ENHANCING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION: THE INTEGRATION OF RECIPROCAL TEACHING AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Ni Putu Leyen Hartika[1], Ni Komang Aryanti Mahottami[2], Ni Wayan Krismayani[3*], I Komang Budiarta[4], Ni Luh Putu Dian Sawitri[5]

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
[*]Corresponding author: Chrismayani@unmas.ac.id

Abstract

Reading comprehension is an important skill when studying English, yet many EFL students have difficulty reaching the required proficiency levels. While both Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT) are successful when used separately, little research has been done on how they might be used together to improve reading comprehension, especially in EFL university settings. This study explores integrating reciprocal and communicative language teaching strategies on students' reading comprehension. This research utilized classroom action research with pre-tests and post-tests to gather quantitative data, and questionnaires to assess students' responses. The findings consistently indicate that integrating Reciprocal Teaching (RT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) significantly enhances students' reading comprehension. The students show positive experiences through tests and questionnaires, including improved text comprehension, increased self-confidence, and a more engaging learning environment. Based on these outcomes, it is recommended that lecturers integrate reciprocal teaching and communicative language teaching to improve reading comprehension skills. The findings show that integrating RT and CLT significantly improves English reading comprehension and usage of these strategies in EFL students. Reading is a crucial English language skill, yet students' comprehension achievement is often below expectations.

Keywords: Communicative language teaching, integrating, reading, reciprocal teaching,

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a crucial English language skill for students' personal growth, providing them with extensive information about various subjects. Reading activities, such as newspapers, reports, messages, books, and notes, are essential for understanding English usage in printed and written forms (Krismayani & Menggo, 2022; Liao, 2011). According to (Agung, Andari, Krismayani, Putu, & Pramerta, 2022; I Gede Ludira Putra, Ni Wayan Krismayani, & Anak Agung Putu Arsana, 2023), reading is vital to functioning effectively in a literate society. However, students who do not understand the importance of learning to read will not be motivated to read. The ability to read can be affected by factors such as linguistic aspects, prior knowledge, and reading strategy (Adhinatha, Budiarta, & Krismayani, 2023; Nyoman et al., 2024). Students can decode meaning from the text by memorizing pertinent vocabulary items and structures by addressing the linguistic elements. Students' prior knowledge before reading is another aspect. Students are not passive when reading a text but actively integrate new information with what they already know (Brown, 2003; Mustikasari, 2020; Vienarahayu et al., 2022). However, strategies when reading have certain advantages that allow students to change their reading goals and become more conscious of what they are reading.

Reciprocal Teaching (RT) include Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, and Summarizing. RT has improved students' reading and critical thinking skills (Doolittle, Hicks, Triplett, Nichols, & Young, 2006; Maspul, 2024; Sholihah, Zubaidah, Mahanal, & Listyorini, 2025). Predicting encourages students to think ahead based on their prior knowledge and experience to the following plot or paragraph; Questioning provides a context for students to explore the text more deeply and assure the meaning construction; Clarifying helps students to decrease confusion they face during reading activity and Summarizing is the process of identifying the critical information and ideas within a text. Summarizing may be based on a single paragraph, a section of text, or an entire passage. In the classroom, reading is considered the most critical activity, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but also as a means of extending one's language knowledge. This receptive ability must be balanced with productive skills in higher education settings, where Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes language use as a tool for daily communication, is crucial in boosting students' self-esteem and speaking engagement (Gulshoda, n.d.; Putri, 2024).

CLT can increase students' confidence and involvement when speaking (Pamuji, Wahyudi, Martuti, Bina, & Palembang, 2024; Setiyorini, Yulia, & Robiasih, 2022). Language use as a tool for everyday communication is emphasized by using CLT. CLT emphasizes adaptability more than accuracy (Jiang & Paulino, 2024). Students are advised to use the target language in role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving situations, among other real-world situations. There are opportunities for more comprehensive education when RT and CLT are combined. Unfortunately, many lecturers discover that students participate in oral activities less frequently due to a lack of exposure to real communication-based activities or a fear of making mistakes. In higher education, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) necessitates a teaching methodology that emphasizes the development of practical communication skills in addition to vocabulary and grammar mastery. Students must be able to communicate verbally in various authentic communication situations. Many students still find it difficult to convey their thoughts clearly and cogently, particularly during class debates or presentations. This emphasizes the necessity of instructional practices that promote active participation and foster the integrated development of communication and critical thinking abilities.

This study was conducted at the English Language Education Study Program. Students' reading proficiency and the critical reading skills needed for the Evaluative Reading course are not aligned, which is the reason for this study. Many students still have trouble fully comprehending evaluative readings, particularly when they are exposed to lengthy academic writings. Reading comprehension skills among students can be greatly enhanced by using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT) techniques. Research combining these two methods in the framework of Classroom Action Research (CAR) in Indonesia is, nevertheless, lacking. Integrating RT and CLT into classroom instruction aims to enhance students' reading and communication skills. Combining CLT and RT is a pertinent strategy for tackling these issues through integrating RT and CLT, including predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing the reading material. RT is a cooperative learning approach that promotes student interaction (Abdelmoati Mohamed, 2023; Hawa, Putra, Suryani, & ..., 2024; Hermansyah, Asrifan, Nadirah, & Imran, 2022). With an emphasis on meaning and active student participation in language tasks, CLT, on the other hand,

stresses the use of language for genuine communication objectives. Combining these two methods results in a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. The findings are also expected to reference lecturers in designing more communicative and collaborative learning strategies in EFL classrooms. It is anticipated that the results will also be used as a guide by lecturers to create more collaborative and communicative teaching methods in EFL classes.

Based on the problem above, the researcher would like to formulate the following research problems:

1. How can integrating Reciprocal Teaching (RT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) improve EFL students' reading comprehension skills?

2. What challenges are encountered by the lecturer and students when implementing RT and CLT integration in reading, and how can these be overcome through classroom action research cycles?

METHOD

This study used Kemmis and McTaggart's Classroom Action Research (CAR) design (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Thirty-two fourth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, who enrolled in Evaluative Reading, are the subject of this study. The study was conducted over one semester (approximately eight effective weeks) with two cycles. Each cycle consisted of 2–3 meetings, each lasting 100 minutes, according to the regular lecture schedule. CLT creates task-based communicative interactions in each meeting, while RT focuses on reading strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. Both are integrated to enable students to engage in group discussions under RT techniques while preserving active communication within the CLT framework. The researchers used research instruments to get the necessary valid and trustworthy data. Tests (pre-test and post-test), questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with lecturers, rubrics and classroom observation are used as research instruments.
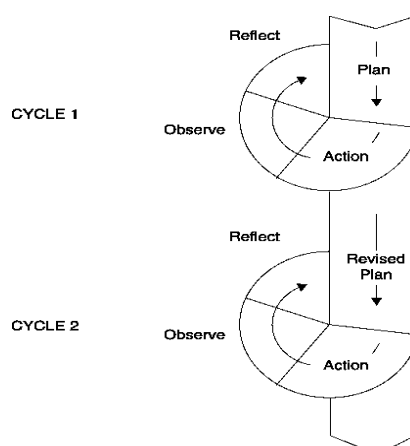

Figure 1. Cyclical CAR

Additionally, the communication process was examined using student reflection sheets and recordings of group discussions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the study's findings. To ascertain the degree of change between cycles, quantitative data which included students' reading test scores before and after the application of Reciprocal Teaching (RT) within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework were descriptively and comparably examined. Meanwhile, student reflection sheets, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, group discussion recordings, and classroom observations were used to gather qualitative data. By combining the two analyses, the researchers could triangulate the results and get a thorough conclusion regarding integrating RT and CLT on students' evaluative reading abilities. This research was deemed successful quantitatively if at least 75% of the students met the minimal mastery requirement for the Evaluative Reading course.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
The Improvement of Students' Reading Comprehension through the Integration of RT and CLT

The Classroom Action Research findings showed that integrating CLT and Reciprocal Teaching RT significantly improved students' reading skills. Students initially had trouble understanding texts and articulating thoughts connected to reading materials, as seen by the average pre-test score of 64.19. The first post-test score rose to 74.84 after applying RT strategies—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—along with communicative group activities. Students' increasing capacity to actively participate in reading texts and work productively with peers was reflected in this improvement.

Based on the first cycle's reflections, improvements were made to the organization of group projects and classroom engagement in the second cycle. Students' performance consequently increased even more, as evidenced by their second post-test average score of 82.74. This steady improvement indicates how well RT and CLT integration promote understanding and communication. While CLT activities like discussion, recounting, and questioning enabled students to express their comprehension dynamically, the RT approach assisted students in deeply internalizing and processing the reading material. This integration was an effective tactic for raising learning results in reading. The progressing achievement can be seen in the following graph.
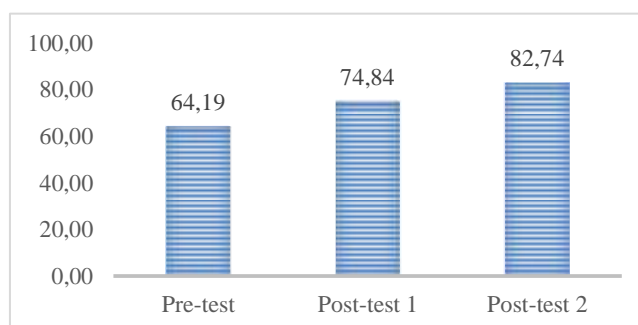

Figure 2. The students' progressing achievement on implementing RT & CLT

As seen by the rising scores from the pre-test to the post-test 2, integrating RT and CLT in the Reading course produced quantifiable gains in student performance. This indicates overwhelmingly positive feedback from the students. According to the questionnaire results, 43.60% of the students agreed and 53.78% strongly agreed that integrating RT and CLT improved their communication and reading comprehension skills. No participants voiced disagree or strongly disagreed; just 2.62% were unsure, as shown in figure 2 below. These findings show that the integrated strategy is widely accepted and is beneficial. Students valued the participatory and collaborative courses, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of the reading materials while practicing meaningful conversation.
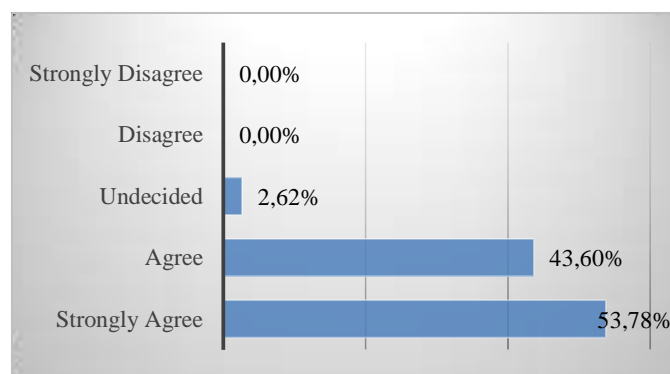

Figure 3. The Students' responses toward the implementation of RT & CLT

The Students and Lecturer Challenges in Integrating RT and CLT

Even though Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT) are successful strategies for improving students' reading and communication abilities, there have been difficulties in putting them into practice in the classroom. The teaching and learning process presented several challenges for the lecturer and the students.

a. Lecturer

Ensuring all students were equally involved during the integration of RT and CLT was a challenge for the lecturer, as shown in the following excerpt of the interview:

"Ensuring that every student participated fully in RT and CLT activities was one of the biggest obstacles I encountered. While some students remained passive, others tended to dominate. I had to give extra guidance, explain the steps more clearly, and pay close attention to how the groups interacted. Balancing group discussion was difficult. I frequently ask the other students to give space for quieter students to speak up" (DS)

b. Students
- Unfamiliarity with RT strategies
  " When the teacher introduced the four strategies, it was confusing for me, especially working in groups" (NA).
  " It was challenging at first as I had never used these four strategies previously. I was uncertain, so I waited for others to begin" (KK).

" *I didn't fully get the four Reciprocal Teaching steps. I waited for my lecturer to explain it*" (AS).

- Low confidence in speaking English
  " *I feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes*" (PD).
  " *When it came my turn to explain, I was anxious since I didn't want to make a mistake in front of my friends*" (GL).
  " *I don't feel confident with my pronunciation, I prefer listening to my friends than speaking*" (YI).

- Some students took charge of conversations while others stayed quiet.
  " *I wanted to talk, but I ended up just listening because the group leader was so controlling*" (GL).
  " *Some of us found it difficult to participate in the conversation during Reciprocal Teaching because some students controlled it*" (NA).
  " *During the CLT activity, some of us spoke a lot, while others would have rather kept quiet*" (PS).

Discussion

This study aimed to find out if the integration of RT and CLT may help the fourth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program improve their reading comprehension and communication skills. Combining RT and CLT in the reading course greatly impacted how well the students learned. The average scores went up from 64.19 in the pre-test to 74.84 in the first post-test and then to 82.74 in the second post-test, which showed this. The scores are improving during the two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), showing that RT and CLT tactics helped students read more actively and improve their communication abilities simultaneously.

Reciprocal Teaching helped students to understand what they were reading (Abrori, Hifdil Islam, & Hamdani, 2023; Afrizatama, 2018; Choo, Eng, & Ahmad, 2011). The four main strategies—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—involved students more in learning. At the same time, employing CLT principles helped students practice using English meaningfully through group discussions, pair work, and oral presentations (Firiady, 2018; S, Mujahidah, & Asni, 2023; Setiyorini et al., 2022). Students could discuss the texts, share their thoughts, and do interactive activities like pair work and group discussions. CLT allowed students to use what they learned from RT methods in real-life conversations, which helped them become more fluent and confident in their English. This combination of RT and CLT made for a balanced setting where students understood what they read and knew how to convey their comprehension well. These tactics helped students think more deeply and track how well they understood their learning. Because of this, students could better understand what they read and think about their thoughts. The higher test scores between the pre-test and post-test 1 showed this. Students said they were surer of themselves when talking about things they read, which aligns with the significant rise in post-test two results. This shows that CLT worked well with RT and made the classroom more active and focused on the students.

A questionnaire was administered to gain further insight into student perceptions of the strategy. The questionnaire results showed that the integration of RT & CLT worked even

better. Most of the students said that integrating RT and CLT helped them learn. 53.78% strongly agreed, and 43.60% agreed. Only 2.62% weren't sure, and no one said they disagreed. This overwhelmingly positive perception reflects students' satisfaction with the interactive and collaborative nature of the lessons. In the survey, students said RT tactics like anticipating, asking, clarifying, and summarizing helped them better understand what they were reading. They also noted that CLT-based activities like pair conversations, role-plays, and group presentations made them more interested in participating and gave them more faith in their ability to speak English. Students also liked that the focus of the lessons changed from the teacher to the student. This provided them more freedom, fostered learning from each other, and made the lessons more interesting and valuable. These answers show that combining RT and CLT not only helped students do better in class, but it also made the classroom a more supportive and communicative place.

Even though RT and CLT had good results, teachers and students faced problems in the teaching and learning process. Based on the interview, the students had trouble becoming involved in the teaching learning process, especially at the beginning of reciprocal teaching. Many students were unfamiliar with the four RT strategies and felt uncertain about applying them independently or within groups. While some students also didn't feel comfortable speaking English, it was hard for them to participate in CLT-based activities like role-plays and group discussions. The way the groups worked together was also different; some students took charge of conversations while others stayed quiet. For the teacher, the challenge was ensuring all the students were equally involved in RT and CLT. Because of these problems, teachers had to support students, explain techniques properly, and watch how groups interacted. To get the most out of RT and CLT, teachers and students should keep getting training and have a scheduled time to think about what they have learned. The study shows that combining RT and CLT can significantly improve EFL students' ability to read and communicate when done correctly.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Combining Reciprocal Teaching (RT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the reading class worked well to help students improve their reading comprehension and communication skills. The consistent improvement in test scores, from the pre-test to two post-tests, showed that students could participate more fully in the learning process and use both cognitive and communication skills well. The questionnaire results showed that students responded well to the method, demonstrating that it was well-received and led to valuable learning experiences. This study shows that combining RT and CLT in a CAR setting can significantly increase students' reading skills and provide a good example of how to teach in the future. The RT helped students understand texts better over two cycles of action, while CLT encouraged them to share their thoughts verbally in a communicative and collaborative setting. The lecturers are suggested to integrate RT and CLT in their reading classes to help students become better communicators in a more organized and integrated way.

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