
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of Reciprocal Teaching in Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

Scholars, educators and politicians have been interested in English language education for long. Though there's a rising significance of English as a global language, there still needs to be agreement on the most effective techniques for teaching English language skills, especially English as a second language. Understanding the opinions and attitudes of English instructors towards language instruction could definitely assist in shaping educational practices and initiatives. This research sought to evaluate English instructors' perspectives on English language education using the reciprocal teaching strategy. Reciprocal teaching is a cooperative learning strategy that aims to improve students' reading comprehension skills, with four components: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing. English language learning as a second language has become of a wide interest all over the world. As reading comprehension represents one of the key stones of English language learning, the problems of students in the secondary stages in Egypt need to be resolved as a way to facilitate their English language learning. This study is one of the efforts to enhance such students; reading comprehension. It is a descriptive quantitative case study. A teacher questionnaire was used for collecting qualitative data. After preparing, validating and administering the study tool, a questionnaire, to teachers who teach in the experimental language secondary schools, results were in favor of using reciprocal teaching for enhancing these students' reading comprehension.

KEYWORDS

Reciprocal teaching – teachers' perspectives –reading comprehension – English language education

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1. Introduction

Education is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. No single approach can address all of its various aspects. In recent years, many educational experts have advocated for the use of the so-called "critical thinking skills" when discussing alternatives to traditional, didactic methods. Among the alternatives, methods grouped under the term "teaching strategies" have a reputation for being both directly dedicated to the development of critical thinking skills and feasible and valid in educational settings. In this study, we propose that Reciprocal Teaching is a valid teaching strategy capable of improving students as critical thinkers. According to Susan (2013) & Iserbyt (2010) reciprocal teaching, also known as reciprocal learning, is a strategy that puts the students in charge of the content. Mosston and Ashworth (2002) added that reciprocal learning involves students working in pairs, collaborating as doer and observer, to enhance their own and each other's learning through observation and feedback.

Melandita (2019) & Alshehri (2014) mentioned that reading is one of the four English learning skills taught along with listening, speaking, and writing. Reading is the most important of all the skills mentioned above, and considered as a master key for learning process and getting knowledge. Melandita also emphasized the significance of reading in education, stating that it provides students with valuable information beyond what teachers provide, and is crucial for career, study, and daily life. Reciprocal Teaching is a four-step strategy for helping students understand and think critically about what they are reading. The reciprocal teaching strategy was found to be the most effective in improving students' ability to comprehend text. Benefits were discovered in areas other than reading comprehension and among students other than those with disabilities. Given the significant improvement in reading comprehension, teachers should consider using reciprocal teaching as one of several strategies for teaching reading comprehension to students with and without disabilities. Reciprocal Teaching is a strategy in which students take turns leading discussions in their groups. The reciprocal teaching strategy allows students to teach each other and expand their awareness of good reading strategies. Reciprocal teaching is a reading practice that uses guided reading and scaffold talk to develop comprehension skills. It encourages students to read, think, and discuss a text using four comprehension strategies: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing. Group leaders prompt discussions for each strategy, allowing students to refine their skills (Palincsar & Brown, 1985; Palincsar, 2003).

2. Literature Review

Investigating the effect of a variety of methods on reading comprehension was the main core of a lot of scientific researches. For example, questioning (Rosenshine, Meister & Chapman, 1996), summarizing (Bean & Steenwyk, 1984; Doctorow, Wittrock & Marks, 1978; Head, Readence & Buss, 1989; Wang, Sabatini, O'Reilly and Feng, 2017) and clarifying (Graesser & Lehman, 2011; Ishiwa, Sanjose & Otero, 2013). Readers must be given appropriate instructions for improving their deep processing of texts saying, "relevance instructions affect reader goals, comprehension, and processing ". Other researchers concur, agreeing that when teachers implement an appropriate strategy, students become engaged and motivated in the reading class (Ilter, 2009; Soufi, Saad and Nicolas, 2015; Schraw, Magliano and McCrudden (2010). This line was extended to strategies and factors which improve reading comprehension within EFL, given the importance, as noted above, of acquiring this core skill (Ninsuwan, 2015; Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah, 2013; and Krashen, 1989). Reading comprehension is considered as the process of getting meaningful information from a written language (Zablocki, Horn & Cuenca-Carlino, 2017) and, as Ahmadi, Ismail and Abudlla (2013) declared, has a positive effect on communication skills and language acquisition. Similarly, Krashen (1989) mentions that since successful EFL teaching counts on both teachers and learners being and remaining strongly motivated. It is crucial to consider the impact of teaching strategies on students' motivation. Motivation is performed in classrooms; hence, it is imperative that EFL teachers improve classrooms to be full of joy through applying motivating strategies which suit today's learners, Gulbinskienė and Dubovičienė (2015). It was discovered that using blogs in reading classes had a positive effect on EFL learners' motivation for reading, in addition to boosting critical thinking skills, Soufi, Saad and Nicolas (2015). Furthermore, Ilter (2009) added that using technology significantly can contribute to an increase in motivation in relation to EFL learners' reading. Palincsar and Brown (1984) started reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching can be defined as a guided reading comprehension instruction technique. The teacher models the required learning behaviours, after which students become the teachers by forming small groups to discuss the texts and support each other's learning. Palincsar and Brown (1984) selected the following four engagement strategies to represent reciprocal teaching within small discussion groups. In these groups, students take the lead as follows: a) To predict what will come next in the text to be read, which allows students to draw inferences; b) To clarify, which improves students' critical thinking; c) To question, which helps students to comprehend ambiguous concepts; and d) To summarize, which guides students to focus on comprehension. In addition, the four main components of reciprocal teaching have recently been applied to the tuition and practice of reading in EFL classes (Sheng-Shiang & Hui-Chin, 2018; Al-Harby, 2016; Pilten, 2016; Ashegh, 2018). Two studies were conducted by Palincsar and Brown (1984) on different groups of the same age (seventh grade) at separate times. This revealed the beneficial impact of reciprocal teaching strategies on pupils' reading comprehension skills in a number of teaching subjects. So many other studies were conducted for the same purpose on different ages and different stages (Schünemann, Spörer, Völlinger & Brunstein, 2017; Liu & Bu, 2016; Pilten, 2016; Sheng-Shiang & Hui-Chin, 2018; Reichenberg & Kent, 2014). Reichenberg and Kent (2014) tried a quasi-experimental study that was carried out in Sweden. Reciprocal teaching proved to improve comprehension of the third-grade students, while similar results with elementary students have been found by Pilten (2016) in Turkey and Schünemann, Spörer, Völlinger and Brunstein (2017) in Europe, especially Germany. In addition, Liu and Bu (2016) got the results that reciprocal teaching enhanced language proficiency among first-year university students in Shanghai. At last, reciprocal teaching was investigated outside the regular education system by Ashegh (2018). This researcher verified the impact of reciprocal teaching within a continuing education programme on the reading comprehension skills of adult EFL students. He (2018) concluded, "reciprocal teaching could improve reading comprehension performance of EFL intermediate learners in Iran" (p. 28). Are all the four elements within reciprocal teaching of equal benefit is an issue that was a matter of debate. For instance, the theoretical paper by Ahmadi and Gilakjani (2012) assures the benefits got through implementing all of the four reciprocal teaching strategies. But, Sheng-Shiang and Hui-Chin (2018) proved that using reflective essays produced by undergraduate students in Taiwan after reciprocal teaching sessions were of the greatest use for their English texts comprehension.

The achievements of reciprocal teaching on students with different proficiency levels and reading abilities was studied by other researchers (Huang & Yang, 2015; Zablocki et al., 2017). Huang and Yang (2015) mention that reciprocal teaching enhanced the students' skills with a low English level at the Technical University in Southern Taiwan. Zablocki et al. (2017), on the other hand, testified teenagers of low social status in an alternative school in the USA and from various ethnic backgrounds. He discovered that they improved slightly in proficiency. Soonthornmanee (2002), as well, conducted an experiment on high and low reading achievers among Thai university EFL students. He got the results that the low achievers expressed a preference for reciprocal teaching. This helped to develop their skills. An experiment was conducted on some disabled students. It has advocated the use of reciprocal teaching (Gomaa, 2015). In addition, using reciprocal teaching proved to bring additional benefits to students. For instance, first-grade students in Canada have become significantly more engaged in the learning process through interacting and involving themselves in some prepared discussions with their teacher (Mandel, Osana & Venkatesh, 2013). The study of Tarchi and Pinto (2016) on third-grade students from different schools also got the results that reciprocal teaching fostered an interactive environment, whereas Schünemann and colleagues (2017) concluded that there was an increase in team spirit when working in the reciprocal teaching environment.

3. The Study Question:

"Can applying reciprocal teaching in reading comprehension classes improve second language (L2) learners' reading comprehension in the Experimental language secondary schools?"

4. Significance of the study:

To date, no such study was conducted on Experimental language secondary school students. Therefore, the present study is considered as an addition to the field of research into EFL teaching if the uncovered aspects in previous studies in RT are born in mind in relation to age, methodology and context. The participants are male and female teachers in the Experimental language secondary schools in Egypt.

5. Study Limitations:

The study has been conducted according to the following limitations:

1. Sample: Teachers of the experimental language schools in Egypt
2. Educational stage: Secondary stage
3. Governorate: Sharkeya Governorate
4. Strategy: Reciprocal teaching with reading comprehension

6. Method:

This study was designed in accordance with descriptive case study. This is a qualitative research method. This method enables a detailed investigation of an uncontrollable phenomenon or incident. In this study, the descriptive approach was used, the most appropriate to the nature of this study. The questionnaire instrument was used to collect data about the reality of using reciprocal strategy in teaching reading comprehension as a main skill in English language teaching to the Experimental language secondary school students.

7. The Teacher Questionnaire form:

The study instrument has been prepared through referring to the related educational literature related to modern teaching methods in teaching English, especially reciprocal teaching. This helped to determine the major items and formulate minor ones. It is not typically derived from any of other resources, but modifications were made to a number of instruments to suit the educational stage in which it is to be applied.

The Teacher Questionnaire Form was developed by the researchers to determine the opinions of the teachers who used reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension before. In the development of the form, first, the relevant literature was scanned and draft items were created. The questionnaire consists of 25 items. There are five items for each topic: predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarizing and general, four of which represent the main roles of students while studying through the reciprocal approach. The last topic is designated for the strategy in general. Each one of the teachers is requested to tick one of the four options: "Totally Agree, Agree, Disagree, Neutral Totally Disagree". To ensure the content validity of the items, opinions were taken from two language curriculum and instruction experts. Both are from Jazan University, Foreign Languages Department. Accordingly, some items were modified and others were removed. Then, they were arranged in line with expert opinions. Then, it

became ready to use. It took around 20 minutes from the teachers to answer all the questions of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers.

8. Population Sample of the Study:

The study population consisted of a number of teachers of the English language in a number of experimental language secondary schools in Sharkeya Governorate, Egypt. Each of these teachers has the validity to teach in experimental languages schools. This validity is received after a number of standardized exams. They numbered (28) male and (14) female teachers in the academic year 2023/2024. They were chosen following the random stratified method.

9. Reliability and validity:

For the purpose of verifying validity of the instrument content, the questionnaire was reviewed in its initial form by the researchers. Then, this task was done again by a group of experts with experience and expertise in curricula and teaching English at Jazan University. Their suggestions for modification were all modified. Some of the modifications suggested by them included deletion, addition and modifications to the instrument items. This verified the suitability to achieve purposes of the present study. Based on such suggestions and opinions, which were agreed upon around (88%), the required modifications of the instrument were done and it was ready in its final version for application.

10. Data Collection and Analysis:

After administering the questionnaire to the teachers, data was collected to be tabulated for analysis and get the results. Results of all the teachers who were not familiar with the method were deleted to avoid hazardous results. They were only two teachers.

The teachers' results in numbers were as follows:

Item	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Have you used reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension (RTTRC) before?	13	23	2	0	2
1. Predicting: Using this strategy: students can assume predictions concerning what may happen in the reading text.	17	18	3	2	0
based on prior information and data from the text, students can expect results.	3	33	3	1	0
Predicting help students to create hypotheses related to the direction of the text and the author's intent.	16	12	10	2	0
Predicting enables students to get an overall rationale for reading.	6	7	22	5	0
It also supports students to confirm or disconfirm self-generated hypotheses.	1	12	27	0	0
2. Clarifying: Using this strategy: Students ask for clarification about the confusing parts of the text.	20	19	0	1	0
Students ask about unclear vocabulary, concepts, or statements.	8	33	8	1	0
Students ask about unclear vocabulary, concepts, or statements.	5	23	7	5	0
Clarifying helps for the identification of difficult aspects of a text.	33	4	1	2	0
Clarifying enhances the motivation for remediating confusion through re-reading and using external resources (e.g., dictionary).	2	22	3	13	0

Clarifying helps to recognize unfamiliar parts of the text.	17	12	10	1	0
3. Questioning: Students can generate questions on the text content.	25	13	2	0	0
They can ask about specific details.	21	6	12	1	0
They are able to inquire about main ideas.	1	30	11	8	0
They can make inferences on the text topic content.	15	25	0	0	0
Questioning provides a context for exploring the text in a deeper way.	9	16	12	3	0
4. Summarizing: Students can make summary of the main ideas of the text by themselves.	7	24	5	4	0
Students can rephrase ideas in their own words.	16	6	11	7	0
This helps reinforce understanding and identify key information.	33	1	3	3	0
Students identify the major information, topics, and sub-topics within a text.	23	7	6	4	0
Summarizing can provide the impetus for creating a context to understand the specifics of a text.	11	27	1	1	0
General: The teacher's role is to explain the process model initially and to make sure that they can perform the assigned roles.	9	28	1	2	0
Students take turns for leading the group discussions on their own.	1	25	12	2	0
The teacher gradually hands over the different responsibilities to the students.	11	15	13	1	0
The strategy reciprocal nature enhances collaboration between students.	23	10	0	7	0
This strategy promotes active engagement in decisions taking.	6	12	19	3	0

11. Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that almost all of the teachers had favorable impressions of the application of RTTRC because of their comprehensive understanding of this instructional method. The study's objective was to use reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension (RTTRC) with the experimental language secondary school students. Through the data collected, the researcher discovered what the teachers of this stage got in mind in regard to this teaching strategy.

The results of the questionnaire showed that majority of the teachers had more positive opinions regarding reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension. Teachers chose the items that show their support for using this method of teaching in all the five domains.

For the first domain pertaining to predicting, majority of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to all the items in this domain. They showed their agreement with the ideas that using this strategy, students can assume predictions concerning what may happen in the reading text. They can also create hypotheses related to the direction of the text and the author's intent, expect results, get an overall rationale for reading, and confirm or disconfirm self-generated hypotheses.

As per the second domain, clarifying, results show that it enhances the motivation for remediating confusion through re-reading and using external resources and helps to recognize unfamiliar parts of the text. Almost all of the teachers give responses that they agree or totally with that opinion.

Regarding the third domain, questioning, teachers ascertain that students can generate questions on the text content, ask about specific details, inquire about main ideas, make inferences on the text topic content, and questioning provides a context for exploring the text in a deeper way.

As for the fourth domain, summarizing, teachers proved that students can make summary of the main ideas of the text by themselves, rephrase ideas in their own words, understand and identify key information, identify the major information, topics, and sub-topics within a text, and understand specifics of a text.

Even for the general domains, it has been proved that using reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension was a useful strategy in enhancing students' reading comprehension.

12. Conclusion:

In the present study, it was determined if reciprocal teaching is effective in enhancing the experimental language secondary students' reading comprehension skills.

In order to determine the effects of reciprocal teaching on students' performance, teachers' perceptions of reciprocal teaching are investigated utilizing a questionnaire. 40 teachers of those who teach in the experimental secondary schools in Sharkeya Governorate, Egypt took part in this study.

The quantitative analysis of the data reveals that reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension (RTTRC) benefits the students in different ways. RTTRC proved to enhance students' reading comprehension in a number of domains such as predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing. This is clearly shown from the simple statistics appeared in the number of responses to the questionnaire and their ratios. The percentage of all of the items, no exception, showed that majority of the teachers agreed or totally agreed to the questionnaire items. Less responses were neutral and the least were for disagreeing, whereas no responses were for totally disagreeing. To sum up, in an answer to the study question, reciprocal teaching has statistically proved that it could enhance second language experimental language school students' reading comprehension.

13. Recommendations And Limitations:

Based on results of the present study, some areas of investigation need to be studied to enhance students' reading comprehension, especially the university college courses.

Reciprocal teaching needs to be used in different ESP areas of study such as the industrial and commercial schools.

14. Suggestions for Further Research:

1. A similar study needs to be conducted with students to inquire about suitability of the reciprocal strategy with the students and how far they can benefit from it.
2. Studies need to be sought and implement with different experimental language school courses using reciprocal teaching strategy.
3. Some studies are required to scrutinize elements of reciprocal teaching and how far other elements need to be added or removed.

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Appendices:

Appendix (1)
The Questionnaire

Reciprocal teaching is a cooperative learning strategy that aims to improve students' reading comprehension skills, with four components: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing. A group of students take turns acting as the teacher in guiding the comprehension of a text.

Item	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Have you used Reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension (RTTRC) before?					
1. Predicting: Using this strategy: students can assume predictions concerning what may happen in the reading text.					
based on prior information and data from the text, students can expect results.					
Predicting help students to create hypotheses related to the direction of the text and the author's intent.					
Predicting enables students to get an overall rationale for reading.					
It also supports students to confirm or disconfirm self-generated hypotheses.					
2. Clarifying: Using this strategy: Students ask for clarification about the confusing parts of the text.					
Students ask about unclear vocabulary, concepts, or statements.					
Students ask about unclear vocabulary, concepts, or statements.					
Clarifying helps for the identification of difficult aspects of a text.					
Clarifying enhances the motivation for remediating confusion through re-reading and using external resources (e.g., dictionary).					
Clarifying helps to recognize unfamiliar parts of the text.					
3. Questioning: Students can generate questions on the text content.					
They can ask about specific details.					
They are able to inquire about main ideas.					
They can make inferences on the text topic content.					
Questioning provides a context for exploring the text in a deeper way.					
4. Summarizing: Students can make summary of the main ideas of the text by themselves.					
Students can rephrase ideas in their own words.					
This helps reinforce understanding and identify key information.					
Students identify the major information, topics, and sub-topics within a text.					
Summarizing can provide the impetus for creating a context to understand the specifics of a text.					
General:					

The teacher's role is to explain the process model initially and to make sure that they can perform the assigned roles.					
Students take turns for leading the group discussions on their own.					
The teacher gradually hands over the different responsibilities to the students.					
The strategy reciprocal nature enhances collaboration between students.					
This strategy promotes active engagement in decisions taking.					

Appendix (2)

Results Percentages

Item	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Have you used Reciprocal teaching in teaching reading comprehension (RTTRC) before?	32.5%	57.5%	5%	0%	5%
1. Predicting: Using this strategy: students can assume predictions concerning what may happen in the reading text.	42.5%	45%	7.5%	5%	0%
based on prior information and data from the text, students can expect results.	7.5%	82.5%	7.5%	2.5%	0%
Predicting help students to create hypotheses related to the direction of the text and the author's intent.	40%	30%	25%	5%	0%
Predicting enables students to get an overall rationale for reading.	15%	17.5%	55%	12.5%	0%
It also supports students to confirm or disconfirm self-generated hypotheses.	2.5%	30%	67.5%	0%	0%
2. Clarifying: Using this strategy: Students ask for clarification about the confusing parts of the text.	50%	47.5%	0%	2.5%	0%
Students ask about unclear vocabulary, concepts, or statements.	20%	82.5%	20%	2.5%	0%
Students ask about unclear vocabulary, concepts, or statements.	12.5%	57.5%	17.5%	12.5%	0%
Clarifying helps for the identification of difficult aspects of a text.	82.5%	10%	2.5%	5%	0%
Clarifying enhances the motivation for remediating confusion through re-reading and using external resources (e.g., dictionary).	5%	55%	7.5%	32.5%	0%
Clarifying helps to recognize unfamiliar parts of the text.	42.5%	30%	25%	2.5%	0%
3. Questioning: Students can generate questions on the text content.	62.5%	32.5%	5%	0%	0%
They can ask about specific details.	52.5%	15%	30%	2.5%	0%
They are able to inquire about main ideas.	2.5%	75%	27.5%	820%	0%
They can make inferences on the text topic content.	37.5%	62.5%	0%	0%	0%
Questioning provides a context for exploring the text in a deeper way.	22.5%	40%	30%	7.5%	0%
4. Summarizing: Students can make summary of the main ideas of the text by themselves.	17.5%	60%	12.5%	10%	0%
Students can rephrase ideas in their own words.	40%	15%	27.5%	17.5%	0%

This helps reinforce understanding and identify key information.	82.5%	2.5%	7.5%	7.5%	0%
Students identify the major information, topics, and sub-topics within a text.	57.5%	17.5%	15%	10%	0%
Summarizing can provide the impetus for creating a context to understand the specifics of a text.	27.5%	67.5%	2.5%	2.5%	0%
General: The teacher's role is to explain the process model initially and to make sure that they can perform the assigned roles.	22.5%	70%	2.5%	5%	0%
Students take turns for leading the group discussions on their own.	2.5%	62.5%	30%	5%	0%
The teacher gradually hands over the different responsibilities to the students.	27.5%	37.5%	32.5%	2.5%	0%
The strategy reciprocal nature enhances collaboration between students.	57.5%	25%	0%	17.5%	0%
This strategy promotes active engagement in decisions taking.	15%	30%	47.5%	7.5%	0%