

Reciprocal Teaching



Purpose

Reciprocal teaching is a technique to develop comprehension of expository text by modeling and practicing how to read and understand the text. The teacher and students take turns leading a discussion about sections of the text. The teacher provides the initial model by thinking aloud about how he constructs a summary, makes up questions, clarifies what is difficult, and predicts what else the text will discuss (Palinscar & Brown, 1984).

Predominant Focus of Instruction:

1. Processing focus: meaning
2. Instructional phase: during reading
3. Response mode emphasized: oral discussion
4. Strategy emphasized: elaboration
5. Skill emphasized: literal comprehension
6. Source of information: text-based
7. Type of instruction: explicit
8. Type of cognitive processing: successive

Procedure

1. The teacher selects a text from a content area.
2. The teacher explains the four tasks:
 - a. question generating
 - b. summarizing
 - c. clarifying the difficult parts
 - d. predicting what the next section will discuss
3. Both the students and teacher silently read the first section of the text.
4. The teacher talks about the four tasks of reading for that section.
 - a. constructing several good questions
 - b. constructing a summary of the section, using the main idea and supporting details
 - c. clarifying difficult parts by stressing vocabulary and organization
 - d. predicting what the next section will contain by using the title and heading
5. The students help revise the summary, answer the questions, clarify unclear parts of the summary and the text, and evaluate the prediction (agree or disagree and add a rationale for doing so).
6. After a few models by the teacher, a student takes the turn of teacher. She thinks aloud, using the four steps.
7. The teacher becomes a student and assumes the student's role.
8. Students take turns playing "teacher."

9. Periodically the teacher reviews the four activities with the students.

Rule for good questions: they should be clear and stand by themselves.

Rule for clarifying: look for difficult vocabulary, incomplete information, unclear references, and unusual expressions.

Rule for predictions: use the title and heading, use questions in the text if present, and use text structures (references to two kinds, four levels, and so on).

10. As the students play “teacher,” the teacher does the following:

- a. Provides feedback about the quality of summaries or questions. When necessary, he models his thinking for the student. For example, he might comment, “that was a start on a summary, but I would summarize by adding...”
- b. He provides encouragement to the students playing “teacher.” For example, he may say, “I liked the way you identified the important information.”

Further Diagnostic Application

Basic View of Reading:

Reading is a socio-interactive process where a reader’s interpretation of the text is shaped by discussing ideas with others as well as by the use of the textual and non-textual information. By thinking aloud, the student becomes more aware of how to integrate knowledge sources when reading.

Patterns of Strengths and Strategies:

Reciprocal teaching is most appropriate for students who have verbal fluency and experimental knowledge of the topics but need to focus their understanding. These students read and retain information, but the complexities of content area reading often produce an overload of unorganized facts rather than important related information.

Learner patterns That Produce Increased Engagement:

1. A passive yet verbally fluent learner who needs to organize the information read. By leading the discussion, the student actively thinks about her section of the text. She also can follow the teacher’s model.
2. A sequential learner who tries to memorize a string of unrelated facts rather than focus on the important points and how the facts relate to these points. This technique encourages her to use only the important information in her summary.
3. A passive reader who does not monitor information learned and relate it to an organized whole. This technique helps her actively summarize text and clarify the difficult parts.

Using the Technique as a Diagnostic Lesson: For reciprocal teaching to be effective, a majority of the following statements must be answered in the affirmative:

- | Yes | No | |
|-----|-----|--|
| ___ | ___ | 1. The student has enough expressive language so that constructing a summary is not terribly time-consuming. |
| ___ | ___ | 2. The student can ask good questions. |
| ___ | ___ | 3. The student can summarize information and convey this information to the group. |