

# Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Using M.U.R.D.E.R Technique

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to describe (1) how M.U.R.D.E.R technique can improve students' reading comprehension; (2) what may happen in the class when M.U.R.D.E.R technique is implemented in the reading class. The research was conducted at SMA N 2 Karanganyar. The research subject was the students of XI-IPA 2. The data of this research are qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were collected through interview, observation, questionnaire, and photograph and were analyzed using assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting the outcomes. The quantitative data were collected through test and were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result of the research shows that: (1) M.U.R.D.E.R technique could improve students' reading comprehension. The mean score of pre-test (61.35) improved to 71.95 in post-test 1 and to 78.08 in post-test 2; (2) the students were more active and communicative. They had more courage to share their ideas to their partner.*

**Key Word:** students' reading comprehension, M.U.R.D.E.R technique.

## Introduction

One of the English skills which must be mastered by the students in Senior High School is reading. Grellet (1998: 7) states that reading is an active skill. She mentions that reading involves guessing, predicting, checking, and asking oneself questions. It means that reading is not a passive skill, when readers reads they think and search for meaning.

Moreover, Grellet (1998: 182) states that reading comprehension means understanding a written text to extract the required information from it as efficiently as possible. On the other word, reading comprehension is the degree to which one understands what he reads. When one picks up the newspaper or read a novel, he is using our reading comprehension skills to gather information from text.

There is an important point related to the purpose of teaching English. In the School Based Curriculum (KTSP) for Senior High School, English teaching aims to develop communicative competency in the form oral and written language. Moreover, the competence standard of reading that should be reached by eleventh grade of Senior High School

is understand the meaning of short functional text and simple essay in the form of report, narrative, analytical exposition, spoof, and hortatory exposition text to interact with surrounding.

To achieve the competence standard and basic competence stated by the curriculum, the eleventh grade students must have adequate portion in reading comprehension. Based on the preliminary observation on the teaching learning process in SMA Negeri 2 Karanganyar, the researcher found that the students' reading comprehension was still low. The researcher tried out the low reading ability of the students by giving them a pre-test. Based on the students' average score in the pre-test, the researcher found that the average score was only 61.35. It was still far from expectation because the passing grade of English subject in SMA N 2 Karanganyar is 75.

The students still encountered some difficulties in using their English for comprehending English texts. They needed a lot of time to understand. In reality, the students of eleventh grade in SMA Negeri 2 Karanganyar have difficulties in comprehending English

texts. The difficulties include identifying of words meaning, main ideas of the text, communicative purposes, detailed information, references, and cohesive devices. Those problems make the students get low scores in doing reading task.

All the problems might be caused by several factors which are from the teacher and students. There is a problem in the technique used by the teacher. The teacher uses a conventional technique. In the reading class, the teacher presents a text in the textbook and asks students to read, either silently or loudly, and then students have to answer the questions that follow. Consequently, the reading lesson becomes monotonous and boring.

Meanwhile from the students, it is identified that the students have low vocabulary mastery. They depend too much on their dictionary. They have to open the dictionary every time they find unfamiliar words. Then, the students have low motivation in reading class. They do not have interest in the passage which will be read. Most students do not read the text when they get assessments related to an English text. Only few students read the text and do their assessments. Some of them copy their friends' work. Most of them are passive in reading class. Moreover, From the class situation, when the teacher explains teaching material, the students do non-academic rather than academic activities. They are noisy in the teaching and learning process by chatting with their friends.

One of the techniques in teaching reading that may be suitable with the condition of the teaching- learning process in SMA Negeri 2 Karanganyar is *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique. According to Hytecker, Danserau, and Rocklin (1988: 26-29), the *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique has many advantages. The Mood aspect of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique encourages the students to relax and focus on the task. Understand helps the students to follow the author's main train by removing pressure to understand in detail. Recall helps the students to rehearse the material, to identify the main idea of each paragraph, and to transform the material into an oral mode and into the students' own words. The Detect aspect encourages the students to make the summary as accurately as possible by detecting any errors or omissions. It helps the

students to improve their ability in summarizing the material. Elaborate guides the students to make the information in the summary more memorable. The last is Review aspect that guides the students to produce the summary of the entire passage. In this technique, the students work in small groups. They work together to share their understanding of the text.

According to Ingo, Fischer and Hesse (2006: 11), there are two objectives of the *M.U.R.D.E.R*-script. First, learners are supposed to acquire knowledge about text content. Second, they are supposed to acquire text-learning strategies. These strategies include cognitive skills such as explaining and metacognitive skills such as monitoring

O'Donnell & Dansereau (1992), "the *M.U.R.D.E.R* script was developed to support dyads in face-to-face settings with respect to text comprehension. First, a text of several pages will be segmented into smaller sections. For each section, the *M.U.R.D.E.R* script specifies several activities for two learners."

Meanwhile, Cafferty, Jacobs, and Iddings (2006: 187-188), identify some steps in applying *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique. Those steps include Mood, Understand, Recall, Detect, Elaborate, and Review.

- a. Mood. A pair of students sets a relaxed purposeful mood before beginning their work. They make sure they are clear on the procedure to follow and engage in a little chit- chat.
- b. Understand. A reading passage (or section from a text) has been divided into sections. (The teacher can do this or students can use natural breaks in the passage, such as chapter sections). Each student reads the first section silently.
- c. Recall. Without looking at the text, one member of the pair acts as a recaller who summarizes the key ideas of the section.
- d. Detect. The other partner looks at the text, detects any errors, omissions, or unnecessary information in the summary and discusses these with the recaller. The role of recaller and detector rotate for the next section.
- e. Elaborate. Both students elaborate on the ideas in the section. The types of elaborations include the following, 1)

connections with other things the students have studied; 2) links between the section and students' lives; 3) addition of relevant information not included in the section; 4) agreements or disagreements with the views or ideas expressed the section; 5) reactions to the section such as surprise, gladness, or anger; 6) applications of the ideas and information; 7) questions, either about things not understood or questions sparked by the section.

Groups repeat the Understand, Recall, Detect, and Elaborate step for all sections of the text.

- f. Review. When the entire text has been completed, the pair combines their thoughts to summarize the entire text.

Meanwhile, the objectives of the study are to describe how *M.U.R.D.E.R* (mood, understand, recall, detect, elaborate, and review) technique can improve students' reading comprehension and to describe what may happen in the class when *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique is implemented in the reading class.

## Research Method

The method used in this research was classroom action research. Meanwhile, the model of action research used in this research was as proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). It is a set of components including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The researcher conducted the research in two cycles. The time allotment for each meeting was 90 minutes. There were four steps done in the cycle; planning the action, action, observing the action, and reflecting the action. In planning step, the researcher prepared everything needed in doing the action in order to enhance the students' reading comprehension such as, making lesson plan, and preparing materials related to the syllabus. The researcher made planning for the cycle based on the problems faced by the students dealing with reading comprehension. The students have difficulties in comprehending English texts. The difficulties include identifying of words meaning, main ideas of the text, communicative purposes, detailed information, references, and cohesive devices.

Next step was action; the first cycle consisted of four meetings including post- test 1 and the second cycle consisted of three meetings including post- test 2. The researcher used *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique to improve the students' reading comprehension. The next step was observing, in this step the researcher observed the action in each meeting of every cycle. The researcher wrote some notes during the observations. The last step was reflection. In this step, the researcher did reflection to the action. From the reflection, the researcher found the strengths and the weaknesses of the teaching- learning process. The result of the reflection could be a basic consideration to make the plan and to conduct the next meeting,

To obtain the data, the researcher used some techniques. The data gathered from the research can be divided into two groups; qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were from interview, observation, questionnaire, and photograph. The quantitative data were collected through pre test ad post test.

The collected data were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative data was used to analyze the data taken during the teaching- learning process. In analyzing the qualitative data, there are several stages in analyzing data which is adapted from McKernan (1996) in Burn (1999: 156-160). Those are assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting the outcomes. The quantitative analysis was used to compare the students' mean score before and after each cycle or the result of the pre-test and post-test. The tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## Finding and Discussion

After conducting the research, the researcher got some results dealing with the improvement on students' reading comprehension and class situation.

The improvement of students reading comprehension can be seen from the increasing of the students' mean score and the mean score of every aspect of students' reading comprehension.

Table 1. The Improvement of the Students' Score

| Description   | Pre-test | Post-test in cycle 1 | Post-test in cycle 2 |
|---------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Highest score | 75       | 88                   | 93                   |
| Lowest score  | 53       | 60                   | 70                   |
| Mean score    | 61.35    | 71.95                | 78.08                |

Table 2. The Improvement of Students' Reading Indicators Score

| No | Indicators   | Pre-test | Post-test 1 | Post-test 2 |
|----|--|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. | Finding main idea                                  | 68.75    | 78.33       | 80.42       |
| 2. | Identifying detailed information                   | 52.27    | 69.55       | 78.64       |
| 3. | Explaining the meaning of certain words            | 58.93    | 67.14       | 75.36       |
| 4. | Mentioning the communicative purposes              | 60.50    | 75          | 78.92       |
| 5. | Explaining the logical meaning of cohesive devices | 62.50    | 72.5        | 73          |
| 6. | Identifying references                             | 69.58    | 70.83       | 75.5        |

From the table above it can be seen that there was an improvement of the students' mean score and the mean score of indicators of reading comprehension. It means that *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique can improve students' reading comprehension.

*M.U.R.D.E.R* technique consists of six steps. Every step has a purpose to help the students in understanding the content of the text. According to O'Donnell, et. al. (1985) applying all steps in *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique will help the students understand the text.

In reading the text, the student must be able to identify the meaning of words in order to understand the content of the text. Understanding step in *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique encourage the students to analyze the words and try to predict their meaning based on the context. Hythecker, Dansereau, and Rocklin (1988: 26- 29) states that understand step helps the students to follow the author's main train by removing pressure to understand in detail. Discussing the words meaning will help the students to understand the content of the text. Therefore, the students may can identify words meaning, main ideas, detailed information, references, communicative purposes, and cohesive devices of the text.

The activities in recalling and detecting steps make the students active in sharing information about the content of the text. The students recalled and detected the main point of each paragraph. Jacobs, et. al. (1997: 33) says that recalling and detecting activity encourage the students to focus on main idea of the text. Being able to identify the general idea, the readers will identify detailed information of the text. According to Gower, Phillips, and Walter (1995: 95) if the students can get an overall idea of the text they can go on to a more detailed understanding.

The activities in elaborating and reviewing steps help the students to produce summary. It helps the student to get information more memorable. Moreover, Jacobs, et. al. (1997:34) state that Elaboration step may lead readers to link key information in the text to what they already know. Meanwhile, review step guided the students to produce the super summary for the entire passage. The summary and the information in elaborating and reviewing step helped the students to get the maximum understanding of the text.

In addition, according to the students' interview, the steps of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique help the students in comprehending the text so, they could answered the questions related to the text. As one of the students said, "*Step pada M.U.R.D.E.R itu bisa membantu dalam memahami teks. Misalnya pas step understand miss, kita kan disuruh membaca per paragraph mencari tahu kata-kata yang sulit.*" The other student, RMP said, "*Pada saat recalling dan detecting step itu membantu kita untuk menemukan ide pokok.*" Moreover, from questionnaire result, 31 students agreed that *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique helped them in comprehending a text. The 33 students said that *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique could be implemented in learning process, especially in reading comprehension.

The researcher also got some results dealing with the improvement on class situation. The more detailed improvement on class situation was explained as follows:

Table 3. The Improvement of Class Situation

| The improvement                        | Before the action  | After the action  |
|--|--|---|
| The improvement on the class situation | <p>a. In teaching-learning process, the students did non academic rather than academic activities.</p> <p>b. The students tended to be passive learners because the teacher dominated the class.</p> <p>c. The students were not interested in reading class. Therefore, they did not have willingness to participate during the teaching-learning process</p> | <p>a. The students did academic rather than non academic activities.</p> <p>b. The students tended to be active learners and the teacher did not dominate the classroom activities. The teacher involved all students to participate in learning process. In <i>M.U.R.D.E.R</i> technique, the students read the text, recalled and detected the main points, and elaborated and review the text. By doing this activities, the students involved actively in learning process.</p> <p>c. The students were interested in reading class. They had willingness to participate during the teaching-learning process. The students were motivated to participate in learning process because they worked in pairs.</p> |

The implementation of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique motivated the students to be more active in the class. The students tended to be active learner and the teacher did not dominate the classroom activities. The teacher involved all students to participate in learning process. In *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique, the students read the text, recalled and detected the main points, and elaborated and review the text. By doing these activities, the students got involved actively in learning process. *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique facilitates the learners to involve actively in teaching and learning process. In addition, from the questionnaire result, 31 students agreed that the used of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique attracted them in learning reading comprehension.

In learning reading using *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique, the students are motivated in reading class because they have the opportunity to share their ideas to their partner. Besides, they are more confidence because they learned in pairs. According to Tsui (1995: 90), the value of small group work is well documented. It has been widely observed that students are much more ready to interact with each other than with their teacher. The class was more communicative and cooperative. From the questionnaire result, 33 students said that they were happy when the teacher used *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique because they learned in pair.

Moreover, the teacher should have an extra effort to manage the class when using *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique, especially in a big class. The class situation will be rather noisy because

the students worked and discussed together with their partner in comprehending the text.

### Conclusion

The ending of this discussion can be drawn into two conclusions. The first is that *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique improves students' reading comprehension. The improvements of the students' reading comprehension cover reading to find words meaning, main ideas, communicative purposes, detailed information, references, and cohesive devices.

The improvement of the students' reading comprehension can be seen in the result of mean scores in pre-test and post-test. The mean score of pre-test was 61.35 and it improved to 71.95 in post-test 1 and also improved to 78.08 in post-test 2. It proved that the use of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique could improve the students' reading comprehension.

The second is about the improvement of class situation when *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique is implemented in reading class. The students were more active. Their motivation and confidence improved. They enjoyed following reading class. They had more courage to share their ideas to their partner and they could collaborate with others. Moreover, the use of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique made the students more communicative and cooperative in the reading class. They could discuss the content of the text with their friend.

Moreover, there are some recommendations for English teachers, students, institution of education, and other researchers. First, for English teachers; they

should improve their ability to make innovation and to make effective strategies to teach reading. Therefore, the learning process is not monotonous; they should create a good atmosphere in the class, so the students will be more active and participate in teaching-learning process; and English teacher can use *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique as an alternative technique in teaching reading. Second, for students; they should motivate themselves to learn more. English as a second language seems difficult if there is no motivation and willingness to learn it; and students who are taught by using *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique should be active and creative in learning reading comprehension. They should have more

courage to speak their ideas or opinions, especially in English. Third, for institution of education; an institution of education should be provided with appropriate facilities in order to support the teaching-learning process; besides encourage the teacher to use various techniques in teaching English in order to improve the quality of their teaching and students' achievement. Fourth, for other researchers; they can use this research as an additional resource to conduct a research towards students' reading comprehension; and they can conduct other researches on the use of *M.U.R.D.E.R* technique in teaching reading or other English skill.

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