THE ROLE OF PQRST STRATEGY TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Teaching reading in English is challenging for Indonesian teachers because not all students can comprehend what they have read. Since English is a second language for Indonesian students, they have a lot of problems in understanding a passage, especially the grammar, vocabulary, and finding main idea. Therefore, English teachers have to think about a suitable strategy to help their students comprehend their reading materials. This article is intended to give an alternative how to solve students’ problem in reading comprehension by using PQRST (Preview, Question, Read, Summarize and Test) strategy. It provides some reasons why PQRST strategy is appropriate to help students to improve their reading comprehension. The discussion emphasizes reading and reading comprehension, micro- and macroskills in reading, teaching reading comprehension, PQRST strategy and the applicability of PQRST strategy in Indonesia. It also describes how to implement the strategy in the classroom which covers previous studies in experimental design and classroom action research. After all, PQRST strategy is one of the potential strategies that can be used to improve students’ reading comprehension.

Keywords: PQRST strategy, teaching reading, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a strategic and complex process covering a number of skills and processes which is used by the reader to anticipate text information, select key information, organize and summarize information, monitor comprehension, repair comprehension breakdowns, and match comprehension output to reader goals (Grabe : 2009 and Tankersley : 2003). It means reading is a process to comprehend the idea and information in the text, and in the process of comprehending the information, readers need their knowledge of vocabulary and
structure of the language. Students need a lot of practices to have a good comprehension.

Teaching reading is challenging for English teachers because students find a lot of problems to understand the passage. Among many reading comprehension strategies that can help students to improve their reading ability and English teacher should find out the effective strategy to teach their students how to comprehend their reading materials more effectively.

Staton as cited by Simatupang and Sihombing (2012) stated that PQRST strategy can be used to improve readers understanding and to help readers focus on prioritizing the information in a way that relates directly to how they will be asked to use that information. This strategy has proved itself as an effective strategy to improve students ability in reading comprehension as Haeryanto (2012), Susanti (2013) and Septiari (2013) have conducted it. Concerning this issue, this article reviews (1) reading and reading comprehension, (2) micro and macro skills for reading comprehension, (3) the teaching of reading comprehension, (4) PQRST strategy, and (5) the applicability of PQRST strategy in Indonesia.

READING AND READING COMPREHENSION

Reading is an important means to find information (Lestari : 2011) . Through reading, people can find information from a variety of texts, written or printed, such as letters, shopping list, magazines, newspapers, advertisements and many other materials. Reading cannot be separated from daily life because every aspect of life is related to reading. Even a person who is looking for a street name cannot find it if he or she cannot read the street’s name.

Reading skill is important for students because almost all of the materials in schools is in a printed form. Students can acquire more knowledge when they want to learn new information in their discipline only by reading. Through the
ability of reading students can develop their knowledge and essential skills for independent learning.

Considering the importance of reading for students, English teachers should teach their students how to master reading skill by using various strategies. It is suggested that teachers not only teach by using conventional strategy such as reading aloud and translation or just deliver the material, but also by using a certain strategy to motivate students reading skill to understand reading the texts. Nunan (1991) states that reading is the most important activity in any class, not only as a source of information and a pleasure activity, but also as a mean of consolidating and extending one’s knowledge of the language, literature, and culture. What the students get from reading activity in the classroom hopefully can be a meaningful contribution in every aspects of life.

Tankersly (2003:2) states that reading comprehension depends on three factors: linguistics structures of the text, metacognitive control, and background knowledge. For the first factor, the reader should have a command of the linguistic structures of the text. The second factor is that the reader is able to exercise metacognitive control over the content of the reading passage. This means that the reader is able to monitor and reflect on his or her own level of understanding while reading the material. The third and the most important criterion influencing comprehension is that the reader has adequate background knowledge of the content and vocabulary mastering.

According to Willis (2008), the process of reading for understanding appears to involve several essential and interrelated phases: (a) information intake which means focusing and attending to the pertinent environmental stimuli, (b) fluency and vocabulary refer to associate the words on the page with stored knowledge to bring meaning to the text, and (c) patterning and networking refering to recognizing familiar patterns and encoding new information by linking it with prior knowledge.

Another expert, McNamara (2006:6) states that a reading comprehension strategy is a cognitivive or behavioral action that is enacted under a particular
contextual conditions, with the goal of improving some aspects of comprehension. For example, when a student finds a new word in the text that he or she does not know the meaning, he or she will open a dictionary and search the word by turning pages as his or her strategic behavior actions. The strategic cognitive actions would be to read the word’s definition in the dictionary, to reread the sentence in the text with the word, and then to comprehend the sentence as a whole.

In relation to reading comprehension, Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading. The reader brings to the act of reading his or her cognitive capabilities (attention, memory, visualisation); motivation; knowledge; and experiences. While reading, the reader constructs various representations of the text that are important for comprehension. Those representation include the surface code (the exact wording of the text), the text base (idea units representing the meaning of the text), and the mental models (the way in which information is processed for meaning) that are embedded in the text. The reading activity involves one or more purposes or tasks, some operations to process the text, and the outcomes of performing the activity, all of which occur within some specific context.

To summarize, reading comprehension is the result of understanding the meaning of written or printed text based on the reader’s experiences, knowledge, vocabulary, and structure of the language. In other words, reading comprehension is the activity that is used by the reader to understand or to find the meaning of the text from implicit or explicit information.

MICRO- AND MACROSILLS FOR READING COMPREHENSION

To become efficient readers, students need to master micro and macro skills for reading comprehension. According to Brown (2015:401), there are six
items of microskills and 8 items of macroskills, as presented in the Table 1. Micro- and Macroskills for Reading Comprehension.

Table 1. Micro- and Macroskills for Reading Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microskills</th>
<th>Macroskills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.</td>
<td>7. Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory.</td>
<td>8. Recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Comprehend written language at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.</td>
<td>9. Recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.</td>
<td>10. Infer context that is not explicit by using background knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Recognize grammatical word classes (noun, verb, etc), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization) patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.</td>
<td>11. Infer links and connections between events, ideas, etc., deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, exemplification.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.</td>
<td>12. Distinguish between literal and implied meaning.</td>
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<td>13. Detect culturally specific references and interpret them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Develop and use a battery of reading</td>
</tr>
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strategies such as scanning, skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, and activating schemata for the interpretation of texts.

To develop students’ reading comprehension, students must be able to recognize the words, grammatical word classes, the pattern and rule of the words as the microskills. For the macroskills, students must be able to relate the clauses, pattern and structure of the language to find the communicative functions, meaning and understanding of the whole text by using their background knowledge and experience.

THE TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION

Nation as cited by Susanti (2013) mentioned four principles of teaching reading that teachers should know. They are: (1) meaning-focused input, (2) meaning-focused output, (3) language-focused learning and (4) fluency development.

The first principle, meaning-focused input, requires teachers to establish practice with a range of reading purposes. Reading here means as a media to get something that is useful for the students. In other hand, teachers should motivate the students that they have a purpose in doing the reading (Duffy, 2009:3). Teachers should teach their students to read for understanding information, for getting new knowledge, for academic goals, and for writing.

The second principle is meaning-focused output. It means that a reading course should be established integratively with other language skills such as listening, speaking and writing. In teaching English, the main role of listening and reading are as receptive skills and they are followed by speaking and writing as the productive skills. In teaching reading, teachers must consider the output in
speaking and writing to find out the students are able to comprehend the reading materials and it must be taught integratively.

The third principle is language-focused learning. The teaching reading process should be able to help the students to develop their reading skills. It can be done by developing the subskills of reading and giving the language features needed to read such as vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation.

The last principle is fluency development. There are three main points in this principle. First, the teaching process of reading should help and push the learners to develop fluency in reading. Teachers should give familiar topic of the materials to help the students easier in understanding the words. Second, the students should enjoy reading and feel motivated to read. They should be involved in the reading activities individually or groups. Third, the students should read a lot. By reading a lot, students will get used to with many kinds of English text and become fluence in reading.

Teaching reading comprehension needs a lot of reading practice, teachers should motivate the students to like reading and make them realize the purpose of reading. If the students like to read, they will use the information that they get from reading in the way they speak and write, enrich their ability in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation mastery and make the students become more fluency.

**PQRST STRATEGY**

According to Sulistyo (2011 : 94), PQRST (Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Test) strategy is useful as an instructional reading strategy by paying more attention to key information in reading activities. This strategy is a step-by-step plan that has been proven to raise test scores for students who follow the steps involved. This strategy helps the students focus on studying and prioritizing the information in a way that relates directly to how they will be asked to use the information in an exam. The strategy can be modified to suit any particular form of learning and it can also allow more accurate timing of work.
Based on the concept, PQRST strategy is proposed as the treatment to improve the students’ reading comprehension since it has a well-organized stage. The strategy can create an enjoyable learning condition by helping the students to activate their background knowledge before reading and evaluating their comprehension after reading. By creating enjoyable learning condition, it is expected that the strategy can solve the problems in teaching reading and make the teaching learning process run effectively.

In addition, Vazques and friends (2006) state that there are some purposes of PQRST: (1) stimulate the students to improve their previous knowledge, (2) motivate the students to actively reflect upon the material before being read in class, (3) prepare the students to participate in reading with an inquiring attitude towards the material, (4) motivate the students to deepen their understanding, (5) encourage the students to ask themselves to do the test to evaluate their comprehension degree of the material, (6) promote the development of students’ autonomy in learning, and (7) improve students’ final performance result.

Preview. In preview stage, teacher stimulates the students to use their previous knowledge to predict the text that will be read by looking at the picture, chart, diagram or title of the text. It can also establish the students’ understanding about the topic or the theme of the text which is going to be read.

Question. After having understanding about the text that the students are going to read, teacher motivates the students to make questions based on their prior knowledge of the text. By creating questions, students are prepared to have inquiry activities related to the text and it helps students to have guided reading. They will read the text to find the answer of their own questions.

Read. In this stage, students will read the text more carefully to find the answer of their own questions. If the students cannot find the answers, they can change their questions and find the answers from the text.

Summarize. For Summarizing activity, students can make their own conclusion by noting the main points of information they can get from
understanding the text. The note can be in the form of list of important points, mind mapping, or diagrams.

Test. In test stage, teacher can give another questions to find out the students comprehension and to make sure that the students really understand the text. The test also important for the students, they may know their ability in reading comprehension after answering teacher’s questions.

A study by Miqawati and Sulistyoy (2014) revealed that the PQRST strategy has an impact on students’ reading comprehension although no difference in the reading comprehension of students with different learning styles taught under the PQRST strategy was evidenced. In addition, no interaction between teaching strategies and students’ learning styles was observed.

Moreover, Haeriyanto (2012) reported that PQRST strategy can improve or progress the students’ reading comprehension skills of the eleventh graders of MA Nurul Jadid. The students are more active in the class in terms of sharing ideas, asking and answering questions. In other words, this strategy can increase the students involvement during the teaching learning process.

Another previous study on the implementation of PQRST strategy was conducted by Susanti (2013). She concluded that PQRST strategy is effective to improve students’ reading comprehension of grade IX of SMA Piri 1 Yogyakarta. The discussion of the new vocabulary in Preview and Question steps of PQRST was done through some ways namely by guessing topics or title, learning from previous experiences, learning from a picture related to the text, and implementing 5W1H question form. It could help the students to enrich their vocabulary by dealing with their difficulties when they were faced new vocabulary in a text, students can improve their comprehension of the text being read.

In line with the other researchers, Septiari (2013) who has conducted classroom action research to improve reading comprehension through PQRST strategy of eighth students of SMPN 2 Banjargan has proved that the attitude and the learning motivation of subject under the study have changed positively. It
is shown by the increasing score, that the students have from reading comprehension test, which is very low before the strategy is implemented and after the strategy is conducted, the score become higher than before. The students participation in the classroom is developed well where they become more confidence to share opinion and more active to answer questions. It indicates that PQRST is effective in improving students’ ability in reading comprehension.

Vazquez et al (2006), who conducted research of the application of the "PQRST" method in the teaching of English of difficult or complex technological subject in Universidad Europea de Madrid, Spain. They found that the teaching of a course through the PQRST method, both in English and in Spanish, not only leads to fully satisfactory results but also that this method is accepted by the majority of the students involved. While Miqawati and Sulistyo (2014) in their research using PQRST strategy investigating reading comprehension, and learning styles, made a conclusion that the PQRST strategy was effective in the teaching of reading comprehension in that students who were taught by using PQRST strategy achieved better scores in reading comprehension than those taught using translation and reading aloud.

Other research conducted by Febtiningsih, Zaim and Jufrizal (2013) showed that the students with low interest taught by PQRST techniques had significantly higher reading comprehension on procedure text than those who were taught by QAR (Question Answer) technique at grade VII of SMPN 2 Padang. It indicates that PQRST technique affects the students with low interest on reading comprehension on procedure texts, that is, producing higher reading comprehension than QAR techniques. This is due to that PQRST technique gives more contribution than QAR technique to the students in comprehending text.

THE APPLICABILITY OF PQRST STRATEGY IN INDONESIA

In line with Indonesian government policy, PQRST strategy is also suitable to scientific approach which is used as one of alternative strategy in Curriculum 2013 beside discovery learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and inquiry learning (Permen Dikbud 22, 2016). Scientific
approach consists of observing, questioning, collecting data, associating, and communicating.

In English subject, scientific approach is implemented as follows: for observing stage, the students are allowed to observe the text by scanning the title, picture, chart or figure of the text to gain a general impression of what the text is likely. In questioning stage, students make a list of their questions that they are going to get the answer from the text. For collecting data, students are collecting the data about any information that they can use to answer their own questions by reading the text carefully. In associating, students can associate their understanding from reading the text with their own questions and answer it, they can get the main point from the reading text and delete the question which is not answered from the text. In communicating stage, teacher can give another questions to find out the students comprehension and the students can answer it as the way of communicating their ability in reading. All the stages in scientific approach show the similarity with the stage in PQRST strategy.

PQRST strategy is also suitable to Curriculum 2013 since in this curriculum the students are expected to be more active through the activities of affective (attitude), cognitive (knowledge) and learning behaviour (learning skill) domains (Permen Dikbud 21, 2016) as shown in Table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective (attitude)</th>
<th>Cognitive (knowledge)</th>
<th>Learning behaviour (learning skill)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving</td>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>Observing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Asking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Logical reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterization by value set</td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Presenting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Creating</td>
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These three competencies require a teacher to apply a strategy that is student centered where the teaching learning process is not focused on the teacher anymore as the main source and model but giving on more space for the students to be more active and creative in their classroom activity. Through this strategy, students are expected to be more active by following the steps of this strategy and developing their ability in reading. Teacher’s position is only as the facilitator to guide students in doing the strategy step by step.

CONCLUSION

Reading comprehension is important for students because through the ability of reading students can develop their knowledge and essential skills for independent learning. That is why teachers should pay more attention in teaching reading to help students improve their reading ability. Teachers should find the most appropriate reading strategy for their students, to help them enhance their reading comprehension. PQRST is one of strategy that can be used by teachers to help their students in improving their reading comprehension. Teachers in Indonesia are suggested to apply this strategy because the previous studies about PQRST strategy and also the requirement of the newest curriculum in Indonesia has shown that PQRST strategy is one potential strategy that can be used to improve students’ reading comprehension.

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