INVESTIGATING STUDENTS’ RESPONSES TO STRATEGIES IN RECIPROCAL TEACHING METHOD

Putri Ace Riaula Ramadhona*, Endang Komariah, and Tengku Maya Silviyanti

University of Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia
putri.aceriaula@gmail.com, endkomariah@yahoo.co.id, and tgk_maya@yahoo.com

Abstract

The influence of students’ responses on their behavior, attitude and its connection to their behavior, attitudes, and achievement brings about the concern over what the students think about the strategies that they use in reading through Reciprocal Teaching Method (RTM). This investigation was undertaken to twelve third grade students of State Senior High School 6, Banda Aceh with the purpose of gaining a deep insight into their viewpoints. Following qualitative procedures, the data of this study was from audio recording which was later transcribed. The interview results have been categorized and coded, yet, presented in the form of tables and charts. From the findings, it was discovered that the students had positive responses to strategies in Reciprocal Teaching Method. The strategies helped them become better readers in seven areas; discussion, prediction, being a good and careful reader, cooperation, analysis and problem solving, mastery of lesson, and improvement in reading fluency. However, it was also discovered that summarizing and predicting were hard for some students. Therefore, it is suggested that the two strategies should be explored further to add valuable information to the students’ problems regarding these strategies.

Keywords: responses, strategies, Reciprocal Teaching Method.

INTRODUCTION

For years, the National Examination (UN) has been implemented as a tool to evaluate Indonesian students’ ability in particular subjects including English. It is a major challenge both for teachers and students because National Examination requires long preparation beforehand. In general, the National Examination’s English
test involves lengthy passages with a variety of genres and questions. This is not an easy task for students since they still encounter difficulties in understanding such texts.

Recognizing the current problems among third grade students, an English teacher of State Senior High School 6 Banda Aceh has provided reading strategy training for her students by applying Reciprocal Teaching Method (RTM). Based on the results of the interview with the teacher (pre-study), we discovered that the students showed improvements in reading comprehension after this method was implemented in the classroom. Nevertheless, some students in her class needed longer time to apply some strategies while learning reading comprehension.

To fill in the gap between reading problems and learning objectives in language teaching area, extensive researches have been conducted. It was reported that starting in the 1970’s, many studies were directed to the reading issues in second language (Singhal, 2001). However, the research study concerning learners’ opinions about strategies and methodologies is limited (Chotran, et al., 2000, in Li & Kam, 2011).

On the one hand, previous studies revealed that learners’ viewpoint influences their behavior, assessment, motivation, and performance in learning English (Baska, et al., 2004; Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem & Taqi, 2014; McMillan & Turner, 2014). For this reason, we believe that instead of focusing merely on evaluating the effectiveness of teaching reading methodology, we concentrate on figuring out the students’ responses to strategies and methodologies used in reading classroom. In addition to gaining general understanding of the students’ opinion, in this way we can examine what problems the students have during reading activities. Therefore, we were interested in investigating the students’ responses by addressing a main question:

• “What are the students’ responses to the strategies in Reciprocal Teaching Method?”

LITERATURE REVIEW
Students’ Responses

Students’ achievements result from factors such as their responses to test, teaching style, learning materials, and tools impact to their learning achievements (Picciano, 2002; Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem & Taqi, 2014; McMillan & Turner, 2014). Everything which is going on in the classroom has to be considered from any aspects. When teachers have certain opinions towards students’ behavior and problems, the students also have their own points of view related to the way teachers teach and carry activities in the classroom. Since students’ reaction associates with their learning outcomes, it gives interpretation that their point of view is crucial in teaching and learning (Baska, et al., 2004). In conclusion, their learning outcome is determined by their responses to the teachers’ point of view, teaching styles, material for learning, learning activity instructions, and assessment.

Reciprocal Teaching Method

The first time this method was constructed by Palinscar and Brown in 1984, it was attempted to enhance students’ comprehension. Similarly, broad objectives of
RTM invention have been noted. According to Blazer (2007), RTM is created with the intention to help students extract information and meaning from the text as well as develop their awareness in monitoring their understanding of reading passages. Salehi and Vafakhah (2013) stated briefly that this is an instructional method which is dedicated to the readers who are struggling in comprehending reading materials. Additionally, learning the procedures and strategies in reciprocal teaching and becoming an independent-strategic reader are the essential aims of reciprocal teaching (Ahmadi, et al., 2013). To be precise, reciprocal teaching is a methodology whose instructions promote students’ comprehension with the aim to assist them in becoming better readers by applying strategies and monitoring their own understanding.

Four strategies of RTM are predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Each strategy is designed to foster students’ thinking and understanding. In predicting strategy, students start identifying the content of the text based on hints relevant to the ideas (Snowball, 2005). Meanwhile, generating questions from the content of the text enables them to check their own comprehension (Oczkus, 2013). When applying clarifying strategy, they are required to concentrate on finding out the meanings of unfamiliar words by guessing the context or using their prior knowledge. The final step is that they relate essential information from the text to get the whole main points (Snowball, 2005).

**METHODOLOGY**

To achieve understanding of the students’ opinions about the use of strategies in RTM, this study was undertaken using qualitative approach by interviewing twelve participants who were registered in a science class in State Senior High School 6, Banda Aceh. Those respondents were chosen purposively.

This present study adapted the interview guidelines from Clark (2003). Five open-ended questions were directed to the participants relevant to their points of view of strategies in RTM. They are as follows:
1. What have you learned from using RTM?
2. Which aspect of reciprocal teaching did you find the easiest?
3. Which strategy did you find the hardest?
4. Have the strategies in RTM helped you be a better reader?
5. In what ways have they helped you?

**FINDINGS**

**Knowledge of Reciprocal Teaching Method**

The participants’ responses to the first question regarding their knowledge of strategies in RTM are shown in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Know how to predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Make questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students’ responses to their knowledge of RTM are categorized into nine themes. The most responses that came from them were that they learned how to predict what the text would be about by looking for available clues. Besides, they admitted that they knew the way to generate questions from the ideas in the text. When they found unfamiliar words, they asked for clarification from their peers. Additionally, they knew how to define the main idea and to summarize essentials points from the text.

Some students confessed that through the application of the four strategies of RTM, they could analyze the text better. The rest of them answered that by using the strategies in RTM, they easily found the information from the text and identified the topic of the reading passages. Finally, one of them responded that he was experiencing work and engaging in a team without being forced to do so.

**Responses to the Easiest Strategy of Reciprocal Teaching Method**

The second question is related to the first one. We asked which strategy that the students found the easiest one of the four strategies in RTM as shown in Figure 1.

![The Easiest Strategy](image)

**Figure 1.** The easiest strategy in RTM.

Figure 1 indicates that the highest responses from the participants was predicting. It can be seen that there were six students who chose predicting as the easiest one. Three participants selected clarifying as the next easiest strategy.
Meanwhile, two respondents preferred questioning to other strategies. The last but not least, only one participant considered that summarizing was easy to accomplish.

**Responses to the Most Difficult Strategy of Reciprocal Teaching Method**

Similar to the previous item, the third one also has association with the first question. From the interview, it was discovered that summarizing was the most difficult strategy in RTM. In Figure 2 below, seven participants voiced their perceptions of summarizing as the most difficult strategy. The next hardest strategy was predicting. Four respondents found that it was hard for them to undertake the predicting strategy. Furthermore, a participant stated that questioning was difficult. All of the twelve interviewees did not find clarifying strategy difficult (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. The most difficult strategy in RTM.](image)

**The Benefits of Reciprocal Teaching Method**

Regarding the question whether the application of this method is beneficial or not, almost all participants (10) admitted that RTM helped them be better readers in seven ways. Table 2 presents various responses to how strategies in RTM can help students be better readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Kinds of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Discussing and learning from peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Being a good and careful reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Analyzing and solving problems to understand text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Mastering the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Cooperating with their members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Improving reading fluency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 2, responses from the respondents indicated that the discussion part gave them opportunity to learn from their partners. The interviewees then stated that predicting assisted them in the understanding of the text being read. Similarly, by using the strategies step by step, the students started becoming good and careful
readers. This finding showed that the students' frequency of reading and applying the reading strategies made them regularly analyze the text and resolve problems arising from it. Moreover, a student stated that the strategies in reciprocal teaching helped him master the subject learnt. The remaining students said that the four strategies assisted in their cooperation with their peers and improved their reading speed.

Thus, the fact that the interviewees experienced different advantages provides additional outcomes for the RTM implementation in reading classroom. Even so, we also discovered that two of the students were unsure that the strategies in RTM helped them. The responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Interviewees' negative responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Kinds of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Subject to the text learnt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Difficulty in understanding the lesson, guessing unfamiliar words, and predicting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

The finding of this study showed that the strategies in reciprocal teaching provide the students with a chance to discuss and work in their groups. This is in accordance with the previous research by Choo, et al., (2011). In addition, the students are becoming careful readers after applying the four strategies of reading. It is in line with the work by Ahmadi, et al. (2013) in which they stated that learners who are exposed to many reading materials become careful during reading. This happens because the learners have read different kinds of texts.

Furthermore, it was showed from the results that the students considered summarizing and predicting strategies hard to be applied. However, they were good at coping with the other strategies namely clarifying and questioning. This can have impact on the students' outcomes in reading comprehension if not resolved.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Students' opinions about the four strategies in reciprocal teaching were positive. Nevertheless, the learners experienced difficulties in summarizing and predicting. They still cannot understand how to summarize the information in the texts, predict the passages, and guess unfamiliar words.

Although this present research investigates the students' perceptions of strategies in reciprocal teaching, its limitation hinders us from exploring the reasons the students consider summarizing and predicting the most difficult strategies. This, however, should be addressed in future research to help students apply all the reading strategies. In addition, this research can be used as feedback on the teaching and learning using reciprocal teaching.
REFERENCES


