

## The Effects of Using QAR Strategy on ESL Young Learners' Reading Comprehension of Narrative Text

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, Malaysian ESL students struggle to read English texts, particularly narrative texts. Lacking in utilising and applying the suitable reading strategies are among factors that hinder reading comprehension. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy on ESL pupils' narrative reading and to find out their perceptions toward QAR strategy in narrative reading. This study employed a non-equivalent pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design. A total of 72 pupils from a government primary Chinese vernacular school were chosen as participants for this study and data were collected using a multiple-choice reading test and a questionnaire. The findings indicated that QAR strategy to teach narrative reading significantly improved the pupils' narrative reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, the result of this study is expected to contribute something for the development of the process of English teaching and learning especially for the teaching of reading comprehension of narrative text.

**Keywords:** Reading, QAR strategy, narrative text, ESL young learners, comprehension

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### Introduction

English is the compulsory second language for all Malaysian pupils in the primary and secondary levels in the Malaysian education system. The primary education curriculum in Malaysia aims to equip pupils with fundamental language skills that will enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts conducive to their development. As reported by AD-Heisat, Mohammed, Sharmella and Issa (2019), in the primary school

English curriculum, the teaching of reading strategies was not mentioned, and the reading skills to be taught are word attack skills and reading for main ideas. It was also found that although primary school teachers know reading strategies, these are seldom applied in the teaching of reading. Reading strategies should be exposed to pupils to facilitate them in improving their reading comprehension and be critical in their reading.

Comprehension has become a critical component of reading in the vast literatures of reading research, both in terms of instruction and assessment (Adams, 2019). It reaffirms the notion that the purpose of reading is to comprehend information contained in texts, a process that involves interaction between the reader, the text, and the context. Good readers are deeply involved in those processes, constantly monitor and evaluate what they read, and make use of what they read in their daily lives. As a result, instructing students to become proficient readers is a difficult and time-consuming task that necessitates specific comprehension instructions (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002).

As a result of the preceding definition, there are numerous difficulties encountered while learning English in school, one of which is answering some questions about reading texts. Many students spend an inordinate amount of time answering comprehension questions. They frequently read all the texts in order to answer one question, then return to the same text to answer subsequent questions. As a result, many students run out of time and are unable to complete the test optimally. Additionally, many students struggle to master the reading language skill. They are typically passive learners, unable to use their literal knowledge to express their ideas or opinions in discussions about text-related issues or to use their higher-level thinking to comprehend the text. They are often afraid to ask questions about material they do not understand during the teaching learning process, and they lack a firm grasp on the elements or aspects of reading they should master.

Unfortunately, some English teachers continue to teach reading in a traditional manner in class, which usually results in pupils becoming bored and having difficulty comprehending the materials due to the method's monotony. As a result, the teacher should devise another method, technique, or strategy for resolving this issue. Thus, the teacher can employ an appropriate strategy to ensure the efficacy of English instruction in order to boost students' achievement. Numerous strategies are used in the classroom to teach reading; one of them is the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy. The teacher can incorporate this strategy into the teaching process, particularly when it comes to reading.

The QAR strategy is intended to facilitate a deliberate and common way of thinking and speaking about effective sources of information when answering questions. QAR is a comprehension-improving strategy used during reading. This strategy teaches pupils that not all questions are the same and that understanding the different types of questions will assist them in answering the questions presented in this strategy. This strategy establishes a three-way relationship between questions, text content, and reader knowledge (Raphael, 1986).

QARs provide a reasonable starting point for addressing the barriers that prevent all students from attaining high levels of literacy. QAR enables students to think critically about the text they are reading and beyond it. Hence,

this study aims to investigate the use of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) as a strategy in teaching reading comprehension to ESL pupils . Specifically, it looks at;

- a. To what extent is the effectiveness of Question Answer and Relationship (QAR) strategy on ESL pupils' reading of narrative text?
- b. What are ESL pupils' perceptions toward Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy in reading of narrative text?

## Literature Review

### Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension was influenced by a variety of factors, including the type of reading, the reader's characteristics, and the reading technique used. At the elementary stage, there was a lot of evidence that reading fluency has a major effect on reading comprehension (Liao, 2015). Once pupils enter middle school, however, fluency was no longer considered a major factor in comprehension. Other variables should be weighed instead. Recent research also supports the teaching of cognitive techniques to enhance reading comprehension ability (Casteel, Isom, & Jordan, 2010). Proficient readers use a variety of techniques to enhance their comprehension of a text (Casteel et al., 2010). Motivation was a reader trait that can be related to reading comprehension (Liao, 2015). It can influence pupils' reading comprehension in a variety of ways. It has been hypothesised that pupils who were more curious or interested in reading have higher levels of reading participation, implying that intrinsic motivation plays a role. Another possibility was that pupils with higher self-efficacy were more likely to put in more effort in attempting to decipher the significance of a letter. It was likely to result in improved reading comprehension.

The text and its context awareness were the two key sources of information in the QAR system. Children were clearly taught that not all answers can be found in the text using this technique. Many inexperienced readers were unaware of this and will profit from such guidance. These two basic classifications, "in the book" and "in my mind" can be further divided into four groups. "Right there" questions and "think and check" questions fall under "in the book" category. The questions right there were very literal, allowing pupils to define textually explicit details including definitions and evidence. They were easily found in the text, so readers just have to deal with small quantities of text to respond to such queries. Readers were asked to summarise, clarify, compare and contrast details, and describe cause and effect relationships in response to think and search questions. Readers must be able to combine and interpret data. They must discuss the whole text when they perform these tasks (Raphael & Au, 2015).

A good teaching method was needed to enhance pupils' reading comprehension because it teaches or assists pupils in resolving difficulties they encounter when reading the text. For instance, how to locate the main idea, the subject, the fact, and the opinion. Reading comprehension may be influenced by a successful or appropriate teaching method in order for pupils to better understand and comprehend the text.

Subdivide text into unnumbered sections, using short, meaningful sub-headings. Please do not use numbered headings. Please limit heading use to three levels. Please use 12-point bold for first-level headings, 10-point bold for second-level headings, and 10-point italics for third-level headings with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns. Leave one blank line (1.5 times spaced) before and after each heading. (Exception: no blank line between consecutive headings.) Please margin all headings to the left.

### **QAR Strategy**

QAR was a reading comprehension technique designed to help pupils understand the ways they can view reading narrative texts and answering questions. It also displays the ways to decipher the kinds of questions they were questioned and clues to look for the solutions (Raphael & Au 2015). Tompkins (2010) elaborates that the Question, Response, and Relationship (QAR) Strategy consists of three steps, namely predicting, clarifying, and questioning. The ability to predict the subject of what was being read was known as prediction. It means that pupils can link their background knowledge to new information about the text or problem. Furthermore, pupils may anticipate or hypothesise what the author will address next in the document. The ability to explain the difficulties encountered when reading the document was known as clarifying. For example, if pupils were confronted with unfamiliar terminology, a muddled reference, or other issues, they can try rereading or requesting classification. The ability to ask a question that was related to the text was known as questioning. It asks pupils to find new knowledge in the form of a question and then self-test to show that they can answer it. The Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) strategy engages students in the process of questioning and demonstrates to them that a variety of resources were available to assist them in answering questions (Jones & Leahy, 2006). QAR does not classify questions in isolation; rather, it considers both the reader's prior knowledge and the text. This method reflects the prevalent view of reading as an immersive activity influenced by the text, the reader, and the context.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research design**

The study employed a non-equivalent pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. There were two groups in this study: an experimental group that received treatment via the QAR strategy and a control group that did not receive treatment. A pre-test was administered to both groups. Only the experimental group received treatment. There were a few steps in putting the QAR strategy into action. The teacher described narrative text, including its general structure and characteristics. The teacher clarified each form of query in order to introduce the idea of QAR. A class was divided into five groups by the teacher. The teacher assigned a short text for the pupils to read. They recited a text about a story. Teacher guided the pupils to answer each question form. Teacher continued this exercise with the pupils, increasing the number of questions of each form. The teacher instructed the pupils to read a longer passage and create a series of questions for their peers to find and answer. The

teacher enquired about the pupils' difficulties in teaching and learning. The materials were completed by the teacher and the pupils.

### Participants

The population was the ESL pupils at a government primary Chinese vernacular school which consists of 126 pupils in total. Due to the homogeneity of the population, cluster random sampling was used in this study. The sample was drawn at random from two classes out of four, with 36 pupils in 4A and 36 pupils in 4B. Then, using coins as random assumptions, class 4A was created as the experimental group using the QAR method, and 4B was created as the control group using conventional techniques.

### Reading Test

Pupils were tested using multiple choice reading tests in the pre- and post-tests for the experimental and control groups. The total number of questions was 25 items. The texts were taken from a children's book and an internet script. The questionnaire scale is based on the Likert scale technique and was adapted from Peng, Hoon, Khoo, and Joseph (2017). Scoring was a term that referred to the outcome of a test or examination, which was typically expressed numerically. The score categorized as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Classification of Pupils' Score

The Range of Score	Classification	Score
80-100	Excellent	A
65-79	Good	B
50-64	Fair	C
40-49	Poor	D
<40	Fail	E

(Source: *School Administration of a government Chinese vernacular primary school in year 2021*)

## Results

### The effectiveness of QAR strategy on ESL young learners' reading of narrative text

Data from pre and post-tests in the forms of reading comprehension questions were analysed to investigate the effectiveness of QAR strategy on ESL pupils' reading comprehension of narrative text. The data were obtained from both control and experimental group.

According to Table 2, majority of the pupils' reading scores from both groups fall under fair to excellent categories. Only one third of the participants in below average or poor to fair categories. This somewhat indicates that the participants from both groups were similar in terms of their reading comprehension skills.

Table 2. Classification of reading comprehension categories pupils' pre-test scores

The Range of Score	Number of Pupils (Control Group)	Percentage	Number of Pupils (Experimental Group)	Percentage	Reading Comprehension Categories
80-100	0	0%	2	5.6%	Excellent
65-79	4	11.1%	7	19.4%	Good
50-64	15	41.7%	16	44.4%	Fair
40-49	13	36.1%	9	25.0%	Poor
< 40	4	11.1%	2	5.6%	Fail
Total	36	100%	36	5.6%	

Table 3. Classification of reading comprehension categories pupils' post-test scores

The Range of Score	Number of Pupils (control group)	Percentage	Number of Pupils (experiment group)	Percentage	Reading Comprehension Categories
80-100	2	5.6%	12	33.3%	Excellent
65-79	9	25.0%	12	33.3%	Good
50-64	17	47.2%	11	30.6%	Fair
40-49	6	16.7%	1	2.8%	Poor
< 40	2	5.6%	0	0%	Fail
Total	36	100%	36	100%	

Based on Table 3, it was found that pupils in experimental group show an increase in their reading scores as the number of participants in fair to excellent categories escalated. Additionally, only one pupil in experimental group was in poor category as compared to reading scores in pre-test. The results also illustrate that the pupils' in experimental group performed better in post-test as compared to pupils from control group.

Table 4. Analysis of pupils' reading scores in experimental group

QAR Strategy	Paired Sample T-Test		
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	4.294	35	0.000

The results in Table 4 further validate that there was a significant difference of reading scores in pre and post-tests among pupils in the experimental group. This implies that the pupils in the experimental group performed significantly better in their post-tests.

Table 5. Analysis of Pupils' Post-test Scores in Control and Experimental Group

QAR Strategy	Independent Sample T-Test		
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	4.121	70	0.000

Table 5 demonstrates results derived from post-tests scores of both groups. The findings implied that there was a significant improvement in learners' narrative reading comprehension scores taught using the QAR

technique compared to those who were not.

### Pupils' perception toward QAR strategy for reading of narrative text

A questionnaire consisted of 10 items was administered to participants in experimental group after post-test had been conducted. Through the questionnaires, the researcher asked the pupils' opinion whether they became better at reading comprehension after learning by using QAR strategy Table 6 shows the results of each item.

Table 6. Questionnaire on pupils' perception toward QAR

No.	Item	Response				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I know how to use the Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) strategy to answer	35 (97.2%)	1 (2.8%)			
2.	I was good at answering comprehension questions before learning the QAR strategy.	27 (75.0%)	5 (13.9%)	4 (11.1 %)		
3.	I became better at answering comprehension questions after learning the QAR strategy.			1 (2.8%)	3 (8.3%)	32 (88.9%)
4.	I feel confident answering comprehension questions after learning the Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) strategy.			2 (5.6%)	3 (8.3%)	31 (86.1%)
5.	I find the Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) strategy for answering comprehension questions helpful.				3 (8.3%)	33 (91.7%)
6.	I will continue to use the Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) strategy when answering comprehension questions.			2 (5.6 %)	4 (11.1%)	30 (83.3%)
7.	I will recommend the Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) strategy to other students.			1 (2.8%)	6 (16.7%)	29 (80.6%)

The questionnaires consist of ten questions provided in English language. It is used to get more information about pupils' perception toward QAR strategy for reading comprehension of narrative text. All the pupils were not familiar with QAR strategy before the treatment was given. 35 pupils (97.2%) strongly disagree with the statement while a pupil (2.8%) disagree with the statement. The data also signifies those 27 pupils (75%) strongly disagree that their ability in reading comprehension was good before learning QAR strategy. 32 pupils (88.9%) strongly agree that their comprehension becomes better after learning by QAR strategy. There are three pupils (8.3%) and one pupil (2.8%) who agree and neutral to the statement respectively. The data proves that 31 pupils (86.1%) strongly agree that they are confident at reading comprehension after learning QAR strategy. 3 pupils (8.3%) agree that they felt confident at reading comprehension. Yet, there are 2 pupils (5.6%) consider that they still do not feel confident. I assume those pupils rarely got involved at reading comprehension.



However, almost all the pupils (94.4%) gave positive responses toward QAR strategy.

33 pupils (91.7%) strongly agree that QAR strategy is very helpful. Moreover, there are 3 pupils (8.3%) confirms that they agree with the statement. Then, no one of the pupils agree with the question statement. it can be seen obviously that 30 pupils (83.3%) and 4 pupils (11.1%) agree that they will continue to use QAR strategy. 2 pupils (5.6%) are neutral to the statement. Thus, none of the pupils gave negative responses regarding the statement. Lastly, 29 pupils (80.6%) strongly agree that they will recommend the QAR strategy to other pupils. 6 pupils (16.7%) agree the statement. However, there is a pupil (2.8%) who was neutral to recommend the QAR strategy to other pupils.

## Discussion

According to the findings described previously, there was a significant improvement in pupils' pre- and post-test scores in the experimental group taught using the QAR strategy and there was a significant difference in pupils' post-test scores between the control and experimental groups. The findings indicated that the QAR strategy may be an effective method for teaching narrative reading comprehension. This finding is consistent with the findings of Murtado (2019) and Wahyuni (2018), who discovered a significant difference in pupils' reading comprehension ability after they were taught using the QAR strategy.

The experimental group's narrative reading achievement increased after they were taught the QAR strategy. Additionally, pupils' narrative reading achievement also improved in the control group, but not as significantly as in the experimental group. Meanwhile, the independent sample t-test revealed a significant difference in the post-test scores of pupils in the experimental groups who were taught using the QAR strategy and the control group who were taught using the strategy used by the school teacher. This finding was consistent with numerous studies, including those conducted by Sari (2012), who discovered that the QAR strategy aided pupils' reading comprehension achievement in narrative text, and Iqbal (2013), who discovered that the QAR strategy aided pupils' reading comprehension achievement in narrative text.

According to Guzzardo (2005), QAR strategy can motivate students to use their prior knowledge to acquire information. Furthermore, Iqbal (2013) posited that the QAR strategy was effective for teaching reading because it increased pupils' enjoyment and participation in class, which resulted in an increase in reading comprehension. As a result, this strategy is effective at assisting pupils in reading comprehension by allowing them to make inferences based on their existing and prior knowledge.

Based on the questionnaires, most pupils agree or strongly agree that they improved their reading comprehension after learning the QAR strategy. This finding is consistent with previous research (Seng, 2009; Alzu'bi, 2019; Ys et al., 2018) indicating that the strategy is effective at assisting students with their reading. It can be concluded that all students agree that the QAR strategy improves their reading comprehension ability.



According to the questionnaire analysis, most pupils agree that the QAR strategy is extremely beneficial and that they will continue to use it in reading comprehension. Additionally, the QAR strategy instilled confidence in the pupils' reading comprehension abilities.

Given the positive response from students regarding the use of the QAR strategy, it can be concluded that students are eager and receptive to being exposed to strategies that will help them become more critical and reflective readers. This study focused on pupils' attitudes toward using the QAR strategy in their reading comprehension because their attitudes were critical in educating teachers about the strategy's benefits and drawbacks. The study's findings may assist teachers in developing instructional strategies that further enhance students' learning processes. Additionally, the findings could be used to develop more comprehensive and appropriate approaches that are more suited to the current learning environment.

Finally, after examining all the test and questionnaire results, it can be concluded that incorporating the QAR strategy into reading comprehension instruction improves the ability of young learners in a government primary school. It was concluded that the QAR strategy's implementation resulted in a significant improvement and difference in pupils' narrative reading comprehension at the school. The QAR strategy successfully motivated students to learn narrative reading comprehension and sparked their interest and engagement in English learning. It could be assumed that the QAR strategy is effective at teaching pupils reading comprehension.

A positive outcome from implementing the QAR strategy suggests that it may have a beneficial effect on pupils' English reading abilities. Pupils who received strategy instruction used a broader variety of strategies. The use of the QAR strategy resulted in more efficient reading, which aided pupils in improving various aspects of their English reading abilities. This indicates that the use of the QAR strategy influences pupils' academic reading success. It is therefore critical for English teachers to instil a sense of value in their students regarding the importance of reading strategies. However, as the pupils observed, additional reading practise both inside and outside the classroom is necessary if pupils are to improve their reading effectively and develop into highly successful or skilled readers. Pupils must take an active role in developing their abilities.

The experimental group's positive results suggest that the QAR strategy used in this study may be successfully applied in other teaching contexts. To ascertain whether this is the case, English teachers may apply the research methodology used in this study to other subgroups of English major students – for example, students with a higher level of language proficiency. The obtained results can be compared to those obtained for lower-level groups of English major students. This will demonstrate whether the QAR strategy has an effect on or improves the reading performance of groups of pupils with varying levels of proficiency. This demonstrates an adequate preparation for pupils entering higher education or reading in the real world.

The authors of materials should consider which strategies might benefit pupils in terms of academic reading and reading in everyday life, as well as how and in what contexts a particular strategy is best applied. Teachers should be guided in order to make the most effective use of the reading activities provided. This means that strategies can be used effectively and appropriately in a wide variety of reading situations and contexts. A

meaningful reading course supplemented by the QAR strategy should result in increased reading comprehension success for students. Given that the QAR strategy employed in the study appears to have been effective in encouraging participants to employ a broader range of strategies and to improve certain aspects of their English reading abilities, additional research could be conducted to examine variations on the QAR strategy in other contexts.

## Conclusion

The Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy is fairly successful on students' reading comprehension of explanation material, according to the research findings. The experimental group's positive results suggest that the QAR technique utilised in this study could be successfully adapted to other instructional environments. English teachers, particularly those in secondary schools, can use the QAR strategy as an alternative strategy for enhancing pupils' narrative reading achievement and the teaching and learning process. The QAR strategy suggests that pupils should learn to read more interestingly and attractively, not just narrative texts, but also other types of texts, as the QAR strategy can be applied to a variety of types of texts. This research can serve as a theoretical foundation for future researchers who wish to conduct similar studies using a variety of variables and conditions and concentrating on aspects of reading comprehension.

By incorporating various techniques, such as the QAR strategy, into their English instruction, teachers can assist students in developing their ability to learn English skills, particularly reading. The QAR strategy can be used to pique pupils' interest and involvement in reading descriptive text, ensuring that they are not bored while learning to read in English. Pupils must understand that learning English is not a one-way street. To accomplish the learning objective, pupils should participate in the classroom activity designed by the teacher. By participating in the activity, pupils can also improve their English proficiency and social skills. Proficiency is not solely the responsibility of the teacher; it is also contingent upon the pupils' active participation in the language learning process.

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