

**“A STUDY ON RECIPROCAL TEACHING STRATEGY AS  
A READING IMPROVING TECHNIQUE IN ENGLISH”**

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### ***Abstract***

The authors' reports an experiment designed to assess the relative effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy (RTS) in improving reading in English among students over the conventional method. The sample consisted of 800 students in Vadodara district in Gujarat. Pre-test, post-test Equivalent –Groups Experimental Design was adopted. The author found that the reciprocal teaching strategy makes for statistically significant improvements in the gain scores pertaining to comprehension, speed and vocabulary acquisition over the conventional method of teaching the language.

### **KEYWORDS:**

*Reciprocal Teaching, Strategy, Reading Improving Technique, English*



## Reading Research

Reading research during the past twenty years has been characterized by simultaneous efforts at many fronts. These new areas in reading research imply a shift from its earlier focuses contemporary reading research is how concerned with

- (1) The role of cognitive processes in reading
- (2) The nature of reading comprehension
- (3) The models of reading and component skills of the reading process

Many research studies have been conducted towards evolving a reading development strategy or set of strategies that would raise the reading levels of students. The application of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy was experimented on urban students in Highland Park, Michigan and the Success of the above experiment was reported by UNESCO – International Bureau of Education in 2001 in its Innodata Monographs-8.

## Reciprocal Teaching- Historical Background

The discovery of Reciprocal Teaching was based on cognitive science research and its record of validation was bona fide: student reading comprehension improved in every trial and the results remained constant over time. Among reading experts and practioners, the technique had been heralded as effective in helping students improve their reading ability in pre-post-trial research studies (Pearson & Doyle 1987; Pressley Snyder 1987). Additionally, Bruner (1993) reported that Reciprocal Teaching helps novice readers learn and internalize in a short time the strategies excellent readers employ and they are able to retain the skills and apply them in other content areas/subjects that the exercise applying the technique was short in duration, twenty days was also part of its appeal. Again, the friendliness, mutual trust and consciousness among the members in the Reciprocal Teaching Strategy make for a joyful and rewarding learning experience. Reciprocal Teaching has aroused international interest. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, an educational resource laboratory, has a web site that explains Reciprocal Teaching and summarizes the research from which it comes. The university of Washington post's a Reciprocal Teaching Home page that reviews the research and has concluded that the technique is effective. In Canada, Hewitt (1995) published a review of Reciprocal Teaching that concludes that the technique is attractive for its simplicity of form and success in realizing its goals.

## Reciprocal Teaching – A Conceptual Framework

'Reciprocal Teaching' is an instructional procedure designed to enhance reading comprehension in young (elementary and middle school) students. It is characterized by

1. Dialogue between students and teacher, each taking a turn in the role of a dialogue leader
2. 'Reciprocal': Interactional where one person acts in response to the other
3. Structured dialogue using four strategies/steps viz., Predicting, Summarizing, Questioning and Clarifying.

According to Palincsar (1986) “Reciprocal teaching refers to an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: predicting, summarizing, question generating and clarifying. The teacher and students take turn assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue. 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”.

### **Need for the present study**

Though teachers and educationists are quite aware of the importance of reading, yet very little has been done to develop skill in reading to the desired level. In western countries, teachers’ educationists and parents can assess and evaluate the progress of their wards at every step with the help of standardized test on reading to suit different grades and age levels and adopt suitable remedial measures and often quite unsuitable to Indian needs, as India is a vast and growing country differing in every respect from one part to another, in language, culture and so on.

Especially no such remedial measures and reading improvement strategies are available in English. In the rapidly changing political, economic and social life of India, there is a renewed emphasis on and search for cultural identity. An important factor in all this is language which is a veritable vehicle for culture and tradition. Since education of English constitutes a “renewal of connection” with a people’s language and cultural heritage, it is to be expected that its importance in educational planning and policy will continue to grow. A study of the practices, techniques, new developments and experiments in English language education will therefore continue to be worthwhile undertaking.

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The studies of Devanathan (1988) and Selvaraj Gnanaguru (1994) are related to Reading Skills in Tamil at elementary and high school level, the present study is unique and different from them as it attempts to study the effect of Reciprocal Teaching as a reading improvement technique. A review of related literature and research studies conducted in India reveals a research gap that no study has been conducted to test the effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching in India with focus on improving reading in English at the elementary level. Hence, the present investigation has been undertaken to apply Reciprocal Teaching as a reading improvement technique and to find out its effectiveness in English of the elementary level students.

### **Objectives**

The main objective of the present experimental study was to find out the effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching of reading over the conventional method of teaching reading in English to students of Standard VIII.

### **Hypotheses**

The specific hypotheses formulated on the basis of the insights gained from the review of related literature and tested by the experiment are: There will be significant difference between the mean achievement scores of the Experimental and the Control Group students in the subtests on

1. Reading Comprehension
2. Reading Speed
3. Vocabulary

Of course, the data were tested in the null form.

## Methodology

Pre-test, Post- test, Equivalent- Groups Experimental Design was adopted.

## Sample

Two intact groups of Std. VIII students from two classes each in ten elementary schools constituted the total sample. The experiment was conducted on a sample of 800 students of standard VIII from ten elementary schools in Vadodara District of Gujarat State. Due representation was given to the locale –rural-urban – of the schools, type of management and sex of the students. The sample subjects were randomly assigned to two groups.

## The experimental treatment

One group was treated as Reciprocal Teaching Group (RTG), which was taught through reciprocal teaching technique. The other group was treated which was taught through the conventional method of teaching was designated CMG. Care was taken to minimize interferences and threats to generalization in experimental research.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

Null Hypothesis1: There is no significant difference between the Gain Score of the Conventional Teaching Group and the Comprehension. Reciprocal Teaching Group in Reading

Table-1

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GAIN SCORES IN READING COMPREHENSION OF THE CONVENTIONAL METHOD GROUP AND THE RECIPROCAL TEACHING GROUP

Group	N	Gain Score	S.D	S.E	t
Conventional	400	1.02	0.04	1.90	12.14*
Reciprocal	400	24.09	3.85		

\*Significant at 0.01 level

Both the control and the experimental groups have gained through the experimental phase. The gain scores of the Conventional Method of Teaching and the Reciprocal Teaching Groups were And 24.09 respectively. The 't' value indicates that the differences in the gain scores of the two groups are significant: the calculated 't' value of 12.94 is higher than the corresponding table 't' value of 1.06. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Between the two groups the Reciprocal Teaching Group has had gain score which is more than 10 times the corresponding score for the conventional method group.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant different between the Gain Scores in Reading Speed of the Conventional Teaching Group and the Reciprocal Teaching Group.

Table -2

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GAIN SCORES OF THE CONVENTIONAL METHOD GROUP AND THE RECIPROCAL TEACHING GROUP IN READING SPEED

Group	N	Gain Score	S.D	S.E	t
Conventional	400	0.025	0.001	7.75	8.21*
Reciprocal	400	63.65	7.32		

\*Significant at 0.01 level

The gain scores of the Conventional Method Group and the Reciprocal Teaching Group between the pre and Posttests were 0.025 and 63.65 respectively. The calculated 't' value of 8.21 indicates that the differences in the gains are significant between the groups. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected: there is significant difference between the gain scores of Control and Experimental Groups in Reading Speed. The Gain Score of the Control Group 0.025 is almost nil whereas that of the Experimental is 63.65.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant different in the Gain Scores of the Conventional Teaching Group and the Reciprocal Teaching Group Vocabulary.

Table -3

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GAIN SCORES OF THE CONVENTIONAL METHOD GROUP AND THE RECIPROCAL TEACHING GROUP IN VOCABULARY

Group	N	Gain Score	S.D	S.E	t
Conventional	400	2.10	1.58	0.61	2.08*
Reciprocal	400	3.37	0.44		

\*Significant at 0.01 level

The gain scores of Conventional and Reciprocal Groups between the pre and post tests are 2.10 and 3.37 respectively. The calculated 't' value is higher than the table value of 1.96: hence the difference in the gain scores between the groups is significant. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Between the groups the reciprocal teaching group has registered a higher gain score.

### Summary of Findings

It has been found that Reciprocal Teaching Technique as an experimental treatment has made for a greater gain score than the conventional method in teaching English for students of standard VIII in

1. Reading Comprehension
2. Reading Speed
3. Vocabulary

## Implications

The findings of this study indicate that the reciprocal teaching strategy be adopted for teaching English to Standard VIII children as this strategy is relatively more effective in improving comprehension, reading speed and acquisition of vocabulary than the conventional method in vogue.

## Recommendations

The Reciprocal Teaching Technique could be taken up by the staff development agencies like National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) at the national level, State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) at the state level and District Institutes of Educational Training (DIETs) at the district level as an important component of in- service training programmes to ensure a widespread diffusion of this technique among elementary school teachers in various states across the nation.

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) could take steps to include Reciprocal Teaching Technique as a mandatory component of the Teacher Education curriculum in India.

Improving students' reading competence is not the responsibility of language teachers alone. Every teacher, sciences or social sciences, must deliberately focus his/her attention on this basic skill which will enhance and accelerate the understanding and comprehension of the subject content taught by him/her.

## Suggestion for Further Research

Action Research Projects which would promote a better understanding and application of the Reciprocal Teaching may be undertaken. Such action Research Projects on a large scale can help bridge the gap between research and development of teacher competency in adopting the reciprocal teaching strategy as a matter of course in their day- to -day teaching.

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