
IMPROVING READING SKILLS IN THE USE OF QUESTION AND ANSWER

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the nature of reading comprehension, types of comprehension, why questioning helps students comprehend texts better. It also correlates to the advantages of using Questions-Answer Relationship (QAR) to improve students' reading comprehension skills and the application of QAR. The paper concludes with several suggestions for classroom in the university level. This research was planned for collaborative classroom activity where the writer (acted as the instructor) and his collaborator (acted as the observer) worked together on the methods of this research, specifically: preparatory, planning, actualizing the plan, observing the activity, and reflecting the result of the activity. The subjects of this research were 30 English students at English education department in the university. For the data collection, the writer employed the checklist, field notes, and test. All the data collection were analyzed descriptively, and the results were compared with the criteria of success in this article to see whether the criteria of success had been accomplished or not.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning English is expected to qualify the student to practice English as a means of communication both in written and spoken forms. Accordingly, students should master the four skills of English; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In the meantime, for students in the university or college, proficiency in English reading is generally expected as an essential for an actual study due to reason most of workbooks for a variety of subjects as well as reading materials available in universities or colleges are mostly written in English language.

The common habits of the lecturers of reading classes in the teaching, learning progress are facts that lecturer reads the text first once or twice, and then they ask a pupil to read the text aloud. Then the lecturers tend to explain several clues or difficult words known in the texts and prepare several questions correlate to the contents of the texts in supposed to increase the students'

understanding. The method applied in the reading class does not encourage the pupil to contribute actively in teaching, learning process. As a result, the pupils usually do not response well to the lecturers' questions since they get difficulties to comprehend the texts and the essences of the questions.

Due to the importance of reading skill and lack of reading comprehension of the students, instructors need to apply several different methods in teaching reading that bring the students to the amazing atmosphere of teaching learning process. Furthermore, Burns et al. (1995:6) remind instructors 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.

To overcome the problems above, it is important to apply several methods in teaching, learning to assistance pupils understand the reading text better. The method planned in this article is Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Method. This strategy refers to a series of instructional activities to assistance student understanding dissimilar level of enquiring and relationship between question and answer.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Taxonomy of Reading

Reading defines as one of the language skills that plays a significant role in the society. Roe et al. (1995, 3) state reading is reconstruction and interpretation of meaning behinds in printed form. Reading contains of two correlated processes: words recognition and comprehension. Word recognition references to the process of observing how written sign resemble to one's verbal language. Comprehension is the manner of making senses of words, sentence and connected texts. On the other hands, Burn et al. (1996, 5) define reading as an extremely complex act that contains of two main components: a process and a product. In this case, reading does not only include the skill in understanding the written text but also the association between scripts.

From the definitions above, reading can be described in a lot of ways by diverse expert yet there are ideas of common agreement among reading expert. One such point is that understanding is the purpose of reading. Thus, reading can be determined as an activity that purposes primarily at understanding or constructing meaning from the written texts. Students will get a lot of benefits by reading written material because the importance of reading that has three characteristics as follows (Burn et al.,1996, 6) firstly, every aspect of live encompasses reading, secondly reading is pleasure, and thirdly reading is an activity to get information.

Knowing how importance of reading ability in the present-day, it is an essential that pupil must have enthusiastic understanding as reading will prime them to get a lot of kinds of knowledge. Also, the students must also be inspired to comprehend, in the procedure of reading, there is an interaction between a writer and reader. Here, reading contracts with interpreting and the understanding process in which a reader attempts to comprehend what a writer has put in a text. here, the reader should correlate his or her understanding to comprehend the reading text better.

Interests in formulating taxonomy of educational objectives has been followed by the formulation of taxonomies of comprehension skills (Cahyono, 1992, 74); therefore, different experts try to formulate the levels of comprehension in different terms. The taxonomy of comprehension skills can be beneficial for instructors to formulate different questions. Cahyono (1992, 74) adds that among the proposed taxonomies, Barrett (Anderson and Pearson, 1954) considered the best method, in which the taxonomy is divided into the questions into three main level of complexity: the comprehension of literal, inferential, and evaluation.

Literal Comprehension

First type of comprehension is called literal comprehension or reading on the lines. This kind of comprehension is act of obtaining information that is directly specified in a selection (Burns et al., 1996, 255). Meanwhile Roe et al. (1995, 98) state that literal comprehension is concerned with facts and ideas that are directly stated in the reading content. The literal comprehension is needed by students in comprehending several facts or contents taken literally from the texts. In this case, students obtain information that is explicitly specified in texts or reading lines level. At this level, reading comprehension aims at obtaining objects or information of a text effectively, especially in comprehending the text as stated by the words, sentences, or a paragraph in the texts.

Bloom's Taxonomy of this level is called knowledge. At the knowledge level students recognize the facts and details using the author's own words. On the other hands, QAR method also needs this kind of comprehension to answer questions on Right There and Thinks and Search question phases. This level of comprehension is usually a prerequisite for higher level comprehension. Furthermore, level consists of following written directions, recognizing details, and sequences. Literal comprehension also deals with identification and recall of stated ideas and details. Most of the experts such as Barrett and Stevick agree to use the term *literal comprehension* to show the basic comprehension.

Inferential Comprehension

Inferential (interpretative) reading is reading among the lines or creating inferences that needs pupils to derive thoughts that are indirect stated (Burns et al., 1996, 263). Besides, Roe et al.

(1995, 100) mention that interpretative reading is focused on deeper meanings and students must correlate facts, generalities, meanings, thoughts, cause-effect relationships that are not directly stated. The students need to comprehend the texts better in order to be able to reach interpretative reading comprehension. Furthermore, Bloom calls this level the comprehension level. Meanwhile, QAR method at level III or the Author and Me needs this level. This level needs the students' abilities to correlate their schemata and the contents of a text in order to guess the implicit ideas in the text. Roe et al. (1995,75) implies that effective students are active students who use a variety of methods and processes to construct meaning. Thus, good students, with appropriate methods of reading, will be able to get the implied ideas by relating their schemata to the texts they are reading. In addition, most experts call this level interpretative or inferential comprehension.

Evaluational Comprehension

Third level of comprehension is evaluational comprehension that is proposed by Barrett. This level of comprehension needs students comparing info and idea in the transcript with substantial offered by the instructor or others authorities, and with student own information and knowledge, in the hope to form judgments of various types (Cahyono, 1992:75). Meanwhile, Bloom identifies the level of analysis in this category.

Evaluational comprehension meets the level of On My Own questions in QAR method as this level needs the students' comprehension and prior knowledge to promote new ideas or opinions. So, the students should read beyond the lines to answer the questions of this level. Meanwhile, another term that is similar to evaluational comprehension is called environmental comprehension that is proposed by Stevick (Fachrurrazy, 2008, 55). This level also needs the students to apply interactive model of reading process to cope with this category of comprehension. Meanwhile, Bloom identifies the level of application in this category. On the other hand, Burns proposes third of comprehension that is called critical reading and creative reading for the fourth (highest) level.

Reading for Critical Comprehension

Critical reading is assessing written material-comparing the ideas discovered in the material with recognized values and drawing conclusions about their accuracy, appropriateness, and timeliness (Burns et al., 1996, 278). This step is higher than interpretative comprehension due to the level of difficulty. Students must read a text carefully and critically in order to get several considerations before they make decisions based on the materials they read.

Critical reading refers to synthesis level of Blooms taxonomy. Meanwhile, according to

Harretts taxonomy of reading, this level refers to evolutionary comprehension (Fachrurrazy, 2008, 55). Thus, the critical readers must be an active reader, questioning, searching for facts, appropriateness, and timeless (Burns et al., 1996, 278). Meanwhile, Roe et al. (1995: 102) add that critical reading also depends on a learner's ability to engage in literal and interpretative reading. It is really important for the reader to understand the text implicitly and explicitly before mastering reading.

Meanwhile, creative reading needs the students to read beyond the lines. This level meets evaluation level of Bloom's taxonomy. Evaluation is making judgment about ideas or materials. Furthermore, according to Stevick, this level is called environmental comprehension (Fachrurrazy, 2008, 55). That is why, this level needs students to contemplate as they need to use imagination (Burns et al., 1996, 293). Creative students are able to view their experiences in different ways. The students need to maximize their schemata by combining their prior knowledge with several ideas taken from the text to produce a new concept or idea. This skill deals with predicting outcomes, making visualization, and solving problems. Among the proposed taxonomies of reading above, this study applies QAR taxonomy based on several reasons: QAR method tries to help the students to identify dissimilar levels of questions also how the question-answer relationship correlates among levels of reading comprehension.

METHOD

There are no comprehension activities have a longer or more universal tradition than asking students questions about their reading, whether this happens in pre-reading, during, or post-reading. Subsequently, pupils are needed to comprehend diverse level of address based on the content they examined and read. They once in a while discover challenges in comprehending them. Frequently pupils react to questions with either a strict reply or by expressing that 'it' it isn't within the content. Subsequently, the instructor ought to encourage them with an appropriate technique. The technique proposed to overcome the issue of reading in perusing comprehension subject is QAR. It stands for question-answer relationship. QAR, according to Crawley and Mountain (1995), is a method for teaching students how to hate and answer comprehension questions. In QAR, students are taught to identify four types of question-answer relationship. Meanwhile, Vacca and Vacca (1996) state that "the kind of questions which are asked to guide comprehension must be based on the information of students need to answer the question. Therefore, instructors must help students become aware of likely sources of information as they respond to questions".

The Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) method assistances students comprehend four different levels of questioning and the relationships between questions and answers. This method

allowed students to comprehend their thoughtful processes and advance their metacognitive capabilities based on four stages of questions **Right There, Think and Search, My Head: The Author and Me**, and **On My Own** — to specify how the question is correlated to a textbook. Meanwhile, following steps are suggested by Vacca and Vacca (1996:60) and Ccie and Glass (2005) for teaching reading using QAR strategy: firstly, a visual support and selection to show the relationship by pointing two broad categories of information sources, and secondly the model of identifying and answering questions in every level of QAR using a visual aid, undertaking categories and processes used to answer these questions as follow.

Right There! needs students to go back to the passage and discover the correct information to answer the question as the answer stated on the transcript. Several questions of this level include these words, “Based on the passage. . .”, “How beautiful she is ...”, “Who are. . .”, “What are . . .”.

Think and Search! questions need students to think how ideas or information in passage correlate to each other. Students need to look back at the passage, find the information that the questions refer to, and then think about how the information or ideas fit together. So, this level needs literal comprehension but it is higher than Right There. Several questions of “Think and Search” include these words, “The main idea of the passage. . .”, “What caused. . .”, “Compare/contrast..”.

The Author and Me! (The author provides ideas and makes students think, but Connections to pupils' knowledge are need to answer the question). “The Author and Me” questions need pupils to use ideas and information is not specified directly in the passage to answer the questions. These questions need the students to think about what they have recited and formulate their own ideas or opinions. This level needs interpretative (inferential) and critical comprehension or the y should apply reading between the lines level. Such questions include in this type are “How can you conclude...?”, “The passage suggests. . .”, “How do you know. . .”?

On My Own! The students should master creative or evaluation comprehension to answer questions of this level. Thus, the y will apply reading beyond the lines level. “On My Own” questions can be answered by using students’ background understanding on a theme. Such questions of this type are: “In your opinion. . .”, “Based on your experience. . .”, “Have you ever...?”

The steps were practiced independently in a three-to-four students by dividing using QAR method. Then, a teacher guided students to apply the method by deciding the QAR for each question and explain students reasoning. The teacher-student discussion was applied in the way it helps pupils to better understand a text.

The Procedure of QAR Strategy

QAR strategy focuses on helping the students comprehend four different levels of questions and how to dig up the answers of the questions. This strategy is then applied into pre, during, and post-reading activities. The prereading activities cover (1) greeting and checking the students' attendance, (2) asking the students to sit in groups of three, (3) introducing the concept and purposes of QAR strategy (4) providing a short paragraph to determine two broad categories of information sources, (5) Modeling and explaining each type of questions using a visual aid, (6) activating the students' schemata related to the text, and (7) distributing the students' worksheet.

The next step applied is during-reading activities. The activities are as follows: (1) asking the students to read the text silently, (2) asking the students to answer the questions based on each level of information sources (Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own), (3) giving a hand to the students if needed, (4) asking the groups to show the answers, and (5) determining the correct answers with the whole class. Finally, the post-reading activities cover such activities as (1) giving feedback, (2) giving a conclusion of the benefits of QAR strategy and (3) closing the meeting. The following Figure 1 is giving a better description on the four levels of questions, meanwhile, Figure 2 is presenting bright examples related to the question stems in each level.

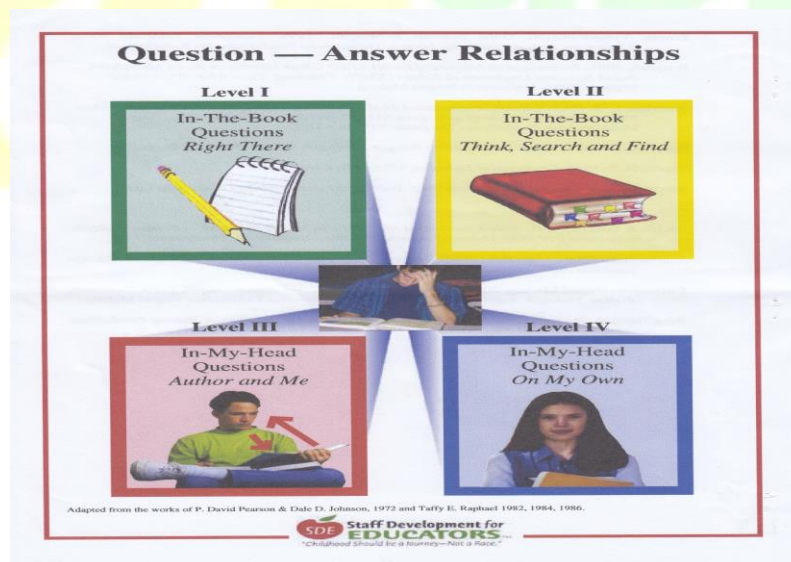


Figure 1 . Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Illustration Adopted from English Journal

Q.A.R.

Level I Questions

Right There: In-The-Book



Easy Answers
Attributes of Level I Questions

- The answer is usually contained in one sentence and is easy to find.
- Often the same words that make up the answer are found in the question.
- Question stems often begin with:
 - When is/was... ?
 - Who is/was... ?
 - What is/was... ?
 - Where is/was... ?
- The reader only needs literal thinking to answer the question.

Adapted from the works of P. David Pearson & Dale D. Johnson, 1972 and Taffy E. Raphael 1982, 1984, 1986.



Q.A.R.

Level II Questions

Think, Search, and Find: In-The-Book



Putting the Parts Together
Attributes of Level II Questions

- The answer is found in more than one place. The parts must be put together to answer the question.
- The words in the question may or may not be the same words used to answer the question.
- Certain words—including pointer/signal words, plurals, and conjunctions—indicate that the answer is in more than one place.
- Question stems often begin with:

Contrast...	Explain...	What were... ?
Compare...	Summarize...	
- The reader only needs literal thinking to answer the question.

Adapted from the works of P. David Pearson & Dale D. Johnson, 1972 and Taffy E. Raphael 1982, 1984, 1986.



QAR

Level III Questions

Author and Me: In-My-Head



Beyond the Text
Attributes of Level III Questions

- The reader must read the text to answer the question (text dependent)
- The reader must use inferential thinking in order to answer the question.
- Question stems often begin with:

How can you conclude... ?	How can you tell... ?
What biases or beliefs are... ?	How do you know... ?
Who does _____ remind you of... ?	

Note: The word you is often used in Level III questions.
- The reader relies on prior knowledge and experience.
- The reader must look for clues and evidence (prove the answer with details).
- The reader must read *between the lines* as the answer is *not explicit* in the text.

Adapted from the works of P. David Pearson & Dale D. Johnson, 1972 and Taffy E. Raphael 1982, 1984, 1986.



QAR

Level IV Questions

On My Own: In-My-Head



Beyond the Text
Attributes of Level IV Questions

- The reader need not read the text in order to answer the question.
- The reader must use inferential thinking.
- Question stems often begin with:
 - Do you believe... ?
 - How do you know... ?
 - How would you... ?
 - Have you ever... ?

Note: The word you is often used in Level IV questions.
- The reader relies on prior knowledge and experiences.
- The reader must use his own ideas and opinions to answer the questions.

Adapted from the works of P. David Pearson & Dale D. Johnson, 1972 and Taffy E. Raphael 1982, 1984, 1986.



Figure 2. Examples of Question Stems of Each Level Adopted from English Journal

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The application of QAR was done in two cycles with four classes meet for cycle 1 and three class meeting for cycle 2. The last class meeting of each cycle led to assess the reading comprehension

of the pupil. The research findings presented in this section comprised the steps in conducting Reading Comprehension 11 subject using QAR method and the students' active participation during the class.

The Findings of Cycle 1

Based on result of the quiz conducted in cycle 1, it was known that the average score of the students' reading comprehension test was 71.33 in scale varying from 0 to 100. The average score indicated a important improvement of the students' reading comprehension compared to the mean score of 59.00 on the pretext. It meant that the average score of the students increased 20.89°/c. In addition, it was also known that out of 30 students, 17 (56.67%) of them got scores > 70, and 13 (43.33%) of them got scores < 70.

The scores obtained by the students in quiz 1, it was known that the average score of the students' reading comprehension test was 71.3. Even though there was a significance improvement in the mean score and it met the first criterion of success (the students' average score of reading was 70.00), yet it failed to meet the second criterion as only 56.67% of the students got > 70.00 since the second criterion, as decided in Table 3.2, determined that at least 75.00% of the students got scores > 70.00. On the other hand, the students' participation had met the third criterion of success as they could get average score of 88.10°/c (equal to very good and above the minimum score of 75.00°/c).

All in all, several evidences in findings of cycle 1 proved QAR were able to improve not only the students' average score but also the motivation in teaching- learning process. so, the findings also presented, the first and third points already reached the criteria of success, however the second failed to meet the criteria of success, (see Table 1). Consequently, the next cycle was still needed to be conducted and several reviews of cycle 1 should also be made to improve the students' reading comprehension skills.

Table 1. The Improvement of Reading Comprehension Skills of students in the Use of QAR Method and the Students' Participation

No.	Criteria of Success	Pretest	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1.	The students' average score of reading comprehension test is ≥ 70	59.00	71.33	74.33

2.	75 % of the students gain score ≥ 70	23.33%	56.67%	80.00%
<hr/>				
3.	75 % of the numbers of the students are actively involved during the teaching learning process of Reading Comprehension	-	88.10%	88.39%

The Findings of Cycle 2

The scores obtained from the quiz proved that there was a little improvement in the students' average score. But it was successful to increase the most of the student who developed scores > 70.00 . The average score of the students' reading comprehension test was 74.33 in the scale varying from 0 to 100. The average score indicated a little improvement of the students' reading comprehension compared to the mean score of 71.33 on Quiz 1. It meant that the average score of the students increased 4.2 I °/c. In addition, it was also known that out of 30 students, 24 (50.00%) of them got scores > 70 , and 6 (20.00%) of them got scores < 70.00 . Prior to the analysis of the use on teaching-learning activities and students' score taken from Quiz 2, it can be concluded use of Question — Answer Relationship method is successful to improve the students' reading skills and active participation. The indicators of successful use that the writer had determined in advance stated that (a) the students' average score was 74.33, (b) 50.00% of the students got scores > 70.00 ., and (c) the students' active participation reached 58.39%. In addition, the indicators were also employed to judge whether the cycle proceeded to the next cycle or needed to be stopped. Based on the reflections overhead, it could be assumed, indicators had reached criteria of success. As a result, next cycle did not requisite to be continued and the writer stopped the study, drew a conclusion, and reported the research.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions of the research, it can be assumed that the use of QAR method in reading comprehension was 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 method to improve the students' reading skills and improving the students' reading comprehension skills. The first aspect correlates to finding the effective strategy to improve the students' reading skills of students. The second one, Question-Answer Relationship method that consists of four levels 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 skills.

The use of the QAR method consists of the following stages: (1) dividing the class in group of three (the class works in cooperative learning to help each other), (2) introducing concept of QAR method using a little paragraph to determine two broad classes of information (In the Text and In My Head), (3) demonstrate and explaining types of questioning by using a graphic aid, (4) activate the pupils' diagrams correlate with text (using pictures and several questions), (5) request the pupils to recite text silently, (6) ask all groups to answer questions based on levels of questions (Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own), (7) ask group to show answers, (8) determine correct answers the entire classes, (9) Give response (the teacher should pay attention not only on the correct answers and levels of questions but also the students mistakes on grammar, pronunciation, and diction), (10) give conclusion of the benefits of QAR method (discussing the QAR technique and how it assistances the pupils to better comprehend text), and (11) implement a test to have the students practice using QAR individually and independently.

Based on results of the data analysis, it was shown QAR method was successful to improve the reading skills of pupils. The use of QAR method helped the pupils to identify different levels of questions and relationship between questions and answers. In addition, the use of QAR method in reading comprehension was beneficial to improve reading skills of students. The progress was proven by increasing on the score that the students could obtain. First, relating to the students' scores in the preliminary study, the average score of the students was 59.00. In the first cycle the students' average score developed into 71.33 (identical to 20,89^a/c). It advanced into 74.33 (identical to 25.98^o/c) in the second cycles or at end of the research. Meanwhile, correlated to the student scores, in the preliminary study, only 7 (23.33*/) of the pupils who got scores > 70 which was the minimum standard criterion of the research. In the first cycle, there was 17 (56.67%) out of 30 pupils who got score > 70. Furthermore, in the second cycle, there was 24 (50.00%) of the students who got scores > 70 which is the minimum normal criterion of the research.

Finally, the use of QAR method also revealed that this method was also effective to encourage the pupils to actively participate in teaching, learning processes of reading comprehension class at this institution. Most of the students (88.10^o/ in first cycle and 88.39^o/c in second cycle) took a part in teaching, learning process actively. All in all, the method was efficient to improve both the students' reading comprehension skill and active participation in the teaching-learning process of

reading. The specific strengths of QAR method were helping the pupils to identify different levels of questions and relationship between questions and answers that made the pupils able to determine the sources of information to answer the questions and activating the pupils to join in teaching-learning process of reading.

Since QAR method helps the students to classify each level of questions and find the sources of the information to answer the questions, it is better for them to apply this method in their study. This method is also useful for them to work together in their study as it also offers discussions in the teaching- learning process that leads them to work together and help each other in order to improve their reading skills. On the other hand, English lecturers if they want to improve reading comprehension skill of students are recommended to apply QAR method causes it enable the students to improve reading skill and the level of participation in the teaching, learning processes. The English instructors must also pay attention on the stages of reading: pre reading, during-reading, and post reading.

Last but not least, this method must be conducted in group of three or little group then the pupils have a chance to effort collected and help among others. Thirdly, the chairperson, as a policy maker, is suggested to inform the strengths and profits of QAR method in improving students reading skill colleagues. He/she is also recommended to provide facilities to improve the skills of students, for the students of universities, proficiency in English particularly in reading is commonly assumed as the essential for a successful study due to the motive that most of good academic workbooks in Indonesia are transcribed in English.

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