

# **IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION SKILL THROUGH QTB STRATEGY**

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## **Abstract**

The paper reports the research “Improving Reading Comprehension Skill through QTB Strategy.” It aimed at discovering the effectiveness of reading comprehension instruction, the use of reading comprehension strategies, and the improvement of reading comprehension skill.

The research was conducted through the Class Action Research (CAR) method in two cycles, each going with three phases: plan, act and observe, and reflect. It was given to the twelfth graders of Science Program 2 in SMA Negeri 1 Babakan Kabupten Cirebon. The data were collected from the subjects through structured observation, questionnaire, and written reading comprehension test. The first was instrumented with checklist formats to record the data of instructional plan, teaching performance, and learning performance. The second was to record the data of students’ knowledge and application of reading strategies. And the third was to record the data of students’ reading comprehension skills. The data were then analyzed through descriptive statistical formulas, from coding, to scoring, and to grading.

The analyses of them led to the results, that, by QTB Strategy the instruction was effective, and from cycle one to cycle two the effectiveness improved; that the students were aware of and used the strategies when they were reading, and it improved in every cycle; and that the students improved in skill, and it occurred from pre treatment to the treatment of cycle one, and to the one of cycle two. In conclusion, the QTB Strategy could improve the effectiveness of reading comprehension instruction, the students’ knowledge and application of reading comprehension strategies, and the students’ reading comprehension skill.

## **Introduction**

Reading skill is an important part of, and can not be apart from, the four language skills. It is an internally active process of understanding written passage and changing it into knowledge or information as a basis for listening, speaking and writing. A listener recalls prior knowledge, he or she got from reading, to catch what a speaker says. A speaker and a writer use what they have in mind, after they input it from reading, to give message to their listeners and readers. Even, a reader him- or herself must relate what he or she has already read to what he or she is reading. Listeners, speakers, readers, and writers are in better position to receive and produce message if they have sufficient reading skill.

School-Based Curriculum 2006, generated from Competence-Based Curriculum 2004, for English subject, has four theoretical foundations –competence model, language model, literacy level, and language competence progress (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2004). In literacy theory, Wells (1987, in Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2004) suggests four levels: performative level, functional level, informational level, and epistemic level. Senior high school students should reach to informational level. By this level, they are expected to be able to access science and knowledge with English. Yusak (2006) states that informational level focuses on the role that literacy plays in the communication of knowledge, particularly

discipline-based knowledge; the curricular emphasis on reading and writing –particularly reading; the student’s use for accessing the accumulated knowledge in order to construct a meaning which reciprocate the intention of the writer; and being a text participant (able to ‘comprehend’ the text).

Language competence progress theory states that language learning run in continuum, starting from oral simple-to-complex mode to literal simple-to-complex mode of language. In senior high school, students start to study the latter. They begin to deal with the texts of written mode containing a variety of lexical items, noun phrase structures, parts of speech as theme, compound and complex clauses.

In daily class performance, however, most students are lack of capability of going up to the informational level mastery and to the written text comprehension. It was assumed that there were several factors influencing their difficulty. But more closely paid attention, the crucial problem was they did apply ineffective strategies; even some did not use any strategy. What they knew and did in their previous reading lessons was working in guided translation while reading and question-answering after reading. It was assumed that they were focused more on learning the content of reading passage than on learning the skill or strategy. In other words, they were not strategic readers since they were not explicitly aware of how to read in a strategic manner.

Based on the case above, the current research would study what reading strategy the students should have and how it should be instructed. QTB Strategy was proposed to be the solution. So, the questions in this research were:

1. *Is the QTB Strategy able to effect reading comprehension instruction of explanation text?*
2. *Is the QTB Strategy able to make students use reading comprehension strategies?*
3. *Is the QTB Strategy able to improve students’ reading comprehension skill?*

This research aimed at improving the quality of reading skill instruction. In specific, it was: 1) to discover whether QTB Strategy can effect reading comprehension instruction of explanation text; 2) to discover whether QTB Strategy can make students use reading strategies; 3) to discover whether QTB Strategy can improve students’ reading comprehension skill.

## **Literary Review**

QTB stands for Question-Type Based. QTB Strategy implies two main strategies: learning strategy and teaching strategy. The former is a sequence of activities the students do to get reading comprehension skill; the latter is a series of procedure the teacher does to have his students be aware of and use reading comprehension strategies. Both are developed in the basis of question types. Invented by the researcher himself, QTB Strategy is influenced by some expert concepts, starting from “Reading Comprehension,” “Reading Comprehension Strategy”, “Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction”, and “Question Types”.

*Reading comprehension* is an actively receptive effort done by a reader using his or her knowledge to catch what a printed text suggests. More comprehensively, Devine (1986) defines:

Reading comprehension is the process of using syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical information found in printed texts to reconstruct in the reader’s mind, using the knowledge of the world he or she possesses, plus appropriate cognitive skills and reasoning ability, a hypothesis or personal explanation which may account for the intended message that existed in the writer’s mind as the printed text was prepared.

*Reading comprehension strategy* is specific cognitive procedures that guide readers to become aware of how well they comprehend as they attempt to read and write (NRP, 2000). Brown (2007) enumerates ten strategies for reading comprehension. They are identifying the purpose in reading, using graphemic rules and patterns, using silent reading technique, skimming the text, scanning the text, using semantic mapping, guessing when feeling not certain, analyzing vocabulary, distinguishing between literal and implied meaning, and capitalizing on the discourse markers. NRP (2000) recommends six reading strategies. Those are comprehension monitoring, using graphic and semantic organizers, using the structure of the stories, answering questions, generating questions, and summarizing.

*Reading comprehension strategy instruction* is the teaching and learning process that trains students about how to read strategically in order to be strategic readers. National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) recommends a model for reading comprehension instructional strategy of Palinscar and Brown (1984) and Rosenshine et al. (1996), that is, *explain/model/scaffold-practice-apply* model.

*Question types* are the kinds of items asking a variety of information, ideas, or message. In reading comprehension field, they have been identified and formulated by experts according to different dimensions. Raphael (1986) with his Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy divides questions into two levels with four types: “In the Text” level, questions constitute “*Right There*” question and “*Think and Search*” question. “In My Head” level, they comprise “*Author and Me*” question and “*On My Own*” question (<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/skill-builder/reading-comprehension/48699.html>). Day and Park (2005) show six types of questions: literal, reorganization, inference, prediction, evaluation, and personal response. Mohamad (1999) and Tankersley (2003) group questions into three types: literal question, referential or interpretative question, and critical question. Pearson and Johnson (1978, in Devine, 1986) suggest three types of questions, those are, textually explicit questions or factual recall questions, textually implicit questions that have answers on the page but are not obvious, and scriptually implicit questions that require some prior knowledge to be answered. The question book of state examination 2009 contains seven types of questions of reading comprehension, namely general idea, main idea, communicative purpose, specific information, detailed information, word meaning, and word reference.

The concepts suggested by the experts above affect the working of QTB Strategy. Firstly, the question type principles are identified and certain question types are selected according to the instructional need. Secondly, reading comprehension strategy theories are taken into inventory and some that are assumed to be able to expose the selected question types are determined as those that are learned, taught, and researched. Finally, the reading comprehension instructional strategy concepts are reviewed, and then one is adapted to be applied.

As a result, seven types of questions, two reading comprehension strategies, and four steps of instructional strategy integrate and work together. The substances that the questions ask about and indicate their types are: 1) topic or general idea of a text, 2) main idea of a paragraph, 3) communicative purpose of a text writer, 4) specific information in a text, 5) detailed information in a text, 6) word meaning in a text, and 7) word reference in a text. The determined strategies of reading comprehension are: 1) answering questions and 2) generating questions. And the steps adapted in the instructional strategy are: 1) explaining the nature of questions classifying them into 7 types, 2) modeling the strategies of answering and generating them, 3) practicing the strategies, and 4) applying them.

The selected question types, the determined reading strategies, and the adapted instruction, that all are integrated in QTB Strategy, use explanation text as the topic. It is one genre whose function is to explain how or why natural or socio-cultural phenomena occur; that is generally written through such steps as from general statement to sequenced explanation until conclusion; and that contains such language features as generic and non-human participants, material and relational processes, temporal and causal circumstances and conjunctions, and passive voice (Anderson and Anderson, 1997; Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2004).

Prior research findings have underlain this study. Dealing with the use of reading strategy, Yen-Chi Fan (2010) gives some evidences suggested by some experts.

“Paris et al. (1983) highlight that learning to be a strategic reader can promote reading comprehension and “failure to be strategic in reading may result from either developmental inability or poor learning” (p.293). Palincsar & Brown (1984) suggest that strategic reading helps students, especially low-achieving learners, avoid comprehension failure and enhance their retention of the text. Koda (2004) points out that strategic reading can not only compensate for learners’ comprehension deficiency but also develop their critical thinking.”

Yen-Chi Fan makes inference that “... comprehension strategy instruction which focuses on teaching reading strategies to students to help them become strategic readers and more self-regulated learners seems not only promising but also necessary.” Unless they are explicitly taught to apply cognitive procedures they are not likely to learn, develop, or use them. Readers at all levels, in fact, can benefit from explicit comprehension strategy instruction.

In term of *reading strategy instruction through questions*, some experts provide their findings. Brown and colleagues give “... empirical evidence that effective instruction in question answering leads to statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension, when compared to regular classroom reading instruction.”

## **Methodology**

### *Research Method*

The current research used *Class Action Research* (CAR) method. In procedure, it adopted Kemmis and Taggart’s model, suggesting at least two cycles with three phases in each: plan, act and observe, and reflect.

### *Research Subject*

This research was conducted in SMA Negeri 1 Babakan, located at 4 Jalan Pangeran Sutajaya Kecamatan Babakan Kabupaten Cirebon. It was concentrated in the twelfth grade of Science Study Program 3, consisting of 40 students, 13 males and 27 females. The topic taught and learnt was “Reading Explanation Text about Natural Phenomena”.

### *Data Collection Technique*

This research used three techniques to collect data. 1) *Structured observation* was done by two participant observers, each instrumented with three kinds of checklist formats to record three components: instructional plan, teaching performance, and learning performance. 2) *Questionnaire* was given by the teacher to the subjects to record the knowledge and

application of reading comprehension strategies. And, 3) *Reading Comprehension test* was given by the teacher, to record students' reading comprehension skill.

*Instrument Validation*

The reading comprehension test had passed validation process through the measurement of item difficulty (Formula 1) and discrimination power (Formula 2).

Formula 1: Item Difficulty Analysis

$IF = \frac{FH + FL}{N}$	IF = Item Facility FH = Frequency High FL = Frequency Low N = Number of subjects
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Formula 2: Discrimination Power Analysis

$ID = \frac{FH - FL}{N}$	ID = Item Discrimination Power FH = Frequency High FL = Frequency Low N = 27.5 % of subjects
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Then, The result was consulted to such a criteria table as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Item Difficulty and Item Discrimination Power Analysis

Difficulty Level		Discriminating Power	
Indexes	Description	Indexes	Description
0.71 – 1.00	Low	0.71 – 1.00	Very good
0.31 – 0.70	Mid	0.41 – 0.70	Good
0.00 – 0.30	High	0.20 – 0.40	Fair
		0.00 – 0.19	Unfair

The scores were correlated to their existing scores using two techniques: *Pearson Product Moment* (Formula 3) to measure the validity and *K-R21* (Formula 4) to measure the reliability of whole items.

Formula 3: Pearson Product Moment

$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X) (\sum Y)}{\sqrt{(N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2) (N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2)}}$	r <sub>xy</sub> = Coefficient Correlation X = Scores of X test Y = Scores of Y test N = Number of both test items
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Formula 4: K-R 21

$r = \frac{N}{N-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum x^2 (N - \sum x)}{NS^2} \right)$
<p> <math>r</math> = Test reliability coefficient  <math>N</math> = Number of test items  <math>\sum x</math> = Average of test scores  <math>S</math> = Standard deviation         </p>

Then, the results were referred to such a criteria table as in Table 2.

Table 2: Coefficient Correlation Criteria

Coefficient	Correlation
0.80 – 1.00	Very high
0.60 – 0.79	High
0.40 – 0.59	Mid
0.20 – 0.39	Low
0.00 – 0.19	Very low

### Data Analysis

The research data were analyzed through descriptive statistic. Observation result data were done through *coding, scoring, grading, and interpreting* to find the effectiveness of instructional plan, teaching performance, and learning performance.

1. Coding

Letters A, B and C were given to code the observation forms of teacher’s instructional plan and teaching performance, and students’ learning performance.

2. Scoring

0 – 4 scale was used to score the response to the items in the forms of teacher’s instructional plan and teaching performance, and students’ learning performance

3. Grading

The following formulas were applied to grade the result of the scoring.

a. Instructional plan, teaching performance, and learning performance

Formula 5: Grading of Teacher’s Instructional Plan

$ip = \frac{S}{IS} \times 100$	<p> <math>ip</math> = Grade of instructional plan  <math>S</math> = Score  <math>IS</math> = Ideal score         </p>
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Formula 6: Grading of Teaching Performance

$tp = \frac{S}{IS} \times 100$	<p>tp = Grade of Teaching Performance                  S = Score                  IS = Ideal score</p>
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Formula 7: Grading of Students' Learning Performance

$lp = \frac{S}{IS} \times 100$	<p>lp = Grade of Learning Performance                  S = Score                  IS = Ideal score</p>
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Formula 8: Grading of the Average of Instructional Plan Grades

$IP = \frac{IP1 + IP2}{2}$	<p>IP = Average of instructional plan grades                  IP1 = 1<sup>st</sup> instructional plan grade                  IP2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> instructional plan grade</p>
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Formula 9: Grading of the Average of Teaching Performance Grades

$TP = \frac{TP1 + TP2}{2}$	<p>TP = Average of teaching performance grades                  TP1 = 1<sup>st</sup> teaching performance grade                  TP2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> teaching performance grade</p>
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Formula 10: Grading of the Average of Learning Performance Grades

$LP = \frac{LP1 + LP2}{2}$	<p>LP = Average of learning performance grades                  LP1 = 1<sup>st</sup> learning performance grade                  LP2 = 2<sup>nd</sup> learning performance grade</p>
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Formula 11: Average of Instructional Plan, Teaching Performance, and Learning Performance Grades

$ITL = \frac{IP + TP + LP}{3}$	<p>ITL = Average of instructional plan, teaching performance, and learning performance grades                  IP = Average of instructional plan grades                  TP = Average of teaching performance grades                  LP = Average of learning performance grades</p>
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Formula 12: Achieving Power of Instructional Plan, Teaching Performance and Learning Performance

$AP = \frac{n}{N} \times 100$	<p>AP = Achieving power of Instructional Plan, Teaching Performance, and Learning Performance</p> <p>n = Number of components achieving the passing grade</p> <p>N = Number of all components</p>
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b. Strategy Knowledge and Application

Formula 13: Grading of Students' Strategy Knowledge and Application

$ska = \frac{S}{IS} \times 100$	<p>SKA = Grade of Strategy Knowledge and Application</p> <p>S = Obtained score</p> <p>IS = Ideal Score</p>
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Formula 14: Average of Strategy Knowledge and Application Grades

$SKA = \frac{G}{N}$	<p>SKA = Average Grade of Strategy Knowledge and Application</p> <p>G = Sum of all grades</p> <p>N = Number of subjects</p>
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Formula 15: Achieving Power of Strategy Knowledge and Application

$AP = \frac{n}{N} \times 100$	<p>AP = Achieving power of strategy knowledge and application</p> <p>n = Number of students getting the target minimum grade (<math>\geq 70</math>)</p> <p>N = Number of all subjects</p>
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c. Reading comprehension Skill

Formula 16: Grading of Students' Reading Comprehension Skill

$rCS = \frac{S}{MS} \times 100$	<p>rCS = Grades of Individual Reading Comprehension skill</p> <p>S = Obtained score</p> <p>MS = Maximum Score</p>
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Formula 17: Average of Reading Comprehension Skill Grades

$RCS = \frac{G}{N}$	<p>RCS = Average of reading comprehension skill grades</p> <p>G = Sum of all grades</p>
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	N = Number of subjects
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Formula 18: Achieving Power of Reading Comprehension Skill

$AP = \frac{n}{N} \times 100$	AP = Achieving power of reading comprehension skill n = Number of students achieving the passing grade N = Number of all subjects
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4. Interpretation

- a. The result of the analysis of the average grade and the achieving power was consulted to such criteria as in Tabel 3.

Tabel 3: Criteria of Interpreting the Average Grade and the Achieving Power of Instructional Plan, Teaching Performance and Learning Performance

Average Grade		Achieving Power	
Index	Meaning	Index	Meaning
90 – 100	Very effective	90 – 100	Very high
80 – 89	Effective	80 – 89	High
70 – 79	Fairly effective	70 – 79	Fair
60 – 69	Less effective	60 – 69	Low
00 – 59	Ineffective	00 – 59	Very low

- b. The result of the analysis of The average grade was interpreted with reference to such criteria as in Table 4.

Table 4: Criteria of Interpreting the Grade and the Achieving of Strategy Knowledge and Application

Average Grade		Achieving Power	
Index	Meaning	Index	Meaning
90 – 100	Very strategic	90 – 100	Very high
80 – 89	Strategic	80 – 89	High
70 – 79	Fairly strategic	70 – 79	Fair
60 – 69	Less strategic	60 – 69	Low
00 – 59	Not strategic	00 – 59	Very low

- c. The result of the analysis of the average grade of reading comprehension skill was interpreted in accordance to such criteria as in Table 5.

Table 5: Criteria of Interpreting the Grade and Achieving Power of Reading Comprehension Skill

Average Grade		Achieving Power	
Index	Meaning	Index	Meaning
90 – 100	very good	90 – 100	Very high
80 – 89	good	80 – 89	High
70 – 79	fair	70 – 79	Fair
60 - 69	poor	60 – 69	Low
00 – 59	very poor	00 – 59	Very low

## Findings and Discussion

### *Result of Test Instrument Validation*

The analysis result of each of the 30 items, analysed by Formula 1 and 2 and consulted to Table 1, shows that six items (numbers 5, 8, 9, 28, 29, and 30) are low; four (numbers 14, 15, 24, and 26) are high; and the other twenty are mid in difficulty. It also shows that nine items (numbers 5, 8, 9, 14, 24, 26, 28, 29, and 30) are bad in discriminating; the others are fair.

By means of Pearson Product Moment, Formula 3, the calculation of validity level of whole items leads to 0.90. With such a coefficient index, referring to Table 2, the whole items of the instrument have very high correlation. Through K-R 21, Formula 4, the calculation of reliability level brings to 0.55. Consulting to the same table, the coefficient 0.55 is in mid correlation.

It can be concluded that the 10 items of low difficulty and bad discriminating power are rejected. The 20 ones that have not only mid difficulty level but also fair discriminating power are accepted to be the instrument to measure reading comprehension skill.

### *Observation Result*

The data collected from the observation of the first cycle show that the component instructional plan gets 97; teaching performance gets 87; and learning performance gets 58.5. The sum is 239.5, and multiplied by 3 (number of components), so the average is 80.5. Of the three components, two achieve the passing grade and one does not. Two divided by three and multiplied by one hundred is 66, and rounded up it becomes 70, so the achieving power is 70 %. Those of the second cycle show that the instructional plan gets grade 98; teaching performance gets 93; and learning performance gets 82. The sum is 273, and multiplied by 3 (number of components), the average is 91. Of the three components, all achieve the passing grade, so the achieving power is 100 %.

### *Questionnaire Result*

The scores collected from questionnaire of the first cycle show that, in the strategy knowledge and application, one student gets 50; two students get 60; two students get 65; eight students get 70; seventeen students get 75; four students get 80; two students get 85; one student get 90; and three students get 95. The sum is 3000, and multiplied by 40 (number of

subjects), the average is 75. Of the forty subjects, thirty five achieve the passing grade and five do not. Thirty five divided by forty and multiplied by one hundred is 75, so the achieving power is 75. Those of the second cycle show that, in reading strategy knowledge and application, one student gets 60; one other gets 70; eight students get 75; twelve students get 80; ten students get 85; two students get 90; one student gets 95; and 5 students get 100. The sum is 3315 and multiplied by 40 (number of students) the average is 83. Of the forty subjects, thirty nine achieve the passing grade and one does not. Thirty nine divided by forty and multiplied by one hundred is 97.5, so the achieving power is 97.5 %.

#### Test Result

The data collected from the reading comprehension test of the first cycle show that two students get grade 60; five students get 65; seven students get 70; eighteen students get 75; four students get 80; one student gets 85; and three students get 90. The sum is 2960, and multiplied by 40 (number of subjects), the average is 74. Of the forty subjects, seven do not achieve the passing grade and thirty three do. Thirty three divided by forty and multiplied by one hundred is 82.5, so the achieving power is 82.5 %. Those of the second cycle show that one student gets grade 65; nine students get 70; eight students get 75; fourteen students get 80; one student gets 85; one student gets 85; three students get 90; three others get 95; and one student gets 100. The sum is 3155, and multiplied by 40 (number of students), the average is 79. Of the forty subjects, thirty nine achieve the passing grade and one does not. Thirty nine divided by forty and multiplied by one hundred is 97.5, so the achieving power is 97.5 %.

#### Discussion

Instructional plan and performance in cycle one has the average 80.5 and the achieving power 70. Referring to Table 3, the instruction generally runs *fairly effectively* and has *fair* achievement. In cycle two they become 91 and 100, so the instruction gets *very effective* and gets to *very high* achievement.

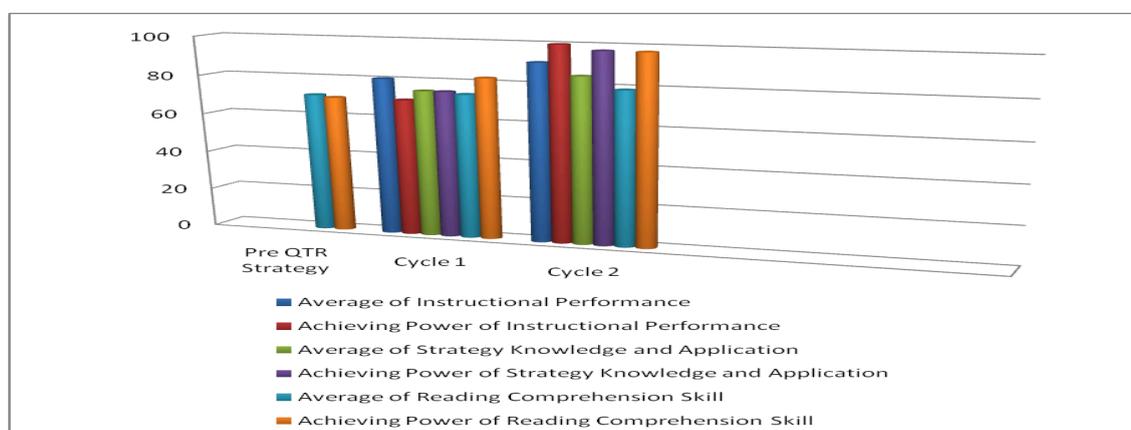
Strategy knowledge and application in cycle one gets 75 in both average and achieving power. Referring to Table 4, the subjects collectively do reading comprehension in *fairly strategic* manner and have *fair* achievement. In cycle two they become 83 and 97.5, so the subjects do it *strategically* and have *very high* achievement.

For reading comprehension skill, prior to class-action-research treatment, the subjects get 71 in average and 70 in achieving power. It means they have *fair* reading skill and *fair* achievement. In cycle one they get 74 in average and 82.5 in achieving power. Referring to Table 5, although the subjects are still in *fair* level in reading comprehension skill, they have higher grade than they did before the treatment. In achievement they get to *high* level. In cycle two they become 79 and 97.5. In average although the subjects still have *fair* reading comprehension skill, they have higher grade than they did in cycle 1. In achievement, they get to *very high* level.

From the analysis above, it can be concluded that there is improvement in both average grade and achieving power from pre period, to cycle one, until cycle two of the CAR treatment through QTB Strategy.

Periods	Grades		Instructional Plan and Performance		Strategy Knowledge and Application		Reading Comprehension Skill	
	Average	Achieving Power	Average	Achieving Power	Average	Achieving Power	Average	Achieving Power

Pre QTB Strategy						71	70
QTB Strategy	Cycle One	80.5	70	75	75	74	82.5
	Cycle Two	91	100	83	97.5	79	97.5



### Conclusion

The fact shown by the research result states that QTB Strategy does work. It can improve the instructional effectiveness, from “fairly effective” to “very effective” instruction, and from “fair” to “very high” achievement of instruction. Furthermore, QTB Strategy can improve the students’ reading comprehension strategy, from “fairly strategic” to “strategic” reading, and from “fair” to “very high” collective achievement of reading strategy. Finally, it can improve students’ reading comprehension skill, from “lower fair” to “middle fair” until “upper fair” level of reading comprehension and from “fair” to “high” until “very high” level of collective achievement of reading comprehension.

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