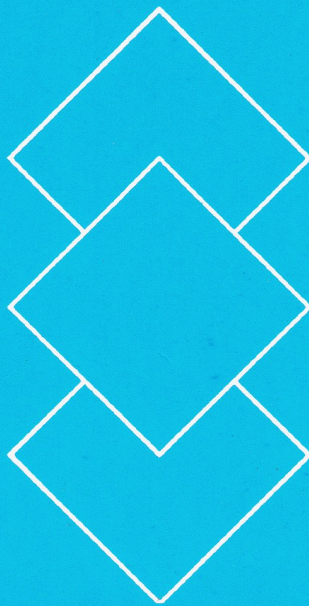


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# CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN

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## **IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY THROUGH SQ3R STRATEGY**

**Purwatiningsih**

**Abstract:** Reading is needed as a means of learning variety of sciences. Success in reading is very important for the students. However, the result of preliminary study conducted at MAN 2 Madiun showed that the students' ability in comprehending the text was not satisfactory yet. Their achievement was still under the minimum standard of learning success (KKM). Thus, this action research was done as one of the solutions to overcome the students' problem in reading comprehension. For that reason, the teaching and learning of reading comprehension through SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) strategy was developed to improve students' reading comprehension. The research design was collaborative classroom action research in which the researcher and her collaborator worked together on designing the lesson plans, implementing the actions, observing the effect of action, and reflecting the results of the actions. In conducting the research, the researcher was the practitioner while the collaborator became the observer. The findings of the research revealed that the appropriate model of SQ3R strategy in teaching reading consisted of eleven procedures, those are: (1) activating the background knowledge before reading, (2) providing some pictures or real objects (3) finding the meaning of the unfamiliar words, (4) formulating list of questions to make prediction, (5) reading the introductory and concluding paragraphs, (6) answering the previously formulated questions, (7) keeping the information in the long term memory, (8) recalling the kept information, (9) doing report, (10) doing verification to the report by rereading text, and (11) writing the result of verification. Furthermore, the finding also indicated that SQ3R strategy improved students' reading comprehension ability. The improvement can be seen from the students' reading scores which fulfilled the mini-

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*Purwatiningsih adalah Guru MAN 2 Madiun*



mum standard of learning success (KKM). The mean scores were 64.5 in test 1 and 78.7 in test 2. In other words, there were merely 33.3% of students who were considered successful in preliminary test, 50% who were successful in Cycle 1, and 86.7% who succeeded in Cycle 2. Besides, the finding indicated that SQ3R strategy was successful to empower students' motivation to be actively involved in the instructional process. The improvement on the students' participation were 59% in Cycle 1 and 79% in Cycle 2.

**Key words:** SQ3R strategy, improvement, reading ability

In general, the skills involved in mastering English are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among them, reading is the most important since every aspect of life involves reading, for example, road signs, traffic regulations, menus in restaurant, labels on cans, printed advertisements, newspapers, magazines, insurance forms, and so forth (Burns et al., 1996: 4). For the students, reading is needed as a means of learning variety of sciences. Students learn many things through reading. They get information by reading books and other printed media. Success in reading is very important to them both for academic and vocational advancement and for the students' psychological well being (Carnine, et al., 1990: 106).

In relation to the importance of reading, teacher should develop students' reading skill as the basic for practicing other language skills. For instance, the students can be asked to find the information from what they read to be written in journal, they are asked to read aloud to practice their pronunciation and so forth. In virtue of UN (Ujian Nasional/ National Examination) reading has to be taught to high school students. It is one of UN (Ujian Nasional/ National Examination) materials which take the major percentage of the overall items. In the 2007 and 2008 National Examinations approximately 70% of the items are on reading. So, by developing students' reading skills, it is expected that the students can deal with the UN.

In MAN 2 Madiun, reading is provided as part of the English teaching. Reading gets more attention than other language skills: listening, speaking and writing. However, teaching reading is not as easy as teaching other language skills since in reading activity, students do not only read the text but also understand what they read. Therefore, in mastering the reading skill, the students must be equipped with the skill to grasp the information and knowledge from the written text. Students are also expected to have some skills in (1) finding certain information stated in a passage, (2) getting the general idea of a passage, (3) locating the specific information of a passage, and (4) identifying



implicit and explicit information of a passage. It seems that reading is considered as a complicated skill covering many activities to comprehend the text.

In relation to the teaching reading, the result of a preliminary study conducted by the writer's collaborator at MAN 2 Madiun particularly at the three programs of the eleventh grades, science program, social program, and language program on 12 August 2008 shows students' achievement at reading was low as indicated by the scores they obtained from reading comprehension in the preliminary test. The mean scores were 75 for science program, 70 for social program, and 59.1 for language program. Among those mean scores, the lowest score was obtained by language program students. This mean score was considered insufficient since it did not achieve the learning target which is 70 for reading skill. From the scores got by the language students, it can be identified that there were 20 out of 30 students who failed or only 33.3% who were successful.

In responding to the result of the preliminary study the writer observed the students' activities during the teaching-learning process of reading to identify some factors causing the problems above. First, the students did not try to become familiar with the organization and the general content of the material. They merely read the text then translated. Secondly, they were not accustomed to do prediction before reading. They read the text as instructed by the teacher. Thirdly, students were not accustomed to make reports after reading the text as the summary of what they had learned. Besides, students did not try to check their answers after doing comprehension questions. The last, majority of the students were not actively involved in the discussion during the teaching and learning process.

However, among those factors, teaching strategy also plays the important role in the instructional process. The success of teaching reading is also determined by the strategy used. As a matter of fact, the English teaching class was still focused on the students. Majority the English teachers in MAN 2 Madiun do not employ the appropriate strategy to teach reading. They still employ the conventional teaching strategy. They come to the classroom then ask students to read aloud. After that, they ask the students to find the meaning of some difficult words, then answer the questions. Teachers do not get the students to make summary of what they learn.

Considering the condition above, the researcher proposes certain strategy in order to solve the problems encountered by the students. However, the way would be advantageous for the students when they are provided with the activities which help them to improve their ability to comprehend the reading text. One of the reading strategies that can be used to make an improvement on the student's reading comprehension ability is SQ3R strategy.

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### TEACHING READING IN EFL CLASSES

In foreign language learning, reading is often used for purposes that are different from those found in the first language learning. The most typical use of reading in a foreign language class is to teach the language itself (Greene & Petty, 1971). The underlying assumption of the notion is that reading might be used to extend one's command of language in such a case that it can provide a major avenue for the further development of power in using language for learning new words and new concepts.

The teaching of reading can also function to prepare students to read informational materials (Dawson, 1987). The focus then should be on helping the students acquire the skills needed in an attempt at constructing meaning. To attain such a purpose, the teacher holds a role in helping students acquire the skills needed from bringing their experiences to bear upon written materials. Besides, he/she should also assist the students to use those skills of reading efficiently and effectively.

To be an effective reading teacher, one should have a great deal of knowledge about the reading process, the sequential development of reading skills, the materials available for use, and the students to be taught. Since the nature of teaching and learning in any given teaching situations is affected by a great number of variables, in consequence, a different choice among a wide range of possible method or approach will turn out to be appropriate in different teaching situations. The teacher, then, should be flexible in line with instructional method used in those different teaching situations. However, the program should be built upon the bases for a reading program and be compatible with the underlying principles of reading instruction. The focus should always be upon reading to gain meaning and to interpret and use the ideas presented in the text.

Harmer (2000) outlines some principles that underlie the effective teaching of reading. First, reading is not a passive skill. This principle implies that the students have to understand what is read before beginning to read, such as understanding what the words mean, seeing the pictures what the word is conveying, understanding the arguments, and working out if they agree with them. Second, the students need to be engaged into what they are reading. To engage the students in reading, the teacher should provide the reading text that interests them and the topic that stimulates them as well. Third, the students should be encouraged to respond to the content of a reading text, not just to the language. This principle implies that the meaning or the message of the text is as important as the way the language is used, and teachers therefore must give the student a chance to respond to that message in some way. Fourth, prediction is a major factor in reading. What is meant by this principle is that students should



have in mind the expectation of what they would find in reading and they should set up the purpose when the active process of reading is ready to begin. Fifth, the task should be matched to the topic. This principle underlines that teachers need to choose and decide good reading tasks for which students are going to accomplish, such as the right kind of questions. Finally, good teachers should exploit reading texts to the full. According to this principle, teachers should integrate the reading text into interesting class sequences the topic for discussion and further task.

### **SQ3R STRATEGY**

SQ3R strategy is a five-step system originated by Francis P. Robison (1941). It provides students with a systematic approach to reading for study and to promote more efficient learning through assigned reading (Eanes, 1997: 79). Each of the steps in SQ3R stands for *Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review*. The procedure of SQ3R strategy as suggested by Robinson involves (1) reading the heading in the chapter quickly to get its important point in the survey' step, (2) turning the heading into a question in the 'question' step, (3) reading to find the answers to the questions in the 'read' step, (4) recall important points i.e., the answers to the questions by retelling them or writing them in one's own words in the 'recite' step, and (5) checking the answer to reinforce one's memory of the important point in the 'review' step.

### **The Procedure of SQ3R Strategy**

#### ***1. Survey Step***

The first step of SQ3R strategy is to survey the text. Surveying helps the reader find the general ideas of a text before beginning to read. Eanes (1997), states that survey is the activity in which readers are required to quickly read the acknowledgement, the conclusion and the sub-chapters. Burns (1996) writes that in survey, a reader is required to skim the parts of the book such as title, sub-titles, acknowledgment, table of contents, indices, graphics, maps, illustrations, first paragraph, the first sentences of the next paragraph and the last paragraph.

Surveying involves creating a mental map of the text. To begin surveying, the readers read the text quickly to get some textual markers or clues about the material of organization of the text. The organizations of the text are used to create a mental map to help the readers move through the material.



## **2. Question Step**

The question is the second step that is also done before beginning to read. It is the readers' question making, which are based on what has been surveyed during the survey. During this step, readers should arrive at their questions by turning what they read in survey step into questions. They can turn the introductory sentences in paragraphs into questions using the question words such as what, who, when, why and how. The activity in question step involves predicting questions that may be answered by the text, the questions are elaborations of the mental map developed in the survey step, and they serve as a framework to which details may be added later.

## **3. Read Step**

The third step the students should do is reading. It requires the readers to carefully read the text to look for information to answer the predicted questions. According to Harjasujana (1988) the read activity should be done in a flexible way in the sense that the readers can do it more rapidly if what they read is the information which are the answers for the predicted question. Otherwise, they can do it more slowly if what they read is the information which is not the answers for such questions. Similarly, Eanes (1997: 107) states that the activity that the readers do during the read step is to read the text in order to find the answer of the predicted question. In this case, they may not focus on isolated details; instead, they may search for relationship among the main ideas and their supporting details. They may look for information that answers the predicted questions, taking a note while reading or underlining the points that refer to the answers of the predicted questions.

## **4. Recite Step**

The recite is the fourth step that is done after reading the text. It allows the readers to monitor as well as to help them keep the information in long-term memory. At this step, the readers are required to recall the important points of a text such as main ideas and details. In this case, they are expected to recite them aloud on the basis of the main points of a text. In addition, having a discussion on what is read is also helpful for recalling the message of a text. In this case, the readers are expected to get involved either in group or in class discussion.

Moreover, in this step, the readers should take a few minutes to recall the important points. Retelling the important points of a text or writing them in ones own words can make mental connections among main ideas and details



more actively. Besides, it can also allow the reader to monitor his/her comprehension. Moreover, immediate recall is helpful for keeping the information in long-term memory.

### **5. Review Step**

The review is the last step where the students are required to see how the information fits together. The readers evaluate their understanding of a text as well as organize all of the main ideas and supporting details. Writing a summary is one of the activities that the readers can do when they want to review the contents of a text. Reviewing allows the reader to evaluate his/her understanding of the text, to organize all of the main idea and its Supporting details, and to reinforce them in memory.

### **The Advantages and Disadvantages of SQ3R Strategy**

It is convinced that SQ3R strategy provides some advantages. One advantage of SQ3R strategy is that it can help elicit students' prior knowledge. Before beginning to read, students at first are required to survey a text in order to anticipate the general meaning of it. Another advantage of SQ3R strategy is that it can help define the students' purpose for reading. After surveying the text, students are expected to make questions about the text they will be reading. The questions provide the students a purpose for reading and make important ideas clear. In the 'read' step, the students are aided in getting the understanding of a text through answering the predicted questions composed. During this step, the students are allowed to confirm their prediction. If they succeed to make a prediction in the sense that they could answer the first question, then they continue reading the next section to answer the following questions. However, if they fail, they should go back to reread the first section of reading.

SQ3R strategy is relatively simple and straightforward. For that reason, the students should be well prepared with a structure and concrete plan of a reading task by using this strategy so that they have a sense of control over reading task. Moreover, using the strategy allows the students to look the reading text several times and to process the information in several ways so that the registration and recalling of new information in memory can be enhanced.

However, some limitations can also be addressed to SQ3R strategy. First, SQ3R strategy is not as broad. SQ3R strategy represents only one strategy which covers several activities which are considered as an effective approach to reading comprehension. Second, several studies of high school students indicate that SQ3R strategy, which are designed for an average students, is not

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an effective strategy for improving literal comprehension by learning disabled students. Finally, although SQ3R strategy is relatively simple and straightforward, it takes much time for students especially those who are low achievers to be proficient in using in their reading tasks.

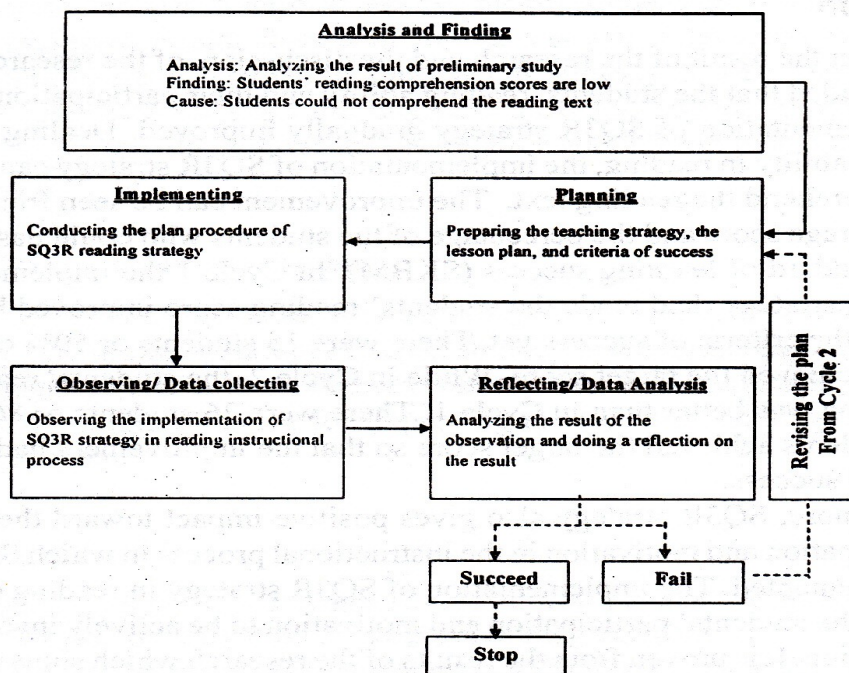
#### RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The procedure of the classroom action research is adapted from Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) which consists of four steps, namely: planning, implementing the plan, observing, and reflecting on the action. The procedure of the research can be seen in figure 1.

Based on the result of preliminary study which was carried out on the three programs of the eleventh grade students: Science, Social, and Language programs of MAN 2 Madiun, the lowest score was obtained by the language program students. The mean reading score they obtained was 59.1. From that score, it was identified that 20 out of 30 students failed. Besides, this score was considered insufficient since it did not fulfill the minimum standard of learning success of reading (SKBM). The minimum standard of learning success should be 70.

The criteria of success were set up in order to judge whether the implementation of the action was effective. Related to this study, the criteria of success were used to see whether the implementation of SQ3R strategy in the teaching of reading comprehension succeed, therefore, a decision could be made whether another Cycle of the action was needed. This study dealt with the improvement of students' reading comprehension ability; therefore, the criteria of success should be in that concern. This study was said to be successful when it met two criteria of success; they were: (1) the students' reading comprehension improved and (2) the students were actively involved in the reading activities.





**Figure 1 Diagram of the Classroom Action Research Procedure Adapted from Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988)**

*a. The students' reading comprehension improved*

In relation to students' reading comprehension ability, this study was considered successful when 70% of the students got the score equal to or greater than 70 and the reading comprehension mean score was 70. The consideration of this score was based on the minimum standard of learning success (*SKBM*) of the English subject specifically for reading skill.

*b. The students were actively involved in the reading activities*

The students were considered active in the teaching and learning activities when 60% of them were actively did the SQ3R steps.

Thus, the data related to the first criteria of success were gained from the students' reading comprehension test. The data about the second criteria of success were taken from the observation checklist, interview guide, and field note.



## CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research and the discussion of the research, it can be concluded that the students' reading ability and their participation during the implementation of SQ3R strategy gradually improved. Dealing with the students' ability in reading, the implementation of SQ3R strategy can help them to comprehend the reading text. The improvement can be seen from the students' average score and the percentage of the students who could pass the minimum standard of learning success (SKBM). In Cycle 1 the implementation of SQ3R strategy had made the students' reading score improved but it did not meet the criteria of success yet. There were 15 students or 50% out of 30 students achieved the target score. While in Cycle 2, the students' reading comprehension was better than in Cycle 1. There were 26 students or 86.7% out of 30 students achieved the target score so that the improvement had met the criteria of success.

Furthermore, SQ3R strategy also gives positive impact toward the students' participation and motivation in the instructional process in which SQ3R strategy implemented. The implementation of SQ3R strategy in reading class can increase the students' participation and motivation to be actively involved in the instruction. It is proven from the results of the research which shows that after the implementation of the SQ3R strategy the percentage of the students' participation during the implementation SQ3R strategy increases. There were 59% out of 30 students were actively involved in the instructional process in Cycle 1. While in Cycle 2 there were 79% out of 30 students were active. Therefore it was said that the result had met the criteria of success.

SQ3R can be an effective strategy for teaching comprehension if it follows several procedures: (1) activating the background knowledge before reading, (2) providing some pictures or real objects (3) finding the meaning of the unfamiliar words, (4) formulating list of questions as the prediction, (5) reading the introductory and concluding paragraphs, (6) answering the previously formulated questions, (7) keeping the information in the long term memory, (8) recalling the kept information, (9) doing report, (10) doing verification to the report by rereading the text, (11) writing the verification result.

## SUGGESTIONS

### a. For the teachers

Due to the fact that SQ3R strategy gives positive impact toward the students' ability in reading comprehension and the students' motivation and par-



ticipation in the instructional process, the researcher suggests the English teachers who have similar classroom problems in which the students have low motivation and achievement to apply SQ3R strategy in their reading class. The researcher also suggests the English teachers to conduct seminars, or workshops, and the like to share the information about the implementation of SQ3R strategy.

#### **b. For the future researchers**

To future researcher it is also suggested to conduct the same research about the implementation of SQ3R strategy in teaching reading with different setting, subject, and in other level of study to see whether SQ3R strategy is applicable and effective for improving the students' reading comprehension achievement.

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