

THE EFFECT OF THE RECIPROCAL TEACHING MODEL ON ENGLISH MAJORS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITIES

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Abstract: *The objective of this research is to examine how reciprocal teaching affects learners in both learning outcomes and attitudes. To meet the desired objectives, this mixed method study examined the effect of the reciprocal teaching model (RTM) on enhancing the reading comprehension abilities of English-majored sophomores. The experimental group (N = 36) experienced an application of the RTM process, whilst the control group (N = 35) participated in traditional reading classes. Data were gathered from a pre-reading assessment conducted before the intervention, a post-reading assessment conducted thereafter, and a semi-structured interview. The results indicated no statistically significant difference in reading scores between the experimental and control group participants in the pre-reading test; nevertheless, the experimental group excelled in the post-reading test. The qualitative data analysis revealed that participants saw the RTM intervention as beneficial in enhancing their reading comprehension abilities and motivating them to read through group interaction. These initial findings may assist subsequent studies in validating the efficacy of RTM in enhancing reading comprehension abilities among learners of all levels of education.*

Keywords: *Group interaction, reading comprehension, reciprocal teaching model (RTM).*

I. Introduction

Developing proficiency in reading comprehension is essential for individuals learning English as a foreign language. Engaging in reading activities can significantly improve learners' vocabulary, fluency, speaking, and writing skills, ultimately facilitating mastery of the target language. Hudri

(2019) noted that reading comprehension is a complex process, as it requires students to engage in various cognitive tasks which encompass fluent interpretation of words, comprehension of language syntax, conclusion drawing, utilization of background information, and the maintenance of working memory. Tran and Duong (2015) noted that in

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Vietnam, English language teaching (ELT) primarily emphasizes the goal of passing final exams. It has been observed that the students are not taught how to read, resulting in students lacking full awareness of how to effectively employ these strategies (Tran & Nguyen, 2017). However, in the context of tertiary education, university students are anticipated to demonstrate a strong reading habit, which is a key criterion for both academic and social development. Moreover, for students to be good at reading, they need to be in charge of the reading process. (Douglas et al., 2016).

Numerous scholars have validated the Reciprocal Teaching Model (RTM) as an effective approach for enhancing students' reading comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Tseng & Yeh, 2018). Moreover, RTM offers students opportunities to collaborate in teams, enabling them to elucidate challenging vocabulary, discern major concepts, and collectively summarize sections of the text. Consequently, students can acquire extensive vocabulary and the tactics to boost their confidence when engaging with lengthy texts (Choo et al., 2011). While RTM has been utilized to instruct reading comprehension in several ESL/EFL settings, this paradigm appears to be rather novel for learners in Vietnam. This study aims to investigate sophomore English majors' perceptions of utilizing RTM to enhance English reading comprehension at Dong Nai Technology University.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to the capacity to understand, interpret, and extract meaning from written material.

It transcends mere word decoding, necessitating the reader to integrate new information with existing knowledge, draw inferences, and critically evaluate the text to comprehensively understand the author's intended message. Frankel et al. (2016) characterise reading comprehension as an interactive process between the reader and the text, wherein the reader formulates a mental model of the information conveyed. However, as learners progress in their studies and texts increase in complexity with fewer contextual clues, some students encounter challenges in fully grasping the meaning of the material. Their challenges in understanding the text stem from a lack of reading interest and adequate reading strategies, as well as the ability to identify and understand what they read (Phantharakphong & Pothitha, 2014; Spear, 2015). Therefore, learners should be instructed on how to read to enhance their reading comprehension.

2.2. Reciprocal Teaching Model (RTM)

Palincsar and Brown initially employed the term Reciprocal Teaching (RT) to denote a systematic approach that scaffolds learners through the sequential application of four strategies: prediction, clarification, self-questioning, and summarization, aimed at assisting individuals who can decode but struggle with text comprehension. They posited that these tactics improved students' comprehension when professors and students alternately facilitated a discourse about portions of the book (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). After that, Palincsar and Brown provided a significant concept of reciprocal teaching practices, enabling collaborative learning among students (Palincsar & Brown, 1986). These two

definitions indicate that they view RTM as a technique to assist and facilitate students in understanding the text's content through mutual engagement. RTM is a collaborative learning method consisting of four individuals in small groups, so it provides equal opportunities for all learners to participate and help each other to achieve the learning goals (Gruenham, 2012; Tarchi & Pinto, 2016). Reciprocal teaching strategies consist of four techniques: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing, through which students acquire knowledge from their teachers' explicit instruction. The strategies are as follows:

2.2.1. Predicting

Clarke et al. (2013) characterized prediction as an inferential activity aimed at aiding students in improving their comprehension of a reading text, which involves identifying clues, signals, and employing prior information to formulate hypotheses regarding the events and locations within the text. Furthermore, prediction is a strategy that enables learners to establish a reading objective and evaluate their understanding of a material. This technique enhances their motivation and pleasure in reading passages while augmenting their understanding (Oczkus, 2010).

2.2.2. Clarifying

Clarifying entails monitoring one's comprehension of reading materials and employing strategies to maintain meaning throughout the reading process (Oczkus, 2010). Clarifying enables students to assess their understanding as they identify comprehension issues while reading portions of the texts. When students face challenges in comprehension, it is essential to address the underlying reasons for their

difficulties, including unfamiliar terms, unclear reference words, and complex or potentially ambiguous concepts.

2.2.3. Questioning

Questioning is a crucial approach for proficient readers; when students employ this strategy, they develop the ability to formulate enquiries on significant elements, including the central theme of the text and textual inferences. Consequently, this method enhances learners' reading abilities (Oczkus, 2010).

2.2.4. Summarizing

Summarization is a complex process that needs abilities such as identifying key points and organizing them coherently. Similarly, students are instructed to memorize significant details and recount the book in their own style (Oczkus, 2010).

The procedures for teaching reading through the RTM are organized into the following stages: A group of four students is selected, with each assigned a specific role: predictor, questioner, summarizer, and clarifier. (b) Subsequently, the students were instructed to read a paragraph aloud to the class and were advised to take notes during the reading, employing techniques such as highlighting and coding. Prior to reading, the designated predictor aids peers in linking previous sections of the text by offering a prediction informed by cues from the title or visuals. The leader instructs the team to convene and deliberate on their forecasts. Participants are directed to review the materials to confirm their predictions. The selected student, as a questioner, aids the group in formulating and responding to enquiries regarding the text to enhance understanding. The summarizer's role is to aid the group in identifying key ideas and details, as well as in creating

a summary. The clarifier aids the group in pinpointing and addressing areas of confusion, including specific words and sentences. (d) Upon completion of the assigned reading, students within each group will exchange roles. They repeat the process, now adhering to their new role. The trainer instructs the learners to independently utilize the four strategies (Oczkus, 2010).

2.3. Previous studies

2.3.1. RTM enhances students' reading comprehension

Ramadan (2017) conducted a study to investigate the impact of RTM on students' reading comprehension success. The researcher employed a quasi-experimental study for his research methodology. The study's samples comprised 165 secondary pupils, categorized into two categories. The results indicated a substantial disparity between the two groups. The survey also showed that students used the prediction and explanation strategies. Out of the four strategies, summarization had the lowest mean score. A separate investigation into the impact of RTM on reading proficiency was conducted by Chang and Lan (2019), utilizing the Moodle platform for the approach. The findings demonstrated that Moodle-based RTM facilitated improved performance among EFL students on the post-reading assessment.

2.3.2. RTM increases students' motivation

An experimental study conducted by Khan (2021) investigates the impact of RTM on the reading motivation of 7th-grade students. The findings indicate that students instructed using RTM exhibited notably greater motivation levels in comparison to those educated through

conventional methods. These studies offer important insights into the ways in which RTM enhances motivation among learners.

Numerous studies have investigated the role of RTM in reading classes to assess its effectiveness in enhancing student motivation, increasing participation, and improving reading comprehension. Nonetheless, limited research has investigated the role of RTM in enhancing learners' reading comprehension within the context of IELTS. This study aims to investigate the students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Teaching method in enhancing reading performance. The research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. How successful is the implementation of the Reciprocal Teaching Method in improving students' reading comprehension?
2. How do the students perceive learning reading with the Reciprocal Teaching Method?

III. Research methodology

3.1. Participants

Seventy-one sophomores majoring in English at Dong Nai Technology University participated in this study. The experimental group had 36 students, which is comparable to the control group of 35 participants. The participants enrolled in the Reading course during the first term of their second academic year. The course spans 15 weeks, featuring a midterm examination in week 11 and a final assessment to evaluate student comprehension of the material. The lecturer, as the researcher, was in charge of two classes. One class was designated as the experimental group, while the other was assigned as the control group.

3.2. Research Design

A pre-test was conducted to see whether a statistically significant difference existed in reading comprehension achievements between the experimental and control groups. The intervention for the experimental group commenced during the initial 10 weeks. The first week of the intervention focused on assisting the experimental group in understanding the stages of the RTM through the researcher's explanations and her modelling. After the explanation, the participants in the experimental group were instructed to assemble into groups of four. Each group member played a distinct role corresponding to the stages of RTM: summarizer, questioner, clarifier, and predictor. The participants designated as summarizers were also assigned the function of group moderator. The questioners posed enquiries about the subjects presented in the reading materials, while the other three group members also expressed their own enquiries. Subsequently, the clarifiers endeavored to address the questions raised; however, it was not solely the clarifiers who sought to provide answers, but other group members also contributed when they possessed relevant responses. Subsequently, the predictors articulated their perspectives on how the arguments articulated, either explicitly or implicitly, in the texts may be reevaluated and/or proposed methodologies could be implemented in their particular environment. As the groups executed their responsibilities, the lecturer observed and provided support as necessary. Following the completion of all steps, the researcher distributed five open-ended questions regarding the material to assess participants' reading comprehension. The groups were allotted

15 minutes to respond, after which they presented their solutions to the questions.

While the experimental group engaged with the articles via the RTM, the control group approached the same reading materials through conventional methods. They studied the texts during class hours and thereafter completed the related questions separately.

Upon completion of the ten-week intervention, a post-test was conducted. A semi-structured interview was conducted with five individuals from the experimental group to explore their perceptions of the RTM intervention.

3.3. Data collection tools

3.3.1. Pre-test and post-test

The program syllabi indicate that students are required to undergo training and complete IELTS (International English Language Testing System) equivalent assessments at the conclusion of the skill courses and prior to graduation. Therefore, a pre-test and a post-test were prepared in accordance with the IELTS reading format, with three passages and a total of 40 questions. The students must accurately respond to multiple-choice questions, sentence completions, diagram completions, matching headings, and short answer enquiries. As a result, the Reciprocal Teaching Model (RTM) can be highly suitable for improving IELTS reading abilities for the fact that RTM emphasizes predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, which align well with the skills needed to tackle the complex texts in IELTS reading sections. The pre-test determines participants' baseline reading comprehension levels prior to the intervention. This assists the researchers in identifying the initial status of learners. The post-test assesses reading

comprehension levels following the intervention. The data acquired from the tests were analyzed using an independent samples t-test. Analyzing pre-test and post-test results enables researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching.

3.3.2. Semi-structured interview

An interview procedure was maintained for each interviewee to document their responses to the questions. Interviews enable the researchers to explore students' emotions, viewpoints, and perceptions regarding the teaching method in depth. This reveals subtle attitudes that may not be apparent through scores. The following questions were formulated for the interview:

Table 1. Independent Samples T-Test Results for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-test
Pre-test	Experimental	36	24.11	6.894	0.467
	Control	35	25.26	6.294	
Post-test	Experimental	36	28.81	5.947	0.006
	Control	35	24.63	6.422	

The results indicate no statistically significant difference between the pre-test scores of the two groups. The experimental group shows Mean = 24.11 and SD = 6.894, while the control group has Mean = 25.26 and SD = 6.294, with $p = 0.467$.

In the post-test, the experimental group achieves Mean = 28.81 and SD = 5.947, significantly higher than the control group (Mean = 24.63 and SD = 6.422) with $p = 0.006$, indicating a statistically significant difference after the intervention. This confirms the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Teaching Model (RTM) in enhancing reading comprehension skills.

The experimental group demonstrated substantial improvement in reading comprehension after applying RTM compared to the control group. This is consistent with Palincsar and

1. How do you rate the RTM's effectiveness in improving your reading comprehension?

2. How has RTM changed the way you approach reading comprehension?

IV. Findings and discussion

4.1. Pre-test and post-test

The anticipated impact of the RTM intervention on the students' reading comprehension abilities was examined by analyzing the scores of the experimental and control groups on the pre- and post-reading tests. Table 1 below presents the results of the independent samples t-test for the pre- and post-reading assessments.

Brown (1984) and Tseng and Yeh, 2018, their assertion that reciprocal teaching has the capacity to improve students' comprehension skills by modifying the manner in which they engage with the texts, utilizing only four reading strategies.

4.2. Semi-structured interview

The qualitative data disclosed the participants' perceptions regarding the RTM intervention. The interviewees considered it beneficial in enhancing their reading comprehension skills. Two primary themes emerged from the findings: Learning strategies and conceptual changes.

4.2.1. Learning Strategies

The interviewees asserted that RTM promoted student-centered teaching and learning by allowing them to conduct

the majority of the work through group interaction, while the lecturer only offered assistance and guidance when necessary. Additionally, the participants reported that they were more engaged in the reading lessons as a result of their collaboration with their group members. The relevant literature includes studies that demonstrate the beneficial impact of collaborative learning on students' reading comprehension, which is consistent with this finding (Gruenham, 2012).

The students demonstrated unequal preferences for specific reading strategies. They favored prediction the most and considered it the most straightforward strategy to acquire out of the four. The interviewees indicated that it facilitated critical thinking and the application of prior knowledge. It is essential for students to have a clear purpose for reading, to engage with the text attentively, and to be motivated to read with enjoyment (Arif, 2014). Conversely, summarizing was perceived as the most challenging strategy to master. To perform this strategy, the students are instructed to rearrange and write main ideas without using the same words. The interviewees claimed that rationally rearranging important concepts in reading texts did not appeal to them. On the contrary, they may repeat the same words and concepts from the material they were reading. They mentioned that this process takes a long time and that they require more training to do this activity.

4.2.2. *Conceptual changes*

The intervention made a substantial difference in the reading scores of the treatment groups on the post-test. Because of this, the students gained confidence and became more motivated. Some students liked reading the material by themselves, others were able to understand the main ideas and details, and still others were eager to ask questions about the studies. When students worked together

to use RTM, they were able to highlight important parts of texts, ask questions in front of the class, talk about key ideas and details with classmates, answer all questions, find tricky words, and finish the reading text. Peer students led the RTM so that students who learn quickly could help students who learn slowly find ideas and talk about the topic together. The subsequent extracts from interviews with students pertain to their experiences with RTM for identifying main ideas, predicting content, formulating questions, clarifying concepts, and summarizing texts.

“Well, the picture or title makes me think of what the writing will be about.”
(Student 1)

“It's easier to find the main ideas when everyone works together.”
(Student 2)

“This way works well for me; it's easy to ask questions about the content. When I have trouble with words, I sometimes ask another friend for help.”
(Student 3)

“We learn to work together and accept responsibility based on our positions.” (Student 4)

“Before we ask questions, we need to draw attention to things like person, place, or time.” (Student 5)

This study demonstrated that RTM can enhance learners' engagement in enjoyable and collaborative activities while also improving their reading comprehension. During classroom reading activities, they exhibited increased engagement, strategic thinking, and cooperation, thereby effectively applying the RTM and enhancing their comprehension of the reading material.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this investigation contribute significantly to the literature.

Implementing the RTM in the Reading Skills course significantly improved the experimental group's reading comprehension skills. Because the students did practically all of the work throughout the intervention, they were strongly motivated to take responsibility for improving their reading skills. The study suggests that university lecturers should avoid traditional teaching approaches and instead focus on fostering student interaction and autonomy.

This study is not without limits. First and foremost, the period of the intervention should be increased because it lasted only ten weeks in this study. Furthermore, more complete qualitative data might be collected to get enlightening insights into students' experiences with the RTM intervention. To ensure significant benefit, study participants should be interviewed both at the end and during the intervention to make the required changes. The study's participants were English-majored students, but the RTM can be used by teachers at all levels of education.

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TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA MÔ HÌNH GIẢNG DẠY QUA LẠI LÊN KHẢ NĂNG ĐỌC HIỂU CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH

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Tóm tắt: Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là xem xét mô hình giảng dạy qua lại ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến kết quả học tập và thái độ của người học. Để đạt được các mục tiêu mong đợi, nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp tìm hiểu tác động của mô hình giảng dạy qua lại trong việc nâng cao khả năng hiểu đọc của sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành tiếng Anh. Nhóm thử nghiệm (N = 36) đã học tập theo quy trình của mô hình, trong khi nhóm đối chứng (N = 35) tham gia lớp học đọc truyền thống. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ bài kiểm tra đánh giá trước và sau khi thực hiện mô hình, và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Kết quả cho thấy không có sự khác biệt về kết quả bài kiểm tra của hai nhóm trước khi áp dụng mô hình; Nhưng sau đó nhóm thử nghiệm lại xuất sắc trong bài kiểm tra sau đó. Phân tích dữ liệu định tính cho thấy những người tham gia cho rằng mô hình giảng dạy qua lại có lợi trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu của họ và thúc đẩy họ đọc thông qua tương tác nhóm. Những phát hiện này có thể hỗ trợ cho việc nghiên cứu sau này trong việc xác nhận tính hiệu quả của mô hình giảng dạy qua lại đối với đối tượng học ở mọi trình độ.

Từ khóa: Tương tác nhóm, đọc hiểu, mô hình giảng dạy qua lại.

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