

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING SQ3R TO TEACH READING SKILLS

Dr. Ahmad Asiri

Head of Joint Programs

KKU

&

Dr. Mowaffaq. M. Momani

Academic Supervisor – QEHC

PYP – **KKU**

ABSTRACT

Comprehension is the main objective of reading and affects the cognizance of all subjects. Learners are effective readers when they are capable of extracting vital information from texts and associate the new information with their background knowledge. SQ3R is a strategy that activates learners' schemata through 'survey'. Research shows that students using SQ3R reading comprehension strategy performed reading activities better than those who did not. By using SQ3R strategy students can retain several reading pages, which otherwise are very stressful for them. They can take down notes in their own words, recite them and review them as they finish chapter or at any other suitable time. Teachers can use this strategy to make the reading process less difficult and more interesting.

Keywords: SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review).

INTRODUCTION

Second language reading comprehension is known as a highly complex skill to master (Phakiti, 2006). New words and diverse text structure may cause problems to EFL learners to acquire complete knowledge of the language. That is also the major challenge for a number of students of ESL. Carlston (2011), states that one of the barriers to master reading comprehension is students' inability to engage the text when they do read. Poor reading may cause difficulty to students in comprehending the text. Reading is a receptive skill. It is an intricate mental activity which is essential for the kind of knowledge society that one envisages in the globalized context. Therefore, the students of modern world must know how to learn from reading and how to get in the present educated society. A reader can lead others to light. Thomas Jefferson, a renowned educationist, states that people who read can be free because reading eliminates ignorance and misconception.

Effective reading takes place when the reader grasps the words of reading material, understands their denotation and connotation, responds to them and assimilates them. Reading process involves perception and comprehension. Comprehension is cognitive whereas perception is mechanical. Johnson (1971), a famous educationist, states that comprehension works as a building bridge between the new and the known. Comprehension is not just a process of recording or reporting exactly what has been read. Reading comprehension involves the coherence of the reader's previous experience and knowledge about language and the world. It also involves integrated techniques such as predicting, skimming, scanning, questioning, summarizing, finding out meanings of vocabulary in context, and observing one's own comprehension. They are collective processes for forming meanings. In an EFL/ESL classroom, a part of paragraph followed by a set of questions is usually given to students. The questions mostly begin with 'what' 'where', 'who and when'. The students can look for the correct answer to these questions easily but it is rather difficult

to answer intellectual questions beginning with 'how' and 'why'. Where there is no space for intellectual thinking, students will become passive and their approach towards reading will not be evaluative, analytical and questionable. It is not the matter of taking in the words given on the page but comprehending what they read. The skills of comprehension cannot be developed except if there is a proper guidance from teacher's part. Development of the comprehension process depends largely on what Taba (1965) identifies as 'cognitive commerce'. In order to develop students' intellectual thinking and improve their reading comprehension skills, SQ3R strategy which stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recall and Review can be introduced. SQ3R is a well-liked reading strategy. It replicates the reading patterns of competent readers, offers effective examples for weak readers to improve, and provides understanding and goal to reading. SQ3R strategy not only enables students improve their reading skills but also makes the reading process less difficult and more interesting.

1. Survey

The first step, survey or skim, advises that one should resist the temptation to read the book and instead first go through a chapter and note headings, sub-headings and other outstanding features, such as figures, tables, and summary paragraphs. This survey step only takes 3-5 minutes, but it provides an outline or framework for what will be presented. The reader should identify ideas and formulate questions about the content of the chapter.

2. Question

Generate questions about the content of the reading. For example, convert headings and sub-headings into questions, and then look for answers in the content of the text. Other more general questions may also be formulated:

- *What is this chapter about?*
- *What question is this chapter trying to answer?*
- *How does this information help me?*
- The Question step again only takes 3-5 minutes to complete, but it will motivate the reader to seek answers to the questions.

3. Read (R¹)

Use the background work done with "S" and "Q" in order to begin reading actively. This means reading in order to answer the questions raised under "Q". Passive reading, in contrast, results in merely reading without engaging with the study material.

4. Recite (R²)

The second "R" refers to the part known as "Recite." The reader should try to retrieve from memory what was learned in the same manner as telling someone else about the information. It is important that the reader use his/her own words in order to formulate and conceptualize the material. Try recalling and identifying major points (heading/subheadings) and answers to questions from the "Q" step. The Recite step may be done either in an oral or written format and is related to the benefits of retrieval in boosting long-term memory for the material.

5. Review (R³)

The final "R" is "Review." In fact, before becoming acquainted with this method a student probably just uses the R & R method; Read and Review. Provided the student has followed all recommendations, the student should have a study sheet and should test himself or herself by attempting to recall the key phrases. This method instructs the diligent student to immediately review all sections pertaining to any key words forgotten.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SQ3R is a reading comprehension strategy devised for reading textbook and assignments for diverse learners. It develops an intrusive, dynamic attitude towards learning and doubles the cognitive processes of successful learners. Robinson devised this strategy in early 1940s (Robinson, 1941). It was also named as 'the grandfather of study strategies' (Lipson & Wixson, 2003). SQ3R stands for five steps that the students follow in using this method. They are Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review. Step1 is survey where the students get information by skimming the title of the reading text, the introduction, illustrations, pictures and captions. They then underline new words, and guess their meanings. In case of many paragraphs, students try to skim the heading and extract main points, which are subsequently developed. This process should take only few minutes (Robinson, 1941) as students only look for headings. Robinson vies that "surveying" the text prior to reading leads students towards better understating of main idea. This helps the learner to organize what he is reading.

Step2 is question. Robinson (1941) advocates the use of questioning by citing Washburn's and Holmes' work (as cited in Robinson). Students change the topic headings into a question. Even for getting more meaningful ideas they can convert the first sentence of the paragraph in question as well. Questioning is a process to know the unknown. The more they question the more they will know. Robinson asserted, "This will arouse your curiosity and so increase comprehension" (p. 29). Thus questions deepen students' curiosity and they extract main points. Making a question needs sensible attempts on the part of the students even though they can convert a heading into a question very easily. Step 3 is reading where students try to find out the answers to the question they have made in the preceding step. Robinson (1941) describes the reading portion of SQ3R as "an active search for the answer" (p. 29). Finding answers to the questions should not be a dull and passive activity rather it should involve active cognition. Noting and underlining the new words, and using dictionaries for blocking items are just a few steps. The students should have the purpose of reading in their minds as they read each section rather running their eyes passively on each line.

Step 4 is to recite what has been read. The reader should not scan or read through the text to find the appropriate answers (Robinson, 1941). After reading, students close books and try to repeat and revise the answers to the questions in their own words. Students can skim again and repeat what they have recited. The reader should take brief notes with headings and subheadings while reading (Robinson, 1941). Writing down ideas, phrases and making notes is the best method to recite from memory. The Q, R-1, and R-2 should be repeated with each heading until the selection has been completely read (Robinson). This process can be repeated with the rest of headings and paragraphs till the entire chapter is completed. The final step of the SQ3R method or step 5 is *review* (R-3), and is justified by Spitzer's work supporting the technique (as cited in Robinson, 1941). After the completion of step 4, students can review their notes by looking at the main points and their relationship to each other. Then they can test their memory by reciting the main points and the sub points under

each heading. This can be done by covering up the notes and recalling the information. Numerous studies have been carried out on the use of SQ3R strategy. Carlston (2011) in his study *Benefits of Student Generated Note Packets: A Preliminary Investigation of SQ3R Implementation* found that students retained more information resulting better exam performance when they used SQ3R strategy. Indahyati (2008) in his study, *Improving Reading Comprehension of Eleven Graders of MAN 3 Malang through SQ3R Strategy* found that by implementing SQ3R strategy students showed positive progress in reading comprehension. Bier in his study carried out with fifth grade indicates that ‘SQ3R significantly improved fifth grade students overall comprehension scores of expository texts’ (Bier, 2011). He concluded that 68.7% of the students used in the study were of the opinion that they would ‘use the reading strategy SQ3R in the future’ (Bier, 2011). Orlando in his book *“Training Students to Use a Modified Version of SQ3R: An Instructional Strategy.”* says that SQ3R is one of the most extensively proposed techniques to facilitate textbook study. “Although intuitively recognized as superior to methods commonly used by students for studying, the modicum of research, which compares the effectiveness of SQ3R to other methods of study, has provided inconclusive empirical evidence to support the use of SQ3R” (Orlando, 1980, p. 215). Next section of this paper will highlight the importance of SQ3R as reading comprehension strategy for students and teachers.

Importance of SQ3R for Students and Teachers

Importance of SQ3R as reading comprehension strategy is evident from many experiments. These experiments show that SQ3R as a strategy improves students’ reading comprehension and proficiency. Students using this strategy collect and assimilate information and they need not to read the whole chapter and remember every bit of it. The Survey of SQ3R makes students ready for effective reading. Questioning unlocks new horizon by connecting them to the subject. Recitation gives students a chance to look back and check up on learning. The review process empowers students to tie up the entire chapter and increase their understanding. Another significance of the SQ3R strategy is that it helps students to retain several reading pages, which otherwise are very stressful for them. They can take down notes in their own words, recite them and review them as they finish chapter or at any other suitable time. Research shows that students using SQ3R reading comprehension strategy accomplished reading activities better than those who did not. This strategy equips students for more systematic and structured reading techniques, so they comprehend the text in a better way. It makes students active and co-operative. Reading activity remains no more a dull practice for them.

Artis (2008) states the significance and usefulness of SQ3R as: “Because students can independently learn the basics of the course via reading, it reduces the need for instructor monologues (passive learning) to cover that information” (p. 133). He argues that this enables students to be more active and involved in their learning. He maintains that SQ3R helps students change their negative impression about reading textbooks. Artis further states that “SQ3R introduces a diverse set of mega cognitive reading techniques in a way students can easily understand and implement” (p. 134). Bakken, Mastropieri, and Scruggs (1997), indicate that SQ3R is an effective source for students when they work at their own. SQ3R gradually allows students to be independent whereas other reading strategies have the students rely on the teacher for instructions. They acknowledge that some other strategies for instance, pre reading comprehension and study guides need “extensive material development” and therefore may be “difficult to implement consistently”. Schlozman and schlozman (2000), opines that SQ3R provides students who are likely to be distracted with a

focused view to discuss apparently challenging textbook tasks. SQ3R strategy is important for teachers too. Teachers can use this strategy to make the reading process less difficult and more interesting. They can incorporate several strategies into the EFL/ESL classrooms to help students in their development of reading skills. One way to develop students' reading abilities is by using direct instruction of study strategies. SQ3R is a direct instruction strategy used to enhance students' comprehension of descriptive texts. It is evident from Carlston (2011), Indahyati (2008) and Bier (2011) research that teachers who used SQ3R strategy in reading comprehension found it very useful and got better results. Following are some recommendations for teachers who want to use SQ3R strategy in teaching reading comprehension.

- (a) Teacher should not be pre-occupied with the idea that his students are expert in the study skills because many students rely on reading and rote memorization.
- (b) Teacher should inculcate students how to use SQ3R effectively and efficiently. Give students time to practice it.
- (c) Teacher should help his students in framing questions for text comprehension. Teacher should identify effective question and also extend feedback for enhancing the quality of questions.
- (d) Teacher should monitor the whole activities for successful implementation of the SQ3R.

CONCLUSION

Reading is an important skill. Students who are competent in reading skills are likely to become good learners and, therefore, display high achievement. However, many students are not competent in reading. They do not have sufficient basic reading skills required in the classroom and to perform future job-related tasks, which largely affects their future education and work. Several teaching reading comprehension strategies have been introduced but SQ3R is a matchless strategy in terms of its comprehensive effect. It offers a comprehensive outline of what a reader needs to achieve during reading. Reading comprehension involves the coherence of the reader's previous experience and knowledge about language and the world. Effective reading takes place when the reader grasps the words of reading material, understands their denotation and connotation, responds to them and assimilates them. SR3Ra direct instruction strategy used to enhance students' comprehension of descriptive texts. This strategy equips students for more systematic and structured reading techniques, so they comprehend the text in a better way. SR3R makes students active and co-operative. Reading activity remains no more a dull practice for them. It develops an intrusive, dynamic attitude towards learning and doubles the cognitive processes of successful learners.

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