USING SQ3R READING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION OF TENTH GRADERS AT SMA NEGERI 1 SRENGAT

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to find out how SQ3R reading strategy helps tenth graders of SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, Buit, East Java to solve their problems in reading descriptive texts. The study is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) which consists of two cycles. In every meeting, the researcher lead the class to implement the SQ3R reading strategy which involves several steps, that is, (1) Surveying, (2) Questioning, (3) Reading, (4) Reciting, and (5) Reviewing. It was found that SQ3R reading strategy could help improve the students’ ability in reading descriptive texts by providing a structured approach for reading activities.

Keywords: reading ability, SQ3R reading strategy, descriptive text

Second language reading comprehension is known as a highly complex skill to master (Phakiti, 2006). New vocabularies and different text structure may cause the difficulties to foreign language learners to master the language. That is also the main challenge for many students of ESL. As stated by Carlston (2011), one of the barriers to master reading comprehension is students’ inability to engage the text when they do read. Ineffective reading may cause the students to find difficulty in comprehending the text.

In addition, reading and literacy researchers agree that reading activities always comprise both decoding process and comprehension (Shepherd & Selden, 2011). Sheperd and Sheldon (2011) state that research on comprehension indicates that good readers employ several strategies before, during, and after they read. It means that a structured reading strategy could help the reader to focus their reading aim on the comprehension of the text; therefore, memory of the information from the text is achieved through understanding. Thus, the absence of reading strategies could lead the readers into ineffective reading activities.

The results of preliminary study carried out at class X-C of SMA Negeri 1 Srengat reveal that most of the students had low reading comprehension, especially in reading descriptive texts. This conclusion is based on the result of the pre-test which showed that only 8 out of 38 students could pass the minimum passing grade, that is 70. From these 38 students, only 8 students scored above 70 (20%), 20 students scored between minimum passing grade and average score of the class (52%), and the rest scored below the average score that is 52.8 (28%). The result of the questionnaires given to the students also showed that most of the students had problem in comprehending the text. This indicates that the students need a particular treatment or strategy to help them improve their reading comprehension, especially in reading descriptive texts.
A number of studies on the use of SQ3R strategy have been conducted. Carlston’s (2011) study found that when students use SQ3R strategies (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. In line with Carlston, research carried out by Indahyati (2008) in MAN 3 Malang also showed that the students were able to make positive progress after the implementation of SQ3R strategy. The research showed that before the implementation of the strategy, only 10% of the students were able to achieve proper level of reading comprehension.

Considering the previous successes of SQ3R strategy implementation to solve reading comprehension issues, the researcher decided to implement this strategy to solve reading comprehension problem of the students in SMA Negeri 1 Srengat, Blitar, East Java. Related to the students’ problems in comprehending the text, SQ3R strategy seems to be a potential solution as it provides the students with a structured reading strategy which can help them comprehend the text.

METHOD

The objective of the research is to examine how SQ3R can help the students to solve their problems in reading comprehension. In line with the objective, the design of the study is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Classroom Action Research is an effective research design in improving the quality of English teachers’ performance in the teaching and learning process (Latief, 2009). CAR is conducted to study the real situation in school using particular theories in order to improve the quality and the result of teaching activities. There were two cycles in this study; each of the cycles comprised two meetings, covering four stages namely planning, implementing, observing, and reviewing.

The study involved 38 tenth graders from X-C in SMA Negeri 1 Srengat as the subjects, with 17 male and 21 female students. During the implementation, the researcher was the one who delivered the lesson and introduced the strategy to the students. Meanwhile the classroom English teacher acted as the observer. During the implementation of the research, the researcher collected several kinds of data using a number of instruments. The first instrument was two sets of tests, the pre-test and the post-test. These tests were used to measure the student reading comprehension progress.

Then second instrument was students’ questionnaires. There were two kinds of student questionnaires used in this research; the first one was distributed during the preliminary study, while the other one was distributed at the end of the research. The questionnaires were used to find out students’ attitude toward reading problems. The third instrument was interview guides used for the interviews with the classroom English
teacher during the preliminary study and at the end of the research. The guides contained several questions about the students’ reading comprehension issues.

The next instrument was observation checklists to record students’ participation during the lessons. In addition, field notes were used to help the researcher to note the detailed condition of the class during the implementation stage of the research.

Furthermore, the researcher decided to use three criteria of success. The criteria used to determine whether or not the implementation of the strategy was successful are:

- 70% of the students score higher than or equal to 70 in the post-test;
- 70% of the students made 10 point or higher improvement compared to the pre-test, and
- the mean of the students’ post-test score is at least 70.

During the implementation and observation stages, all the data acquired using the instruments were analyzed and evaluated on the basis of the criteria of success to determine whether or not the research needed to be continued to the next cycle, and if so, what revisions were to be made.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The results of the study covers information on the students’ performance and responses toward the implementation of the SQ3R reading strategy, and the procedure by which the SQ3R reading strategy can be used to improve the students’ reading comprehension.

**Findings**

*Students’ Performance During the Implementation*

The results of the post-test 1 showed that only 19 out of 38 students (50%) passed the minimum passing grade of 7, and the average score of the students was 64.7. Meanwhile, the results of post-test 2 showed that 28 out of 38 students (73.7%) passed the minimum passing grade and the average score of the students was 75.1. The result of the post-test 2 also showed that the students were able to identify main ideas as well as obtain more detailed information from the text. In addition, based on the data from the observation checklist and field notes, the students’ participation in the second cycle was higher compared to the first cycle. They were more active in answering the researcher’s questions. The students were very cooperative during the implementation of the strategy and they were no longer reluctant to speak in their groups.

*Responses toward the Implementation of the SQ3R Reading Strategy*

The results of the questionnaire showed that most of the students gave positive response toward the implementation of the SQ3R reading strategy in reading activities in
the class. It can be seen from the students’ answers regarding whether or not the implementation of the procedure of SQ3R reading strategy helped them in comprehending a text. It was found that 34 students (89.5%) stated that the procedure of SQ3R reading strategy was very helpful for them, while the other 4 students (10.5%) answered that the procedure was quite helpful.

In response to the second question which was about whether or not the implementation of the procedure of SQ3R reading strategy had motivated them to learn English, it was found out that 30 students (79%) admitted that the procedure of SQ3R reading strategy was really motivating. Another 5 students (13.1%) stated that the procedure was quite motivating, while the other 3 students (7.9%) stated that the procedure did not affect them at all. Moreover, the students’ responses related to the last question, that is, about whether or not they would implement the SQ3R strategy in the future, it was found out that 34 students (89.5%) considered applying the procedure in reading English texts in the future, while the other 4 students (10.5%) stated that they were not interested in applying the procedure in the future.

**Suggested Procedure of SQ3R Reading Strategy**

The suggested procedure by which implementation of SQ3R reading strategy is carried out successfully in a reading class is as follows:

- The teacher should start the lesson by activating the students’ prior knowledge.
- In the very first step of the strategy, that is, “surveying”, the teacher should guide the students to survey the text by skimming the text to get the key words and the main ideas.
- In the second step of the strategy, that is, “questioning”, the teacher should guide the students to generate questions based on the key words and main ideas acquired in the previous step.
- In the third step of the strategy, that is, “reading”, the teacher should guide the students to get the detailed information from the text, reminding them to get the answers to their own questions, and not to let them write notes during this step.
- In the fourth step of the strategy, that is, “reciting”, the teacher should guide the students to write notes and the answers to the questions that have been generated in “questioning” step, and not to let them open the text again.
- In the fifth step of the strategy, that is, “reviewing”, the teacher should guide the students to review the text and help them to find whether there is any missing information during the first reading session.
Reward method might be helpful to motivate the students so that they will be enthusiastic in following the lesson. The use of pair and group discussion is very helpful in giving the students opportunity to share their ideas with their friends.

Discussions

It could be seen that the results of this study indicated that SQ3R reading strategy is an appropriate strategy to improve the students’ reading comprehension, especially in reading descriptive texts. The students’ problems in comprehending a text, especially descriptive text, could be solved gradually by the implementation of SQ3R reading strategy. The discussion in the steps of SQ3R as they were implemented in the cycles is explained as follows:

Activating Prior Knowledge

Before teaching the students how to implement SQ3R, the researcher helped the students by activating their prior knowledge related to the topic of the text. This is not part of the SQ3R strategy, yet this is important for students since it helps them to prepare to digest new information in the text. The prior knowledge activation is one of the vital necessary components in establishing an effective learning (Yuksel, 2012). This was proven to be useful to generate the students’ ideas about the text and to lead them to it. The purpose of this step was to stimulate the students to be ready to connect their prior information to the new information in the passage. The prior knowledge activation was done by asking them several questions related to the topic of the text.

Surveying

In the first step of the strategy, that is, surveying, the researcher guided the students to survey the title and the heading of the text. In this step, the researcher gave the students example of how to get general ideas of what the text is going total about by “surveying” or browsing through the text. The information acquired can be in the form of key word and main ideas of the text. This step was useful for helping the students to get an overview of the contents of the text and how the text was structured. This is in line with Agudelo, Ávila, and Lopez (2007) who also state that in order to comprehend the text, it is necessary for the reader to extract the key words in order to understand the whole text.

Questioning

In the second step of the strategy, that is, questioning, the teacher guided the students to generate questions based on the information acquired during the “surveying” step and their prior knowledge. It is expected that generating questions would help the
students comprehend in a way that they can have expectations and make predictions of the text, and become more to search for the answer to the questions when they later read the text. Robinson (1961, as cited in Baier, 2011: 21) also states that by generating questions based on the information acquired during the “surveying” step and prior knowledge, the reader will be able to arouse their curiosity and so increase their comprehension toward the text.

Reading

In the next step of the strategy, that is, reading, the students had in depth reading session, allowing them to read the text carefully in order to understand the text. In this step, they were supposed to focus only on main ideas and important information which support the main idea. They were not allowed to take a note during the implementation of this step as they had to focus on getting the detailed information. This is in line with Soedarsono (2001) who states that during the implementation of “reading” step in SQ3R, the readers are not supposed to take any notes. Without focusing on the important information, the students could easily be distracted by unimportant details on the text. Robinson (1961) as cited in Baier (2011: 22) describes the “reading” portion of SQ3R strategy as an active search in order to get the answer.

Reciting

In the fourth step of the strategy, that is, reciting, the teacher instructed the students to answer their own prior questions made earlier without looking back at the text. This is in line with Robinson (1961, as cited in Baier, 2011: 22) who states that during the implementation of this step, the reader is not supposed to read or scan the text. The goal of this step is actually to make sure that the readers are able provide the answers asked before the “reading” session.

Reviewing

In the last step of the strategy, reviewing, the teacher instructed the students to review the text by re-reading it and checking their own notes for important information. Soedarsono (2001) states that during “review” step of SQ3R strategy, the reader should try to find information that they may have missed at “reading” step. A study conducted by McDaniel and Fisher (1991) revealed that re-reading activity provides immediate feedback which has been shown to bolster the testing effect.
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions
The findings of the current research showed that the students who used SQ3R reading strategy performed reading activity better, especially in reading descriptive text. The strategy had apparently provided the students with a structured reading technique, which could lead them to comprehend the text better. Compared to the students’ performance during the preliminary study, the students’ performance in the two cycles showed that through the five steps of the strategy, the students were able to identify main ideas as well as obtain more detailed information from the text. Furthermore, the data acquired from the observation checklist and field notes showed that the students’ participation in the second cycle improved compared to the first cycle. They were more active in answering the researcher’s questions. The students were very cooperative during the implementation of the strategy and they were no longer reluctant to speak in their groups.

Suggestions
Some suggestions are proposed to English teachers and researchers who want to conduct further research on the use of the SQ3R reading strategy in teaching of reading skill. Teachers are suggested to implement the SQ3R strategy in their teaching to improve their students’ reading comprehension. Further researchers are suggested to conduct a study on the implementation of SQ3R reading strategy in the teaching of other genres of texts to explore the use of the strategy in wider contexts.

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