



Using Reciprocal Reading with Informational Texts to Improve Reading Comprehension

This presentation will review:

- The implementation of reciprocal reading as an instructional procedure to enhance the learning outcomes for students in reading comprehension.
- The empirical evidence underpinning this pedagogical approach
- The deliberate acts of teaching that were used to promote student metacognition.
- The resources that were developed.
- The outcomes.
- Considerations for future research and practice.

The Rationale

Observations showed that:

- teacher questioning about texts was for the most part 'closed'.
- teachers were leading the thinking in the classroom.
- teaching was highly teacher-centred.
- students were not demonstrating the ability to develop or respond to questions that required inferential or abstract levels of comprehension.
- there was a lack of scaffolding approaches to support student learning.
- student performance in reading comprehension was not meeting expectations or showing improvement.
- Students were displaying concerning levels of performance anxiety especially in comprehension tasks where they encountered unfamiliar language.

What strategy or strategies could be implemented to develop strategic competence in a student-centred learning environment and improve student outcomes in reading comprehension tasks?

- What skills should be explicitly taught to develop students' strategic competence in reading comprehension tasks?
- What strategy or strategies could be best implemented to improve student outcomes in reading comprehension tasks?
- What is the most effective way to introduce the strategy to students?
- How can the focus of teaching and learning become more student-centred when undertaking reading comprehension tasks?

What strategy or strategies could be best implemented to improve student outcomes in reading comprehension tasks?

Palinscar and Brown's (1984) studies show that when improving students' ability to learn from texts, it is generally agreed that reading comprehension is the product of three main factors: (1) considerate texts, (2) the compatibility of the reader's knowledge and text content, and (3) the active strategies the reader employs to enhance understanding and retention, and to circumvent comprehension failures.

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional procedure designed to teach students cognitive strategies that might lead to improved reading comprehension. (Rosenshine and Meister, 1994)

Reciprocal Teaching is an “instructional technique in which reading comprehension is viewed as a problem-solving activity in which thinking is promoted while reading” (Glaser, 1990, p.30)

What is the most effective way to introduce the strategy to students?

Marzano (2015) states that it is important to explicitly teach your students the things they need to learn. His review of research showed that it was the most important factor affecting students' success. Teachers need to tell students what they need to know and show them how to do things they must be able to do for themselves.

Marzano also found that teachers must explicitly teach deeper levels of understanding by using graphic organisers to show how different ideas were related to each other (e.g. steps, cause-effect, hierarchy, lists, comparisons, etc.,).

Hattie (2015) found that Direct Instruction was very effective when it involves explicitly teaching a carefully sequenced curriculum, with built in cumulative practice. He also highlighted the power of giving students *worked examples* when explaining how to multi-step tasks.

What skills should be explicitly taught to develop students' strategic competence in reading comprehension tasks?

As a strategy Reciprocal Teaching requires teachers to model the process and scaffold the learning of their students enabling them, with time and practice, to work collaboratively and lead their own learning when working with texts independently.

Four strategies should be acquired by the students: predicting, question generation, summarising and clarifying.

Students need to know how to identify relevant key ideas from a text while discussing language, developing ideas and questions, and summarising information.

Students should acquire a set of knowledge-extending activities that could be applied to a wide range of situations other than reading, notably the basic skills of argument.

How was Reciprocal Reading introduced to our teaching and learning programmes?

Reciprocal teaching sessions demand extensive modelling of the type of comprehension fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities that are usually difficult to detect in the expert reader (Palinscar and Brown, 1984, p.169).

There was continuous trial and error on the part of the students.

The reciprocal teaching process forces all students to engage with the text and the ensuing discussion.



How was Reciprocal Reading introduced to our teaching and learning programmes?

Having adopted most of the essential skills modelled by the teacher, students began to work in groups and the teacher acted as a facilitator responding to each student's changing cognitive status and needs at any stage of the process.

Irrespective of the variation in the rates of progress, the teacher provided texts that afforded students the opportunity to respond at a slightly challenging level.



How can the focus of teaching and learning become more student-centred when undertaking reading comprehension tasks?

Following the review of the empirical evidence and having identified Reciprocal Reading as the strategy for implementation, it was now necessary to establish a process that would best meet the needs of our students as well as supporting teachers in its implementation.

A digital template was adapted and then trialled with students. Minor modifications were made in the first few weeks of implementing Reciprocal Reading into our programmes.

A similar process was followed to develop role prompt cards which allocated unique roles to each student encouraging them to be actively involved in leading the learning as they read – **Predictor, Clarifier, Questioner, and Summariser.**



How can the focus of teaching and learning become more student-centred when undertaking reading comprehension tasks?

Students self-assess (in their groups) using the Reciprocal Reading Rubric which we have developed and is still being trialled. When students share their template using the interactive whiteboard, they are then peer-assessed by another group. Finally, the teacher will also use the rubric to provide feedback and feed forward.



What is the process did we follow?

Title of text: _____

As they read, students generate abstract questions that are relevant to the context and move beyond the content of the text.

Students predict what they think they will learn by reading the

Having read a paragraph or section, students

Students review the statements written for the main ideas of the text and use these to develop a summary of the text (1 – 2 sentences).

unfamiliar language that is highly relevant to the context and is key to meaning making.

In their groups, students discuss and record possible contextual meanings for the unfamiliar language.

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Selecting appropriate texts

Communicative pedagogies have stressed the importance of teaching authentic texts used by native speakers in culturally authentic contexts of use, rather than pedagogically doctored texts. (Kramersch, 2000)

The contexts for language practice should be devised, as much as possible, from culturally authentic sources with authority of native speaker use.

Through the use of authentic materials for reading instruction, learners should be able to acquire "usable skills" in real-life situations.

Authentic texts are defined as real texts that are designated for reading by native speakers and not language learners, i.e. the texts are not written for language teaching purposes.

The outcomes for students

The success of using Reciprocal Reading as an intervention can be directly attributed to teachers taking the time to model the comprehension fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities required in the process and allowing students multiple opportunities to practise and develop the strategic competencies necessary.

There was clear evidence of improvement in the quality of students' interactions.



The outcomes for teachers

Teachers were uniformly enthusiastic about the procedure once they had mastered it (not before) and planned to incorporate it into their routine teaching repertoires.



'To start with it was really challenging even though we had several lessons teaching it with [co-teacher]. What I found really difficult beyond the context... Before doing this [students] just practised reading, answering comprehension questions and when they did [this] strategy... it took them time to get used to it... they had to not relying on the teachers... without using dictionaries which was really difficult for them. The template helped to show [teachers] while doing Reciprocal Reading each student had to be responsible where the students' [skills] levels were. [Students] admitted they could not do it without practising a lot. It wholly changed our thinking about thinking. The most important outcome of Reciprocal Reading is that it makes our students think critically and how to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary and working out the meaning. Go with it necessary to identify the main idea. They ignore unknown words if it's helping us and students find it really interesting to do.' Is the answer correct? Is it the only answer? Each teacher in every school should use this strategy.'

Serikbayeva Zhadyra
Shaikhiyeva Bakhtygul

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