

# IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH SQ3R TECHNIQUE

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## ***Abstract***

*This Classroom Action Research was aimed to improve students' reading comprehension of biographical recount text through Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review (SQ3R) technique. The tenth grade students of SMKN 3 Pontianak were the subject of this research. The findings showed that the students' problems in understanding biographical recount text especially in finding main idea and detail information were solved by using SQ3R as their reading technique. The students also responded to the implementation of SQ3R technique positively. They become active learners in generating questions, providing and presenting the answers and discussing their work together. Based on the findings, it is concluded that SQ3R technique can improve comprehension in reading biographical recount text by providing a structured stages for reading activities.*

***Key words: Reading Comprehension, Recount Text, SQ3R Technique***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reading is one of the language skills which needs to be developed and mastered by the students. The importance of reading comprehension for vocational high school students could be seen in the school test and national examination in which always dominated by the test of reading. Moreover, based on the basic competences of curriculum 2013, high school students are expected to be able to comprehend short functional text including biographical recount text. This kind of text is chosen as the specific genre to teach reading because of its social function and its familiarity to students' life. The purpose is to inform the reader by retelling past events and achievements in a person's life. The students are expected to understand its generic structures namely orientation, events, and reorientation.

The process of reading comprehension itself is actually an important aspect which needs to be considered. Carter and Nunan (2001, p. 22) declared that the

definition of reading comprehension is now shifted from the simply 'active' process into 'interactive'. The term interactive refers to the situation of two ways communication. The readers and the writer actually are doing an indirect communication in which readers try to get the meaning of what the writer wants to communicate by their writing. In order to construct a meaningful representation of a reading text, Abbas (2016, p. 229) said that an effective reading technique is needed. He added "effective reading techniques are considered as significant skills that have received the special focus on students' reading comprehension proficiency." Hence, the existing of reading technique is undoubtedly important.

In addition, the term reading technique and reading comprehension are often interchangeable. Abbas (2016, p. 237) said "reading techniques have a great impact on the students' reading

comprehension ability.” All of the techniques would work together to make the process easy and effective. However, Aisiri and Mowafiq (2016, p. 2) declared “the skills of comprehension cannot be developed except if there is a proper guidance from teacher’s part.” So that teachers have a big responsibility to motivate their students in reading and should be very sensitive to their learners’ comprehension difficulties, therefore they can better understand the text.

According to the result of preliminary study carried out at class X PM 1 in SMKN 3 Pontianak, the researcher found out two problems arose in which related to students’ competence in reading comprehension of biographical recount text in which occur in the literal and inferential level of comprehension. The indicators are: (a) students were unable to find main idea; and (b) students were unable to find detail information on the orientation, events, and reorientation of biographical recount text.

On the orientation, they found it difficult to understand the background information presented such as who, what, where and how a particular person is. On the events, they could not easily identify the information which describes a particular person. Moreover, on the reorientation, they could not discover the concluding comments which express a personal opinion regarding the person described. The researcher noticed that they actually read without guidelines and often jumped from reading to reciting, and reading then reviewing which leads to a disorganize reading activity.

The students’ difficulties to discover the main idea and the detail information on the orientation, events, and reorientation parts of biographical recount text could be seen when the teacher asked them about the main idea and the detail information of the text, the students just read but they could not understand what they read. The researcher noticed that they actually read without guidelines and often jumped from reading to reciting, and reading then reviewing which leads to a disorganize reading activity.

Related to the problems mentioned above, both of the reasearcher and the English teacher came to an agreement that a new step forward to enhance reading comprehension of the tenth grade students of SMKN 3 Pontianak class X PM 1 particularly in biographical recount text is crucially needed. The researcher believed that SQ3R technique could contribute to tackle down the problems through the proccess on each steps of SQ3R technique. Each of the steps stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review.

SQ3R technique is developed by a Professor of Psychology at Ohio State University by the name of Prof. Francis P. Robinson in 1946. Robinson stated that SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review (McNamara, 2007, p. 6). Although this technique is an old idea, it is still relevant to the present practice of teaching and worth to try as Lipson & Wixson (cited in Carlston, 2011, p.4) declared “the Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review (SQ3R) is one of the oldest and most widely implemented study tehniques”. It means that this technique is a well-known reading technique.

Furthermore, Brown in 2000 (p. 315) still recommends to apply this technique as a reading comprehension technique, he stated that SQ3R is “one effective series of procedures for approaching a reading text”. This technique uses for fully absorbing written information. It helps students to create a good mental framework of a subject and helps them to set study goals which employ before reading, while reading and after reading activity.

According to Robinson (1946) there are 5 strengths of the use of SQ3R techniques; (1) surveying the text before it is read, the reader will have a greater understanding of the main ideas and the students can know the organization from the text and get general impression, (2) questioning will arouse curiosity and so increase comprehension, (3) reading will occur as an active search for the answer of the previously generated questions. Besides,

the students can read faster because there are questions as the guider, (4) reciting tends to check wheather the reader has comprehended the material, and the recitation fixes the ideas in memory, (5) reviewing will enable the students to looked over the total outline to get an over-all easily visualized picture to mastery over the whole round and materials that they have read (pp. 29-31).

According to the original version proposed by Robinson (1946, p. 28) SQ3R technique consists of five separate steps that help the individual determine the most important points of each chapter and study those points. The steps are as follow: (1) Survey: Glance over the headings in the chapter to see the few big points which will be developed, (2) Question: Turn the first heading into question. This will arouse the students' curiosity and so increase comprehension. It will bring to mind information already known, thus helping the students to understand that section more quickly, (3) Read: Read to answer that question, i.e., to the end of the first headed section. This is not passive plowing along each line, but an active search for the answer, (4) Recite: Having read the first section, the students look away from the book and try briefly to recite the answer to their question, (5) Review: When the lesson has thus been read through, the students look over their notes to get a bird-eyes view of the points and their relationship and check their memory as to the content by reciting on the major sub points under each heading (Robinson, 1946, p. 28).

In this case, he researcher tries to do some modification on this technique to make it suitable to the condition of this current research based on the original technique formulated by Robinson (1946, p. 28) as follows:

### **1. Survey**

Based on the original from, in *survey* section, the students are supposed to glance over the headings in the chapter to see the few big points which will be developed (Robinson, 1946). While in this research,

the researcher used a recount text in which does not have any headings. So, instead of asking them to glance over the headings, the researcher would ask the students to survey the text by reading the title of the text, first sentence of each paragraph and counting how many paragraph does the text have. This section would have to activate students background knowledge. Activating background knowledge would surely help students to get the general overview what is the text would be about. Besides, students were able to note the structure and the organization of the text as well which would help them to prepare their mind. This section will help in finding main idea of the text and identifying the structure of the text.

### **2. Question**

In this section, the original version assisted the students to turn the first heading into question (Robinson, 1946). Since the recount text used here does not have any headings, the teacher guided the students to turn each paragraph into questions instead by using 5W1H formula. Shepherd and Mitchell (1997, p. 28) said "who, what, why, how, where, and when question, as an interactive dialogue between yourself and the study material, in order to extract the important facts". In order to avoid the confusion of the students in generating the questions, the researcher grouped them so that it would be easier to give guidance.

It is important for students not to skip this stage to keep them alert and involved in the reading. This section offers an easy and good way to fix the main idea and figure out the detail information of the text.

### **3. Read**

Referring to the original version, in *read* section students should read actively. The researcher asked the students to read the text individually and silently with the purpose of answering the questions they have. Teacher asks the students to answer the questions they made in the "question" section by highlighting/underlining the point on their reading text.

#### 4. Recite

In *recite* section, the researcher also follows the original version by asking to recite both the questions and answers out loud to the classroom without looking up the reading text and their highlighted parts after the students read the text. Robinson (1946 p. 30) stated that “this tends to check wheather the reader has comprehended the material, and the recitation fixes the ideas in memory”. Besides, this process would enhance all the memory system, “reading silently, writing questions with your hand, reciting the questions with your voice, and hearing the answers with your ears would activate nearly all parts of your brain and will greatly enhance your memory” (Academic Support Center of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, 2007). It means that recite section should include reading, writing, and hearing the question and the answer are useful to process the information and would enable students to enchanche the memory.

#### 5. Review

In the *review* section, same as the original version, the researcher asks the students to review by summarizing the questions and the answers of their questions in their own words by writing down the main ideas and the supporting details of the text on the handout given by the teacher. As Robinson (1946, p. 31) stated that “the total outline should be looked over to get an over-all easily visualized picture”. Hence, this section helps to fix information in their mind. If they get stuck, they may refer to their highlighted parts. They also asked to summarize the text to confirm they understand the text.

A number of previous studies had been done on this topic. A research carried out by Iqlima Srifayu Intan (2010) in MTs Miftahussa’adah Pontianak Utara showed that the students were able to make positive progress in comprehending narrative text after the implementation of SQ3R technique. The research showed that the result were satisfied because 100% of the participants increased their score. The second research was done by

Akira Puteri (2016), based on direct observation by Akira in SMAN 1 Parung, the subjects had low ability in reading comprehension. Therefore, the researcher concentrated of the students’ problems in comprehending report text by using SQ3R technique. The result of this research showed that the reading comprehension of SQ3R technique could make the subjects improved their reading ability. The third study was done by Carlston in Midwestern University (2011), he found out that when students used SQ3R technique (e.g., surveying prior to reading, generating questions, reading to answer said questions, reciting and reviewing information), they retain more information as demonstrated by higher achievement on course exams.

Considering the success of the implementation of SQ3R technique, the researcher intended to conduct a classroom action research under the title: “Improving Students Reading Comprehension through SQ3R Technique” as an effort to improve students’ reading comprehension through SQ3R technique. In this present study, the researcher selected the participant from different level as the previous studies above. Vocational high school students were choosen as the research participants. Moreover, the previous researchers employed narrative and report text while in this research, the researcher used recount text especially biographical recount. The researcher decided to use biographical recount text because the students learned about recount text in four chapters. However, biographical recount is learned in two out of that four chapters under the title The Successful Person and Heroes, the other two chapters were about Personal Diary and Historical Events. In this case, biographical recount text is considered as an important material to be mastered by the students.

In addition, in this research the researcher performed a more detail process of teaching reading using SQ3R technique in which aimed to solve the students’ problems in reading comprehension on each parts of biographical recount text namely orientation, events and reorientation in the literal and inferential level of comprehension. Hence, it

presented the more applicable way of teaching reading by employing SQ3R technique to be followed by the teachers, unlike the previous studies which did not give a clear description on how each steps of SQ3R would work on each parts of the text.

Moreover, in this research, the researcher covered two levels of comprehension especially the literal one as an effort to prepare and train the students facing the national examination because the test requires HOTS (High Order Thinking Skills) in which the answer of the question tested is merely unstated on the text. So, hopefully the result of this study can contribute to improve the students ability to comprehend biographical recount text better.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was done in action research design. As Zuber-Skerritt (1996) cited in Cohen et al. (2000, p. 298) suggested that “the aims of any action research project or programme are to bring about practical improvement, innovation, change or development of social practice, and the practitioners’ better understanding of their practices”. Similarly, Creswell (2012, p. 592) said “the purpose of action research is to improve the practice of education, with researchers studying their own problems or issues in a school or educational setting. Educators engage in reflection about these problems, collect and analyze data, and implement changes or a plan of action based on their findings”. Moreover, Kemmis and McTaggart as cited in Cohen et al. (2000, p. 299) declared one of the principles of action research “action research is an approach to *improving education* by *changing* it and learning from the consequences of changes.” Meaning that doing action research should bring improvement and changes upon the participants in this case are the students through the reflection in teaching.

In line with the aim of action research mentioned above, this research therefore aims to improve students’ reading comprehension of biographical recount text through Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review (SQ3R)

technique. Referring to Burns (2010, p. 8) there are 4 phases in doing action research namely planning, acting, evaluating and reflecting.

The participants of this current research are the students of class X PM 1 of SMKN 3 PONTIANAK. While the English teacher of this class acts as the collaborator. In this research, the researcher obtained the data through reading test. Meanwhile, during the implementation of the actions, the researcher always did an observation by producing field notes in every meeting and did some observation checklist.

The first tools for collecting the data in this research was test. The scores were obtained through reading test. The reading test was in the form of multiple-choice which consists of 20 test items. The second tool is observation checklist, it is used to observe the students’ activities during the teaching and learning process. The third tool is field note which functioned to make a written record of progress or weakness which is not covered in the observation checklist. This written record is done by the collaborator during the classroom activities.

In order to know the improvement of students’ reading comprehension, the researcher would combine the quantitative data from reading test, and the qualitative data from classroom observation and field notes which would be analyzed descriptively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

In general, the use of SQ3R technique had improved students reading comprehension in finding out main idea and detail information of biographical recount text. The description of the findings could be seen in the following paragraphs.

In the first cycle, the students met difficulty in applying the use SQ3R in their reading since it was the first time for them to experience this technique. Some of the students were still confused with the multi-steps of SQ3R and most of them had not been familiar with it. Moreover, the researcher also met difficulty in managing the time. Although

the time limit for each steps has been set, the researcher could not manage it effectively because the students found the SQ3R technique was not easy to be applied. Hence, each steps took a longer time then it should be.

On the first step of SQ3R that is *survey*, the students seemed enjoy and understood the instruction well. They were familiar with the subject being described that is about B. J. Habibie. They could relate the new information presented in the text with their background knowlegde. It helped them a lot in predicting and get the general overview of the text.

In *question* step, the students got difficulty in generating the questions. The questions that they made have not addressed the needs to find the main idea and the detail information of the paragraph so that the researcher worked hard to fix their questions.

In *read* step the students read the whole paragraphs and tried to answer their questions by underlining it. This process went well. In *recite* step, the researcher drew a line in the middle of the whiteboard so that two students from two different groups could use it together at once. The researcher tried so hard to ask the students to come to the front. They said that they were afraid of making mistakes and forgot the answers since they did not allow to bring their reading text to the front.

However, the last step namely *review* was not run well, some students could fulfil the task easily because they took some notes from the other groups questions and the answers. On the other hand, the students who did not have any notes got difficulties in finding main idea and detail information from each paragraphs. However, there are some students who just leave the summary section blank.

Of all steps of SQ3R namely *survey*, *question*, *read*, *recite* and *review*, the researcher found some struggles in *question*, *recite* and *review* section. While the *survey* and *read* section have been perfectly done. In *question* section, the students got difficulty in generating meaningful questions. These problems were expected not to be existed on the next cycle by maximizing the process of surveying the text.

Moreover, in *recite* section, instead of commanding students to write the questions on the board, the researcher thought that it would be more efficient if the researcher typed the questions so that everyone could see and read them clearly on the screen. In *review* section, the researcher displayed all the groups work so that everyone could get all the main idea and the detail information from each paragraph to help them narrow down the information to make summary. Lastly, the researcher would try to manage the time according to the time limit which has been set out to make the teaching and learning process run systematically.

In the second cycle, the researcher has been able to manage the time effectifely, each steps of SQ3R was done according to the time limit so that each section run systematically. On the first step of SQ3R that is *survey*, the students followed the instruction and everything went well. In *question* section, group 1, 2, 4, and 6 cooperated with all the members in making the questions. The other groups who were still struggle in generating questions took turn asking the researcher to come and ask questions whether or not they have made understandable and grammatically correct questions.

On the next step that is *reading*, the students were also read and underlined the answers of their questions properly. In the *recite* step, the researcher asked one student from the group as the representative to stand up mentioning the group's questions and the answers without looking up to the text. Here the students still reluctant to represent their group until the researcher announced that the representative would get an extra point. Last step that is *review* went well since all the groups had their notes. However, when it came to the summary section, the students were still got difficulty. They still copied the whole sentences from the paragraph.

Considering those problems which still occur in *question* and *review* section, the researcher tried to put a little more effort on the next cycle to contribute to the success of the implementation of SQ3R technique. First, the researcher would take a longer time in

*survey* section to discuss each paragraph to let all the group's member understood the content of the paragraph that they should work on. However, in order to help the students to make a better summary in *review* section, the researcher tried to guide them to get the gist of the paragraph by understanding the main idea and the detail information which supported the main idea then tried to put it in their own word.

In the third cycle, the data from observation checklist and the field note shown that the teaching-learning process had gradually changed better. The data taken from observation checklist and the field notes said that before reading, in *survey* section, the students were able to create an overview of the text. In *question* section, the students could address their needs to get the main idea and the detail information through the questions they made. In this case, the researcher maximized the process of survey so that they fully understand the content of each paragraph and easily turned it into questions. This step also helped them to set goals while reading.

In *read* section, the students were able to find the main idea and the detail information easily by using the questions as the guide while reading the text. After reading, in *recite* section, the students were able to recite their own questions and the answers. The students were even shared their ideas towards the other groups work by having class discussion. In addition, in *review* section, the students were able to review the entire text and consciously determine which one is the main point and which one is the supporting points by making summary. Lastly, the researcher could follow the time limitation on each section so that everything was well managed.

In conclusion, SQ3R technique could improve the students' reading comprehension on the generic structure of biographical recount text. The result of the study were satisfied. It was proven that the revision version worked better in helping the students comprehend the biographical recount text as could be seen from the result of the test.

## Discussion

SQ3R technique is found to be a good way to improve the students' reading comprehension. Formerly, the students had difficulties in finding the main ideas and detail information on the generic structure of biographical recount texts namely orientation, events, and reorientation. It was because they rarely practiced and were only taught on how to find the main ideas and the detail information by simply reading the whole text without given any guidance. From the findings, the discussion was written as the following.

In *survey* section, the students could easily get the overview and the main idea on the orientation, events, and reorientation of biographical recount text by surveying it before reading. The students were also stimulated and got a chance to activate and relate the new information presented with their background knowledge. This finding supported the statement of Yuksel (2012) who said that the prior knowledge activation is one of the vital necessary components in establishing an effective learning. Hence, it was really helping for the students to let them relate the information they have already known with the upcoming one to better understand the text further.

Besides, this step allowed the students to prepare their mind for the subject at hand and also predict what the text would be about as Robinson (1946, p. 29) mentioned that by surveying the text before it is read, the reader would estimate what the lesson is about. In short, through *survey* section, the students were able to improve their reading comprehension by noting the structure and the organization of the text by recognizing the content of each part of it along the survey process.

In *question* section, the questions generated based on the information acquired during the previous step and their prior knowledge were expected to lead the students to comprehend in a way that they could have expectations and make predictions of the text.

This was agreed with Robinson (1946, p. 29) who argued that by generating questions, the reader would be able to arouse their curiosity and so increase their comprehension toward the text. Hence, through *question* section, the students were able to improve their reading comprehension by the process of generating questions which could lead the students become more active to search for the answer on the orientation, events, and reorientation parts when they read the text to identify the main idea and the detail information.

While in *reading* section, the students had in depth reading session throughout the orientation, events and reorientation parts. They became an effective reader because they have a goal to find the answer of their questions when they read. This idea was in line with Robinson (1946) who described the reading portion of SQ3R as “an active search for the answer” (p. 29). In this step, the students’ needs to identify the main idea and figure out the detail information was resolved. They were supposed to focus only on main idea and important information which supported the main idea as written in the questions. Hence, through *read* section, the students were able to improve their reading comprehension by answering questions which led the students to identify the main idea and detail information on each parts of the text while reading the text.

In *recite* section, the students from each group shared their questions and the answers to the class without looking up to their notes. This point was in line with Robinson (1946 p. 30) who claimed that “this tends to check wheather the reader has comprehended the material, and the recitation fixes the ideas in memory”. Hence, the goal is actually to make sure that the students were able to provide the answers asked in *question* section with the information they obtained from their mind, not from the text anymore. The discussion of the questions from the whole paragraphs of the orientation, events and reorientation part as the follow up activity enabled the students to go deeper to comprehend the content of each part of it. Those questions helped to stimulate the

discussion by delivering some ideas, thoughts, suggestions and even questions.

The idea here was the students would not be able to give ideas, thoughts, suggestions or questions when they did not read it. But the reading itself did not go without guidance. So, the questions that have been made by the other groups worked to assist them in reading as a guideline to go on each section of the text effectively. However, whenever they found any irrelevant or insignificant question which was not helping for them to get the main idea and detail information of each part of the text, they could share their ideas to revise that question. All in all, through *recite* section, the students were able to improve their reading comprehension by having discussion and responding towards the other group’s work. From the groups’ questions and the discussion, the students were able to identify the main idea and cover the detail information of each parts of the text.

Lastly, in *review* section, the students were given one more opportunity to confirm their ability to comprehend the whole text especially in finding the main idea and the detail information by listing the main idea and its detail information from the orientation, events and reorientation part as well as the summary. McDaniel and Fisher (1991) revealed that re-reading activity provides immediate feedback which has been shown to bolster the comprehension. Besides, Robinson (1946, p. 31) also stated that “the total outline should be looked over to get an over-all easily visualized picture”. In conclusion, through *review* section, the students were able to improve their reading comprehension by summarizing each paragraph to let them determine which one is the core and which one is the supporting information so that it helps them to fix the information in their memory.

Above all, the researcher noticed that the sections of SQ3R which worked out the most to improve students reading comprehension in finding main idea and detail information on the orientation, events and reorientation of biographical recount text are *question*, *recite* and *review* section. The process of self-generated questions in *question*



section, reciting all the questions and the answers in *recite* section and summarizing the information in *review* section were a perfect combination to help students in finding the main idea and detail information which improved students reading comprehension.

Finally, the findings are in line to the reports of the previous studies done by Carlston (2011), Intan (2010) and Puteri (2016) as mentioned in the background in which supported the notion that SQ3R technique enhance the students' reading comprehension. In short, the findings confirmed, in a real setting, that employing SQ3R as a well-structured reading comprehension technique to reading biographical recount text improved students' reading comprehension on biographical recount text especially on the orientation, events and reorientation parts. On the orientation, the students easily understood the background information presented such as who, what, where and how a particular person is. On the events, they easily identified the detail information which describes a particular person. Lastly, on the reorientation, they easily discovered the concluding comments express a personal opinion regarding the person described.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

Referring to the discussion of the previous chapter, it could be seen that the students improved their reading comprehension of biographical recount text after being taught by using SQ3R technique. Besides, the students score were clearly described their improvement in reading comprehension. The better achievement was gained through the suitable technique in the learning process that applied. By having SQ3R as a good reading comprehension technique, the students gained better achievement. In short, as the quality of the teaching and learning process has gradually changed and improved into the better one, the result of the study would go on balance.

### Suggestions

Based on the conclusion above, it can be seen that SQ3R technique can improve students' reading comprehension of biographical recount text. However, the researcher found some struggle in practicing the *question*, *recite*, and *review* section. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following suggestions.

First, in *question* section, it is suggested to maximize the survey process in activating and relating students prior knowledge with the information presented on the text. The teacher also suggested to have the *survey* section done by making sure that the students get the overall information of each paragraph. If the *survey* section has completely done, it would be much easier for students to generate questions in *question* section.

Second, in *recite* section, the teacher may offer an extra point to boost students participation in delivering the group's questions and the answers so that the the class can form a lively discussion. Third, *review* section, the teacher should help students to determine which one is the core and which one is the supporting information of the paragraph so that at the end they will be able make a conclusion by using their own words.

Lastly, the time management is also needed to be consider due to the complexity of this technique. The teacher must tell the time limit of each parts of SQ3R technique at the beginning of the lesson and along the process of practicing the technique to prevent the uneffectiveness of the learning process.

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