

Reciprocal Teaching as a Strategy to Improve Students' Reading Skill

Fenty Andriani

Email fentyandriani14@gmail.com

[Universitas PGRI Ronggolawe Tuban](#)

Abstract

This paper aims to describe how Reciprocal Teaching implemented as a strategy to improve students' reading skill. Reciprocal Teaching is a strategy in which students take turn assuming the role of "teacher" in their small group to conduct the four comprehension components: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing. It involves a high degree of social interaction and collaboration, since students gradually learn to assume the role of teacher in helping their peers construct meaning from text. The role of "teacher" should be rotated on a regular basis, so that all students have a chance to be the leader of the group. After, overall, Reciprocal Teaching is a great way to teach students how to determine important ideas from a reading text while discussing vocabulary, developing ideas and questions, and summarizing information.

Key-word: Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

Introduction

The teaching-learning process of reading has a particular importance as reading is a basic skill to learn something and very fundamental for students. Unfortunately, in fact, many students consider that reading is a tiring and difficult activity as they not only have to read the text but they also have to activate their prior knowledge and match them with the information they get in order to achieve comprehension. Without comprehension, reading is just an activity to decode printed materials with no understanding

However, in the case of comprehending texts, there is a fact that all readers, no matter how good ability they have, occasionally still face comprehension or cognitive failure when reading text (Wade, 2001). Then, if the proficient readers still face comprehension failure how about the poor comprehenders are.

In the case of comprehending text, it seems reasonable if most of the students have difficulty since most of their English teachers apply a testing strategy rather than a teaching one. What the writer means here is that the teachers just ask the students to read a certain text then answer the questions. In this case, actually, the process happening cannot

be called as a strategy to teach reading, but it is appropriate to be called as a way to test students. As stated by Dubin and Bycina (1999) that requiring students to answer a series of comprehension questions when they have finished reading is really a testing rather than a teaching strategy. This is actually an evidence that the teaching strategy of reading comprehension is not successful yet.

Based on the explanation above, therefore, the writer offers a reading teaching strategy that may be able to solve the problem in comprehending text. It is the Reciprocal Teaching strategy. This strategy, based on Palincsar and Brown (1984) identifies four basic strategies (predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing) that help students recognize and react to sign of comprehension breakdown.

The Nature of Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal Teaching is a strategy in which the teacher has the students conduct four comprehension strategies (predicting, question generating, clarifying, and summarizing) by taking turn assuming the role of teacher. Originally, it was developed by Palincsar in 1982. Later, it was refined and operationalized by Palincsar and Brown in 1984. Basically, reciprocal teaching is developed as a technique to help low achievers in elementary and middle schools learn reading for comprehension (Slavin, 2000:264).

Narrowly, reciprocal teaching can be defined as an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue, which is structured by the use of four strategies: predicting, question generating, clarifying, and summarizing, between teachers and students regarding segments of text. Here, the teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue (Palincsar, 1986).

In this case, the dialogue itself, as written by Palincsar, Ransom, and Derber (1989), is used as the medium because of two reasons. Firstly, it is a language format with which children are familiar (as opposed to writing, which may be too difficult for some struggling readers). Secondly, dialogue provides a useful vehicle for alternating control between teacher and students in a systematic and purposeful manner.

Overall, reciprocal teaching is a teaching reading strategy which provides students with four specific strategies that are actively and consciously used as texts are processed. These reading strategies cover Clarifying, Predicting, Questioning, and Summarizing. All of them take place within the context of small group collaborative investigation, which is monitored and guided by the teacher.

The Steps of Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching deals with the activities which are more students centered. Palincsar (1986) states four steps involved in implementing the reciprocal teaching strategy. Those are: predicting, generating questions, clarifying, and summarizing.

First of all, the predicting step is a step which gets the students to speculate on what will be discussed next in the text. To be successful, students must recall relevant background knowledge so they can connect what they are reading with what they already know. Here, the students have a purpose for reading: to confirm or disprove their hypotheses (Palincsar, 1986).

Secondly, generating questions step requires the students to ask questions about the material. Here, they are encouraged to identify key ideas of a text and connect them to their prior knowledge (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). Question generating can reinforce the summarizing strategy and carry the learner one more step along in the comprehension activity. Firstly, when students generate questions, they have to identify the kind of information that is significant enough to provide the substance for a question. They, then, pose this information in question form and self-test to ensure that they can answer their own question. It is important to be underlined that it is a flexible strategy to the extent that students can be taught and encouraged to generate questions at many levels. For example, some school situations require that students master supporting detail information; others require that the students be able to infer or apply new information from text (Palincsar, 1986).

Thirdly, the clarifying step is the step in which the students have to focus on the reasons why the text is difficult to understand, such as: new vocabulary, unclear reference words, and unfamiliar concepts. Students may clarify or ask for clarification in order to make sense of the text. Clarifying is an activity that is particularly important when working with students who have a history of comprehension difficulty. Here, they are taught to be alert to take the necessary of constructing meaning by rereading and asking for help (Palincsar, 1986).

The last one, the summarizing step is the activity in which students are asked to retell what they have read in their own words. They work to find the most important information in the text. Firstly, when the students begin the reciprocal teaching procedure, their efforts are generally focused on the sentence and paragraph levels. As they become more proficient, they are able to integrate at the paragraph and passage levels.

Summarizing provides the opportunity to identify and integrate the most important information in the text (Palincsar, 1986).

In summary, each of these strategies is selected as a means of aiding students to construct meaning from text as well as a means of monitoring their reading to ensure that they understand what they read.

Choosing Guided Reading Groups in Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal Teaching is originally designed as a discussion strategy so that guided group is an essential part which cannot be separated. Here, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) refer to guided reading group as small-group instruction in which students are organized into flexible groups and guided by the teacher to comprehend a text that may be more difficult than a text read on their own.

Furthermore, students may be placed in a guide reading group because they need to work on one specific. Then, there are several ways to place students into guided reading groups. Firstly, students may be grouped based on self-selected reading material. Secondly, students may also be grouped based on ability. In these groups, students with the same reading level, based on classroom assessment, are grouped together. Finally, students may also be placed in a mix ability group (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996).

Additionally, the benefits of using guided reading instruction during the implementation of reciprocal teaching include:

- 1) To guide students to apply reciprocal teaching strategies easily.
- 2) To guide students to use effective strategies for comprehending text before, during, and after reading.
- 3) To allow all students to benefit from a small-group setting.
- 4) To make students be more understand the text easily than if they work individually.
- 5) To assess flexibly and easily.
- 6) To guide students through interactive lessons that prepare them for literature circles and other group discussions.
- 7) To help students to reflect on the use of the reciprocal teaching strategies (Oczuks, 2003).

Discussions

The purpose of this part is to relate the results of the study and the theories. In the first meeting, the top-down model of reading was performed since the teacher started the class by stimulating the students' background knowledge, making predictions, and confirming to the text whether the predictions hypothesized were correct or not. In other words, the students started with a complex problem then worked down toward the smaller elements. As stated by Nunan (2003) that a top-down model begin with the largest elements and works down towards smaller elements to build comprehension of what is being read. Thus, here, it is proved that Reciprocal Teaching strategy uses top-down models of reading since the students begin with complex problems to solve and then work out or discover (with the teachers' guidance) the basic skills required (Slavin, 2000). Then, since in constructivist learning theory, the top-down model of reading is used, it means that Reciprocal Teaching can be called as a well kind example of constructivist learning theory (Palincsar & Brown in Slavin, 2000).

Besides, the teacher also modelled how to implement the strategy with very short pieces of literatures by discussing paragraph by paragraph. As suggested by Rosenshine and Meister in 1994 that starting this strategy with very short pieces of literature or short sections of a larger work (a chapter or section of a novel, biography, etc.) allowed students to practice their skills before moving on to longer readings. Then, after being showed how to implement the four comprehension strategies, the students were grouped into small groups of four and five to apply the strategy independently. Here, the teacher assigned individual student to take turns "teaching" and "modelling" the strategies in their small group. This metacognitive exercise encouraged students to think about their own thought processes when using reading strategies (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

Based on the explanations above, it showed that in the first meeting, the teacher followed the steps and procedures in implementing Reciprocal Teaching strategy. Below, the researcher would like to little bit rewrite some example instructions which indicated the four steps of Reciprocal Teaching conducted by the teacher:

a) Predicting

“Does anyone have a prediction what will be the story about?”

“Read the first sentence of the story: Walter Crane was a rich merchant. What do you think the author is going to tell us?”

b) Questioning

“What is Walter Crane’s job?”

c) Clarifying

“What is the meaning of “rich merchant”?”

“How to pronounce this word “merchant”?”

d) Summarizing

“From the first and second paragraph, what do we learn?”

It is better to choose the “teacher” role with the one who has less difficulty with the activities. In this case, the researcher believes that there will be some expected effects if the teacher does not do that. For examples:

- 1) The time can be managed well since the teacher does not have to spend much time to guide the student “teacher” performed in front of the class.
- 2) The other students are able to see a good example in applying the four strategies, so that they might not ask so many questions how to implement the strategy.

The teaching-learning activities for the second until the last meeting are similar with the first one, that is by discussing the texts with their group by implementing the four strategies of Reciprocal Teaching, namely predicting, generating questions, clarifying, and summarizing. However, it is important to note that they also change the role of the students “teacher” orderly so that all of the students could be the leader of the group.

In short, Reciprocal Teaching strategy implemented by the teacher is students-centered since the students actively learned the lesson material by themselves. Here, the teacher guides, keeps on track, and monitors the students’ activities. As stated by Rosenshine & Meister (1994) that the teacher should spend his/her time to move around the room to visit each group’s discussion. He/she also might ask a follow-up question to enrich the conversation. The teacher follows both the procedures in implementing Reciprocal Teaching strategy and the process of reading, namely pre- reading, whilst reading, and post-reading.