

Reciprocal teaching of reading

RdComp

RdCrit

Reciprocal teaching of reading is a useful small-group procedure that helps develop comprehension and critical thinking.⁵ The learners will need to have the approach modelled carefully, and tutors can use a prompt sheet (see Appendix D) as a support until the learners are sure of what they need to do.

The purpose of the activity

In reciprocal teaching, the learners read a text section by section, pausing to use four explicit strategies for comprehension. The learners take on roles related to the strategies:

1. The Predictor - makes predictions about the information that may be found in the section to be read.
2. The Clarifier - clarifies (or asks for clarification about) ideas and information in the text.
3. The Questioner - asks questions about the text and the author's intentions.
4. The Summariser - gives a brief summary of the section.

Initially, the tutor leads the group, explaining and modelling the four roles to show how readers actively construct meaning. As the learners become confident, the tutor hands over the roles to the group.

The teaching points

- Modelling effective reading strategies.
- Generating discussion about the text and about the strategies readers use.
- Drawing on prior knowledge and information in the text to predict what may come next.
- Clarifying ideas and the information in the text.
- Formulating relevant and thoughtful questions.
- Summarising information in the text clearly and concisely.

Resources

- Copies of an extended text at a suitable reading level, sectioned into short chunks (each participant needs to have a copy of the text).
- Prompt sheet (Appendix D).

The prompt sheet can be made into four prompt cards, one for each role.

The guided teaching and learning sequence

1. Prepare by selecting a suitable text and marking it into sections. For example, photocopy the text and cut it into sections. Ensure that each section has enough information for discussion.
2. Explain how the process will work, then start by introducing the text.
3. The Predictor makes a prediction about what they will read in the section of the text. After a brief discussion, allow time for the learners to read the section silently.

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⁵ For further information about reciprocal teaching of reading, refer to the Ministry of Education's video resource *Reciprocal Teaching: Extending reading strategies* (1993).

4. When everyone has read the first section, the Clarifier asks for clarification of anything they're not sure of in the text (for example, the meaning of a word or phrase, the reason given for an action). Others respond to help clarify the point.
5. The Questioner asks a question about the section to check for understanding. The others in the group respond, sharing their understanding.
6. The Summariser gives a brief summary of the section.
7. This process continues until the whole text has been read.
8. The tutor checks in with the discussion to make sure the learners are using the process effectively and that everyone is contributing to the discussions.

Follow-up activity

The learners gradually take over more and more of the responsibility for the roles, ultimately selecting, sectioning and discussing texts with minimal guidance from the tutor.