

IMPLEMENTING QUESTION ANSWER RELATIONSHIP FOR UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS

I Gde Putu Agus Pramerta

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
putuagus1708@gmail.com

Abstract: In Mahasaraswati Denpasar University, basic reading course is provided for the sophomore (second semester students). The level of difficulty of the materials is quite similar to the level in secondary level. However, students seem to have problems in comprehending simple passages despite the fact that they are EFL students of university level. Moreover, with limited time and large class numbers, a communicative treatment was needed to solve the problems. Question Answer Relationship was implemented as the strategy to help them. It provides the students with a communicative teaching and promotes students' learning autonomy. This paper discusses a classroom action research on reading comprehension that was aimed at improving the students' reading comprehension and promoting the students' learning autonomy.

Keywords: *learning autonomy, reading comprehension, question answer relationship*

INTRODUCTION

In Mahasaraswati Denpasar University, basic reading course is offered in the second semester for the sophomore students. Even though the level of difficulty is quite similar to the level in secondary level, many students still have problems when they were asked to comprehend simple passages. In comprehending a text, students need to answer questions related to the main idea, specific information, textual reference, and word meaning based on context. Those are important to be mastered by the students in reading comprehension. If they have good comprehension in reading, they will be able to achieve the competencies of the material in reading comprehension.

The researcher conducted the research in 2F class of English Education Study Program. In the first meeting, when he did brainstorming about the course, students seemed to have problems in responding the given questions. At that time, the material was a short descriptive text. He asked the students to read the text. He gave questions afterwards. He set the teaching learning process as communicative as possible. All questions were addressed to four main aspects in reading comprehension: main idea, specific information, textual reference, and word meaning.

During the reading session, all of the students did the task individually and then answered the comprehension questions that were related to the text on their exercise book. The fact was that, when the researcher asked them to raise hand and answered the questions related to the text, the students just kept silent and seemed to be reluctant to answer the questions. When the researcher asked them the reason for their reluctance, they admitted that they struggled with difficult words. They needed time to translate the words by consulting the dictionary. They could not guess the meaning from its context, and they asked the researcher to tell them the meaning of the words. Only after they were told the meaning of the difficult words, the students understood the content of the text.

The students also had problem in answering the question which was related to the main idea. They asked the researcher to help them give a clue to answer the question. Unfortunately, they could not answer all the questions because of the time. The students spent the time in finding out the difficult words. Additionally, the size of the class was considered too big. It made it

difficult for the researcher to divide his attention equally to the students and he had to speak loudly in order that all students heard the explanation and instruction given.

During an informal interview with the students, it was revealed that their problem occurred because they did not know the meaning of particular words. It made them uninterested in reading activity, especially in comprehending a reading text. They always asked the researcher to translate it first into *bahasa Indonesia*. Because they had limited vocabulary, they were not able to get the meaning and textual reference of a long sentence given.

A pre-test was conducted in the first meeting to confirm the problems of the students and to know how serious their problems were. It could be reported that the students' reading comprehension was insufficient so that it influenced their achievement. To support this report, the mean score that was obtained in the pre-test was 50.73 in which it was categorized below the minimum standard.

Based on the problems found in the classroom, the researcher was interested to use Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) to improve the students' reading comprehension and promote autonomous learning.

Theoretical Framework

There are four levels of questions in implementing QAR. They are divided into two sections based on the location of the answers. The following table is the framework and summary of QAR.

Table 1 The QAR framework (adapted from Raphael & Au, 2005)

Reading Cycle	QAR	Comprehension Strategies	Questions
Before Reading	On My Own	Activating prior Knowledge	From the title, what do I already know that can connect me to the text?
	Author and Me	Predicting and Visualizing	From the title or illustrations, what might this text be about?
During Reading	Author and Me	Making simple and complex inferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think will happen next? • How would I describe the mood of the story and why is this important?
	Right There	Scanning to locate information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the main character? • What are some words that describe the setting?
	Think and Search	Summarizing, clarifying, and making simple inferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the problem and how is it resolved? • What are the important events? • What role do the characters play in the story?
After Reading	Author and Me	Distinguishing fact and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author's message? • How well does the author make his argument?
	Think and Search	Identifying Important information	Find evidence in the text to support an argument.

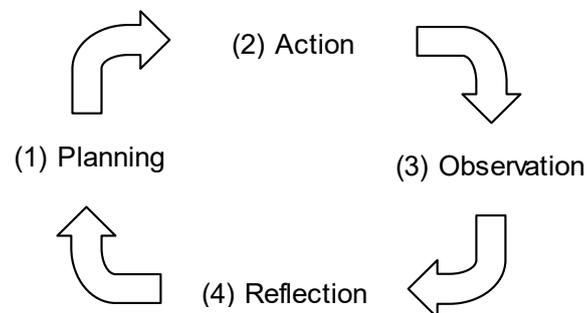
METHOD

This study is basically designed to improve the students' reading comprehension, especially in helping them answer the questions to determine the topic, main idea, and supporting ideas of the text in the Basic Reading course. The subject of the research is the 2F class students of the English Education Study Program of Mahasaraswati Denpasar University in the academic year 2016/2017. There were 39 students altogether.

The research design is a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) by adapting the Kemmis and Mc Taggart models of research design through a cyclical process by adding the preliminary study before setting up the planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting in a cycle, (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, in Koshy, 2005:4).

It is a cyclic process which consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The cyclic process of the study could be figured out as the following figure.

Figure 1 Classroom Action Research Cycle



Based on the figure 1, the procedure of the study was started with planning. The planning was done to prepare the things that were needed to conduct all of the steps in each action and instruments needed in collecting the data. The researcher prepared four preparations in planning stages that include (1) preparing the cure of the students' problem in reading comprehension, (2) preparing the material that matched the application of QAR and potentially improve students' reading comprehension, (3) setting up the teaching scenario that was used in every cycle, and (4) preparing the entire research instrument during the cycle. There were three instruments which were used in this study; those were the tests which were used in pre-test and post-test for each cycle, researcher's diary, and questionnaires.

The second step is action. In this stage, the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy was implemented in a form of teaching scenario. The stages that were done in the classroom in every cycle can be explained as follows: (1) introducing the QAR strategy (2) creating QAR questions from small sections of text (not longer than five sentences) for each of the four levels, (3) giving the students sample questions to answer in small groups and identify which of the QAR levels they used, and (4) having students work individually on questions from longer passages and getting students to examine the types of questions in their textbooks.

Then, observation is conducted in order to observe the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Observation was carried out to see whether the implementation of QAR could improve the students' reading comprehension.

The last step was reflection. It was done at the end of each cycle. The reflection came from the result of observation that showed the weakness and the strength of the action. The result of post-test was compared with the result of the pre-test in order to know whether the students gained improvement in their reading comprehension. The result of the researcher's diary and the

questionnaire was used to know the students' response toward the activity that was done during the action.

There were two kinds of data obtained in this study. They were quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data was obtained from the researcher's diary and questionnaire. Meanwhile, the quantitative data was obtained from the rubric scoring of the students' reading comprehension. The obtained data was analyzed descriptively. The students' improvement was analyzed from the mean score gained by every group that was established after pre-test had been administrated.

The data that was found in each cycle was compared to the data on pre-test. It was done to know the students' improvement in their reading comprehension. The research could be said successful if 100% of the students reached the minimum score, that was 70 (as the criteria of success) and they were active during the teaching and learning process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research was done in 2F class of English Education Study Program in two cycles. Lesson plan in each cycle focused on improving students' reading comprehension by using Question-Answer Relationships (QAR). The material was based on the learning contract that had been prepared.

In cycle one, teaching learning activity started with greeting. Then teacher gave the students a text to read. After that he did brainstorming by asking the students the topic of the text. He asked the students to read the text quickly and asked if there were some difficult words. He divided the students into group of four and explained how to use QAR in answering the questions. Then he asked them to practice differentiating the kinds of questions using QAR, and then used it to answer the questions. He approached the groups one by one. Finally the lesson closed by reviewing the material given.

There were two weaknesses in cycle one: students' lack of vocabulary and the problem in identifying "Think and Search" and "Author and Me". It was obvious that the main problem was the vocabulary. Therefore in cycle two, the step in delivering material in class was the same as cycle one. However, the researcher focused more on vocabulary and group discussion.

Based on the result of the observation and the test from cycle one and two, it could be concluded that the students' reading comprehension were increasing. They could comprehend the indicators of reading by using QAR, such as finding main idea, finding explicit information, finding implicit information, and guessing information from the text.

The research finding showed two main points: improvement in students' reading comprehension and improvement in class situation. The findings of the study showed that the use of QAR improved students' reading comprehension. Their ability improved from cycle to cycle. It could be seen through the improvement of all reading aspects or indicators: finding main idea, implicit information, and explicit information and guess information from the text. The students' ability in comprehending the given text improved because they were taught to read and answer the questions in an effective way.

In addition, QAR can help the reader become efficient in reading. *First*, QAR "In My Head: On My Own" helped them to build the information of the reading topic. The researcher asked the students several questions which arouse their interest in knowing more about the text. *Second*, QAR "In the Book: Right There" helped the students to answer the explicit question effectively. The questions which used this strategy are WH-questions, such as What, Where, When, and Who. *Third*, QAR "In the Book: Think and Search" helped the students to find the main idea and implicit

information. The students had to think the answer and then searched the answer in the text by using scanning and skimming technique, since the answers were in the text. However, the details necessary to answer the questions were in more than one location, so the students needed to summarize it. This question required the students to think about idea and information in the passage, whether they are related to each other or not. Therefore, the students have to “think and search” throughout the text and would need to look back at the passage, find the information and then think about how the ideas fit together.

Fourth, QAR helped the students in guessing information. The students guessed the answer by collecting the clue and information in the text. “Author and Me” questions required the students to use ideas and information that were not stated directly in the passage to answer the questions. The students had to analyse some aspects of the text to get the meaning. These questions were based on information provided in the text. However, the students needed to relate it to their own knowledge and experience. This finding is supported by the result of the pre-test and post-test 2, that the students’ average scores of each indicator improved. The mean score between the pre-test and post-test in cycle 1 improves from 50.73 to 65.8. Then it improved in post-test in cycle 2 to 72.68.

Regarding the improvement of class situation, the researcher used smart phone in brainstorming stage to engage the students before he explained QAR. He asked the students to surf on Google about the text that they were interested in. The assumption was when the students read their favorite text, it would make them eager to get the information in the text. Besides, using smart phone to get the text that they like in brainstorming led them into a more autonomous learning.

QAR required the students to change their way of thinking. It seemed difficult at first, but eventually it could optimize the students’ time in answering the question and more importantly, in understanding the text. The main problem of the students was that seemed to read the text, but they did not know the content of what they read. They could not get information from such a text. The researcher used group discussion in applying QAR. It was intended to help the students in sharing and discussing their difficulties in understanding QAR to their friends in a group. Moreover, he could control the students’ discussion by explaining them the strategy directly from one group to the other.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that teaching reading by using Question Answer Relationships (QAR) could improve EFL students’ reading comprehension. The students’ reading comprehension improved from the pre-test to post-test. Additionally, the students seemed to be more autonomous and actively involved in the reading class.

Furthermore, this study was subject to the following limitation. The researcher had an access to a limited number of sophomore EFL students in second semester. It was only for one class that was 2F class of English Education Study Program. It means that the findings might not be generalized to other contexts or to a larger scope. So, the result of this study can be used as a reference for other researchers to do some research working in different contexts and on a large number of participants.

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