Effectiveness Of Question-Answer-Relationship (Qar) Strategy In Improving The Reading Comprehension Level Of Grade 7 Learners

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Abstract: This study sought to determine the effectiveness of Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) strategy in improving the reading comprehension of Grade 7 learners of the Second Congressional District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan. One-group pre-test-post-test design was employed in the study. Parallel forms of pre-test and post-test including a self-evaluation form were utilized for data collection. At the onset of the experiment, the researcher conducted a reading comprehension pre-test among the participants. Subsequently, a ten (10) day QAR strategy classes was employed to the participants as the intervention phase. After completing the classes, the researcher conducted a post-test on the participants' reading comprehension. A self-evaluation form was also accomplished after the post-test. Results show that a significant difference is evident between the participants' pre-test and post-test scores wherein a higher mean score was observed in the post-tests compared to participants' pre-tests. Furthermore, based on the participants' responses on the self-evaluation form, more than half of them reported that they became better and feel confident at answering comprehension questions after learning the QAR strategy. All participants also agreed that they will recommend the QAR strategy to their peers. Therefore, this study concludes that employing the QAR strategy is effective in improving the reading comprehension of the students.

Index Terms: question-answer-relationship strategy; reading comprehension

I. INTRODUCTION

In learning any kind of languages, including English, the learners should be master these several skills: Reading, listening, speaking and writing. According to Harmer, those the four language skills in teaching English are divided into two: productive and receptive skills1 . Productive skills are skills where people have to produce language themselves. Receptive skills are how people essence meaning from the discourse they see or hear. Speaking and writing are productive skills as they are useful for producing and delivering information, reading and listening are receptive skills as they used in receiving information and. Receptive skills here does not mean passive, because to be able to receive information either from reading or listening, we need to conduct several processes to understand the information.

Based on the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) as cited in Stone reading is a cognitive process which has a particular purpose in which the reader at the same time uses some knowledge about: spoken and written language, text topics, and their culture to construct meaning with text. From the statement, it can be inferred that text, reader make an effort to understand the meaning of the text. In other words, reading activity needs interaction between the reader and the text. The interaction is created when the reader involves the text and tries to make meaning the message in the text.

Furthermore, to obtain new knowledge and information by reading, the readers have to comprehend what they read. William Grabe and Stoller support this, the capability to understand the information in a text and interpret it appropriately what is meant by the text is the mean of reading comprehension. Moreover, he

assumed that reading without comprehension is nonsense and useless. They are related to each other and cannot be separated. In simple word, the essence of the reading process is reading comprehension, which means we have to know the meaning of the text we read.

Reading is the activity to obtain and understand the information from written resources. In various aspects of life most information comes from the books or written reports. It holds an important role to gain information and help students to build their own knowledge. According to Wallace (2004), reading as the important role in almost every course of study. In learning English, reading is one of the prominent skills from four basics skill in English, and reading should be acquired by any students who learn English to get information and knowledge. The importance of reading explained by Grabe (1991) as well that reading is most likely the major skill for second language learners in academic context. Consequently, English learner should be able to understand English text clearly to improve their learning quality.

Many strategies have been examined to enrich student's comprehension in reading texts, by hope it can help students' interest in reading activities. English teachers are hoped to choose appropriate strategy in their teaching process. Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) and Think Aloud strategies are two examples of strategies which can be implemented in teaching EFL students in reading class.

Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy is conducted by Raphael (2006). In this strategy, the students are trained to identify the answer by four terms and it known as QAR taxonomy. The terms are ("right there", "think and search", "On my own", and "Author and me"). The taxonomy helps the student to identify three kinds of information's sources in answering reading comprehension question: text explicit, text implicit and script implicit. Text explicit inferred the answer is already in the text. Text implicit is inferred from the text, using information across sentences or paragraph. Script implicit is required the information comes from student own knowledge. Raphael and AU (2005) state that Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy helps the students to plan reading and answering comprehension question, and also helps the students to ensure that there will not be an over emphasis of lower lever skill with questions that only require the students to locate and recall information.

Think aloud is known as online tasks, students are asked what is going through on their minds in solving their problem. Stronge (2004) argues that think aloud instructional strategy, is used to demonstrate what a though process is. Teacher verbalize what they are thinking as they perform a particular task, read a passage, or solve a problem to enable students to hear the inferences and choice that are being made. Block and Israel (2004) states that Think aloud help to increase student's ability of the thinking process and understand what they comprehend. Thus, it allows students to connect meaning and understanding with a text.

All of those previous studies have proved that both Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) and Think Aloud strategies have positive impacts on students' ability. Although, Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) and Think Aloud strategy could offer reading benefits to students, but the number of research studies relating to the combination of these two strategies together to improve students reading comprehension in Indonesia is very rare. Therefore, this present research tries to investigate how reading instruction using Question-Answer Relationship and Think aloud strategies affect the ability of the students in comprehending reading text.

Reading is a way to transform the knowledge from the written text to humans mind. Carrel and Eisterhold (2003) illuminate the relation between the reader and the text as an interpretive process. In other words, the reader is a key to open and develop the gate information. Likewise, in reading process reader tries to convert the information which depends on how the readers encounters the meaning of the text differ they background knowledge.

Reading comprehension is a flexible ongoing cognitive and constructive process (Wolley, 2011). It is a two-way process that integrates information from text-based with information from prior knowledge of the reader. During reading, a reader attempt to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences. He also asserts that a reader must link ideas across sentences and construct the meaning that is implied by drawing the situation from their own background knowledge. Thus, to be an effective reader must set reading goals, monitor meaning and reflect upon their own understanding (Wolley, 2011).

Consequently, reading is not only about the reading passage, but it is also about the background or prior knowledge that a reader brings to the reading task. The importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension is mentioned through this definition: "Reading comprehension is the construction of the meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message… the presumption here is that meaning resides in the intentional problem-solving, thinking process of the interpreter … that the content of the meaning is influenced by that person's prior knowledge and experience (Harris & Hodges, 2005, p.39)."

Based on the definition above, Reading comprehension is not simply about recalling information encountered in the text. Reciprocal implies that the reader brings something to reading comprehension. It is not just the information that comes from the text, but the information that the reader already processes also influences the construction of the meaning. And problem-solving, thinking processes suggest that the reader is actively involved in attempting to build a meaning in the mind. This also indicates that one is understanding in reading might be different from that of others, it depends on how the reader filters the text through their own background knowledge, biases, and other experiences that affect how they interpret the text (Harris & Hodges, 2005).

Comprehension is the goal of reading. Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of the act of reading. When a person reads a text, he engages in a complex array of cognitive activity. The person simultaneously uses his awareness and understanding of phonemes, phonics and ability to comprehend or construct meaning from the text (K12Reader, 2008). Without comprehension, reading will be just like going through the words on a material from left to right without interpretation. The words on the page will hold no significance at all. Despite the fact that people read for various reasons, the topmost objective of reading is and will always be to derive understanding or to comprehend what the writer or author of a reading selection wants to convey. Once the information has been processed, putting the information into action comes next. This is why reading with comprehension is very important. So, in order to learn how to read with comprehension, there is a need for readers especially students to strategize or find ways on how they can instantaneously process text and meaning from a reading material or article. Thus, teachers are faced with constant challenges of addressing the needs of their students particularly in identifying certain comprehension strategies that will improve their students' reading abilities.

Generally, comprehension strategies help students become purposeful and active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension (Adler, 2016). However, previous studies revealed that some of these strategies have been found to have contradicting effects on students' reading comprehension. One of them is the QAR or Question-Answer-Relationship strategy that aims to "clarify how students approach the tasks of reading texts and answering questions" (Raphael, 2006, p.176). This strategy consists of different levels of questions namely: Right There; Think and Search; Author and Me; and On My Own questions (Eanes as cited in Par, 2011). While some studies reported that QAR strategy is effective and has positive effect on students' reading comprehension, other researches revealed that this strategy had negative or no significant effect on students' reading ability (Johnson, 2014; Kucera, 2009; Stafford, 2012). Also, while this strategy has been extensively researched in foreign settings, related studies involving Filipino students were not encountered.

The original of QAR program was based on the Pearson and Johnson (1978) question taxonomy. The taxonomy's creators proposed that questions should not be identified in isolation, but rather in relation to both the text being read and the reader's background knowledge. It was designed as a means for students to know the relationship between answers and questions directly through the types of question. QAR strategy helps students to consider information obtained by text or their own background knowledge. This strategy aims to elaborating students' thinking of processes. It develops their metacognitive abilities to understand different types of questioning and the relationship between the question and answer. This is where the difference between QARs with conventional question answer frequently used in the Reading test. Preszler (2005) explains that this strategy could be a reading strategy that is extensively used to assist students" comprehension and it is not only used as tool test methods but also as a medium to monitor students" understanding. It helps the students to identify different types of questions and recognize how the questions and answer were correlated each other.

The researcher concludes that explanation text is a text used to explain how and why the process of a social, culture phenomenon, events or action, and natural scientific. It also used to share the fact of knowledge and understanding. The purpose of explanation text is to explain how or why, e.g. to explain the processes bound in natural/social phenomena or to explain why something is the way it is.

One of the texts that the researchers concentrated in this research was narrative text. It was suitable with the curriculum that the teacher taught for tenth graders. According to Rebecca (2003), narrative text is a text which tells about a story and that has purposes to amuse, entertain, or inform the reader or listener. The structure of narrative text consists of orientation, complication, sequence of events, resolution and coda/moral value.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers tried to help students" difficulty on reading comprehension especially in narrative text by using Question Answer Relationship. The goal of this strategy is ultimately on the students" understanding on the content of reading through the question answer itself. Thus, this strategy is not only used as a tool to measure students" understanding but also as a medium to monitor their understanding.

Given these conflicting results and the lack of similar studies in the Philippines, the researchers were motivated to carry out this study with the hope of adding relevant information on the effect of QAR strategy in the reading comprehension of Filipino students. Specifically, it aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) to describe the participants' pre-test scores in reading comprehension prior to the intervention and participants' post-test scores after the 10-day QAR strategy immersion; 2) to determine if there is a significant difference between the participants' pre-test and post-scores in reading comprehension; and 3) to describe the participants' responses in the self-evaluation form.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy in improving the comprehension level of Grade 7 learners in the Second Congressional District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan during the School Year 2023-2024.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the performance of the Grade 7 learners before exposure to the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy?
2. What is the performance of the Grade 7 learners after exposure to the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy?
3. Is there a significant difference between the performance of the Grade 7 learners before and after exposure to the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy?
4. What is the level of responses of the Grade 7 learners based on their self-evaluation about the use of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, sources of data, instrumentation and data collection and the tools for data analysis.

Research Design

In conducting the research, the researcher used experimental research design. According to Ary et.al, experimental research is a general plan to carry out a study with an active independent variable. The design is important because it determines the study's internal validity, which is the ability to reach valid conclusions about the effect of the experimental treatment on the dependent variable. It means that experimental design is a research design that is used to find the influence of one variable to another.

In this research, the researcher used quasi experimental research design. Quasi experimental design is similar to randomly experimental design in that they involve manipulation of an independent variable but differ in that subjects are not randomly. That is appropriate to this research's subject assigned to the treatment groups. Because this research's subject is in groups. So, if the researcher randomly assigns the students into the two groups, it will disrupt the classroom learning. It means that in quasi experimental research the researcher does not randomly assign the students. The researcher assigned the sample by taking randomly the class of the students, so it would not disrupt the classroom learning.

In a quasi-experimental research, there are two variables use, there are independent and dependent. The researcher used QAR Strategy as dependent variable and student reading comprehension as a dependent variable. In this group design, the experimenter cannot create the group artificially because of the availability of participants or because of the setting that prohibits creating groups. The researcher used two groups which are experimental and control group. Experimental group is a group that using QAR strategy in teaching and learning process, while the control group using conventional method. Before gave the treatment, a pretest for each group was given by the researcher in other to see the level of students' qualification. After the treatment, a post-tests gave both groups in order to know the students' reading comprehension score. In this design, it was called nonequivalent group pre-test-post-test design because two group of experimental and control were involved in this study as presented in the following: Note: O1: pretest for the experimental group; O2: post-test for the experimental group; O3: pretest for the control group; O4: post-test for the control group X: the treatment.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Four (4) instruments were utilized in the study: 1) pre-test; 2) post-test; 3) short response rubric and 4) self-evaluation form. All instruments were validated by three (3) Language experts. Parallel forms pre-test and post-test consist of 26 items that measure students' reading comprehension. To test the reliability of the tests, Raagas and Ramos' (2007) software for item analysis was used. Students' test scores who participated in the pilot test were utilized for item analysis. Computed values of .75 for pre-test and .81 for post-test were obtained using the Kuder Richardson Formula (KR20) which indicate that both tests are reliable.

The literary pieces for both pre-test and post-test, The Aged Mother by Basho and The Soul of the Great Bell by Lafcadio were taken from online sites. On the other hand, the short response rubric which was

used to score the participants' answers on the Author and Me and On My Own questions along with the self-evaluation form were adopted from a similar study conducted by Peng, Hoon, Khoo, and Joseph (2007).

During the 10-day strategy immersion, four (4) reading selections were used to check the participants' understanding of the strategy. To assess the participants' understanding of the first category of QAR –In the Text- the researchers lifted the stories A Boy so Young from Menez (2009) and The Country's Good Son from Thein (2009). In order for the researchers to check the participants' understanding of QAR's second category –In My Head- literature pieces, Scheherazade and Emperor's Seed were used. Both literatures were taken from online sites.

At the onset of the study, the researcher conducted a reading comprehension pre-test among the participants wherein an hour was allotted to answer the test.

After the pre-test, the ten (10) day QAR immersion commenced. Day 1 was spent giving a brief introduction of QAR Strategy, distribution of handout to the participants, discussion of the strand, framework modeling using the short fable Belling the Cat by Aesop which was then followed by a ten (10) item multiple-choice test. In Day 2, the researchers distributed the participants' results in the test. A short review of the strand was done. The researchers entertained QAR-related questions from the participants to tie any loose ends from the first strand. Day 3 started with a brief review of the strand and was immediately followed by an introduction and discussion of the Think and Search strand. The researchers used the same fable Belling the Cat for framework modeling and gave the participants another set of ten (10) item multiple-choice test. In day 4, the researchers distributed to the participants the results of their test from the previous day. A short review of the Think and Search strand was done. The researchers entertained queries regarding the second strand. And that ended the immersion for the In the Text category of the QAR strategy. For the next category, the researchers decided to add a day per strand to ensure understanding on the part of the participants. Hence, three (3) days were allotted for each strand in the category. For day 5, the researchers gave the participants a brief recap on QAR Strategy and Think and Search strand. It was followed by an introduction and discussion of the Author and Me strand.

Aesop's fable Belling the Cat was once again used for framework modeling. Day 6 was spent on reviewing Author and Me strand and giving the participants a test where they are asked to give a short response to the five (5) questions or tasks given to them. The participants' answers were graded using a standardized rubric where a maximum of two (2) points and a minimum of zero (0) point is given to each item depending on how effective the participants answered the question or task. Day 7 was when the researchers distributed the participants' results in the Author and Me test.

A short review of the Author and Me strand happened, followed by exchange of questions and answers among the researchers and the participants. For the day 8 of the immersion, the participants were given a recap of the Author and Me strand. It was followed by an introduction and discussion of the strand. For framework modeling, Aesop's Belling the Cat was used. In day 9, the researchers briefly discuss the strand followed by a short-response test. Just like all the tests given throughout the treatment, the participants were given thirty (30) minutes to answer. The final (10th) day of the immersion was when the researchers distributed to the participants the results of their test followed by an exchange of questions and answers. An overall recap on the QAR Strategy and its strands was also accomplished to prepare the participants for the post-test. After the ten-day immersion in the strategy, the participants were given a twenty-six (26) item post-test on reading comprehension to be answered for an hour. Afterwards, a self-evaluation form was accomplished.

A letter of request was forwarded to the office of the Schools Division Superintendent with the recommendation of the respective public elementary principals, upon approval, the researcher personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaire upon completion of the said tool, which was collated and tabulated later and ready for statistical treatment.

Tools for Data Analysis

To derive valid and accurate results, appropriate statistical tools were employed.

This study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics. While the participants' pre-test and post-test scores along with their responses on the self-evaluation form were presented using frequency and percentage count, mean, mode, and standard deviation, significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores were determined using the paired sample t-test. A level of significance of 0.01 was used to determine if significant difference exists between the participants' pre-test and post-test scores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered relative to sub-problems in the study.

Reflected on Table 1 is the frequency and percentage distribution of the participants' pre-test scores in reading comprehension test. One (3.6%) out of 28 students had the lowest score of 14 while 2 (7.1%) students had the highest score of 23. Furthermore, 6 (21.4%) students had scores of 20 and another 6 (21.4%) students with scores of 21. The test given prior to the 10-day QAR strategy established the participants' baseline in their reading comprehension. This data served as basis to test the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing it with the participants' post-test scores.

Table 1. Participants' Pre-test Scores in Reading Comprehension Test

Raw Score	Frequency	Percent
14	1	3.6
15	1	3.6
16	2	7.1
17	3	10.7
18	2	7.1
19	3	10.7
20	6	21.4
21	6	21.4
22	2	7.1
23	2	7.1
Total	**28**	**100**

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the participants' post-test scores in reading comprehension test. One (3.6%) out of 28 students had the lowest score of 15 while 1 (3.6%) student also got a perfect score of 26. Results further show that 6 (21.4%) students had scores of 24. This indicates a movement in the participants' post-test scores as compared to their pre-test scores.

Table 2. Participants' Post-test Scores in Reading Comprehension Test

Raw Score	Frequency	Percent
15	1	3.6
16	2	7.1
17	4	14.3
18	3	10.7
19	1	3.6
20	2	7.1
21	0	0
22	3	10.7
23	2	7.1
24	6	21.4
25	3	10.7
26	1	3.6
Total	**28**	**100**

Table 3 shows the difference between the participants' pre-test and post-test mean scores and standard deviation. Based from the results, it can be observed that the mean score of the participants' pre-tests prior to the 10-day QAR strategy immersion is 19.32 with a standard deviation of 2.36. On the other hand, the participants' post-test mean score after the intervention is 20.89 but with a standard deviation of 3.45. This implies that while participants' post-test scores improved due to the difference of mean scores from their pre-test, this also means that their post-test scores are more dispersed compared to their pre-test scores. In addition, the computed value of 0.008 which is less than the 0.01 level of significance indicates a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that the QAR strategy is effective in improving the reading comprehension of learners.

Table 3. Difference between Participants' Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Reading Comprehension Test

	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
Mean	19.32	20.89
Standard Deviation	2.36	3.45
Sig. (2-tailed)	.008**	

**-significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 shows the participants' responses on the self-evaluation form given by the researchers after the 10-day intervention. It is evident that more than half of the students strongly agree that they became better and feel confident at answering comprehension questions after learning the QAR strategy. Same finding was also observed in a previous study where more than half of the learners who were taught the QAR strategy felt more confident about answering comprehension questions after learning the strategy (Peng, Hoon, Khoo, & Joseph, 2007). Results of this study further revealed that majority of the students strongly agree that they find the QAR strategy for answering comprehension questions helpful (71.4%) and will continue to use the QAR strategy when answering comprehension questions (78.65). Lastly, the table shows that all (100%) students mentioned that they will recommend the QAR strategy to their peers. Indeed, QAR strategy can improve students' reading comprehension. Significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores was further proven by the result of the self-evaluation form given to the participants.

Table 4. Participants' Responses on the Self Evaluation Form

Statement	SA (1)	A (2)	D (3)	SD (4)	Mode	Des.
I know how to use the QAR strategy to answer comprehension questions	12 (42.9)	15 (53.6)	1 (3.6)	0	2	Agree
I was good at answering comprehension questions prior to learning the QAR strategy	8 (28.6)	17 (60.7)	3 (10.7)	0	2	Agree
I became better at answering comprehension questions after learning the QAR strategy.	18 (64.3)	10 (35.7)	0	0	1	Strongly Agree
I feel confident answering comprehension questions after learning the QAR strategy.	14 (50.0)	13 (46.6)	1 (3.6)	0	1	Strongly Agree
I find the QAR strategy for answering comprehension questions helpful.	20 (71.4)	6 (21.4)	0	0	1	Strongly Agree
I will continue to use the QAR strategy when answering comprehension questions.	22 (78.6)	6 (21.4)	0	0	1	Strongly Agree
Statement	Yes (1)		No (2)		Mode	Des.
I will recommend the QAR strategy to my peers	28 (100.0)		0		1	Yes

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following remedial measures may be developed:

The Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) strategy is effective in improving the reading comprehension of selected Grade 6 learners. More than half of the participants strongly agree that they became better and feel confident at answering comprehension questions after learning the QAR strategy. More so, all participants will recommend QAR strategy to their peers.

Given the limitations of this study, the researchers recommend conducting another similar study employing more sophisticated experimental designs such as involving both experimental and control groups and utilizing bigger samples.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions derived from the study, the researcher hereby recommended the following:

1. The researcher would like to suggest QAR Strategy to be applied in public secondary schools in order to enhance the learners' reading comprehension of narrative text. In addition, this strategy made the learners become more active to share their ideas. Therefore, it is suggested for English teachers to choose QAR strategy as a model to help the learners in comprehending reading texts, especially narrative text.

2. Since there was only one personality factor, i.e. reading motivation as the intrinsic side of affective domain, which was taken into account as a moderator variable in this study, then it would be demanding if

other researchers who are interested in conducting a similar study consider more factors or a personality factor other than reading motivation, such as self-esteem, anxiety and extroversion which might be attributable for the students' reading performance besides the comprehension-strategy instruction.

3. Finally, as the questioning strategies under the framework of QAR and SQ strategies involve the implementation of question generation activities, then it would be challenging to have a similar study which measure the extent to which the participants can formulate the different types of questions for the assigned reading passages. In a sense, another study can measure the effect of questioning strategies on the participants' writing performance in addition to their reading performance at the same time. Moreover, it would be possible to measure the extent to which questioning strategies, i.e. question generation can improve the students' higher order thinking skills especially at the higher level education

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