

Implementing Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy in Teaching Reading on Practical English Course

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ABSTRACT

Question-answer strategy

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Reading is one of the four language skills that should be mastered in language learning. It is usually taught in integration with one of the other language skills (listening, speaking, and writing) in the new trends of language instruction. Generally, the teaching of reading as a foreign language (EFL reading) in PTKIN aims at enabling students to read and comprehend texts and other materials written in English. The study is conducted to overcome the students' difficulties in reading comprehension and encourage students to actively participate in the teaching-learning process through Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. The strategy offers four levels of questions (i.e., Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own) to help students answer each level of questions. This strategy comprises three phases: pre-reading, during-reading, and post reading activities. It is applicable for teaching reading comprehension since it can help and guide the students in comprehending a text well based on the levels of questions.

INTRODUCTION

The proficiency of English particularly in reading, for university students, is generally assumed to be essential for a successful study due to the reason that a textbook is used as a source of materials in teaching learning process particularly in teaching English. Indonesia has been using textbooks for many years in education (Susiati & Mufidati, 2020). Amiruddin & Syafitri (2021) also stated that English textbook from the government is issued for all the Indonesian students in junior high school. In addition, Suyadi and Husnaini (2022) avowed that the results found in their research indicate that the texts provided in English textbook are significantly able to improve the students' reading skills. Therefore, it is very important to train students to read and comprehend academic texts in English better.

Concerning this topic, the reading skills of university students, whose departments are not English, are still far from satisfaction. In line with this case, Cahyono and Widiati (2006, as

cited in Anwar & Sailuddin, 2022) stated that, convergent with the university students' low interest in EFL reading, their reading skills are not yet adequate to perform most reading task; therefore, their reading skills need to be improved because the essence of reading is the comprehension. It is emphasized by Duffy (2009) who believed that the communication of messages is the objective of written language. If one does not understand the message, it can lead to a conclusion, which is she or he did not read.

The importance of reading comprehension for students, moreover, is indeed obvious because it creates the basis for knowledge independent acquisition (Seifert, 2021). The main goal of comprehension is making the students conscious of the reasoning employed by self-regulated readers. Burns et al. (1996:207) stated that the objective of all readers is the comprehension of what they read; meanwhile, Pang et al. in (2003, as cited in Pham, 2021) viewed reading comprehension as an active process of constructing meaning from connected text that involve word knowledge as well as thinking and reasoning.

Henceforth, the importance of reading skill as well as the lack of students' reading comprehension require teachers to apply some different methods in teaching reading skills that lead the students to the amazing atmosphere of teaching-learning process. Burns et al. (1996:6) reminded teachers to motivate the students that reading is a means of enjoyment. These issues, therefore, trigger the writers to find out how students can implement Question and Answer strategy in practical English reading text as well as how effective the implementation of the practical English reading text is.

Related to the problems above, the researcher 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 levels of questioning and the relationship between questions and answers. Roe et al. (1995:107) viewed that "QAR focuses on the processes for generating answers to questions and on the relationship between questions and answers within reading comprehension activities. Students are encouraged to think of sources for answering questions." Yahya (2021), through his research, has also proven that QAR strategy is more effective compared to the conventional method for escalating students' metacognitive processes related to English texts reading comprehension.

Raphael, as mentioned in Yahya (2021), created QAR in 1968 as a reading comprehension strategy to elucidate the way students deal with the tasks in the reading texts given by the teachers and answer the related questions. It explains how the reader's past experience gets connected while reading; thus, he actively participates in the reading activity. Based on the statement of Lems et al. (2010, as cited in Yahya, 2021), studies have shown that readers utilize their text structure-related knowledge for storing, retrieving, and summarizing the information they obtained during the reading activity. Moreover, Astuti (2019), has pointed out that students are taught to identify four types of question-answer relationship through QAR. Here, Raphael (1986, as cited in Astuti, 2019) stated that the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy helps students understand four different levels of questioning and the relationships between questions and answers. They are Right There, Think and Search, The Author and Me, and On My Own. He further elucidated that the first two questions in QAR are based on text, and the remaining two other questions are based on one's knowledge. To obtain the answers of the first two questions, students are required to relate and find relevant information conveyed in the text given to them. Meanwhile, it is obvious that, for the last

category, the answers that the students look for are not given the text. Therefore, teachers' help is even more needed to guide them to answer these types of questions. In addition to QAR, Bouchard (2005, as cited in Astuti, 2019) confirmed that this strategy helps students to be more conscious of the information conveyed by the text they read and one from their past experiences or knowledge. Thus, this strategy allows students to understand their thinking processes and develop their metacognitive abilities.

Fundamentally, the activities of a reading class can be divided into three stages. They are pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. First of all, pre-reading activities are often intended to activate students' schemata related to the subject or type of text to enhance the comprehension of the material (Burns et al., 1996:224). These activities are given before the students read the text in order to prepare the students' focus on the text. Through these activities, the teacher may judge whether the students are ready for active participation in the learning process or not. Thus, the teacher can decide when the students start to read the texts. Some activities in pre-reading are predicting, previews, purpose question, and anticipation guides (Burns et al., 1996:225).

Moreover, the teachers should monitor their comprehension constantly and take steps to correct the situations when they fail to comprehend the text as some strategies and activities can be used during reading stage to promote comprehension (Burns et al., 1996:229). They may re-read the passage several times before comprehending the text well. Somehow, a teacher should help poor readers become more strategic through direct guidance in order to help them how to comprehend the text better.

While post-reading strategies can help students integrate new information into existing schemata (Burns et al., 1996:237). These activities strengthen the students' comprehension of the text given. Some activities that may be categorized into post reading activities are extending learning, questioning, retelling, discussion, and visual representation.

The purpose of teaching reading is to provide students with skills to comprehend texts. It is essential, as conveyed by Parviz (2019, as cited in Parhadjanovna, 2023), to be able to understand written text for students learning a foreign language since it helps them to acquire new vocabularies and grammar, as well as escalate their reading skills. There are many reading strategies that teachers can implement, one of them is asking related questions to the students in reading activities. Students are required to comprehend different levels of questions based on the texts they read and they occasionally find difficulties in comprehending them. Often students respond to questions with either a literal answer or by stating that "it" is not in the texts. Consequently, the teacher should facilitate them with an appropriate strategy. Eventually, the Question-Answer Relationship strategy is proposed to overcome the problems of students in reading comprehension subject.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The present study of this research is a collaborative classroom action research (CAR). According to Gay (2000, as cited in Suwondo & Syaifullah, 2019), action research refers to a process involving individuals or teachers who work together to gather proofs and take decisions regarding their knowledge, performance, beliefs, and impacts so that they can eventually fathom and develop them. In this research, the researcher works together with one of the reading comprehension lecturers in conducting the action. Furthermore, the researcher conducts the action in cyclical process and the collaborative lecturer acted as an observer. The research is conducted at one of the Non-English Department of the private university in Malang. This department has 4 parallel classes in the academic year 2023/2024 in which each class consists

of approximately 30 students. The subjects of the research are the Non-English Department students of the third semester in this institution who join English Language program of class A in the academic year 2023/2024 that consists of 30 students based on two considerations. First, the problems of comprehending texts were found in this class. Second, the researcher is one of the lecturers in this university.

The procedures of this research were adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1992, as cited in Riasman, et al., 2024) which consist of consists of four steps as follows; (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting. Figure 1.1. describes the activities of each step of this study.

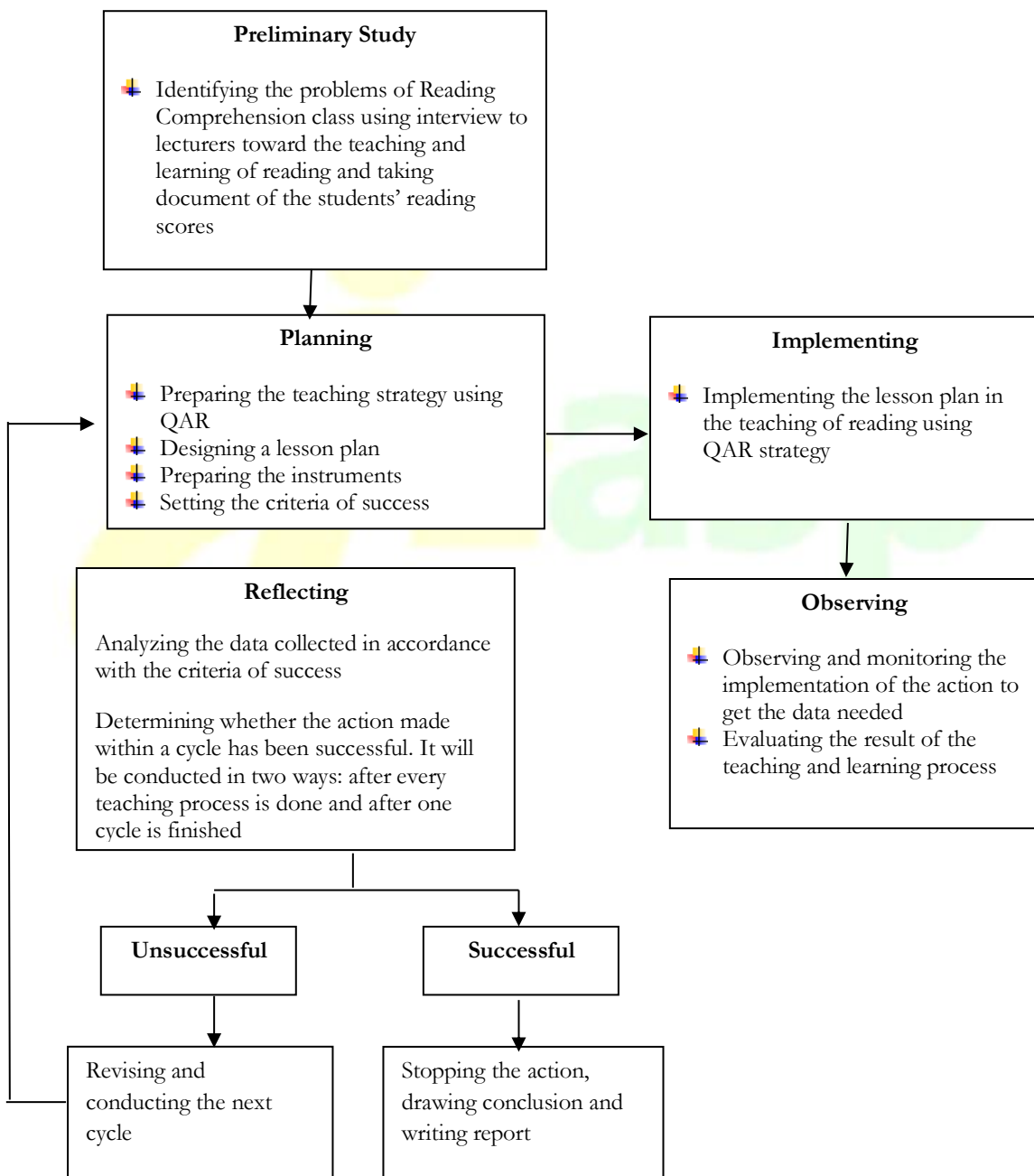


Figure 1.1. The Diagram of Classroom Action Research (Adapted from Kemmis and Mc Taggart)

The instructional objectives consist of general and specific objectives that aim at facilitating the students with reading comprehension skills that should be achieved at the end of each meeting of English Regular Class (odd semester).

In this study, the general objective refers to comprehending the content of the text provided in each meeting. Meanwhile, the specific objectives aim at enabling students to be able to do exercises based on four levels of questions after reading and discussing the text provided in each meeting.

a. Materials and Media

The materials and media are prepared based on the instructional objectives stated in each lesson plan.

The texts used in each meeting are taken from Practical English work book focusing on the reading comprehension practices. Meanwhile, exercises of each text are composed by the teacher-researcher and the collaborator. Furthermore, the teacher-researcher provides additional media to maximize the activities of teaching-learning process such as: a short paragraph and pictures to introduce QAR strategy relevant to the texts for each meeting, laptop, and LCD.

b. Teaching Procedure

The teaching-learning activities of reading using QAR strategy are divided into three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post reading activities as described in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 The Procedure of Applying QAR in Reading Class

Stage	Focus	Teacher’s Activities	Students’ Activities
Pre-reading Activities	Introducing the strategy and activating the students’ prior knowledge and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greeting ➤ Setting the students into groups of three ➤ Introducing QAR strategy ➤ Giving different levels of questions ➤ Asking questions related to the topic ➤ Introducing the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Responding greeting ➤ Sitting with their groups ➤ Paying attention on the strategy ➤ Learning the different levels of questions ➤ Responding the questions ➤ Paying attention on Topic

During Reading Activities	Improving the students' reading skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Asking the students to read the text silently ➤ Asking the students to do the assignment ➤ Giving a hand if needed ➤ Asking the groups to show the answers ➤ Determining correct answers with the class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reading the text ➤ Doing assignment ➤ Asking for help ➤ Showing the answers ➤ Thinking about the answers
Post-reading Activities	Strengthening students' comprehension on the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Giving feedback ➤ Giving a conclusion on the whole activities using QAR ➤ Closing the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Receiving feedback ➤ Paying attention and asking if needed ➤ Ending the class

The instruments of the study are tools to collect the data needed in this study. The instruments applied in this study are observation checklist, field notes, and test to obtain the information during the teaching learning activities through QAR strategy. All of the instruments are designed to identify as well as to determine whether or not one cycle of the actions has met the criteria of success. The explanations in detail are visualized in the section of instruments and techniques for data collection.

In conducting the study, the implementation of the teaching learning process applied QAR strategy. The strategy arranged in the lesson plan is implemented in pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. The researcher acts as the lecturer of the study while the collaborator observes the teaching learning process in regular English class.

Observation is the process of recording and collecting data concerning the implementation of teaching learning process using QAR strategy. The data gained through observation checklist, field notes, and test are used to judge whether the criteria of success are successfully reached or not.

In this step, there are two kinds of data to be collected: quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data are in the form of numbers or scores taken from observation checklist and test. These are the main data to determine the criteria of success. Meanwhile, qualitative data are descriptive data about the teaching-learning process of reading of regular class derived from students' and teachers' activities to illustrate the application of QAR strategy in teaching-learning process.

Table 1. 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	71.33
2.	75 % of the students gained score ≥ 70	56.67%

Based on the results of the quiz conducted in Cycle 1, it was found that the average score of the students' reading comprehension test was 71.33 in the scale, varying from 0 to 100. The average score indicated a significant improvement of the students' reading comprehension compared to the mean score of 59.00 on the preliminary study. It meant that the average score of the students increased 20.89%. In addition, it was also found that out of 30 students, 17 (56.67%) of them got scores ≥ 70 , and 13 (43.33%) of them got scores < 70 .

The findings on the students' active participation could be based on the data obtained from the observation checklist during the implementation of QAR strategy in the teaching - learning process of Reading Comprehension II class in this cycle. The data were employed to revise and modify the whole plans in helping the students to improve their reading skills in comprehending texts. Meanwhile, the analysis of teaching - learning process covered three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities.

In pre-reading stage, the students' performance at the first meeting showed that the students had to pay much more attention to the teacher's explanation on the objectives of the meeting since the teacher intended to introduce a new strategy in reading comprehension class. However, some of the students were still busy talking about other things that were irrelevant to the lesson. The teacher could attract the students to pay attention on the real activities of the introduction of QAR strategy after displaying a short paragraph and asked them to read and comprehend the paragraph in two minutes only. This activity led the teacher to explain QAR strategy. In the pre-reading activity of the first meeting, the students' active participation was 90.00% (equal to very good).

Meanwhile, the students' performance in pre-reading stage of the second meeting was much better than that in the first meeting, 100.00% (equal to very good) since almost all of the students actively involved in the activities. Their new experiences in QAR strategy made them curious to understand more deeply in reading activities especially in answering the questions. Based on the informal interview conducted with the students, they got many benefits from QAR strategy and helped them answer the questions provided more easily.

The students' participation in the pre-reading activities of the third meeting was lower than that in the second meeting since the level of the students' participation was 95.00% (equal to very good). Not all of the students answered the teacher's greeting. Nonetheless, in other activities of pre-reading stage, the students were very active.

In short, the students were actively involved in the pre-reading activities since they were thinking so hard to respond to the teacher's stimulus, even though, sometimes the teacher had to call the students' names when they were daydreaming or thinking about something else. As a whole, the average of the students' participation in pre-reading stages of Cycle 1 (meetings 1,

2, and 3) was 95.00% (equal to very good). The average percentage was taken from $90.00\% + 100.00\% + 95.00\% / 3 = 95.00\%$.

During-reading stage in this cycle aimed at guiding the students to have an interaction or engaged with the text which led to facilitation of comprehension. In these activities, the students worked in groups of three in comprehending the text, doing exercises based on different levels of questions provided by the teacher, and sharing the answers of the questions.

In the first meeting of this stage, the groups answered the questions given based on the levels of questions for each item. The groups started to be familiar with different levels of questions and how to get the information to answer the questions. As a result, they did not find serious problems in answering the questions. Somehow, they needed more time to discuss the answers of the questions for level 3 and 4 (In My Head) since the answers were varied based on the students' levels of comprehension and schemata. As a whole, the students did not find difficulties in comprehending the text since the text was close to the students' experiences. Meanwhile, the level of the students' participation in this stage was 90.00% (equal to very good).

Somehow, the students' participation in the second meeting of this cycle was lower than that in the first meeting. The level of the students' participation was 85.00% (equal to very good). Some students said that the text was more complicated than the previous one and they relied on their partners' responses in answering the questions. It seemed that the teacher should have controlled each group's activities to make each member of the groups work properly (see Appendix 3a).

The participation of the students in the third meeting of Cycle 1 was 80.00%. It was lower than those in the second and third meetings even though the students looked happy with the activities as they had a different atmosphere in the teaching learning process. Not all of the students had difficulties in answering different levels of questions. In this meeting, the teacher did not provide the students with the guidance for each level of each question (Appendix 1c-3). He wanted to know how well the students identify the level of each question.

In summary, the average of the students' participation in during-reading stages of Cycle 1 (meetings 1, 2, and 3) was 85.00% (equal to very good). The average percentage was taken from $90.00\% + 85.00\% + 80.00\% / 3 = 85.00\%$.

In the first meeting, the teacher gave some feedbacks especially on the students' grammatical mistakes in answering the questions, concluding the different levels of questions including the benefits of understanding the levels of the questions, and providing a chance for the students to ask some questions related to QAR strategy and the content of the text. Somehow, only small numbers of the students asked some questions related to the content of the text. Meanwhile, the students' participation in this stage was 66.67% (equal to good).

The students' participation in the second meeting was similar to the first one as it was only 66.67% (equal to good). The students seemed reluctant to ask questions related either to the strategy or the content of the text. On the other hand, the students' participation in the third meeting increased significantly to 91.67%. They really paid attention on the feedbacks given by the teacher and asked some questions related to the topic as they were really familiar with the topic. The topic, according to them, was very interesting. The average of the students' participation in post-reading stages of Cycle 1 (meetings 1, 2, and 3) was 75.00% (equal to good). The average percentage was taken from $66.67\% + 66.67\% + 91.67\% / 3 = 75.00\%$.

Based on the analysis of the teaching-learning process in Cycle 1 that covered three meetings in which each meeting consisted of three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities, it was found that the students' average score for active participation was

87.18% (equal to very good). The average percentage was taken from $84.62\% + 88.46\% + 88.46\% / 3 = 87.18\%$.

Table 2 Students' Active Participation in Cycle 1

No	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Average/Stage
Pre-reading	90.00%	100.00%	95.00%	95.00%
During-reading	90.00%	85.00%	80.00%	85.00%
Post-reading	66.67%	66.67%	91.67%	75.00%
Average/Meeting	84.62%	88.46%	88.46%	87.18%

Table 3 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	74.33
2.	75 % of the students gain score ≥ 70	80.00%

Table 4 Students' Active Participation in Cycle 2

No	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Average/Stage
Pre-reading	90.00%	100.00%	95.00%
During-reading	90.00%	90.00%	90.00%
Post-reading	66.67%	75.00%	70.84%
Average/Meeting	84.46%	90.38%	87.42%

Table 5 The Improvement of the Students' Reading Comprehension Skills in the Implementation of QAR Strategy and the Students' participation

No.	Criteria of Success	Preliminary Study	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 gained score ≥ 70	23.33%	56.67%	80.00%
3.	75 % of the numbers of the students who were actively involved during the teaching learning process of Reading Comprehension	-	87.18%	87.42%

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that implementing QAR strategies in reading comprehension can effectively solve students' reading comprehension problems. This study mainly considers two aspects: identifying effective strategies to improve students' reading skills and improving students' reading comprehension skills.

The first aspect involves finding effective strategies to improve the reading comprehension skills of the students of Non-English department. The second strategy is the question-answer relationship strategy, which consists of four levels of questions: "Just There", "Thinking and Seeking", "The Author and Me" and "Myself". It can effectively help students understand the text they read and effectively improve their reading ability, their reading comprehension skills in particular.

The implementation of the QAR strategy involves several sequential steps: firstly, dividing the class into groups of three, where cooperative learning is encouraged; secondly, introducing the QAR strategy concept through a brief paragraph that establishes two main categories of information, namely "In the Text" and "In My Head"; thirdly, providing visual aids to model and explain each type of question; next, activating the students' prior knowledge related to the text using pictures and questions; then, instructing the students to read the text silently; after that, assigning each group to answer the questions based on the different levels of questioning, including "Right There," "Think and Search," "Author and Me," and "On My Own"; and finally, requesting the groups to present their answers.

Furthermore, the process includes determining the correct answers collectively as a class, providing comprehensive feedback that addresses not only the accuracy of responses and question levels but also students' grammar, pronunciation, and diction errors. It concludes with

an examination of the advantages of the QAR strategy by discussing its technique and how it enhances students' comprehension of the text. Finally, a test is administered to allow students to independently practice using QAR.

The analysis of the data revealed that the utilization of the QAR strategy yielded positive results in enhancing the reading comprehension abilities of the students enrolled at Islamic Education program of English class program. By implementing this strategy, students were able to discern various question levels and establish connections between questions and answers. Moreover, the incorporation of the QAR strategy in reading comprehension has been proven to be advantageous in improving the students' overall reading skills. This improvement was evident through the increase in the students' scores. Initially, during the preliminary study, the students achieved an average score of 59.00. However, in the first cycle, their average score rose to 71.33 (a significant increase of 20.89%). Subsequently, in the second cycle, or at the conclusion of the research, their average score further progressed to 74.33 (equivalent to a 25.98% improvement).

Related to the students' scores, in the preliminary study, only 7 (23.33%) of the students got scores ≥ 70 which was the minimum standard criterion of the research. In the first cycle, there were 17 (56.67%) out of 30 students who got scores ≥ 70 . Furthermore, in the second cycle, there were 24 (80.00%) of the students who got scores ≥ 70 which was the minimum standard criterion of the research. Finally, the implementation of QAR strategy also revealed that this strategy was also effective to encourage the students to actively participate in the teaching-learning process of reading comprehension class at this institution. Most of the students (88.10% in the first cycle and 88.39 % in the second cycle) took a part in the teaching-learning process actively.

In conclusion, the strategy can be considered efficient to improve both the students' reading comprehension skills and active participation in the teaching-learning process of reading. The specific strengths of QAR strategy were helping the students to identify different levels of questions and the relationship between questions and answers that made the students able to determine the sources of information to answer the questions. It was also activating the students' motivation to participate in the teaching-learning process of reading.

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Contributors:

Dian Aristades Wiranegara: initiating the paper, reviewing previous study, conducting the research by spreading the questionnaires, collecting the data, and working on the conclusion of the research

Prima Purbasari: revising/updating the In-text citation & reference list, paraphrasing the cited information, elaborating on some information cited, proofreading

Sohibul Hairi: Proof-reader, Copywriter, editor and layouter the manuscript.

