Using SQ3R to improve KPCE demonstration junior high students' reading ability of expository texts

Research article

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Abstract
This study investigated how effective the SQ3R technique could be used in improving Kibi (KPCE) Demonstration Junior High students' reading ability of expository texts. Using the simple random sampling, 45 students were selected to study the baseline performance of the students in reading comprehension, a pre-test was conducted after which twelve students were taught the intervention comprehension lessons using the SQ3R reading strategy. A post-test was also conducted after the intervention to see whether there was an improvement in the performance of the students. SPSS statistical software was used to calculate the mean value of both tests. The study discovered that p value $p < 0.05$ and $df = 44$, the 't' value for the two means for matched groups was 6.7. This means that students' performance in the post-test was much better than in the pre-test. This performance therefore was attributed to the intervention used. The study concluded that SQ3R is a better strategy for improving junior high students' reading comprehension ability of expository texts; hence it should be encouraged in teaching comprehension.

Keywords: action research, expository text, junior high students, SQ3R, Schema theory

Public Interest Statement

The SQ3R is a strategy which Brown (2001) says consists of five steps, namely; Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. SQ3R is one of the most effective strategies used for teaching learners reading comprehension, and also in approaching a reading text. The study helped students of KPCE Demonstration Junior High School to realize that SQ3R is one of the useful strategies to employ when reading expository texts, such as their textbooks. It also equipped the English teachers of the school with the teaching skills and strategies for developing comprehension skills in junior high school students.

Introduction

Educated people see literacy as important, hence few question the fundamental idea that reading is the elementary unit, if not the basic part on which success at school, work, and in society depends (Feiler, 2007; Gee, 2008; McCarty, 2005). Pardede (2008) also asserts that reading is possibly the most extensively and intensively studied skill, among the four language skills, by experts in the language teaching field. Reading is so important that, according to Hedgcock and Ferris, (2009), in many parts of the globe, basic-level teachers acquire specialized education and training on how to teach children to read. Grabe (2004) also opine that It is very important that teachers understand and teach effective reading strategies to learners. Information gathered from two diagnostic tests administered to the students indicated that about 80% of final year students at KPCE Demonstration Junior High School had a problem with comprehending expository texts as they found it difficult to understand what they read. They could not also skim through texts to predict and come out with questions that would help them understand the text they were reading. Furthermore, they could not search for answers to their questions neither could they summarize what they have read. They also had challenges with using background knowledge appropriately, vocabulary knowledge, and fluency. They also had a problem with the use of strategy and metacognitive skills for monitoring. Furthermore, they could not differentiate between text structures. This could be because they were not exposed to various comprehension strategies. In a reading task, students could be taught explicitly to use specific cognitive strategies to help them understand any text that they read. One of such strategies is SQ3R. The SQ3R according to Brown, (2001) is an effective approach to reading a text. The steps of the strategy allow students to skim through texts to make predictions and form questions, so that as they read, they search actively to get answers to their questions. The strategy also provides the students with opportunity to summarize texts that they read and review notes that they have written. A lot of research has been done on the effectiveness of the SQ3R technique, but few studies have been done in Ghana. This research, therefore, was to find out whether the SQ3R strategy could also work out in our Ghanaian classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

The researchers gave an expository text to the final year junior high students of KPCE Demonstration Junior High School to read and give answers to the questions; and it became evident that they were not able to answer the questions accurately. We also asked them to summarize the text but they could not do it. They lacked adequate vocabulary hence it affected their comprehension skills. Furthermore, they lacked comprehension strategies that could help them understand the text. Some of them copied irrelevant material from the comprehension passage. This confirms the B.E.C.E. Chief Examiner's Reports for English Language (2014) and (2015) which state that most students lacked adequate word stock and therefore used words at random unmindful of what the words implied in the context. The reports also indicate that other students copied long stretches of irrelevant material from the comprehension passages as answers. From these reports, we conveniently concluded that reading comprehension was a challenge to most junior high students. The reasons were not far-fetched. Some students at the junior high; KPCE Demonstration Junior High School not an exception; were not used to expository texts, as almost all the texts they were exposed to were narratives. In view of these challenges, we decided to find out whether the use of the SQ3R would help the students to monitor their comprehension of expository texts that they read.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions:
1. What are the causes of the final year KPCE Demonstration Junior High students' inability to comprehend expository texts?
2. How can SQ3R improve KPCE Demonstration Junior High students' reading ability of expository texts?

2.0 Literature review

This section reviewed related literature by authors on the subject under review. It looked at definitions of reading, micro-skills of reading, theories of reading, causes of learners' inability to read, the concept of SQ3R, reading in the Junior High School, expository texts; and importance of learning how to read and comprehend expository texts.

2.1 Reading

Linguists have defined reading in various ways because of their opinion about reading. Walker (1996) is of the opinion that reading is an active process in which a reader sifts between sources of information, explains meaning and strategies, and checks the interpretation of the information and use social contexts to focus their response. Burns, Roe & Ross (1999) see reading as an extremely complex process. They go further by saying that each aspect of the

reading process is also complex. Harmer (2001) also defines reading as an active process of understanding print and graphic texts. In fact, reading involves the use of a complex cognitive process by the reader to decode symbols in order to build or construct meaning.

Anderson (1997) asserts that reading is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning. Furthermore, Nuttall (2005) is of the view that to get meaning from a text is the overriding purpose of reading. Mikulecky (2011) also sees reading as a complex activity in which a reader uses his conscious and unconscious mental abilities to reconstruct meaning that the writer intends sending across, through the use of a number of strategies. These strategies include information from the text and from the reader's background knowledge. Other authors such as Manzo and Manzo (1993) observed that reading is a process of reading the information on the lines, reading the information between the lines, and reading beyond the lines at the same time. This means that a reader must decode words in a text in order to get the writer's basic message, make inferences and also understand the writer's implied message. Finally, the reader must be able to judge the significance of the writer's message and apply it to other areas of his prior knowledge.

It is interesting to note that none of the authors defined reading to include the sounding out of words, though it is important. The emphasis is on understanding and thinking, because that is what reading is about. To be able to make sense of print, good readers use cueing systems. Cueing systems are simply skills employed by readers. They include graphophonic, which is obtained from spelling patterns and the sounds that it presents; syntactic, which talks about the word order and; semantic, which deals with words in the text that provide context and meaning to words and ideas in the text that are unfamiliar. Burns et al (1999) explain that some educators have the opinion that reading is a set of subskills that students must master and integrate. Students therefore need these skills to be able to be fluent in reading. The ultimate objective of reading is to help a reader to comprehend a text.

Nunan (2004) explains that comprehension is the process in which a reader reads to understand written and oral language. Reading comprehension can be said to be a process in which meaning is constructed from a text. Two key players in a reading comprehension task are the reader and the text. In any reading comprehension task, the reader will have to decode the words of the writer and then use their schemata or prior knowledge to interpret or understand the message of the writer. Durkin (1993) explains that the essence of reading is comprehension. When a reader reads, they make the active effort to construct meaning from what they have read. Burns et al (1999) also support this assertion by saying that the objective of all readers is, or should be, comprehension of what they read.

From the definitions given above, we can say that comprehension is the reason why

we read. If readers pronounce or decode words but they find it difficult to understand what they read, the objective of reading is said not to be achieved. To be able to understand a text, a reader has to use his schemata and experience; his knowlede about print, phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, word stock, meaning, and word order. They should also have meta-cognition and use various comprehension strategies to construct the meaning of the text that they read. Readers who read at a meta-cognitive level are aware of the strategies that help in their own reading. They decode unfamiliar words, connect texts with their background experiences, understand the meanings of words, identify the main ideas, make inferences from texts and synthesize the message. Teachers have to model how students can use meta-cognition to get what they know and what they need to know.

2.2 Micro- skills of Reading

Teachers are to know these skills so that they can help their students. Brown (2001) lists the following as micro and macro- skills for reading. They are distinguishing among typical graphemes and spelling patterns of English; storing a lot of language that are of different lengths in short-term memory; working on writing at an appreciable rate of speed to fit the purpose; identifying a lot of sight words; interpreting patterns of word order and their importance; identifying grammatical classes of words; identifying tense and agreement; grammatical rules; and also knowing that a particular meaning of grammatical forms can be expressed differently. Others include identifying transitional devices in written texts and their functions, in cohesion.

2.3 Theories of reading

Results of various studies conducted for many decades on the nature of reading have contributed contrasting theories about what works best in the teaching of reading (Pardede, 2008). This study was underpinned by the interactive reading model and the schema theory.

The interactive reading model

This model was developed by theorists to make up for the weaknesses in the bottom-up and top-down theories of reading. Rumelhart (1977, cited in Tran-Thanh, 2014) defines this model as a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing. Rumelhart also proposes this model as a way in which the processes of both data-driven sensory information and non-sensory information happen simultaneously. Bilokuoglu (2012, cited in Tran-Thanh, 2014) also suggests that to be able to settle on an interpretation of a text topic, the reader is expected to go through the top-down and bottom-up processing. According to Rumelhart (1989, cited in Tran-Thanh, 2014), the interactive reading model begins with the reader storing words and their corresponding spelling in his mind, extracting characteristic features of those words and

placing them in the pattern synthesizer. Finally, the reader gets the meaning of the text by means of syntactic, semantic, orthographic and lexical knowledge.

The Schema Theory

The Schema theory, according to Rumelhart (1980, cited in Shuying, 2013) is an explanation of how a reader uses prior knowledge to comprehend a text. Rumelhart introduced the "label" schema in reading when talking about the overriding role of background knowledge in reading comprehension. According to schema theory, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Many studies have documented the theory as being efficacious in learning tasks (Khodadady & Khaghaninejad, 2012; Wulf, 1991). In the schema theory, when readers activate their schema on the title of a text that they are reading, or some words or group of words, it helps them to understand the text. For junior high students who are exposed to expository texts, they may need to use this theory a lot.

2.4 The Concept of SQ3R

The SQ3R is a strategy which Brown (2001) says it is for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. Survey is the first stage where the reader glances through the material briefly to get a gist of the text before beginning to read the material. In Survey, the reader looks at the headings and sub-headings of texts.This include looking at the introductions and conclusions of texts; questions; pictures or diagrams; words or ideas in bold or italics; graphs, tables, figures; and summary. Question: This stage is where readers generate some questions on what they want to learn in the reading task, using the information gathered at the survey stage. Readers do this by changing headings into questions; and using the chapter's questions. The next stage is Read: As the reader reads, they underline or highlight key ideas; writes notes, asks questions, comments, or writes symbols in the margins; and tries to answer their earlier questions.

Recite: After reading for a while, the reader closes the text for a moment and tries to recite the key points they have read. The next stage is Review: This stage is important for the reader to consolidate the salient information into their memory. Reviewing means that the reader does something different with the information. At this stage, the reader reads through the main topic areas and writes out key ideas in their own words; and does the practice questions at the end of the text. Various researches have shown that the SQ3R is effective for the teaching of reading. Bakhtiar (2018) conducted a research on "Improving students' reading comprehension by using sq3r method". After analyzing the data, the researcher concluded that SQ3R had a positive influence on the students' reading comprehension.

Another research was by Betaubun (2016) on "The implementation of SQ3R technique

in teaching English to support Third Class Students' ability in reading comprehension at State Vocational High School in Merauke-Papua Indonesia". The result was not different from the previous one as the findings indicated that the performance of students in reading comprehension without applying the SQ3R technique was not encouraging but after giving a treatment by applying the SQ3R technique a greater number of them improved.

2.5 Reading in the Junior High School

According to the Ghana English Curriculum for Junior High School (2012), the objective of teaching reading at the Junior High School is to enable students to be able to read, understand and derive information from texts of varied nature. In light of this, students are to be taught the following: meaning of vocabulary in context of passage; factual and inferential statements; predictions of what could happen next in the passage; appreciative and speculative questions; author's purpose; author's line of argument; explanation of figurative expressions in contexts; distinguishing between logical and illogical statements in the passage; and conclusions of the text/passage. The content of the curriculum as mentioned above can mostly be achieved if teachers can teach students to use reading strategies such as SQ3R, as Mangrum (1989, cited in Al-Ghazo, 2015) says, students can read textual materials effectively and efficiently if teachers teach the appropriate study skills and strategies. It therefore goes to say that once students are taught these skills, they can apply them to achieve the contents of the curriculum.

2.6 Causes of learners' inability to read

In Ghana, English is a second language, hence many students have difficulty in comprehending the main idea of a text in English. The first reason could be due to the complexity of the text that the learner is reading. When texts selected for learners are above their language level, it becomes a challenge for the learner. The second cause might arise from the type of texts that the learners are exposed to. Narrative texts are generally easy for learners because they involve narrations, but expository texts are normally difficult for learners. This explains why some learners are unable to read their textbooks. Thirdly, it becomes quite difficult when learners are given texts that are culturally unfamiliar. According to Bilokcuoglu (2014), recent studies have shown that prior knowledge also known as schema plays a significant role in reading comprehension. That is why it is very important for teachers to activate the learner's schema if the learner lacks knowledge in a particular topic. Fourthly, if the text is not interesting or motivating to the learners, reading becomes challenging to the learners. Teachers therefore have to help learners to become motivated by arousing their interests in the pre-reading stage where the learners, according to Bilokcuoglu, are made to think, write, and discuss everything they possibly know about the topic, applying techniques

like semantic mapping, prediction, previewing, brain showering. Another challenge to learners' inability to read might be from their negative attitude towards reading.

2.7 Expository Texts

These are texts written to inform, explain, describe and to argue out points. Expository texts are subject-oriented and contain facts and information (Tonjes, Wolpow & Zint, 1991). The form determines the organization of the structure of expository texts. However, there are seven basic structures of expository texts. Heller (1995) identifies seven text structures: These are description, classification, comparison, analysis, definition, process and persuasion.

2.8 Importance of learning how to read and comprehend expository texts

Many expository texts are structured to make the processing of the text easier for readers. They contain features that guide readers through their reading. Readers who therefore understand the idea of text structure and how to analyze it will possibly comprehend better what they read. Next, students who are exposed to expository texts become ready for college because college students are expected to read large volumes of texts independently to be able to contribute to discussions in class.

3.0 Methodology

The study was an action research. Action research, according to Cohen and Manion (1994), is a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the intervention's effects. Corey (1953) also cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 297) defines action research " as a process in which practitioners study problems scientifically so that they can evaluate, improve and steer decision-making and practice." The Action Research was used because it gave us the chance to diagnose the problem and to give an intervention.

3.1 Population

The population for the study was all final year junior high students of KPCE Demonstration Junior High School, Kibi, totaling 60. However, the accessible population was 45: 25 boys and 20 girls. The sample was chosen based on the simple random technique. The school was purposively selected because of its proximity to the College and also because it is the demonstration school of the College where the researchers teach. Two English teachers were also selected for the study because they were the teachers who taught the students English

3.3 Observation

The researchers used the direct observation approach, which involves the researcher observing without interacting with the participants, to observe the subject teachers teach the

students reading comprehension during the pre-intervention stage. We also used overt observation where the teachers and students were aware of being observed. This was to let them know about the study. An observation checklist was prepared to guide the researchers on the issues to be observed. The checklist for the observation was developed from the Ghanaian MOE JHS English Syllabus to find out whether the skills stated in the syllabus were the ones observed. After the observation, the teachers were briefed on the impending study, which focused on the reading strategy to be used. They were also encouraged to take active part in the study.

3.4 Test

We conducted a pre-test during the first week of our visit to the school. This was to enable us find out the students' baseline performance before the intervention. We used sixty minutes for the pre-test. The test items were set from an expository text, within their supposed language level. The test was marked and the scores recorded. A total of twelve intervention reading lessons were taught over a period of six weeks, using SQ3R as a strategy. We used six weeks because according to Lally, Van Jaarsveld, Potts, and Wardle (2009), behaviour change occurs between 18 and 254 days. We visited the research site two times in a week. A post-test meant to find out the students' reading ability, after the intervention, was conducted during the eighth week of the research. To ascertain whether the improvement could be attributed to the intervention, the same instrument used for the pre-test was used for the post test.

3.5 Scoring

After the test, we marked the students' scripts and scored them out of 100%. The scores for each test, that is pre-test and post-test, were recorded and used for calculating the mean, standard deviation, and computing for the t- value to find out whether there had been any significant improvement in the students' performance in reading comprehension of expository texts.

3.6 Data analysis

The 't' Test for comparison between two means for matched groups was used for statistical analysis. This was due to the fact that the same number of students was used for both the pre-test and post-test. The SPSS software was used.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Table 1: Frequency distribution for Pre-Test

Score (x)	Freq. (f)	Percentage (%)
100 - 109	0	0.0
90 - 99	2	4.4
80 - 89	1	2.2
70 - 79	1	2.2
60 - 69	13	28.9
50 - 59	6	13.3
40 - 49	7	15.6
30 - 39	6	13.3
20 - 29	5	11.1
10 - 19	2	4.4
0 - 9	2	4.4
TOTAL	45	100%

Source: Field Study, 2019.

From Table 1 above, we realized that 51.0% had a score of 50 and above, while 49.0% scored below 50 in the pre-test.

Table 2: Frequency distribution for Post-Test

Score (x)	Freq. (f)	Percentage (%)
100 - 109	1	2.2
90 - 99	3	6.7
80 - 89	9	20.0
70 - 79	6	13.3
60 - 69	11	24.4
50 - 59	4	8.9
40 - 49	2	4.4
30 - 39	5	11.1
20 - 29	2	4.4
10 - 19	2	4.4
0 - 9	0	0.0
TOTAL	45	100%

Source: Field Study, 2019

In Table 2 above, we realized that 75.8% had a score of 50 and above, while only 24.2% scored below 50 in the post-test.

Table 3: Results of the paired sample t-test from SPSS software

TEST	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST			
	M SE	SD	M SD	SE	t	P
	48.64 21	3.1	63.78 21.8	3.2	6. 7	0.000

*p<0.05, df=44. M:mean SD: Standard deviation, P: p-value, df: degrees of freedom, **SE: Standard error.**

Source: fieldwork data, 2019

Results from the paired sample "t" test is illustrated in Table 3. The mean and standard error for the pre-test were 48.64 and 3.141 respectively whereas the mean and standard error of the post-test were 63.78 and 3.233 respectively. The standard deviation of the pre-test was 21 while that of the post test was 21.8.

4.2 Discussion

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

Research question 1:

What are the causes leading to final year KPCE Demonstration Junior High School students' inability to comprehend Expository texts?

From the observation, we realized that most of the final year junior high students of KPCE Demonstration Junior High School had little knowledge of how expository texts are read or studied. This resulted from the fact that students were not taught an effective way to study these expository texts. Secondly, teachers taught students comprehension without using specific strategies. There were no predictions on the text, the authors' purposes were not discussed with the students. They shared passages to students, taught them vocabulary items, and then asked them to read the passages. After reading the passages, they asked students to answer the comprehension questions. The teachers did not differentiate between speculative and appreciative questions. This was the strategy they used always during comprehension lessons. Thirdly, students were not taught the figurative expressions in contexts. Fourthly, conclusions of texts were also not taught. We also noticed that the students' background knowledge or their schemata was not activated during the reading lessons. From a short informal interview we conducted on the students, it came to light that

some of the students came from a farming community, nearby, where print is non-existent, hence they had a negative attitude towards reading. This was worsened by the fact that nobody could help them at home to read. Most of the students said they liked the way their teachers taught them reading comprehension, but sometimes their teachers made the reading lessons boring. When it came to their reading challenges, some of the students mentioned their inability to comprehend texts that they read. Others said they did not know how to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words in passages.

Research question 2 :

How can SQ3R improve KPCE Demonstration Junior High students' reading ability of expository texts?

The researchers gave the students two written tests, a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after the intervention. The results from the two tests were analyzed using the IBM SPSS. SFrom the results of the paired sample "t" test, we realised that before the intervention, the pre-test conducted gave a mean score of 48.6 whereas that of the post-test after the intervention was 63.8. Similarly, the standard deviation for the pre-test was 21 while the post-test was 21.8. Significant differences were recorded in the reading comprehension ability because before the strategy was used, a pre-test conducted yielded a mean score of 48.64 while that of the post-test was 63.78. Considering the mean gain difference of 15.1, it was clear that students' reading comprehension ability improved, as the performance in the post-test far outscored their performance in the pre-test. Furthermore, the standard deviation for the pre-test was 21, whereas that of the post-test was 21.8.

Comparing the pre-test and post-test analysis of results, it was clear that there was a difference between the pre-test mean and the post-test mean. At 95% confidence level and p<0.05, the calculated t – value was 6.72. Comparing this result with the value of 't' in the t-table for 45-1 = 44 degrees of freedom of 0.05% level of significance, 't' was 1.68. This showed that the calculated 't' value of 6.72 was larger than the 't' – value of 1.68. These results showed that the difference between the pre-test results and that of the post was statistically significant. In the light of these findings, we attributed this improvement in the post-test scores of the sample to the use of the SQ3R as intervention. This went a long way to confirm Brown's (2001) assertion that the SQ3R is an effective approach to reading a text. Furthermore, Bakhtiar (2018) concluded in a research carried out that the SQ3R had a positive influence on the students' reading comprehension. Betaubun (2016) also highlighted in an earlier research that when SQ3R was not used, students' performance was not encouraging, but after giving a treatment by applying SQ3R technique, some of the students' performance improved. The implication is that students should be exposed to more expository texts and, also teachers should use the SQ3R as a strategy in teaching reading comprehension.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: The performance of the students was better in the post-test than in the pre-test. In other words, the use of the SQ3R as a strategy could be used to enhance students' reading comprehension skills. We also discovered from the study that when the students were introduced to the SQ3R, they read expository texts with understanding. As a result, many of the students became motivated to study texts on their own. Furthermore, the English teachers that were used for the study were also equipped with the strategy because they were involved in the study.

5.2 Recommendations

Reading a text without comprehending it is a waste of time and energy, therefore students at the junior high level need to be exposed to a variety of strategies to help them overcome reading comprehension difficulties. It is in this light that the researchers have proffered these recommendations: Teachers of English should devote more time developing reading comprehension skills specifically, at the pre-reading stage so that the students can be independent readers and take charge of their own reading. Secondly, teachers should be made more aware of the SQ3R as a strategy to help in developing comprehension skills. There should be in-service education and training for teachers in their various schools on the use of various strategies, especially the SQ3R, to be used in teaching reading comprehension.

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Authorship and Level of Contribution: This article has been co-authored by Mr. Henry Kwao Ayitey, who conducted the research and wrote the report; and Mad. Margaret Nyaniba Baiden, who conducted the intervention and also helped in writing the report.

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