# Promoting Reading Comprehension by Using Socratic Questioning

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to describe the atmosphere in improving reading comprehension of Pamulang University students in reading class using Socratic questioning method. The study emphasized the technique of reading comprehension by promoting Socratic Question. It particularly focused on helping students' achievement in Reading Comprehension. The subjects of this study were second semester students from the English Department at Pamulang University. Two cycles of Classroom Action research were conducted by implementing the actions, observing the class and analyzing the results. The instruments used in this study were observation lists, questionnaires and reading tests. The data were analyzed qualitatively. Based on the data analysis it was found that Socratic Questioning promoted reading comprehension. It is presented on improvement in mean score between pre and posttest in the first phase. In the second phase, the differing mean score was likewise seen. This improvement shows that students learn that by implementing Socratic questioning on the text given. It also leads to the conclusion that the Socratic questioning method encourages them to ask questions, meaning that the Socratic questioning method stimulates their critical thinking to think about the text they read and guides them to comprehend the text.

**Keywords:** *Socratic 1, Question 2, Reading 3*

## Introduction

Reading issues lead to the fact that a nation with a high literacy index drives its people to advance more rapidly than those with lower literacy rates. However, some obstacles are found in the class as the heart of the education system in a nation. The first, reading has not yet become an integral part of daily life. According to WeareSocial (2017), the majority of Indonesians, including students, devote over nine hours a day to smartphones. Instead of using their smartphones for reading sources such as e-books, people tend to use them for chatting, online games, and social media. Wijayanti (2020) noted that the challenge in Indonesian class is impacted not only by a lack of enthusiasm in reading, but also by laziness and other factors. The second, current strategy in reading class including in Pamulang University, has involved the integral of capturing, analyzing, drawing and concluding. However, the application has not been maximized. This condition is sometimes leading teachers back to old fashion, teachers instructing pupils to read the text and then answer the question. Meanwhile, comprehending the text involves critical thinking as a scientific learning process that involves maximizing the

ability of capturing, analyzing, drawing, concluding and taking advantage of the process (Priyatni,2014). No wonder, the ineffective reading strategy leads Indonesian pupils to less critical thinking and frequently struggle with reading information from text (Jayanti in Azmi and Nanda, 2020). In terms of this condition, it needs to identify a teaching strategy to motivate pupils to grasp their reading. Fundamentally, comprehending text requires students to build a thinking process or cognitive process that involves both new information and pre-existing knowledge that was gained early through a variety of means, including reading strategy, in order to grasp the text.

In terms of reading strategy issues, this study implements Socratic Questioning developed by Philosopher Socrates. This model focuses on questions that encourage students to communicate their thoughts, and to be praised for doing so. In this way, it encourages individuals to think critically about the ideas, issues and values presented in a given work (Napitulu 2016). According to Brewer (2005), Socratic Question is a method that tries to understand information from a text by creating a dialogue related to the text. The first step, participants pursue and examine the complex ideas of the text deeply through a careful process of listening to the dialogue. After observing the text, the participants then propose analyzed open-ended questions by connecting them to universal themes in human real life. The question's principles must involve participants to think prudently, analyze multiple meanings in text and express idea simplicity and conviction. From Brewers' statement, it can be implied that Socratic Approach is stressed in self-examination through question. It is in line with Kusmayani (2017) that the Socratic Approach is a teaching and learning method founded by Socrates that emphasizes self-examination-via questioning.

During the process, participants respond to each other. However, this method attempts to respond by listening rather than interrupting. Prior to responding, participants are instructed to paraphrase and summarize other critical ideas obtained from the learned text or other supporting text, either in support of or in disagreement with learned text. Rather than attempting to win or find the "right" answer, participants exchange perspectives politely in order to stimulate real debate. In terms of the study, this research will not emphasize on dialogue. However, principles of Socratic approach, specifically the approach of questioning will be inserted into the reading approach. In proportion to Paul and Elder (2017) that Socratic questioning is a type of disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue though in a variety of directions and for a variety of purposes, including: to explore complex ideas, to ascertain the truth, to open up issues and problems, to uncover assumptions, to analyze concepts, to distinguish what eh know from what we don't know, and to follow out logical implication of thought.

Based on Robert Paul' taxonomy, there are nine types of questions in the Socratic Questioning approach. Furthermore, Paul in Napitulu (2016, p 61) describes the questions as followed:

1. Clarification question. The objective of this question is to elicit information that is absent or unclear in the problem statement inquiry, for example: What are you referring to? In

your opinion, what is the major issue here? Could you please provide an example, or Could you elaborate on that?

2. Purpose-Probing Question. The purpose-probing inquiries are intended to elicit information regarding a situation in which the reason for what they say is unclear,such as: what is the objective of? How do these two individuals' motivations differ?

3. Question probing assumption. This inquiry type is intended to investigate assumptions. For example: In this case, why do you think it's true? What else can we assume?

4. Inquiries into information, Reason, Evidence, and causes. The queries are intended to dig up information, reasoning, proof and causes of problems or issues. Such as: How do you know? What is an example, do you have any evidence to back up your claim?

5. Question about a question. This query seeks to discover why, who and how the topic or problem was posed: How can we find out? How could this be resolved?

6. Inquiry into concepts. This question is meant to dig deeply into a problem or idea being discussed: What is the point?

7. Inquiry into inferences and interpretation. It is used to dig deeper understanding of inferences, conclusion, opinion, choice and the speaker's interpretation of the problem: What conclusions do we draw? What do you think?.

8. Questions about viewpoints or perspectives. This question seeks to discover how objects are regarded or judged, not simply relative but also holistically. For example: You seem to have a perspective on the subject. Why did you choose this perspective over another?

9. Questions that probe implications and consequences. This question asks about the inferences or deductions and the outcome if the action is taken. For example: What do you mean? How would that work? Is that a certainty or a probability?

Socratic Questioning has been applied in many studies in Indonesian, including in classes of speaking and critical thinking, such as in the English Department of Muhammadiyah University. In this study, Manurung and Siregar (2018, p 212-216) found that Even Though several difficulties with grammar, vocabulary and a limited knowledge base related to the issues are presented during the research, Socratic questioning helps students improve not only their oral communication, but also their critical thinking. The same result was found by Gozali et.al. (2021, p60-71) who promoted Socratic Questioning in HOTS questioning and HOTS perception among language teachers in five provinces in Indonesia. Furthermore, Kusmaryani (2017) gave the evidence that the application of Socratic Questioning in EFL Class of state University in Tarakan resulted in a significant value 000 < 0.05 in speaking and critical thinking test results using the Wilcoxon ranking test. It indicates that there is significant improvement in student's speaking and critical thinking skills after undergoing the Socratic question method.

However, data from Google Scholar showed that there are no studies yet that demonstrate the possibility of Socratic Questioning in reading comprehension, particularly in first-year EFL students. This data serves a foundation for choosing Socratic Questioning as the research theme for reading comprehension among EFL university students. In terms of this, the study explored whether Socratic Questioning is beneficial

or not for Student' Reading Comprehension. Therefore, some questions formulated into two research questions.as follows;

1) Does implementing Socratic Questioning improve the process of teaching and learning Reading Comprehension of students in the second semester of the English department at Universitas Pamulang ?

2) What improvements are found in students' reading comprehension after implementing the Socratic questioning method?

## Method

As the purpose of the study is to investigate whether reading strategy instruction of Socratic Questioning is beneficial in improving students' reading comprehension, it should be conducted as class action research. Mettetal (2002, p6) found that this design is a technique to determine what works best in your own classroom in order to improve your students' learning. This study implies that this research design motivates teachers to engage in self evaluation and problem solving for their class problem. Furthermore, Khasinah (2013, p 107-114) argued that Classroom Research Action serves as a tool for resolving classroom problems as well as for in-service training, in which teachers apply new skills and methods and hone their analytical abilities. Additionally, it works as a means for developing innovative learning and improving communication between teachers and researchers. It entails that this design involves a teacher as a good teacher and a good researcher. It does not only train teachers to solve their own class problems and train themselves for new skills or methods, but also sharpen their analytical abilities and foster innovative learning. Since the study devotes classroom action research, the study was through on cycle as Kemmis and Taggart in Khasinah (2013, p 107-114)) stated that the study begins by action plan. The plan is then carried out as an action in the classroom. The action is then observed and the reflection will be served as a means of analyzing the data gathered during the action.

The participants in this study were private university students from Universitas Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan who are enrolled in their first year of education. Tangerang Selatan. A total of 32 students had been selected to participate in this project. As the main goal of the study is to assess possibility of Socratic questioning in students' understanding level on the text, this study conducted five instrument for collecting data: document analysis, Reading Test, observation, questionnaires and interview, as Denscombe (2014) suggests that different methods are more appropriate for different situation. To support document analysis, this study employed two cycle phases. As the study involves beliefs, attitude and value of respondents to answer the possibility of Socratic questioning in improving students 'reading comprehension, then the investigation employed a qualitative approach as a technique of collecting data. It is supported by Marshall and Rossman in Mahmud and Tryana (202, p85-93) that qualitative research is able to trigger information that contains a high proportion of opinion, attitude and personal experiences. Furthermore, Huberman, Miles, and Saldana (2014, p10) found that qualitative study gives a deep awareness of what "real life" is like, since it concentrates on naturally occurring and ordinary occasions in natural settings only. In terms of the data study, all instrument data were then triangulated to get a clear description towards the possibility of students' reading improvement, responds and perception in terms of Socratic Question as Cohen & Manion (1994, p43) suggests that even thought, it is possible to discover

ambiguous responses in questionnaire result, triangular techniques fully explained human behaviors 'complexity through multiple perspective.

## Results

To answer the research question, this investigation was conducted in 2 cycling phases. Each cycle has the same phase. However the phrase for reading text has a different topic. In the first cycling, the topic was about "Beauty", meanwhile "Caffeine" was offered in the second cycling. The phase are followed:

**Cycling 1**

Preparation

Reading the text and Pre-Test: This phase marks the initiation of Socratic Questioning implementation in Reading Comprehension. The lecture provided students with an explanation text with the topic "Beauty". Students are required to read and comprehend the assigned text in order to answer the question as Mcmohan (2016) argued that reading is purposed to ensure students comprehend the material that will be tested. After reading the text, students were asked to answer some questions about the text.

Implementing Socratic Question

This phase consists of two sub phases: a) Discussion. In this sub phase, the lecturer allowed the students time to discuss the topic. In this phase the lecturer began to provide the students' response to the question. The instructor initially inquired about the general question. The purpose of the general questions is to stimulate students' ability to think beginning with easy, moderate, and challenging questions (Reynold, 2011). In this phase, the teacher began to ask the students simple questions, such as general questions about the topic, in order to determine their basic knowledge in terms of the topic; b) Socratic Questioning. In this sub-phase, the instructor progressed to the hypothesis-generating phase of Socratic questioning This phase is purposed to encourage students to share their thoughts on the topic, thereby facilitating their ability to respond to the question (Mcmahon 2016). Students were asked to respond based on their viewpoint and schemata in this subphase (prior knowledge). Nonetheless, at this phase, students attempted to be presented with many Socratic Questions.

The instructor encouraged students to employ Socratic Questioning by posing clarification questions, subject inquiries, assumption questions, and other HOTs questions related to Socratic Questioning. The students then answer by rephrasing the question using the Socratic method; c). Synthesizing. In this phase, the lecturer began to stimulate the students' critical thinking by socratic questioning to lead them reanswering the question on the given treading text by their own interpretations of the questions; d)Post test. The final phase of Socratic questioning involved evidence. In this final phase, post-tests are administered. This final phase was intended to assist students in determining whether their answer was correct or incorrect. In addition, the purpose of this phase is to determine whether or not progress was made between the use of socratic questions before and after through pre and post tests.

Observation

In this phase the result of pre and post tests was confirmed by students' questionnaires responding and interview's result.

**Cycling 2**

The phase of cycling 2 is identical to that of cycle 1. However, the topic of cycling 2 is altered to focus on "Caffeine"

Compared to cycles 1 and 2, both cycles demonstrated an improvement in post-test scores. In line with the order of phases, the study revealed that either in Cycling 1 or 2, a significant number of students may exhibit growth on their Post Test. 63% of respondents made significant improvements in the first cycle, whereas 53% of respondents showed improvement in the second cycle. In keeping with the progress, the cycle 1 pre-test average score was 60.6, whereas the post-test average score was 74. Meanwhile, the mean score for cycle 2's pre-test was 58 and its post-test score was 68.5%.

In Cycle 1, lost dialogue incident discovered when the instructor asked, "What do you think about...?".  The majority of pupils think for a time before answering. However, when a student was asked, "What do you think of beauty?" the student remained silent and thought for a long time. This was out of the instructor's expectations, hence this circumstance resulted in silence between students and lecturers within minutes. The student was able to answer the question only when the instructor noticed this circumstance. . After realizing this, the instructor altered the question to "What do you think of beauty based on your viewpoint or experience?" and the student was finally able to answer. The occurrence of a lost discussion in this incident hinders thought considerably. This occurrence suggests that instructors require rigorous training in the use of socratic questions. Instructors must recognize that not all students can be integrated with the same Socratic question; thus, they must be ready and vigilant with other Socratic questions so that dialogue is not lost and students may think more swiftly and extensively while responding to these questions.

In addition, another student was asked with the same question?" The response was out of expectations and even veered away from the subject matter. This occurrence brings to mind the fundamental intent of the Socratic Question. Paul and Eder (2008) assert that the Socratic Spirit encourages individuals to pay attention to intellectual criteria, specifically whether what they think is correct or wrong, logical or illogical, reasonable or irrational. However, when the context attempts to increase reading comprehension, the necessity to answer correctly becomes the most important aspect of this spirit. So that well planning is necessary, instructors must consider in advance what they want students to think: probable student viewpoints on a topic; possible reasons for students to reach conclusions; so that it allows students to reflect on facts pertinent to a provided issue/theme. All of these things must be prepared to the greatest extent feasible to anticipate student reactions outside of the context of questions and topics.

In contrast, surprisingly, Cycle 2 revealed that the majority of students were more engaged in responding to and re-asking Socratic questions. However, it is unclear if the increased engagement is a result of the Socratic Question implementation or the students' familiarity with the material. However, some challenging questions had been responded to by students involving their perspective. Some students said that they were unfamiliar with numerous words, phrases and terms in the text which made it rather challenging for them to define and characterize the terminology based on their personal experience. In contrast, some students said that the text material in cycle 2 was related to their daily life, which helped them comprehend the text.. In addition, one student added that a part of daily life in text material would directly bring them to their experience towards the words/terms.

Other responses to the Socratic inquiry were discovered. Some students reported that the frequent question "what do you think about this or that?" prompted them to

reevaluate the subject matter and draw upon their existing knowledge to form an opinion. In addition, one student stated that questions such as "how do you know that or why do you believe that way?" prompted them to recollect their past knowledge for giving proof and verify it in their initial response to "what do you think about this/that?" This circumstance caused them to reconsider.

In addition, another student claimed that re-asking oneself through lecture questions relates to the student's perspective, rationale, and questioning assumption, which results in them relating the text content to their past knowledge and experience. He stated that the lecturer did not provide a solution or answer; rather, the presentation posed questions. However, the lecturer's question prompted him to re-ask and compelled him to optimize his past and present knowledge and experience in order to respond. Lastly, a few students commented that this procedure left them doubtful of their first response to the pre-test reading text question. This occurrence prompted them to alter their Post-Test response.

Based on Findings data, it is possible to argue that the usage of Socratic questions promoted Reading Comprehension. As a type of critical thinking, Socratic questions compelled individuals to examine their personal experiences, previous and present knowledge of the topic in order to create their own views or opinion on it. Therefore, when it is employed in reading, it may assist students in grasping their schemata for critical interpretation, thereby enabling them to answer the question on the given text and leading them to be inquisitive in re-asking questions about the text. It will ultimately result in their comprehension of the content.

Furthermore, based on the data, it can be stated that familiarity with the text will encourage the optimal implementation of Socratic questioning. It motivates students' prior knowledge to engage in active text comprehension. Students are engaged in Socratic inquiry and will participate enthusiastically if the topic ties to their schemata or prior knowledge owing to subject familiarity. This conclusion is consistent with Abiah's research (2002).

## Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of the study:
1. Socratic Question has been proven to enhance students' reading comprehension. However, the process must first engage students' critical thinking before leading to the correct answer on Reading Comprehension.
2. The Socratic Question approach enhances students' reading comprehension when the subject matter of the reading is relevant to their current and prior experiences and knowledge. The inquiry compelled students to go deeper into their own experiences, past and present knowledge of the subject, in order to formulate their own opinion on it, as a means of comprehending all of these through critical thinking. In terms of this, the researcher should provide a selection of reading topics for further study.
3. Bloom's Taxonomy of Socratic Questioning can be used to enhance Reading Comprehension as long as the emphasis is on developing students' critical thinking. Students' critical thinking then motivates them to provide accurate reading comprehension answers.
4. Students will become critical thinkers and improve their reading comprehension if Socratic questioning is supported by appropriate learning resources and teaching methods. Without both, Socratic questioning is nothing more than a simple inquiry.

5. The application of Socratic Questions in reading comprehension is susceptible to lost dialogue or interaction between the teacher/instructors/lecturer and the students; this will inhibit students' critical thinking processes, which will undoubtedly have an effect on their reading achievement. Therefore, instructors must hone their skills in posing Socratic questions by extensive practice. Instructors must recognize that not all students can be integrated with the same Socratic question; therefore, they must be immediately prepared and vigilant with alternative Socratic questions so that dialogue is not lost and students can think more quickly and comprehensively in order to answer these questions

6. The use of Socratiq Questions to reading comprehension is prone to student replies that are unrelated to the questions and topics. Therefore, instructors should develop a well plan by considering in advance what they want from students to consider: probable student viewpoints on an issue; possible reasons for students to reach conclusions; so that students are able to reflect on facts pertinent to the provided subject/theme. All of them must be as thoroughly prepared as possible in order to anticipate student answers outside of the context of questions and topics.

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