

# A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND RECIPROCAL TEACHING OF READING COMPREHENSION AMONG POOR READERS

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of traditional and reciprocal teaching on reading comprehension of the poor readers. The research was conducted on experimental design method. The population of the study consisted on the students of secondary level. Twenty students were taken as sample through the diagnostic reading test. The tools of the research were English reading comprehension tests. The treatment span was fifteen days, two hours per day. After collecting the data, it was quoted and analyzed. The students, who had been taught through reciprocal teaching, showed improvement in reading comprehension. It was concluded that reciprocal teaching method was better than traditional teaching method.*

## **Introduction**

Reading is a skill that empowers everyone who learns it. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes; word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. The readers typically make background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help understand written text (Kamil, Pang, Muaka and Bernhardt, 2003). In Pakistan, students read English as a second language. Their primary language is not English, so they face a lot of reading problems. Educational

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success requires successful reading and it is said that those who fail in school usually have failed first in reading (Dechant, 1991).

There are different methods of teaching the reading habit. Traditional teaching method is the most common in our country. Mostly the teachers teach the students through this method. The teachers ask one student to read the lesson loudly and the rest of the students to listen it. The student reads the lesson without understanding it. Generally the guidelines are given by the teacher. When the tests are used for diagnostic purpose, they are generally used only to establish grades for recall. The use of literacy tools (listening, reading, writing) in the traditional approach is restricted primarily to the individualized reading with minimal writing done often only in workbooks (Verghese, 1997). The purpose of a teacher is to complete the whole course during the short time. This method is being used since many years.

Reciprocal teaching is also a teaching method of reading comprehension. The purpose of reciprocal teaching is to facilitate a group effort between teacher and students as well as among students in the task of bringing meaning to the text. Basically, it is an interactive method used to improve reading comprehension. Using this teaching strategy, teachers and students take turns towards leading discussions regarding sections of the text using cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Reciprocal teaching is based on Vygotsky's theory of the fundamental role of social interaction (dialogue) in the development of cognition. Thinking aloud and discussion of thoughts aid in clarification and revision of thinking and learning, therefore developing cognition. Vygotsky's theory of ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) is critical to identify appropriate text and scaffolding activities to support student success. Text must be at a level than can be effectively shared, not too easy and not too difficult. Appropriate support and feedback must be given to facilitate learning during reciprocal teaching activities. Reciprocal teaching was developed by Palincsar and Brown in 1984 for the purpose of helping the students from first grade on for improving their understanding during reading. Reciprocal teaching is a learning arrangement in which students take turns leading a small-group discussion (Santrock, 2004).

Reading is a constructive process which is linked with the reader's oral and written language. Reading is a very complex task. It should be viewed as the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text, and the context of the reading situation. Reading is a continuously developing skill which improves with practice. It is not mastered once and for all. At all stages of reading, from the beginning on, it is important

that the learner has sufficient opportunities to practice and engage in the process of reading. The teachers must search for strategies that will offer many reading opportunities.

Reading is the recognition of the printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli to the recall of meanings built up through the reader's past experience. New meanings are derived through manipulation of concepts already in his possession. The organization of these meanings is governed by purpose clearly defined by the reader. In short, the reading process involves both the acquisition of meanings intended by the writer and the reader's own contributions in the form of interpretation, evaluation, and reflection of these meanings (Babu, Prasad and Rao, 2004).

### **Poor Readers**

The poor readers are those who have difficulties in reading. The poor readers start reading without thinking about the subject. They do not know why they are reading except that it is an assignment. They do not know whether they understand or not and do not monitor their own comprehension. They do not use any strategy for understanding the text during the process of reading. They read the text quickly and sometimes adept at phonic analysis, but do not go for understanding the meaning. They can say the words, but don't know what they mean. When they do not take interest in reading they get bore of it. At the end of the reading they do not know what they have read.

### **Reading Difficulties**

There are a lot of reading difficulties. The more prevalent are the following:

- Faculty word identification and recognition.
- Inappropriate directional habits.
- Deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities.
- Limited special comprehension abilities.
- Deficiencies in basic study skills.
- Deficiencies in ability to adopt to reading needs of content fields.
- Deficiencies in rate of comprehension.
- Poor oral reading (Mercer and Mercer, 1985).

### **Reading Comprehension**

In reading, comprehension means understanding the meaning of a printed passage by reconstructing the message the author intended to send. Reading comprehension is the process of determining meaning. In this process, readers

construct an author's intended message in their own minds (Savage, 1998). Comprehension is the consummation of the reading process; if a person does not understand what he/she reads, that person is not reading really.

Reading comprehension is a very complex process. It can be defined as constructing and reconstructing meaning from the printed material. It is an interactive process that required the use of the prior knowledge (previous experience) which the reader combines with the information on the printed pages. In most instances, prior knowledge is more important than the printed material. The more prior knowledge a reader possesses, the less printed material need to be used (Miller, 1993). Reading comprehension is composed of two equally important components. Decoding, or the ability to translate text into speech, is only part of the process of reading comprehension. The other component is language comprehension, or the ability to understand spoken language. All struggling readers have difficulty with either language comprehension or decoding or both.

### **Objectives**

- To analyze the impact of reciprocal teaching on poor readers.
- To analyze the impact of traditional teaching on poor readers.
- To compare reciprocal and traditional teaching in terms of their outcomes.

### **Methodology**

Population of this research were the poor readers studying at secondary level, 20 poor readers were selected from grade 6. Sample from 6<sup>th</sup> grade was chosen because at this stage student's age is 10 to 15 years. The children at this age increase their ability to think abstractly. They have the ability to use planning to think ahead and can recognize and identify a problem. They can state several alternative hypotheses, execute procedures to collect information about the problems to be studies, and test the hypotheses (Lin, 2002).

Purposive sampling technique was applied to extract the sample from population. The poor readers were initially pointed out by their teacher. The selected group was further given a diagnostic reading comprehension test. On the result of this test, the sample of 20 students was randomly taken. A checklist of characteristics of poor readers was prepared. And a reading paragraph was given to the students for oral reading. Then, three questions were made to assess the reading comprehension and three questions for assessing the

