

## Increasing sight-reading ability through implementation of the Super Sight-Reading Secrets programme

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of this research was to investigate and analyse a programme, called the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme by Howard Richman, to improve the sight-reading abilities of students in the PIM Piano IV class at the Department of Music Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. This research involved Classroom Action Research (CAR) that was conducted in two cycles using the model of Kemmis and McTaggart (2002). The subject of this research was the PIM Piano IV students, consisting of 17 students. The data collection techniques used were participatory observation, documentation and testing. The data analysis techniques used were qualitative and quantitative approach. The results show that there is an improvement in the sight-reading skills of the students through the use of the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme by Howard Richman. The results show progressive increases in the mean score from the pre-cycle at 68.12 to cycle I at 77.26, followed by cycle II at 78.44.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, music is in demand and favoured by the wider community. This is shown in terms of its meanings. Music is one of the sciences and one of the fields in art, in the form of sounds that combine in an organised sequence of rhythms, melodies and harmonies that reflect the creator's feelings and emotions. In addition, the wider community is not concerned with age. Learning music can be started at all ages, from children to the elderly. In learning music an institution is needed to learn well and correctly. One of the ways to study well and correctly is by learning music via three education tracks. Education in Indonesia is divided into three tracks, namely formal, informal and non-formal. To learn music well and correctly, one institution for learning music is the Department of Music Education, Faculty of Language and Arts at Yogyakarta State University. In the Department of Music Education, courses are carried out both in theoretical and practical terms. One of the practical subjects taught is Major Instrument Practice (PIM). PIM is a practical course consisting of several instruments selected according to the talents and interests of the students. One instrument that students can choose in the course is the Major Instrument Practice (PIM) Piano. The PIM Piano course is divided into four parts. One of the objectives is that students are able to play or sing musical works from one era by paying attention to music techniques, practising, and interpretation and expression of several composers in one era. According to a preliminary study conducted through interviews with students of PIM Piano IV, when students began learning they were informed that they should have the ability to read beam notation material precisely and accurately. However, students still had deficiencies in mastering reading beam notation. In addition, students also lacked mastery in tempo and dynamics when they played free songs in PIM Piano learning. PIM Piano learning is held once a week in a face-to-face session and students are required to master techniques by perform songs. However, limited face-to-face learning time is one of the factors that prevents students from mastering techniques, practising and performing the music and



song. Besides limited face-to-face sessions, PIM Piano learning deficiencies are due to the lack of time devoted to the practice of reading beam notation.

Thus, the ability to read beam notation directly is important for PIM Piano IV students because PIM Piano IV learning materials use beam notation. By instilling the habit of reading beam notation, the ability to read beam notation directly by PIM Piano IV students can increase their reading abilities. Therefore, with the implementation of the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme developed by Howard Richman for students of PIM Piano IV, it was expected that the programme would help students to overcome the problems that arose and that reading beam notation directly or sight-reading skills would improve.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Sight-Reading*

Skills are identical to an activity. Syah (2015, p. 121) said that that skills are defined as activities related to nerves and muscles that appear in physical activities such as writing, typing, and exercise.

Green (2011, p. 4) said that skill is one of the words in social science, which is expressed in language that has meaning and synonyms that are truly like abilities, skills, and talents. Furthermore, Soemarjadi and Zahri (1991, p. 2) stated that skills are behaviours obtained through certain learning stages. It can be said that skills are abilities, talents in doing something or tasks in the form of verbal actions, thoughts of data, people, or objects that require coordination of muscle movements or psychomotor actions. Sight-reading is also known as *prima vista*. Richman (1986) said that sight-reading is the skill of reading music notation directly. Maydwell (2007, p. 2) stated that sight-reading is the ability to display music when reading scores first. This is in line with Pace (1999, p. 1) who said that sight-reading is the ability to read and play music for the first time, for example without preparing to learn the work being played. In addition, sight-reading is a very important provision for musicians. Moreover, Wristen (2005, p. 44) stated that sight-reading is an important and inseparable part of the musical experience of every musician. Meanwhile, Lehmann and Kopiez (2009, p. 344) define sight-reading as a skill in appearance, both vocal and instrumental or *prima vista*.

Based on these opinions, it can be said that sight-reading is the ability to read music notation that has not been seen before. In other words, sight-reading is reading music notation directly.

### 2.2 *Beam notation*

The beam notation comes from the Dutch language, namely the expression *noten balk*, which means music notation which is in five horizontal lines that can be filled by pitch. This is similar to what was expressed by Kamien (1980, p. 41), who stated that beam notation is a system of music that is written so that tone and rhythmic accuracy can be related. Beam notation is a form of musical writing with five straight lines, in order to indicate high and low tones. In line with Kamien, Harder (1995, p. 17) stated that music notation is the writing of symbols which describe the tone. Meanwhile, Sukohardi (2015, p. 5) said that the notation of the beam indicated by the value of notation is the low height and the length of the short note indicated by the sign.

According to the statement, it can be said that the beam notation is a music system which is depicted by a sign which is arranged into five lines which are called pitches, and can be placed vertically or horizontally so that the tone and rhythmic tone can be interconnected.

The beam notation is divided into various components. The components include: 1) notation value and rest sign; 2) staves; 3) key (clef); 4) barline; 5) dynamic; 6) tempo.



### 3 MATERIAL & METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR). According to Hendriana (2014, p. 31), CAR is a systematic study conducted by teachers in an effort to improve practices in education, by taking practical action and reflection of these actions. In addition, according to McNiff (in Kusumah & Dwitagama, 2010, p. 8), looking at the nature of CAR is a form of reflective research conducted by the teacher themselves, whose results are used as tools for developing teaching skills.

This research was conducted at the Department of Music Education, Language and Arts Faculty, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The reason that this research place was selected is because the facilities in the Department of Music Education are quite adequate. In addition, PIM Piano IV students in the Department of Music Education still lacked sight-reading skills, thus hampering the smooth playing of the piano in PIM Piano learning.

In this study, the subjects were 17 students enrolled in PIM Piano IV courses – 12 male students and five female students. PIM Piano IV students were selected because these students did not major in sight-reading training and had difficulties in sight-reading skills.

This research was designed in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four stages: 1) planning; 2) action; 3) observation; 4) reflection/evaluation. The second cycle was a continuation of the first cycle phase, because in the first cycle there were still some obstacles and shortcomings. This activity was carried out with the aim to get better results in the second cycle compared to the first cycle, and success was determined in accordance with the indicators of research success. The data collection techniques used in this study included: 1) participatory observation; 2) documentation; 3) testing. The research instrument was an assessment test sheet. Practice test sheets were given to the students in the form of assessment aspects, such as running, rhythm and melody. The data analysis technique in this study involved qualitative descriptive analysis. Qualitative descriptive analysis describes the success of actions that have been carried out from the pre-cycle to cycle I and through cycle II, followed by evaluation. In addition to qualitative descriptive data analysis, quantitatively descriptive analysis from observation results were processed by giving a value to each observed aspect using a scoring range of 81–100 (very good), 61–80 (good), 41–60 (adequate), 21–40 (poor), and 1–20 (very poor).

### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Results

The research began with pre-cycle activities. Pre-cycle activities were undertaken with the aim to determine the level of sight-reading skills of PIM Piano IV students before further learning actions were taken. Pre-cycle activities were held once, on 20 March 2017. From the results of the pre-cycle action activities, five of the 17 students met the success criteria. The average result of sight-reading skills in the pre-cycle action was 68.13. This result shows that students had not met the success criteria within the sufficient value range (71–80).

The implementation of cycle I actions was the beginning of the classroom action research. The implementation of cycle I actions included planning, action, observation and reflection. The implementation of the first cycle was conducted four times, on 27 March, 3 April, 10 April and 17 April 2017. The sight-reading materials in each meeting were different. For the first to fourth meetings, materials from G. Schafer op. 45 nos. 25, 22, 19 and 23 were given. During the action stages in this study, before playing, sight-reading materials were provided using steps from Howard Richman's Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme. In addition, another method that was used was the lecture and demonstration method. Based on the observation results and reflections on the actions of cycle I, among all of the students, seven students did not sufficiently meet the standard criteria of (71–80). The results of the average value in the first cycle action was 77.26. As a percentage increase from the pre-cycle, the average value increased by 13.2% in cycle I. The implementation of cycle II actions was a follow-up action from cycle I. The second cycle action was carried



out as an effort to improve the cycle I action. The implementation of cycle II actions was generally similar to cycle I, which included planning, action, observation and reflection. The difference is that the steps taken were adjusted according to the input and suggestions from collaborators. In addition, by reflecting upon the first cycle, the average value did not meet the criteria for action success. The implementation of cycle I was carried out three times, on 15 May, 22 May and 29 May 2017. Sight-reading material in each meeting was different. For the first to fourth meetings, material from Czerny op. 599 vol. 146 nos. 21, 24 and 25 were given. The second cycle planning stage made improvement possible from cycle I, so that the students' sight-reading skills increased. The emphasis on the material given in cycle I was on the melody aspect, while in cycle II the chord aspect was emphasised. During the action stage in this study, before playing sight-reading material the students were given steps from the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme. In addition, the lecture and demonstration method was used. Based on the results of observations and reflections on the second cycle action, all students met the standard criteria sufficiently (71–80). The average value in the second cycle action was 77.26. As a percentage change from cycle I, the average value of students increased by 1.5%. The assessment results are shown in Figure 1.

#### 4.2 Discussion

Based on the results of the research, the implementation of Howard Richman's Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme did improve the sight-reading skills of PIM Piano IV students at the Department of Music Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. The improvement can be seen from the results of student scores in sight-reading skills, from pre-cycle activities through every meeting in the first cycle and second cycle actions, and at the end of the first cycle and second cycle. The average score from the pre-cycle was 68.12 and the first cycle was 77.26, so that the increase from the pre-cycle to the first cycle was 9.13 or a 13.2% increase. The average value of the first cycle was 77.26 followed by the second cycle at 78.44, showing an increase from cycle I to cycle II of 1.17 or a 1.5% increase. Furthermore, from the results of the average score in the pre-cycle to the cycle II action there was an increase of 10.31 or a 15.1% increase. The results of the study show that there was an increase in sight-reading skills of PIM Piano IV students. This is evident in the success of actions taken in cycle I and cycle II, by applying the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme. Therefore, the application of the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme successfully improved sight-reading skills of PIM Piano IV students at the Department of Music Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. The researchers suggest that students can use Howard Richman's programme, not only for PIM Piano learning but also for learning other instruments and improving sight-reading skills.

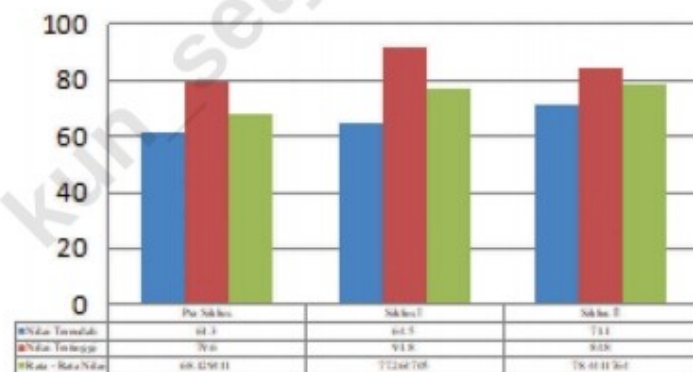


Figure 1. Graph of sight-reading assessment results for PIM Piano IV students: pre-cycle, cycle I and cycle II.



## 5 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that have been obtained, it can be concluded that the sight-reading skills of PIM Piano IV students improved through the implementation of the Super Sight-Reading Secrets Programme by Howard Richman. This is evidenced by the data results obtained in each cycle. In the first cycle, of the 17 students, ten students met the standard of research success with a score of  $\geq 71$ . The first cycle showed an increase in average value to 77.26 or 13.2%. In the second cycle, all 17 students met the standard value of the research success, all scoring above 71. Cycle II showed an increase in the average score, rising to 78.44. From cycle I to cycle II there was an increase in sight-reading skills of 1.5%. When viewed as a whole from pre-cycle to cycle II, an increase of 15.1% was obtained. Therefore, PIM Piano IV students met the success criteria for the action taken in cycle II.

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