SCAFFOLDING STUDENTS' INTERACTION WITH TEXTS USING QAR STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT. The teaching of reading as a foreign language (EFL reading) in Indonesia aims at enabling students to read and comprehend texts and other materials written in English. Due to the importance and lack of reading skills of students, this study was 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 findings of the research, taken at Kanjuruhan University of Malang, showed that QAR strategy was worthy to improve the students' reading skills, especially critical and scanning skills, and activate **students to participate in the teaching-learning process of reading.**

Key Words: QAR strategy, reading comprehension skills.

The teaching-learning of English is expected to enable students to use English as a means of communication both in written and spoken forms. Accordingly, students should master the four skills of English; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In the meantime, for students of universities or colleges, proficiency in English particularly in reading skills is generally assumed to be essential for a successful study due to the reason that most of textbooks for a variety of subjects as well as reading materials available in universities or colleges are mostly written in English language. Meanwhile, the common habits of the lecturers of reading classes in the teaching and learning process are the facts that the lecturers read the texts first once or twice, and then they ask a student to read the text aloud. Then the lecturers tend to explain some clues or difficult words found in the texts and prepare some questions relate to the contents of the texts in order to increase the students' comprehension. The strategy applied in the reading class does not encour-age the students to participate actively in the teaching and learning process. As a result, the students usually do not response well to the lecturers' questions since they get difficulties to comprehend the texts and the essences of the questions.

Due to the importance of reading skills and lack of reading comprehension of the students, teachers need to apply some different methods in teaching reading that bring the students to the amazing atmosphere of teaching learning process. Furthermore, Burns et al. (1995:6) remind teachers to motivate the students that reading is a means of enjoyment, to fulfill daily task and reading may also become the media to obtain information. To overcome the problems above, it is important to apply some strategies in the teaching-learning process to help the students comprehend the texts better. The strategy proposed in this article is Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy. This strategy refers to a series of instructional activities to help students understand different levels of question-

ing and the relationship between questions and answers.

Based on the background of the study, the problem question of the study is "*How can Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy improve the reading comprehension skills of the students of Kanjuruhan University?*" It aims at improving the reading comprehension skills of the students of Kanjuruhan University through the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy.

The Nature of Reading Comprehension

Reading is one of the language skills that plays an important role in the society. Reading may be described in many ways by different experts yet there are points of general agreement among reading experts. One such point is that comprehension is the purpose of reading. Reading can be concluded as an activity that aims primarily at understanding or constructing meaning from the written texts. Realizing the importance of reading ability in the present time, it is a must that students should have avid reading as reading will lead them to get so many kinds of information and knowledge. In this activity, reading deals with decoding and the comprehension process in which a reader tries to understand what a writer has put in a text. In the activity, the reader actively has to relate his or her prior knowledge or schemata to comprehend the text better.

The Taxonomy of Reading

Interest in formulating taxonomy of educational objectives has been followed by the formulation of taxonomies of comprehension skills (Cahyono, 1992:74). That is why, different experts try to formulate the levels of comprehension in different terms. The taxonomy of comprehension skills can be beneficial for teachers to formulate different questions. Cahyono (1992:74) adds that among the proposed taxonomies, Barrett's (Anderson and Pearson, 1984) is considered the best. The taxonomy divides the questions into three main

levels of complexity: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluational comprehension.

Literal Comprehension

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

This level of comprehension is usually a prerequisite for higher level comprehension. Furthermore, this level consists of the following written directions, recognizing details, and sequences. Literal comprehension also deals with identification and recall of stated ideas and details. Most of the experts such as Barrett and Stevick agree to use the term 'literal comprehension' to show the basic comprehension.

Inferential Comprehension

Inferential (interpretative) reading is reading between the lines or making inferences that requires students to derive ideas that are implied rather than directly stated (Burns et al., 1996:263). Besides, Roe et al. (1995:100) mention that interpretative reading is concerned with deeper meanings and readers must relate facts, generalizations, definitions, ideas, cause-effect relationships that are not directly stated. The readers need to comprehend the texts better in order to be able to reach interpretative reading comprehension.

Evaluational Comprehension

Third level of comprehension is evaluational comprehension that is proposed by Barrett. This level of comprehension requires the students to compare information and ideas in the text with material presented by the instructor or other authorities, and with the students' own knowledge and experience, in order to form judgments of various kinds (Cahyono, 1992:75). Meanwhile, Bloom identifies the level of analysis in this category.

Meanwhile, another term that is similar to evaluational comprehension is called environmental comprehension that is proposed by Stevick (Fachrurrazy, 2008:55). This level also requires the students to apply interactive model of reading process to cope with this category of comprehension. Meanwhile, Bloom identifies the level of application in this category. On the other hand, Burn et al propose the third level of comprehension that is called critical reading and creative reading for the fourth (highest) level.

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

Meanwhile, creative reading requires the readers to read beyond the lines. This level meets evaluation level of Bloom's taxonomy. Evaluation is making judgment about the value of ideas or materials. Furthermore, according to Stevick, this level is called environmental comprehension (Fachrurrazy, 2008:55). That is why, this level requires readers to think as they read and requires them to use their imagination (Burns et al., 1996:293). Creative readers are able to view their experi-

ences in different ways. The readers need to maximize their schemata by combining their prior knowledge with some ideas taken from the text to produce a new concept or idea. This skill deals with predicting outcomes, making visualization, and solving problems. Among the proposed taxonomies of reading above, this study applies QAR taxonomy based on some reasons: QAR strategy tries to help the readers to identify different levels of questions and how the questions and answers relate to each other.

Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)

"No comprehension activity has a longer or more pervasive tradition than asking students questions about their reading, whether this occurs before, during, or after reading" (Duke and Pearson in Coe and Glass, 2005). In line with this activity, 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. The strategy proposed to overcome the problems of students in reading comprehension subject is QAR. It stands for Question-Answer Relationship.

The Essence of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy

The Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy helps students understand four different levels of questioning and the relationships between questions and answers. This strategy allows students to understand their thinking processes and develop their metacognitive abilities based on four levels of questions – Right There, Think and

Search, The Author and Me, and On My Own – to indicate how the question is related to the text.

a. Right There! (The answer is found in the

text. The words in the questions can usually be found in the same sentence with the answer). It requires students to go back to the passage and find the correct information to answer the questions as the answers are stated on the text. "These are sometimes called literal questions because the correct answer can be found somewhere in the text" (Ladewig, online). Some questions of this level include these words, "According to the passage...", "How many...", "Who is...", "What is ...".

b. Think and Search! (The answer is in the text, but the words are probably not in the same sentence. Read the text; look for ideas that can be put together, and think about what the author is saying). "Think and Search" questions require students to think how ideas or information in the passage relate to each other. Students need to look back at the passage, find the information that the questions refer to, and then think about how the information or ideas fit together (Ladewig, online). So, this level needs literal comprehension but it is higher than Right There. Some questions of "Think and Search" include these words, "The main idea of the passage...", "What caused...", "Compare/contrast...".

c. The *Author* and Me! (The author provides ideas and makes students think, but connections to students' knowledge are needed to answer the question). "The Author and Me" questions require students to use ideas and information that is not stated directly in the passage to answer the questions. These questions require the students to think about what they have read and formulate their own ideas or opinions. This level needs interpretative (inferential) and critical comprehension or they should apply reading between the lines level. Such questions include in this type are "How can you conclude...?", "The passage suggests...", "How do you know...?"

d. On My Own! (Students must apply their own knowledge and what has been learned to answer the question). The students should master creative or evaluational comprehension to answer questions of this level. Thus, they will apply reading beyond the lines level. "On My Own" questions can be answered using students' background knowledge on a topic. Such questions of this type are: "In your opinion...", "Based on your experience...", "Have you ever...?".

Figure 1. The Categorization of QAR
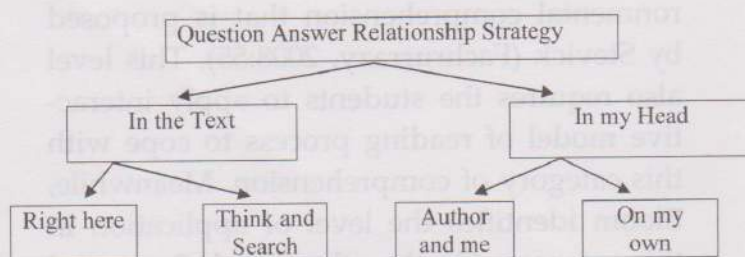
METHOD

The design of this research is a collaborative classroom action research (CAR). According to Latief (2008:22), CAR is a means to develop the teachers' technique in teaching and to improve the students' achievement. 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 procedures of this research were adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1992:5) which consist of consists of four steps as follows; (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting.

Setting and Subjects of the Research

The research is conducted at the English Department of FKIP Kanjuruhan University located, at Jl. Sudanco Supriadi 48 Malang. This department has 8 parallel classes in the academic year 2009/2010 in which each class consists of approximately 30 students. The subjects of the research are the English

Department students of the second semester in this institution who join Reading Comprehension II class A in the academic year 2009/2010 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 Instruments of the Research

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

Observation, as stated by Thomas (2003:60), is gathering information by watching and / or listening to events, then recording what occurred. In this study, the data collected by using observation instrument are the students' activities in the teaching-learning process. The aspects of the students' activities which are observed deal with their activities at every stage of the reading comprehension. The observation is made to see the students' involvement in carrying out the expected activities during the implementation stage. The observation checklist is to record and determine the level of the students' participation by giving a mark (V) on provided qualifications.

Field notes is an instrument used to record the factual data which might not be covered in observation checklist such as the phenomena and essential features that occurred in the classroom activities. It includes the setting of the class, the class atmosphere, the interaction between the teacher and the students, and in-teraction among the students. The instrument also covers good points and things that need to be improved by the teacher for better implementation of the next meeting.

The subjective test in the form of short answers is conducted to measure the students' comprehension of the reading text given at the end of a cycle. The test is adapted from an article on More Reading Power which is relevant to the students' needs and levels. The items of the subjective tests are in the form of WH-questions based on the consideration that the subjective tests are available to measure the students' level of comprehension.

The reflection is the process of judgment towards the effects of an action. In this step, the students' activities during the teaching learning process using QAR strategy and reading achievements are analyzed. It is intended to see how the strategy helps the students solve the problems in comprehending the texts given by the teacher-researcher. This step also reflects whether the cycles has been reached successfully or not by comparing the data gained by the researcher and the collaborator with the criteria of success.

FINDINGS

The implementation of QAR strategy was done in two cycles with four meetings for Cycle 1 and three meetings for Cycle 2. The last meeting of each cycle was conducted to test the reading comprehension skills of the students. The research findings presented in this section comprised the steps in conducting Reading Comprehension II subject using QAR strategy and the students' active participation during the class.

Some findings of the research revealed that the implementation of Question-Answer Relationship strategy could improve both the students' skills in comprehending the texts given and the students' participation in teaching-learning process (see table below).

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 at least 70	59.00	71.33	74.33
2.	75 % of the students gain score at least 70	23.33%	56.67%	80.00%
3.	75 % of the numbers of the students are actively involved during the teaching learning process of Reading Comprehension	-	87.18%	87.42%

Based on the results of the data analysis, it was shown that QAR strategy was successful to improve the reading comprehension skills of the students of Kanjuruhan University Malang. The implementation of the strategy helped the students to identify different levels of questions and relationship between questions and answers. In addition, the implementation of QAR strategy in reading comprehension was beneficial to improve the students' reading skills.

DISCUSSION

The students' reading skills that were improved as the results of the implementation of QAR strategy basically were two skills: critical reading and scanning. Critical reading means that they understood to criticize different levels of questions. Students were asked to indicate whether the information they used to answer questions about the text was textually explicit questions that were directly stated in the text, textually implicit questions that were implied in the text, or questions that needed entirely ideas from the students' own background or schemata.

Meanwhile, scanning refers to quick reading to locate specific information. Students got familiar with different levels of questions and could categorize comprehension questions according to where they got the information they needed to answer each question. Beside the reading skills above, the implementation of the strategy also helped students refute the common misconception held by students that the text told all or provided all answers to questions of texts. In a nutshell, the improvement of the skills helped students improve their comprehension as reflected on the increase on the scores that students could obtain and active participation.

CONCLUSION

There are many considerations in teaching reading. What we have presented in the preceding section is a set of the results of the study conducted at university level. Realizing the important of reading skills and the difficulties faced by students in comprehending texts, it is strongly suggested to apply QAR strategy since this strategy was proved to be able to help students comprehend texts better. The strategy was 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 and activating the students to participate in the teaching-learning process of reading.

QAR strategy includes the following steps: (1) dividing the class in groups of three (the class works in cooperative learning to help each other), (2) introducing the concept of QAR strategy using a short paragraph to determine two broad categories of information (In the Text and In My Head), (3) modeling and explaining each type of questions using a visual aid, (4) activating the students' schemata related to the text (using pictures and some questions), (5) asking the students to read the text silently, (6) asking each group to answer the questions based on the levels of questions (Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own), (7) asking the groups to show the answers, (8) determining the correct answers with the whole class, (9) Giving feedback (the teacher should pay attention not only on the correct answers and levels of questions but also the students mistakes on grammar, pronunciation, and diction), (10) giving conclusion of the benefits of QAR strategy (discussing the QAR technique and how it helps the students to better understand the text), and (11) implementing a test to have the students practice using QAR individually and independently.

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