

Effects of Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review Technique on Reading Comprehension Performance of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study assessed the effects of survey, question, read, recite and review technique on reading comprehension performance of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were developed for the study. Quasi-experimental design involving pre-test, treatment and post-test was adopted for the study. The population included all the 100 level English Language Education students in University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2024/2025 academic session. Purposive sampling was adopted for the study. The sample size was 100. A test titled RCT, constructed by the lead researcher was used as the instrument for the study. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the test. The reliability coefficient was measured using Kendalls test of Concordance. The reliability was 0.75. This showed that the test was highly reliable. Pre-test analysis established the shared homogenous level of the respondents in reading comprehension skills. After pre-test, based on their scores, the subjects were divided into two homogenous groups of 50 each; experimental group, and the control group. The experimental group was given treatment using the SQ3R Technique, while the control group was taught using the TMTRC. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance (t-test). SPSS program was used for the analysis by a statistician. The findings from the study revealed that those taught reading comprehension using the SQ3R technique perform significantly better at the literal, inferential, and critical levels than those taught using the TMTRC in University of Nigeria Nsukka. It was therefore recommended that Lecturers in tertiary level should adopt the SQ3R technique in their classroom instruction of reading comprehension.

Keywords: SQ3R technique, reading comprehension, tertiary education, quasi-experimental design, Nigeria.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

English language plays a good number of roles and functions in multilingual Nigeria. It is a second language (L2); it is the language of education, international and diplomatic interaction, science and technology, commerce, mass communication, inter-ethnic communication, and the Judiciary. Due to the numerous functions that English performs as well as the importance of English language in Nigeria, it has been accorded the highest regards in terms of

language status. Legally and practically, English is the official language of the country. According to Lyons (2021), around 237 million people speak English in Africa, with the majority living in Nigeria (about 111 million people).

Despite the roles, the functions and the importance of English language in Nigeria, it has been observed by scholars (Achu, 2007; Ghazo, 2015; Odumuh, 2020) that the performance of students in English language examinations generally is very poor. These claims are strongly supported by results made



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available by both national and international examination bodies such as the National Examination Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC). For example, in an analysis of the Senior Secondary Schools' results in English language between 1988 and 1996, Olapopo in Alufohai (2016) reported that the percentage of failure of students was between 53.36% and 72.71%. This position is supported by an online report in 2012, which revealed that out of the 1.5 million candidates who sat for the May/June 2011 WASSCE nationwide, only 472,906 candidates equivalent to only 31.5% of the candidates could obtain a credit in English language.

Many factors could be responsible for students' poor performance in English language examinations in Nigeria. Obeh and Otagburuagu in Achu (2007) are of the opinion that the poor performance of students is as a result of deficiencies in reading comprehension, summarizing, and note-taking. Unoh in Achu (2007) also observed that the Nigerian students generally performed poorly in reading. This poor performance could either be a teacher factor or learner factor. According to Odumuh (2020), the poor performance of Nigerian students in reading skill, despite the importance of reading in this technological age, prompted the formation of the Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) in 1982 to enhance the reading culture of Nigerians.

There are four basic language skills always assessed in language examinations; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The focus of this research is on the reading skill. Williams (2004) opines that:

"Reading instruction involves the development of skills that are related to the various stages of the curriculum; the skills which are progressively developed at the intermediate and advanced stages enable the reader to interpret the meaning of sentences in connected discourse". (p. 129)

This means that the ability to read involves instruction that centre on the development of certain skills that enable the learner to decode information written in symbols and by extension, connect sentences in written discourse. These skills are progressively taught at various stages of the curriculum. The foundation of reading according to

Odumuh (2020) is very important. This is because subsequent ability and performance at the higher level depends on how the basic skills have been developed.

Reading is also a very important language skill in this computer age. It should be mastered by everyone (infants excluded) irrespective of class, sex, location (urban or rural), whether they are students, apprentices, maids or roadside mechanics. This is because a large amount of important and useful information in the world today is either encoded in one written form or the other. It is advocated by scholars (Artis, 2008; Fan, 2010; Edison, 2014; Ghazo 2015) that the instruction of the reading skill should be given more attention than it is receiving now, because it plays a major role in the learning/acquisition of language. For adequate proficiency and mastery of the English language, the development of the reading skill through effective instruction is essential.

In this 21st century, regardless of who it is, people use electronic gadgets, sell or buy items, use the services of service providers, visit the supermarket, make choices of what to buy and so on. In carrying out these daily activities, people have to read manuals of gadgets, read instructions on items about usage, storage or expiry dates. While travelling, there are boards by the roads that give directions to places, for example; Lagos 124 kilometres, road bumps 20 metres ahead, national hospital 28 metres turn right. All these information is written and can only be decoded through reading. In fact, the importance of reading in our daily activities cannot be over emphasized.

Despite the importance of reading in our contemporary society, it has been observed by scholars (Artis, 2008; Fan, 2010; Edison, 2014; Ghazo 2015, Okebukola, 2018; Odumuh, 2002 and Odumuh, 2020) that the reading skill is the least appreciated and mastered by learners and teachers. According to Edison (2014), College students are not necessarily good readers. Though they are reading advanced academic materials, they do not always comprehend the information in the text. He goes ahead to say that among the four basic language skills taught in schools (listening, speaking, reading

and writing), college teachers do not realize that comprehension in textbooks, scholarly books, and research journal articles, along with identification of important information in texts can be problematic for college students. They do not see the teaching of reading skills as part of their job. Okebukola in Odumuh (2020) in an extensive study observed that undergraduate students including their lecturers exhibited poor reading culture. According to him, poor reading culture is becoming a universal trend as it affects Europe, America, and Africa. Odumuh in Odumuh (2020) investigated the reading culture of students of the University of Nigeria. She found that the students exhibited poor reading culture. According to her, the students' involvement in reading as regards the number of books they read in a semester is not only poor but they read only to pass examination. This could be the reason for students' poor performances in language examinations as observed earlier. According to Artis (2008), in a reading comprehension lesson, the following are expected from the readers, to; understand specific ideas, understand main idea, infer from the text, understand meanings of words, understand the details of the text, carryout critical evaluation of the text and make valuable judgement about the text. He believes that many students lack these reading skills.

Poor reading abilities of students in Nigeria may be a result of some underlying problems. Ismail and Tha'er (2015) reported that students are often faced with two problems in reading comprehension. The first problem is that the students may have a lot of spelling mistakes and poor writing composition. The second problem is that the students may have low self-esteem and are afraid of reading and making mistakes before the class. The reader may also feel shy. In addition, Ghazo (2015) also found that students encounter some problems in reading comprehension such as: the inability to understand the complex reading text because they do not interact with the text that they read, and they are not able to comprehend what they read fully. Here, the question remains why so? According to Williams (2004), the reading skill is progressively developed, and at an advanced level, it enables the reader to interpret the meaning of sentences in a connected discourse.

In a study carried out by the researcher titled "The effects of the use of task-based approach on secondary school students' achievement in spoken English in FCT Nigeria, Nigeria," the researcher noticed how difficult it was for the learners to comprehend a simple reading passage in secondary schools in Nigeria. This problem, coupled with the poor performance of students in English language examinations as explained earlier are factors that motivated the researcher to carry out this study: "Effects of Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review 'SQ3R' Technique on Reading Comprehension Performance of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria".

Reading techniques help learners adopt some degree of strategic reading behaviours in a reading class. According to Fan (2010), there is a positive effect on the learners' reading comprehension abilities when an effective reading technique is used in class. It is very necessary for learners to acquire the reading skill, and it is the duty of teachers to make sure they do everything within their professional ability to ensure that learners learn not just how to read, but to understand the contents of the materials they read.

There is a wide range of reading techniques that can be used by teachers in their reading comprehension lessons to assist the students to comprehend written texts. Some of these reading techniques include; scanning, Bottom-Up technique, Top-Down technique, Know - Want-to-know - and Learned (K-W-L) technique, Read, Encode, Annotate, and Ponder (REAP) technique, Select, Organize, Associate and Regulate (SOAR), just to mention a few. Research have shown that these reading strategies have been used in different places and times.

Reading comprehension is central to academic success, particularly among students of English Language Education who are expected to develop sophisticated literacy skills. However, many Nigerian tertiary students experience difficulties progressing beyond literal comprehension to inferential and critical levels. These challenges necessitate evidence-based instructional strategies that foster deeper engagement with texts.

The SQ3R method is an acronym for a five-step technique for comprehending reading texts. This method was originally developed by an American psychologist Francis Pleasant Robinson (1906-1983) in his book “Effective Study” (1946) revised (1978). The SQ3R reading comprehension technique came into existence due to the need for students to read and understand complex college texts. According to Helmut (2012), during the Second World War, droves of army personnel were sent to colleges and universities to attend intensive training in skills relevant to winning the war. Within this period according to Helmut (2012), Robinson was a professor of psychology at the Ohio State University (OSU) and headed the learning and study skill programme. Based on his research, he devised the SQ3R technique to help the military learn specialized skills in as little time as possible. In his commentary ahead of veteran’s Day in 2002, Thomas G. Sticht called the SQ3R reading comprehension technique “The reading formulae that helped win World War 11” (Sticht, 2002).

The SQ3R reading comprehension technique differs from other techniques including the traditional method of teaching reading comprehension (TMTRC) because it is designed to provide a systematic approach to reading. It suggests that a learner writes down a set of questions first and then read actively with the aim of answering those questions (Helmut, 2012). It is argued by scholars that this technique is very effective in improving students’ comprehension of both complex and simple texts. For example, Brown (2001) observes that the SQ3R technique is an effective technique for approaching a text for the purpose of comprehension. The SQ3R technique is also designed to make students read and comprehend information from the text as fast as possible. Whorter (1992) believes that the SQ3R reading comprehension technique has been successful in reading lessons. This technique according to Helmut (2012) has five steps. He describes these five steps as follows: survey, question, read, recite, and review. The researcher is interested in this study “the effects of the SQ3R reading comprehension technique” because of some of the arguments posed by renowned scholars in favour of the use of the SQ3R technique on students’

reading comprehension ability.

In contrast, many Nigerian tertiary classrooms rely on the Traditional Method of Teaching Reading Comprehension (TMTRC), characterized by teacher-led reading and recall questions. This study therefore examined the comparative effect of SQ3R and TMTRC on students’ reading comprehension performance at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The traditional method of teaching reading comprehension (TMTRC) or conventional method as it is sometimes referred to is a method of teaching reading comprehension where by learners are given reading texts to complete reading tasks without necessarily adopting any special reading technique. Here, the learners just read, comprehend and answer comprehension questions (Betaubum, 2016).

The researcher’s experience as a teacher as well as a research-student, coupled with the arguments for SQ3R technique by scholars as an effective means of teaching reading, motivated the researcher and prompted him to carry out this study; “the effects of SQ3R technique on performance of Public Senior secondary school students in reading comprehension in Nigeria, Nigeria. The primary goal of this study is to improve students’ reading and comprehension skills and improve their performance in English language examinations in Nigeria as a whole, which research have shown deteriorated in the past decade.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is expected that students in tertiary institutions should be able to read and understand what they read. It is also expected that at the secondary school level, students should have mastered the basic reading comprehension skills; read for specific ideas, read for main ideas, read to understand the details of the text, read for general understanding, read to analyse and read to make inferences based on critical thinking. The researcher’s experience in teaching English language in Nigeria however indicates that most students in Nigeria at secondary school levels and beyond have poor reading cultures and find reading comprehension very difficult. This claim is supported by the findings of many researchers (Ghazo, 2015; Artis, 2008; Okebukola, 2018;

Odumuh, 2002 and 2020, and Edison; 2014). From Ghazo's (2015) view point, students are unable to comprehend complex reading materials because they find it difficult to interact with complex text. Edison (2014) shares the same view, though his research was on college students' reading comprehension ability. As a teacher and a student as well, the researcher has come in contact with students at different levels of education in Nigeria, who after reading a simple text, can neither establish the ideas in the text nor make critical judgement about the text. Worst of all, there are some students who do not get any information from the text after reading and admit their difficulty in comprehension.

English language plays very important roles and functions in the complex multilingual society of Nigeria. It is therefore very necessary for learners to acquire the reading skills, and it is the duty of teachers to make sure that they do everything within their professional ability to ensure that learners learn not just how to read, but to understand the contents of the text they read.

Fan (2010), argues that reading strategies are effective for teaching reading comprehension. Whorter (1992) specifically supports the use of the 'SQ3R' reading comprehension technique in schools to improve reading comprehension of learners.

The persistent deterioration in the performance of students in English language examinations, poor reading culture and in particular, their poor levels of comprehension of simple and complex reading texts suggests that there is a gap in instruction. It is the responsibility of teachers to constantly seek for better ways and methods to improve instruction and to add value to their classroom practices. Therefore, it is against this background that the researcher sought to examine the effects of SQ3R technique on reading comprehension performance of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of survey, question, read, recite and review technique on reading comprehension performance of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The specific objectives included to:

1. Establish the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the literal level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
2. Establish the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the inferential level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
3. Establish the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the critical level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

1.4 Research questions

To provide proper guide to this research, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the literal level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
2. What is the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the inferential level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
3. What is the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the critical level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

1.5 Hypotheses

In seeking answers to the above research questions, the following null hypotheses were developed to guide the data analysis process:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the literal level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using

traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the inferential level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the critical level using the SQ3R technique and those taught using traditional method in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

This study will be limited to the assessment of the effects of survey, question, read, recite and review technique on reading comprehension performance of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study will further be limited to African Aviation and Aerospace University Nigeria, Nigeria. It will focus on examining the difference in performance between the post-test results of students taught reading comprehension at the literal level, inferential level, and the critical level using the SQ3R technique, and those taught using traditional method. Finally, the study will be conducted in 2025, within the period of 6 months.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The SQ3R Technique

The SQ3R technique is a five step strategy for comprehending reading. It is an acronym for; Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. It was developed by American psychologist Francis P. Robinson (1941) in his book "*Effective Study*". The technique provides a structured framework that promotes active reading. The method encourages learners to preview material, generate guiding questions, read purposefully, recite key ideas, and review content to consolidate learning. Studies (Biringkane, 2018; Siregar et al., 2024; Yuliana, 2022) have demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing comprehension across diverse contexts.

Traditional Method of Teaching Reading Comprehension (TMTRC)

The traditional method of teaching reading comprehension (TMTRC) or conventional method as it is sometimes referred to is a method of teaching reading comprehension where by learners are given reading texts to complete reading tasks without necessarily adopting any special reading technique. Here, the learners just read, comprehend and answer comprehension questions (Betaubum, 2016).

Concept of Reading

Reading can simply be defined as the ability to decode information encoded in print form. It does not stop at that, it goes hand in hand with the ability to understand the information and work on it. Reading is a lifelong skill to be used both at school and throughout life as rightly observed by Kucukoglu in Akinkurolere and Usman (2019). Reading as a basic literacy skill has continuously been referred as one of the factors responsible for students' performance in schools. It is the processes of decoding meaning encoded in writing (symbols).

Concept of Comprehension

Comprehension has many interpretations; however, there are some specific attributes that exist in all definitions. All interpretations capture the readers' interaction with the text and their ability to extract meaning from the text (Baier, 2011). Rand Reading Study Group in Baier (2011) defined comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (page; 8). This definition is centred on reading written text. Comprehension goes beyond the ability to read and understand written text.

This study was grounded in the assumption that structured reading strategies like SQ3R foster meaningful interaction with text at three comprehension levels:

Literal comprehension – understanding explicit ideas.

Inferential comprehension – interpreting implied meanings.

Critical comprehension – evaluating and synthesizing ideas.

2.2 Theoretical Basis

SQ3R aligns with cognitive and metacognitive theories of reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), which emphasize activating prior knowledge, self-questioning, and summarization. The technique also supports constructivist learning principles, as students construct meaning actively rather than receive it passively

2.3 Empirical Evidence

Biringkanae (2018) found that the SQ3R method significantly improved Indonesian junior high students' comprehension performance. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2024) reported that SQ3R enhances comprehension through working-memory activation. In Nigeria, Aramide and Abimbola (2021) demonstrated that SQ3R mitigated aliteracy among senior secondary students. However, few empirical studies have explored its application at the tertiary level.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

The study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test, treatment, and post-test design with non-equivalent groups. According to Bell in Yuliana (2013), the principle of such experiments is that if two identical groups are selected, one of which (the experimental group) is given special treatment and the other (the control group) is not, then any differences between the two groups at the end of the experimental period may be attributed to the

difference in treatment. Using this design therefore, it can be established whether causal relationship exists between treatment and performance.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study will be made up of all the '217' 100 level English Language Education students in the department of Art Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Using purposive sampling, 100 students were selected and randomly assigned to experimental (n = 50) and control (n = 50) groups.

3.5 Instrumentation

A researcher-constructed Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) measured students' comprehension at literal, inferential, and critical levels. Reliability was determined via Kendall's coefficient ($r = .75$).

3.6 Treatment

Over six months, the experimental group received instruction using the SQ3R technique, while the control group was taught using TMTRC. Instruction was delivered twice weekly. Lesson content and reading passages were standardized across groups.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics summarized pre-test and post-test scores. Independent samples *t*-tests were used to test hypotheses at $\alpha = .05$. Analyses were performed with SPSS version 26.

4. Discussion

Table 1

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	SD	Post-test Mean	SD	Mean Gain
SQ3R (Experimental)	50	47.20	4.35	81.60	5.12	34.40
TMTRC (Control)	50	46.88	4.41	68.70	6.03	21.82

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test and Post-test Reading Comprehension Scores Both groups began with comparable pre-test means, confirming

homogeneity. However, the SQ3R group demonstrated a markedly higher post-test mean.

Table 2

Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Group Comparison	df	t	p	Decision
Overall Reading Comprehension	SQ3R vs. TMTRC	98	7.42	< .001	Reject H ₀
Literal Comprehension	SQ3R vs. TMTRC	98	6.88	< .001	Reject H ₀
Inferential Comprehension	SQ3R vs. TMTRC	98	7.10	< .001	Reject H ₀
Critical Comprehension	SQ3R vs. TMTRC	98	7.96	< .001	Reject H ₀

The *t*-values indicate significant differences favouring the SQ3R group across all comprehension levels.

5. Discussion

The results affirm that the SQ3R technique significantly enhances reading comprehension compared to TMTRC. These findings corroborate those of Biringkanae (2018), Siregar et al. (2024), and Yuliana (2022), who observed similar gains across contexts. The strategy's effectiveness likely stems from its emphasis on self-questioning, active recall, and metacognitive monitoring, all of which promote deeper processing and retention.

Students in the SQ3R group demonstrated greater improvement not only in literal understanding but also in inferential and critical analysis, suggesting that the technique fosters higher-order thinking. This aligns with cognitive theories highlighting active engagement as central to comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the SQ3R technique significantly improves students' reading comprehension at literal, inferential, and critical levels in tertiary education. The findings validate SQ3R as a superior instructional method compared with TMTRC in enhancing comprehension among first-year English Language Education students.

7. Recommendations

- 1. Pedagogical Adoption:** Lecturers should adopt the SQ3R technique in teaching reading comprehension at tertiary institutions.
- 2. Teacher Training:** Departments should provide workshops on SQ3R implementation.
- 3. Curriculum Integration:** SQ3R should be integrated into reading and study-skills courses.
- 4. Further Research:** Future studies should examine long-term retention and adaptation of SQ3R in other disciplines.

8. Recognition

We thank the Almighty God for the ability to carry out this study. We also specially acknowledge and appreciate the effort, support and fundings provided by TETFund for this study. On behalf of the lead researcher and every other member of the research team, we say thanks to TETFund. It is important to note that the entire funding for this research was provided by TETFund.

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