

RECIPROCAL TEACHING: ONE OF THE METHODS FOR POOR COMPREHENDERS

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Abstract : Reciprocal teaching is a method which emphasizes the students' cognitive and meta cognitive domains for it covers the structural process of the instruction. The whole elements within the procedure enable the students to choose the strategy, plan, monitor, and evaluate their own activities. Furthermore, the procedures integrated in this method are believed to enhance the students' thinking process. The method, introduced by Palinscar and Brown, belongs to cooperative learning in that the students' thinking process in learning is expressed through a natural dialogue. This method is designed to improve the students' competency in text reading while those students find it difficult to comprehend the content of the text. The method also encourages the students to apply such four strategies as predicting, summarizing, questioning, and clarifying.

Keywords: Reciprocal Teaching, Method, Reading, Thinking Process

INTRODUCTION

Reciprocal Teaching (RT) is a method that develops the cognitive and meta cognitive processes for the students, because it includes structural procedures (Omari & Weshah, 2010:26). According to Foster & Rotoloni (2012), the procedures enable the students to select the strategies to plan, control, and evaluate at their own pace. It means that procedures in RT can develop the thinking process. Reciprocal Teaching is also a cooperative learning instructional method in which learners' thinking processes about a shared learning experience are modeled and revealed by natural dialogue. It indicates that Reciprocal Teaching is a method that offers dialogue in it.

The method was developed by Palinscar and Brown (1984) and originally designed to improve

comprehension for students who could decode but had difficulty comprehending text. Students learn to apply the four strategies when discussing text with the teacher and their friends; those are *prediction*, *summarization*, *question generation*, and *clarification*. At first the teacher models how to implement the strategies. Next, through prompts, question, and reminders, the teacher supports students' efforts to use the strategies while reading and discussing text. The teacher reduces his assistance when the students become more proficient. The reason is that teaching students to use the four strategies collaboratively in a dialogue will help them bring the meaning to the text as well as promote their internalization of the use of the strategies—thus ultimately improving their reading comprehension.

There are three related theories that explain effectiveness of reciprocal teaching, i.e. *the zone of proximal development*, *scaffolding*, and *proleptic teaching* (Brown & Palinscar, 1989). According to Vygotsky (1978), the focus of the zone of proximal development is not on what students can do independently, but on how students' emerging skills and knowledge can be enhanced with guidance provided through interactions with others. The manner in which support is provided within a student's zone of proximal development is based on the theories of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) and proleptic teaching (Rogoff & Gardner, 1984). According to Palinscar & Brown (1989:411), *scaffolding* means providing adjustable and temporary supports through which the expert guides the learner to solve a problem that he or she would not be able to complete independently, much as a construction scaffold provides temporary support to builders. In order to successfully assist the learner, the expert must be aware of where the child's abilities lie on a continuum from novice to expert and be able to adjust instruction accordingly. *Proleptic teaching* is setting high expectations for all students, the student takes on an apprentice role.

Reciprocal teaching is also grounded in cognitive views of learning and development (Brown & Palinscar, 1989). Students are presented with multiple models of cognitive processing, through explanations and think-alouds, from the teacher and their peers. In addition, each of the four reciprocal teaching strategies can be explained in terms of cognitive psychology: *prediction*, *question generation*, *clarification*, and *summarization*. Similarly, the idea of using metacognition to monitor one's use of strategies and understanding of what is being read comes from cognitive psychology.

The Implementation of Reciprocal Teaching

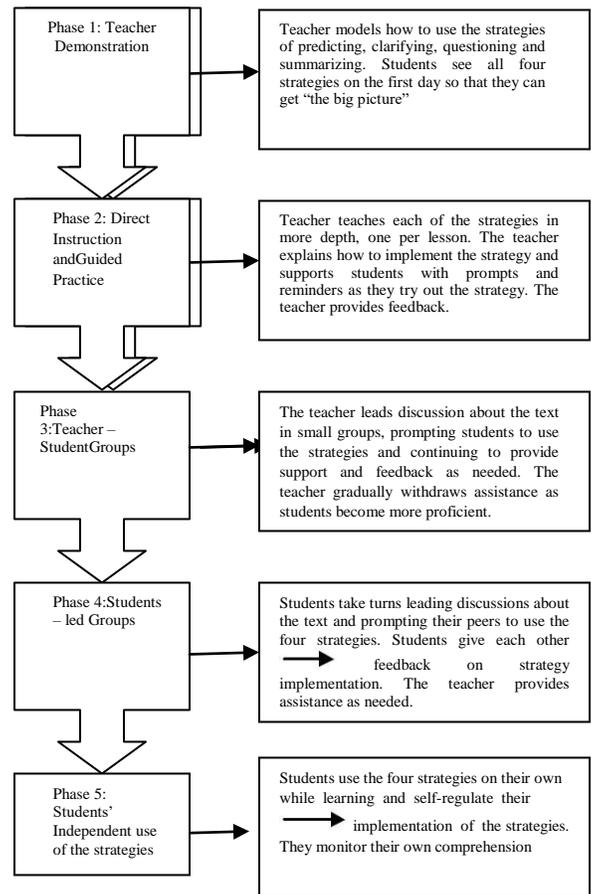
There are three essential components in reciprocal teaching, i.e., *dialogue*, *comprehension strategies*, and *scaffolding*. The students read a paragraph from the assigned text then do the dialogue. The teacher or a student in the role of 'dialogue leader' begins a discussion structured around the four reading strategies. Besides, the dialogue leader has some responsibilities: 1) He is responsible for starting the discussion by asking questions and helping the group clarify any words or concepts that are unclear. On the contrary, the responsibility of everyone in the group is answering questions, elaborating or commenting on others' answers, and asking new questions. 2) He provides a summary of the paragraph and invites the group to elaborate or comment on the summary. 3) He gives or asks for predictions about the upcoming paragraph. Through this process the group is able to move beyond merely restating the information in the text to develop a collective meaning for the passage. After finishing the dialogue, the process begins again with a new section of text and a new leader.

There are four strategies at the heart of the dialogue: *questioning*, *clarifying*, *summarizing*, and *predicting*. Palinscar & Brown (1984) selected these strategies, because they are the tactics good readers use to make sense of text. The scaffolding of instruction is integral to reciprocal teaching. The teacher guides students in using the strategies and gradually turns over this responsibility of strategy

application to the students themselves. First the teacher explains the purpose for learning comprehension strategies, telling the students that the primary goal is for them to become better readers (i.e., more ‘strategic’ and better comprehenders). Following this purpose-setting statement, the teacher models the entire process of reading a passage and applying the strategies by using think alouds so that the students can see ‘the big picture’.

The teacher may next choose to provide direct instruction in each of the strategies before proceeding. The teacher and students then use the strategies while reading and discussing text in small groups. The teacher offers a great deal of support as students try to implement the strategies. The teacher must be skillful at assessing the students’ zone of proximal development and adjusting support accordingly, using scaffolding techniques such as prompts, elaborations, modifications, praise, and feedback. The teacher is the first dialogue leader, but as students develop proficiency in applying the strategies, they then take turns leading discussions. This approach sets high expectations for all the students—a basic feature of proleptic teaching. By about the eighty day of reciprocal teaching, in their alternating roles as students and dialogue leaders, students typically can implement the strategies with minimal assistance from the teacher. The following figure provides a description of the step-by-step guide for how to implement reciprocal teaching.

Figure 1:



It is stated that Reciprocal Teaching provides students with four specific reading strategies that are used to support comprehension actively and consciously: *Predicting*, *Clarifying*, *Questioning*, and *Summarizing*. The students apply these while discussing text with the teacher, their peers or their group. Palinscar and Brown selected those strategies based on the description, rationale, and method:

1) Predicting

Predicting involves looking for clues in the structure and content of a passage that might suggest what will occur next. It can activate prior knowledge and encourages students to continue passage to determine if their

predictions are correct. Students are instructed to use the title to make first prediction about the story and then to use the clues in the story to make additional predictions before reading each new paragraph.

2) *Clarifying*

Clarifying involves discerning when there is any difficulty in comprehension and taking steps to repair meaning. It can assure that the passage will make sense to the reader. Students are instructed to be alert to occasions when they do not understand the meaning of the text, and when this takes place to process the text again.

3) *Questioning*

Questions are built about essential information. It allows readers to understand the text and helps them to identify what important in the story is. To make up questions, the words *who*, *how*, *when*, *where*, and *why* are used.

4) *Summarizing*

A summary is statement that tells the most important ideas that is contained in a paragraph or section of text. It can improve understanding and memory of the text. Firstly, students are instructed to place the topic sentence of a paragraph; secondly, students are instructed to place the most important details that support the topic sentence and to omit what unimportant is; finally, students are instructed to restate the main idea and supporting details in their own words.

Those are some strategies that are used in the dialogue in Reciprocal Teaching. The dialogue is started by one or two strategies, and gradually add the others. In the dialogue, each learner acts in response to another. That is why it is called Reciprocal.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Reciprocal Teaching

The advantages and disadvantages of Reciprocal Teaching are as follows:

- 1) The Advantages of Reciprocal Teaching
 - a) Students who use reciprocal teaching can improve their summaries with practice and works independently.
 - b) Because the students are more cognitively engaged in the material, Reciprocal Teaching classes see fewer disruptive student behaviors.
 - c) Reciprocal Teaching has also been shown to help students develop interpersonal communication skills because they must interact with other students and the teacher. Because student team helps each other, this teaching strategy involves students helping and teaching other students. This is thought to encourage student self-efficiency and self-esteem.
- 2) The Disadvantages of Reciprocal Teaching
 - a) Because the students are collaborating with each other and sharing the teaching of the material with the teacher, it is possible that students will provide wrong feedback to other students while discussing the material.
 - b) With larger groups of students, it is sometimes hard for the teacher to monitor all of the communications between the students, and misinformation may be passed through the class.

CONCLUSION

Reciprocal Teaching is a method which was designed by Palinscar and Brown, where three related theories explained its effectiveness, i.e. *the zone of proximal development, scaffolding, and proleptic teaching*. It was originally designed to improve comprehension for middle school students who could decode but had difficulty comprehending text. The students apply the four strategies while discussing text with their teacher and peers, i.e. *predicting, summarizing, questioning, and clarifying*.

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