The Power of Process: Helping Japanese University Students Become Autonomous Readers

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Although the Japanese are arguably the most literate people on the planet, any teacher of Japanese freshmen university students can tell you that most are not what could be called "readers." Most freshmen come into the university with few or none of the requisite skills needed to handle complex reading material in either their mother tongue or a foreign language. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to introduce a process of reading that gives students a solid method for coping with reading material that is beyond their level. This process is known as Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review, or *SQ3R*. The author will introduce the basic tenets of SQ3R and demonstrate how he has incorporated these into the curriculum of his freshmen reading course. The author will also discuss the results of pre/post-course exams and surveys to show how students have reacted to SQ3R.

Ⅰ. Introduction

Learner autonomy has become an influential force in the field of second language acquisition and research into both the theory and application of learner autonomy has grown exponentially in the last two decades. In this paper, my aim is not to attempt to describe all the current research, but to rather focus on how I have attempted to put that research into practice. In defining learner autonomy, a simple, yet useful, definition was provided by Holec (1981) more than twenty-five years ago. Holec described learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's learning." More recently, Dam (as cited in Thanasoulas, 2000) went on to qualify Holec (1981) by providing a definition of the ultimate autonomous learner. This super

learner is one who independently chooses aims and purposes and sets goals; chooses materials, methods and tasks; exercises choice and purpose in organizing and carrying out those tasks; and chooses criteria for evaluation .

As language teachers, we all would love to have a classroom full of Dam's super learners. Unfortunately, teachers of first-year Japanese university students are most often faced with classrooms full of the pedagogical opposites. We are faced with students who are the product of an education system whose function it seems is to produce students who lack few, if any, of Dam's qualities of the super learner. Prior to entering university, Japanese students have been DEPENDant on their schools and teachers for almost every aspect of their learning experience. One of the great challenges for university language teachers, then, is to find methods to help nurture autonomy in students who have had little or no experience with autonomy.

So how do we go about fostering super learners? One of the most important first steps we can take is to introduce our students to the PROCESSES of learning. In other words, to not focus on teaching WHAT to learn, but HOW to learn. In this paper, I would like to focus on the process of reading - in particular, the process of reading I have incorporated into my freshman English reading classes at Miyazaki Municipal University in Miyazaki-city, Japan.

Ⅱ．SQ3R: the Traditional Approach

When I first started trying to develop the curriculum for this reading course, I wanted to introduce a process-approach to learning language skills. I strongly feel that students, especially students here in Japan, benefit from seeing learning, especially skills such as reading and writing, as a process. The approach I have adapted for this course is the SQ3R system (Kemper, Meyer, & Sebranek, 1992; Robinson, 1970). SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. The main reason for my selecting this approach over any other is that I feel it is one of the most systematic approaches to teaching reading strategies. In addition, SQ3R incorporates all of the steps that I, personally, feel are important in teaching the process of reading.

Key to this approach is its circular nature. Many reading approaches tend to be linear: each class the students do pre-reading activities for a given article or passage, they then read the article, and finally finish by doing post-reading activities. Each reading experience, therefore, is a self-contained activity which may or may not relate to previous or following reading sessions. On the other hand, SQ3R promotes a circular approach where reading

sessions are broken up into manageable chunks and post-reading activities from one reading session always support the pre-reading activities of the following session, and vice versa. In this manner, students are constantly using previously learned material to read and understand new material.

To better explain the SQ3R system, I will now briefly outline the traditional SQ3R approach and then follow with a more in-depth explanation of how I have attempted to put this system into practice.

2.1　Step 1: Survey

The first step in SQ3R is **Survey**. The activities in Survey are designed as pre-reading activities that help the student prepare to read the text in detail by helping them to get a general idea of what is in the passage and to identify in advance any problems they might face. With many types of reading materials (books, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and graded readers), there are many clues that can help students to get an idea of what the book or article might be about - before they read the text in detail. In Survey, the students try to find those clues without resorting to reading the text. In the original SQ3R system, students are advised to do the following activities:

1．Read the title, sub-titles, headings, and then guess what the passage might be about.
2．Scan for any **bold** or italicized words that might be keywords to understanding the text.
3．Look at all the illustrations, graphs, charts, or pictures and their captions and try to guess how they are connected to each other and to the title and section headings.
4．Skim the first and last sentence of each major paragraph.

2.2　Step 2: Question

The second step in SQ3R is **Question**, which is also pre-reading activity. In this step, the students try to use all the information they have gained in their Survey to make questions about what they are going to read. It is important to stress that the answers to the questions are not important at this stage. The questions, therefore, should try to a) make the students think more deeply about the story, b) help the students identify important points in the passage, and c) help the students predict what the story might be about.

2.3　Step 3: Reading in Detail

The next step, **Reading in Detail**, is fairly self-explanatory. The students simply use what

they learned in Survey to help read the passage in detail while thinking about the questions they have made in Question.　While reading, students should actively read the text by constantly asking and answering questions to themselves while they are reading.　In the traditional approach, students are advised to break up the reading assignment into manageable chunks by chapter, section or major ideas.　Students also take notes and summarize major ideas.

2.4　Step 4: Recite

The fourth step is **Recite**.　In some ways, Recite is the easiest and most difficult step in SQ3R because all that the students need to do is talk about what they have been reading and learning.　In some situations, they may do this by themselves, but hopefully they can also engage in discussions with their classmates.　In these discussions, they should review what they have read:　the story, the plot, the characters, etc.　They should also talk about any problems they might have had understanding the text or any interesting points they might have found.　Finally, they should repeat out loud the answer to all the questions they may have made in the step Question.　The main point is to talk out loud about the passage. In this way, they will help themselves and their classmates better understand what they have learned AND identify any problems they might face.

2.5　Step 5: Review

The last step in SQ3R is **Review** which is both a post-reading activity and a pre-reading activity. Ideally, Review should be done at the end of a reading session and at the beginning. The students should always try to use what they have learned in previous chapters to help them understand that they are going to read in the next.　Only when they have sufficiently reviewed what they should have already learned are they ready to continue reading the next section of the text by starting the whole SQ3R system over with Survey.　By using Review as both a post-reading and pre-reading strategy, the students are constantly reinforcing newly acquired material.　This circular approach is designed to be more effective in maintaining long-term acquisition of newly acquired material.

Ⅲ．Course Description

Now, I would like to show how I have adapted the SQ3R system for use in my freshmen reading classes at Miyazaki Municipal University.

3.1　Setting

Miyazaki Municipal University (MMU) has an incoming freshmen class of about 220 students.　The students study liberal arts, languages, and/or multi-media. Each twelve-week term of their freshmen year, they have a Core English Curriculum made up of one or two CALL classes and one Reading, Writing, and Grammar Module. For these modules, the students are divided into eight groups of between 25 and 30 students.　Each module meets once a week for 90 minutes. At the beginning of the year, the students are placed into three levels: low, intermediate, and high. At the beginning and end of the term, all students are also given the Edinburgh Project for Extensive Reading (EPER) Placement/Progress exam (EPER, 1994, 1995) in order to a) determine student reading levels and b) assess progress at the end of each term.

In the Spring term of 2006, I was responsible for teaching the Reading Module to 4 groups (106 students total).　　Three of these groups were placed at the intermediate level (Class 1, 2, and 4) and one group (Class 3) at the low level.　The average score for my students on the pre-course EPER exam was 24 which corresponds to just between the Beginner and Elementary Level of the MacMillan Guided Readers or an average of 800-1200 head words. (see Table 1 below)　In addition to the EPER exam, students in my classes also were asked to participate in pre-course and post-course surveys to gauge student opinions on reading in general, reading in a second language, and their evaluations of the SQ3R system.

3.2　Course Objectives

With this setting in mind, I have set four general objectives for the reading curriculum. My first objective is to improve the students reading skills, but also I hope to improve their motivation to read in English.　Second, students participate in an extensive reading component in which they read self-selected graded readers outside of class and complete a reading journal.　Third, is to develop learner autonomy by helping students learn ways to independently and confidently face future college-level reading assignments.　　Finally, and most importantly to this paper, the fourth objective is to help foster autonomous learning by introducing the SQ3R reading system. Whereas, the extensive reading component focuses primarily on reading a lot of graded material at the students' current reading level, SQ3R is an *intensive* reading approach that is designed to help students independently cope with material that is more difficult and challenging.

3.3　Reading Material

In addition to the self-selected graded readers the students read outside of class for their extensive reading, the students also have a "class reader" which they read together in class on a week-by-week, chapter-by-chapter basis. The class reader I have chosen is *When Rain Clouds Gather* (Macmillan Guided Readers, Intermediate Level). I will be the first to admit that the choice of this graded material is a compromise with more traditional authentic material that SQ3R was designed to be used with. Note, however, that my goal for this class is to focus on the PROCESS not the PRODUCT. By selecting graded material instead of authentic material such as short stories or newspaper, magazine, or journal articles, I can be assured that the material we cover each week is at the same level and that this level is challenging but not overwhelming. As mentioned before, the average student in this course is at a reading level which corresponds to the Macmillan Guided Reader's Beginner/Elementary Level. *When Rain Clouds Gather* is one level above that and through experience with using this book for several years, I have found that both the level and the content of this graded reader are perfectly suited to the instruction of the SQ3R system.

3.4　The Weekly Worksheet

The main instrument for the instruction of SQ3R is a weekly worksheet that I have designed specifically for this course. For the first four weeks of class, each week's worksheet introduces and practices one step in SQ3R. Starting with the fifth week, the weekly worksheets incorporate all of the steps and class time is spent completing the worksheets in self-selected groups of three to five students. I will now introduce the SQ3R system in more detail and demonstrate how the worksheet activities are designed to use with this system. Please see the Appendix for a sample of the weekly worksheet

3.4.1　Weekly Worksheet: *Survey*

On the weekly worksheets, Activities 3 and 4 are dedicated to Survey. In Activity 3, the students work with the illustrations, chapter title, and other visual and textual clues in the chapter. In groups, the students discuss the illustrations, draw conclusions as to how these illustrations connect to previously read chapters, and make inferences about what might happen next in the chapter they will read that day. In addition, the students are asked to search the illustrations for any unknown vocabulary.

Activity 5 is a skimming activity where they skim the chapter and mark any unknown vocabulary. They then work as a group to make a New Word List by copying their

unknown words into the chart and using their dictionaries to find the Japanese meanings. By finding this unknown vocabulary before they read the chapter, students can concentrate more carefully on the meaning of the story without having to interrupt the flow of their reading by taking time to look up unknown words. By working as a group, less time is also needed in looking up unknown words allowing a more effective use of class time.

In these activities, the students work together to start to get a general idea of what this week's chapter *might* be about. The weekly worksheets have been designed to provide as many opportunities as possible for the students to work in self-selected groups. As independent groups, the students soon learn to depend on themselves and not on the teacher. As teams, they begin to rely on themselves and their classmates to solve the problems they are facing in their learning. For freshmen students, such teamwork may be an acquired skill. Although they may have had opportunities to work as groups in their previous educational experience, in the university setting, most students will not know each other and this unfamiliarity causes a great amount of anxiety. Therefore, my role within in the classroom is very often that of group cheerleader by helping the members work together, making sure everyone is participating, and helping groups stay on task.

Another important focus of these activities, especially Activity 3, is to foster inferencing skills. In other words, Activity 3 is designed to help the students learn how to make guesses, and this, as with working in groups, is an acquired skill for many first-year university students. In my experience, many students are very hesitant to make inferences because there are no clear right or wrong answers. However, in this activity, the students soon learn that it is perfectly acceptable to be creative and make guesses. More importantly, they learn that they will be evaluated on how they work as a team and on the logic and creativity of their guesses - not on their "correctness." It may take several weeks, but by the end of the course, most groups will learn both the value of teamwork and the importance of making inferences.

3.4.2　Weekly Worksheet: *Question*

Activity 6 of the worksheet focuses on the questions they should be thinking about later while they are reading. Idealistically, the students themselves generate this list of questions after they have completed their Survey. However, I have found that this is an activity that is quite challenging for most freshmen because they are used to having a set of questions given them by teacher. Therefore, until Week 8, I compromise by having the students write two questions of their own and supplementing those with questions that I

think are important. After that, they try to write their own.

The important point is to have the students think of their own questions and then preview my questions *before* they start reading. This helps them become much more active readers by giving them something to concentrate on while they are reading. Another goal of this activity is to help the students understand that the purpose of reading is not simply to answer a set of "comprehension" questions generated by the teacher. More importantly, in order to become autonomous readers they need to start exploring the text more deeply by asking questions themselves AND then searching for the answers to those questions in their reading.

3.4.3　Weekly Worksheet: *Read in Detail*

Activity 6 introduces the next step, Reading in Detail, and is fairly self-explanatory. The students simply use what they learned in Survey to help read the text in detail while thinking about the questions they made in Question. While reading, students should actively read the text by constantly asking and answering questions to themselves while they are reading.

3.4.4　Weekly Worksheet: Recite

The last two steps of SQ3R are Post-Reading activities. These are activities that, in my experience, most students have never done or do not do enough. The prevailing opinion with most students is, "Okay, I have read it, I kind of understand it, I answered the teacher's questions, and that's good enough." Unfortunately, for more difficult reading material this attitude will result in a very superficial understanding that will soon be forgotten.

Activity 6 had the students read the chapter carefully through one time. For Activity 7, they read the chapter *again*. This time, the students stop and write a summary after each page. I have them close their books while they are writing so that they are using what they learned and not just copying from the book. I don't demand that the students write their summaries in English or Japanese. I encourage them to write in English because I feel that helps reinforce new vocabulary; however, I do feel that some students benefit greatly from having to synthesize what they have read into Japanese. As a reading teacher, I still have not decided whether summarizing in English or Japanese is most beneficial. Therefore, I leave it to the students to decide what they feel is best for them.

Activity 8 of the worksheet asks the students to discuss the story and the answers to the questions from Activity 5 as a group. In answering the questions, the students are asked to use only the summaries they have written and to not refer back to text. This helps impress on them the importance of good note-taking and the need to read the text deeply. Working as a group, students play both the role of student and teacher by having to both explain their answers and help the members of their group to overcome problems with understanding. As with the previous exercises, my role is limited to helping groups with problems they first couldn't answer as a group.

3.4.5　Weekly Worksheet: Review

As mentioned above, Review is designed to be both a post-reading and pre-reading activity. Therefore, the Review activities are actually at the end and the beginning of the worksheet. In class each week, my goal for the students is to finish through Activity 8. In order to promote a more long-term acquisition of the material the students are reading, I have designed the final activities of the worksheet to be done outside of class - hopefully several days after class.

Activity 9 has the students review their summaries and write out answers to the questions in Activity 5 two or three days after class. This encourages the students to review what they learned and helps them to not forget everything they did in class. I also ask the students to not refer back to the text unless absolutely necessary. This keeps them from just copying sentences straight out of the book.

Activity 10 asks the students to again practice inferencing skills by using their imagination to make inferences as to what will happen next in the story. As with Activity 3, many students may hesitate to do such inferencing because they are anxious about having the right answer. Once they finally understand that there are no "right" answers, however, many students come up with very imaginative and interesting guesses.

Activities 1 and 2 of the following week's worksheet, ask the students to simply share their work from the previous week. Students take turns reading their summaries out loud while the other members of the group listen and add any important information they might have missed. They also review the answers to the questions, compare their answers with their classmates, and add any additional information that they might have missed. Finally they share their guesses about the future story.

Ⅳ． Assessment of the Weekly Worksheets

In order to promote learner autonomy, the students are given several opportunities to evaluate their own work and to self-correct their own worksheets. To accomplish this, the weekly worksheets are marked in two stages. First, three days before their next class, the completed worksheets are handed in and everything is checked by me. At this initial stage, I do not give a grade. I simply make sure they have done the work. I put a check mark next to all the places where they should have written something and an X mark next to all the places they have not written anything. This helps me to keep track of what is actually the individual student's work and how much they add later with the help of their groupmates.

For the second stage, at the beginning of the following week's class, the checked worksheets are handed back to the students to use in Review Activities 1-3 of the following week's worksheet. As they are reviewing the answers, they have an opportunity to compare their answers to their classmates' and add anything they feel is necessary. At the end of class, I give an answer key for Activity 9 from which the students self-correct their answers. To allow for flexibility in the grading, I do not ask the students to mark "correct" or "incorrect." I have them look at my answers from the key and then evaluate their answers on a three-point scale: O = has almost all of the most important information; △ = has most of the important information; and X = needs more work. After they self-correct their worksheets, the students re-submit the worksheets for a final grade.

Ⅴ． Evaluation of the SQ3R Approach

An evaluation of this approach can be best seen in the following results: scores on the weekly worksheet, differences between pre/post-course reading exams, and the opinions shown in post-course surveys.

5.1　The Weekly Worksheet

Marking of the weekly worksheets has been described above. For each week, the worksheets were given an overall score of 10 points. These 10 points were given by me based on both the quantity and quality of the work. In determining their points, I also considered the self-evaluation scores the students had given their own worksheets, and the level of the class. Unfair though it may be, I tried to match the quality of the work with the level of the student and the effort it took to complete the worksheet. In other words, I expected more from the advanced students. (see Table 1)

Table 1．Scores of Weekly Worksheets

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
average score	82.37	78.46	69.68	84.07
stdev	7.71	8.76	15.49	5.52

Overall, I was very satisfied with the work these students produced. This course asked a lot from the students in terms of in-class work and homework, but most students did fine work and managed to get their work in on time. At first glance, Class 3, with its 69.68 average worksheet score, seems to have struggled the most with the worksheets. However, this class was extremely bimodal and the standard deviation (stdev) of 15.49 is evident of that. In this class there were students who worked very hard during the term and a small group that did not. The poor scores of that small group did much to pull down the average.

5.2　The Edinburgh Project for Extensive Reading (EPER) Placement/Progress Exams

As mentioned above, the students took the EPER Exam at the beginning and end of the term. This exam asks the students to provide missing words from several increasingly difficult passages taken from short stories. The EPER Exam comes in several different versions. For the pre-course and post-course, our students take the Test A and Test B versions which have 141 and 147 items, respectively (EPER 1994, 1995). For the data analysis, scores have been standardized using the standardized scores provided by the publisher. The publishers also provide a guide which shows how test scores correspond to the levels of graded-readers published by several popular publishers. Table 2 has been adapted from this guide. In addition to the standardized scores, this adaptation is used to gauge improvements in student reading levels.

Table 2．EPER Reading Levels and Corresponding Graded Readers

LEVEL G　(EPER Scores: 0 - 11) -average vocabulary 200 - 400 words	MacMillan Guided Readers, Starter Level [1] Penguin Readers, Easy Starters / 1 Beginner	Oxford Bookworms, Stage 1
LEVEL F　(EPER Scores: 12 - 17) -average vocabulary ~600 words	Cambridge Readers, level 1 & 2 MacMillan Guided Readers, Beginner [1]	Oxford Bookworms, Stage 1 Penguin Readers, Level 2 Elementary
LEVEL E　(EPER Scores: 18 - 24) -average vocabulary ~800 words	Cambridge Readers, level 2 & 3 MacMillan Guided Readers, Beginner [1]	Oxford Bookworms:　Stage 2 & 3 Penguin Readers, Level 2 Elementary
LEVEL D　(EPER Scores: 25 - 34) -average vocabulary ~1200 words	Cambridge Readers, level 3 MacMillan Guided Readers, Elementary [1]	Oxford Bookworms, Stage 3 Penguin Readers, Level 3 Pre-Intermediate
LEVEL C　(EPER Scores: 35 - 44) -average vocabulary ~1600 words	Cambridge Readers, level 4 MacMillan Guided Readers, Intermediate [1]	Oxford Bookworms, Stage 4 & 5 Penguin Readers, Level 4 Intermediate
LEVEL B　(EPER Scores: 45 - 54) -average vocabulary ~1900 words	Cambridge Readers, level 4 & 5 MacMillan Guided Readers, Upper [1] Oxford Bookworms, Stage 4 & 5	Longman Classics, Stage 4 Penguin Readers, Level 5 Upper-Intermediate

[1] formerly Heinemann Guided Readers

The students in my classes had an average 9.14-point gain on the EPER Exam (see Table 3). This corresponded to an average increase of one reading level (Level E to Level D) over the 12-week course. Individually, three students decreased one level, twenty student's test scores increased but reading level remained the same, 57 students increased by 1 reading level, and 23 students increased by two reading levels. On a class-by-class basis, two of the intermediate classes (Class 1 and 4) saw the most gains, while the other intermediate class (Class2) and the lower class (Class 3) saw less impressive gains.

Table 3．EPER Placement/Progress Test Results

	Pre-Course	Post-Course	Gain
Class 1	25.21	36.07	10.86
Class 2	28.08	35.20	7.12
Class 3	18.16	25.29	7.13
Class 4	28.00	39.36	11.36
All Classes	24.94	34.08	9.14

It must be re-stated that the Reading Module was not the only English class these students were attending; therefore, these gains cannot be attributed solely to the work the students did in the Reading Module.   Nevertheless, I am very satisfied with the results shown on the post-course EPER Exam. Class 1 and 4 were especially satisfying with their 10.86-point and 11.36-point gains being the greatest gains of any class I have taught at MMU in the previous eight years. Even with their lesser gains, Class 2 and 3 were also satisfying in that these two groups were not the most motivated students I had ever had. In contrast to the other two classes, these two groups were much quieter in class, less willing to actively participate in group work, and tended to not get their work done on time. Realizing that even these less motivated students could see such gains on the post-course exam, demonstrated to me the strength of the approach described above.

5.3　Pre-Course and Post-Course Surveys

In order to ascertain student attitudes on both the SQ3R system and the Reading Module in general, pre-course and post-course surveys with 6-point Lickert-type questions were administered. Based on the results of the EPER exam, the groups have been divided into three levels: low (Class 3), intermediate (Class 1, 2), and high (Class 4). For the purpose of this paper, the results of one class from each level were analyzed. See Table 4.

Table 4．Results of Pre-Course and Post-Course Surveys

	Class 3 (low)					Class 1 (intermediate)					Class 4 (high)					All Classes				
	Pre		Post			Pre		Post			Pre		Post			Pre		Post		
	X	SD	X	SD	Diff	X	SD	X	SD	Diff	X	SD	X	SD	Diff	X	SD	X	SD	Diff
1. What do you think your English reading level is? (1)	2.1	0.7	2.6	0.8	0.5	2.8	0.9	3.0	0.9	0.2	2.6	1.0	2.8	0.9	0.2	2.5	1.0	2.8	0.9	0.3
2. How much do you like to read in English? (2)	3.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	1.0	4.0	1.2	4.3	1.2	0.3	4.1	1.2	3.7	1.0	-0.5	3.7	1.3	4.0	1.1	0.3
3. How many hours per week do you spend reading in English?(3)	1.7	0.7	2.9	1.0	1.1	1.4	0.6	2.6	1.3	1.2	1.8	0.9	2.8	0.9	1.0	1.6	0.9	2.8	1.1	1.1
4. How many English words do you know? (4)	2.6	1.1	2.7	0.8	0.1	3.0	0.8	3.0	0.8	-0.1	2.2	0.9	2.4	0.8	0.2	2.6	1.2	2.7	0.8	0.1
5. How often do you think you don't know enough English words? (5)	2.2	1.2	2.6	1.2	0.5	2.3	1.1	2.8	1.2	0.5	2.0	1.1	2.0	0.8	0.0	2.2	1.1	2.5	1.1	0.3
6. How often do you have difficulty understanding English words when you read? (5)	2.3	1.3	2.9	1.3	0.6	2.7	0.9	3.4	0.8	0.7	2.4	1.0	2.8	1.1	0.4	2.5	1.2	3.0	1.1	0.5
7. How well do you think reading strategies help you? (2)	3.5	1.3	3.8	1.0	0.4	4.1	1.3	3.8	0.9	-0.3	4.0	1.6	3.9	1.1	-0.1	3.9	1.6	3.9	1.0	0.0
8. How often do you use reading strategies when reading in English? (6)	2.9	1.2	3.6	1.2	0.7	3.0	1.1	3.6	0.6	0.6	2.9	1.3	3.5	1.1	0.6	3.0	1.2	3.6	1.0	0.6
9. How well can you find key words and phrases in an English reading passage? (7)	2.8	1.0	3.3	0.9	0.5	3.3	0.8	3.4	0.9	0.1	2.7	0.9	3.0	0.9	0.3	3.0	0.9	3.2	0.9	0.3
10. How well can you write a summary of a reading passage after reading it? (7).	2.3	1.0	3.7	1.1	1.4	2.4	0.9	3.4	1.1	0.9	1.7	0.9	3.2	1.3	1.5	2.2	0.9	3.4	1.2	1.2
11. How well has this course helped you improve your English reading ability? (7)			4.1	1.1				4.3	1.1				4.4	1.2				4.3	1.1	
12. How well do you think you did in this course? (7)			4.1	1.2				4.5	1.0				4.6	1.2				4.4	1.1	
13. How much effort do you think you gave in this course? (8)			4.2	1.1				4.8	0.9				4.8	1.1				4.6	1.0	
14. How difficult was this course for you? (9)			3.1	1.1				3.3	0.8				2.9	1.1				3.1	1.0	
15. How well do you think you can use SQ3R to help you understand English reading material? (7)			4.4	1.0				4.2	0.9				4.0	1.2				4.2	1.1	
16. How much did you think doing the worksheets for "When Rain Clouds Gather" helped you improve your reading ability? (2)			4.2	1.1				4.4	0.9				4.1	1.0				4.2	1.0	
17. How much did you think doing the worksheets for "When Rain Clouds Gather" helped you understand the story? (2)			4.5	1.1				4.5	1.0				4.3	0.9				4.5	1.0	

rating criteria: **1** (very beginner - very advanced), **2** (not at all - very much), **3** (1=0hr, 2=1-3hrs, 3=4-6hrs, 4=7-9hrs, 5=10-15hrs, 6=15+hrs),
(1 to 6)　**4** (very few - very many), **5** (always - never), **6** (never - always), **7** (not very well - very well), **8** (no effort - all my effort),
9 (very difficult - very easy)

With a few exceptions, the results of the post-course survey show increases over the pre-course results. Question 1 shows that all three classes felt their reading level improved, with the greatest improvements shown in the lowest level class. Question 2 had varied results with the low group showing the largest improvement in their enjoyment in reading in English. On the other hand, the intermediate class showed less gains and the high group actually showed a decline. This may be due to the fact that the more advanced students were reading more challenging, therefore, less "enjoyable" books for their extensive reading outside of class. In Question 3, however, although all classes showed substantial gains in the amount of English they read each week, the least gains were in the high-level class.

Questions 4 - 6 focus on vocabulary. In previous years, post-course surveys of freshmen students had shown that the lack of sufficient vocabulary was the most difficult aspect of reading in English. The results to these questions show that this year's classes did little to improve attitudes on how many words the students know, but did much to overcome feelings of not knowing a sufficient amount of words and the difficulty in understanding English words when reading. Interestingly, the high-level class again showed the least positive results.

Questions 7 and 8 ask about their views on reading strategies. The results for Question 8 were quite disappointing. Except for the low-level class, students did not feel as if the use of reading strategies helped very much. Question 8 contradicts this somewhat in that the amount of strategy use increased rather dramatically. Therefore, the students in the intermediate- and high-level classes were using strategies more, but did not seem to think they were much use. Another interpretation of this might be that as higher level students, they are probably using strategies more implicitly and therefore are less cognizant of their effect. For the lower level students, this might be the first time they have been introduced to reading strategies and are therefore much more aware of the effect strategies are having in their reading.

Question 9 and 10 focus on how well the students can work with the text in order to find key points and in using those key points to write a summary of the text. Again, the low-level class seems to have benefited most in both their ability to find key information and their ability to write a summary. The intermediate- and high-level groups didn't feel as if their ability to find essential points in the text improved dramatically. However, this is contradicted in their much improved ability to write a summary of the text - which, in essence, is finding the most important pieces of information. This shows that these students are much less confident of their receptive ability (i.e., finding key points) and much more confident in their productive skill of summarizing.

The next group of questions (Questions 11-14) asked students to evaluate both the course and their effort in fulfilling the course requirements. I was very satisfied with the results of these questions with most students showing very positive opinions. Although there was a slight variance from class to class, most students felt the course improved their reading skills and that they did well in completing class assignments. Most students also felt as if they worked hard in the class, even though the course was rated as being neither very easy nor very difficult. Interestingly, the most advanced class felt as if the course was the most difficult.

The final three questions in Table 4 (Questions 15-17) asked the students to evaluate my approach to teaching the SQ3R system and the worksheets that I developed to practice SQ3R. Once more, I was very satisfied with the results. A majority of the students felt that they had learned how to use the SQ3R system well enough to help them understand English reading material. In addition, most students felt that the weekly worksheets helped them improve their reading overall reading ability and more specifically their ability to understand the story they read in class.

In response to an open-ended question asking what the students thought about the SQ3R system, almost all of the students who commented did so positively (see Table 5). Most commented that they thought SQ3R was a good system that helped them become better readers. In more detail, students wrote that SQ3R made reading easier, and that their ability

Table 5. Student Responses to "What did you think about the SQ3R system?" (n = 82)

I think SQ3R is a good system.	46
SQ3R helps me become a better reader.	37
SQ3R helps me understand the story more deeply.	19
I can read more easily/smoothly.	15
I could learn the best way to read in English.	12
SQ3R is useful.	7
Using SQ3R makes me think/imagine more.	7
I had never used process reading before.	7
I can read more quickly.	6
SQ3R helps me to remember the content of the story better.	6
I liked talking about the illustrations.	4
I think I will continue using.	4
I like reading in English better now.	3
SQ3R helps me learn more English words.	1
I could understand the story by myself.	1
It was difficult to understand/use at first.	7
I couldnft understand system.	5
I donft think SQ3R helps me be a better reader.	5
SQ3R takes too much time.	4
I didn't understand the system but if I did maybe it would help my reading.	4
SQ3R was just the same stuff I did in high school.	1
I didnft understand why I had to make guesses about the future story.	1

to comprehend more deeply and to remember the story improved. On the other hand, only 5 out of 82 students responded negatively. These comments included criticisms that SQ3R was difficult to understand and that it took too much time. For these students, SQ3R was not seen as being much help in making them better readers.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper, I have described a reading system designed to improve freshmen university students English reading ability by helping them become more confident, autonomous learners. Although understanding the content of their reading was important, more emphasis was placed on teaching students how to follow a process of reading. I have been developing this approach for several years and have reached a point where I am confident that when students leave my classroom, they are in a much better position to overcome the challenges that will face them in the future - confidently and independently. Although in twelve short weeks, it is difficult to develop super-learners, I feel as if I have helped my students start on their journey to becoming autonomous learners and therefore much more able to take charge of their own learning - which should be the goal of any pedagogical endeavor.

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VIII. Appendix

Figure 1 Sample of Weekly Worksheet