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## Engaging Efl Students in Reading Comprehension Through SQ3R Techniques: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines of the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) technique in enhancing EFL students' reading comprehension at vocational high schools and explores students' responses to its implementation in reading activities. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved 35 students as participants. Data were collected through observations and interviews, then analyzed using Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the SQ3R technique enhances student engagement in reading, facilitates deeper comprehension of texts, and strengthens critical thinking skills. Moreover, students became more systematic in processing information, which contributed to improved retention and understanding. However, some students faced challenges, particularly in formulating relevant questions and summarizing key points effectively. These difficulties highlight the need for additional guidance and practice. The study recommends integrating digital tools to support SQ3R implementation and providing targeted training sessions to help students maximize the benefits of this technique, ensuring more effective and independent reading comprehension development.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia, according to the 2019 Alibaba National Reading Literacy Activity index report from the Ministry of Education and Culture is still ranked in the bottom 10 countries with low literacy levels (Program for International Student Assessment, 2019). There is a need for teaching strategies to increase Indonesian students' literacy. SQ3R technique can be one alternative to improve students' literacy in reading. SQ3R is important for improving literacy because it helps readers actively engage with the text, enhance critical thinking skill, and strengthens retention of the material learned.

In the last five years, many researchers have investigated the SQ3R in different context. Fong (2020) investigated the application of the SQ3R technique in the flipped classroom model to explore how this strategy can be adapted in different

learning environments. Abimbola et al. (2021) studied the use of the SQ3R technique to address the issue of aliteracy among high school students, focusing on changes in students' reading attitudes and behavior after the implementation of the method. Cataraja (2022) researched the impact of using the SQ3R technique on students' reading comprehension by comparing learning outcomes between students using the SQ3R technique and those using conventional reading strategies. Murdani (2023) the effect of SQ3R on student's reading comprehension of narrative text. Finally, Silfani (2024) investigated the use of the Beelinguapp application alongside the SQ3R method to determine how this technique helps students find main ideas, understand unfamiliar words, and identify implicit information in texts.

Although many studies focus on reading comprehension outcomes, there is still a lack of research that explicitly examines how the SQ3R technique affects student engagement in the reading process. It is important to conduct research related to student engagement because students are a key factor in the success of learning, especially in the context of EFL. This study will seek to understand how SQ3R can engage EFL students' engagement in reading activities.

This research aims to investigate how steps in SQ3R technique facilitate reading comprehension of EFL vocational students, and explore their responses in using the technique in reading activities. This study is expected to provide new insights and practical solutions for teachers to improve the quality of reading instruction in the digital era. Furthermore, it is also hoped that this research can have an impact on students' reading comprehension and improve literacy in Indonesia.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employed a case study with qualitative approach, focusing on 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. Data collection methods includes observation and interviews. Observations were carried out during the implementation of the SQ3R technique in reading sessions to capture students' engagement and behavior in real-time. Interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges while using the SQ3R technique. The interviews involved 5 students who were randomly selected to represent various points of view. To collect data through the interviews, a recorder was set up to document the responses of the selected students the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, ensuring a comfortable environment for the participants. The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step process proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) The researcher begins by transcribing the interviews conducted with participants, converting spoken responses into written text for analysis. Next, they identify key words and phrases that hold significant meaning and organize them into initial codes. In the following step, these codes are grouped into relevant themes based on their similarities and patterns.

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Once the themes are established, the researcher carefully reviews and refines them, ensuring they accurately represent the data. Each theme is then described in detail, highlighting key insights gained from the participants. Finally, the researcher analyzes the themes in relation to the research topic, drawing meaningful conclusions based on the findings. Google Classroom supported the implementation of SQ3R, facilitating access to reading materials and interactive tasks.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

This study presents findings obtained through systematic research. The researcher utilized observations and interviews as primary methods for data collection to gather essential information. The collected data provide valuable insights into engaging EFL students in reading comprehension using the SQ3R technique.

#### ***1. The Implementation SQ3R Technique***

In this lesson, the teacher provides a text for students to observe during the learning process using the SQ3R technique. The text, entitled "Bandung Sea of Fire," explains an important event in the history of Indonesia's struggle for independence. The text contains approximately 515 words.

##### **a. Survey Session**

The first step in the SQ3R method is the Survey stage, which helps students get a general overview of the text before engaging in more detailed reading. This process activates their prior knowledge and prepares their minds for the content they are about to read (Kintsch,1998).

In this stage, students began by scanning the text to familiarize themselves with its structure and main features. They were guided to look at the title, headings, subheadings, images, and any highlighted or bolded terms. This process activated their prior knowledge and prepared their minds for the content they were about to read. This approach encouraged students to engage with the text in a non-committal way, focusing on initial impressions and predictions. By doing so, they were able to anticipate the theme and content of the text, which built their confidence and primed them for the deeper reading that followed.

Based on findings at the survey stage indicate that students are highly engaged during the Survey phase, as they actively participate in predicting the main topic, analyzing the structure of the text, and identifying potential key points. This interactive process encourages students to critically assess the content before reading in detail. Several students noted main ideas, which helped them focus on important sections during reading, allowing them to gauge their familiarity with the subject matter and assess the relevance of the text to their personal interests and academic goals.

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The conclusion from the observations above indicates that the survey step in the SQ3R technique is effective in helping students comprehend texts. By identifying the main ideas before reading in depth, students can focus more on the key sections of the text (Nassaji, 2007). This not only enhances their understanding but also increases their engagement during the reading process. Additionally, the relevance of the text to their personal interests and academic goals provides extra motivation to explore the material more deeply, making the learning experience more meaningful and enjoyable.

### b. Question Sessions

In the Question stage of the SQ3R technique, the main focus is to help students develop questions based on their initial survey of the text. This step aims to build curiosity and provide them with a clear purpose for reading. Using the text title “The Sea of Fire in Bandung”, students were guided to create relevant questions that could be answered through deeper reading.

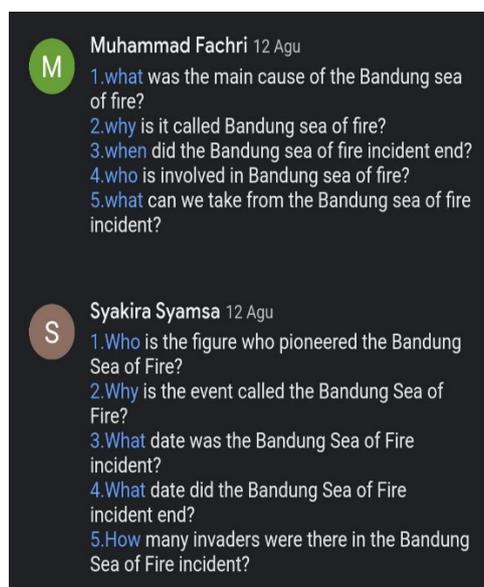


Figure 1. Students answer in Question stage

In the stage question in the SQ3R technique provides an engaging and valuable learning experience. Formulating questions before reading helped students focus and have a clear purpose while reading. With pre-made questions, students felt guided on what to look for in the text, preventing them from feeling overwhelmed by excessive information (Vacca, 2005).

For some students, this experience offered a new perspective on reading. They began to view it as an active process that required critical thinking, rather than just a passive activity. However, not all students find it easy to formulate high-quality questions. The student found it challenging to create questions during the question stage without reading the full text, leading to confusion. However, they saw it as an opportunity to think critically and engage with the material.

S5: *“At the question stage, because we haven't read the entire text, we are confused about what to ask. But the question stage can also be a challenge for me without reading first.”*

(Interview data 1)

In conclusion, the question stage plays a crucial role in encouraging students to think critically, even though it may initially cause confusion due to the lack of context from not having read the full text. Despite this challenge, it pushes students to actively engage with the material, fostering a deeper connection and better preparation for the reading process.

### **c. Read Sessions**

In the read stage of the SQ3R technique, students began reading the text with the goal of finding answers to the questions they had previously created. This stage is crucial because it helps students focus on relevant information and makes it easier for them to understand the text more deeply (Robinson, 1970).

During the read stage, Students focused not only on gathering general information but also on examining specific details within the text. They actively sought out key information, such as identifying the people involved, understanding the main events, and noting important facts or evidence that supported the central ideas. This stage encourages students to engage deeply with the text, helping them build a clearer and more detailed understanding of the content (Robinson, 1946)

The read stage in the SQ3R process is a valuable and engaging experience. After formulating their questions earlier, students find that reading the text with a clear purpose makes the process much more meaningful.

Based on the findings above, the reading process in the Read step of the SQ3R technique involves a comprehensive understanding of the text while actively searching for relevant information to answer the questions previously formulated. Based on the observations, most students demonstrated active engagement in this stage. They read carefully, frequently referring back to their questions as a guide to maintain focus. This indicates that the read step helps students read more purposefully and thoroughly, thereby improving their comprehension of the text.

### **d. Recite Sessions**

In the recite stage of the SQ3R technique, students were encouraged to recall and explain what they had read using their own words. This stage aimed to help students internalize the information they had discovered and strengthen their understanding of the text. By expressing the content either orally or in writing, students practiced organizing information, identifying main ideas, and connecting important details to a broader context.

In the recite stage of the SQ3R technique, students actively engage with the text by making points in the text, using the information gathered during the read stage.

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This activity involves more than just remembering facts; students explain or discuss the content of the text, which helps them articulate their understanding and reinforce key concepts. As they engage in this process, they not only confirm their understanding but also develop critical thinking and communication skills by reflecting and verbally expressing their ideas. Additionally, this step allowed students to identify parts of the text that they did not fully understand, encouraging them to go back and review those parts for clarity. This active engagement ensures deeper and more meaningful engagement with the material.

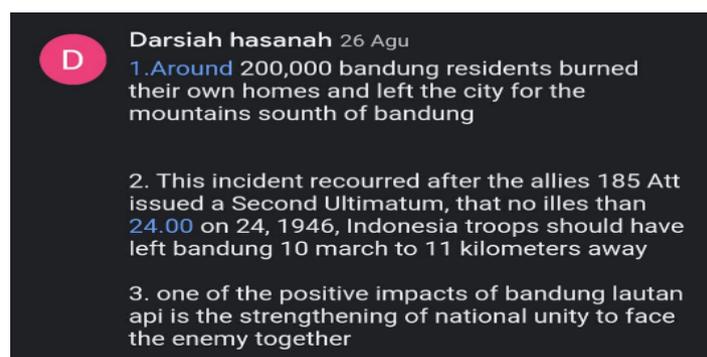


Figure 2. Students answer in Recite stage

The students' responses demonstrate their ability to comprehend and convey information from the text. Most students were able to recall and explain the main ideas and key details using their own words, indicating that they not only read but also processed the information deeply.

However, there were some students who rewrote the entire content of the text without filtering the information. This suggests that they may not have fully grasped how to sift and summarize the most important information. This difficulty could be an indication that they need more guidance in summarizing and identifying key points from the text. Nonetheless, their effort still reflects an attempt to understand the text as a whole. With further guidance, these students can be directed to improve their critical thinking skills and convey information more concisely and relevantly.

#### e. Review Sessions

The review stage in the SQ3R method is a crucial step to ensure that students have understood the material they have read and can answer the questions created in the question stage. In this stage, students revisited the text and the answers they had found, then verified that their responses aligned with the questions they had previously formulated.

This process helps students reflect on their learning, connect the information discovered during reading, and assess whether their answers are complete and relevant (Flavell, 1979). By answering questions they created themselves, students not only practice reading skills but also critical thinking skills, as they must ensure

that their answers match the content of the text and support their understanding of the topic.



Figure 3. Students answer in Review stage

The results indicate that the majority of students were able to answer their questions effectively after reading the text in depth. Students who posed critical and relevant questions during the Question stage appeared more focused in seeking answers during the reading process, enabling them to provide more structured and accurate responses. For example, a student who previously asked about the causes of the “Bandung Sea of Fire” event was able to clearly identify the results from the reading and present logical, text-based answers.

Students who were active in the Question stage also tended to be more confident in answering questions during the Review stage. Through this collaborative process, students were able to refine their comprehension of the material and enhance their critical thinking skills. These results indicate that well-structured questions during the Question stage play a crucial role in guiding students to find accurate information while reading and strengthening their ability to review and evaluate their understanding of the text.

## 2. Students’ Responses of SQ3R Technique in Learning Reading Comprehension

These findings are based on classroom observations and interviews with six students of varying achievement levels and provide insights into their perceptions of this teaching approach. The theme is organized into four sections: fun, students’ motivation, challenges and difficulties, and suggestion on SQ3R techniques. Each section presents detailed findings related to the respective theme, providing a comprehensive overview of the students’ perspectives on this innovative teaching approach.

### a. SQ3R motivating students and making reading comprehension fun

In the introduction and SQ3R learning phases, students demonstrate great curiosity and a desire to learn about reading comprehension. This initial interest forms the foundation for active participation and engagement in the subsequent stages of SQ3R. Additional discussions are sparked by students' interest in the structured approach to reading through SQ3R. This interest likely increases student engagement with the reading material. It serves as a significant motivating factor, as students find the process enjoyable and are encouraged to delve deeper into the learning material. **S1 (Student 1) expressed,**

*“...It's exciting because we understand reading better because there are several steps that make us understand the content of the text better, moreover, it can be applied in other learning, motivating us to keep reading...”*

*(Interview data 2)*

Similarly, **S2 & S3 stated,**

S2: *“...I feel more easily and understand the reading text...”*

*(Interview data 3)*

S3: *“...After learning this technique, I feel more focused when reading because there are steps that help me understand the content of the text...”*

*(Interview data 4)*

Students find learning with SQ3R, especially in reading comprehension, motivating. They feel empowered to fully comprehend English texts. Additionally, they appreciate the structured nature of the process, which helps guide their learning and builds their confidence in understanding texts. These responses highlight the many benefits of using SQ3R, including fostering a deeper level of understanding, critical thinking, and self-driven learning.

Utilizing the SQ3R technique in learning provides significant motivation for students. When teachers implement SQ3R, students first survey the text (Survey), giving them an overview of the material and piquing their curiosity. After this, they create questions (Question), which focus their reading and encourage critical thinking. During the reading stage (Read), students are more engaged because they have specific questions to answer, making their reading purposeful. When they summarize the material in their own words (Recite), students reinforce their understanding and take ownership of their learning. Finally, when students review (Review), they solidify their knowledge, making it easier to retain. Thus, SQ3R not only helps deepen students' comprehension but also motivates them to take an active and structured role in their learning process.

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### **b. Challenges and difficulties faced by students during SQ3R techniques in learning reading comprehension**

Despite the advantages, SQ3R also presents several challenges. Some students found the technique difficult to master or less effective in certain areas. **S4 expressed,**

*" I have difficulty understanding text using the SQ3R technique, especially during the recite stage, because I am sometimes confused about making the important points."*

(Interview data 5)

This suggests that SQ3R may not universally meet all students' comprehension needs, particularly for those who struggle with the structured steps.

Participants also reported difficulties with certain SQ3R stages. **S1 mentioned,**

*" At the question stage, because sometimes it is difficult to ask what to ask."*

(Interview data 6)

Indicating that creating meaningful questions during the Question stage during the could be complex. Similarly, **S5 stated,**

*" At the question stage, because we haven't read the entire text, we are confused about what to ask."*

(Interview data 7)

These difficulties reflect the complexity of managing multiple steps in a structured reading process. These challenges align with findings from researchers who note that structured reading techniques, such as SQ3R, can sometimes overwhelm students, especially when they have different levels of comprehension and learning styles. The reported difficulties suggest that while SQ3R is beneficial for many, its implementation may require adjustments to better accommodate diverse learning needs. In the Survey phase, students previewed the text by examining titles, headings, and keywords, which helped activate their prior knowledge and set a clear purpose for reading. According to (Tarigan,2019), this initial phase is crucial for activating prior knowledge and forming a framework to understand the content.

During the Question phase, students generated specific questions, which directed their focus toward key information in the text, fostering critical thinking and deeper engagement. (Smith,2021) emphasizes that formulating questions encourages active reading and sharpens students' focus on relevant details. into the Read phase, students searched for answers to their questions, ensuring active interaction with the material and improving comprehension. The Recite phase

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further solidified their understanding by encouraging them to summarize and discuss the text, reinforcing key concepts and improving retention. (Killian,2019) argues that summarizing and reciting content enhances cognitive processing and retention. Lastly, the Review phase allowed students to revisit and reflect on the text, reinforcing their understanding and ensuring better retention of information. (Kiewra et al, 2024) suggest that review activities are essential for reinforcing key concepts and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the material. This structured approach not only enhanced comprehension but also encouraged independent learning and critical engagement with the text.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the SQ3R technique in enhancing reading comprehension among EFL students. The research demonstrates that SQ3R facilitates active engagement, critical thinking, and better retention of information through its structured steps Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. Students in this study benefited from the sequential approach, which encouraged them to interact more deeply with texts, set reading goals, and evaluate their understanding effectively. Additionally, the integration of Google Classroom in applying SQ3R showed that digital tools could amplify the method's benefits by allowing interactive, timely feedback and tracking progress.

The study also reveals a positive response from students, as most participants found the SQ3R technique enjoyable and beneficial in comprehending texts more thoroughly. These results affirm the SQ3R's applicability and value in modern, digitally enhanced classrooms. As such, this research supports the method's continued use and provides a foundation for future studies that seek to explore its potential in various educational settings and student groups.

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