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The Effects of Reciprocal Teaching on Perceived Reading Comprehension Self-Efficacy: Reflections of Post-Graduate Students and their Professor

Muhammad Tariq Bhatti [*] Syed Gulzar Ali Shah [†]

Abstract: *This study examined the effects of reciprocal teaching (RT) on the perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy of post-graduate students. The study was designed in pre-test post-test experimental design with a control group. Qualitative data was also collected from the intervention group students and the classroom professor who carried out the intervention lessons. Participants consist of typically developing post-graduate students from a state university (n = 34) in Pakistan. While the intervention group used a total of 36 lesson hours of RT techniques for 6 lessons per week for 6 weeks, the lesson was taught in traditional ways in the control group. No statistically significant difference was found between the post-test scores of the intervention and control groups [t (32) = 1.06, p = .30, p¿.05]. Students stated that the most difficult RT strategy was summarizing, while the easiest was prediction. These findings have revealed new perspectives on RT.*

Keywords: Reciprocal teaching, self-efficacy, reading comprehension, post-graduates.

Introduction

This study examined the effects of reciprocal teaching (RT) on the perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy of post-graduate students. It is inevitable for an individual to have reading comprehension skills to be equipped with the features required by the age and to be a lifelong learner. One of the main purposes of reading is to make sense of the text. When you read a text, the most effective way to understand that text is to use reading strategies. Reading strategies should be taught directly to students (Borko, Putnam, Berliner, & Calfee, 1996; Duffy, 2002). However, it is known that professors do not spare enough time to teach reading strategies in a regular classroom and they have limited knowledge in strategy teaching (Ness, 2008; Pressley, Graham, & Harris, 2006). Some researchers anticipate that future professors as well may not be successful in teaching reading strategies (DeGraff, Schmidt, & Waddell, 2015). In this case, it is thought that there is a need for experimental pedagogy research on reading strategies that can guide

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professors.

Although reciprocal teaching has been around for some time in New Zealand and the USA and has become increasingly popular in the UK in recent years (Gilbert, 2018). It is still relatively unknown and not used much in Pakistan. Therefore, this study is aimed to contribute to the international literature while inspiring researchers in Pakistan. When the past RT studies are examined, it is noteworthy that although many RT studies have been conducted with secondary (Gilbert, 2018; Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2015) and higher education students (Freihat & Al-Makhzoomi, 2012; Huang & Yang, 2015), there are not enough studies with young students. For this reason, such a study has been designed with university post-graduate students, who can be considered as a young age group. It is thought that this research will contribute and inspire researchers who study reading, comprehension, reading strategy instruction, self-efficacy and pedagogy, and pre-service and in-service professors.

Reading Comprehension Self-efficacy

Reading is a meaning-making process that involves complex mental skills, based on effective communication between the author and the reader, using prior knowledge (Akyol, 2003; Balcı, 2013). The reading comprehension process involves complex mental processes such as finding meaning, reflecting on meaning, researching causes, drawing conclusions, and evaluating. Deep learners try to analyze the thought underlying what they read while creating an individual meaning from it. Reading comprehension takes place by establishing a connection between what an individual reads and his daily life or previous knowledge.

Studies are revealing that there are high relationships between reading comprehension and reading self-efficacy (Unrau et al., 2018). Self-efficacy is a person's belief in his capacity to bring learning and behavior to the required levels. Self-efficacy perception is effective in individuals' deciding to do a job, making effort, and persistence in that job by facing difficulties. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy of individuals is affected by (1) vicarious experience, (2) performance accomplishments, (3) verbal persuasion, and (4) physiological & affective states. Three important components are mentioned to support reading self-efficacy; (1) professor and peer modeling, (2) student mastery experiences, and (3) calibrated feedback (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020). The involvement of these components, which improve reading self-efficacy, in the RT process has been the inspiration of the researcher to design this research.

Reciprocal Teaching (RT)

RT is an instructional technique that promotes reading comprehension through the use of four strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. RT, a socio-instructional approach based on professor-student, student-student dialogue based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, is a kind of reading strategy teaching to enhance reading comprehension.

Pressley et al. (2006) stated that RT encourages students to take a more active role in leading a group dialogue. These dialogues and small group discussions that students have with each other and with their professors enable them to better understand the text they read collaboratively. RT begins with the professor modeling how to use each strategy using an explicit strategy instruction through thinking aloud (Alfassi, 2004; Klingner et al., 2015). Leadership in the RT process gradually passes from professor to student. Then, through guided practice, the professor guides the students to use strategies in small groups, discuss and comment on the text they read. With Independent practice, the leadership of the learning process gradually passes to the students. Students apply 4 RT strategies working in pairs or small groups, passing the leadership alternately from one to the other. In this process, the professor should encourage the students, give scaffolding and feedback.

This paper aimed to determine the effects of RT on the perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy of post-graduate students. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought: the pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the (a) intervention group and the (b) control group; (c) Is there a significant difference between the reading comprehension self-efficacy post-test scores of the students in the intervention and control groups? (d) What are the reflections of the students in the intervention group and the classroom professor who conducts the intervention lessons about the RT process?

Method

Research Model

The research was designed in pre-test-post-test experimental design with a control group. Qualitative data was also collected from the intervention group (IG) students and the classroom professor who carried out the intervention lessons (IL) to deeply understand the RT experiences of the students and to gain a detailed idea about the process.

Participants

Necessary ethics and research permissions to carry out the study were taken from the Ministry of Federal Education (MFE) in Pakistan. The principal of the university where the experimental study conducted and the classroom professors of the intervention and control groups were consulted and permission was obtained, and the scope and purpose of the study were explained to them. By meeting with the parents, the students were approved to participate in such a research process.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Information

Characteristic	Intervention		Control		Total	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
Gender						
Female	7	41.2	7	41.2	14	41.2
Male	10	58.8	10	58.8	20	58.8
Age (M)	24.9		24.8		7.85	

Participants consist of typically developing post-graduate students from a state university (n = 34) in Sukkur Region in Pakistan. The demographic characteristics of the participants are included in Table 1.

Intervention (n = 17) and control (n = 17) groups were determined from the post-graduate students of the university through the unbiased assignment. It was concluded that the data obtained from the groups showed a normal distribution according to the pre-test scores of the perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy (Mastery experiences, $p=.20$, $p>.05$). As a result of the independent samples t-test, it was concluded that the intervention and control groups were equal groups in terms of perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy before the intervention, that is, there was no significant difference between the groups before the intervention ($t(34) = -1.85$, $p=.07$, $p>.05$).

The female professor, who conducted the experimental process and provides qualitative data to the research with reflective diary notes and views throughout the process, was 34 years old, was a professor for 10 years, and had been working in the university where the experiment was conducted for 8 years. The professor was interested in reading and comprehension studies and conducted projects in this field. She had implemented the "Reading Family" as an eTwinning project (http://etwinning.meb.gov.tr/etwnedir/). The project was aimed to create reading awareness in both families and students and to increase the number of families with a reading habit.

Design and Procedures

Pre-experiment process: The professor, who carried out IL, was given training on RT for 4 weeks. In this training, information such as the theoretical foundations of RT, application steps, professor and student roles in the process, evaluation techniques were included. The professor was shown sample videos on how to use RT during the lesson. Lesson plan and teaching materials preparation training were provided on how to implement RT. Lesson plans and teaching materials for IL were prepared with the consensus of the researcher and the professor. In the preparation of the lesson plans and teaching materials, the book "Reciprocal Teaching at Work" written by Oczkus (2003) and the doctoral thesis about RT prepared by Kula (2018) were used.

Informative and narrative texts, which were approved by the Board of Education in terms of suitability for students' development characteristics, were determined by the consensus of the professor and the researcher. In the Advanced reading level lesson, Finger Puppets, Blackberry Ice Cream narrative texts and Remote control, Platypus and Hooray I'm growing informative texts were used with RT strategies. Figures, hats, cards, worksheets representing strategies were used as intervention materials.

Intervention Process: The experiment process was started by the classroom professor on 04.03.2020 (4th of March) and lasted 6 weeks. During the intervention, the professor and the researcher evaluated the experimental process by interviewing 2-3 times a week. Solutions were determined by exchanging ideas for the problems encountered in the process.

In the Advanced reading level lesson, while the intervention group used a total of 36 lesson hours of RT techniques for 6 lessons per week for 6 weeks, the lesson was taught in traditional ways in the control group.The 1st week was determined as a trial week for the experimental process, and it was ensured that both professors and students got to know and practice RT. RT strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing) were applied in each lesson for the next 5 weeks.In general, the flow of a lesson was as follows: the professor showed how strategies were used through modeling and thinking aloud (approximately 2-3 min for each strategy). Reading the text individually, in pairs, or groups (15-20 min). Students' application of individual, pairs, or group strategies (15-20 min). While the students were implementing the strategies, the professor observed the students and provided them scaffolded instruction and feedback simultaneously (15-20 min). Lesson closing by evaluating RT strategies and the learnings of the day (5 min).

Process in the Control Group: Advanced reading level lessons in the control group, by the curriculum set by the MFE, has continued with traditional practices. The content is similar to the intervention group. In this process, students read the text (15-20 min), responded to the questions asked by the professor (15 min), and professor provided evaluation (5 min). In the context of the research design, no intervention was made to the control group, and the lessons continued in the same traditional way. These lessons were conducted with traditional methods conducted under the leadership of the professor.

Data Collection and Measures

Self-efficacy perceptions scale for reading comprehension (SPSRC): A one-dimensional scale with 29 items, the 3-point Likert scale with the extreme points labeled "doesn't fit me at all" (1) and "fits me perfectly" (3) developed by the researcher [name deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process], was used as pre-post tests for intervention and control groups. The original scale was developed for 4th-grade students. To test the suitability of the scale to post-graduate university students, a trial application was conducted on 224 students with an average age of 8.36 years.The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .914 and Spearman-Brown Coefficient as .904.To verify the structure validity of the one-dimensional scale, the model fit indexes were examined by applying the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (χ^2/sd= 1.49, RMSEA=.047,NFI=.92, NNFI=.97, IFI=.97, RFI=.91, CFI=.97, GFI=.85, AGFI=.83, RMR=.026) and it was revealed that the scale is a valid and reliable scale applicable to post-graduate students.

Professor's reflective diaries: Reflective diaries are used for various purposes such as recording the lived experience, increasing learning, and activating metacognition (J. Moon, n.d.; J. A. Moon, 2006). It helps the professor to review the learning process and develop hypotheses (Lee, 2008), and think in more detail about the problems they encounter in the lesson. In this study, the professor who carried out the intervention process recorded her

observations, difficulties she encountered, and her notes on the experiment process in a reflective diary at the end of the day.

Professor opinion form: "RT-professor opinion form" was developed by the researcher to determine the opinions of the professor who carried out the intervention process by using RT techniques in the process. In the development of the form, first, the relevant literature was scanned and draft questions were created. To ensure the content validity of the questions, opinions were taken from 2 language training experts, 1 curriculum and instruction expert. The questions were arranged in line with expert opinions and the form consisting of 3 open-ended questions became ready to use. The interview with the professor was conducted online by the researcher and lasted approximately 50 minutes.

Student opinion form: The researcher developed an "RT-student opinion form" for the intervention group students who were introduced to the RT technique in the IL to determine their opinions about RT, reading comprehension, and intervention process. In the development of the form, first, the relevant literature was scanned and 16 draft questions were prepared. In order to ensure the content validity of the questions, opinions were taken from 2 language training experts, 1 curriculum and instruction expert. Also, the questions in the form were shown to 3 university post-graduate students who could not take part in the experimental process and the questions they did not understand were corrected. The questions were rearranged in line with the expert and student views and the form consisting of 10 open-ended questions became ready to use. The classroom professor who carried out the experiment process conducted the interviews with the students.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the quantitative data obtained in the study, it was concluded that the intervention and control groups, whose normality of the data were tested, showed a normal distribution according to the pre-test (Mastery experiences, $p=.20$, $p>.05$) and post-test (Mastery experiences, $p=.20$, $p>.05$) scores of reading comprehension self-efficacy, and in this direction, parametric tests were used in the analyzes determined by the problems of the study.

Content analysis was used in the analysis of qualitative data. The qualitative data obtained from the students were coded as "s1, s2... s17". Reliability in qualitative research is related to the care, attention, credibility, and verifiability of the researcher in all stages of the design, implementation, and reporting of the research (Merriam, 2013). In this study, benefiting from expert opinions, including direct opinions of the participants in the findings, and writing the research report in detail are the measures taken to increase the reliability of the study. All of the intervention lessons were videotaped. During the weekly interviews, the interventions of the professor were re-evaluated by the researcher and the professor. The experimental process was structured by another researcher who was outside the research process, giving feedback on the application of the lessons. To provide consistency for the codes of the research, the data were coded by the two researchers, and a consensus was reached by comparing the data coded by the two researchers. The consistency between coders was calculated as 90% using the formula [Consensus/ (Disagreement + Consensus) x 100.00] (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

Quantitative Results

The paired samples t-test was used to test the change in pre-post test scores of the students' perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy in the intervention and control groups. There was no statistically significant difference between the pre-post test scores of the intervention group [x pretest= 2.01, x posttest= 2.21, t (16) = -1.74, p= .10, p>.05]. There was also no statistically significant difference between the pre-post test scores of the control group [x pretest= 2.10, x posttest= 2.10, t(16) = 0.34, p = .97, p>.05].

The independent samples t-test was used to test the change in the post-test scores of the students' perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy in the intervention and control groups. No statistically significant difference was found between the post-test scores of the intervention and control groups [x intervention= 2.21 , x control= 2.10 , t(32) = 1.06, p = .30, p>.05].

Qualitative Results

Interviews were held with the students in the intervention group and the classroom professor who conducted the intervention lessons. Using the reflective diaries of the classroom professor, the opinions of the professors and students on the RT process were determined.

Table 2
Students' opinions on RT

Theme	Category	Code	f
Reading Comprehension	Effects on RC	significantly positive effects	15
		no effect	2
	RC techniques	reading over and over	5
		reading carefully	3
	The most difficult RT strategy	Summarizing	10
		Questioning	4
		Clarifying	2
		Predicting	1

Note. RC: Reading comprehension, RT: Reciprocal teaching

Students read a text many times to understand it better. They stated that they had the most difficulty in summarizing (f = 10) among RT strategies. The reflective diary of the classroom professor who conducted the intervention lessons included the following observations about the students' implementation of strategies:

> "When it comes to asking questions within strategies and summarizing, the process is slower than other strategies. Guess what they like best; In the guessing phase, my students are eager to share their ideas. They can easily write their predictions on their worksheets." Professor's reflective diary- 4th week

The professor's opinions on RT strategies were as follows:

> "We had been doing a lot of reading in Advanced reading level classes before, but I did not make a clear observation that the students understood the text well. Each strategy of RT makes it very easy to understand the text in detail. In guessing strategy RT wants the student to generate a correct or incorrect idea about the text. Later, as the student reads the text, it makes him pay attention if the guess is wrong. Guessing about the text takes the student's interest and curiosity for the text to the next level. In the strategy of asking questions, the student is constantly checking the text because he knows that he should ask questions. I think this part of the technique makes students' understanding of the text even stronger. Students constantly try to make sense of the text with questions in their minds, allowing them to analyze the text well. Explanation and summarizing make the student think about words he doesn't know; as well as providing an outline of the text. In this way, it is ensured that information is internalized by thinking at a high level, analyzing, and synthesizing. While observing this process, I thought we had the most progress in summarizing skills. When I said let's move on to the summary part, most students were able to summarize the text with their sentences and on their own." Professor's opinions

The professor who carried out intervention lessons stated that the students had difficulty in group discussions in RT, but progress was made in the process.

> "My students started to achieve group leadership by guiding each other in group work and asking questions. I join groups and help with modeling when they have little problems. I think group leadership improves my students' speaking skills. Group interaction in RT helps students pull each other up. They support each other with strong momentum." Professor's reflective diary-5th week

The professor stated that teaching materials such as magnifying glasses, magician hats, and question cards prepared for RT increased students' interest in the lesson and facilitated their implementation of strategies.

Discussion

This study examined the effects of reciprocal teaching on the perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy of post-graduate students. Findings revealed that RT did not have a significant effect on post-graduate students' perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy.While the pre and post-test mean scores of the control group for reading comprehension self-efficacy did not change before and after the intervention (x pretest 2.10, x posttest= 2.10), It was noteworthy that the mean score of the intervention group increased after the implementation of RT (x pretest= 2.01, x posttest= 2.21). According to this result, it can be said that RT affects perceived self-efficacy more positively than traditional reading methods. However, this increase in the mean scores of the intervention group was

not found to be statistically significant. These results were consistent with previous reading comprehension self-efficacy findings (Kula, 2018; Van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005). In the previous study conducted by Kula (2018), although the RT-IG reading comprehension scores showed a significant increase compared to the control group, it was observed that the students did not perceive themselves as adequate in reading comprehension.

Kula (2018) thought that this situation in perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy was since students were used to having lessons with traditional methods. Lessons are conducted under the leadership of the professor in classrooms where traditional methods are used. On the other hand, in RT, leadership passes step by step from professor to student. It can be thought that intervention group students who were not familiar with the culture of the independent study had difficulties in RT strategies and therefore did not find themselves sufficient in understanding what they read.When an individual thinks that a task assigned to him is difficult, this thought negatively affects perceived self-efficacy (Schunk, 2014). In the findings of this research, both the students themselves and the professor who conducted the intervention stated that the students had difficulties in some RT strategies. It was thought that this strain might be one of the reasons why RT did not affect perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy.

Studies are revealing that RT intervention time is also an important variable that affects students' reading comprehension. In the study conducted by Westera and Moore (1995), students received RT in 3 different periods. It was concluded that reading comprehension improved more in groups with longer RT intervention time. In this case, one of the reasons why no significant change was observed in students' perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy in the present study might be the RT intervention time.

The present research was conducted with university post-graduate students, that is, students in the younger age group, as a whole class session. Rosenshine and Meister (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of 16 quantitative studies focusing on RT in higher education and found that RT is more effective for older students and those with poor understanding skills. Therefore, the young age of the study group can be considered as another variable affecting the results of this study. In the research conducted by Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005), no effect was found on the perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy of second-year students. In the case of post-graduate students, it can be assumed that such influences did not manifest themselves in students' preoccupation with thoughts about themselves. While interpreting these results, it should be taken into account that it is not easy to change the perceived self-efficacy of young students. Therefore, in future studies, it should be investigated whether the expanded intervention conditions are successful in producing significant effects.

The qualitative findings of the study showed that students and professors think that RT had significantly positive effects on reading comprehension. RT is a student-centered technique that supports students' reading comprehension with pre-reading, reading order, and post-reading strategies (Oczkus, 2003). Previous research confirms that RT is an effective reading strategy instruction technique that supports reading comprehension (Huang & Yang, 2015; Kula, 2018; Navaie, 2018).

One of the common findings of many previous RT studies was also encountered in the results of this study; students stated that the most difficult RT strategy was summarizing,

while the easiest was prediction (Huang & Yang, 2015; Kula, 2018). Although students found it difficult to summarize, they also considered this strategy most useful for reading comprehension (Huang & Yang, 2015). The classroom professor who conducted the intervention lessons stated that the students were very eager to tell their predictions and that they read the text carefully to check the accuracy of their predictions in the prediction strategy, which activated their prior knowledge (Palinscar & Brown, 1984).

Another result of the present study was that students had difficulties in group discussions or in the dialogues in which they lead the group. It was noted that especially introverted students were reluctant to lead the group. Similar results were found in previous RT studies. It was observed that the collaborative group work, which is an important part of RT, did not progress successfully due to the students' poor group discourse skills (Hacker & Tenent, 2002). It may be necessary for both the intervention professor and the students to use RT strategies for a longer period of time to eliminate these problems.

Limitations and Future Research

One of the limitations of this study is the measurement tool used to determine students' perceived reading comprehension self-efficacy. This type of Likert scale can be difficult for students in this age group to make sense of. For this reason, it can be suggested for future researches that students fill in such scales in guidance of an adult.

In future studies, different study designs can be preferred and changes in reading comprehension self-efficacy can be observed. Because different study designs are known to cause different effects on self-efficacy (Unrau et al., 2018). Measuring other psychological variables such as reading motivation and reading interest that may affect students' self-efficacy perceptions was not among the problems of this study. In future research, considering other psychological variables as well as self-efficacy may provide a way to reach meaningful results.

In the study, Intervention was performed in a total of 36 lesson hours in 6 weeks. It may be useful to examine the effects of longer-term interventions in subsequent research. Also, during the intervention process, students can write a reflective diary to determine their progress in the process from their own perspective.

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