cahyaningsih & Santosa, 2024). Therefore, improving reading ability requires instructional approaches that provide students with opportunities to interact actively with texts while receiving appropriate support throughout the reading process.

One instructional approach that may address these needs is the Reading Buddy model. Reading Buddy is a paired-reading activity that engages students in reading, discussing, questioning, clarifying information, and assisting one another in understanding texts (Ortlieb & McDowell, 2016; Proctor et al., 2020; Silverman et al., 2019). Through interaction with peers, students who experience difficulties can receive support during the process of constructing meaning from a text. This activity may also encourage students to articulate their understanding, listen to their peers' perspectives, identify important information, and draw conclusions. Accordingly, Reading Buddy provides not only opportunities for reading practice but also creates a collaborative learning environment in which peer support becomes an integral part of the learning process.

The implementation of Reading Buddy is particularly relevant for fourth-grade elementary school students, who increasingly encounter longer reading materials and learning content that requires the ability to comprehend and interpret information.

When reading comprehension skills have not developed adequately, students may experience difficulties in participating effectively in learning activities across different subjects. Therefore, an instructional strategy that provides both guidance and active student engagement in reading activities is needed.

This context is particularly relevant to the situation of fourth-grade students at SDN Citaringgul 02. Classroom-level data on students' reading abilities can provide empirical information regarding the gap between expected reading competencies and students' actual performance. Such data can subsequently be considered alongside broader literacy indicators from PISA, ANBK, and TKA to strengthen the understanding of the importance of early and targeted intervention in reading comprehension.

Based on this context, the present study investigates the implementation of the Reading Buddy model as an alternative approach for improving students' reading comprehension skills. The study specifically examines students' reading comprehension abilities before and after the implementation of Reading Buddy and determines whether there is a significant improvement between the two conditions. Through paired reading, discussion, meaning clarification, and peer support, Reading Buddy is expected to assist students with lower reading abilities in developing a better understanding of texts. Therefore, this study, entitled "Implementation of the Reading Buddy Model to Improve the Reading Comprehension Skills of Fourth-Grade Students at SDN Citaringgul 02," is important to examine in order to determine how the model can be implemented and to what extent it can contribute to improving students' reading comprehension.

The study is also expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it may enrich the literature on reading comprehension instruction, particularly regarding collaborative learning and peer support. Practically, the findings may provide teachers with an alternative strategy for teaching reading, offer students a more collaborative and supportive reading experience, and provide schools with considerations for developing literacy improvement programs. For future researchers, the findings may serve as a reference for further research concerning the implementation and effectiveness of the Reading Buddy model in elementary education.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Reading Comprehension Skills

Reading comprehension is one of the essential language skills required in the learning process, particularly at the elementary school level. Conceptually, reading comprehension refers to a deliberate reading process aimed at obtaining the meaning or essence of a text rather than merely decoding or vocalizing written symbols (Hasbullah et al., 2022). Comprehension is a skill developed through knowledge, with comprehension positioned at the second level of the cognitive domain after knowledge (Hasbullah et al., 2022). This perspective emphasizes that reading

comprehension is not a passive activity but an active process through which readers construct meaning from the texts they read.

Reading itself encompasses a series of interconnected skills, beginning with phonemic awareness, pronunciation development, recognition of letter-sound relationships as a prerequisite for reading, sound discrimination, memory, letter discrimination, directional orientation, and eventually comprehension and vocabulary mastery (Azkia & Rohman, 2020). Thus, reading comprehension can be regarded as the culmination of a gradual development of reading skills, beginning with the recognition of letters and progressing toward the ability to understand and interpret the meaning of a text as a whole (Avşaroğlu et al., 2025; Kirman, et al., 2016; Tsuei et al., 2020).

2. Objectives of Reading Comprehension

The primary purpose of reading is to seek and obtain information, including the content and meaning of a text (Azkia & Rohman, 2020). In the context of Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level, instruction emphasizes reading and writing as fundamental skills that support students' mastery of other academic subjects (Azkia & Rohman, 2020). Through reading comprehension activities, students are expected to be able to answer questions concerning the content of a text, identify and write the main idea, determine the theme of the text, and independently summarize its content (Akbar et al., 2022). In addition, early and consistent reading habits, such as reading non-academic books before lessons begin, are considered capable of fostering students' reading interest while simultaneously improving their reading skills and supporting the acquisition of knowledge (Cano & Ruiz, 2020; Ready et al., 2026; Fang et al., 2025).

3. Indicators of Reading Comprehension among Fourth-Grade Students

Previous studies concerning the use of instructional media to improve reading comprehension have identified several indicators that can be used to assess students' reading comprehension skills. These indicators include the ability to answer questions related to the content of a text, identify and write the main idea, determine the theme of a reading passage, and summarize the content of the text (Chang & Mauer, 2024; Hunt et al., 2020; Kozleski et al., 2021; Djabbar et al., 2026), these four indicators are particularly relevant to fourth-grade elementary school students because, at this developmental stage, students begin to demonstrate more structured thinking and are increasingly capable of analyzing texts to obtain new understanding, drawing conclusions from different perspectives, and engaging with learning materials that require simple synthesis skills (Anggraeni et al., 2022). At approximately nine to ten years of age, fourth-grade students begin to enter a stage in which they are able to perform simple forms of synthesis and logically combine different objects or pieces of information (Anggraeni et al., 2022).

4. Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension

Students' reading comprehension skills are influenced by a variety of internal and external factors. One important factor is the nature of the reading material itself. Reading materials that are appropriate to students' abilities may increase reading interest and facilitate comprehension, whereas overly difficult materials may discourage students from engaging with the text. In addition, the use of instructional media and learning materials that correspond to students' cognitive development also influences the success of reading instruction. Teachers therefore need an adequate understanding of students' cognitive characteristics to ensure that the instructional media and materials employed are appropriate and effective (Yasin, 2022).

Environmental conditions and reading habits also contribute to students' reading development. External factors, including excessive use of gadgets and television, may reduce children's interest in reading. Consequently, schools need to establish consistent reading habits, including regular exposure to non-academic reading materials. More broadly, both internal factors, such as hereditary characteristics, and external factors, particularly the surrounding environment, influence the development of children's language abilities, including reading skills (Minsih, 2023). Learning difficulties among elementary school children, especially those in the lower grades, may also manifest in the form of reading difficulties, verbal communication barriers, and problems with learning concentration, all of which may contribute to lower reading comprehension abilities (Minsih, 2023).

5. The Reading Buddy Model in Reading Instruction

Reading Buddy is a reading instructional model that involves two students working as a pair to support one another in understanding a text. In its implementation, students with relatively stronger reading abilities may serve as tutors, while students who require greater assistance function as tutees (Bhatnagar & Many, 2022). This model represents a form of *peer tutoring* in which peers become learning resources for one another. Within a buddy-based learning arrangement, students do not learn solely as individuals but also engage in mutual support, assistance, and encouragement throughout the learning process (Simpson, 2021; Govender & Booyse, 2024). Accordingly, *Reading Buddy* can be understood as a paired reading approach that integrates reading activities, interaction, discussion, and peer assistance to facilitate students' comprehension of texts.

6. Characteristics and Principles of Reading Buddy

The main characteristics of *Reading Buddy* include paired reading activities, interaction between students with different levels of ability, and active student involvement in understanding texts. Learning activities may involve reading orally together or taking turns, providing explanations, asking questions, and discussing the content of the text (Bhatnagar & Many, 2022). Although peer interaction is central to the model, teachers continue to play an important role by demonstrating fluent and expressive reading and modeling strategies for understanding texts (Ada, 2025).

The principles underlying *Reading Buddy* can also be related to the concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), in which learning develops through assistance provided by a more capable individual. Such assistance is gradually adjusted through *scaffolding* according to students' needs (Bartlett & Bajaj, 2023). The effectiveness of paired learning is further supported by the exchange of ideas, explanations, reasoning, and discussion. Therefore, students need to be provided with an understanding of their roles and appropriate tutoring procedures so that peer interactions can effectively support learning (Thomason & Ward, 2024).

7. Peer Support and Scaffolding in Reading Buddy

Within the *Reading Buddy* model, peers function as sources of learning support. Students may assist their partners in understanding vocabulary, locating important information, explaining the content of a passage, and asking or responding to questions about the text. Such interaction enables students to negotiate meaning, compare their interpretations, and refine their understanding of the text (Downs et al., 2022; Radday & Mervis, 2024).

Scaffolding is provided according to students' needs and may take several forms, including breaking reading tasks into smaller components, providing guiding questions, offering feedback, using pictures or concept maps, and providing sentence frames (Maspul, 2024; Ries et al., 2023; Thomason & Ward, 2024). This support can gradually be reduced as students develop greater independence in understanding texts.

8. Reading Buddy Instructional Syntax

Based on the characteristics of *Reading Buddy*, the principles of *peer tutoring*, and the concept of *scaffolding*, the implementation sequence adopted in this study consists of six stages:

Table 1. Implementation Sequence Adopted in This Study

Stage	Activity
Orientation and Modeling	The teacher explains the learning objectives, introduces the text, and models appropriate reading and text-comprehension strategies.
Formation of Reading Buddy Pairs	The teacher pairs students according to their reading abilities and support needs while considering the compatibility of each pair.
Paired Reading	Students read the text together or take turns reading. The more capable student provides an example and assistance to the partner.
Clarification and Discussion	Students discuss vocabulary, important information, main ideas, cause-and-effect relationships, and portions of the text that remain unclear.

Comprehension and Verification	Students answer questions, identify textual evidence, draw conclusions, and explain their understanding to their partners. The teacher provides <i>scaffolding</i> and monitors the interaction.
Reflection and Evaluation	Students communicate their understanding, reflect on the reading process, and receive feedback from the teacher.

9. Relationship between Reading Buddy and Reading Comprehension

Reading Buddy is closely related to reading comprehension because its instructional process provides students with opportunities to interact actively with texts. Collaborative reading encourages students to ask questions, explain ideas, make predictions, clarify information, and discuss what they have understood from the text (Ada, 2025; Vokatis, 2023). These processes can support students in understanding vocabulary, identifying relevant information, establishing connections among pieces of information, and constructing meaning from a text.

Peer discussion also enables students to examine and verify their understanding through explanations and questions. When students encounter information they do not understand, their peers or teachers can provide *scaffolding* through guiding questions, examples, visual materials, or simplified explanations (Maspul, 2024; Gerard et al., 2025). Consequently, *Reading Buddy* emphasizes not only the activity of reading but also the social process through which meaning and understanding are constructed through interaction. In the present study, *Reading Buddy* is positioned as an instructional model that is expected to improve students' reading comprehension skills through paired reading, discussion, clarification, and gradually adjusted peer and teacher support.

C. METHOD

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) method. Classroom action research is a reflective form of research conducted by teachers themselves, the results of which can be utilized as a means of developing and improving professional expertise. The research was conducted through a cyclical process consisting of planning, action and observation, and reflection. At the planning stage, the researcher developed an action plan aimed at addressing the learning problems identified in the classroom. The plan served as the basis for implementing the learning activities in the subsequent stage. During the action and observation stages, both the teacher and students implemented the planned learning activities while simultaneously monitoring the learning process and the activities performed by the students. The reflection stage was then conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented actions, identify weaknesses or obstacles, and formulate the improvements required before proceeding to the next cycle.

The study was conducted in September 2026 at SDN Citaringgul 02, involving 26 fourth-grade students. The research was carried out over two cycles, with each cycle following the stages of planning, action and observation, and reflection, consistent with the characteristics of classroom action research developed by Kemmis and Taggart.

Data in this study were obtained from three sources, namely tests, observations, and documentation. Observation was conducted by monitoring students' activities during the implementation of the Reading Buddy model. The test was administered to assess the effectiveness of Reading Buddy in improving students' reading comprehension. The assessment instrument consisted of 12 questions, comprising 10 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay questions, which were used as a basis for evaluating changes in students' reading comprehension performance. In addition, documentation was used to record the learning activities through visual records and photographs.

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative analysis was employed to determine the improvement in students' reading comprehension based on the results of the tests administered in each cycle. Qualitative analysis was used to interpret students' activities and learning processes during the implementation of Reading Buddy, particularly as reflected in their reading comprehension activities and interactions with their peers. The research was considered to have achieved its success indicator when an improvement was observed in the test results administered across successive cycles.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Pre-Cycle

Before the instructional intervention was implemented, the researcher first observed the reading process of fourth-grade students at SDN Citaringgul 02 during the 2026/2027 academic year. The initial identification indicated that the students' reading comprehension skills were still relatively low. This condition was reflected in the limited participation of students during question-and-answer sessions after independently reading books, as well as their difficulties in responding to questions posed by the teacher. To obtain a more accurate and objective picture of the students' initial abilities, the researcher established a minimum achievement criterion of 75 and administered a pre-test on the topic of bar charts and pictograms.

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Ability

No.	Achievement Aspect	Category	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Mastery	Score $\geq$ 75	5	19.2%
2	Non-Mastery	Score $<$ 75	21	80.8%
Class Mean			45,2	

The pre-test data presented in Table 2 show that only 5 students achieved the minimum mastery criterion, while the remaining 21 students had not yet met the criterion. The class mean score in the pre-cycle was 45.2, indicating that students' initial comprehension of the learning material remained low. These findings served as the basis for the researcher to design an instructional intervention using the Reading Buddy model, with the aim of improving students' reading comprehension and increasing their participation during the learning process.

2. Cycle I

Implementation of the Action and Observation

Cycle I was conducted in two meetings, held on September 8 and 15, 2026. The learning activities were designed according to the stages of the Reading Buddy model, beginning with teacher orientation and modeling of the Reading Buddy activity. This was followed by the formation of paired Reading Buddy groups. The students then engaged in paired reading activities. During the paired reading activity, students took turns serving as readers and listeners. Before taking on these respective roles, they first read the text together. They then alternated between the roles of reader and listener. After completing the paired reading activity, the students engaged in clarification and discussion with their respective partners.

The observations recorded throughout Cycle I indicated a high level of enthusiasm among students during the paired reading activities. However, several students were distracted by observing other groups and consequently showed a lack of focus. Because their attention was divided, many students remained hesitant when responding to questions posed by the teacher. In the final stage, the students jointly reflected on the paired reading activities. The reflection sheets showed that many students expressed that they enjoyed reading together with their partners.

Cycle I Post-Test Results

After the learning activities in the two meetings were completed, the students took a post-test. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Post-Test Results of Students in Cycle I

No.	Mastery Aspect	Category	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Mastery	Score ≥ 75	17	65.38%
2	Non-Mastery	Score < 75	9	34.62%
Class Mean			72.78	

The results show that 17 students achieved a score of 75 or higher, resulting in a learning mastery rate of 65.38% in Cycle I. The class mean score was 72.78, while 9 students (34.62%) did not achieve the minimum mastery criterion. Although the results demonstrated a substantial improvement compared with the pre-cycle condition, the achievement had not yet met the success indicator established for the study.

Reflection on Cycle I

The reflection on Cycle I was conducted after the entire series of actions and the post-test had been completed. The researcher reviewed the learning process that took place during the two meetings. Although the reading activities had been implemented according to the plan, several challenges remained and affected the effectiveness of the intervention.

During the reading process, some students were not yet able to maintain their focus. Several students were distracted by other groups, while others did not fully engage in the paired reading activity and instead talked with their partners, which disrupted their reading comprehension. In addition, the delivery of the reading material by their peers was not yet fully optimal, indicating the need for a more intensive approach to understanding and explaining the content of the text.

The results of the Cycle I post-test had not yet reached the predetermined success indicator. Based on the reflection, the researcher recognized the need to improve the quality of the intervention in the subsequent cycle. The improvements were therefore focused on time management, strengthening the implementation of the Reading Buddy procedures, increasing students' attention through attention-focusing strategies such as ice-breaking activities, and strengthening motivation by providing rewards to actively participating students. Based on the results of the reflection, the researcher designed improvements for Cycle II by emphasizing greater student focus and strengthening the Reading Buddy instructional stages.

3. Cycle II

Implementation of the Action and Observation

Cycle II was conducted in two meetings, on September 22 and 23, 2026. The overall learning stages followed the same structure as Cycle I, with modifications based on the findings from the previous cycle. The teacher modified the modeling stage by using surrounding objects as characters in the story and implemented more intensive classroom management to maintain students' attention and focus.

The observation results showed a clear improvement in both teacher and student activities. The students appeared more enthusiastic in participating in the paired reading activities. They were also more focused and made greater efforts to engage with the stories they were reading or retelling.

Cycle II Post-Test Results

At the end of Cycle II, the students took another post-test. The research results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Post-Test Results of Students in Cycle II

No.	Mastery Aspect	Category	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
1	Mastery	Score ≥ 75	23	88.46%
2	Non-Mastery	Score < 75	3	11.54%
Class Mean			90.25	

Learning mastery reached 88.46%, with 23 students achieving the minimum mastery criterion and only 3 students remaining below the criterion. The class mean score increased considerably to 90.25, indicating a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension following the implementation of the Reading Buddy model.

Reflection on Cycle II

The reflection on Cycle II was conducted after all learning activities and the final post-test had been completed. At this stage, the researcher reviewed the implementation of the intervention that had been refined based on the findings from the previous cycle. The reflection showed that the implementation of Reading Buddy for developing students' reading comprehension was more effective than in Cycle I, both in terms of student engagement and learning achievement.

The improvements implemented based on the reflection from Cycle I had a positive impact on the learning process. Students appeared more focused when following the instructional explanation, the classroom atmosphere became more conducive, and the researcher succeeded in increasing interaction among students while they read and listened to one another directly. The clarification and discussion activities also became more structured and no longer consumed excessive amounts of time. In addition, students' enthusiasm for asking questions and responding to the content of the stories increased significantly compared with the previous cycle.

The results of the Cycle II post-test demonstrated a substantial increase in learning mastery and exceeded the predetermined success indicator of the study. The analysis indicated that most students were able to understand the content of a reading text more easily when engaging in paired reading. This development suggests that the Reading Buddy model consistently improved the reading activity by making it more engaging, focused, and motivating for students. Based on the reflection, the researcher concluded that the actions implemented in Cycle II had successfully addressed the problems identified in Cycle I; therefore, no further cycle was considered necessary.

During the pre-cycle stage, students' mathematics learning outcomes were in the low category, as indicated by a class mean score of 45.2, with only 19.20% achieving classical mastery. This condition indicates that most students had not yet developed adequate reading comprehension skills.

Following the implementation of Reading Buddy in Cycle I, there was a

considerable improvement in the class mean score, which increased to 72.78, while classical mastery increased to 65.38%. This finding indicates that the use of paired reading began to have a positive effect on students' motivation and engagement. Nevertheless, the predetermined mastery target had not yet been achieved, indicating the need for further improvement in the subsequent cycle.

The improvements implemented based on the reflection from Cycle I produced a stronger effect in Cycle II. The students' mean score increased substantially to 90.25, while classical mastery reached 88.46%, exceeding the success indicator established for the study. This improvement demonstrates that the Reading Buddy strategy, when implemented progressively, was able to support the development of students' reading comprehension skills. The improvement in achievement across the cycles is presented in Figure 1 as a representation of the development of students' learning outcomes throughout the research process.

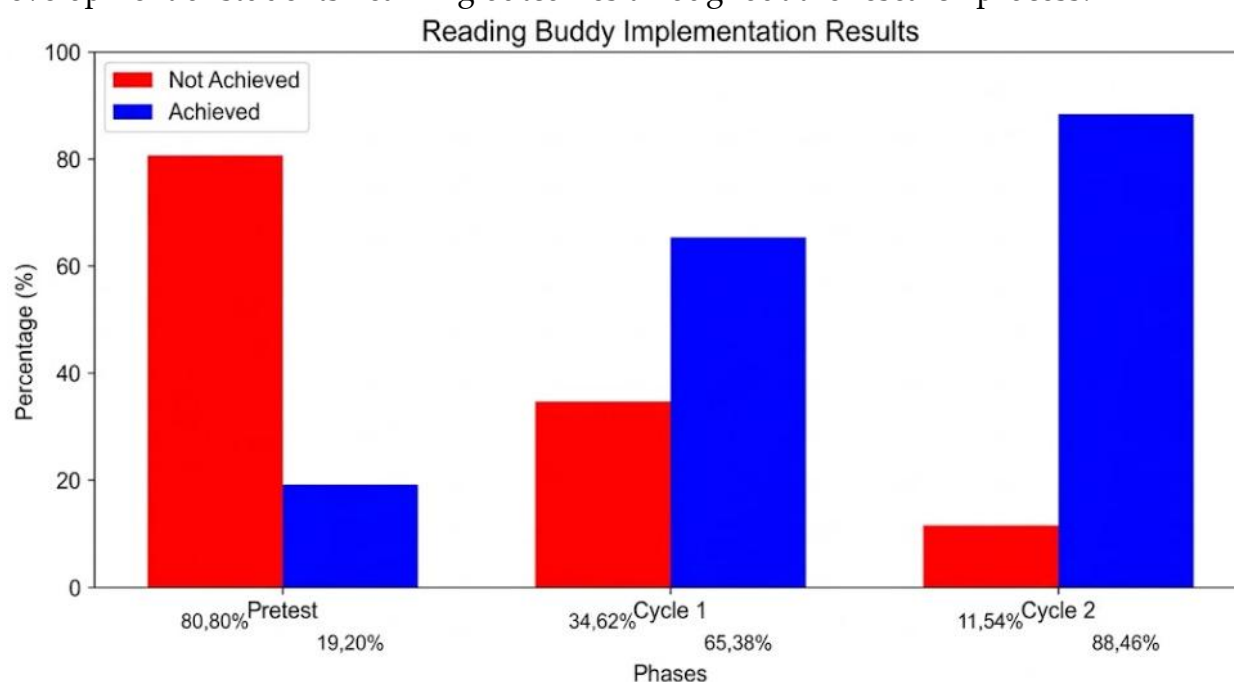


Figure 1. Reading Buddy Implementation Results

Based on Figure 1, which presents a diagram of the learning outcomes obtained at each stage of the study, students' achievement can be seen to improve consistently from the pre-cycle through Cycle II. This improvement indicates that the use of Reading Buddy had a positive impact on students' reading comprehension.

In addition to the improvement in learning outcomes, the implementation of Reading Buddy also contributed to changes in students' learning behavior, which were evident in the three main components of the Reading Buddy instructional model. Through the implementation of the Reading Buddy model, students began to divide roles independently, engage in more focused and engaging discussions with their group members, and become more confident in expressing their opinions. During the implementation, an increase in students' enthusiasm and learning motivation was observed as a result of a comfortable learning atmosphere

that encouraged the participation of each individual. Students who had initially been passive became more willing to participate in question-and-answer activities.

These findings demonstrate that the implementation of Reading Buddy not only contributed quantitatively to the improvement of students' reading comprehension skills but also had a tangible impact on changes in their learning behavior. These changes included increased participation, motivation, collaboration, and interaction among students throughout the learning process. The improvement in learning outcomes did not occur by chance and was not solely attributable to the implementation of Reading Buddy, but was also influenced by the adjustments made during the intervention and the strengthening of classroom management carried out by the teacher. This finding therefore also indicates that the effectiveness of Reading Buddy depends on the quality of its implementation. This is consistent with the view of Mulyawati and Purnomo (2021), who argue that the appropriate selection and implementation of an instructional model directly influence the achievement of learning objectives.

Theoretically, the success of Reading Buddy in this study is consistent with Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Elementary school students are generally situated within the concrete operational stage, in which they more easily understand concepts through concrete activities and direct experiences. Play-based elements can also help students connect data representations with real-life experiences, thereby strengthening their understanding. Elementary school-age children tend to enjoy activities involving play, movement, group work, and trying things out concretely (Aminah et al., 2022). Considering these characteristics, mathematics learning is likely to be more effective when presented through an instructional model that involves collaborative activities and direct practice.

The Reading Buddy model corresponds to these needs because it combines collaboration, play, and reading activities that can increase learning motivation, strengthen memory, and encourage students to engage in higher-order reasoning (Astuti et al., 2022). Through collaborative activities, learning becomes more engaging, provides students with opportunities to participate actively, and creates a more enjoyable learning atmosphere (Amalia et al., 2025; Ningsih et al., 2025). The implementation of Reading Buddy not only helps align instruction with the characteristics of elementary school students but also reduces the boredom that may arise during mathematics learning. A positive competitive atmosphere encourages greater enthusiasm among students, thereby reducing negative perceptions toward understanding story content, which may otherwise be perceived as less interesting and difficult to sustain. This increased enthusiasm and engagement ultimately contributes to improved learning outcomes.

Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that when Reading Buddy is implemented optimally, it can be effectively used to improve the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Citaringgul 02 during the 2026/2027 academic year.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of Reading Buddy was effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of fourth-grade students at SDN Citaringgul 02 during the 2026/2027 academic year. This effectiveness was reflected in the improvement in students' scores at each stage of the research. In the pre-test conducted during the pre-cycle stage, the students' mean score was 45.2, with a learning mastery rate of only 19.20%. Following the intervention in Cycle I, the mean score increased to 69.615, while the percentage of students achieving mastery reached 65.38%. A higher improvement was observed in Cycle II, in which the mean score increased to 89.038 and learning mastery reached 88.46%. The achievement in Cycle II indicates that the success indicator established for the study had been exceeded. Therefore, Reading Buddy can be recommended as an alternative approach to reading comprehension instruction that can encourage students' active participation and motivation while improving their comprehension of stories.

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