

RECIPROCAL TEACHING STRATEGY ON STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Teaching strategy in improving the reading comprehension of descriptive texts among first-semester students in the English Language Program at the Faculty of Culture, Management, and Business. Grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, Reciprocal Teaching encourages active student engagement through four key strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. Employing a quasi-experimental design with a posttest-only control group, the research involved 37 students and utilized pretest and posttest assessments to measure comprehension gains. Descriptive statistics showed a marked improvement in mean scores, from 66.84 to 76.89, alongside increases in median and mode, indicating overall enhancement in performance. A paired samples t-test confirmed that the gain was statistically significant ($t = -26.217$, $p = 0.000$), demonstrating the effectiveness of the intervention. These results support Reciprocal Teaching as a powerful instructional method that not only enhances reading comprehension but also promotes student autonomy and deeper engagement with texts. Nonetheless, challenges such as time constraints, the complexity of texts, and classroom management were noted. Future research should explore the strategy's applicability to other text types and learning contexts to further validate its pedagogical value.

Keywords: Reciprocal Teaching Strategy, Reading Comprehension, Descriptive Text

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill necessary for accessing information from various sources such as books, newspaper articles, and online content. Without strong reading abilities, it is difficult for individuals to comprehend and engage with these forms of written communication. (Jeon & Yamashita, 2022) highlight that reading plays a crucial role in language acquisition, particularly through its contribution to vocabulary development and comprehension skills. Beyond its educational value, reading is essential for personal and professional success. Those who aspire to succeed must consistently allocate time for reading.

Research by (Duke & Cartwright, 2021) underscores reading as a dynamic instructional strategy that activates prior knowledge, preparing learners for more complex cognitive tasks. Similarly, Recent studies underscore that foundational literacy skills, particularly reading, remain central to academic achievement, as they underpin critical thinking and knowledge acquisition across disciplines. For instance, (Ramadhani et al., 2023) found a significant correlation between students' reading comprehension and their critical thinking abilities in an undergraduate English program in Indonesia. Similarly, (Nurhayati et al., 2023) demonstrated that developing reading literacy assessment questions can effectively enhance students' critical thinking skills.

Brown (2001) identifies four key English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—that students must master. Among these, reading is not only a skill but

also a crucial learning competency that supports the development of the others. Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as an active process that involves interaction with text and the construction of meaning through written language. Similarly, Pikulski & Chard (2005) describe comprehension as the conscious act of creating meaning through a dialogue between the reader and the text.

Reading comprehension is essential for enhancing both the effectiveness and enjoyment of reading. It also supports learning in all other academic areas and has wide-reaching personal and professional benefits. For language learners, particularly those studying English, comprehension skills are key to understanding various text types, including descriptive texts.

Descriptive texts are structured to provide detailed information about a person, place, object, or event, often using sensory language to create vivid imagery in the reader's mind. Typically factual or observational in nature, these texts aim to help readers visualize and understand what is being described. According to Derewianka (2020) define descriptive texts as a genre focused on detailing specific attributes of a person, place, or object, often through vivid language and sensory details. Exposure to descriptive texts benefits learners by expanding their lexical repertoire, refining observational abilities, and fostering the use of nuanced, contextually appropriate language in both written and spoken communication.

Despite their importance, many students struggle with reading English texts. Common challenges include unfamiliar vocabulary, difficulties in pronunciation, and a lack of general exposure to the English language. Reading comprehension is particularly difficult for students who lack motivation or find reading time-consuming. Some students must read a passage multiple times to grasp its meaning, which can be discouraging.

Harmer (2003) suggests that students often anticipate frustration when faced with challenging reading materials, which can lower their motivation. This negative attitude frequently stems from a lack of reading fluency and confidence. Contributing factors include inappropriate text selection, unengaging teaching methods, and the perception that reading is tedious. Many students lack internal motivation, support from parents and family, or interest in the English language itself.

Boredom in reading comprehension classes often arises from teaching strategies that fail to captivate students' interest. To address these issues, it is essential for educators to select level-appropriate texts and apply engaging, interactive methods that foster students' curiosity and involvement in reading.

Based on observations at first-semester students of the English language program of the Faculty of Culture, Management, and Business UNDIKMA, the researchers discovered that English teachers continued to use the old method, which only focused on explanation. As a result of teachers' lack of creativity in adopting learning methods, students become bored quickly when learning English, resulting in difficulty reading, a lack of vocabulary, difficulty understanding English texts, and a lack of motivation to learn to read.

The researcher use the Reciprocal Teaching strategy to address the issue of reading comprehension in students. Reciprocal Teaching is a collaborative reading strategy designed to improve comprehension through structured dialogue. Developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984), this approach teaches students to use four main strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. These strategies help guide students through the process of understanding a text by encouraging them to actively think about what they are reading and

engage with the material. Initially facilitated by the teacher, responsibility for using these strategies gradually shifts to the students, fostering independence and confidence in reading.

The theoretical foundation of Reciprocal Teaching lies in Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978), which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and guided support. This strategy allows students to work collaboratively, share interpretations, and develop higher-order thinking skills while building comprehension through peer dialogue and teacher scaffolding. Reciprocal Teaching enables students to activate prior knowledge and engage with the text in a way that fosters deeper comprehension and a personal connection to the material. This process enhances students' ability to integrate new ideas with their existing knowledge, leading to more meaningful learning experiences (Palincsar, 1986).

A number of recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching in improving reading comprehension. Aktaş (2023) found that the strategy significantly enhanced students' understanding of narrative texts by providing a structured framework for engagement. Similarly, (Nisa' et al., 2022) reported that Reciprocal Teaching helped students better interpret main ideas and details through active participation. Imran et al., (2022) showed improvements in students' ability to monitor their comprehension and resolve confusion during reading. In addition, Tantowie et al., (2022) highlighted the strategy's success in encouraging students to think critically and summarize content effectively.

This study addresses a critical gap in pedagogical research by adapting Reciprocal Teaching—a strategy proven effective in prior studies (Aktaş, 2023; Tantowie et al., 2022)—to the needs of Indonesian tertiary students, a demographic underrepresented in existing literature. While earlier research has predominantly focused on narrative or expository texts in Western educational contexts, this investigation prioritizes descriptive texts, a genre essential for vocabulary development and observational skills but seldom examined in comprehension studies. Building on these findings, the present research aims to evaluate the impact of Reciprocal Teaching on first-semester English students at FACULTY OF CULTURE, MANAGEMENT, AND BUSINESS UNDIKMA, specifically in enhancing their comprehension of descriptive texts. The central research question examines whether students exposed to Reciprocal Teaching demonstrate superior reading comprehension.

METHOD

This study employs a quasi-experimental framework. The researcher selected this design due to the constraints of the school setting, which precluded random assignment of participants. Despite this limitation, the researcher maintained control over critical aspects of the experimental process, including the scheduling of the study and the selection of research measurements. According to Cham et al., (2024), quasi-experimental designs, such as regression discontinuity and difference-in-differences, are commonly used in educational research when random assignment is not feasible. These designs allow researchers to infer causal relationships while accounting for potential confounding variables.

This study employed cluster random sampling to select participants from the first-semester cohorts of the English Language program at Faculty of Culture, Management, And Business. Among the available classes, Class A was randomly chosen as the representative

cluster for this research. The selected cluster comprised 37 students, including 16 males and 21 females, all of whom participated in the study.

Additionally, the study involved administering tests to the students, specifically pretests and posttests. The 45-item multiple-choice test assessed reading comprehension of descriptive texts through questions targeting main ideas, details, vocabulary, and inferences. The pretest was given before the treatment to assess the students' baseline reading comprehension ability, while the posttest was given after the treatment to evaluate the improvement in the students' reading skills following the intervention. For the analysis of pretest and post-test scores, a quantitative data analysis approach was employed using SPSS version 29. The hypothesis testing involved several statistical methods, including descriptive analysis, assessments of validity and reliability, a normality test, a test for homogeneity of variances, and an independent sample t-test to evaluate the results. These techniques were used to ensure the robustness and accuracy of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this study, a set of 45-item reading comprehension tests were administered as both a pretest and a posttest to assess the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Teaching strategy. The internal consistency and item validity of the test instruments were evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and item-total correlation, respectively. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 29.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Test	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Pretest	0.876	45
Posttest	0.912	45

Both the pretest and posttest demonstrate high internal consistency. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.876 for the pretest and 0.912 for the posttest indicates that the items reliably measure students' reading comprehension abilities. The increase in reliability from pretest to posttest suggests more consistent responses, possibly due to enhanced comprehension following the teaching intervention.

Table 2 Item-Total Statistics

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item 1	0.502	0.873
Item 2	0.553	0.870
Item 3	0.478	0.875
Item 4	0.592	0.869
Item 5	0.514	0.872
Item 6	0.566	0.870
Item 7	0.534	0.871
Item 8	0.501	0.874
Item 9	0.548	0.870
Item 10	0.522	0.872

The corrected item-total correlation values are all above the 0.3 threshold, indicating that each item contributes meaningfully to the overall scale. Furthermore, none of the items, if removed, would increase Cronbach's Alpha substantially, affirming the quality and validity of the test items.

Table 3 Item-Total Statistics

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item 1	0.621	0.909
Item 2	0.634	0.908
Item 3	0.607	0.910
Item 4	0.648	0.907
Item 5	0.615	0.909
Item 6	0.662	0.906
Item 7	0.628	0.908
Item 8	0.611	0.910
Item 9	0.642	0.907
Item 10	0.633	0.908

The posttest items also demonstrate strong corrected item-total correlations, with all sampled values exceeding 0.6. This indicates even stronger alignment between individual items and the overall scale compared to the pretest. The Cronbach's Alpha values remain high even if any individual item is deleted, which further confirms the internal validity of the instrument.

The pretest and posttest instruments used in this study demonstrate both strong reliability and item validity. These results support the use of the tests as effective tools for measuring student improvement in reading comprehension after the Reciprocal Teaching intervention. The consistently high item-total correlations and Cronbach's Alpha values provide strong evidence for the validity and reliability of the assessment tools used.

To further support these findings, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to summarize and interpret the test data. This analysis included calculations of the mean, frequency, total score, standard deviation, median, and percentage. The results of this statistical descriptive analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Pretest and Post-Test Score

Statistics		Pretest	Posttest
N	Valid	37	37
	Missing	0	0
Mean		66.8378	76.8919
Std. Error of Mean		.32997	.39854
Median		67.0000	77.0000
Mode		68.00	78.00
Std. Deviation		2.00712	2.42423
Variance		4.029	5.877
Range		8.00	9.00
Minimum		63.00	73.00
Maximum		71.00	82.00
Sum		2473.00	2845.00

The analysis of the pretest and posttest results on students' reading comprehension of descriptive texts shows a clear and positive impact from using the Reciprocal Teaching strategy. The data indicates a noticeable improvement in the average score, which increased from 66.84 on the pretest to 76.89 on the posttest. This suggests that Reciprocal Teaching played a key role in enhancing students' comprehension. In addition to the mean, other measures of central tendency—like the median and mode—also shifted towards higher values in the posttest, supporting the conclusion that more students performed better after the intervention.

While there was a slight increase in both the standard deviation and variance from the pretest to the posttest, it suggests that although most students showed improvement, the scores became more spread out. Some students experienced substantial gains, implying that the Reciprocal Teaching strategy had varying levels of effectiveness, with certain students benefiting more than others.

The range, along with the minimum and maximum scores, also increased in the posttest, further emphasizing that not only did most students improve, but even those who performed poorly at the start saw progress. The total sum of scores rose from 2,473 in the pretest to 2,845 in the posttest, offering additional evidence of overall improvement in student performance.

Next, the researcher analyzes the impact of Reciprocal Teaching on students' reading comprehension of descriptive text by conducting a paired samples t-test to compare the pretest and posttest scores. This will help us determine whether the instructional method led to significant improvements in students' comprehension abilities.

Table 5 Paired Samples Test
Paired Differences

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-10.05405	2.33269	.38349	-10.83181	-9.27630	-26.217	36	.000

The SPSS output from the paired samples t-test indicates that Reciprocal Teaching had a significant positive impact on students' reading comprehension of descriptive text. The mean difference between the pretest and posttest scores was -10.05, suggesting that, on average, students' posttest scores were significantly lower than their pretest scores, indicating an improvement in performance. The standard deviation of the differences (2.33) shows there was some variability in how much each student's score improved, but overall, the improvement was consistent. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference, ranging from -10.83 to -9.28, confirms that the true mean difference is likely negative, further supporting the idea that students performed better on the posttest. The t-value of -26.217 and the p-value of 0.000 both indicate that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores is statistically significant, with a very low probability that this result occurred by chance. Therefore, it can be concluded that Reciprocal Teaching effectively enhanced students' comprehension of descriptive text, as evidenced by the significant improvement in their posttest performance.

Discussion

This study investigates the impact of the Reciprocal Teaching strategy on students' comprehension of descriptive texts. Originally developed by Palincsar & Brown, (1984), Reciprocal Teaching is a scaffold instructional method that improves reading comprehension through structured, student-teacher dialogue. It centers around four core strategies—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—which empower students to actively monitor and regulate their understanding of texts. According to Palincsar (1986), this metacognitive engagement enables learners to critically reflect on their reading processes. (Oczkus, 2006) further supports this approach, emphasizing the strategy's effectiveness in promoting cooperative learning and the development of strategic thinking skills. Pressley (2006) adds that the structured nature of particularly benefits diverse learners, facilitating deeper comprehension through interactive and reflective learning.

The quantitative analysis, conducted using a Paired Samples t-Test, revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' reading comprehension following the intervention. The pretest mean was substantially lower than the posttest mean, with a mean difference of -10.05 (SD = 2.33). The test yielded a t-value of -26.217 with 36 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H_1), indicating that Reciprocal Teaching strategy had a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension.

These findings align with existing literature supporting the efficacy of Reciprocal Teaching. Kula & Budak, (2020), for instance, documented notable gains in reading scores post-intervention. Similarly, Enteding et al., (2004) reported improved comprehension among tenth-grade students using the Reciprocal Teaching strategy. Dew et al., (2021) also found Reciprocal teaching met the essential criteria of an effective intervention, as studies showed notable improvements when it was implemented. Its flexibility allows it to be tailored to suit learners from diverse backgrounds, age groups, and educational levels.

Reciprocal Teaching continues to gain support in recent studies. Rajeh Alsalmi et al., (2024) Reciprocal teaching has a beneficial impact on students' academic performance in science.. Ruangprasertkun & Chinwonno, (2023) observed similar improvements among Thai secondary school students, who also expressed positive attitudes toward the strategy, appreciating its support for comprehensive reading development.

In the context of digital learning, Aktaş, (2023) explored online implementations of the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy with primary students. While results indicated improved comprehension, the study noted no significant change in intrinsic motivation, though extrinsic motivation did increase. (Islam & Hamdani, 2022) found the Reciprocal Teaching strategy effective among senior high school students, further underscoring its adaptability across educational levels. Likewise, (Butar Butar et al., 2023) confirmed its efficacy in helping eighth-grade students comprehend narrative texts, demonstrating the strategy's versatility across text genres and learning environments.

Despite its many strengths, the Reciprocal Teaching strategy presents some implementation challenges. The strategy's reliance on dialogue and student leadership can be time-intensive, potentially hindering content coverage. Some students may also require considerable teacher modeling before they can confidently assume discussion roles. Additionally, classroom management becomes critical to maintain engagement and ensure productive discourse.

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design, providing compelling evidence of Reciprocal Teaching strategy's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. However, the complexity of the texts occasionally exceeded students' reading levels, leading to longer processing times. Maintaining engagement and classroom control also posed difficulties, which in turn impacted the smooth facilitation of the Reciprocal Teaching strategy process.

Future research should consider larger, more diverse sample populations and explore the Reciprocal Teaching strategy's effects across various text types, including procedural and report texts. Employing a broader range of research methodologies could uncover how the Reciprocal Teaching strategy interacts with different instructional strategies and learning environments. Investigating its application in tertiary education settings may also offer deeper insights into its broader pedagogical potential.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The discussion above highlights the significant challenge that reading comprehension poses for many students, often due to language barriers. When the language used in academic texts differs from the one spoken at home, understanding becomes considerably more difficult. To address this issue, the researcher implemented the Reciprocal Teaching strategy, particularly focusing on descriptive texts. The notable gains in students' post-test scores compared to their

pre-test results indicate that this approach holds considerable promise in enhancing comprehension skills.

However, the implementation process was not without its difficulties. The strategy demanded a substantial amount of reading material, and at times, the complexity of the texts exceeded the students' current abilities. Many learners required additional time to fully process the content, and maintaining focus and engagement in the classroom proved to be a persistent challenge.

Moving forward, there is ample opportunity to refine this approach. Future research could benefit from more structured planning and the incorporation of effective classroom management techniques. Expanding the study to include a larger sample size and experimenting with various text types could offer valuable insights into the broader applicability and effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching across different reading contexts.

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