

**Utilizing a Strategy Based on Reciprocal Teaching to Develop
EFL Critical Reading Skills of Preparatory School Students**

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of reciprocal teaching strategy to develop critical reading skills of preparatory school students . To achieve the study aim , The author adopted the quasi design of two groups ; experimental and control (60) pupils at Boys' prep school in sahragt El kobra Mit Ghamr Dakahlia ' the members were divided into two corresponding groups . both groups were pretested to assure that they corresponding in critical reading skills . The experimental group was taught using Reciprocal teaching strategy while the control one was taught by the regular method in the first term of 2022 – 2023 the experiment lasted for six weeks in which the author implemented the study academic instruments a checklist and a test of critical reading skills . The results were statistically analyzed by the author . results revealed that there were statistically significant differences at

($\alpha= 0.01$)between the mean scores of the control group and that of the experimental one on the critical reading post test in favor of the experimental group. This positive result was attributed to the effect of Reciprocal teaching strategy

According to the findings it was recommended that EFL teachers need to use RT to develop critical reading skills of prep stage students \

Key words : reciprocal teaching ,critical reading

1. Introduction

Critical reading is an interactive process in which readers receive and comprehend the author's message, it assists readers to analyze and evaluate what's read, it's a high level in reading comprehension, so it empowers readers to think beyond the lines in an analytical way.

Moreover, Critical reading (CR) is necessary not only in academic context, but also essential for life. For McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004), people need to read from a critical stance and to think rather than passively accept the information they read as when most people were in school, they believed everything they read. Generally, students never ask, who writes the text, who decides what topics should be included or excluded. They rarely ask if there is any viewpoint other than the one presented. That is why Zin and Galea (2014) mentioned that critical reading is not only essential for academic reasons, but it is also a tool kit to read the world.

According to Paul and Elder (2014) a critical person raises essential questions and problems, formulates them clearly and exactly; gathers and assesses relevant information, and effectively clarifies it; comes to well-reasoned outcomes and solutions, tests them against relevant criteria and standards; thinks open-mindedly

within alternative systems of thought. In addition, he recognizes and evaluates their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and communicates effectively with others in discovering solutions to complex problems .

As critical reading plays a vital role for language learners, it receives much attention in pedagogical literature. Zaki et al (2014) mentioned that there is no more central issue of education than thinking, it should be improved and integrated into the process of foreign language learning and teaching, in other words, learners should learn how to critically produce and receive information through language. It's proved that block-schemes enable non-language-majoring to understand the main ideas and to respond to the questions more efficiently due to developing skills as analyzing and assessing the materials (**Minakova, 2014**).

Palincsar and Brown (1984) suggested teaching four reading techniques which are; questioning, predicting, summarizing and clarifying. They stated that these specific techniques were deliberately selected among the various techniques as they function on two folds: monitoring understanding and enhancing understanding. Students better comprehend the text via negotiating

the meaning. Additionally, they can monitor their comprehending level after a while of a systematic practice.

Reciprocal Teaching (RT) is one of the best strategies of teaching reading as the combination of strategic responses to texts seems to be more effective in the support of development of understanding. Reciprocal Teaching focuses not only on understanding the text read by the students, but also preparing them to apply all the acquired techniques in future reading tasks in a self-regulated way and, so, aims at enhancing their cognitive and metacognitive skills (**Doolittle et al, 2006**).

Reciprocal Teaching core goal is to foster comprehension of the text, via monitoring understanding during reading. It is an “instructional activity of reading comprehension, in which a group of students is collaboratively applying four reading strategies (questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting) to co-construct the written text meaning” (**Tarchi & Pinto, 2016**). The model is boosted in the classroom via the strategies’ guided teaching by the teacher. The teacher models the techniques during the process of reading a text and thinking aloud, verbally explaining his mental processes to the students. Then students take the role of the teacher, and showing their thinking aloud during the process of reading. The

teacher and students roles' reciprocating continues to make understanding more easily. The model enables students with teacher to construct and scaffold meaning in a social manner via conversation, discussion and thinking aloud activities (**Oczkus, 2010**).

In addition, Palincsar and Brown (1984) mentioned that the strategy is derived from the social constructivist theory, because it depends on the proximal development zone and the teacher's scaffold. The strategy focuses on the teaching comprehension process more than the product itself. In another meaning, Reciprocal Teaching is about passing time skilling students with strategies more than passing time assessing their performance and giving feedback on their mistakes. The method is based on two principles: (a) teaching the four concrete, cognitive techniques before reading comprehension, and (b) teaching the techniques in the form of the dialogue between the teacher and students (**Rosenshine & Meister, 1994**).

So, the teacher's role is central in teaching the techniques. The teacher acts as a model for students to follow in dealing with the reading passage. Students then exchange roles with the teacher in leading the conversation about the text. That shows why a

conversation is acting as the “heart of Reciprocal Learning” (Casanave,1988). The constructivist nature of Reciprocal teaching is a fundamental element in scaffolding skills of the learners. The teacher guides the students then and gradually withdraws himself from the conversation when students become more efficient and capable of applying the strategy for understanding new texts (Palincsar & Brown,1984).

Moreover, the think aloud technique, helps students to imitate the style of the teacher in showing his mental processes. Gradually, students adapt and integrate the behavior of the teacher to their potentials. By the time, students receive the feedback that they use for monitoring their thinking while they communicate and express their ideas. Finally, students gain higher awareness of their thinking processes and their reading monitoring enhancement. Scaffolding, by that meaning, is defined as the gradual outlets delivered from the teacher to the students who by time become able to share the responsibility of monitoring their understanding (Raslie et al, 2015).

2. Context of the problem

The researcher, as an EFL supervisor observed that the preparatory stage students have got low points in most of critical reading skills

The researcher reviewed the previous studies related to the research dependent variables that showed the deficiency of the students' levels in the target skills. Besides, interviews were also conducted with EFL teachers in some prep schools. They complained that most students lack critical reading skills.

- **Results of the exploratory study revealed that**

An exploratory study was conducted on 60 students from the first-grade preparatory school to determine their performance levels in some critical reading skills. The pilot study included a tests for critical reading and. Results indicated that the students' performance level in the exploratory study was below the average score (50%) see appendix (A&B)

The results of the tests were as follow:

Table (1) the results of critical reading skills pilot test

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Percentage of students 'levels</u>
1- Recognizing the author's purpose and evaluating ideas	36.6%
2- Supporting claims with evidence	33.3%
3- Comparing and contrasting	23.3%

4- Differentiating between facts and opinions.	30%
5- Making predictions	30%
6- Giving point of view about the author and the text	20%

According to the results of the pilot study it is obvious that EFL first grade students have weakness in their critical reading skills that their grades are below 40% in the stated areas. So, utilizing a strategy based on reciprocal teaching may be a remedy for this weakness

3. Statement of the problem:

Based on the aforementioned discussion, reviewing literature and the mean scores of the pilot study it could be concluded that students in preparatory stage are weak in EFL critical reading skills Accordingly, the current study attempts to answer the following main question

What is the effect of a strategy based on reciprocal teaching on developing EFL critical reading skills of preparatory school students?

This main question is subdivided into the following ones

1. What are the EFL critical reading skills required for preparatory school students?
2. What's the current level of the prep stage students in critical reading skills

3. How can a strategy based on reciprocal teaching be designed to develop EFL critical reading skills

4. The purpose of the Study:

The current study aims at investigating the effect of a strategy based on reciprocal teaching on developing EFL critical reading skills of preparatory stage students.

5. Significance of the Study:

This study will be hopefully be helpful to

5.1. EFL prep school students in:

- Improving their critical reading skills

3.2. EFL supervisors and teachers:

- As it might provide them with systematic and practical procedures to develop their methods of teaching critical reading skills through.
- Preparing a suitable instrument to measure EFL critical reading skills.

6. The study design:

1. The quasi-experimental design will be adopted in this study; two groups of 1st grade preparatory school will be selected to represent the experimental and the control groups.

7. The study instruments:

1. Critical reading skills test.
2. Critical reading checklist

8. Hypotheses of the study:

1. There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the post administration of EFL critical reading skills test results favoring the experimental group.
2. There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment group in the pre and post administrations of the EFL critical reading skills test results in favor of the post administration one.
3. The strategy based on reciprocal teaching has a positive effect on devolving first grade preparatory school students EFL critical reading skills.

10. Procedures:

To answer the study questions, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Reviewing literature and previous studies related to reciprocal teaching strategy and critical reading
2. Analyzing the content of the English language text book taught to first grade prep school students to recognize the target skills
3. Preparing a list of critical reading skills for the first grade prep school students and validating them by jury members

4. Designing the critical reading skills test based on the previous list
5. Submitting the previous instruments to the jury members to be validated
6. Designing a reciprocal teaching strategy to be implemented for developing critical reading skills.
7. Submitting the proposed strategy to the jury members.
8. Utilizing the proposed strategy that based on reciprocal teaching
9. Selecting the participants of EFL 1st grade preparatory school students and dividing them into two groups, the control and the experimental group.
10. Pre administrating the study instruments to the two groups.
11. Administrating the suggested strategy on the experimental group.
12. Post administrating the study instruments to the two groups to investigate the effect of the suggested strategy.
13. Comparing the pre and post results of the study instruments.
14. Performing the statistical analysis of the data collected to test the hypotheses.
15. Interpreting results and providing conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.
- 16.

11. Delimitations of the study:

The study will be delaminated to:

1. Two groups of 1st grade preparatory school will be selected to represent the experimental and the control groups.
2. Some EFL critical reading skills which are suitable for EFL first grade preparatory school pupils and validated by jury members.

12. Definitions of terms:

12.1. Reciprocal Teaching:

Reciprocal teaching is a strategy with multiple techniques by which the teacher demonstrates his manner of constructing meaning from the text using four techniques. In other words Reciprocal Teaching is a guided reading comprehension strategy which helps students to improve the skills that readers and learners do automatically (summarize, question, clarify, predict and respond to what they are reading). Students apply these four comprehension methods on a common text, in pairs or small groups (**Palincsar & Brown, 1984**).

Operationally, Reciprocal teaching is a classroom teaching method which consists of four techniques predicting, clarifying, summarizing and questioning. These techniques get students more involved throughout the reading process and improve their overall comprehension

12.2. **Critical reading**

Critical reading is an examination into, and critique of the validity of arguments expressed in reading passages

(Walz, 2001).

Operationally:

It's students' ability to investigate, critique and analyze a reading text.

- **Methods**

13 . Design of the study

A quasi experimental design wasⁱ used to **conduct the study** . sixty students were randomly assigned to two groups , experimental and control ,(30)students each . The control group received instructions through the regular class room sessions and the experimental group was taught by implementing the reciprocal teaching strategy . Critical reading skills pre/post test was administrated to the two groups befor and after the experiment .the design included the following variables an independent variable which was reciprocal teaching and dependent variable which was critical reading

14 . Participant

Participant of the students were sixty students from the first year prep at Sahragt Elkobra Boys' school in Mit Ghamr , Dakahlia

governorate , enrolled in the first term of the school year(2022/2023). Participant were divided into two groups The control group (n = 30) and the experimental group (n = 30). The participant were supposed to be homogeneous group as a result they were participated to have a lot in common and not differ greatly in terms of experience or age

The researcher attempted to control some variables to ensure that the improvement of some of the students' critical reading skills could be attributed only to the effect of reciprocal teaching strategy , also to ensure that both the experimental group and the control group equivalent .

These variables were :

Age : the students were all between the ages of 12 and 14

Grade : all the students were in first prep

Both control and experimental group were pretested to ensure they were the same level of critical reading skills befor starting the experiment

Data analysis

To find out whether there were significant difference in the pre-post test of the study sample in the EFL critical reading skills all the data were statistically treated using statistical package for the social science (spss)

Furthermore , to assess the effect size of the treatment , Eta square formula (η^2) was used. The findings were stated as follows :

The main hypothesis

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the pre- post mean scores of the study sample in the overall critical reading skills in favor of the post assessment .

In order to test the first hypothesis the researcher used “t “ test for the study sample to identify the significance of difference between the pre- post test

The following table show this:

Table (1) results of the test between the pre and post assessment of the study sample in the overall critical reading skills

FL overall	he test	o	N	ean m	D	S	value t	f	ig s
cri tical reading	re p	0	3	9.63	1.98	1	4.85	2	0
	ost p	0	3	4.36	0.98	1			
sk ills									

It is clear from this table that there are statistically significant differences between pre- post administration of the overall critical reading skills this difference is in favor of the post treatment, the level significance is 0.01

The sub hypothesis 1

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean score of the pre- post of the study sample in recognizing the author purpose and evaluating the ideas To test this hypothesis “t “test is used to identify the difference

The following table shows this

sub skill	est	o	ean	n	D	T	value	F	ig
recognizing the author's purpose and evaluating ideas	re	0	96	.	.51	1	6.60	9	.01
	ost	0	.51	7	.80				

It is clear from this table that the significance between the pre – post administration is in favor of the post one. The level of significance is 0.01

The sub hypothesis 2

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores and the study sample in the pre –post administration in supporting claims with evidence

To test this hypothesis t test was used to identify the significance and difference , the following table shows this

Table (3) “ t” test between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre – post test of supporting claims with evidence

sub skill	test	mean	standard deviation	T value	F	sig
supporting claims with evidence	pre	.70	.80	1.90	9	.01
	post	.80	.10			

It is clear from this table that there are statistically significant difference between the mean score of the study sample in the pre – post test of the supporting claims with evidence the difference is in favor of the posttest the level of significance is 0.01

Sub hypothesis 3

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample in comparing and contrasting in the pre – post administration of the test

To test this hypothesis “t “ test was used to identify the difference

The following table shows this

Table (4) t test between the mean score of the study sample in the pre – post test administration of comparing and contrasting

sub skill	est	o	ean	M	D	T	value	F	ig
comparing and contrasting	re	0	.40	3	.50	1	3.60	9	,01
	ost	0	.01	8	,10				

It is clear from this table that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample in the pre – post test of comparing and contrasting . The difference is in favor of the post treatment . the level of significance is 0.01

Sub hypothesis 4

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores in the post administrations of the study sample in differentiating between fact and opinions

To test this hypothesis t test was used to identify the difference .

The following table shows this

Table (5) t test between the mean scores of the study sample in the differentiating between fact and opinion

sub skill	est	o	ean	M	d	t	value	f	ig
differentiating between facts and opinions	re	0	.04	2	.60	9	.25	9	.01
	ost	0	.81	4	45				

It is clear from this table that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample in post

administration of differentiating facts and opinions .The difference is in favor of the post treatment

The level of significance is 0.01

Sub hypothesis 5

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample in making predictions . To test this hypothesis “t “ test was used to identify the difference between the scores

The following table shows this

Table (6) t test between the mean scores of the study sample in the post administration of making predictions

sub skill	est	o	means	d	t value	f	ig
Makin g predictions	re	0	.80	.63	5.12	4	.01
	ost	0	1.78	66			

It is clear from this table that there are statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study samples in the post administration of making prediction the difference is in favor of the post administration the level od significance is 0.01

Sub hypothesis 6

This hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample giving point of view about the author and the text to test this hypothesis “ t “ test was used to identify the difference

The following table show this :

Table (7) t test between the mean scores of the study sample in giving point of view about the author and the text in pre – post administration

sub skill	test	score	mean	std	t value	df	sig
giving point of view about the author and the text	pre	60	1.50	1	8.15	4	.01
	post	15	7.70	1			

It is clear from this table that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample in the

administration of giving point of view about the author and the text the difference is in favor of the post administration . The level of significance is 0.01

Discussion of the results

The current study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of using reciprocal teaching strategy for enhancing critical reading skills of the preparatory stage pupils .The results reveals a statistically significant differences at 0.01 level . between the mean scores of the students in the pre – post administration of the critical reading skills test in favor of the post administration . This improvement may be due to using reciprocal teaching with its four strategies predicting , questioning , making clarification and summarizing involves a gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to students for carrying out each part of the routine in the early stage of the reciprocal teaching , the teacher does much modeling of the target comprehension strategies with direct teaching of each individual strategy and the use of work sheets for practicing the strategy . As the time goes on , the students assume increasing control strategy use , eventually using the strategy with

little or no teacher support this result is consistent with Nell et Al (2010)

Recommendation

- 1- EFL curriculum designers should pay attention to the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching in developing critical reading skills
- 2- Critical reading skills should be prioritized to be enhanced from the start of learning a foreign language at primary , preparatory and secondary stage
- 3- Teachers should pay too much attention to using reciprocal teaching as a way of learning process that would \support language learning process
- 4- Teaching should be changed from a teacher centered to a student centered approach in order to be involved in an active learning environment
- 5- Students should be trained and supported to be presenters , self learners self managers , decision makers self correctors and problem solvers they should use new learning strategies to be able to improve their critical reading skills

- 6- Reciprocal teaching could be used as a successful teaching method in EFL classroom
- 7- It is recommended that EFL teachers should have training in utilizing reciprocal teaching method
- 8- EFL teachers should model for those students and help them develop their skills and beliefs that are required to complete a given task

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