

ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

Teaching strategy – Reciprocal teaching

Focuses on

Speaking Listening **Reading** Writing

Most useful for students at stages

A1 A2 BL B1 **B2 B3** SL S1 **S2 S3 S4**

Reciprocal teaching is suited to middle/ upper primary and secondary students and supports established as well as struggling readers to engage more effectively with the text's meaning.

Purpose of this activity

Reciprocal teaching is an interactive teaching strategy for supporting readers to develop comprehension strategies. It is particularly useful for ESL students who are often able to decode a text but do not fully understand what they have read.

Reciprocal teaching involves four roles, which need to be modelled for the students over a number of teaching sessions before the students can be expected to adopt the roles.

The four roles are Questioner, Clarifier, Predictor and Summariser. As the students enact these roles, they are practising the comprehension strategies of questioning, clarifying, predicting and summarising as they engage in a structured dialogue about the selected text.

How this helps ESL students in particular

Reciprocal teaching:

- focuses on reading for meaning, supporting students to develop comprehension strategies in a supportive context
- engages students in meaningful dialogue about texts
- supports students to develop a language for talking about texts
- makes explicit what readers do – question, clarify, predict and summarise
- extends students' ability to talk about their interpretation of a text
- supports students in understanding complex texts
- develops students' content knowledge and topic vocabulary
- helps students to develop skills in locating, organising and recording information about a topic for writing.

Procedure

The key steps of reciprocal teaching are:

- Introduce and model the roles over a series of session so that the students are familiar with the expectations of each role:

Questioner: asks questions to help the group to understand the text.

Clarifier: asks questions and highlights parts of the text where the meaning is unclear.

Predictor: sets a purpose for what might be ahead in the text.

Summariser: talks about the most important parts of the text in their own words.

- Once the students are familiar with the roles and expectations, they can take on the roles themselves, with teacher support.
- The teacher selects a text and provides a brief, focused introduction to prepare the students for reading the text.
- Students are allocated roles and lead discussion of the text with the teacher's support where necessary.

Using reciprocal teaching with ESL students

Modelling the roles will also involve modelling the language that students will need to lead the group in discussion. For example:

- Questioner: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? What if?
- Clarifier: I'm not sure what means? Does anyone know what ...? Why do you think that? I think that word means
- Predictor: What do think will happen when/if...? I wonder if... I think this text will tell us aboutPerhaps.... Why do you think...? What might this section of the text tell us about?
- Summariser: The main idea in this text is ... The most important ideas are ... The key arguments in this text are ... There are three main ideas in this text. To begin with ... Also ... Finally ...

Model explicit examples of what the various roles might involve and provide support for student reference, e.g. charts, lists . For example:

Questioner:

- Ask questions before during and after reading.
- Model examples of literal, inferential and evaluative questions.
- Provide question-type support charts, for example:
 - Right There – Did the author say it?
 - Read and Think – Did the author mean it?
 - On My Own - Would the author agree?

Clarifier:

- Look for unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Examine the layout of the text.
- Identify complex concepts.
- Use the grammar of the text.
- Use a dictionary or thesaurus.
- Re-read.

Predictor:

- Stop at different points in the text.
- Use headings, sub-headings.
- Confirm or reject predictions.

Summariser:

- Locate key words in the text and use in the summary.
- Summarise the main idea of a paragraph.
- Summarise key points relating to sub-headings.

Use texts related to other areas the students are learning about in the classroom so that they are familiar with the topic, vocabulary, technical language etc. These texts can then be used to support the students in related writing activities e.g. writing information reports, arguments or explanations.

Acknowledgments/reference

Education Department of Western Australia (2004). *Reading: Resource book, 2nd ed.* Port Melbourne: Rigby Heineman.

Palincsar, A. & Brown, A. (1985). Reciprocal teaching: activities to promote 'reading with your mind'. *Reading, Thinking, and Concept Development: Strategies for the Classroom.* Harris, T. & Cooper, E. (eds). NY: College Board Public.