

**THE USE OF QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR (QtA) STRATEGY
IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' ABILITY IN READING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT
AT THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP ISLAM PLUS JANNATUL
FIRDAUS PEKANBARU**

Wahyu Presetyo ¹⁾, M. Fadhly Farhy Abbas ²⁾

¹⁾ Universitas Lancang Kuning

wahyuprasetyo119@gmail.com

²⁾ Universitas Lancang Kuning

fadhly@unilak.ac.id

Abstract: Students at SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru had problems in understanding the text when reading process, those were because: the students ought to construct of generic structure of descriptive text namely identification and description. The students ought to comprehend the contents of identification. The students ought to comprehend the contents of description. Then, the researcher tested based-score of reading descriptive text, the researcher found that the students' mean score was just 68. This research aimed to improve the students' ability in reading descriptive text by using Questioning the Author (QtA) Strategy. Thus, this research conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR) consisting of one cycles. There were 15 students at Grade VII of SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru as the participants of the research. To gain the data, the researcher used four instruments namely: test, observation, field note, and interview. The result of the reading test in cycle 1 (78.33) was better than the based-score. The factors influenced the changing of students' ability in reading descriptive text were the vocabulary mastery, the condition of the class, and absolutely the strategy used by the teacher in teaching reading. In conclusion, Questioning the Author (QtA) strategy can improve the students' ability in reading descriptive text.

Keywords: Questioning the Author (QtA) Strategy, Reading, and Descriptive

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a process to get meaning from words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts. Reading is one of crucial skill that should be mastered by the students in learning English after listening, speaking and writing. It connects the writer or author to the reader. It will build a communication between the reader and writer in understanding a printed material or text. Through reading, readers can get much knowledge that can be useful in getting information.

Based on English Syllabus of the Curriculum (*KTSP* 2006) of the seventh grade of junior high school, the students were required to comprehend text types in form of Procedure and Descriptive text. In this research, the researcher just focuses on the Descriptive text because most of students face some problems in identifying the information.

To solve problems faced by the students, the teacher should apply appropriate strategy to help the students in comprehending the texts. Therefore, the researcher would like to apply a reading strategy that so called Questioning the Author (QtA) strategy. Blachowich and Ogle (2008:123) states that questioning the author strategy helps students learn to think more about who has written a text. Students are encouraged to “query” the author. It means, the students just focus on the author and thinking about how the author has written for them as reader. After that, the students answer the questions given. Finally, Questioning the Author is an effective strategy for helping students focus on their content area reading assignment, because it encourages them to interact with their reading and create meaning from it by talking time to analyze the author’s purpose rather than merely reading what the text says.

A. Reading

According to Moreillon (2007:10) defines reading is as an active process that requires a great deal of practice and skill. The students should read actively to keep focus on the text to get the message and information from reading text. Improving the students reading skill is needed to practice more and more. Through practice, of course the students can improve their reading skill.

Moreover, Farrel (2009:20) explain that reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader’s exiting knowledge, the information suggested by the written language and the context of the reading situation. Reading is not passive skill, as it involves the readers active interaction with what is presented in the text in order to make sense of what is written. In constructing the meaning, the readers should understand the ideas, information of feeling from the text.

Based on the explanation of some experts above, it can be concluded that reading is not only the relationship between the text and the reader’s background knowledge, but also the relationship between the author and the text. The relationship between the text and the students background knowledge will determine the students comprehension. Reading also provides a situation of the students to analyze what the writer purpose in the text. So, that they can get the meanings, messages and information from what they have read.

B. Teaching Reading

Teacher should make the students easy to understand content of the text. Therefore, by teaching reading the students can develop their knowledge in reading. In teaching reading, teachers are required to be able to motivate students'

interest in reading because teaching reading is not only the way to teach students how to read a text but also how to comprehend the text. Rao (2004: 197) states that teaching reading is difficult works, teacher must be aware of the progress that student are making and adjust the information of the text. There is a benefit in teaching reading.

Moreover, Nunan (2003: 67) mentions teaching reading usually has at least two aspects such as; first, it can be refer to teaching learners who are learning to read for the very first time. Second, teaching reading refers to teaching learners who already have reading skills in their first language. So, in teaching reading the teacher can guide the students to learn how to read with skill in comprehending a reading text on reading subject.

Meanwhile, Linse (2005:71) defines that teaching of reading is the process to derive the meaning as well as analyze and synthesize what the students have read. Besides, the aim of teaching reading is to help the students get adequate reading competence. In conclusion, the writer can conclude that reading is process of the students understand content the text of the teacher with well and easy understand by the students. Then, teaching reading can improve students ability and can increase students vocabulary.

Based on the explanation above, the writer concludes that teaching reading is the activity that will be done by the teacher. Beside that, teaching reading can help the students to acquire the ability to understand the text. In teaching reading, the teachers have three stages of it, that are: pre –reading is the teachers prepare the learners for what they are going to read. Next, while –reading is teacher help the learners to understand about the text.

The last is post –reading, in this stage the teachers help learners to connect what the have read with their own ideas and experience, just as the teacher often do real life.

C. Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a part of factual genres (Wardiman et al, 2008:122). It has social function which is to describe a particular person, place, or thing. Descriptive gives sense impression like the feel, sound, taste, and look of things through words. Its aim is also to inform the readers about how something or someone looks like. The characteristic features of a person, an animal or a particular thing become the focus of descriptive text. The point is that descriptive text gives a description of something in particular in order to help the people perceive it through words.

Oshima and Hogue (2007:61) state “descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes and/or sounds. Descriptive paragraph tells the subject looks, sounds, feels, taste, and or smells like. As you might expect, a descriptive paragraph “describe” ideas and example focus on a particular subject.

Another opinion was given by Hutchinson (2005: 5). She stated that descriptive writing to the students describes something clearly to create vivid image in the minds of audience. In creating it writer can use vivid nouns, vivid verbs, and vivid adjective. So, to describe something the writer has to create vivid image. This can lead the reader catches the image of what is writer described.

From the explanation above, the researcher concludes that descriptive text simply describes about person, place or thing. If the writer wants to

read/comprehend a descriptive text, they only need to go to the object and take a note by using questioning the author strategy. In reading descriptive text, the reader must concern on the generic structure in order to understand the text. After knowing how the writer arrange the text, the readers will be easier to comprehend throughout the text.

D. Questioning the Author (QtA) Strategy

Housel (2002:72) states that Questioning the Author is a strategy which help students take an active, questioning attitude toward text. By using the Questioning the Author Strategy in teaching reading, it can make the students are easy in comprehending the text. Beside that, the students can also finding the answer of the questions based on the text easily. By using this strategy, the students can be more active and make possible connection to the material.

In addition, Blachowich and Ogle (2008:123) says that questioning the author strategy helps students learn to think more about who has written a text. They develop dialogue with the author like a person talking with them face to face. Students are encouraged to “query” the author. Its mean, the students just focus on the author and thinking about how the author has written for them as reader. After that, the students answer the questions given. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Questioning the Author strategy is a strategy helps students to think more about what the author says.

According to Housel (2002:72-73), there are seven procedures in using Questioning the Author Strategy. They are:

- a. Arrange the classroom desk into a U-shape so that students can easily see and interact with each other.
- b. Teach your students to view authors as fallible.
- c. Plan the Questioning the Author lesson by reading the text to determine for yourself the major concepts you want students to understand.
- d. Segment the text by deciding on specific stopping points where you will initiate queries and class discussion.
- e. Establish queries for each segment, queries should be open-ended and put the onus for developing understanding on the students typical queries include the following: (What does the writer mean by?, What is the writer message?, What is the writer trying to say? And, What is the writer purpose in telling us this?).
- f. Reading the text aloud with the students, stopping at the designated points stating a query and guiding students discussion.
- g. During discussion you may reiterate the key points from a students contribution in another way.

You want your students to see you as a learner who ask question. So, it is a good idea to occasionally deflect students can effectively answer.

2. METHOD

In accordance with the purpose of the reasearch, this study implemented a classroom action research (CAR) design. According to Kemmis and Mac Taggart (2000: 274), Classroom action research typically involves the use of qualitative interpretive modes of inquiry and data collection by teachers (often with help from academics) with a view to teachers making judgments about how to improve

their own practices. The practice of classroom action research has a long tradition but has swung in and out of favor, principally because the theoretical work that justified it lagged behind the progressive educational movements that breathed life into it at certain historical moments. In short, classroom action research is a research design that can be used in teaching and learning process. The principle of this research is to solve the students' problems in reading descriptive text and improve the learning process be better than what used to be done previously.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

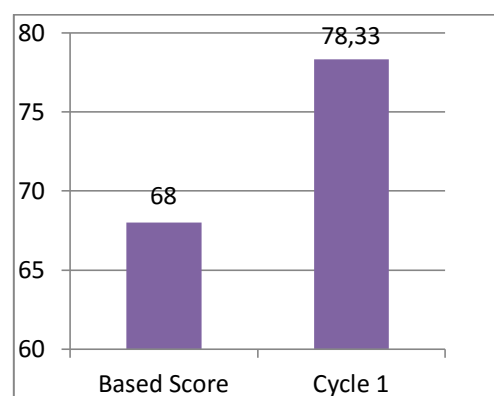
This chapter shows the description of data analysis. There were two research questions that would be answered in this chapter. Firstly "To what extent can questioning the author (QtA) strategy improve students' ability in reading descriptive text at the seventh grade students of SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru?" and secondly "What factors influence the changing of students' ability in reading descriptive text by using questioning the author (QtA) strategy at the seventh grade students of SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru?". Both of these questions would be answered based on the data obtained from the test, observation checklist, field note, and the interview.

After analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher examined whether questioning the author strategy could improve the students' reading. The result was explained below:

The Result of Students' Reading Test from the Based Score to Cycle 1

Test	Average	Category
Based Score	68	Failed
Cycle 1	78.33	Passed

The Result of Students' Reading Test from the Based Score to Cycle 1



Based on the table and diagram above, it was presented that the students' reading score was improved because it could pass the passing grade criteria ≥ 70 . As explained above, the final average was 78.33.

The reseracher had conducted teaching descriptive text based on the procedure of questioning the author strategy, and there were some observations that were done by the collaborator and the researcher. Previously, it was observed by collaborator while having teaching process by using questioning the author strategy, and also the text. This was conducted in every meeting. The collaborator also wrote notes about the class activity namely the teacher's and the students' activities in every meeting.

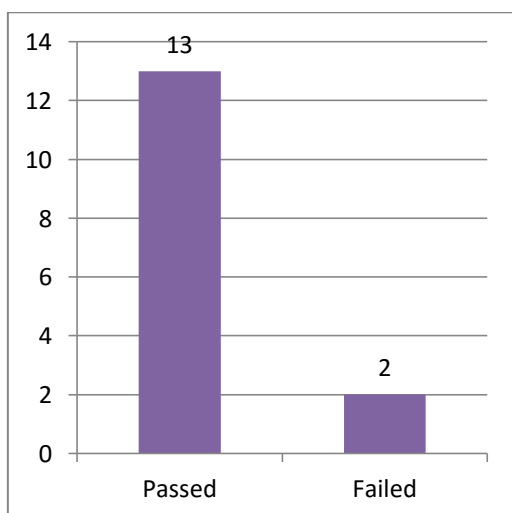
Furthermore, the researcher gave the reading test for the students. The aim

was to know the students' ability in reading descriptive text. In this test, the researcher gave some text about "Fotball Players". The average score of the first cycle test was presented below.

The Students' Reading Ability in Cycle 1

Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Passed	13	86.67%
Failed	2	13.33%

The Students' Reading Score in Cycle 1

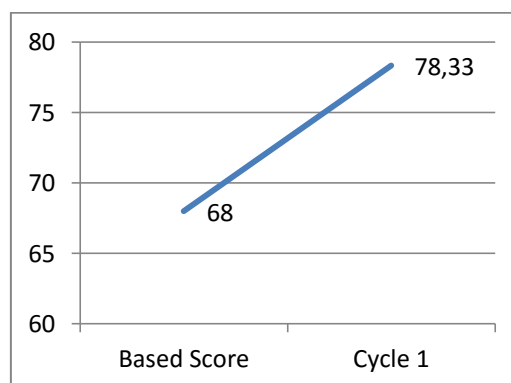


Based on the table and diagram above, there were 13 students who passed the passing grade criteria, and 2 were failed. The average score of the students' ability in reading descriptive text was 78.33. Comparing to the based score, it was much better than based score, with increased point 10.33. The comparison and increased point were shown in the table below:

The Increased Point of the Students' Reading Score from the Based Score to Cycle 1

Test	The Mean Score
Based Score	68
Increased Point	10.33
Cycle 1	78.33

The Increased Point of the Students' Reading Score from the Based Score to Cycle 1



Refers to the result of the first cycle, it could be summarized that comparison the score of the students' reading by using questioning the author strategy was increased from the based score to cycle 1. The researcher and the collaborator found that the score in cycle 1 was higher than based score. In based-score, the mean score was 68, and in reading test of cycle 1 was 78.33 with the increased point 10.33. So, the collaborator and the researcher agreed to finish the research on the cycle 1.

The researcher need to reflect all things done from meeting one to meeting four. The reflection aimed to improve some actions for the next cycle. The researcher and collaborator had done

evaluation by using test. This reflection aimed to improve for the next cycle. This consists of some important points the researcher still found some problems in relation to students' ability in reading descriptive text within cycle 1. The class average score in cycle 1 was higher than based score, there are only two students who could not pass the passing-grade criteria. It means that, there were more students who had passes the passing grade criteria, especially in reading descriptive text. According to all the data obtained in cycle 1, the collaborator and the researcher finally stated that the students' ability in reading descriptive text score from based score to cycle 1 had improved. The students' improvement was also found in the students' reading mean score, it was 68 for the based score, 78.33 for the cycle I. Accordingly, the researcher decided to finish the research on the cycle 1, because the average score of students' ability in reading descriptive text had reached the passing grade criteria with almost all students could pass it.

Based on the findings of this study, simplification improved reading ability of students SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Baleghizadeh, 2011), which similarly reported that the results of the research revealed that the participants in all the experimental groups outperformed their peers in the control group. Nevertheless, the participants' reading scores who had been trained in QtA were significantly higher than the scores of their peers in the other three groups. This indicates the value of training students in generating their own comprehension questions.

The primary goal of this study, however, was to find out whether or not questioning the author (QtA) strategy can improve students' ability in reading

descriptive text at the seventh grade students of SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru and explain the factors that changing of students' ability in reading descriptive text by using questioning the author (QtA) strategy at the seventh grade students of SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru.

The interesting finding of the study, however, is concerned with the first research question which sought to explore whether learners who discussed texts through receiving training in questioning the author strategy can improve students' ability in reading descriptive text. The answer to this question was also a positive. This suggests that training in QtA significantly improved reading ability on descriptive text of the participants.

From based score, the students' mean score was 68, and it was increased in cycle 1, the mean score was 78.33. It means that questioning the author strategy could better improve the students' ability in reading descriptive text. The increased point from based score to cycle 1 was significant, moreover the improvement could be seen in the number of students who could reach the passing grade criteria in which in cycle 1, there were thirteen students passed, otherwise in based-score there are only seven students who could pass the passing grade criteria.

The strength of questioning the author strategy is that this strategy provides very simple queries or questions which are easily understood by students to respond. The way how to apply the queries could be adjusted to the students' or the class need based on the certain situation, it can be in the middle of reading the text or in the end of finishing reading the text. Therefore, it

would help the students to comprehend the text overall.

However, this strategy have a little weakness, in which the researcher or teacher need to seek for longer reading text to make sure that there is some information in the text students require to gain. For shorter reading text, it would contribute very few queries or questions stated based on the text's content.

The stength is supported by the theory, Blachowich and Ogle (2008:123) says that questioning the author strategy helps students learn to think more about who has written a text. They develop dialogue with the author like a person talking with them face to face. Students are encouraged to "query" the author. Its mean, the students just focus on the author and thinking about how the author has written for them as reader. After that, the students answer the questions given. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Questioning the Author strategy is a strategy helps students to think more about what the author says.

Finally, the use of questioning the author strategy was very useful to improve the students' ability in reading descriptive text. By applying this strategy affectively, the teacher could increase the students' ability in reading descriptive text. Also, there were more students' who could pass the passing grade in cycle 1 than based score. It was caused some factors. The students' average score in reading descriptive text in cycle 1 was improved from based score.

4. CONCLUSION

After conducting this classroom action research at grade seven students of SMP Islam Plus Jannatul Firdaus Pekanbaru, and therefore based on the research findings, it can be concluded that:

1. Questioning the Author (QtA) Strategy can improve the students' ability in reading descriptive text. It could be seen from the number of students who could reach the passing-grade criteria in based-score (7 students), got better in cycle one (13 students), likewise the students' reading score in cycle 1 (78.33) was higher than the students' average at based-score (68).
2. The factors that influence the changing of students' ability in reading descriptive text are the vocabulary mastery of the students, the condition of the class whether it was nice and comfortable or not, and absolutely the strategy used by the teacher in teaching reading.

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