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An investigation of reciprocal teaching on EFL learner's reading comprehension

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the effects of reciprocal teaching on the English reading comprehension and metacognitive reading strategies of Iranian pre-university learners in a reading comprehension classroom.

Method: To fulfill the purpose of the study, the participants, included 60 female junior high school students were randomly assigned into two experimental and control groups each consisting of 30 learners. The experimental group was taught through reciprocal teaching while the control group was taught through traditional teaching method. Following a pretest, treatment, and a posttest, the obtained data was analyzed using paired t-test to examine the effects of the independent variables.

Findings: The results of the analysis indicated that reciprocal teaching had a significantly positive effect on the English reading comprehension and usage of the four main metacognitive reading strategies of the students. The posttest mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group at 0.05 level. However, less proficient learners reported high favor of the reciprocal strategy compared to the learners with higher level of proficiency. It is noteworthy that both experimental and control group had a better performance on the posttest when compared with the pretest. The findings are discussed as far as effective reciprocal teaching is concerned in a foreign language teaching context.

Keywords: Reciprocal Teaching, Reading Comprehension, Cognitive strategies, Metacognitive strategies

1. Introduction

In reading, especially in reading comprehension, readers have been found to employ a wide range of strategies, while they are engage in comprehending text (Wasik and Truner, 1991), since reading comprehension " involves conscious and unconscious use of various strategies, including problem solving strategies to build a model of meaning" (Johnston, 1983).

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional method designed to use prior knowledge and interactive dialogues to promote comprehension development of children in natural settings. Palincsar and Brown (1984) assert that reciprocal teaching can be used to not only

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help poor comprehenders improve their rate of comprehension, but also enable them to maintain that progress over time and to transfer those critical thinking skills to different learning tasks. They conceptualize comprehension as a product of three main factors: considerate texts, an overlap between prior knowledge and the content of the text, and those strategies used to enhance and overcome comprehension failure. Focusing on the strategic aspects of comprehension, they make a distinction between automaticity and debugging. They relate that automaticity enables mature readers to detect reading failure, while debugging enables mature readers to slow down and apply fix-up strategies to comprehend the meaning of the text. This type of strategic reading requires students to monitor themselves and their comprehension as they read and to adopt behaviors that will enhance their understanding of the text. The goal of reciprocal teaching is to enhance comprehension and self-monitoring of novice weak students in reading.

The use of reciprocal teaching, a metacognitive exercise, encourages students to reflect on their own thought process (Alvermann and Phelps, 1998). The reciprocal teaching method is one of the effective approaches that teach learners to become responsible for their reading and employ metacognitive reading strategies over cognitive reading strategies (Cohen, 1998). Irwin (2007) recognized a form of systematic training in strategies that help less efficient readers improve their reading comprehension and become independent readers.

The results of the previous studies showed that concentrating on cognitive reading strategy and reading comprehension helped students increase their comprehension and helped less proficient readers to self-regulate or self-monitor their reading strategies. However, little research related to the training of metacognitive strategies has been conducted, particularly at intermediate level. Therefore, it is beneficial to investigate the effects of metacognitive strategy instruction on EFL learner's reading comprehension in a high-school classroom.

The following tentative research questions have been formed for which the current study seeks to find answer.

RQ1: Does the reciprocal teaching of reading have significant effect on EFL learner's reading comprehension?

RQ2: Does reciprocal teaching of reading comprehension enhance the English reading ability of both proficient and less proficient EFL learners.

The following hypotheses are put forward for the above-cited research questions.

H1: Reciprocal teaching of reading comprehension has no significant effect on EFL learner's reading comprehension.

H2: The gain in English reading ability of students in the experimental group is not significantly higher than that of the control group.

2. Literature review

Classroom practices that facilitate rich language input and those that encourage meaningful student interactions (e.g., cooperative grouping and discovery learning) are recommended not only for ELLs but also for native speakers (Hashey and Connors, 2003;

Harper and De Jong, 2004). Pollock (2001) identify strategies that are effective for diverse students especially for ELLs instruction.

Reading comprehension requires not only the skills of reading (word recognition, and how to derive meaning from text) but it also requires fundamental language proficiency (knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and conventions of use) for they are the essence of knowing a language (Williams, 2003). Learners who have the basic reading skills and know the language can concentrate on the academic content (Harper and De Jong, 2004).

Goldenberg (2006, 2008) found cooperative learning to increase reading comprehension. Cooperative learning activities promote peer interaction, which helps the development of language and the learning of concepts and content (Brooks and Brooks, 2001; Himmele and Himmele, 2009).

Cognitively guided language instruction uses direct modeling of strategies to foster student's cognitive monitoring of their own learning (Carter, 1997; Lubliner, 2001; Wilson, 1996). This further supports the use of reciprocal teaching as a means to cognitively guide reading comprehension.

Cognitive theory promotes complex and individualized mental processes that are thought to influence individual learners. These cognitive processes include receiving information, internally preparing it to make it meaningful, and storing it for later application (Lachat, 2004). On the other hand, metacognitive skill is used by highly proficient readers of any language in addition to a skill that is critical for learning a second language (Carter, 1997; Greenway, 2002; Williams, 2003). The process of metacognitive abilities informs readers of when understanding takes place to consciously make the decision to slow-down, or re-read a given piece of literature (Hacker and Tenet, 2002). However, studies have found that "young readers and poor readers do not use effective strategies for monitoring and constructing meaning from text" (Kelly and More, 1994). Apparently, metacognitive skills develop gradually and may appear developmentally later than other skills. Reciprocal teaching therefore presents an alternative approach to literacy pedagogy and practice.

Reciprocal teaching is defined as a strategy that directly teaches learners to use metacognitive thinking while constructing meaning from a text. In fact, it is a model of reading comprehension as an interactive one, in which readers interact with the text as their prior experience is activated and impress their motivation and interest (Sricklin, 2011). The teacher throughout this process is to provide modeling, scaffolding, feedback, and explanation for students. Both the teacher and the students cooperate in making efforts of understanding the material that is being taught (Greenway, 2002; Hacker and Tenet, 2002). Reciprocal teaching has four main strategies that teachers and students employ together to comprehend the text; summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (Brown and Palincsar, 1989).

Palincsar, Ransom, and Derber (1988) identify the following principles on the theoretical basis for reciprocal teaching. First, it is used to construct the meaning of the text and to monitor comprehension. Also, the acquisition of the strategies mirrors a joint relation of teachers and students; whereas the teacher assumes the major responsibility but gradually transfer their responsibility to the students.

This reading strategy emphasizes the development of both cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies through cooperative learning with scaffold instruction (Johnson-Glenberg, 2000; Lubliner, 2001).

Kelly and Moore (1994) designed a study to provide information on the practical applicability of reciprocal teaching in a regular class while examining the effects on poor reader's comprehension of a selected text. The data showed that there was the expected increase in teacher questioning, summarizing, and clarifying the first half of the intervention while a reduction in the second half due to the increase in student engagement.

Karbalaei and Ababaf (2010) explored the effects of metacognitive strategies training on EFL and ESL learner's reading comprehension and the results indicated that there was no significant difference between EFL and ESL learners in metacognitive awareness of reading strategy use.

Moghadam (2010) evaluated the effects of explicit training of a selected number of cognitive reading strategies on students' comprehension of ESP texts and concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of comprehension of ESP reading texts suggesting that they benefited from the reading strategy training.

So it would be plausible to suggest that more attention is needed on the constructive role of strategy training studies which seems to be missing in majority of English classes in EFL context.

3. Method

3.1 participants

The participants in this study were 60 Iranian EFL learners. They were a convenience sample of students in two remedial reading intact classes in the school. Given that students were already in classes, it was impossible to conduct a random assignment in terms of their participation. Therefore, the researcher decided that all students in the selected classes could participate and their data would be collected, but the analysis phase would disaggregate the data in terms of student reading proficiency. The only selection process for students was in terms of the screening portion of the study. Before the actual implementation of the reciprocal teaching model, a reading comprehension test –the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination English (2011, Appendix A) - was administered to the participants of both groups in order to obtain pretreatment measures of students' reading comprehension. By so doing, the researcher could distinguish the less proficient readers from more proficient readers. The validity and reliability of the research instruments used had already been verified. All students in both groups covered the same material in their reading course during each week's one three-hour-long reading lessons. The participants were chosen by their teachers as adequate decoders but poor comprehenders as less proficient readers based on their scores. The students who scored below the 50th percentile on standardized reading tests were assigned into the less proficient readers and those who scored above the 50th percentile rank were assumed as proficient readers.

3.2 instruments

The instructional materials that were used consisted of: a reading comprehension test by Yoosabai (2009, Appendix B) and another reading comprehension test which was adopted from (the United Nations Language Proficiency, 2011: Appendix A), some reading materials from the book, *Select Readings* by Lee and Gunderson (2001). The readings were implemented and instructed during the treatment phase of the research. Some reading

comprehension exercises were also designed by the researcher himself and used during the class time.

Test-retest reliability for the both instruments ranges from .89 to .97 respectively, and internal consistency reliabilities are generally over .90 and Interrater reliabilities range from .87 to .98.

3.2.1 Screening Reading Test

A standardized screening reading test (United Nations Language Proficiency Examination (2011, Appendix A) was used to measure the general reading ability and select the sample of the study. The test consisted of different skills and sub-skills of language proficiency from: Listening Comprehension (25 points) 40 minutes, Reading Comprehension (30 points) 60 minutes, Vocabulary (10 points) 15 minutes, Grammar (15 points) 25 minutes. The reading comprehension section was used as a tool to recognize the proficient and less proficient students from each other based on their results.

3.2.2 Standardized Pre-Post Test

All the students participating in the study were pre- and post-tested using the Yoosabai (2009, Appendix B) reading comprehension test. The test was designed to be used for students aged between 16 and 20. It consisted of 35 multiple choice sentence completion items. The allotted time to answer the reading comprehension questions was approximately 50 minutes. In this study, to investigate the participants' reading ability, the English reading comprehension test was used as both the pretest and posttest.

3.2.3 Reading Selections

The reading selections which all were chosen by the researcher, as the topic for the subjects to study were best tried to be a type that the students didn't have much background knowledge about them (based on the students own comments). Meanwhile they were all intended for nonnative intermediate students. With some speculations the conclusion was made that the original selections were too long, therefore an attempt was made to cut them short.

The instructional materials for use in the experiment consisted of four reading passages chosen from the book *select readings* by Lee and Gunderson (2001). The topics were "culture shock", "how to make a speech", "letters of application" and "John's Taiwanese wedding".

3.2.4 Comprehension Exercises

After reading the passage, both groups did the same researcher -made -comprehension exercises and activities; one type of exercises was fill-in-the-blank in which the students chose a word from a list of vocabulary items they were just taught to fill in the sentence. This item type assesses reading skills and requires you to use contextual and grammatical cues to complete a reading text by identifying the single correct answer for each blank. In another kind of exercise (true or false) the students were made to identify whether the sentences containing the vocabulary items they had learned were correct or made sense and they were supposed to correct the sentences which didn't make sense. Such exercises generally involved having the students demonstrate comprehension of a novel word. And

also, the students were given some multiple choice questions with a set of answers for each question.

Both the experimental and the control group had these exercises as they were practicing in the classroom to understand the passages. The exercises were used after the students worked the passage. The difference resided in the way they were being taught as to how to tackle the passage or the text in front of them. The only difference was that the control group used traditional and the experimental group the reciprocal teaching.

3.3 Procedure

The experiment lasted for eight weeks. Prior to the treatment and the main meeting the United Nations Language Proficiency (2011, Appendix A) and Yoosabai (2009, see Appendix B) reading proficiency tests were used as the preliminary steps for sampling and pretesting procedures. After the study began, the students participated in the training sessions in three-hour meetings for four weeks. After which there was a one week time interval from the last session and then they were given the posttest. A one week of time interval was to neutralize the effect of the students' remembering the answers from the pretest.

This study employed two instructional models: the reciprocal teaching approach and the traditional teaching of reading comprehension. Each teaching approach used teaching scripts or lessons based on each approach for the teacher to use when using that specific approach.

Within this study the reciprocal teaching model was used as an approach to instructing cognitive/metacognitive reading strategies. Reciprocal teaching should be used to teach students how to coordinate the use of four comprehension strategies: predicting, clarifying, generating questions, and summarizing (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Myers, 2005). Explicit-teaching-before-reciprocal-teaching (ET-RT) was adopted in the experiment, indicating that the teacher taught four strategies: predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing prior to engaging students in dialogues.

In this approach, the teacher models the four strategies of predicting what appears next in the text (*predicting*), clarifying word meaning (*clarifying*), generating questions (*questioning*), and summarizing (*summarizing*) (Maria, 1990). In the next step, students alternate playing the role of teacher and implement the strategies within their groups of five to six students.

A two-week span that included ten hours of class time was planned for instruction in one strategy and reading practice. While working in small groups, the students used these strategies to engage in a discussion thereby jointly constructing and enhancing one another's understanding of the text. The first four lessons were teacher-directed; these lessons were structured to introduce all four strategies with teacher modeling and whole group discussions before the treatment sessions started.

After the pretest session during which no intervention took place, the reciprocal teaching sessions followed a time period of eight weeks. The students in the experimental group spent between 30 and 45 minutes practicing reciprocal teaching during their 180-minute sessions. The students in the traditional group met in 150-minute sessions the other day.

At the beginning, the instructor (the researcher) acted as the leader in the classroom, later withdrawing from leadership role to be the facilitator role when the students were able

to perform their leading roles in the groups assigned. In the control group, the instructor applied traditional instruction for teaching reading strategies such as decoding skills in vocabulary and grammar structure, finding main ideas, and translation. The instructor held the dominant roles in the classroom; the students were required to take notes, memorize vocabulary and complete grammar and translation exercises. After a four-week instructional period, the posttest on reading comprehension was administered to both the control group and experimental group.

Both the experimental and control group did the exercises as they were practicing in the classroom to understand the passages. The exercises were used after the students worked on the passage.

In the control group, students received traditional reading instruction, which relied heavily on the teacher's lecture and grammar translation practice. Each lesson (two texts and two reading worksheets) took two weeks of ten hours of class to finish within two weeks.

When introducing a reading text, the teacher first explained each unfamiliar word and elucidated grammar points related to the text. Then, the students completed vocabulary and grammar exercises. Next, the teacher explained every sentence of the text and translated the sentences into Farsi. The students needed to note down important vocabulary and grammar points that were pinpointed by the teacher. The instructions for how to do skimming for main ideas and scanning for details were given to the subjects for the purpose of preparing them for testing the patterns. Both the experimental and control group did the exercises as they were practicing in the classroom to understand the passages. The exercises were used after the students worked on the passage.

3.4 Results

For research question one a pre-test/post-test control group experimental design was used to examine the effect of the independent variable (reciprocal teaching as an instructional strategy) on the dependent variable (reading comprehension achievement). The means and standard deviations for the control and experimental groups on the formal measure of reading comprehension achievement were computed, followed by a student's paired samples t-test for each of the measures for both groups.

Means, standard deviations, and t-tests for equality of means were used to analyze the data for the comparison of the reading comprehension achievement of the proficient and less-proficient readers in the experimental group (question two).

The hypothesis implicit in the first research question that reciprocal teaching would help poor readers, was confirmed by the analysis of descriptive statistics from the research study. Descriptive statistics were examined for each of the two groups i.e. reciprocal and traditional teaching of reading comprehension in order to examine the mean scores on the all of the dependent variables and to compare the mean scores across the groups.

The data obtained from the pre- and post-administration of the RSQ to the experimental group were analyzed by descriptive statistics using the software SPSS (2011) to determine the mean scores and standard deviation (SD). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for each group in the study. It also presents the means and standard deviations for the pre- and post-tests, as well as the change scores (post-test minus pre-test) for both treatment groups on the two measures used to assess reading comprehension.

Table 1: Comparison of Pre/Post Scores on Two Comprehension Tests for Two Groups of Readers

Control group	\bar{X}	N	S. D	S. E. M
Pretest	12.80	30	3.800	.694
Post test	13.23	30	3.766	.688

Experimental group	\bar{X}	N	S. D	S. E. M
Pretest	12.77	30	4.232	.773
Posttest	15.47	30	3.235	.591

All the scores were calculated out of 20. By having a quick overview of the table it becomes clear that both the control and experimental groups had a change in their scores. This means that groups learned and used their classes as a reading comprehension tool and they improved their reading comprehension skill in one way or another. The findings were to demonstrate the difference between the reading strategies the experimental group employed prior to and after receiving instruction through reciprocal teaching. This finding follows what other researchers found—over a short time period, little change can be expected on standardized tests (Alfassi, 1998; Rosenshine and Meister, 1994).

A comparison of the mean scores of tests obtained by the two groups show that performance was much higher when the reading comprehension passages were taught through the reciprocal teaching than that through traditional method.

To compare the reciprocal teaching as reading strategy between proficient and less proficient readers when it was employed before and after reciprocal teaching, all the data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using the paired t-test to determine the presence of a significant difference in the effect of use of the metacognitive strategies. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Tables 2 and 3 below present the information regarding the students' performance in both the pre- and post-tests.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test Pretest and posttest of control group

	Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	\bar{X}	S. D	S.E.M	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 PREtestCntrl Post Cntrl	-.433	1.251	.228	-.900	.034	-1.898	29	.068

Table 2 depicts the results of a paired samples t-test to compare the difference in means of the change scores of the traditional (control) group (N=30). The difference in the

group means was not statistically found as significant at $p = .05$ which indicates a strong practical significance (Bartz, 1998).

A two-tailed paired t-test was conducted. There was not a statistically significant difference between mean scores for the pretest and posttest. As a result, the null hypothesis was supported and the amount of change without employing reciprocal teaching it was found to be insignificant and insufficient. Furthermore, the mean score on the pretest ($M = 12.80, SD = 3.80$) was less than the mean score on the posttest ($M = 13.23, SD = 3.76$).

Table 3: Paired Samples Test Pretest and posttest of experimental group

	Paired Differences						T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	\bar{X}	S. D	S.E M	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1 PREtestEXP POstEXP	-2.700	1.725	.315	-3.344	-2.056	-8.573	29	.000	

A two-tailed paired t-test was conducted. There was a statistically significant difference between mean scores for the pretest and posttest when analyzing the 30 students who completed both tests sig (2-tailed) = .000 and $p = 0.05$. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the amount of change when employing reciprocal teaching was found to be insignificant and insufficient. Furthermore, the mean score on the pretest ($M = 12.80, SD = 3.80$) was less than the mean score on the posttest ($M = 13.23, SD = 3.76$; Table 2). Therefore, the first null-hypothesis proposed in this study as there is no significant effect of teaching reading comprehension passages through reciprocal teaching on EFL intermediate students is rejected and it can be concluded that teaching reading comprehension passages through reciprocal teaching has a significant effect on students' ability to comprehend the texts.

After examining the results based on the work of Brady (1990), it was planned to know whether reciprocal teaching had a different impact on students who had lower or higher reading skills as determined by their scores on the reading comprehension assessment.

Is there a difference in gains in reading achievement as measured by a reading test between proficient and less-proficient readers who engage in reciprocal teaching?

In each of the two reading groups there were both proficient and less-proficient learners. There were 17 less proficient students in the experimental group and 13 proficient students. All students in both groups covered the same material in their reading course during each week's one three-hour-long reading sessions. The participants were chosen by their teachers as adequate decoders but poor comprehenders as less proficient readers based on their scores. The students who scored below the 50th percentile on standardized reading tests were assigned into the less proficient readers and those who scored above the 50th percentile rank were assumed as proficient readers.

Table 4 presents the number of the students involved and the correlation between their performance on both measures used to assess reading comprehension for the two subgroups of students that received the intervention.

Table 4: Reading Comprehension correlation of Proficient and less proficient readers (experimental group)

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	pretestless and posttestless	17	.304	.236
Pair 2	pretestpprof and posttestprof	13	.906	.000

The table 4 shows how two groups performed in comparison to their previous test. The closer the correlation is to 1, the more unity between the groups is. However, as far as we need to know the change and a variation before and after the treatment, we can conclude that there has been a more change between the less proficient students after the treatment. Both groups show a significant change and improvement.

Table 5: Paired Samples Test of Proficient and less proficient readers in experimental group

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	\bar{X}	S. D	S. E. M	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest less proficient posttest less proficient	-3.706	3.738	.907	-5.628	-1.784	-4.088	16	.001
Pair 2 Pretest proficient posttest proficient	-2.769	2.166	.601	-4.078	-1.460	-4.609	12	.001

A comparison of the mean scores obtained by the two groups show that performance was a bit higher when the target reading comprehension passages were taught through reciprocal teaching to the students with less level of reading comprehension. Having a look at the significance level of the both groups, it can be suggested that both of them had a change in a desired significant level (less proficient readers Sig. (2-tailed) = .001 and proficient readers Sig. (2-tailed) = .001 [95% Confidence Interval of the Difference]). Nevertheless, to make sure if there exists any difference between them, the mean score of the less proficient students was higher than that of the proficient students. Therefore, it can be concluded that less proficient students favored reciprocal teaching more than the proficient readers.

3.5 Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicated that reciprocal teaching had a significantly positive effect on the English reading comprehension and metacognitive reading strategies of Iranian EFL students. The posttest mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group at 0.05 level. Reciprocal teaching also enhanced the reading ability of both the proficient and less proficient students.

The results from this study also suggest that reciprocal teaching helped the Iranian EFL students improve their ability to ask questions, answer questions and offer summaries about passages they read in their textbooks. The students also showed improvement in their comprehension on the reading comprehension assessment. Additionally, less proficient students who learned and practiced reciprocal teaching experienced positive gains in their reading comprehension scores equal to those proficient students who learned and practiced the reciprocal teaching approach in the same group.

Anyone planning to use reciprocal teaching strategies should consider the timing and frequency of this type of instruction. In this study, reciprocal teaching was used for three hours a week (two 1.5 hour sessions a week) for eight weeks. Before the start of each session there was a review over the method to ensure that all students knew the process well, by the end of the study even the students who enjoyed reciprocal teaching were getting tired of it. It is important to use the strategy frequently enough that the students know it and can do it, but not to use it so frequently that it becomes rote and stale.

Another consideration for reciprocal teaching users will be what to read. For this study, it was intentionally decided to use the textbook assigned to the classes for almost all of the readings which were familiar to the learners and the subject which were unambiguous. This decision was made because part of the research objective was to consider implementation of the strategies. It is believed, as the conclusion of the research, that the results of the study suggest that almost any textbook can be effectively used for reciprocal teaching and there is no need to worry about the kind of reading material and whether the reading passage is suitable or not. However, it is more useful to plan to supplement the textbook readings with others that might lead to more discussion or debate among students.

One of the goals of reciprocal teaching is for students to engage in this type of discussion. Ideally, reciprocal teaching would be used as a springboard to improve the ability of students to read and comprehend, and also to help students develop the ability to engage a more natural discussion of whatever topic was assigned. The students in the study did not reach this secondary goal. Perhaps if the students had used reciprocal teaching for the whole year, they would have been more comfortable with the roles by mid-year and by second semester may be ready for meaningful discussions. This is an area of reciprocal teaching that needs more research and explanation as to how to create real dialogue and discussion that engages students.

With respect to the less proficient students, they benefited more from reciprocal teaching than the proficient ones; indeed, the students in the low proficiency group exhibited more improvement than the students who already had good reading ability before the treatment. This result is supported by Palincsar and Brown (1984) who examined the effect of reciprocal teaching on the reading comprehension of less proficient students and found that after treatment, the students made significant gains in reading ability. Three reasons could be accounted for this. First, the less efficient readers might not be aware of the value of the reading strategies, of what strategies to use, and of how and when to use them. Although less proficient readers might be familiar with reciprocal strategies, they might not utilize those strategies actively, whereas the proficient students might already know them and may be eager to use them efficiently in their reading. Second, these strategies should be instructed in a step-by-step fashion. After practicing, the participants of this study knew what the four strategies were, and when, why, and how to use them. Then they had enough practice before working in their own group. Third, they worked in

cooperative groups of participants with mixed abilities, so that the weaker students learned from their friends. In turn, the proficient students learnt how to act as leaders and how to cope with comprehension failure. In such a group setting, they were not embarrassed to ask questions on the points they did not understand and to share their ideas and experiences with their friends.

The finding suggests that reciprocal teaching enhanced both the proficient and less proficient students of the experimental group. Indeed, both types of students gained significantly higher scores in reading comprehension after receiving instruction through reciprocal teaching.

Concerning the present study, the proficient students in the reciprocal teaching group also knew how to monitor their comprehension. However, they needed explicit training and more practice (Billingsley and Wildman, 1988). In this study, they were offered more opportunities to practice through the metacognitive processes and to use the reading strategies. They constantly planned, monitored, and evaluated themselves through the reciprocal teaching procedure. This may be the reason why the proficient students performed better after reciprocal teaching.

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