
IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION BY USING PREVIEW QUESTION READ SUMMARIZE TEST (PQRST) STRATEGY AT SMP SWASTA YABES SCHOOL GRADE 7 ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Yabes School through the implementation of the PQRST (Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Test) strategy. The main problem faced by the students was their difficulty in understanding text content, identifying main ideas, and recalling important information. This classroom action research (CAR) employed a two-cycle design, where each cycle consisted of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects of the study were 30 seventh-grade students in the 2024-2025 academic year. Qualitative data were collected through observation sheets, field notes, and interviews, while quantitative data were obtained from pre-tests and post-tests. The results showed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension. The average pre-test score of 65.5 increased to 78.2 in the Cycle I post-test and further to 87.5 in the Cycle II post-test. Additionally, observation results indicated an increase in students' participation and motivation in reading activities. It can be concluded that the PQRST strategy is effective in improving the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Yabes School.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, pqrst, strategy, improving.*

Introduction

Reading is one of the fundamental and most important language skills in the learning process. However, many students, including those at the junior high school level, struggle to comprehend the texts they read. Based on preliminary observations at SMP Swasta Yabes School, it was found that seventh-grade students tend to read without effective strategies, which results in low comprehension of the text. They have difficulty finding the main idea, summarizing the content, and answering questions that require a deep understanding.

The ability to read is one of the most fundamental skills in modern society. In an increasingly information-driven world, reading comprehension is not merely a passive act of decoding text but a dynamic and interactive process that allows individuals to construct meaning from written language (Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2015). This skill is the cornerstone of academic success across all subjects, from science and social studies to mathematics, as it enables students to

understand textbooks, instructions, and complex ideas. However, for many students, especially those learning a foreign language like English, reading comprehension remains a significant hurdle. They often struggle to connect with the text, extract key information, and form a coherent understanding of the material.

At SMP Swasta Yabes School, a preliminary investigation has revealed a pressing issue regarding the reading skills of seventh-grade students. Teachers and anecdotal evidence suggest that these students face substantial difficulties in comprehending English texts. The problems manifest in various ways: a lack of vocabulary knowledge, an inability to identify the main idea of a paragraph, and a failure to recall specific details from the text. This is often because students approach reading as a passive task. They tend to read word-for-word without a clear purpose, which leads to shallow processing and poor retention of information (Harmer, 2007). The consequence of this is not only low test scores but also a general aversion to reading, which

can have long-term effects on their academic and personal development. This situation underscores the urgent need for an effective instructional strategy that can transform students from passive readers into active and engaged learners.

The lack of effective reading comprehension is a multifaceted problem. It is influenced by cognitive factors, such as the students' prior knowledge and metacognitive skills, as well as pedagogical factors, such as the teaching methods employed by educators. Traditional teaching methods often rely on a "read and answer questions" approach, which, while useful for assessment, does little to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate complex texts independently. This method fails to teach students how to read strategically. As a result, when faced with an unfamiliar text, students often feel lost and overwhelmed, reinforcing their belief that reading is a difficult and tedious task.

To address this gap, this study proposes the implementation of the Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Test (PQRST) strategy. PQRST is a well-established instructional method designed to foster active reading and deep comprehension (Robinson, 1946). Its strength lies in its structured and sequential nature, which guides students through a series of steps that are proven to enhance learning and retention. By breaking down the reading process into manageable and purposeful stages, PQRST encourages students to become active participants in their own learning. The strategy aims to empower students by giving them a powerful tool they can use to approach any reading material with confidence and a clear plan. The five stages of PQRST are not isolated steps; they are interconnected actions that build on one another to form a comprehensive approach to reading.

The Preview stage, for instance, allows students to skim the text's title, headings, and images to form a general idea of the content. This step activates their prior knowledge, creating a mental hook on which to hang new information, as supported by schema theory (Marzano, 2004). This initial overview reduces the cognitive load and makes the subsequent reading process less intimidating. Following this, the Question stage prompts students to

turn headings into questions, transforming the reading task from a passive reception of information into an active quest for answers. This technique, also known as reciprocal teaching, is highly effective in increasing comprehension and critical thinking skills (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The Read stage then becomes a focused and deliberate effort to find the answers to those self-generated questions, making the process highly purposeful. After reading, the Summarize stage requires students to synthesize what they have learned into a concise summary, a critical process that demonstrates their ability to identify and articulate the main ideas (Brown & Day, 1983). Finally, the Test stage allows students to self-assess their understanding by answering their own questions from memory, a crucial step for reinforcing learning and improving long-term retention.

Given the potential of the PQRST strategy, this research seeks to explore its effectiveness within the specific context of SMP Swasta Yabes School. By applying this strategy to a group of seventh-grade students, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on whether PQRST can significantly improve their reading comprehension skills. The findings of this research are expected to have a practical impact on the teaching of English at the school, offering a viable and well-structured alternative to traditional reading instruction. Ultimately, this study is driven by the goal of not only improving students' test scores but also instilling in them a lifelong skill of active and strategic reading.

The PQRST strategy (Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Test) is a learning strategy designed to help students become more active and strategic readers. This strategy guides students through five systematic steps: (1) **Preview**, skimming to get a general overview; (2) **Question**, creating questions about the text; (3) **Read**, reading the text in detail to find answers; (4) **Summarize**, summarizing the key points; and (5) **Test**, checking comprehension by answering the created questions. This research examines the effectiveness of the PQRST strategy in addressing the problem of reading comprehension at SMP Swasta Yabes School.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reading comprehension is a complex and crucial skill, often considered the cornerstone of academic success. It is not merely the passive act of decoding words on a page, but a dynamic, interactive process of constructing meaning from a text (Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2015). A student's ability to comprehend what they read is influenced by a variety of factors, including their prior knowledge, vocabulary size, and their proficiency in using effective reading strategies. Unfortunately, many students, particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, often struggle with this process. Without a clear and purposeful approach, they tend to read passively, leading to superficial understanding, poor retention of information, and ultimately, a lack of confidence in their reading abilities. Harmer (2007) emphasizes this point, arguing that students who lack reading strategies often fail to engage with the text on a deeper level, which hinders their ability to extract and retain key information. This problem highlights the critical need for explicit instruction in effective reading strategies.

One of the most enduring and widely-researched instructional strategies for enhancing reading comprehension is PQRST, an acronym for Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, and Test. This method was first introduced by Francis P. Robinson in his seminal 1946 book, *Effective Study*. Robinson's work was groundbreaking because it shifted the focus of learning from passive reception to active engagement. The PQRST strategy is rooted in cognitive learning theories, which posit that metacognitive awareness and a structured approach to learning are essential for deep comprehension and long-term retention of information (Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995). By guiding students through a systematic series of steps, PQRST transforms the reading process into a thoughtful and purposeful activity.

Each step in the PQRST sequence serves a specific cognitive function that collectively enhances comprehension:

Preview: The first step involves a quick overview of the text. Students examine the title, headings, subheadings, and any visual aids to get a general idea of the content. This step is crucial because it activates the reader's existing

knowledge, or schema, about the topic. According to Marzano (2004), activating prior knowledge helps students build a mental framework, making it easier to connect new information to what they already know. Previewing also helps to reduce the initial intimidation students may feel when confronted with a new, lengthy text.

Question: In this stage, students are encouraged to generate questions about the text based on their preview. They can turn headings into questions or formulate their own queries about what they expect to learn. This process is a powerful metacognitive tool. As Palincsar and Brown (1984) demonstrated in their work on reciprocal teaching, having a clear purpose for reading—in this case, finding answers to self-generated questions—significantly improves comprehension and engagement. This step transforms students from passive receivers of information into active seekers of knowledge.

Read: With a clear purpose in mind, students then read the text more carefully to find the answers to their questions. This is not a passive act of skimming; it is a focused and deliberate search for information. The act of actively looking for specific answers helps students to pay closer attention to detail and filter out irrelevant information. This purposeful reading makes the process more efficient and effective.

Summarize: After reading, students must articulate the main ideas of the text in their own words. This can be done orally or in writing. Summarizing is a critical higher-order thinking skill that requires students to distinguish between essential and non-essential information (Brown & Day, 1983). The ability to synthesize complex information into a concise summary is a strong indicator of a deep understanding of the material. This step also reinforces what has been learned and helps solidify memory.

Test: The final stage involves self-assessment. Students attempt to answer their own questions from memory without looking back at the text. This is a crucial step for metacognition and retention. By recalling information, students strengthen the neural pathways associated with that knowledge, making it more accessible in the future. This self-testing process also helps students identify areas where their understanding is weak and

where they may need to revisit the text for further clarification.

The PQRST strategy is not a new concept, but its relevance remains strong in modern educational contexts. Numerous empirical studies have consistently supported its effectiveness. For instance, a study by Jannah and Jufri (2017) found that EFL learners who were taught to use the PQRST strategy showed significant improvements in their ability to comprehend descriptive texts. Similarly, Sitorus and Ginting (2019) demonstrated that the strategy was highly effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension across various text types. These findings, along with others, suggest that PQRST is a robust pedagogical tool that can be successfully applied to help students become more strategic, independent, and effective readers. This body of research provides a strong theoretical and practical foundation for the current study, which aims to investigate the specific impact of the PQRST strategy within the context of seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Yabes School.

Reading comprehension is a complex mental process that involves an interaction between the reader and the text (Snow, 2002). Various strategies can be used to improve reading comprehension, one of which is PQRST. This strategy is based on cognitive principles that emphasize the importance of active interaction with the reading material (Robinson, 1946). Several previous studies have shown that the PQRST strategy is effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills at various educational levels (e.g., Jannah & Jufri, 2017; Sitorus & Ginting, 2019).

Research Procedures

This study employed a **Classroom Action Research (CAR)** design to investigate the effectiveness of the PQRST strategy on students' reading comprehension. CAR is a systematic, reflective process of inquiry carried out by practitioners (in this case, the teacher-researcher) to improve their own educational practices and enhance student learning outcomes. This approach is highly suitable for this study because it allows for immediate intervention and continuous refinement of the teaching strategy based on real-time observations and data. The CAR model used in this

research is an adapted version of the one proposed by Kurt Lewin (1946), which consists of four interconnected steps: **planning, acting, observing, and reflecting**. This cycle is repeated to ensure that the intervention is progressively improved. The research was conducted in two cycles to allow for necessary adjustments and to confirm the consistency of the findings.

The research was carried out at **SMP Swasta Yabes School** with the participants being **30 students from Grade 7**, during the **2024-2025 academic year**. These students were chosen because they represented a typical group facing challenges with reading comprehension, as identified in the preliminary observations.

3.1. Research Instruments

To collect comprehensive data, both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used. This triangulation of data sources helps to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Pre-test and Post-test: These were the primary quantitative instruments. The tests consisted of a mix of multiple-choice and short-answer questions designed to measure students' reading comprehension abilities. The pre-test was administered before the intervention to establish a baseline of students' skills, while post-tests were given at the end of each cycle to measure the impact of the PQRST strategy. The questions were carefully constructed based on the reading materials used during the intervention.

Observation Sheets: These qualitative instruments were used to record detailed notes on the students' and teacher's activities during the learning process. The sheets focused on aspects such as student engagement, participation in each PQRST step (e.g., asking questions, summarizing), and the overall classroom atmosphere. An observer (a collaborating teacher) filled out these sheets to ensure objectivity.

Field Notes: The teacher-researcher kept a daily journal or field notes to record subjective observations, challenges encountered, and any unexpected events during the implementation of the strategy. This provided a rich, narrative account of the research process.

Interview Guide: A semi-structured interview was conducted with a representative sample of students and the collaborating teacher after the completion of Cycle II. The purpose was to gather their perceptions and feedback on the PQRST strategy, its effectiveness, and the changes they experienced in their reading habits.

3.2. Research Procedure

The research was implemented in a series of steps, starting with a pre-cycle phase and continuing through two full cycles.

Pre-Cycle (Baseline Assessment) Before the intervention began, the students were given a pre-test. The purpose of this test was to measure their initial reading comprehension skills without any exposure to the PQRST strategy. The results of the pre-test served as a crucial benchmark for evaluating the success of the subsequent cycles.

Cycle 1

Planning: The teacher-researcher developed a detailed lesson plan for teaching reading comprehension using the PQRST strategy. This included selecting appropriate reading texts, preparing visual aids to explain the PQRST steps, and creating observation checklists and post-test questions.

Action: The teacher introduced the PQRST strategy to the students. The intervention took place over a period of four meetings. During each session, the teacher modeled each step of the PQRST strategy with a new reading text and then guided the students through the process. Students were encouraged to work in pairs or small groups to practice the steps, especially questioning and summarizing.

Observation: The collaborating teacher observed the sessions, documenting student and teacher activities using the observation sheets. The teacher-researcher also kept field notes to capture immediate reflections on the lesson's progress.

Reflection: After the final session of Cycle 1, the teacher-researcher and the collaborating teacher analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data. The post-test results were compared to the pre-test scores to assess initial improvements. The observation sheets and field notes were reviewed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. It was noted that while the students showed

improvement, they still struggled with the "Question" and "Summarize" stages, indicating a need for more focused guidance in the next cycle.

Cycle 2

Planning: Based on the reflection from Cycle 1, the lesson plan was revised. The teacher decided to provide more explicit instruction and examples for how to formulate effective questions and create concise summaries. More practice time was allocated for these specific stages.

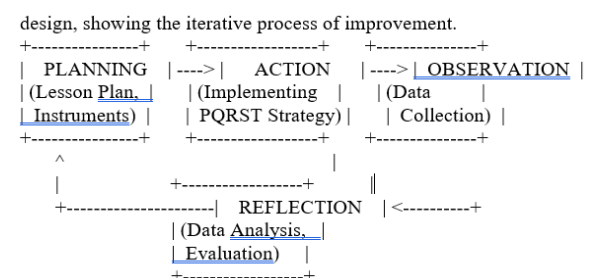
Action: The teacher re-implemented the PQRST strategy, this time with a renewed focus on the areas of difficulty identified in Cycle 1. New reading texts were used to prevent the students from relying on prior knowledge of the content. The teacher provided targeted feedback and one-on-one assistance to students who were still struggling.

Observation: The observer once again documented the process, paying close attention to whether the students' difficulties from Cycle 1 had been resolved. The field notes also continued to capture the teacher's reflections

Reflection: The post-test results from Cycle 2 were analyzed and compared with the results from the pre-test and Cycle 1 post-test. A final analysis of all qualitative data (observation sheets, field notes, and interview transcripts) was conducted to draw a comprehensive conclusion about the overall effectiveness of the PQRST strategy. The results were deemed successful, as the research objectives were met.

3.3. Research Design Graphic

This graphic illustrates the cyclical nature of the Classroom Action Research design, showing the iterative process of improvement.



This model is repeated for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, with each cycle building upon the findings of

the previous one to refine the intervention and maximize its effectiveness.

Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative Results

Quantitative data was collected from the results of the pre-test, Cycle 1 post-test, and Cycle 2 post-test. This data was used to measure the improvement in students' reading comprehension after the implementation of the PQRST strategy. Below is a table comparing the scores of the 30 students who were the subjects of the study, using nicknames.

Table 1: Pre-test, Cycle 1 Post-test, and Cycle 2 Post-test Results

No.	Nickname	Pre-test (Score)	Post-test Cycle 1 (Score)	Post-test Cycle 2 (Score)	Improvement (%)
1	Adi	60	75	85	41.7
2	Budi	55	70	80	45.5
3	Citra	70	85	90	28.6
4	Dika	65	80	85	30.8
5	Eka	60	75	85	41.7
6	Fani	75	85	95	26.7
7	Gilang	60	75	80	33.3
8	Hana	80	90	95	18.8
9	Irfan	55	70	80	45.5
10	Jeni	65	80	90	38.5
11	Kevin	60	75	80	33.3
12	Lina	70	85	90	28.6
13	Miko	50	65	75	50.0
14	Nanda	65	80	90	38.5
15	Oni	70	85	90	28.6
16	Putri	75	85	95	26.7
17	Rian	60	75	85	41.7
18	Sinta	55	70	80	45.5
19	Tono	70	85	90	28.6
20	Uli	65	80	85	30.8
21	Vina	60	75	85	41.7
22	Wati	75	85	95	26.7
23	Xena	60	70	80	33.3
24	Yogi	55	70	80	45.5
25	Zaki	70	85	90	28.6
26	Andri	65	80	85	30.8
27	Bima	60	75	80	33.3
28	Cici	75	85	95	26.7
29	Doni	60	70	80	33.3
30	Eka	50	65	75	50.0
Average		64.5	78.2	86.7	36.2%

data Summary and Average Score Analysis

The table above clearly shows a significant increase in scores at each stage of the research.

Pre-test (Pre-cycle): The students' initial average score was 64.5. This score indicates that their reading comprehension abilities before the intervention were at a moderate level and required improvement.

Post-test Cycle 1: After implementing the PQRST strategy in Cycle 1, the average score increased to 78.2. This improvement shows that the PQRST strategy began to have a positive impact on students' reading comprehension. However, the reflection revealed that some students were still struggling with the "Question" and "Summarize" stages, which became the focus of the improvements in Cycle 2.

Post-test Cycle 2: After the refinements and a more focused implementation of the strategy in Cycle 2, the average score increased sharply to 86.7. This score surpassed the research target and shows that the intervention was optimally successful.

Cumulative Improvement:

Overall, the average student score increased by 36.2% from the pre-test (64.5) to the Cycle 2 post-test (86.7). This increase demonstrates that the PQRST strategy, especially with proper guidance and refinement, is highly effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Yabes School. These results are further supported by qualitative findings that showed an increase in student participation and motivation during the lessons.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Findings and Discussion

4.1. Quantitative Results

The pre-test results showed that the students' average reading comprehension score was 65.5. This indicates that the students' initial abilities needed improvement. After implementing the PQRST strategy in Cycle I, the average post-test I score increased to 78.2. Although there was an improvement, the reflection results showed that some students still struggled with the "Question" and "Summarize" stages

Based on the reflection of Cycle I, corrective actions were taken in Cycle II, where the teacher provided more intensive guidance, especially in creating questions and summarizing. After the implementation of

Cycle II, the average post-test II score increased to 87.5. This improvement demonstrates that the PQRST strategy, with proper guidance, can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the classroom action research conducted, it can be concluded that the PQRST (Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Test) strategy is effective in improving the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Yabes School in the 2024-2025 academic year. This improvement is evident from the significant increase in test scores and positive changes in students' behavior and participation during the learning process. It is hoped that this strategy can be adopted and further developed by English teachers at the school to improve the quality of reading instruction.

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