Available at https://jeell.upjb.ac.id/index.php
P-ISSN 2356-5446
E-ISSN 2598-3059

Volume 11
No. 1, 2024
page 10-24

Article History:
Submitted:
08-09-2024
Accepted:
20-09-2024
Published:
02-10-2024

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION IN RECOUNT TEXT USING THE QUESTION-ANSWER RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

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URL: https://jeell.upjb.ac.id/index.php/files/article/view/6 DOI: https://doi.org/10.32682/174w4s49

Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy to improve Reading Comprehension of the recount text. Using a quasi-experimental design, this study involved 76 students from MTsN 3 Kediri. The experimental group consisted of 38 students from class VIII-G who were treated using the QAR strategy, while the other 38 students from class VIII-D were in the control group with the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) strategy. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to compare the effectiveness of the two strategies. The study results revealed that the Mean score for the experimental group was 75.79, whereas the control group scored 71.71 on average. The ANCOVA analysis indicated a significant value of 0.000, lower than the threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the QAR strategy was more successful in improving reading comprehension compared to the SSR strategy. Students taught using the QAR Strategy outperformed those taught using the SSR Strategy in comprehending recount texts.

Keyword: *Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy, Reading Comprehension, Recount Text, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) strategy*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki efektivitas Strategi *Question-Answer Relationship* (QAR) untuk meningkatkan Pemahaman Membaca teks *recount*. Dengan menggunakan desain *quasi-experimental*, penelitian ini melibatkan 76 siswa dari MTsN 3 Kediri. Kelompok eksperimen terdiri atas 38 siswa dari kelas VIII-G yang diberi perlakuan dengan menggunakan strategi QAR, sedangkan 38 siswa lainnya dari kelas VIII-D berada di kelompok kontrol dengan strategi Sustained Silent Reading

(SSR). Analisis Kovarian (ANCOVA) digunakan untuk membandingkan keefektifan kedua strategi tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata untuk kelompok eksperimen adalah 75,79, sedangkan kelompok kontrol memiliki nilai rata-rata 71,71. Analisis ANCOVA menunjukkan nilai signifikan sebesar 0,000, lebih rendah dari ambang batas 0,05, yang menunjukkan bahwa strategi QAR lebih berhasil dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca dibandingkan dengan strategi SSR. Siswa yang diajar menggunakan Strategi QAR mengungguli siswa yang diajar menggunakan Strategi SSR dalam memahami teks *recount*.

***Kata Kunci**: Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy, Reading Comprehension, Recount Text, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) strategy*

Introduction

Indonesia is grappling with a significant challenge in reading comprehension among its students (Sulistiyo, 2016). A study by Central Connecticut State University, which ranked countries by literacy, placed Indonesia near the bottom of the list, at 60 out of 61 Southeast Asian nations, in terms of reading enthusiasm (Miller & McKenna, 2016). This finding paints a stark picture of the country's reading culture, which is facing a critical downturn, particularly among young learners.

Mastering reading comprehension is a crucial aspect of language acquisition. According to Woolley (2011), reading comprehension involves gras, rather than just deciphering individual words or phrases. The ultimate objective is to accurately interpret the author's intended message. In achieving this, readers are deemed successful. However, for Indonesian language learners, while comprehending texts in their native language may pose little challenge, navigating English texts can be a more complex and daunting task (Setiyadi, 2016).

Despite efforts to improve, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia continue to struggle with comprehending English texts. Several key factors contribute to this issue, including insufficient vocabulary (Kurniarahman, 2023), low motivation to read, limited background knowledge of the subject matter, and inadequate learning strategies (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010). A significant obstacle is the learners' restricted vocabulary, which hinders their ability to grasp the meaning of the text and, consequently, respond accurately to questions posed by their teachers. It was consistently shown that a limited vocabulary is a major barrier to effective reading comprehension among

Indonesian EFL learners (Floris & Divina, 2009; Garcia-Castro, 2020; Sutarsyah, 2008).

In connection with this matter, it is essential that the teaching and learning environment be engaging in order to inspire students to enhance their reading comprehension skills. The implementation of the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy and the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) Strategy is expected to enhance reading comprehension. These strategies are designed to boost students' active participation in the reading process and aid in their understanding of the content within texts (Moreilon, 2007).

Raphael (1983) and Raphael and Au (2005) developed the QAR strategy to help students identify the source of questions. They categorized QAR into 4 elements: "Right There", "Think and Search", "Author and Me", and "On My Own". The "Right There" category involves questions that can be answered directly from the text, with the question and answer often found in the same sentence. In contrast, "Think and Search" requires readers to synthesize information from different parts of the text to find the answer. The "On My Own" requires readers to draw on their prior knowledge and experience to answer the question, as the answer is not explicitly stated in the text. Meanwhile, "Author and Me" requires readers to integrate their own knowledge with the author's message to form an answer.

Meanwhile, Hunt's (1970) SSR Strategy stated that students read silently for some time. Krashen (2006) also stated that schools typically allocate around 15 minutes to the SSR strategy. In addition, Aisida and Agama (2020) stated that silent reading is defined as a reading activity that does not involve making sounds, moving lips or heads, or whispering. Both strategies can enhance students' comprehension of texts and boost their reading abilities by fostering increased reading engagement and interaction with the material, particularly in recounting the content.

Recount texts were chosen by the researcher for the purposes of this tudy. According to Anderson and Anderson (1998), recount texts are narratives that describe previous events, typically in chronological order. These texts delve into past occurrences by presenting them in a detailed sequence of events (Cahyono, 2011). The primary purpose of a recount text is to inform or entertain the audience by revisiting specific past events (Gerot & Peter, 1994). Structurally, a recount text comprises an introduction (orientation) that establishes the context, a series of events that form the main narrative, and a conclusion (re-orientation) that summarizes the recounted events (Gerot & Peter, 1994).

Recount texts are worthy of being studied by students because these texts contain stories of the author's experiences that we can encounter daily. However, when students answer questions about recount text, students often need help answering text-based questions. QAR strategies can help students maximize their reading by showing them how to find and use information in texts to answer teacher questions (Lehrn & Osborn Jean, 2005). Teachers can ask students to answer comprehension questions to determine whether they understand what they read. This may indicate that students need better reading skills if they can answer many questions correctly.

Research has investigated the impact of the QAR on students' ability to comprehend texts. A study conducted by Siagian (2020) revealed that implementing QAR affected the reading comprehension of tenth-grade high school students. However, the study had some limitations, including a scarcity of references, the researcher's limited expertise in data analysis, and time and knowledge constraints. The findings suggested that QAR plays a crucial role in comprehending texts. Utilizing the QAR provides students with opportunities to think critically, solve problems, and make inferences based on the information presented in the reading, thereby fostering independent learning.

Another comprehensive investigation conducted by Arisman et al. (2021) additionally revealed significant discrepancies in the reading comprehension abilities exhibited by seventh-grade students enrolled in Junior High School, particularly when a comparative analysis was undertaken between those who were taught utilizing the QAR instructional strategy and those who received education through traditional pedagogical approaches grounded in narrative texts.

Mutiara (2022) undertook a comprehensive research investigation aimed at elucidating the ramifications of implementing question-and-answer relationship strategies, commonly abbreviated as QAR, on the reading comprehension abilities of students in the eleventh grade. The researchers dedicated their efforts primarily to the examination of narrative texts, and subsequently discovered that there exists a significant influence exerted by the application of the QAR strategy on the reading comprehension proficiency of eleventh-grade students when analyzing narrative texts, particularly when comparing the performance levels observed prior to and subsequent to the deployment of the QAR.

Zulfitri (2023) investigated the impact of the QAR on students' ability to comprehend descriptive texts. The research employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, featuring received QAR instruction and a control

group that did not. Both groups participated in pre- and post-assessments to measure their reading comprehension skills. The findings showed that the QAR had a significant effect on students' ability to understand descriptive texts, demonstrating its effectiveness as a teaching technique.

Referring to previous research, we found a gap, namely the QAR strategy and counter strategies. Although there are many studies examining the efficacy of QAR to improve reading comprehension, there has been no study comparing QAR with SSR. Research in this area is deemed necessary, considering that SSR has always been a strategy that is quite popular and used during reading. Realizing this gap, the researcher feels the need to conduct a study that directly compares QAR and SSR in enhancing comprehension in reading, especially in recount texts, to answer the following Question: Do the students taught using the QAR Strategy perform better than the students taught using the SSR Strategy in terms of reading comprehension in the recount text?

Research Methods

Design and Samples

The design of this study was quantitative in a quasi-experimental design. The population of this study consisted of class VIII students spread across nine classes, namely class 8 A-I from MTsN 3 Kediri in 2023-2024. The students in every class were divided into two groups—an experimental group and a control group—via a lottery, and it was found that the students from class VIII-G were assigned to the experimental group, and class VIII-D students were to the control group based on the result of the lottery. Lottery allowed us to avoid our tendency when assigning the two classes into experimental or control groups.

Research Instrument

The instrument consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions. This instrument can be used to convey student understanding in reading. In assessing students' work, we used the following criteria: a score of 5 was given if students answered the questions correctly; a score of 0 was given if the student answered the test questions incorrectly. The instrument was validated before being distributed to the two groups. The instrument was tested on the other classes besides the classes involved as the research subject. The tryout was conducted from 12 October 2023 to 17 October 2023 in classes 8E, consisting of 39 students, and 8F, consisting of 39 students, totaling 78 students at MTSN 3 Kediri.

Data Collection

We used pre-tests and post-tests to collect data. A pre-test was used to determine initial competence in terms of reading comprehension. The pre-test was given to the control and experimental classes at the first meeting. Next, treatment was applied to both groups. The experimental group received treatment using the QAR, and another group received the SSR. After treatment, we conducted a post-test to know the different achievements between the groups in the recount text.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) through SPSS. This statistical method was utilized to manage factors that cannot be randomly assigned but are quantifiable on an interval scale (Kaselmen et al., 1998), and to conduct Hypothesis testing to support the effectiveness of the QAR strategy in enhancing students' comprehension of the recount text.

Results

Pre-Test and Post-Test Results for the Two Groups

The primary data for this study consists of tests, with the author detailing information gathered from pre-test and post-test data to students in both groups. Test results for both groups are shown below:

Table 1. Pre- and Post-Test Results for the Two Groups

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD
Pre-Test Experimental Group	38	30	40	70	2120	55.79	7.669
Pre-Test Control Group	38	35	40	75	2150	56.58	8.861
Post-Test Experimental Group	38	30	60	90	2880	75.79	8.014
Post-Test Control Group	38	35	50	85	2725	71.71	8.950

The data presented in Table 1 shows that the experimental group had a pre-test Mean score of 55.79, while the control group had a pre-test Mean score of 56.58, with scores ranging from 40 to 75. In the post-test, the experimental

group had a Mean score of 75.79, higher than the control group's Mean score of 71.71, with post-test scores ranging from 50 to 85.

Normality Testing for Pre-test and Post-Test

A normality test was conducted to ascertain if the data errors adhered to a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test can be utilized for this test. A *p*-value exceeding the significance level, commonly set at 0.05, suggests that the error variance follows a normal distribution. Below are the test outcomes for both groups:

Table 2. Normality Testing for Pre-Test and Post-Test

Normality Test Result				
Test		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pre-Test	Experimental Group	.130	38	.108
	Control Group	.123	38	.152
Post-Test	Experimental Group	.121	38	.170
	Control Group	.128	38	.116

The information presented in Table 2 above indicates the results of normality tests conducted on the pre-test and post-test data of both groups. The Kolmirnov normality tests revealed that the significance level for the pre-test data was 0.108 and 0.152 for the two groups, respectively, which indicated that the data followed a normal distribution. Similarly, the alpha for the post-test data were 0.170 and 0.116 for the two groups, respectively, confirming that the data were normally distributed.

Homogeneity of Variances Testing for Pre-Test and Post-Test

The homogeneity test was meticulously utilized as a statistical method to evaluate and determine whether the variance associated with the data errors demonstrates a consistent and uniform characteristic of homogeneity across the dataset in question. If, upon conducting this analysis, the calculated p-value was found to exceed the predetermined significance level, which had been explicitly established at a threshold of 0.05, it would then imply that the distribution of error variance adheres to the principles of a normal distribution, thereby suggesting a level of predictability and regularity in the data variability.

Table 3. Homogeneity of Variances Testing for Pre-Test and Post-Test

Homogeneity Test of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-Test	Based on Mean	1.038	1	74	.312
	Based on Median	.825	1	74	.367
	Based on trimmed mean	.928	1	74	.339
Post-Test	Based on Mean	.393	1	74	.533
	Based on Median	.288	1	74	.593
	Based on the Median and with adjusted df	.288	1	72.099	.593
	Based on trimmed mean	.422	1	74	.518
	Based on Mean	.393	1	74	.533

The results of the homogeneity of variance test, as presented in Table 3, indicate that the variances in the pre-test and post-test scores were consistent across both groups. Specifically, the pre-test results showed a significance value of 0.312, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the pre-test data was homogeneous. Similarly, the post-test results yielded a significance value of 0.533, also above 0.05, indicating that the post-test data was homogeneous as well.

Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

A regression test for homogeneity was employed to ascertain if there was a relationship between covariates and independent variables. When the p-value is less than 0.05, it signifies that the covariate impacted the independent variable. On the other hand, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, it implies that the covariate did not affect the independent variable.

Table 4. Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3455.767[a]	3	1151.922	37.691	.000
Intercept	1433.320	1	1433.320	46.898	.000
Groups	73.058	1	73.058	2.390	.126
Pretest	2954.087	1	2954.087	96.658	.000
Groups * pretest	**32.314**	**1**	**32.314**	**1.057**	**.307**
Error	2200.483	72	30.562		

Total	419025.000	76			
Corrected Total	5656.250	75			

a. R Squared = 0.611 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.595)

The information presented in Table 4 indicates the findings of the homogeneity of regression slopes test conducted on the relationship between Groups and pretest scores as shown in the **Groups*pretest section**. The test results showed a significance value of 0.307, which is greater than 0.05. This suggests that there is no notable impact of the covariate (pre-test) on the independent variables related to the QAR, allowing us to move forward with the ANCOVA analysis.

Linear Relationship between Covariate and Dependent Variable

The purpose of the Linearity test was to establish whether a linear connection could be identified between the covariate (pre-test) and the dependent variable (post-test). The test was considered successful when a statistically significant linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable was observed (p<0.05).

Table 5. Linear Relationship between Covariate and Dependent Variable

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable:	Posttest				
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3423.453[a]	2	1711.727	55.964	.000
Intercept	1401.334	1	1401.334	45.816	.000
Pre-test	**3107.335**	**1**	**3107.335**	**101.593**	**.000**
Groups	418.075	1	418.075	13.669	.000
Error	2232.797	73	30.586		
Total	419025.000	76			
Corrected Total	5656.250	75			

a. R Squared = ,605 (Adjusted R Squared = ,594)

The data presented in Table 5 above elucidates the outcomes pertaining to the linear association between the covariate and the dependent variable as assessed during the pre-test, as depicted in the aforementioned table. In the analysis of the linear relationship between the covariate (pre-test) and the dependent variable (post-test), the attained significance value was recorded at 0.000, which is less than the Sig. threshold of 0.05, thereby indicating the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the covariate (pre-test) and the dependent variable (post-test). Thus, the criteria for establishing a

linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable are deemed fulfilled.

Hypothesis Testing

After analyzing the outcomes of the preliminary assessments (tests for normality, homogeneity, and linearity), it was evident that the data showed normal distribution, homogeneity, regression, and linearity. Having completed these initial evaluations, it was possible to proceed with an ANCOVA. The objective of the ANCOVA was to ascertain whether there were notable distinctions in reading comprehension abilities based on the utilization of the QAR versus the SSR.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable:	Post-Test					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3423.453[a]	2	1711.727	55.964	.000	.605
Intercept	1401.334	1	1401.334	45.816	.000	.386
Pre-test	3107.335	1	3107.335	101.593	.000	.582
Groups	**418.075**	**1**	**418.075**	**13.669**	**.000**	**.158**
Error	2232.797	73	30.586			
Total	419025.000	76				
Corrected Total	5656.250	75				

a. R Squared = ,605 (Adjusted R Squared = ,594)

The results of the ANCOVA analysis presented in Table 6 indicate a statistically significant difference, with a *p*-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, suggesting that there was a notable difference in comprehension abilities between students who received instruction using the QAR and those who received instruction using the SSR strategy.

Following this, there is a notable discrepancy in the Mean scores of students on the post-test in both the experimental and control groups. Moreover, the post-test Mean in the experimental group was 75.79, while in the control group, it stood at 71.71 (refer to Table 1). This indicates that the Mean score for the experimental group post-test surpasses that of the control group. A significant difference is apparent in the reading comprehension abilities of students who employed the QAR and SSR strategies. Consequently, students instructed through the QAR approach outperformed those taught using the SSR method in terms of reading comprehension.

Discussion

This research sought to compare the impact of the QAR versus the SSR on junior high school student's ability to comprehend recount texts. The findings revealed that the QAR yielded superior results in enhancing reading comprehension compared to the SSR. Students who received instruction using the QAR demonstrated greater proficiency in understanding recount texts using the SSR. This finding was on the same track as research by Siagian (2020), Arisman et al. (2021), Mutiara (2022), and Zulfitri (2023). The study conducted by Arisman et al. (2021) found a significant difference in reading comprehension between students instructed with the QAR and those taught through the conventional method of seventh-grade students in Junior High School. The findings align with research by Siagian (2020), Mutiara (2022), and Zulfitri (2023), which concluded that using the QAR yields a significant effect on the reading comprehension of X, XI, and XII grades in Senior High School. The QAR method was better than the traditional method in enhancing students' reading comprehension proficiency.

The QAR offers a systematic method for improving reading comprehension by teaching students to classify questions into two distinct categories: those that can be answered directly from the text and those that require outside knowledge or inference (Ayodele, 2013). This method, compared to SSR, where students read independently without explicit guidance, shows more potential for improving reading comprehension, particularly in recount texts, which require understanding factual details and context. QAR boosts student involvement by encouraging them to think about the text and what they already know, leading to a better understanding of both implied and direct meanings. Research by Muzammil (2017) suggests that the structured nature of QAR helps students develop a better understanding of reading, like those in recount texts, by making connections between events and their significance. This contrasts with SSR, where the passive nature of the strategy might limit comprehension growth, especially for struggling readers.

Unlike the students of the QAR, the students who use the SSR strategy are considered less effective in their reading comprehension skills due to several areas for improvement. Regarding the weaknesses of the SSR strategy, Manurung et al. (2020) stated that when applying the SSR strategy, some students do not genuinely read. Instead, they are engaged in other activities, such as conversing with their peers, dozing off, working on other assignments, and texting (F. Savasci & Tuna, 2018). Additionally, Hunt (1970) stated that there

is a concern about the effectiveness of requiring struggling readers to read independently for 15 minutes without any support. It is challenging for students to develop reading proficiency and fluency without effectively utilizing sustained silent reading time (M. Savasci & Akyel, 2022). Without supervision or accountability, students are not incentivized to use this time productively (Feliciani, 2013).

QAR's interactive nature is critical in recounting texts, which are often chronological and require an understanding of cause-effect relationships. To facilitate comprehension, students are prompted to pose two types of questions: "Right there", which involves identifying answers explicitly stated in the text, and "Think and search", which requires integrating information from multiple sections of the text to form a deeper understanding. According to Raphael and Au (2005), these categories help students process recount texts in a more structured way, developing both surface-level and deep comprehension. SSR, on the other hand, lacks this scaffolding, making it less effective for students who need more explicit instruction to improve their reading skills.

Furthermore, QAR allows for differentiation by accommodating diverse learning needs. Students who struggle with comprehension can benefit from teacher-led discussions using QAR, which guides them through the text, asking questions that gradually increase in complexity. The collaborative discussions inherent in QAR also foster peer learning, where students model good reading strategies for one another, as highlighted by Cain and Oakhill (2007). In contrast, SSR's independent nature does not offer this form of collaborative learning, which can be particularly useful for recounting texts that require understanding nuances and temporal sequencing.

Additionally, QAR promotes metacognitive skills, as students must reflect on where and how they found their answers. This skill is particularly important in recounting texts, where students must evaluate the significance of historical or personal events. A study by Klingner et al. (2012) showed that students who used QAR outperformed those who engaged in SSR in tasks requiring text-based evidence and inferencing. This suggests that QAR's explicit focus on question categorization helps students better analyze recount texts' structure and content, leading to a deeper understanding.

In conclusion, while SSR can improve reading fluency by encouraging independent reading, its impact on comprehension, particularly for recount texts, is limited compared to the QAR. The QAR provides a more structured, interactive, and reflective approach to reading, making it more effective in developing students' comprehension of recount texts. By promoting active

engagement, peer learning, and metacognition, QAR provides a more extensive resource to enhance students' understanding of reading compared to SSR.

Conclusion

The study investigated the effectiveness of QAR in comparison to SSR. During the pre-test, it was observed that the experimental group had lower scores compared to the control group, with average scores of 55.79 and 56.58, respectively. However, in the post-test, the experimental group achieved higher scores than the control group, with averages of 75.79 and 71.71. The ANCOVA analysis resulted in a significance level of 0.000, which is below 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha). This indicates the students taught using the QAR outperformed those who taught using the SSR.

Implementing the QAR in reading recount texts can significantly enhance students' comprehension by encouraging them to categorize and process information based on four distinct questions: Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own. Teachers can begin by selecting a recount text and guiding students through pre-reading activities, activating background knowledge and setting reading purposes. During reading, students engage with the text through the four QAR categories, which help differentiate between information found directly in the text and that requires inference or personal reflection. This structured approach fosters a deeper understanding of the text and promotes active reading. In post-reading activities, students reflect on the answers and clarify any misunderstandings through peer discussion or teacher feedback. Research supports that QAR improves reading comprehension by training students to identify where and how to find answers, thus improving literal and inferential comprehension skills (Wiranegara et al., 2024). Classroom action research, such as in Yahni et al. (2024), demonstrates significant score improvements when QAR is implemented, showing its efficacy in teaching recount texts.

The researchers acknowledge the imperfections in the current research and provide limitations, and the study did not distinguish between male and female participants, prompting the recommendation for future research to explore the impact of the QAR across genders for more inclusive results. Secondly, this study was in a quasi-experimental design, implying that the conclusions drawn may not be universally applicable due to the inability to randomize the sample. To increase the reliability and generalizability of results, it

is highly recommended that future studies employ a True Experimental design, allowing for more accurate and representative conclusions that can be applied to a wider population.

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