Improving Students' Reading Comprehension
through Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy

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Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari apakah ada perbedaan signifikan pada keterampilan pemahaman menbaca siswa sebelum dan setelah penerapan strategi *Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)* .Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif. Sasaran penelitian sebanyak 22 siswa pada kelas satu di MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan. Uji *reading rcomprehension* digunakan untuk pengambilan data. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan *t-test value (Repeated Measure T-test)* dengan level signifikansi $p < 0.05$. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara statistik ada perbedaan signifikan pada keterampilan pemahaman membaca siswa dengan level signifikansi 0.05. Hal ini menandakan bahwa strategi *Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)* dapat diterapkan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan pemahaman membaca siswa dalam bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: pemahaman membaca, strategi Question-Answer Relationship (QAR), peningkatan

Abstract. The aim of this research was to find outwhether there was a significant difference of students' reading comprehension before and after the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy at the first grade of MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan. This research was quantitative research**.** The subjects of this research were 22 students of the first grade at MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan. Reading comprehension tests were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using t-test value *(Repeated MeasureT-test)* in which the significance was determined by $p < 0.05$. The result indicates that there was a statistically significant difference of the students' reading comprehension achievement with a significant level of 0.05. This suggests that QAR strategy facilitates to improve students' achievement in reading comprehension.

Keywords: reading comprehension, Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy, improvement

INTRODUCTION

At school, there are many problems faced in learning English, one of which is in answering some questions related to reading texts. Many students waste too much time to answer comprehension questions. They tend to read all the text to answer one question only then they will repeat to read the same text to answer the next questions. As the result, many students run out of time and cannot finish the test optimally. Besides that, many students lack in mastering reading language skill. They tend to be passive learners and unable either to use their literal knowledge to deliver their ideas or opinion in discussing such questions related to text or to use their high-level of thinking in understanding the text. They tend to be afraid to ask questions about the material they do not understand in teaching learning process and they do not really understand about elements or aspects in reading they should master.

Unfortunately, some English teachers still apply a conventional way to teach reading in the class and it usually makes the students bored and difficult to understand the materials because the method is monotonous. Therefore, the teacher should find another method, technique, or strategy to overcome this problem. Thus, the teacher can apply an appropriate strategy to establish the effectiveness of English teaching in order to make the students have better achievement. There are many strategies which are used in teaching reading; one of them is Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. The teacher can apply this strategy in teaching learning process, especially in reading.

Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy is designed as a method for a deliberate and common way of thinking and talking about effective sources of information when answering questions in which QAR is a during reading strategy that improves comprehension. This strategy teaches students that all questions are not alike and that knowing how to identify the types of questions will help them answer the questions in which this strategy presents a three-way relationship between questions, text content, and reader knowledge (Raphael, 1982, 1986).

Therefore, the researcher chose QAR strategy to teach reading comprehension based on the previous study which proved that QAR strategy could be successfully implemented to teach reading in which this strategy could lead to growth in reading comprehension of students (Furtado and Pastell, 2012). Moreover, QAR strategy gave a positive effect toward students' reading comprehension abilityin which students who were taught by this strategy gave a positive response and showed some improvements in their reading comprehension (Peng *et al.*, 2007; Cummins *et al.*, 2012; Agustina, 2012).

Besides that, there are a lot of advantages of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. They are; first, QARs serve as a reasonable starting point to address the problems that stand in the way of moving all students to high levels of literacy. QAR empowers students to think about the text they are reading and beyond it, too. It inspires them to think creatively and work cooperatively while challenging them to use literal and higher-level thinking skills. In addition, the different skills required to answer the four types of questions in QAR allow students to become aware of their own thinking processes as they ask and answer questions. Moreover,

generating questions facilitates deeper thought than does merely answering questions.

Considering the statement above, the researcher conducted Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) as a strategy in teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, the purposes of this research are to find out whether there is a significant difference of students' reading comprehension at the first grade of MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan before and after the implementation of QAR strategy and which aspect of reading comprehension improves the most after the implementation of this strategy.

METHODS

This research was conducted through quantitative design with a group pre-test and post-test. The population of the research was students of the first grade of MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan in the second semester of academic year 2016/2017 in which Class VII A which consisted of 22 students was chosen as the sample. The instrument used was a reading comprehension test. The research was conducted in several steps: selecting the instrument material, determining the population and sample, administering try-out test, administering the pre-test, conducting the treatment, administering the post-test, analyzing the data, and concluding then reporting the results of data analysis.

In collecting the data, the researcher used the procedures that could be described as follows: First, try-out. In try-out class, the researcher provided 35 items in 90 minutes. It was done in order to know whether the test items were applicable or not. Second, pre-test. This test was administered to find out students' basic ability in reading comprehension before treatments. The test was selected-response test in form of multiple choices with four alternatives. Third, treatments. The researcher conducted three treatments by applying QAR strategy. The materials used in this research were based on the curriculum of the first grade in junior high school students at the second semester, that is, descriptive text. Fourth, post-test. The test was distributed to find out the result of students' reading comprehension after the implementation of QAR strategy. Then, the researcher determined the procedure to be used in scoring the students' work. In order to do that, the researcher used Arikunto's formula (1989) with the ideal score is 100.

After getting the data, the researcher analyzed them using SPSS 16.0 for Windows thorugh *Repeated Measure T-test* in which the significant level was determined by $p < 0.05$ to find out the difference of student's reading comprehension ability after the treatments.

The hypothesis of this research is: There is a significant difference of students' reading comprehension at the first grade of MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan before and after the implementation of QAR strategy.

RESULTS

After analyzing the data of try out test, the researcher used the items that had been selected for testing. There were 25 items in the form of multiple choices containing four alternatives of answer of each item (A, B, C and D), one was the correct answer

and the rest were distracters. The researcher distributed a pre-test to find out the student's basic ability in reading comprehension. The total score of the pre-test was 1196.00, the mean score was 54.36, the highest score was 80.00, the median was 56.00 and the lowest score was 32.00.

Furthermore, the researcher distributed a post test in order to find out whether there was a significant difference of students' reading comprehension ability. The total score of post-test was 1492.00, the mean score was 67.81, the highest score was 88.00, the median was 66.00 and the lowest score was 52.00. It shows that the students' scores in post-test are higher than their scores in pre-test. The distribution of the students' score of the pre-test and post-test in experimental class can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution Frequency of Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores

		Pre-test					Post-test			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	32	1	4.5	4.5	4.5	Valid	52	3	13.6	13.6	13.6
	36	2	9.1	9.1	13.6		56	3	13.6	13.6	27.3
	40	3	13.6	13.6	27.3		60	3	13.6	13.6	40.9
	48	3	13.6	13.6	40.9		64	2	9.1	9.1	50.0
	56	4	18.2	18.2	59.1		68	2	9.1	9.1	59.1
	60	3	13.6	13.6	72.7		72	1	4.5	4.5	63.6
	64	1	4.5	4.5	77.3		76	3	13.6	13.6	77.3
	68	3	13.6	13.6	90.9		80	2	9.1	9.1	86.4
	76	1	4.5	4.5	95.5		88	3	13.6	13.6	100.0
	80	1	4.5	4.5	100.0						
	Total	22	100.0	100.0			Total	22	100.0	100.0	

Table above shows the distribution frequency of students' pre-test scores before the treatment of teaching reading comprehension through Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was implemented. The table above illustrates that the students who get the high scores (reaching standard score: 74.00) are 2 students out of 22 students. It seems that the students' reading ability is poor.

The distribution frequency of students' post-test scores after treatments of teaching reading through Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy can also be seen from the table above. The table above illustrates that the students who get the high scores (reaching standard score: 74.00) are 8 students out of 22 students. It can be stated that students' achievement in reading comprehension improves after the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy.

Table 2. The Improvement of the Pre-test and the Post-test Score

	The Score of Pretest	The Score of Posttest	Gain
Mean	54.36	67.81	13.45
Median	56.00	66.00	-
Mode	56.00	52.00*	-
Range	48.00	36.00	-
Minimum	32.00	52.00	20.00
Maximum	80.00	88.00	8.00
Sum	1196.00	1492.00	296.00

*multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

The scores show that QAR strategy improved the students' reading comprehension ability in the experimental class. Meanwhile, the result of the computation shows that t-value is 8.457 and t-table is 3.819. Because the value of t-value is higher than t-table (8.457>3.819) and the significant level is lower than 0.05 (0.000<0.05), it means that H_1 is accepted if $t_0 > t_{tab}$ and $p < 0.05$.

Besides that, there were five aspects measured in this research by using the tests. The tables below provide the students' score in the pre test and post test which covered five aspect of reading comprehension.

Table 3. Students' Results of Five Aspects in Reading Comprehension

No.	Aspect of Reading Comprehension	Total Answer Pre-test	Total Answer Post-test	Improve-ment	Percentage Pre-test	Percentage Post-test	Improve-ment
1.	Finding Main Idea	38	52	14	53.97%	59.09%	5.12%
2.	Finding Supporting Detail	69	95	26	52.27%	71.97%	19.70%
3.	Making Inference	101	121	20	65.58%	78.57%	12.99%
4.	Confirming Reference	81	78	-3	59.86%	59.09%	-0.78%
5.	Understanding Vocabulary	12	27	15	27.27%	61.36%	34.09%

Table above shows that Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy improves students' reading comprehension in four out of five aspects in reading comprehension. Based on the results of this research, it can be said that this strategy improved the aspects of reading comprehension such as finding main idea with the gain of 14 points or 5.12%, finding supporting detail with 26 points or 19.70%, making inference with 20 points or 12.99%, and understanding vocabulary with 15 points or 34.09% while confirming reference decreased 3 points with the gain percentage of -0.78%. Furthermore, Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy

mostly improved students' reading comprehension ability in understanding vocabulary, in which their ability in that aspect improved 15 points or 34.09% significantly. The improvement occurred because this strategy helped and accustomed the students to match the synonym or antonym of the word quickly and this strategy also help the students to understand the meaning of the word by seeing the context used in the sentences. The students were accustomed to use their high thinking ability and their background knowledge to answer the question, so they have known what they should do or how they should find the answer the question about vocabulary without using any dictionary.

DISCUSSION

The main concern in this research is to find out whether there is a significant difference of students' reading comprehension ability before and after the implementation of QAR strategy and to investigate which aspect of reading comprehension improves the most through this strategy. In relation to this research, the results indicated that Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension ability in class VII A of MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan. The students' mean score after the implementation Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy improved better and significantly. The students' mean score of pre-test was 54.36 meanwhile their mean score of post-test after the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was 67.81, in which students' gain score was 13.45. Thus, this finding has answered the first research question of this study. In line with the finding, it could be stated that from students' mean score of pre-test and post-test, there was a significant difference before and after the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy in teaching learning process.

In relation with the result of the research findings, it could be seen that Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was effective in teaching reading comprehension. The result of *Repeated Measure T-test* computation showed that the significant level gained was 0.000 (two tailed) and t-value was higher than t-table (8.457>3.819) which indicated that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. It means H_1 was accepted which stated that there is a difference between pre-test and post-test scores after the treatments which shows significant improvement in students' reading comprehension ability. Thus, the treatments could run well and could give a positive effect in improving students' reading comprehension ability.

According to Raphael (1982, 1986), the QAR strategy is designed as a way for students to understand that the answer to a question is directly related to the type of question asked. He states that QAR strategy is a reading comprehension strategy developed to clarify how students approach the task of reading texts and answering questions. Furthermore, according to Raphael and Au (in Chien, 2013), it is believed that a QAR framework provides a straightforward approach for reading comprehension instruction with the potential of closing the literacy achievement gap. These statements supported the findings of this research in which students' reading achievement improved and got better after the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. Using this strategy, students could find the answers of the questions easily by categorizing the types of questions and

determining the location of possible correct answers. Gavelek and Raphael (in Agustina, 2012) contend that by using QAR strategy, students become familiar with the various functional relationships that exist between questions and their responses. It means that students will realize the connection between question and answer which will help them to find out the answer of the question more easily.

In line with the result of students' mean score of pre-test and post-test in this research, it is also supported by previous research finding by Peng *et al.* (2007) which also revealed that students who were taught by QAR strategy showed some improvement in their reading comprehension test score after intervention compared to the control group at Primary 6. After the treatment was given, the experiment group demonstrated better comprehension in all types of questions than control group. The same result was also shown in the present research in which students' post-test score improved better than pre-test score with the gain score of 13.45.

This finding of the present research is also supported by another study conducted by Kinniburgh and Prew (2010) who found that the QAR strategy could be successfully implemented in kindergarten, and first and second primary grades with proper staff development and support and also the QAR strategy could lead to growth in reading comprehension of primary grade students which was proved by students' result of pre-test and post-test and students' interviews.

Furthermore, Furtado and Pastell (2012) also found that students overwhelmingly scored higher on the post-test reading comprehension after read-aloud of *The Jay and the Peacock* with some receiving perfect scores after applying QAR strategy in teaching learning activity in kindergarten. This finding was in line with the finding of present research, in which the result of study by Furtado and Pastell (2012) showed that twenty out of twenty three kindergarten students scored considerably higher on the post-test that they did on the pre-test. It showed that kindergarten students gave positive response toward the implementation of QAR strategy in teaching reading comprehension. Besides that, Cummins *et al.* (2012) who examined QAR strategy for the fourth grade students also found that QAR strategy increased the test score of lower-level students which meant that QAR strategy gave a positive effect toward students' ability.

In addition, Agustina's study (2012) was also in accordance with the finding of the present research. Her research proved that QAR strategy could be used to improve students' reading comprehension at senior high school. It could be seen from the reading test scores earned by students after being taught by QAR strategy through three cycles conducted in the research, which showed the improvement of the students' reading achievement from the pre-test to post-test.

However, there was a research which had the opposite finding with the present research. Stafford (2012) found that QAR strategy had a negative effect on students' question-answering ability and raised question regarding comprehension instruction, length of interventions, and the role of scaffolded support for a target population of adolescent readers. The results of his study indicated that the QAR treatment did not increase students' ability to accurately answer comprehension questions in which students' scores between pre-test and post-test in experimental

group and control group decreased quite significantly. In other words, the finding of the present research indirectly rejects Stafford's finding which is supported by five previous researches which indicates that QAR strategy gave a positive effect toward students' reading comprehension ability and showed the significant improvement.

In this research, Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was applied in three meetings. In the first meeting, the researcher began by asking the students' about their understanding of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. Then, she introduced Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy by explaining the definition and concept of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy to the students. After that, the researcher distributed a text with ten following questions (containing five aspects of reading) and gave them 20 minutes to answer the questions in pair using QAR strategy. Limited timing was applied to stimulate the students so that they could find out the answer of the question in the text quickly. After the students finished answering the questions, the researcher discussed them together with students.

After the discussion was finished, the researcher distributed a task to the students in the form of multiple choices with 10 items (containing five aspects of reading). The students were asked to do the task individually and then submit it in 20 minutes. This task was given as the evaluation so that the students mastered reading comprehension as well as Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy to be applied in answering comprehension questions. Then, at the end of the meeting, the students were asked to share their thought in order to measure their understanding during learning process using Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy and recall what they have learned and how they should apply QAR strategy in their learning.

In the second and third meetings, the researcher began the class by re-explaining briefly about QAR strategy and gave the tricks to find out the answers quickly using QAR strategy. Then, she divided the students into groups consisting of 6 students in which the group was divided again into two sub-groups: 3 members for student group and 3 members for expert group and she distributed a text to each expert group and the clues to each student group. And next, they did group discussion regarding to the text in 27 minutes. Through the time given, student group should make some questions regarding the five aspects of reading using the clues given. And then, the expert group should answer the questions made by student group.

After the discussion was finished, the students were asked to do the task individually in the form of multiple choices with 10 items (containing five aspects of reading) and then submit it in 18 minutes. The time was shortened to stimulate the students so that they could find the answer quickly. At the end of the meeting, the researcher did the same thing like she did in the first meeting and also told the benefits of using QAR strategy in their learning especially in reading.

During the learning process, it was found that Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was a new way to answer the question more easily and quickly for the students. Using this strategy, the students were also able to make questions

regarding to the five aspects of reading comprehension on their own and they were able to categorize the types of questions so that they could find the answer easily and quickly. It was in line with John's and Leahy's statement cited in Chien (2013). They also affirm that QAR strategy actively engages the students in the questioning process. It was also in accordance with the study by Cummins *et al.* (2012). Through the implementation of this strategy, they found that the students were increasingly able to create questions in all four sub-categories of QAR and its implication.

In addition, QAR strategy categorizes different types of questions which helps the students to analyze, comprehend, and respond to the text concepts. As cited in Kinniburgh and Prew (2010), Caldwell and Leslie (2005) contend that QARs assist students in differentiating among questions based on where the answer can be found.

In this research, the researcher did not only analyze the improvement of the students' reading comprehension achievement, but also the increase of each aspect of reading comprehension in order to find out which aspect of reading comprehension improves the most after the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy, so it made the result of this research deeper and more specific. Moreover, the improvement of students' reading comprehension achievement can also be seen from the increase of each aspect of reading which includes finding main idea, finding specific information, confirming reference, making inference, and understanding vocabulary. After the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy, some aspects of reading comprehension improved significantly even though there was one aspect which decreased.

In accordance with the result analysis, students' achievement in finding main idea improved 14 points (5.12%) from 38 to 52, finding supporting detail improved 26 points (19.70%) from 69 to 95, making inference improved 20 points (12.99%), and understanding vocabulary improved 15 points (34.09%) from 12 to 27. The students' achievement especially improved in understanding vocabulary with the highest gain compared with the other aspects in reading comprehension in which 61.36% of the subjects answered the questions correctly in the post-test. This finding has answered the second research question in this research.

Evidently, QAR strategy could improve students' achievement in understanding vocabulary because this strategy helped the students to match the synonym or antonym of the word quickly and to understand the meaning of the word by seeing the context used in the sentences. This finding is in line with the theories from Raphael (1982, 1986).According Raphael (1986), essentially QAR teaches the students three comprehension strategies: (a) locating information, (b) determining text structures and how they convey information, and (c) determining when an inference is required. Using QAR, students will be able to recognize possible answer locations by classifying questions by type as well as monitor their comprehension of the text. Furthermore, The Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy presents a three-way relationship between questions, text content, and reader knowledge. Simply put, the QAR strategy shows that students who

understand how questions are written are better prepared to answer questions. These activities help students "demystify" the question-building process as a step toward better reading comprehension (Raphael, 1982).

However, students' achievement in confirming reference decreased through QAR strategy. It seemed that through this strategy, the students got confused to determine what a word refers to in the question. They got confused to interpret word references in the questions and to find which the correct answer of the questions is. It was said that finding reference means that the reader should interpret and determine one linguistic expression to another (Suparman, 2012). Moreover, Latulippe (in Agustina, 2012) contends that reference is words or phrases used either before or after the reference in reading materials. In this case, sometimes, the linguistic expression used in the question referred to the word which far from the sentence it belonged to. Sometimes, linguistic expression used in the question might even refer to many words in the text because it still makes sense to refer the linguistic expression in reference question to more than one word in the text. Hence, the students got wrong interpretation toward the reference in the question so that they answered the question incorrectly.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the data analyses, some conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. QAR strategy gives a positive effect toward students' reading comprehension ability in which this strategy improves students' reading comprehension ability at the first grade of MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan significantly. In line with previous researches, this strategy can improve students' reading comprehension ability in all graders, especially in their test score and their ability in questioning process.
2. The students' reading comprehension ability shows the significant improvement in four aspects of reading comprehension. It means that not all aspects of reading comprehension can be improved by using QAR strategy. The highest improvement occurs in understanding vocabulary while in confirming reference, it decreases after the implementation of QAR strategy.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusions above, the suggestions are as follows:

1. English teachers can apply QAR strategy in the classroom for teaching English particularly teaching reading as a way to improve students' reading comprehension ability. However, teachers in general particularly those in MTsN 2 Lampung Selatan who want to improve students' reading comprehension ability, should explain clearly about QAR strategy to the students such as what the QAR strategy is, what the types of QAR are, how to categorize the questions based on QAR types and how to determine the location of possible correct answers in the text. Teachers should give a model on how to apply this strategy in learning process and can also give some tricks or clues

to the students how to answer the question quickly and easily based on the types of the questions.

2. Future researchers who want to investigate the same topic, can spend more time and use other types of texts in giving treatments using QAR strategy and can apply this strategy for those other types of texts. Other researchers can also choose other subjects for future researches such as university students or Islamic school students in other levels or grades. Future researchers should investigate the effect of QAR strategy in improving other skills. And for reading skill, they should investigate each aspect of reading more specifically and find the cause why that aspect increases or decreases to complete the previous findings and should also make some modifications in the implementation of QAR strategy so that this strategy can improve all aspects of reading comprehension.

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