



The Effectiveness of QAR Strategy in Improving Junior High School Learners' Reading Comprehension: A Lesson of Deep Reading Processes

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for students, yet many face challenges due to limited vocabulary and ineffective reading strategies. This study investigates the effectiveness of the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy in enhancing reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 15 Sigi. Utilizing a quasi-experimental design, the research involved an experimental group receiving QAR-based instruction and a control group following conventional methods. Data were gathered through pre-tests and post-tests and analyzed using SPSS version 22. The results revealed that the experimental group achieved a significantly higher post-test mean score (69.57) compared to the control group (58.83), with an independent sample t-test value of 0.018 ($p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that the QAR strategy effectively improves reading comprehension by assisting students in categorizing and responding to questions more accurately. The strategy not only enhances comprehension but also fosters critical thinking and increases student engagement during reading activities. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to incorporate the QAR strategy into their reading instruction to promote deeper understanding and improve academic outcomes. By integrating QAR, educators can support students in developing more effective reading strategies, ultimately leading to improved literacy skills and learning success.

Keywords: Question-answer Strategy; Reading strategies; Deep reading process; Reading Comprehension

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental language skill essential for students to acquire knowledge and expand their understanding of the world (Alfatihah & Tyas, 2022; Asrimawati et al., 2024). Reading contributes to the development of a strong linguistic foundation, which enables students to express their ideas effectively in both oral and written forms (Rajabi, 2009; Aynalem & Tesmand, 2023). Reading comprehension, which involves processing, interpreting, and making connections between text and prior knowledge, is a critical component of this process. Li & Wilhelm (2008) assert that effective reading comprehension requires the use of appropriate and efficient strategies, as students who lack these strategies often struggle to extract essential information from texts. However, despite its importance, reading comprehension remains a significant challenge for many students, particularly in Indonesia.

Several reading comprehension issues have been observed among Indonesian students, particularly at the junior secondary level. Preliminary research conducted at Junior high schools revealed that many students face difficulties in understanding texts

effectively (Alianata & Miftakh, 2021; Herwanis et al., 2021). One prevalent issue is the inability to identify main ideas and distinguish them from supporting details. Many students struggle to extract specific information, often relying heavily on dictionaries to grasp the meanings of unfamiliar words. This dependence on external aids not only slows down the reading process but also hampers students' ability to develop independent comprehension skills (Firdaus & Mayasari, 2022; Muflaha et al., 2024). Additionally, students often find it challenging to interpret implicit meanings and make inferences from the text. The Kurikulum Merdeka (2022) emphasizes the importance of developing deep comprehension skills, such as the ability to analyze text structures and adapt to various types of texts. However, the findings at Junior high schools suggest that many students are not meeting these expectations. This underscores the need for structured and effective reading strategies that can support students in overcoming these challenges and improving their comprehension skills.

One promising strategy to enhance reading comprehension is the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy, developed by Raphael (1986). The QAR strategy categorizes questions into types and assists students in recognizing the relationship between questions and their corresponding answers. It guides learners in finding relevant information and making logical inferences based on textual evidence. The QAR framework consists of two primary categories: "In the Book" questions, which require students to locate explicit information within the text, and "In My Head" questions, which encourage students to draw inferences and connect ideas to their prior knowledge. This structured approach helps students understand where to find answers and how to think critically about the text.

Although previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of the QAR strategy in improving reading comprehension, its application in junior high schools in Indonesia remains underexplored. Most existing studies on reading comprehension strategies in the Indonesian context have focused on general reading techniques, such as skimming, scanning, and summarizing. However, these approaches often lack the structured framework necessary to guide students systematically through the comprehension process. The QAR strategy, with its clear categorization of questions and answers, provides a more structured and effective framework for enhancing comprehension skills. Given the specific challenges faced by students at SMP Negeri 15 Sigi, this study seeks to fill the research gap by investigating the effectiveness of the QAR strategy in improving reading comprehension among junior secondary school students in Indonesia.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the practical implementation of the QAR strategy within the Indonesian junior secondary school context. While the QAR strategy has been extensively researched in other educational settings, limited studies have examined its effectiveness in Indonesian classrooms, particularly in rural or semi-urban areas such as Sigi. Additionally, this study contributes new insights by exploring not only the impact of the QAR strategy on comprehension outcomes but also the specific challenges students encounter when applying the strategy. By identifying these challenges, the research provides valuable recommendations for educators on how to adapt and optimize the QAR strategy to better suit the needs of Indonesian students.

Furthermore, this study is significant because it aligns with the objectives of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which advocates for the development of critical thinking and deep comprehension skills among students. By investigating a structured approach to reading comprehension, the study contributes to the broader goal of enhancing educational quality and supporting curriculum implementation. It also addresses the pressing issue of low reading proficiency among Indonesian students, offering evidence-based strategies that can be incorporated into teaching practices to improve learning outcomes.

This study endeavors to provide a comprehensive analysis of the QAR strategy's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at Junior

high schools. By examining both the outcomes and challenges associated with the strategy, the research seeks to offer practical recommendations for educators and contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective reading comprehension strategies in the Indonesian educational context. The findings are expected to have significant implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and classroom practices, ultimately contributing to the improvement of reading comprehension skills among junior secondary school students in Indonesia.

To address this gap, the study sets out to explore the impact of the QAR strategy on the reading comprehension abilities of eighth-grade students at Junior high schools. Specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions: How does the QAR strategy affect students' reading comprehension ability? What challenges do students face when using the QAR strategy?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design, which involved the formation of two distinct groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received reading instruction that incorporated the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy, a structured approach aimed at enhancing students' comprehension by guiding them in identifying and categorizing questions and corresponding answers based on text content and prior knowledge. The control group, on the other hand, followed conventional reading instruction methods commonly used in the school curriculum, without the inclusion of the QAR strategy. The rationale behind selecting a quasi-experimental design was to enable a comparative analysis of reading comprehension outcomes between the two groups, thereby evaluating the effectiveness of the QAR strategy.

This research design was particularly suitable because it facilitated an objective assessment of the instructional intervention while acknowledging the natural classroom setting, where random assignment of participants was not feasible. By comparing pre-test and post-test scores, the study aimed to determine whether the QAR strategy led to significant improvements in reading comprehension. Additionally, the design allowed for the identification of differences in how each group processed and understood textual information. Ultimately, this approach provided robust and practical insights into the role of structured reading strategies in enhancing students' comprehension skills.

Research Participants

The participants in this study were eighth-grade students from SMP Negeri 15 Sigi, selected using a purposive sampling technique. This sampling method was chosen to ensure that the selected participants met specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives, particularly regarding their reading comprehension levels. To ensure fairness and comparability between the experimental and control groups, an initial reading test was administered to assess students' baseline reading abilities. This assessment aimed to categorize students according to their reading proficiency and ensure that both groups had relatively similar abilities prior to the intervention. By doing so, the study minimized potential biases and ensured that any observed differences in outcomes could be attributed more confidently to the QAR strategy intervention.

A total of 57 students participated in the research, with 30 students assigned to the experimental group and 27 to the control group. The participants were aged between 13 and 14 years, representing the typical age range of eighth-grade students. The initial test results indicated that students exhibited varying levels of reading proficiency, ranging from low to moderate. This diversity in skill levels provided a realistic representation of the

student population and allowed for a comprehensive examination of how the QAR strategy could benefit learners with different reading capabilities.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument utilized in this study was a reading comprehension test, which was administered twice—once as a pre-test and again as a post-test. This approach was designed to measure students' reading comprehension levels before and after the implementation of the QAR strategy, allowing for an effective assessment of the strategy's impact. The test was constructed to align with the students' school curriculum and focused on narrative texts to ensure relevance and familiarity. It comprised a balanced set of 10 multiple-choice questions and 10 essay questions, offering a comprehensive evaluation of students' comprehension skills.

The multiple-choice questions were crafted to assess students' ability to identify explicit information and understand basic elements of the narrative text. For instance, a sample question might ask, "What is the main idea of the first paragraph?" with answer choices including the introduction of the main character, a conflict between characters, the setting of the story, or the resolution of the problem. This type of question encouraged students to focus on key information and demonstrate their understanding of the text's main points. In contrast, the essay questions were designed to evaluate higher-order thinking skills, such as interpretation, inference, and the ability to connect ideas within the text. An example of an essay question is, "How did the main character's actions change the outcome of the story? Give examples from the text to support your answer." This question required students to not only recall information but also analyze the character's behavior and its impact on the narrative's progression. By including both question types, the test provided a comprehensive measure of students' reading comprehension, assessing both their ability to recall factual details and their capacity to engage in deeper, analytical thinking about the text.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the reading comprehension tests were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. This software was selected for its comprehensive statistical analysis capabilities, ensuring accurate and reliable results. The initial step of the analysis involved applying descriptive statistics to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations for both the experimental and control groups. The mean scores provided an overview of the overall performance of each group, while the standard deviations indicated the variability of students' scores within each group. This descriptive analysis offered insights into the general trends and patterns in the students' reading comprehension achievements.

To further determine the effectiveness of the QAR strategy, an independent sample t-test was conducted. This statistical test was chosen because it is appropriate for comparing the means of two independent groups, in this case, the experimental group that received QAR-based instruction and the control group that followed conventional reading strategies. The t-test aimed to evaluate whether the differences observed in post-test scores between the two groups were statistically significant or occurred by chance. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered the threshold for statistical significance, indicating that the differences in scores could be attributed to the intervention. This analysis was crucial in confirming the positive impact of the QAR strategy on enhancing students' reading comprehension skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the results of the study, including students' reading comprehension scores from the pre-test and post-test, along with statistical analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 below shows the pre-test and post-test scores for both the experimental group and the control group

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

Kelas	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Improvement
post-eksperimental	23	54.43	69.57	+15.14
post-control	24	55.00	58.83	+3.83

To illustrate the differences more clearly, Figure 1 presents a visual comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores for both groups.

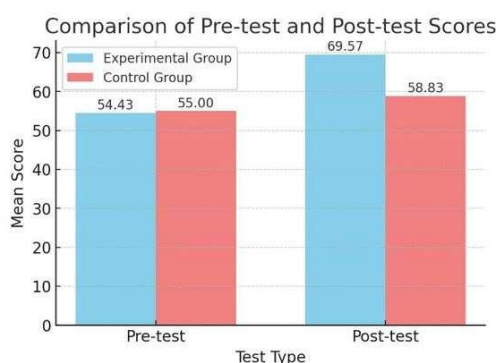


Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

From the figure, it is evident that the experimental group experienced a significantly higher improvement (15.14 points) compared to the control group (3.83 points). This suggests that the QAR strategy had a stronger impact on reading comprehension improvement than conventional methods.

Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Before proceeding with further statistical analysis, it was essential to perform normality and homogeneity tests to ensure that the data met the required assumptions for valid inferential statistics. The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, both of which are standard methods for assessing whether the data distribution aligns with a normal distribution. The results of these tests indicated that the data were normally distributed, as evidenced by p-values greater than 0.05. This finding confirmed that the data did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution, allowing for the use of parametric statistical tests in subsequent analysis.

In addition to the normality test, a homogeneity test was performed to determine whether the variances between the experimental and control groups were equal. Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variance was employed for this purpose, as it is a widely accepted method for assessing equality of variances across groups. The test results revealed a p-value of 0.472, which was greater than the 0.05 threshold. This indicated that the assumption of equal variances was met, ensuring the validity of conducting an independent sample t-test. Confirming the assumptions of normality and homogeneity was crucial to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the statistical analysis in determining the effectiveness of the QAR strategy.

Independent Sample T-test Results

To determine whether the improvement in reading comprehension was statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was conducted for the post-test scores. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent Sample

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Significance One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Hasil belajar	Equal variances assumed	.526	.472	2.159	45	.018	.036	10.732	4.970	.722	20.742
	Equal variances not assumed			2.153	43.711	.018	.037	10.732	4.984	.685	20.778

Since the p-value (0.018) is less than 0.05, this confirms that there is a statistically significant difference in reading comprehension improvement between the experimental and control groups. The students who were taught using the QAR strategy performed significantly better than those taught with conventional methods, proving its effectiveness in improving reading comprehension.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy is an effective approach for improving students' reading comprehension skills, particularly among junior high school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The experimental group, which received instruction utilizing the QAR strategy, demonstrated a significantly higher post-test score (69.57) compared to the control group, which achieved a post-test score of 58.83. This notable improvement underscores the QAR strategy's capacity to assist students in categorizing and locating answers more efficiently, leading to enhanced comprehension outcomes. By teaching students to distinguish between "In the Book" and "In My Head" questions, the QAR strategy enables learners to develop a more systematic approach to reading comprehension. This method encourages learners to focus on understanding the text, drawing logical conclusions, and connecting new information with prior knowledge.

The results of this study align with findings by Nurhayati et al. (2019), who demonstrated that the QAR strategy significantly enhances students' ability to identify, process, and interpret textual information. Their research indicated that students utilizing the QAR approach outperformed those relying on conventional reading strategies in comprehension assessments. This highlights the QAR strategy's role in encouraging students to engage more deeply with the text by fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. Similarly, Rahman & Sari (2021) found that the implementation of the QAR strategy positively influenced students' engagement with reading materials, as well as their accuracy in answering comprehension questions. Their study noted that by guiding students in differentiating between explicit and implicit information, the QAR strategy helped students approach reading tasks with greater clarity and confidence.

Furthermore, a recent study by Sinurat et al. (2024) emphasized that the QAR strategy not only improves reading comprehension but also fosters the development of students' critical thinking skills. The current research supports this assertion, observing that

students in the experimental group demonstrated a deeper understanding of textual content and adopted a more structured approach to answering comprehension questions. This structured approach enabled students to better analyze narrative structures, identify key information, and interpret underlying meanings within texts. Additionally, Afriani et al. (2020) argued that the QAR strategy promotes active reading, encouraging students to move beyond surface-level comprehension toward deeper textual analysis. This deeper engagement is particularly crucial for EFL learners, as it enhances their ability to navigate complex texts and apply critical thinking to unfamiliar content. Such analytical skills not only improve reading proficiency but also contribute to overall academic success.

Despite the overall positive outcomes, the implementation of the QAR strategy presented several challenges. One of the primary difficulties encountered was students' initial confusion in distinguishing between different types of QAR questions. This challenge aligns with findings by Bautista (2022), who noted that students often require explicit instruction and consistent modeling to fully grasp the distinctions between "Right There," "Think and Search," "Author and Me," and "On My Own" question types. During the initial stages of instruction, some students struggled to categorize questions correctly, leading to confusion and inaccurate answers. To overcome this challenge, the researcher provided step-by-step guidance, introduced visual aids, and facilitated additional practice sessions. This structured approach gradually improved students' understanding and enabled them to apply the QAR framework more effectively.

Another significant challenge was related to time management. Some students, particularly those with lower reading proficiency, required longer periods to locate relevant information and formulate accurate answers. This issue is consistent with the findings of Anderson & Lerer (2023), who recommended training students in time-efficient reading strategies. In response, the researcher introduced scanning techniques, guided students to identify key textual markers, and encouraged the use of skimming strategies to enhance information retrieval (Rafi et al., 2021; Suci et al., 2023). This approach not only improved students' efficiency in locating answers but also reduced their cognitive load, allowing them to focus on interpreting and analyzing the text.

Vocabulary limitations also emerged as a considerable obstacle, particularly for EFL learners who struggled with unfamiliar words and complex sentence structures. Ariawan & Winoto (2021) highlighted the significance of integrating vocabulary-building activities alongside comprehension strategies like QAR. To address this challenge, the researcher incorporated pre-reading vocabulary exercises, focusing on key terms likely to appear in the reading texts. Contextual inference strategies were also introduced, enabling students to deduce word meanings based on surrounding information (Zano, 2022). These approaches empowered students to engage with texts more confidently and contributed to improved comprehension outcomes. By enhancing vocabulary knowledge, students were better equipped to analyze and interpret texts without excessive reliance on dictionaries, thereby improving reading fluency and comprehension accuracy.

Given these findings, it is strongly recommended that educators integrate the QAR strategy into reading instruction to enhance students' comprehension skills. Effective implementation of the strategy involves several key components. First, it is essential to explicitly teach the types of QAR questions through guided modeling and practice sessions, ensuring that students clearly understand the differences between question types. This helps students develop a systematic approach to categorizing and answering questions. Second, structured reading exercises should be incorporated, gradually increasing in complexity to challenge students and promote deeper analytical thinking. Third, vocabulary instruction should be integrated to support students with limited word knowledge. Pre-reading exercises, contextual guessing strategies, and post-reading discussions can enhance students' lexical understanding and improve overall

comprehension. Finally, encouraging independent and collaborative reading activities fosters critical thinking, enhances engagement, and develops students' metacognitive skills.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce the efficacy and adaptability of the QAR strategy in improving reading comprehension for junior high school EFL learners. The strategy provides a structured framework that helps students develop essential reading skills, promotes active engagement with texts, and encourages deeper analysis of content. By addressing potential challenges—such as difficulties in question categorization, time management issues, and vocabulary limitations—educators can optimize the implementation of the QAR strategy and maximize its impact on student learning outcomes (Herwanis et al., 2021; Mustiah et al., 2024). Additionally, the integration of QAR into reading instruction offers long-term benefits, fostering transferable skills that extend beyond reading comprehension and into other academic domains.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and instructional practices. In terms of curriculum design, incorporating the QAR strategy can promote more structured and engaging reading activities that align with national education standards and improve literacy outcomes. For teacher training, it is crucial to equip educators with the skills and strategies necessary for effective QAR instruction, including techniques for modeling, guiding practice, and providing feedback. Instructional practices should also emphasize flexibility, allowing educators to adapt the QAR framework to suit diverse learning contexts and student needs.

In conclusion, the QAR strategy offers an effective and adaptable approach to enhancing reading comprehension among EFL learners in junior high schools. Its structured framework not only improves comprehension outcomes but also fosters critical thinking, analytical skills, and deeper engagement with texts. By addressing potential challenges and integrating supportive teaching methods, educators can help students develop stronger analytical skills, enhance their engagement with texts, and improve overall reading proficiency. The findings of this study highlight the importance of strategic reading instruction and underscore the value of the QAR strategy in fostering academic success and lifelong learning skills for students in diverse educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reaffirm the effectiveness of the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy as an impactful approach for enhancing reading comprehension skills, particularly among junior high school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The significant improvement in the post-test scores of the experimental group, compared to the control group, underscores the QAR strategy's capacity to aid learners in categorizing and locating answers more efficiently. By encouraging students to differentiate between "In the Book" and "In My Head" questions, the strategy fosters systematic thinking and facilitates deeper comprehension. This method not only assists students in interpreting explicit information but also enhances their ability to infer meaning and connect new information with prior knowledge. The positive alignment with previous research, such as studies by Nurhayati et al. (2019) and Rahman & Sari (2021), further validates the QAR strategy's effectiveness in fostering engagement and comprehension accuracy. Additionally, the strategy's potential to cultivate critical thinking, as emphasized by Sinurat et al. (2024) and Afriani et al. (2020), signifies its relevance in developing higher-order thinking skills that extend beyond basic comprehension. Despite the challenges encountered—such as initial confusion regarding question types, time management difficulties, and vocabulary limitations—the overall positive outcomes highlight the strategy's adaptability and its capacity to meet diverse learning needs when effectively implemented.

Given the significance of these findings, the integration of the QAR strategy into reading instruction is highly recommended to bolster students' comprehension abilities. To maximize its effectiveness, educators should adopt a structured approach to teaching QAR, starting with explicit instruction on the different question types and providing ample opportunities for guided practice. Introducing gradual reading exercises of increasing complexity and integrating targeted vocabulary instruction are essential to support students with varying levels of proficiency. Addressing time management challenges through strategic reading techniques, such as scanning and skimming, can further enhance students' efficiency and confidence when engaging with texts. Additionally, fostering collaborative and independent reading activities will not only deepen students' engagement but also cultivate their critical thinking and metacognitive skills. The QAR strategy's long-term benefits, including its capacity to develop transferable analytical skills, make it a valuable addition to reading instruction. These skills are instrumental in helping students navigate complex reading materials, contributing to academic success across various disciplines. Moreover, the findings carry significant implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and instructional design. By incorporating the QAR strategy into educational frameworks, educators can create more engaging and effective learning experiences, ultimately enhancing literacy outcomes and supporting students' lifelong learning journeys. In conclusion, the QAR strategy stands out as a robust instructional approach that equips students with essential reading and analytical skills, fostering both academic proficiency and cognitive development in diverse educational contexts.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the application and effectiveness of the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, it is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding and mastery of the QAR strategy to integrate it effectively into teaching practices. Consistent implementation of the QAR strategy can not only enhance students' reading comprehension but also foster active participation and critical thinking. Teachers are encouraged to provide explicit instruction on the different types of QAR questions and to use guided modeling to help students distinguish between question types.

For students, actively engaging with the QAR strategy is crucial to improving their reading comprehension skills. Students are encouraged to practice identifying different types of questions and applying effective methods to locate answers within texts. Regular practice will not only enhance their comprehension but also promote critical thinking and greater independence in processing information. For future researchers, this study serves as a foundation for further exploration of the QAR strategy's potential in enhancing reading comprehension. Future studies could investigate the strategy's application across different student demographics, such as learners of varying ages, language proficiencies, or educational backgrounds. Research could also explore the long-term effects of consistent QAR strategy use on students' reading comprehension abilities. Additionally, combining the QAR strategy with other instructional approaches, such as metacognitive or collaborative strategies, could be examined to evaluate their joint effectiveness in enhancing comprehension outcomes.

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