

USING QUESTION ANSWER RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION

Hafizhatun Nadia

A Lecturer of English Education Department at Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teachers Training of IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin

ABSTRACT

This study based on the English Department students of the second semester of STAIN Palangka Raya problems in Reading Comprehension. This study was interested in overcoming the problems by applying a particular strategy in the teaching-learning process to help the students comprehend texts better. The strategy proposed in this study is Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy. The research subjects in this study were 36 students. In this study, the researcher used Classroom Action Research (CAR) as research design. The data in this study were collected from test, and field note. It was found that there was an improvement in the students' ability in Reading Comprehension after Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was applied. The preliminary study result showed that the average score of the students was 60.77. In the first cycle the students' average score developed to 69.99 and it developed to 77.80 in the second cycle. Related to preliminary study, only 10 (27.78%) of the students who got score ≥ 70 . In the first cycle, there were 19 (52.78%) out of 36 students who got scores ≥ 70 , and in second cycle, there were 32 (88.88%) of the students got score ≥ 70 which was the minimum standard of criterion of the success. Based on the result of the study above, it was proven that Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy can improve the students' reading comprehension skills.

Key words: QAR strategy, CAR and reading Problems

Reading is one of English skills that play an important role in facilitating the students to learn a foreign language because by reading they will know how English is actually conveyed in printed forms. They learn many things through reading. According to Rivers (in Rajabi, 2009) reading is a most important activity in any language class. It is only a source of important and pleasurable activity, but also means of consolidating one's knowledge of a language. In reading, students must read carefully and give appreciation about what they read, because students have a purpose in this process that is to get meaning and information from the reading materials. In other words, activities of reading can bring many worthwhile for the students for instant to get information, pleasure and knowledge.

Leipzig (2001) stated that reading requires words recognition, comprehension, and fluency. Djiwandono (1996: 63) points out that to understand all types of information in an array of the texts; it requires not only the reading activity, but also ability to understand the content. In addition, he states that without the ability to understand the text content, one is not able to absorb or comprehend a lot of information quickly, accurately, and easily.

Ability or skill of comprehending a message in the text is the goal of reading in a language instruction. However, comprehending a text message is not easy, especially in English. It can be seen from the students' reading comprehension that is still far from what is being expected.

The essence of reading is comprehension. The main goal of comprehension is to make the students conscious of the reasoning employed by self-regulated readers. Burns et al. (1996:207) state that the objective of all readers is the comprehension of what they read; meanwhile, Pang et al. (2003) avow that reading comprehension is an active process of constructing meaning from connected text that involve word knowledge as well as thinking and reasoning.

Due to the importance of reading skill and lack of reading comprehension of the students, teachers are required to apply some different methods in teaching reading that lead the students to the amazing atmosphere of teaching learning process. Furthermore, Burns et al. (1996:6) remind teachers to motivate the students that reading is a means of enjoyment, to fulfill daily task and reading may also become the media to obtain information.

Most of the students had low motivation to read. They just read texts if the lecturers asked them. Second, most of the students were not enthusiastic and passive. They usually just listened to the lecturers' explanation. Only some students dominated the teaching-learning process. That is why; the passive students just relied mostly on the lecturer's explanation and the responses of the active students. And last but not least is that the strategies in teaching reading comprehension still set the lecturers the center of teaching learning process. The strategies that the lecturers applied were more lecturer-centered and conventional in that the reading materials are only read either by the lecturers or the students in the class, and afterwards, the students were asked to answer the questions to measure the students' comprehension on the texts provided.

The common habits of the lecturers of Reading Comprehension classes in the teaching-learning process were the facts that the lecturers read the texts first once or twice, and then they asked a student to read the text aloud. Then the lecturers tended to explain some clues or difficult words found in the texts and prepared some questions related to the contents of the texts in order to increase the students' comprehension. The strategy applied in the reading class did not encourage the students to participate actively in the teaching and learning process. As a result, the students usually did not response well to the lecturers' questions since they got difficulties to comprehend the texts and the essences of the questions.

Related to the problems above, the writer is interested in overcoming the problems by applying a particular strategy in the teaching-learning process to help the students comprehend the texts better. The strategy proposed in this study is Question-Answer Relationship (QAR). This strategy refers to a series of instructional activities that help students figure out how to go about answering questions based on a given text and understand different types of questioning and the relationship between questions and answers.

Furthermore, Roe et al. (1995:107) avow that “QAR focuses on the processes for generating answers to questions and on the relationship between questions and answers. Students are encouraged to think of sources for answers to questions.” Vacca and Vacca (1999:60) add that QAR strategy allows students to understand their thinking processes and develop their metacognitive abilities.

Basically, QAR provides four types of questions to indicate how each question is related to the text as follows:

- a. Right There! (The answer is found in the text. The words in the questions can usually be found in the same sentence with the answer).
- b. Think and Search! (The answer is in the text, but the words are probably not in the same sentence. Read the text; look for ideas that can be put together and think about what the author is saying).
- c. The Author and Me! (The author provides ideas and makes students think, but connections to students’ knowledge are needed to answer the question).
- d. On My Own! (Students must apply their own knowledge and what has been learned to answer the question).

Question Answer Relationship strategy aims at elaborating students' thinking of processes and developing their metacognitive abilities to understand different types of questioning and the relationship between the question and answer. This is where the difference between QARs with conventional question answer frequently used in the Reading test. On Question Answer Relationship strategy the question and answer not only used as a tool test methods but also in use as a medium to monitor students understanding. Question Answer Relationship strategy tries to help the student to identify the readers to identify different types of questions and how to the questions and answer relate to each other.

In some testing method of reading which is usually used -one of which is the short answer tests- according to Alderson short answer test in this case is the question and answer the justification for these techniques is that it is possible to interpret students' responses to see if they have really understood. Thus, these techniques are used merely as a tool to determine the extent to which students have understood the content of the reading is. This is different from QARs, where the goal is ultimately the students' understanding on the content of reading through the question answer itself. Thus, it can be concluded, that the question answer in the QARs not only used as measure student understanding but also used as a medium to monitor their understanding.

Based on the background of the study, the problem question of the study is “How can Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy improve the reading comprehension skills of the students of English Department of Tarbiyah faculty (FKIP) of STAIN Palangka Raya?”

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design of this study is classroom action research (CAR). Classroom action research is a process in which teachers examine their own practice systematically and carefully using the techniques of research. The result of this research can be used to decide what the future practice should be. Carr and Kemmis (1986) defined action research as a form of self-reflection enquiry undertaken by participants in a social setting (including educational setting such as schools) in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a)

their own practice, (b) their understanding of these practice, and (c) the situation in which the practices are carried out. The procedure in this research adapted from Kemmis and Mc. Taggart (in Koshy, 2005) which consists of four steps as follow, (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting

Subject, Setting and Observer of the Research

The research conducted at the English Department of Tarbiyah Faculty of STAIN Palangka Raya located, at Jl. G. Obos Komplek Islamic Centre Palangka Raya. This Department has 4 parallel classes in the academic year 2010/2011 in which each class consists approximately 25-30 students.

The subjects of the research was the English Department students of the second semester in this institution who join reading comprehension class C in the academic year 2010/2011 that consist of 36 students.

For purpose of this research, the writer utilized Question Answer Relationships (QARs) strategy. The writer will collaborate with the Reading Comprehension II lecturer. The writer herself will act as the teacher-researcher and the collaborative teacher will act the observer. The following tables are the summary of activities and meetings in Reading Comprehension II class. The meeting was done once a week in April-May 2011.

Table 1 Meeting Schedule in Cycle 1

Cycle	Meeting/Date	Activities
1 (one)	Meeting 1	Discussing QAR strategy reading the text, doing exercise, and discussing the answer
	Meeting 2	Reading the text, doing exercise, and discussing the answers
	Meeting 3	Doing the test

Table 2 Meeting Schedule in Cycle 2

Cycle	Meeting/Date	Activities
2 (two)	Meeting 1	Discussing QAR strategy and the answer of Test 1, reading the text, doing exercise, and discussing the answer
	Meeting 2	Reading the text, doing exercise, and discussing the answers
	Meeting 3	Doing the test

To obtain the relevant data in this study, the writer uses subjective test. The subjective test in the form of short answer conducted to measure the students' comprehension of the reading text given at the end of a cycle (post test) and the pre-test done in the first meeting before the teaching program, it is used to find information dealing with the students' reading comprehension.

In this study, the writer administered test, namely: test I at the end cycle 1, if the criteria of success has not met yet, researcher continued to give test 2 at the end cycle 2, and so forth. The kind of test is subjective test in the form of WH questions.

The researcher utilized field note in every meeting of the implementation of the reading comprehension. This instrument used to record that happened during the teaching and learning process.

In terms of scoring of the students' work in each test, the scoring rubric employed which adapted from Cohen and Djwandono with some modification. The students' reading test analyzed into two components – content and language use- each of which has scales ranging from 0 to 5 and descriptors. The scoring below is based on the analytic method. This method is much better of making when the writer wants to inform our students about their achievement (Heaton. J.B, 1979: 109).

Table 3.1 Scoring Rubric for Reading Comprehension Test Adapted from Cohen (1994) and Djwandono (2008) with some modification

Components	Score	Criteria
Content	5	The answer stated is complete and clearly
	4	The answer stated is fairly complete and clearly
	3	The answer is somewhat complete and unclearly
	2	The answer is incomplete and unclearly
	1	The answer is incorrect
	0	No answer
Language use	5	Effective choice of words, effective sentence construction, no grammatical mistakes
	4	Effective but occasional errors of words choice, sentence construction and some grammatical mistakes
	3	Some errors of word choice, sentence construction and some grammatical mistakes
	2	Major problems words choice, sentence construction and numerous grammatical mistakes
	1	Errors of word choice, sentence constructional and grammatical mistakes
	0	No answer

The product assessment is focused to the students' achievement in reading comprehension text by utilizing reading comprehension test, the students' worksheet scored. Therefore from the scoring of reading comprehension, the computation of the students score uses the following formula.

$$\text{The Students' reading score} = \frac{\text{Obtained score}}{\text{Maximum score}} \times 100$$

Obtained score is the score that each student's gains in the aspects of contents and language use, whereas maximum score is all score of the two components of reading comprehension aspects that multiply by the number of the questions.

In this research, to find out how the students' improvement after the implementation of the strategy the writer will be used two criteria. (1) the students' average score of reading comprehension of reading comprehension test is ≥ 70 , (2) the students' reading

comprehension improves. The improvement intended is that at least 75% of the students gain score of ≥ 70 in their reading comprehension

Table 3.3 The Criteria of Success

Criteria of Success	Data Sources	Instruments
The students' average score of reading comprehension test is ≥ 70	Score	Test
75% of the students gain score ≥ 70	Score	Test

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The First Meeting of Cycle 1

In The First Meeting in the cycle 1 the writer decided to introduce QARs. It focused on giving the students different types of question and how to get the sources of information in order to answer the question. The teacher divided the students into groups of three and introduced the strategy by giving the students a short paragraph. As soon as the students could identify the differences between “In the Book” and “In My Head” questions. Some of groups found some problems in answering the question, but the other groups did not find serious problem in answering the questions..

One of the problems that are often faced by students is that when students are faced with a new foreign vocabulary according to them. Here, the teacher tried to direct them to understand it according to the context of existing literature, using the technique of guessing unknown vocabularies they have learned in Reading Comprehension 1, in the previous semester.

Having finished discussing the correct answer, each group was asked to report the results of them work whether they got difficulties in comprehending the text since the text was close to the students' experiences. In this meeting the teacher given the students the subjective test are in the form of WH-questions. In “Right There” type “Think and Search” type, “Author & Me” type “On My Own” type.

In the meantime, the last stage of reading comprehension was after reading. The stage aimed at providing review and feedback after reading to strengthen the students' comprehension on the text. The teacher gave some feedbacks especially on the students' grammatical mistakes in answering the questions, concluding the different types of questions including the benefits of understanding the types of the questions, and providing the chance for the students to ask some questions related to QAR strategy and the content of the text.

The Second Meeting of Cycle 1

In the second of cycle 1 the students had been fairly familiar with the QAR strategy. During reading activities focused on the activities to comprehend the text provided. As a usual, the teacher asked the groups to read text silently. Unfortunately, the students found some strange words in the text. As a result, some questions proposed by the groups concerned the difficult words. The teacher helped them with the words. Finishing reading the text, the groups discussed and helped each other in comprehending the text. As in the first meeting, in this meeting the teacher also gave the students questions in “Right There” type “Think and Search” type, “Author & Me” type “On My Own” type.

Then, the groups shared their answer with the whole students. While discussing the correct answers, the teacher also proposed the questions related to the types of the questions. Having finished discussing the correct answers, the teacher asked each group to share their comments on the text.

A group mentioned that the topic of the text was an interesting. Seldom for them get it in English and another groups said that they were not familiar with some vocabularies in the text.

The same as the previous meeting, the last stage of reading comprehension was after reading. Once again, the teacher gave some feedbacks especially on the students' grammatical mistakes in answering the questions. She also concluded the different types on questions including the benefit of understanding the types of the questions.

The Third Meeting of Cycle 1

It was the last meeting of cycle 1, in this activities the writer gave the students Test 1 (post test 1) to measure their reading skills in understanding a certain text after being treated with QAR strategy in the previous two meetings.

The students had to answer ten questions of different types of subjective test in the form in "Right There" type "Think and Search" type, "Author & Me" type "On My Own" type.

Based on the result of the conducted in Cycle 1, it was found that the average score of the students' reading comprehension test was 69.91 in the scale varying 0 to 100. The average score indicated an improvement on the students' reading comprehension compared to the mean score of 60.77 on the pre-test even it failed to meet the first criteria of success as decided in table 3.3. In addition, it was also found that out of 36 students, 19 (52.78%) of them got score ≥ 70 , and 17 (47.22%) of them got scores < 70 .

Table 4.2 The Students' Reading Comprehension Scores in the Implementation of QAR Strategy in Cycle 1

No.	Criteria	Students' Scores
1.	The students' average score of reading Comprehension test is ≥ 70	69.91
2.	75 % of the students gain score ≥ 70	52.78%

Meanwhile, some factors had caused the failure of the first and second criterion in Cycle 1. First, some students were still confused to determine each type of questions before answering the questions. Second, the students have problems with the some vocabularies that they got in the text.

To minimize the score of the failure, the teacher provided longer time in discussing each type of questions in cycle 2, tried to build students vocabulary by using longer time in discussed unknown vocabulary besides provided the text which the students were familiar and more interesting topic in cycle 2 and test 2.

The First Meeting of Cycle 2

The first meeting in this cycle 1 was focused on reinforcing the students' awareness on the different types of questions as stated in QAR strategy using a new text. The teacher began to active the student's schemata related to the topic.

After distributing the text to the students, as usual, in during reading stage teacher asked the student to read silently and discussing the difficult words as they found in the text. As in every meeting in cycle 1, the students had to answer ten questions of different types of subjective test in the form in "Right There" type "Think and Search" type, "Author & Me" type "On My Own" type.

Then, the groups shared their answer with the whole students. While discussing the correct answers, the teacher also proposed the questions related to the types of the questions. Having finished discussing the correct answers, the teacher asked each group to share their comments on the text.

In The last stage of reading comprehension Once again, the teacher gave some feedbacks especially on the students' grammatical mistakes in answering the questions. She also concluded the different types on questions including the benefit of understanding the types of the questions

The Second Meeting of Cycle 2

The second meeting was the last meeting before the teacher gave the students Test 2 to measure their skills in comprehending a text affair being treated with QAR strategy.

In this activity some of students discussed some unknown vocabularies and the teacher led them using their schemata. Then, the groups shared their answers with the whole students. As in the first meeting, in this meeting The students had to answer ten questions of different types of subjective test in the form in "Right There" type "Think and Search" type, "Author & Me" type "On My Own" type.

Once again, the teacher gave some feedbacks especially on the students' grammatical mistakes in answering the questions. She also concluded the different types on questions including the benefit of understanding the types of the questions.

The Third Meeting of Cycle 2

It was the last meeting of cycle 2 and the teacher asked the students to do test 2 to measure their reading skills in understanding a certain text after being treated with QAR strategy.

The score obtained from test proved that there was a small improvement in the students' average score. But it was successful to increase the numbers of the students who got ≥ 70.00 . The average score of the students' reading comprehension test was 77.80 in the scale varying from 0 to 100. The average score indicated a improvement of the students' reading comprehension compared to the mean score of 69.91 on Test 1. In addition, it was also found that out of 36 students, 32 (88.88%) of them got scores ≥ 70 , and 4 (11.11%) of them got scores <70.00 (See table 4.5).

Table 4.5 The Students' Reading Comprehension Scores in the Implementation of QAR Strategy in Cycle 2

No.	Criteria	Students' Scores
1.	The students' average score of reading Comprehension test is ≥ 70	77.80
2.	75 % of the students gain score ≥ 70	88.88%

Based on the reflection above, it could be generalized that the indicators had met the criteria of success as describe in Table 4.7. As a result, the next cycle did not need to be continued and the writer stopped the research.

DISCUSSION

QAR strategy in Reading Comprehension was successful to increase the students' reading comprehension skills. The strategy helped the students identify different types of the questions and the relationship between questions and answers. It also helped the students find the location of the answer of each question. Coe and Glass (2005) state that QAR strategy helps the students realize the need to consider information in the text and that from their own background knowledge. Therefore, teachers should also discuss sources of information as the students respond to questions.

Table 4.7 The Improvement of the Students' Reading Comprehension Skills in the Implementation of QAR Strategy and the Students' Participation

No	Criteria of Success	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1.	The students' average score of the reading comprehension test is ≥ 70	69.91	77.80
2.	75% of the students gain score ≥ 70	52.78%	88.88%

CONCLUSIONS

Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy is effective to solve the problems of the students in reading comprehension. The research was conducted in terms of two main aspects: finding out the effective strategy to improve the students' reading skills and improving the students' reading comprehension skills.

The first aspect relates to finding the effective strategy to improve the students' reading comprehension skills at English Department of STAIN Palangka Raya. The second one, the Question-Answer Relationship strategy that consists of four types of questions namely "Right There", "Think and Search", "Author and Me", and "On My Own" had effectively helped the students comprehend the texts they read and had effectively improved the students' reading comprehension. The last this strategy helps the students to identify different types of questions and relationship between question and answer. In addition, the implementation of QAR strategy in Reading Comprehension was proven by the increase on the scores that the students could obtain.

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