

English Journal

Vol. 13, No. 2; September, 2019, pp. 88-98

IMPLEMENTING QUESTION-ANSWER RELATIONSHIPS (QAR) STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION SKILL

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ABSTRACT

This action research was conducted to highlight how far the improvement of students' reading comprehension skill after being treated by implementing QAR strategy and to find out the advantages when QAR is implemented in teaching reading comprehension. The research was organized at SMA Negeri 1 Rangkasbitung, Lebak - Banten. The subject of the research was the eleventh grade students, class IPS³. The design of it was an action research by covering three cycles, and every cycle consists of five meetings. Planning, acting, observing, and reflecting were implemented in every cycle to get a clear data. The research applied two sorts of data collecting: qualitative and quantitative data. Observation, recording, and interview were conducted to obtain qualitative data, while the quantitative data was gained through test. The research finding reflected that implementing Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy can help students in comprehending the text while answering the questions. The students were able to categorize the questions as well to avoid spending too much time while finding the answer. The implementation of QAR Strategy in teaching-learning process was getting better cycle to cycle, the students were energetic, active, enthusiastic, and felt much more confident to take a part in reading learning activity eventually. It showed that teacher's teaching strategy had positive impact to students' reading comprehension, and could arouse students' motivation and participation as well to learn which greatly influenced their reading comprehension skill. It is helpful for teacher as a framework for directing questioning activities and comprehension instruction in pre-, while-, and post-reading. Implementing QAR in reading comprehension can ensure that it does not only focus on lower-level skills and question but in high level as well and it can motivate students to think critically and creatively. Considering QAR is helpful and beneficial for both teacher and students, the institution may implement QAR for any grades and school subjects in order to make students familiar with higher-level question. Therefore, it will be no longer difficult to comprehend the text for students who have been treated by implementing QAR.

Keywords: Action Research, Question-Answer Relationships Strategy, Improvement, Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading does not merely mean to understand the meaning of words or recognize new vocabularies of English but comprehends the content of written information or message explicitly and implicitly as well. As Nuttal (1996:4) states that reading is the process of an interaction between language perception and the reader's language skill, cognitive skill and the knowledge of the world.

But unfortunately, the students often deal with some difficulties in comprehending the reading text. They tend to assume that the answers of each question can only be found in the text instead of readers' head. Through informal interview, the researcher found out that both students' poor vocabulary mastery and conventional teaching method are the triggers of students'

difficulties in improving their reading comprehension skill.

In this case, the teacher absolutely needs a good strategy to stimulate and activate the students in reading activity. Question - Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy is considered to be able to help students to be more active in processing the text, to control their comprehension, and stimulate them to think critically all at once.

Regarding to the issue above, the researcher will highlight how far the improvement of students' reading comprehension skill after being treated by implementing QAR strategy and to find out the advantages when QAR is implemented in teaching reading comprehension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Merisuo and Storm (2012:1) reading comprehension is a complex process in which the reader constructs the meaning by interacting with the text using his or her previous knowledge and experience and the information that can be found in the text. Strengthened by Nunan (2003:74) who states that a reader's background knowledge can influence reading comprehension. Background knowledge includes all of the experience that a reader brings to a text: life experiences, educational experiences and knowledge of how texts can be organized. It can be inferred that reading comprehension is an ability to understand what a reader reads by involving what she or he knew in the past as previous knowledge or experience and comparing it with the information contained in the text. The distinction of background knowledge and experience the readers have may emerge varied comprehension.

Background knowledge of the readers involved in reading process plays crucial role in reading comprehension. It is indeed used to define the information of the text to reach the comprehension

and can affect the readers in comprehending what they read. Through question-answer, asking prediction and explanation of the structure of the text, the background knowledge can be activated and the comprehension can be improved all at once.

Since the readers have different purpose of reading, the researcher determined skimming and scanning as the best methods of reading to obtain the information which is appropriate with their aims of reading from the text well.

Skimming is applied to acquire an overall understanding of the content of text by running one's eyes across a whole text quickly while scanning is used to locate specific information by looking for piece of information without reading a whole text (Lindeck, Jeremy, 2011). Generally, both skimming and scanning are intended to find out what the readers need to know from the text without reading every single words.

While during reading activity, it is asserted that silent reading can bring advantages for advance level students rather than oral reading.

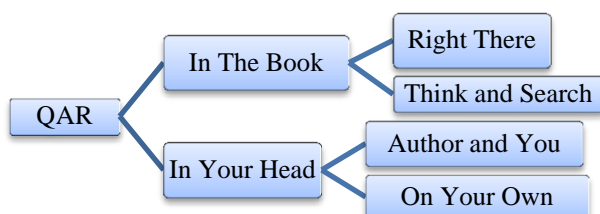
Furthermore, the researcher used three phase approaches: pre-, during-, and post-reading. In pre-reading instruction, the students' background information is needed to facilitate subsequent reading, provide specific information and stimulate students' interest, sets up student expectations and model strategies that students can later use on their own. During-reading instruction assists students in dealing with difficult concepts, making sense of complex sentences and considering relationship among ideas or characters in the text, and reading purposefully and strategically. Post reading instruction guides the students to develop ideas and information from the text (Grabe, William & Fredricka L. Stoller, 2001). These three phase approaches were expected to bring the comprehension of the reading text by integrating the readers'

background knowledge and stimulating their critical thinking toward the information contained in the text.

In the meantime, to support reading comprehension, the researcher stated that reading skills should involve explicit information, implicit information, main idea and communicative function. In this case, QAR is an appropriate reading strategy that can help the students to categorize comprehension questions based on where they got information needed to answer each questions (<http://www.Indiana.edu/isit/QARhtml>).

Raphael (1986: 518-519) identified QAR into two categories. The first category is *in the book question* consisting of *right there* and *think and search*. In *right there questions*, it is necessary to scan the key information from the text to find the right answers of questions namely explicit information. In the other side, the readers must be able to combine one idea or information to the others by skimming important ideas and information to find main idea or implicit information to answer *think and search questions*. In this sort of question, the readers' critical thought will be stimulated indirectly. Next, Second category is *in your head questions* consisting of *author and you* and *on your own*. In *author and you*, the readers will not find the answer from the text directly but they must combine or even compare their knowledge about the ideas or information in the passage with the author's one to deal with communicative function. Then the readers' background knowledge and experience related to the passage are very useful to make prediction in *on my own questions* (Readence. J.E, 2006)

Figure 1. QAR categories



METHOD

This research was conducted in SMA Negeri 1 Rangkasbitung in which 40 students of XI IPS³ participated as subject of the research. The researcher considered them as subject of the research based on the teacher's consideration and suggestion that this class was very poor in reading comprehension and the most of the students did not have any motivation and enthusiasm to learn English.

Classroom Action Research (CAR) method was implemented in this research by conducting through 4 stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Before doing those four stages, the researcher did observation, spread questionnaire, did interview and administered reading comprehension test to identify students' problems in reading comprehension.

In planning, researcher discussed and decided teaching and learning design which would be applied in cycle one. Then the researcher composed lesson plan, decided competence standard and prepared diary journal and observation sheet.

In acting stage, the researcher conducted the design that had been decided and prepared in cycle one. It provided some activities; started with presentation the topics, giving task, and ended with evaluation.

In observing, the researcher filled the findings on observation sheet and also observed students formative test.

On the last stage, the researcher conducted reflecting to analyze what had been done and what had not, what had been successful and what had not. Based on this data, it could be input to repair for next cycle to achieve the target of the research.

The researcher used quantitative and qualitative data to collect data. In form of post-test, quantitative data was done to investigate whether there was significant improvement on students' reading comprehension after

implementing QAR strategy. Meanwhile, to collect the qualitative data the researcher conducted observation, recording and interview.

Besides, in data analysis technique the researcher used quantitative data by checking students' answers on the written test and computing their correct answers and qualitative data by using interactive models which consist of data reduction, data display and data verification.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher conducted pre-test initially to figure out students' reading comprehension skill, get students' preliminary reading score and compare with post test result. In accordance with *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM)* of class eleven which was 70, the number of students passing was only 10 students or 25% while the researcher determined to achieve 75% passing students in reading comprehension test. Post-test would be given in each fifth meeting of every cycle to know the students' improvement on reading comprehension skill.

From the result of pre-test given to the students, the researcher can identify that the students had difficulties in identifying explicit information of the text, comprehending the text, inferring the meaning of the text and they could not find main idea of paragraph.

Besides, the researcher also spread questionnaire and interviewed students as pre research activities. The researcher observed that some students had no interest in reading or answering some questions related to the text. The lack of vocabularies mastered by students, the lack of motivation from teachers to students, uninspiring teaching method and dominating teacher in the class were considered as the causes of the students' problem in reading comprehension.

To cope with those problems, the researcher involved three cycles comprising of five meetings in implementing QAR in this research. In each cycles, students were provided with authentic materials of hortatory texts obtained by downloading in various web searching. The researcher also took a role as an English teacher and the real English teacher as a collaborator who cooperated to observe students' activity in the class during research period.

In cycle 1, the students worked in group containing 6-7 students and would discuss together to answer teacher's questions related to the text and QAR categories of each questions. On the first meeting of cycle 1, the students were introduced to QAR and given explanation about characteristic of the text.

During pre-reading, the teacher asked *On your own question* related to the text, their knowledge and experience. Later, the teacher gave *Author and you question* to guess what the text might be about.

In while reading, the students silently read a hortatory exposition text distributed by the teacher. There were three kinds of questions used here. The first question was *Author and you* which was used for making simple and complex inferences, the second one was *Right there* question in which the students can find the right answer by scanning the key word, and the last one was *Think and search* which was aimed to summarize, clarify and make simple inferences.

In post reading, the teacher asked some questions: *Author and you*, *Right there* and *Think and search*. To be able to distinguish fact and opinion, *Author and you* question was used. *Think and search* question was applied to make students achieve comprehension strategy in identifying important information. The teacher also asked the tenses used in the text and had the students find out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabularies of

the text from dictionary to be memorized later.

For closing activity, the teacher made a conclusion, gave feedback toward learning process and assigned the students to look for information related to the topic of the text given as their homework. The researcher also interviewed the students to know both their interest and opinions during learning activity.

As the result of post-test on the fifth meeting of cycle 1, there were 35% students passed the passing grade. It was higher than pre-test result which was only 25% (see table 1). However, the researcher required such more students (75%) passing that the researcher arranged cycle 2.

After accomplishing five meetings, the researcher conducted observation, interview and reflecting. It was found that the students were stimulated and interested to read and their scores were even improved, but all the same, they had difficulty to identify *implicit information*, *main idea*, *prediction*, and *communicative function*. The researcher also found some passive students during activity. Consequently, the researcher made the students to work in group consisting of 3-4 students for further cycles.

Table 1. The result of pre-test compared with post-Test In Cycle I

Elements	The mean score	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Explicit information (Right There)	67.5	73.1
Implicit information (Think and Search)	59.5	64.7
Main Idea (Think and Search)	61.3	66.3
Making Prediction (On Your Own)	54.8	59.7
Communicative function (Author and You)	61	65.8

In the cycle 2, the teacher explained the use of QAR strategy clearly and gave more motivation to the students.

Since the students worked in smaller group comprising 3 – 4 students, the activity was far easier to control. The students looked enjoy reading the text and discussed the answers of the questions instead of being busy by themselves.

After doing cycle 2, there were 20 students scored above or equal to 70. It means that there were 50 % of students passed the passing grade. The highest score was 87 and the lowest score was 57. The students' scores in the second cycle were increased compared with the students' score in post-test of cycle 1 as there were 14 or 35 % students scored above or equal to 70 (see table 2).

Table 2. The result of post-test in cycle 2 compared with post-test in cycle 1:

Elements	The mean score		
	Preliminary research	Post-test cycle 1	Post-test cycle 2
Explicit information (Right There)	60.5	73.1	75.3
Implicit information (Think and Search)	52.5	64.6	67.3
Main Idea (Think and Search)	54.3	66.3	73.1
Making Prediction (On Your Own)	47.8	59.7	61.6
Communicative function (Author and You)	54	65.8	69.1

Getting more explanation about how to recognize main idea, communicative function, prediction, and implicit information, the researcher

gained 50% students passing in post-test of cycle 2. The students were also more manageable and active. They are more enthusiastic to join the teaching learning process and more familiar with how to apply QAR. Nonetheless, their scores of making prediction, interpreting implicit information and recognizing communicative function was not increased. Hence, the researcher applied cycle 3.

The researcher gave same treatment in every meeting of cycle 3. There were 32 students (80%) scored above or equal to 70. The highest score was 90 and the lowest score was 57. The students' score in the third cycle was increased compared with the students' score in post-test of cycle 2 and the target of 75 % students achieving the passing grade had been achieved (see table 3). In this cycle, the students were much more confident and active to participate in reading learning activity eventually. The students had begun understanding well how to deal with QAR categories.

Table 3. The result of post-test in cycle 3 compared with post-test in cycle 1 and cycle 2:

Elements	The mean score			
	Preliminary research	Post-test cycle 1	Post-test cycle 2	Post-test cycle 3
Explicit information (Right There)	67.5	73.1	75.3	77.9
Implicit information (Think and Search)	59.5	64.7	67.3	73.2
Main Idea (Think and Search)	61.3	66.3	73.1	75
Making Prediction (On Your Own)	54.8	59.7	61.6	67.6

Communicative function (Author and You)	61	65.8	69.1	74.2
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After describing the teaching and learning process in employing QARs strategy to improve students' reading comprehension, it can be found that QARs strategy is effective as can be viewed from the students' condition in learning process. QARs strategy is beneficial and helpful for student in improving their reading ability, because it provides the easy ways to answer the question by using the types of its categories, and it also stimulates the students' activeness, creativity and critical thinking in answering the questions, even in high level questions.

The students' reading comprehension scores indicate that the implementation of QAR in reading activity is helpful and beneficial as it shows in the table 4. Besides, in the end of cycle 3, there were 32 students scored above or equal to 70. Referring to *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM)* of class eleven: 70, it means that there were 80 % of students passed the passing grade.

Table 4 The Result of Post-Test In Cycle 3 Compared With Post-Test In Cycle 1 And Cycle 3

Elements	The mean score			
	Preliminary research	Post-test cycle 1	Post-test cycle 2	Post-test cycle 3
Explicit information (Right There)	60.4	73.1	75.3	77.9
Implicit information (Think and Search)	52.5	64.7	67.3	73.2

Main Idea (Think and Search)	54.3	66.3	73.1	75
Making Prediction (On Your Own)	47.8	59.7	61.6	67.6
Communicative function (Author and You)	54	65.8	69.1	74.2

The students, after working with QAR, became more actively participated during teaching-learning process. They were more motivated to read as they were stimulated to predict what they were going to read.

Based on the research findings of implementing QARs Strategy to teach reading comprehension, it shows several important points;

- a) The improvement of students' reading comprehension skill.
- b) The improvement of students' participation.
- c) The improvement of students' motivation

1. The Improvement of students' Reading Comprehension skill

Implementing QAR strategy, the students could comprehend the procedure to answer the questions based on the types. They have been trained to use QAR strategy in group in order to study each other and also share the difficult things that were found. The students finally could understand the relationship between question and answer. Thus the students would understand the meaning of the text as well.

The improvement of students' reading comprehension might be influenced by the fact that the students became more strategic in their reading after being introduced with QAR as a reading strategy. Klingner (2007:110) assert that the QAR framework was chosen for the professional

development initiative because a common practice for students to be asked to respond the questions in the text. QAR Strategy provides a framework for thinking about these questions and provide students with the helpful categories to identify the relationship between text and questions. QAR can not only guide classroom reading discussion but also assist students to become more strategic, or metacognitive, in their reading as stated by Klingner that helping students to become metacognitive with content area material, furthermore, will improve academic performance (2007: 112).

2. The Improvement of Students' Participation

After working with QAR, the students became more actively participated during teaching-learning process. In pre-reading, when the teacher provided the students with questions to activate background knowledge in relation to the topic and prediction aimed at motivating students to read, the students were enthusiastic to give response or answer the question heterogeneously according to their previous information and experience bank stored in their head.

Then, in while-reading, the students also actively participated in learning process. Working in group might be another factor that influenced the students' participation since QAR required the students to work in group (Klingner, 2007:113). Group learning is used considering QAR involves higher-level question. Aebersold & Field (1997:123) state that higher level question can be frustrating for some students; teacher should plan their use carefully. Students benefit greatly from the thoughts, experience, and knowledge of their classmates, and small group

discussions of higher-level questions may be last threatening and most helpful way to introduce this level of work.

Working in group might be one of the factors which made the students more actively participated. Ornstein and Lasley (2000:311) state that dividing students into small groups seem to provide an opportunity for students to become more actively engaged in learning and for teachers to monitor students' progress better.

The students' active participation could also be seen in post-reading especially when the teacher asked the students to propose their opinion as a reflection of what they read. It might occur because the teacher constantly motivated and encouraged them by telling that it would be fine if they made mistake when giving response. "Because students will often make incorrect responses, it is up to the teacher to respond without discouraging the students from being willing to take risks and attempting to problem solve. Another effort to motivate students actively participate was by praising and appreciating their response. Show honest appreciation. When teacher uses "I statement" to convey their honest appreciation about a student, the teacher is communicating personal appreciation, rather than using a mechanical or an exaggerated response". likewise "verbal praise, and so on for good performance, even something as apparently "childish" as a "Good Job" stamp or sticker can encourage students to perform at higher levels," (<http://www.virtualsalt.com>)

Thereby, when the students responded or answered questions and then made mistake, the teacher was not angry with them. He appreciated their responses, instead, by saying, for example: I appreciate that, I like the way you said that; thank you very much for that; sure like your taking that risk.

3. The improvement of students' Motivation

The students were more motivated to read as they were stimulated to predict what they were going to read. QAR category, such as a question, "what might this text be about?" (Author and Me), made students curious whether or not their prediction was right. Predicting what the text would tell, moreover, helped the teacher to frame students' reading purpose: to obtain information. Corner (2006) says that QAR serves five purposes: (1) Help students monitor their comprehension of the text, (2) Provides a purpose for reading the text, (3) Allows students to assess their comprehension of the text, (4) Encourages collaborative and critical thinking, (5) Helps refute the common misconception held by students that the text tells all. Based on that theory, the researcher can state that QAR not only helps the readers to comprehend the text but also encourage their collaborative and critical thinking skills.

Harmer (2007:99) asserts that "prediction is the major factor in reading. When we read texts in our own language, we frequently have a good idea of the content before we actually read". In other word, the students' motivation to read was influenced by the teacher's question in asking the students to predict according to the tittle what the text would discuss. This activity is in accordance with the function of pre-reading phase proposed by William (1996:126) the pre-reading phase tries (1) to introduce and arouse students' interest in the topic; (2) to motivate students by providing reasons for reading or helping them specify their own reason; (3) to provide then/necessary some language preparation for the text.

The students' motivation might be influenced by the teacher's proposing On My Own question in pre-reading. This activity in pre-reading is in line with Grabe and Stoller's framework about what should enable students to access

background information that can facilitate subsequent reading, provides specific information needed for successful comprehension, stimulate students' interest, sets up students' expectations, and models strategies that students can later use on their own. Activating prior knowledge, besides, in pre-reading can also increase motivation (Grabe, 2001:191)

Based on researcher's personal opinion, interest is the main factor in learning English, especially in reading comprehension, because students' interest can stimulate their participation and motivation to take a part in the learning process. To get students' interest, teacher should be able to make enjoyable and comfortable class and treat the students by using the right strategy based on their needs and wants. I think Question Answer Relationship (QAR) is the right strategy in reading lesson which is not only able to attract students' interest in reading but also stimulate them to be more confident and active in conveying their ideas and indeed enrich their vocabularies. It will be very helpful to both teacher and students especially students of Senior High School. In this school grade, they should be able to comprehend long reading text with hard vocabularies, even on their National Examination. Doing more practice reading by using QAR can assist the students to be accustomed to deal with passage and respond what they read immediately. That's exactly what researcher had found in the class.

Finally the researcher concluded that QAR is the right strategy to be implemented in the class, because the fact proved there was significant progress and improvement after students were treated by this strategy. Different from the situation before QAR strategy is applied, where the students were not enthusiastic when they were given reading text, eventually the researcher found out that the students enjoy reading

text and they were very creative and strategic in answering the question even in high level question. They were able to figure out the way to answer the question of passage well. They were also more active in the class. The researcher were very satisfied and happy to see that the students had got used to reading and answering the question easily, being active in the class and being confident to convey their ideas about something.

Through QAR, the students were getting more interested in reading lesson, their vocabularies were better and better, they were used to answering of the text in the way of QAR and they were also more interactive in speaking in English Class.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the data found in the implementation of QAR in teaching reading at SMAN 1 Rangkasbitung, the researcher can conclude that the QAR is a strategy which can assist students to their reading comprehension. It was proved by the fact that 80% students achieved score above or equal to 70. QAR strategy made students more strategic and creative in answering the questions, because it provides the appropriate categories to reduce students' difficulties on their reading comprehension and made them easier to find out the answer either explicitly or implicitly. Through QAR, the students can realize that the answers of question do not only come from the text itself but also can be related with students' own experience and knowledge.

The use of QAR in reading activity also gives motivation and stimulation to students to read and understand the information of the text by predicting what the text tells about based on the title. Furthermore, the teacher tells the students about how to find the answers of questions that make them easier to get the point of the text they read.

Besides, QAR influences the students to participate in teaching learning activity more actively. In pre-reading, to stimulate and activate students' schemata in relation to the topic and prediction, it was shown from the enthusiasm of students in giving response and answering the questions as the teacher gave them some questions related to the text to explore their knowledge. The distinction of students' answer is an effect of students' background knowledge.

In while-reading, the students also actively participated in learning. Working in group might be another factor that influenced the students' participation since QAR required the students to work in group. It might be one of the factors which made the students more actively participated as was supported by Klingner Janette K, Sharon Vaughn & Alison Boardman that dividing students into small groups seem to provide an opportunity for students to become more actively engaged in learning and for teachers to monitor students' progress better.

The students' active participation could also be seen in post-reading especially when the teacher asked the students to purpose their opinion as a reflection of what they read. It might take place since the teacher, on and on, motivated and encouraged them by telling them that it would be fine if they made mistake when giving respond. So that when students make mistake when responding the question, the teacher is not angry with, he appreciate it, instead, by praising.

Moreover, QAR is helpful as a framework for organizing questioning activities and comprehension instruction in pre-, while-, and post reading. Then, QAR also enables teacher to reform for literacy instruction oriented toward higher level thinking.

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