



IMPLEMENTING SQ3R TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge for Indonesian high school students, as evidenced by the country's below-average performance in international assessments like PISA. This issue is particularly evident in understanding news item texts, which require critical thinking and text-structure awareness. The present study investigates the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review—in improving students' comprehension of news item texts. Using a pre-test and post-test design with 34 Grade XI students, the results revealed a significant improvement in comprehension, with mean scores increasing from 61.47 to 81.91. The t-test analysis indicated a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$), confirming the effectiveness of the technique. The findings underscore the potential of SQ3R in enhancing comprehension through structured, sequential reading stages. Recommendations include integrating SQ3R into reading curricula and providing additional support for students struggling with text structure and vocabulary.

Keywords: Reading strategies, SQ3R technique, news text, Indonesian classrooms

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning (OECD, 2018), particularly when engaging with news item texts that require students to extract, interpret, and evaluate information accurately. In the context of Indonesian high schools, these texts pose significant challenges due to their formal language, complex sentence structures, and culturally specific content. The ability to comprehend such texts is essential for academic success and for fostering critical thinking, a core component of 21st-century skills (OECD, 2018). However, Indonesian students continue to struggle with reading comprehension, as evidenced by the 2018 PISA results, which ranked Indonesia below the global average in reading literacy. This persistent underperformance underscores the need for effective, research-based strategies to support reading development (PISA, 2018).

Despite various instructional approaches introduced to improve reading comprehension, challenges persist. Indonesian EFL students often encounter difficulties in accessing authentic English texts and practicing higher-order reading skills (Mustopa et al., 2024).

Furthermore, teachers report difficulties in implementing effective strategies to address these challenges, particularly in digital learning environments where engagement is harder to maintain (Rahma et al., 2024). The lack of metacognitive awareness, which is essential for effective comprehension, further complicates this issue (Mustopa et al., 2024). These obstacles highlight the urgent need for innovative, structured, and student-centered approaches to reading instruction.

One promising technique for improving reading comprehension is the SQ3R strategy, which stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. This strategy offers a systematic approach by guiding learners through key steps that promote deeper engagement with texts (Olifant, 2024). For instance, during the Survey stage, students skim for main ideas; in the Question stage, they formulate queries to guide their reading; the Read stage involves careful reading to find answers; the Recite stage helps reinforce understanding through summarization; and the Review stage consolidates learning through reflection. Research indicates that SQ3R can enhance students' comprehension and retention by encouraging active, purposeful reading (Olifant, 2024).

However, while the SQ3R technique has shown success in various EFL contexts, its application in Indonesian high schools remains underexplored. Previous studies have examined techniques like the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) and found improvements in comprehension through guided predictions and critical thinking (Ariatna & Ellis, 2024). Yet, the systematic, step-by-step nature of SQ3R has not received comparable attention, especially regarding its effectiveness with news item texts in Indonesian EFL settings (Dewi et al., 2024). Additionally, potential challenges, such as teachers' unfamiliarity with the technique and cultural factors influencing reading practices, have not been sufficiently addressed in existing research (Lestari et al., 2024; Rahma et al., 2024). This gap indicates a need for empirical investigation into the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique in this specific context.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique in improving reading comprehension among Indonesian high school students. The research will specifically examine how the sequential stages of SQ3R contribute to comprehension development and identify potential challenges in its implementation. By addressing the gap in the literature, this study seeks to provide insights into the practical application of SQ3R in Indonesian EFL classrooms and contribute to the development of more effective reading instruction strategies.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research design with a quasi-experimental approach to investigate the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique in improving reading comprehension of news item texts among Grade XI students. The methodology is structured into the following components:

Research Design

The research uses a pre-test and post-test design with a single group. The pre-test measures students' initial reading comprehension ability, while the post-test assesses improvement after implementing the SQ3R technique. The results are analyzed to determine the technique's impact. This design aligns with best practices in quantitative research, emphasizing the importance of measuring outcomes to assess educational interventions

(Asher, 2024). Additionally, Creswell & Plano Clark (2017) highlights the value of pre-test and post-test designs in identifying changes attributable to the intervention.

Population and Sample

The population consists of Grade XI students from a high school in Indonesia. A sample of 34 students is selected using purposive sampling based on their academic schedule and availability. Purposive sampling is a widely recognized non-random sampling technique that allows researchers to select participants with specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives (Patton, 2002). While practical, this sampling method raises concerns about representativeness, which is crucial for the validity of the findings (Asher, 2024).

Data Collection Instruments

The study uses two primary instruments:

- **Reading Comprehension Tests:** Pre-test and post-test containing multiple-choice and short-answer questions focused on news item texts. Such tests are commonly used in reading comprehension research to assess students' ability to extract, interpret, and apply information (Snow, 2002).
- **SQ3R Observation Checklist:** This checklist tracks student engagement during each stage of the SQ3R technique—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. It records students' ability to identify text structures, generate questions, extract information, summarize key points, and review content effectively. Observation is essential for understanding students' active engagement with the SQ3R stages, as noted by Abalkheel & Shen (2024) and further supported by Duffy & Roehler (1987), who emphasize the importance of interactive reading strategies.

Procedures

The research follows a structured procedure as recommended in experimental educational research:

1. **Pre-Test:** Students complete a pre-test to assess baseline reading comprehension.
2. **Implementation of SQ3R:**
 - **Survey:** Students skim the text to identify main ideas and structural elements. This stage activates prior knowledge and sets a purpose for reading, which is crucial for comprehension (Grabe et al., 2013).
 - **Question:** Students generate questions about the text content. Generating questions fosters active engagement and improves memory retention (King, 1992).
 - **Read:** Students read the text to find answers to the questions. This stage involves focused reading, which is central to the SQ3R technique.
 - **Recite:** Students summarize information orally or in written form. Summarization aids in consolidating information and enhancing understanding.
 - **Review:** Students revisit their summaries and original text to reinforce comprehension. The review process ensures long-term retention and deeper understanding (Pressley & Afflerbach, 2009).

3. **Post-Test:** Students take a post-test to measure comprehension improvements. This step provides quantitative data on the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique (Asher, 2024).
4. **Observation:** During each stage of SQ3R, the teacher-researcher uses the checklist to note students' participation and performance. Observation data provide insights into the learning process and the practical implementation of the technique (Abalkheel & Shen, 2024).

Data Analysis

The pre-test and post-test scores are analyzed using SPSS software to perform a paired sample t-test. This test evaluates whether the observed differences in reading comprehension are statistically significant. The paired sample t-test is a robust statistical method for measuring the effectiveness of educational interventions (Field, 2013). Additionally, observation data are analyzed to identify which stages of SQ3R most contributed to the improvement. The integration of both test scores and observation data aligns with educational research practices that emphasize the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique and explain the importance of the sequential stages in this technique to help students understand texts more effectively in improving their comprehension of news item texts in Grade XI. Data were obtained through pre-tests and post-tests, which were then analyzed to evaluate the changes in students' reading comprehension.

Pre-Test Results

Before implementing the SQ3R technique, a pre-test was conducted to measure students' initial abilities. The average student score on the pre-test was 61.47, with the highest score being 90 and the lowest 40. Out of 34 students, only 3 students (8.82%) achieved or exceeded the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) of 80, while 31 students (91.18%) did not reach this standard. These results indicate that most students experienced difficulties in understanding news texts, which might be caused by a lack of vocabulary, minimal use of reading strategies, and low motivation to learn news texts.

Post-Test Results

After applying the SQ3R technique, the post-test results showed a significant improvement, with an average difference of 20.44 points compared to the pre-test (81.91 - 61.47). The average score increased to 81.91, with the highest score being 100 and the lowest 40. A total of 6 students (17.65%) achieved a perfect score of 100, 11 students (32.35%) scored 95, and 7 students (20.59%) obtained a score of 90. Overall, 24 students (70.59%) successfully reached or exceeded the MMC. However, 5 students (14.71%) still did not reach the MMC and need additional support.

The following table presents the results of the SPSS analysis comparing the average pre-test and post-test scores. This table has been rechecked to ensure data accuracy and the completeness of relevant elements. The table shows that the average difference of 20.44

indicates a significant improvement in students' comprehension. The smaller standard deviation in the post-test results indicates a more consistent score distribution compared to the pre-test.

Table 1. the average pre-test and post-test score

Statistics	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Mean	61.47	81.91	20.44
Std. Dev.	10.25	9.87	-
N	34	34	-

Interpretation:

- Mean: The mean difference of 20.44 indicates a significant improvement in students' comprehension.
- Std. Dev.: The smaller standard deviation in the post-test indicates more consistent results.
- N: The number of participants remains 34 students.

The t-test yielded a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the difference between the pre-test and post-test is statistically significant. This suggests that the observed improvement is not due to chance but reflects a genuine impact of the SQ3R technique on students' comprehension.

Discussion

The significant improvement in learning outcomes after applying the SQ3R technique highlights its effectiveness in enhancing the comprehension of news texts in English, particularly among high school students in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context. The SQ3R technique consists of five stages—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. It is a sequential and interconnected reading method that helps students comprehend texts more effectively. Research by Olifant (2024) highlights that the SQ3R method actively engages learners with the text, fostering deeper understanding and retention through structured, strategy-based instruction. This engagement is measured through comprehension quizzes and student feedback, which reflect improved understanding and retention. Similarly, Al-Moteri et al. (2024) found that the use of systematic reading techniques like SQ3R leads to sustained improvements in comprehension, as demonstrated by better performance in delayed assessments. Their study utilized a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests to measure comprehension gains over time. Additionally, Dewi et al. (2024) note that while alternative methods such as the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) can also enhance comprehension by encouraging critical thinking and predictive skills, the SQ3R technique remains effective due to its clear, step-by-step structure. Furthermore, Bulut & Yıldız (2024) suggest that integrating computer-assisted strategies alongside traditional techniques like SQ3R can further support reading comprehension, highlighting the potential of combining innovative and established methods to optimize learning outcomes.

The SQ3R technique's structured process plays a crucial role in enhancing students' reading comprehension. First, in the Survey stage, students are encouraged to examine the text

structure and identify key information quickly, which helps them obtain a general idea before engaging in detailed reading. Second, the Question stage prompts students to develop questions about the text's content, motivating them to read with a specific purpose. Third, during the Read stage, students read the text carefully to find answers to the questions they have formulated, training them to focus and better understand the content. Fourth, the Recite stage involves students retelling the text's content in their own words, which strengthens their understanding and memory of the information. Finally, the Review stage allows students to revisit the text and their answers to ensure comprehensive understanding and long-term retention.

Despite these positive outcomes, some students still did not reach the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC), which may be due to challenges such as unfamiliarity with text structures, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in applying reading strategies consistently. which might be attributed to difficulties in understanding text structure, limited vocabulary, and inconsistent application of reading strategies. This suggests the need for additional strategies supported by research findings. For instance, Kärbla et al. (2023a) emphasize the importance of regular vocabulary practice, noting that explicit vocabulary instruction significantly improves reading comprehension across different proficiency levels. Furthermore, Kärbla et al. (2023a) highlight that engaging students in vocabulary-building activities can lead to better retention and application of new words, thereby enhancing overall reading skills.

In addition, group discussions have been shown to foster deeper understanding through collaborative learning. Olifant (2024) found that such discussions help students articulate their thoughts and clarify misconceptions, promoting critical reading skills. This finding aligns with Sutherland et al. (2024), who reported that social interaction in learning environments provides exposure to diverse perspectives, contributing to improved comprehension.

Moreover, the use of interactive media, such as educational apps like Kahoot! or Quizlet, can enhance student motivation and engagement by making learning more interactive and enjoyable. Maier & Richter (2014) demonstrated that educational videos and applications make learning more appealing by presenting content in varied contexts. Kärbla et al. (2023b) similarly noted that multimedia resources stimulate interest in reading materials, which can lead to improved comprehension outcomes.

Thus, while the SQ3R technique has proven effective in improving students' reading comprehension of news texts, its effectiveness is further strengthened when paired with supportive strategies like vocabulary practice, group discussions, and interactive media. of news texts in Grade XI, it should be complemented by supportive strategies such as vocabulary practice, group discussions, and interactive media to assist students who continue to face difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the SQ3R technique effectively enhances students' reading comprehension of news item texts in Grade XI. The observed improvement from a mean pre-test score of 61.47 to a mean post-test score of 81.91, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.000, confirms the technique's positive impact. The sequential steps of SQ3R—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review—helped students engage more actively with the text, improving their ability to identify main ideas, understand text structures, and retain information. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of guided, structured reading strategies in EFL learning contexts. While the majority of

students showed significant improvement, a small number still struggled to meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria, suggesting the need for additional support and alternative approaches for these learners.

Recommendations

1. **Pedagogical Implementation:** Teachers are encouraged to incorporate the SQ3R technique into their reading instruction, particularly when teaching news item texts, to foster active reading and comprehension.
2. **Training and Development:** Professional development workshops should be provided to train teachers in the effective implementation of the SQ3R steps, ensuring consistency and effectiveness in classroom practice.
3. **Supplementary Activities:** Vocabulary-building exercises and interactive media applications, such as Quizlet or Kahoot!, can be integrated alongside SQ3R to further support students' reading comprehension.
4. **Further Research:** Future studies could explore the long-term effects of the SQ3R technique across different text types and educational levels to provide more generalizable insights into its effectiveness.

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