

ADAPTING RECIPROCAL TEACHING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE EFL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY AT JUNIOR SECONDARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy (RTS) to enhance reading comprehension among EFL students at the junior secondary level. Reciprocal Teaching Strategy incorporates four main strategies—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—to promote metacognitive awareness and collaborative learning. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research was conducted at a public junior high school in Karawang, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with one English teacher and three students, and documentation analysis. The findings reveal that Reciprocal Teaching Strategy was implemented through guided modeling, group roles, and repeated practice, resulting in improved student participation and comprehension, especially during predicting and clarifying activities. However, challenges emerged, including students' unfamiliarity with reflective strategies, varied proficiency levels, and limited classroom resources. Despite these obstacles, the teacher's adaptive approach contributed significantly to the effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy. This study highlights the importance of strategic scaffolding and role assignment in EFL reading instruction. It also provides insights for practitioners seeking to apply Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in similar contexts.

Keywords: EFL students, qualitative study, reading comprehension, Reciprocal teaching strategy, secondary education

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan Reciprocal Teaching Strategy (RTS) untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca pada siswa EFL di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama. Strategi ini mencakup empat teknik utama—memprediksi, mengajukan pertanyaan, mengklarifikasi, dan merangkum—yang bertujuan untuk mendorong kesadaran metakognitif dan pembelajaran kolaboratif. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini dilaksanakan di sebuah SMP negeri di Karawang, Indonesia. Data diperoleh melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan satu guru Bahasa Inggris dan tiga siswa, serta analisis dokumentasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa strategi ini diimplementasikan melalui pemodelan terpandu, pembagian peran dalam kelompok, dan latihan berulang, yang berdampak pada meningkatnya partisipasi dan pemahaman siswa, terutama

dalam kegiatan memprediksi dan mengklarifikasi. Namun, terdapat beberapa tantangan seperti kurangnya keterbiasaan siswa terhadap strategi reflektif, perbedaan tingkat kemampuan, dan keterbatasan sumber daya di kelas. Meskipun demikian, pendekatan adaptif guru berkontribusi besar terhadap efektivitas penerapan strategi ini. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya scaffolding yang strategis dan pembagian peran dalam pengajaran membaca bagi siswa EFL, serta memberikan wawasan bagi praktisi yang ingin menerapkan RTS dalam konteks serupa.

Kata Kunci: pemahaman membaca, Pendidikan menengah, siswa EFL, strategi *reciprocal teaching*, studi kualitatif

A. Introduction

Reading Comprehension is an essential component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. In the Indonesian context, reading becomes one of the primary ways through which learners engage with English due to the limited use of the language in daily communication. However, students often struggle to derive meaning from texts, as seen in international assessments such as PISA (2018), where Indonesian students consistently rank below average in reading literacy. This indicates a systemic issue in reading instruction, which often emphasizes teacher-centered approaches and literal translation rather than strategy-based comprehension.

To address this, various studies have introduced student-centered strategies that promote active reading and critical thinking. One such

strategy is the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy (RTS), first developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984). Reciprocal Teaching Strategy involves four cognitive and metacognitive processes: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. These strategies are designed to enhance comprehension through guided dialogue and cooperative learning. Recent studies (Dew et al., 2021; Abdullah et al., 2023; Bilici & Subaşı, 2022) affirm that Reciprocal Teaching Strategy positively influences students' comprehension and engagement. However, most of these studies focus on quantitative outcomes and do not deeply examine the implementation process, especially within under-resourced, lower-secondary classrooms in EFL contexts.

This study addresses that gap by examining the classroom application

of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in a junior high school in Indonesia. It aims to explore how Reciprocal Teaching Strategy is implemented and what challenges arise during its use. By focusing on the process rather than solely outcomes, this study offers practical insights into adapting Reciprocal Teaching Strategy to classrooms with diverse learner needs and limited facilities. The research is guided by the following questions: (1) How is Reciprocal Teaching Strategy implemented in teaching reading comprehension to secondary EFL students? and (2) What are the challenges faced by the teacher during its implementation? The novelty of this study lies in its contextual specificity and its contribution to the practical adaptation of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in developing EFL settings.

B. Method

This study applied a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation process of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in an actual classroom setting. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in natural contexts, while Yin (2018)

defines case study as a method that allows for in-depth exploration of a bounded system. This design was deemed suitable to capture how Reciprocal Teaching Strategy is applied in a junior secondary classroom and what challenges arise during its use. The research was conducted at a public junior high school in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted of one English teacher and three seventh-grade students, selected through purposive sampling to represent different levels of reading proficiency. The selection aimed to gain a balanced perspective from both teacher and learner viewpoints regarding Reciprocal Teaching Strategy implementation.

Data were collected through three primary instruments: classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out across three reading sessions that implemented Reciprocal Teaching Strategy. The researcher used an observation sheet based on the four main strategies of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy to record teaching activities, student responses, and group dynamics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the

teacher and three students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and difficulties. In addition, supporting documents such as lesson plans, student worksheets, and classroom materials were analyzed to triangulate findings.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. The data were categorized under two main themes: (1) the implementation of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy, and (2) the challenges faced by the teacher. The analysis was also guided by Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and Flavell's (1979) theory of metacognition, which underpin the theoretical foundation of RTS as a scaffolded, strategy-based learning method.

This methodological approach allowed the researcher to describe not only what occurred during Reciprocal Teaching Strategy sessions but also how participants made sense of the strategy, adapted to its routines, and navigated its demands within the classroom context.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

a. The Implementation of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in Teaching Reading Comprehension

The classroom implemented the reciprocal teaching strategy by following four essential steps: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. Based on three classroom observations and data from teachers and students' interviews, it was found that the strategy was consistently and systematically across several teaching sessions.

The teacher introduced and described the four main strategies in Reciprocal Teaching—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—before putting the strategy into practice. The teacher presented each strategy both orally and visually on the board, enabling students to better understand them. Students confirmed the clarity of these instructions in the interviews:

"Dijelasin satu-satu terus dikasih teks bacaan gitu buat dicontohin." (PT 1, Question 2). The teacher methodically walked the class through every strategy one step at a time, providing illustrated examples that were closely tied to the readings that were presented in class. This kind of modeling helped close the gap between theory and practice. The strategy was used consistently throughout the three meetings, with students agreeing that the teacher's methodical and deliberate delivery of the material made it easier for them to follow along and gave them greater confidence. To practice the strategy together, students participated in group discussions and were given sample texts. The teachers' planning and guidance for implementing the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy were methodical and transparent, which improved the students' comprehension of the strategy's phases and

increased their preparedness for reading lessons.

In each of the three meetings that were observed, the teacher assigned a new reading text appropriate for the students' language proficiency levels. Small groups of five to six students worked together, receiving instructions on how to carry out each Reciprocal Teaching Strategy step cooperatively. The four of Reciprocal Teaching Strategies were successfully applied sequentially in all three meetings with consistent implementation. The majority of students demonstrated active engagement in the process and were able to follow the exercises successfully, despite difficulties with some methods like questioning and summarizing. One teacher's remark emphasized the issue: "*Mereka kadang menyalin ulang semua kalimat yang ada di teks.*" (Teacher, Q8). Over time, student involvement

increased, with more students participating actively in the second and third meetings. The classroom environment was characterized as stimulating, exciting, lively, but sometimes noisy too, and the teacher underlined that assigning responsibilities to students in groups—such as summarizer and questioner—helped boost involvement and accountability. It has been demonstrated that using group strategy increases student involvement and participation, particularly when students are assigned defined responsibilities in discussion.

It is possible to draw the conclusion that the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy was applied methodically and consistently through its primary stages—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—based on observations made in the classroom and teacher and student interviews. Prior to group activities that enabled

students to actively participate in the reading process, the teacher began each course with concise explanations and modeling. Students showed increased participation and comprehension over the sessions, particularly in the predicting and clarifying stages. Overall, the questioning and summarizing strategies helped students become more engaged and thoughtful readers, despite the fact that some students found them difficult to use. This implementation shows how junior high school EFL students' reading comprehension can be enhanced through the use of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy.

b. The Difficulties Faced by the Teacher in Implementing Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

The Reciprocal Teaching Strategy was implemented in a classroom setting, but faced several

challenges. The main challenge was students' lack of familiarity with metacognitive reading strategies, particularly when it came to creating questioning and summarizing readings. Group projects were also complicated by the disparities in the students' reading skills. The implementation process was also impacted by technical problems like big class sizes, unequal group allocation, and a lack of classroom supplies and facilities.

To overcome these challenges, the teacher used a flexible and adaptive strategy, which included modifying exercises according to the needs of the class and offering extra support. This approach allowed the teacher to overcome these challenges and successfully implement the strategy. The teacher also noted that not all students showed the same degree of preparedness for the strategy. As the teacher

noted, "*Ada yang cepat paham, tapi juga ada yang harus terus dibimbing.*" (Teacher, Q2). Some students adjusted rapidly, while others needed ongoing instruction. Teachers can support students' development in accordance with their unique abilities by using an individual strategy and providing continuous guidance.

Group management presented logistical challenges, as uneven group sizes occasionally interfered with the flow of activities, and some students preferred working with close friends. The teacher mentioned, "*Suka protes kalau tidak sekelompok dengan temannya.*" (Teacher, Q4). Large class sizes made supervision difficult: "*Kalau kelasnya ramai jadi agak sulit mengawasi semua kelompok secara maksimal.*" (Teacher, Q11). However, teachers could manage these challenges with adaptable

classroom management and a flexible strategy.

Instructional materials and facilities were also limited, with inadequate facilities and incompatible materials hindering learning. Teachers were able to overcome these issues by modifying the reading material to keep it interesting and intelligible for the students. Time constraints and flexibility were essential in adjusting the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy to different classroom situations. The teacher was flexible in modifying his strategy based on the demands of the students and the dynamics of the classroom.

In conclusion, the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy is largely dependent on teachers' ability to respond adaptively to learning dynamics, as demonstrated by their flexibility in adapting them to classroom situations. By addressing these challenges, the teacher was able to successfully

implement the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy and improve student comprehension and capacity to use the strategy independently.

2. Discussion

a. The Implementation of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

This study supports the Reciprocal Teaching strategy, which focuses on four main strategies to improve students' reading comprehension: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. The strategy was implemented successfully, with the teacher's modelling and structured group activities playing a crucial role. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes scaffolding in learning, was also applied, allowing students to participate in higher-order thinking and collaborative learning.

Students gradually improved their application of the strategy during three class meetings, particularly in predicting and clarifying. The teacher's role-based group projects and methodical explanations were essential in boosting students' self-esteem and involvement. However, students found questioning and summarizing to be the most difficult tasks, as they struggled to come up with insightful questions and frequently copied information instead of rephrasing it. This suggests the need for more intensive training and guidance in these areas.

The study also highlights the need for more frequent reinforcement, controlled practice, and concrete modelling for younger students who have less experience with strategic reading instruction. This emphasizes the need for context-sensitive adjustments when implementing the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in lower secondary education.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in improving students' reading comprehension.

b. The Difficulties in Implementing Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

The implementation of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in classrooms faced several challenges. The pace and efficacy of group projects were affected by students' reading proficiency, with some students quickly adopting the technique while others required ongoing assistance. This highlights the importance of individualized education in diverse classrooms. Logistical issues were caused by group dynamics, with uneven group sizes and students' preference for close friends disrupting the flow of conversations. Large class sizes and limited classroom amenities further exacerbated these issues.

Despite these challenges, the teacher demonstrated flexibility by modifying exercises according to class climate, student attendance, and readiness. They occasionally switched from group work to pair or individual assignments and adjusted the text's difficulty level to preserve student comprehension. The effectiveness of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to scaffold learning, oversee classroom operations, and adapt instruction to meet the needs of the class, as well as the students' comprehension of each strategy. These findings have practical implications for teachers and policymakers seeking to apply student-centred reading strategies in diverse educational contexts.

The study discovered that the four primary stages of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—were applied methodically and successfully. By utilizing appropriate literature, dividing the class into groups with designated duties, and modelling each strategy, the teacher delivered education that was both clear and structured. This strategy encouraged student participation and aided in their steady improvement in reading comprehension.

Students showed improved engagement and comprehension over the course of three class meetings, especially in terms of predicting and clarifying. They were able to actively engage with the texts and their colleagues through collaborative activities, which promoted metacognitive awareness and critical thinking. Even though students initially struggled, particularly when it came to creating questions and summarizing material in their own words, ongoing teacher assistance enabled them to advance. This demonstrates that, when used with regular scaffolding and support, the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy can be a useful tool for

E. Conclusion

1. The Implementation of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in Teaching Reading Comprehension

improving reading comprehension in secondary EFL students.

2. The Difficulties Faced by the Teacher in Implementing Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

The Reciprocal Teaching Strategy presented a number of difficulties in spite of its advantages. Confusion resulted from students' lack of knowledge of metacognitive techniques, particularly when they were asked to create original questions or sum up literature. The teacher found it challenging to control the pace and engagement levels of each group due to the variations in the reading skills of the students.

Large class sizes, unequal group composition, and inadequate classroom facilities were among the logistical problems that made the procedure even more difficult. Furthermore, some of the reading materials needed to be modified or changed since they were too challenging. But by changing lesson ideas, grouping techniques, and employing different teaching resources, the teacher showed flexibility. These findings highlight how crucial varied instruction, classroom management abilities, and teacher

flexibility are when implementing the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy in heterogeneous EFL classes.

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