TEACHERS' VIEWS OF RECIPROCAL TEACHING AS A TOOL FOR TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

Reciprocal Teaching is an approach to reading first designed by Palincsar and Brown (1984). It is built on predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising – four strategies used by competent readers. It is an approach found in many books on teaching reading, yet is relatively unknown in countries like Singapore, and perhaps Malaysia too. This paper centres on a research study conducted with some teachers in Singaporean Secondary Schools. It reviews what literature says about Reciprocal Teaching and the Thinkaloud protocol which is used together with the former. It also details the research methodology, presents and discusses the views of the teacher-participants on Reciprocal Teaching before they were introduced to it, and after they taught using the teaching package designed for them.

Introduction

English Language teachers have to be equipped with scaffolding tools to teach students skills for reading. They should not just aim to go through the reading text with the class so that students can answer the questions that follow thet text, and then wonder how to help their students improve their examination results when they do not do well in their comprehension paper. One good scaffolding tool which teachers can use to teach reading comprehension is Reciprocal Teaching. Reciprocal Teaching requires students to work in groups, and use predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising strategies as they read texts. However, have teachers even heard of 'Reciprocal Teaching' before? Perhaps not too many in this part of the world have heard of it. Technically speaking, secondary school English teachers in Singapore should know what Reciprocal Teaching is about because it is recommended to be used for remediation by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the "Guide to the English Language Syllabus 2001 (Upper Secondary). Moreover, several studies (Carter, 1997; Oczkus, 2003; Palincsar & Klenk, 1991) have proved that Reciprocal Teaching helps students improve their reading comprehension and it is also recommended in many books on the teaching of reading comprehension. This issue of English teachers and Reciprocal Teaching prompted a small-scale research to be conducted on this relatively unknown teaching method.

This paper discusses a group of Singaporean secondary school teachers' views of using Reciprocal Teaching to teach reading comprehension. It includes a literature review of Reciprocal Teaching and the Think-aloud protocol which is another teaching tool used together with Reciprocal Teaching; the details of the research done and the data collected. The data will show if the teacher-participants know what Reciprocal Teaching is and their opinions of Reciprocal Teaching after being introduced to this method of teaching reading comprehension.

Literature Review

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal Teaching (RT) is a teaching tool first crafted to assist elementary school children who had difficulties in comprehending what they were reading. It was inspired by Vygotsky's theory of learning (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Basically, in RT, the teacher models the use of the four reading comprehension strategies peculiar to RT before passing the task over to the students. The students then, in their small groups, read a certain section of a text which can be a paragraph. This text can be a continuation of the one used earlier by the teacher or a new one. The students ask questions, clarify words and anything that they are not clear of, and summarise the main points of that section of the text. They may then predict what the next section is about before proceeding with their reading. The order in which these strategies are employed is not fixed. According to Palincsar and Klenk (1991), two of the three developers of RT, this method of teaching allows teachers and students to "take turns leading discussions about shared text. The purpose of these discussions is to achieve joint understanding of the text through the flexible application of four comprehension strategies: prediction, clarification, summarization, and question generation" (p. 116).

There are several reasons why one should use RT. Firstly, in RT the teacher supplies "expert scaffolding" (Herrmann, 1991). The teacher, playing the role of the expert, explains the steps of RT, models the four reading strategies, and involves the students in his discussion of the text. He then groups the students and passes the responsibility over to them to play the role of the 'teacher' in their groups. According to Herrmann (1991):

> As a form of expert scaffolding, rhetorical teaching involves continuous trial and error on the part of the student coupled with continuous adjustment on the part of the teacher. Through interactions with the teacher and more knowledgeable peers, each student is led to perform at increasingly more mature levels. Sometimes this progress is fast, sometimes slow, but regardless of its pace, the teacher provides an opportunity for each student to respond at a slightly more challenging level (p. 294).

Secondly, RT can be used to help struggling readers (Carter, 1997; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Palincsar & Klenk, 1991) because the teacher is there to provide scaffolding. It can also be carried out as a whole class activity with mixed ability classes. Oczkus (2003) tried RT with her class as a whole and discovered that "they have a sense of community, of being in a place where they feel that they are cared about and valued" (p. 30). Her students of varied abilities felt that way probably because they sensed that they were being listened to when they clarified their doubts about the text or shared their ideas about it. In addition, Oczkus encouraged her students by telling them that they were all "capable of reading, understanding what they read and sharing ideas surrounding the literature or content area text" (p. 30). The fact that RT can be used with a whole class makes this method a practical one for all teachers to use, especially for teachers with big classes.

The third reason for using RT is that it promotes interaction among students (Alvermann & Phelps, 2002; Camperell, 1991; Palincsar & Brown, 1986). In RT, students have several opportunities to do pair and group work. This supports Vygotsky's view that interaction promotes learning. Research in second language acquisition (Ellis, 1994; Swain, 1995; van Lier, 1996) also shows that interaction has an important part to play in language development. Talking takes place when students interact, and talk "has a special role in negotiating knowledge, as it is the means through which meanings are made available, modified and contested among participants" (Jones, 2001, p. 72). This is a point worth noting for teachers in Singapore and South-east Asia because they have to teach students whose mother tongue is not English. They can capitalise on RT as an avenue for their students to interact with their classmates and improve their English language.

RT has been tried out by many researchers and has proven to sharpen students' comprehension skills. Palincsar and Brown (1986) contend that its effectiveness is due to "its interactive nature" (p. 773). Alvermann and Phelps (2002) give credit to the presence of direct strategy instruction, while Pressley (as cited in Alvermann & Phelps, 2002) attributes it to the distinctive feature of RT, which is the gradual handing over of responsibility of the teaching component from the teacher to the students. According to Soto (1989), through the RT dialogues, the teachers are in a favourable position to monitor students' understanding of the text and capitalise on students' cultural backgrounds and traditions to further enhance the students' comprehension of the text. Soto also suggests that because all students are given the chance to participate in the discussions, distinctions in terms of ethnicity and home language are decreased, and that is the strength of RT. This last point is pertinent to schools in a multi-cultural country like Singapore, where a class is made up of students of all races and religions. If RT can break down the barriers of race and culture, there will be no inhibitions, and language learning can be reinforced.

Think-aloud

To implement RT, both the teacher and students have to use think-aloud protocols. Therefore it is necessary to know what the think-aloud protocol entails.

In reading, when the teacher or student thinks aloud, he is

> creating a record, either through writing or talking aloud, of the strategic decision-making and interpretative process of going through a text, reporting everything the reader is aware of noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, asking, and understanding as she [or he] reads (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 19).

In short, it encompasses talking about the strategies the reader is employing as he reads, and the content of the text he is reading (Wilhelm, 2001). An example of a think-aloud is as follows:

Text	Think-aloud
"You thinking about cutting a deal? " King asked.	Geez, why would King threaten him? They're both on trial. They should be in this together.
King curled his lip and narrowed his eyes.	Yes, he is definitely threatening Steve! He is making a face at him to let him know he better not be making a deal and finking on him. But why would Steve need to cut a deal? Why would King be worried about him cutting a deal?

(Wilhelm, 2001, p. 23)

When doing a think-aloud, a reader voices out his response to the content of the text, as in the example above, or follow Davey's (1983) five points. The latter suggests the following to guide students, particularly poor readers, as they think aloud:

1. Make predictions. (Show how to develop hypotheses.)
   "From the title, I predict that this section will tell how fishermen used to catch whales."
2. Describe the picture you're forming in your head from the information. (Show how to develop images during reading.)
   "I have a picture of this scene in my mind. The car is on a dark, probably narrow, road; there are no other cars around."
3. Share an analogy. (Show how to link prior knowledge with new information in text.) We call this the "like-a" step. "This is like a time we drove to Boston and had a flat tire. We were worried and we had to walk three miles for help."
4. Verbalize a confusing point. (Show how you monitor your ongoing comprehension.)
   "This just doesn't make sense."

5. Demonstrate fix-up strategies. (Show how you correct your lagging comprehension.)
   "I'd better reread."
   "This is a new word to me – I'd better check context to figure it out."
   (p. 45)

The Think-alouds to be carried out in the study mentioned in this paper were done together with RT so they were geared towards predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising, and therefore might not include Davey's points two and three.

Methodology

Outline of the Steps taken in the Research

Before the start of the research, the writer who was also the researcher approached three neighbourhood secondary schools to conduct her research – one for the pre-test and two for the actual research. Once the Principals of these schools had allowed the writer to do so, she then sought permission in writing from the Ministry of Education (MOE), Singapore, to conduct her research in these schools.

While waiting for the MOE's reply, the writer started designing two sets of teaching packages – one for Secondary 1 and one for Secondary 2. Each package consisted of seven lesson plans, reading texts, possible teacher's responses and teacher-talk (see p. 5 for more details on the designing of these packages). Upon receiving a positive reply from the MOE, the writer then went to one school to try out the packages. She taught one Secondary (Sec.) 1 Express and one Normal Academic class over four days (see second paragraph of 'Subjects and Sampling' for explanation on these two types of classes). After the pre-test, the writer had to modify the sections of the teaching packages that did not work well.

Next, pre-treatment interviews were conducted with the research participants. The participants were interviewed individually -- they were asked the same questions. Following that, the writer conducted a workshop on the Think-aloud protocol and Reciprocal Teaching, and the use of the teaching packages for the teacher-participants. Separate workshops were conducted for the two schools. After that, the participants were left to teach using the lesson plans as a guide.

After approximately one month, the writer went to School B again to conduct the post-treatment interviews; however, with School A, it was after six weeks. As in the pre-treatment interviews, the post-treatment ones were semi-structured.

Subjects and Sampling

The participants of this research were teachers from two secondary schools in

Singapore – five from each school. They were teachers teaching lower secondary English. The Heads of Department of these schools were the ones who chose the teachers. However, these teachers had the right not to participate if they did not want to. All the teachers had to sign consent forms if they wished to take part in the research, and were given information letters explaining to them the details of the research. In total, there were eight female and two male teachers. Generally, there are more female than male teachers in Singapore so it was not a surprise for the writer to find only two male teachers participating in the study. The ages of the participants ranged from 25 to 61 years old, and their years of experience from 1 to over 40 years. This wide range in experience was an advantage for this study as the data collected from them during the interviews would not be biased against any one age group of teachers.

Another group of people who were indirectly involved in this research comprised the teachers' students. Altogether the teacher-participants tried out the teaching packages designed by the writer on one Secondary 1 Express, one Secondary 1 Normal Academic, four Secondary 2 Express and five Secondary 2 Normal Academic classes. In Singapore, the Express stream students sit for the GCE 'O' Level Examinations in their fourth year of studies, while the Normal Academic stream students sit for the GCE 'N' Level Examinations in their fourth year. If they pass that examination, they will move on to Secondary 5 and will sit for the GCE 'O' Level Examinations then. The two schools the teacher-participants taught in are both neighbourhood schools, that is, they are schools located in housing estates and most of their students are from these estates. Hence, the students' academic ability may range from good to poor.

Designing of the Teaching Packages
The teaching packages designed for this study were meant for the teacher-participants to use when trying out the Reciprocal Teaching method. They consisted of lesson plans – one set for the Sec. 1 teachers and a different set for the Sec. 2 teachers. Oczkus' (2003) book on Reciprocal Teaching served as a guide in the design of these teaching packages. It was this book that prompted the writer to allocate individual lessons for 'think-aloud', 'predicting', 'clarifying', 'questioning' and 'summarising' before devoting another two lessons for students to put all these reading strategies together. This allowed the teacher-participants more opportunities to provide scaffolding for their students. By the final lesson, no scaffolding was needed. The checklists given to the students in Lesson 7 were adapted from the 'bookmarks' which Oczkus gave to her students. The checklist was like a 'Have-I-done-the-following' list. It made the 'questioner' (one of the roles played by the students) stop to ask if he had watched for places where a teacher would normally ask a question as he read, whether the questions were answered, and so on. The 'predictor', 'clarifier' and 'summariser' would also have similar checklists stipulating the things they had to do.

The Lesson Plans
There were seven lesson plans each for both Secondary 1 and 2. The breakdown of the lessons is shown in Table 1. The lessons could be carried out over 3 weeks.

Table 1: Schedule of Lessons

Lesson No.	No. of Periods (1 period = 30 mins)	Strategies Taught
1	2	Think-aloud (TL)
2	1	Reciprocal Teaching (RT) – Predicting (P)
3	1	RT – Clarifying (C)
4	1	RT – Questioning (Q)
5	1	RT–Summarising (S)
6	2	TL and RT (P, C, Q, S)
7	2	TL and RT (P, C, Q, S)

The format of the lessons was basically as follows:

Lessons 1-5 (Teaching of Think-alouds, predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising)

Stage 1 – Introduction: the teacher-participant explains to the class what the strategy to be was, the purpose of it and how it is to be done.

Stage 2 – Modelling: the teacher-participant then models the strategy by doing a think- aloud.

Stage 3 – Pairwork: the students try out the strategy with their partners. Working in pairs allows students to make mistakes in a less threatening situation.
– Individual work: the students try out the strategy on their own, sometimes orally, sometimes in writing. This allows the students to practise and reiterate what they have learnt. (The order of the above could be reversed depending on the lesson)

Stage 4 – Sharing: the teacher-participant gets some students to either demonstrate the strategy or share the product of that strategy, for example, the questions they had generated or the summary they had come up with. This gives the teacher-participant the opportunity to check if the students are on the right track.

Stage 5 – Reflection/Recapitulation: the teacher-participant either tells the students to reflect on the usefulness of the specific strategy learnt in that lesson and to share their opinions with the class orally, or the teacher-participant points out to the students its usefulness — this would vary from lesson to lesson. It is only during the last lesson that the students would be given checklists for them to reflect on the roles played by them. The aim of including these reflection sessions is to make the teacher-participant

and students aware of the purpose of using the various strategies in their reading.

Lesson 6 (Whole-class teaching of Reciprocal Teaching)

Stage 1 – Recapitulation: the teacher-participant recapitulates the strategies learntthus far and explains how Reciprocal Teaching is to be used.
Stage 2 – Modelling: the teacher-participant models by predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising aloud as he/she reads one chunk of the text.
Stage 3 – Whole-class instruction: the teacher-participant conducts Reciprocal Teaching with the class (using another chunk of the text). For this, the class is divided into 4 groups -- predictors, clarifiers, questioners and summarisers.
Stage 4 – Groupwork: students carry out Reciprocal Teaching in groups of four. Each group member takes on a different role.
Stage 5 – Sharing: the teacher-participant picks some predictors, clarifiers, questioners and summarisers to share what they had done.
    -- The teacher-participant instructs students to try answering the questions following   the text. This is to make the students see that Reciprocal Teaching could help them understand the text better and hence enable them to answer the questions pertaining to the text.

Lesson 7

Stage 1 – Recapitulation: the teacher-participant reviews the roles the students had to play.
Stage 2 – Groupwork: students carry out Reciprocal Teaching using the checklists provided.
    The things they have to do for each role are stipulated in the checklists.
Stage 3 – Same as Stage 5 in Lesson 6.
Stage 4 – Students give feedback on the use of Reciprocal Teaching.

In most of the lesson plans, like in the 'predicting', 'clarifying' and 'questioning' ones, samples of teacher-talk were supplied to the participants to guide them in their teaching. For example, under 'prediction', the teacher-talk given was: "Look at the title of this text and drawing below. What do you think this text is about?" and "Let's read the first paragraph to see if any of our predictions are right". To guide the participants further, particularly in Lesson 6 where they were supposed to conduct Reciprocal Teaching with the whole class, the series of teacher-talk for each strategy and paragraph were provided too. One of the purposes of the lesson plans being structured and comprehensive, was to make the lessons conducted more standardised, leaving little room for the teachers' personalities and teaching styles to affect the outcome of the research findings.

The Reading Texts

A narrative text was chosen for the Think-aloud lesson as it was more enjoyable and easier to think aloud with this kind of text. A non-fiction text was selected for the Reciprocal Teaching lessons so as to provide variety. The final two reading passages were taken from examination papers of another school to show both the teachers and students that the reading strategies they had learnt could be employed when attempting reading comprehension examination papers too.

The Workshop for Teacher-Participants

One workshop for each participating school was conducted. At the workshop, the writer explained to the participants what Think-aloud protocols and Reciprocal Teaching entailed, and why they were useful for the teaching of reading comprehension. The concept of scaffolding was also explained to them. The writer then went on to the hands-on session.

The first part of the hands-on session was on thinking aloud. The writer modelled the strategy by using "Charlotte's Web" the text to be used for the Secondary 1 classes. The participants then tried it out while working in pairs. In a second try on thinking aloud, the text for Secondary 2 classes, "White Mountain" was used. The writer used these two texts so that the participants would be familiar with the materials found in the teaching packages.

The second part of the hands-on session focused on the Reciprocal Teaching method. The rationale of each reading strategy used in Reciprocal Teaching was explained to the participants. The writer also demonstrated the teaching of each of the strategies. The text used was the one found in the teaching packages. After that, the writer briefly went through the last two lessons found in the teaching packages with the participants.

The Interviews

A semi-structured interview was employed to get feedback from the participants. In such an interview, a series of questions are designed in advance but during the interview the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given; particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included. (Robson, 2002, p. 270).

Findings

The findings of this research were gathered from the interviews conducted. They were neither coded nor scored for analysis as the sample number was not big; they were examined at face value.

Pre-treatment Interviews

In the pre-treatment interviews, the teacher-participants were asked:

1. "Have you heard of the Reciprocal Teaching approach to teaching comprehension?"

    a. (If yes) "Have you tried using this approach?"
    b. (If yes) "Could you tell me how you go about using it?"
    c. (If no) "Thank you very much. This is the end of the interview."

Two out of ten of the participants had heard of the Reciprocal Teaching approach. These two were from School B. They had heard of this term as they had attended a school-based workshop on the teaching of reading comprehension, and Reciprocal Teaching was mentioned at that workshop. However, both of them had not tried using it to teach reading comprehension.

Post-treatment Interviews

For the purpose of clear reference, the teacher-participants will be known as Participants 1 to 10. In the post-treatment interviews, the teacher-participants were asked:

1. a. "What is your opinion of the Reciprocal Teaching method?"
    b. "Will you continue to use it to teach comprehension? Why/why not?"

The findings from the interviews are displayed in the tables below.

Table 1: Question *1a. What is your opinion of the Reciprocal Teaching method?*

Participants	Positive Comments
No. 4	Initially, teacher's Normal Academic (NA) students could not follow the lesson but after re-ordering the lesson, they could generate many questions, asked for them to be answered, and asked for clarifications.
No. 6	Weaker students (Sec 1 NA): could not grasp the concept of Reciprocal Teaching (RT).
	Better students in the class: benefited. Teacher said that RT was useful, particularly the summarising strategy as it prepared students for the examinations.
No. 7	Good as it allowed interaction among students.
No. 8	The four strategies helped students answer comprehension questions better BUT students already knew them without her teaching them.
No. 10	Good as it allowed interaction among students.

	Negative Comments
No. 1	Teacher felt that RT was not useful as it could not be used during examinations, though she felt that RT allowed students to engage in group work during lessons.
No. 9	Did not work with her Sec. 2 NA students as they were noisy and restless. Students could not even formulate questions.

	Invalid Comments (the data could not be used as the teacher-participants did not teach all the lessons in the teaching package)
No. 2	Conducted only 'predicting' lesson. Teacher's Comment: Useful but nothing new to students.
No. 3	Conducted only 'predicting' and 'clarifying' lessons. Teacher's Comment: Useful but nothing new to students.
No. 5	Conducted only 'clarifying' lesson. He asked students if they had any questions about the reading text and would then explain that unclear part to the students. No comments on RT from teacher.

Table 1 shows that five out of seven participants, which is 71% (three participants' views could not be used), had positive things to say about Reciprocal Teaching.

Table 2: Question *1b. Will you continue to use it to teach comprehension? Why/why not?*

Participants	Positive Answers
No. 4	Yes
No. 6	Yes
No. 7	Yes
No. 8	Yes
No. 9	Yes. Teacher would conduct it with her better classes as RT would allow students to work independently without having to rely on the teacher.
	Non-commital Answers
No. 1	Teacher might use it but not that often.
No. 10	Might use it but had to be more familiar with it first.
	No Data (the question was not asked as the participants had not actually carried out a RT lesson)
No. 2	Not applicable
No. 3	Not applicable
No. 5	Not applicable

Table 2 indicates that five out of seven participants (71%) would continue to use RT to teach reading comprehension.

Discussion of Data

The data from the pre-treatment interviews show that only 20% of the teacher-participants had heard of the Reciprocal Teaching method but had not tried it. This indicates that this method was not used in reading comprehension lessons in these two schools. There is a possibility that it is also not used in other schools in Singapore.

With regard to the data from the post-treatment interviews, the views on Reciprocal Teaching from Participants 2, 3 and 5 could not be counted as valid data as they had either conducted only one or two lessons on Reciprocal Teaching or did not carry out the last two putting-them-together lessons which were crucial to the students. These last two lessons would actually let these students experience Reciprocal Teaching. Leaving these three participants out, it could then be said that five out of seven of the participants, that is 71% of them, found the Reciprocal Teaching method beneficial. One of the reasons for its value, as stated by two participants, was the interaction among students. Participant 1, who felt that Reciprocal Teaching was impractical, also highlighted that the good part of Reciprocal Teaching was the group work. This confirms what researchers have said about Reciprocal Teaching, that it is highly interactive (Alvernmann & Phelps, 2002; Camperell, 1991; Palincsar & Brown, 1986) as there are many opportunities for students to work in pairs and groups.

The other reason given by two participants as to why Reciprocal Teaching isworth using is related to the reading strategies. Participant 4's students began to question more while Participant 6 got to practise summarising, a skill needed in the reading comprehension examination. Participant 8 highlighted that these skills helped her students to handle comprehension questions better. Reciprocal Teaching did provide many opportunities for these students to sharpen their reading skills. In the long run, students should be able to internalise these skills. It is not surprising that Participant 6 should mention summarising as a skill needed in the examinations. Singaporean teachers are generally examination conscious. Whatever they learn has to contribute to helping their students do well in their examinations; the new method which they have acquired will then be deemed useful. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to know that Participant 4 found Reciprocal Teaching of use primarily because of that.

The negative feedback regarding Reciprocal Teaching came from Participant 1. To her, Reciprocal Teaching was not practical as it could not be used during examinations for the latter required individual work, not group work. As stated in the Literature Review, many researchers found improvements in students' comprehension skills because of Reciprocal Teaching. Palincsar and Brown (1986) attribute it to the "interactive nature" of Reciprocal Teaching (p. 773). In the case of Participant 1, if she could perhaps give this method a chance and try it out a few more times, she might be able to see the benefits of the group work conducted during Reciprocal Teaching manifesting in her students' performance during their examinations.

Participant 9 also did not give positive feedback on Reciprocal Teaching and that was because of the class she was teaching. It was a Secondary 2 Normal Academic

class. The students were noisy and restless so that prevented her from being able to carry out the lessons properly. Participant 6 also pointed out that his weaker students (Secondary 1 Normal Academic) could not understand what Reciprocal Teaching was all about. It would seem that Reciprocal Teaching will not work with classes which are weak or ill-disciplined. It might be appropriate at this juncture to review the origins of Reciprocal Teaching. As mentioned in the Literature Review, Reciprocal Teaching was initially crafted to help elementary school children who have difficulties in their studies to improve their reading comprehension (Berk & Winsler, 1995). These children could not have been better than the Secondary 1 and 2 Normal Academic students in Participants 6 and 9's classes as the latter are older and would have learnt to read more difficult texts. Many researchers also advocate the use of Reciprocal Teaching to help struggling readers because the teacher is there to provide scaffolding (Carter, 1997; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Palincsar & Klenk, 1991). Oczkus (2003) even conducted Reciprocal Teaching with her class as a whole, a class with differing abilities, and it yielded results. Perhaps, in the case of the participants of this study, more time is needed for their students to get used to the idea of Reciprocal Teaching, though it cannot be disputed that a disciplined class is crucial for teaching to take place. More lessons are also required for the teacher to continue to do Reciprocal Teaching with the whole class before they are left on their own to perform their roles as 'predictors', 'clarifiers', 'questioners' and 'summarisers'. Because the participants and their students were not that familiar with Reciprocal Teaching, some of the participants were not too keen to try it again in future. Fortunately only two participants fell into this category.

In short, 71% of the participants found Reciprocal Teaching useful, and most importantly, they were willing to implement it again in their comprehension lessons.

Conclusion

80% of the participant-teachers had not heard of Reciprocal Teaching before being introduced to it by the writer, while the other 20% vaguely knew what it was but had not used it. This confirms the writer's view that Reciprocal Teaching is new to teachers in Singapore, at least to those in the two research schools, though it has been in existence since the 1980's.

71% of the participants found the Reciprocal Teaching method useful. The most attractive point of Reciprocal Teaching, as highlighted by the participants who gave positive feedback about it, was its interactive nature. The participants also deemed it beneficial for students because the latter had the chance to practise their summarising skill, a skill which is required in the examination. The participants also mentioned that the other reading strategies also helped their students read with better understanding.

It has to be noted that the Reciprocal Teaching process "is more beneficial in the long run" (Hashey & Connors, 2003, p. 225). Hence, teachers who want to try Reciprocal Teaching have to give themselves and their students time to internalise the process, to practise the strategies and to get used to the method before they can see results. Hashey and Connors (2003) conducted an action research study on Reciprocal Teaching over a period of two years and saw great improvement in the quality of their classroom discourse and the reading comprehension level of their students. They ended by advising teachers using this method to be patient as "it's worth it" (p. 231).

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