**IMPROVING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ABILITY IN COMPREHENDING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING RECIPROCAL TEACHING TECHNIQUE**

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**Abstrak**

The writer will discuss about teaching reading comprehension to senior high school by using the reciprocal teaching technique. This technique was firstly introduced by Annemarie Palinscar and Ann Brown in 1984.

There are several goals in implementing the reciprocal teaching technique on descriptive text, such as to help students finding main ideas and specific information in the text and to help students in improving the vocabulary. This technique is not only limited to descriptive text, but also to many other kinds of text. By using this technique, the students are expected to be more interested in reading since they are actively involved in the process.

Teaching reading comprehension by using the reciprocal teaching technique consists of four stages such as *predicting, questioning, clarifying,* dan *summarizing*. The activity begins with what the students have already known about descriptive text. After that, the teacher introduces each stage of the reciprocal teaching technique by modelling them. When the students have understood each stage, they are then divided into a group of four or more. Then, they begin to perform each stage of the reciprocal teaching technique.

Key words: *Reciprocal Teaching Technique, Reading, Teaching Reading*

1. **Introduction**

English is an international language that has been taught in Indonesia at many levels of education. In learning English, there are several skills that should be mastered by the students. One of the skills is reading. Reading is a process where students can get information from what they read. This process allows the students to improve their knowledge through many written texts. Since it is a skill that should be mastered by the students, the teacher has an important role to help the students master it.

Even though reading has been taught since junior high school, based on the writer’s observation in the schools, there are many students in senior high school level still face difficulties in understanding the text given. It is caused by many factors. First, lack of vocabulary is the common factor that is usually faced by the student. Vocabulary is one of the language components in reading comprehension; one cannot understand text without knowing what most of the words mean (Nagy, E. William in M. Kamil, P. Pearson, et al, 2000: 269). Therefore, the students must have great numbers of vocabulary to understand the text easily. It can be said the more they know the word, the more they will be able to understand what they read. Lack of vocabulary makes students unfamiliar with the words. As a result, they find it difficult to get the message from the text. It means that they cannot comprehend and understand the text given.

The second factor is a lack of motivation. Slavin (1997: 345) describes motivation in a general sense: “... motivation is what gets you going, keeps you going and determines where you are trying to go”. It means that motivation is needed in doing something including in understanding and comprehending the text. The students should be kept motivated so that they can achieve the goal of reading. There are several things that make students unmotivated to read such as unfamiliar topic, too many unknown words, or difficult in determining main ideas. If they are not motivated to read, the goal of learning process cannot be achieved.

The problem might also an inappropriate technique used by the teachers. In reading session in the classroom, it is commonly found that the teacher asks the students to read the text given, and there are some questions that should be answered afterward. If the students find difficulties, they will simply ask their friends, only a few students come to the teacher and discuss about them. In this case, there is no interaction between the teacher and the students in discussing the text. This problem is barrier for students to improve their reading skill. Thus, the teacher needs another technique in teaching reading.

Based on the explanation above the writer proposes Reciprocal Teaching Technique as a technique to improve students’ reading ability. Reciprocal teaching was firstly introduced by Annemarie Palinscar and Ann Brown in 1984. Reciprocal teaching technique becomes an instructional procedure designed to enhance students’ reading comprehension of a text (Farris, 2004: 340). Researcon reciprocal teaching was conducted by Melani, Jufri and Tiarina in 2013. This technique is a technique where the teacher and the students work cooperatively in comprehending the text. The teacher is an instructor in the process, explaining and drawing a conclusion about the text together with the students. She also mentions that this technique consists of four strategies in series such as, prediction, questioning, seeking clarification, and summarization.

1. **Discussion**

Reciprocal Teaching was first introduced by Palinscar and Brown in 1984. This technique is an interchange process between the teacher and the students in holding discourse for the same purpose, here, the same purpose in reading class. The reciprocal teaching technique consists of content and method. The content involves four reading comprehension strategies (predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing) and four roles for each strategy (predictor, questioner, clarifier, and summarizer), while the method consists of a discussion, initially between the teacher and the students, and then (through giving students the role of teacher in turn) between students, so that they practice comprehension strategies (Palincsar, David and Brown, 1989).

1. **Preparation**

The success of teaching is also determined by how well the teacher preparation before the process begins. To run the process efficiently, teacher needs a lesson plan. A successful lesson plan addresses and integrates these three key components: Objectives for student learning, teaching/learning activities, and strategies to check student understanding.

The next thing that should be prepared by the teacher is the materials. Since the discussion is about the descriptive text, the teacher must find materials related to the curriculum and the school level. The teacher can find such materials on students’ book or the Internet. In preparing the materials, the teacher should take into account whether the material could catch students’ attention.

1. **Implementation**

Before each stage of reciprocal teaching is introduced, the teacher recalls or reviews what the students have known about descriptive text such as its definition, function, structure and language features, or the adjectives that are used in describing something, someone, or place. After that, the teacher explains that there will be two sections. In the first section, the teacher is involved in the discussion, he/she models each strategy and is followed by the students. Meanwhile, in the second section, the teacher imparts himself from the discussion. Therefore, the discussion is run by the students.

1. ***First Section : Teacher - Students***

Before the first stage of the first section begins, the teacher delivers a descriptive text. The title is “Lesser Slow Loris *(Nycticebus pygmaeus)”.*

**Lesser Slow Loris *(Nycticebus pygmaeus)***

 The Lesser Slow Loris is a Mammal which can clamp onto branches for a long period of time. To help it do this, the Loris has a network of blood vessels, called rate mirabile in its forearms and shanks.

It is 7-10 in long (175-250 mm) and can weigh as much as 12 ounces or 340 grams. The Lesser Slow Loris is a plump animal with soft, thick fur ranging in color from light brown-grey to deep reddish-brown with a dark stripe down the back and neck. It has a long snout with comb like front teeth, which are used in grooming. It is found in Southern Asia, Vietnam, Borneo and Sumatra in restricted to tropical rain forest. The diet of the Loris is made up fruit and leaves, tender shoots, insect, birds, small mammals and reptiles. It is nocturnal and sleeps by day rolled up in a ball.

1. **Predicting**

Predicting is the first stage of the Reciprocal Teaching that is introduced to the students before reading the text. The teacher stimulates the students to give some predictions by giving an example of how to form predictions. There are several things that can be used to make predictions, such as headings, pictures, the questions the author asks or other text features. After the teacher shares his/her predictions, he/she encourage the students to add some predictions too about the text. Here are some prediction sentence starters that can be used:

1. Based on the title “*Lesser Slow Loris (Nycticebus pygmaeus)”*, I predict that this text will be about an animal called Lesser Slow Loris.
2. From the picture, I think that I will discuss about animal which lives in forest/trees.
3. Based on the picture, I imagine that it is a mammal.
4. Based on what I know/watch/read about this animal, I believe that it is very slow.

The teacher might ask the students to read only the first paragraph or the whole text. It depends on the students’ ability and concentration. After the students read the text, they come to the next stage.

1. **Questioning**

On questioning stage, the teacher models how to make a question from the text using question words like who, how, what, when, where, and why. Here are the examples of questions that can be used by the teacher in this stage:

1. How can the Lesser Slow Loris clamp onto branches for a long period of time?
2. How does the Lesser Slow Loris look like?
3. How does the Lesser Slow Loris grasp?

Here are the examples of additional questions made by the students:

1. What is the color of the Lesser Slow Loris’s fur?
2. Where can we find the Lesser Slow Loris?
3. What is the Lesser Slow Loris diet?

After that, the teacher works with the students to decide where the answer to these questions might be-in the reading, in the clues, or in the reader’s mind. The teacher makes sure that the students attempt to answer the questions. The teacher can also ask if the students have questions too. Since the point of questioning stage is self-testing of the information given from the text, grammar mistakes in making questions done by the students should not be the main concern.

1. **Clarifying**

In clarifying, the teacher will first ask the students if they need any words or ideas clarified. After that, the teacher works with the students to determine meanings of unknown vocabularies or unclear ideas from the text. To define those words or ideas, students are assigned to read the sentences that precede or follow it or to line the words like: *such as, or, like*, the word in the brackets, or the words between comma (,). These words or punctuations may signal the meaning of those unknown words or ideas. This stage can also clarify incorrect answers in the question stage. The students are also asked to define referents, for example, he, she, they, them, their, we, our, etc. by reading the sentences that precede or follow it. Here are some expressions that can be used:

* 1. I need to have “rate mirabile” clarified.

*Clarification: we can clarify the words “rate mirabile” by looking at the previous statement. “rate mirabile” are the term used for a network blood vessel of the slow loris.*

* 1. I did not understand the part where the Lesser Slow Loris does grooming.

*Clarification: we can clarify the word grooming by looking at the previous and the next statements. From the previous statement, we know that this animal has fur, and from the next statement, we know that it has front teeth as a comb. Therefore, the word “grooming”means something done by the animal when it wants to look after its coat or fur. Here, Slow Loris does grooming by its front teeth.*

* 1. I need to know more about the word “diet”.

*Clarifications: we can clarify the word “diet” by looking at the next explanation which mentions “…fruit, leaves, insects, birds etc”. Therefore, we can conclude that the word “diet” means kinds of food that is consumed by the animal.*

1. **Summarizing**

In summarizing, the teacher first models how to make summary by looking at the topic sentences or the first sentence in each paragraph, looking at the concluding sentence or last sentence in each paragraph, answering the *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* Of the text, or focusing on key details. The students can also add the summary in their own words. Here are some examples in summarizing:

1. The first part is about the introduction of the animal that will be discussed.
2. The most important idea on the second part is about the characteristics of the animal.
3. The characteristics of this animal are: it is 7-10 inches long; it weighs 12 ounces; it has thick fur; and it is in Asia.
4. ***Second Section: Students - Students***

In the second section, the teacher acts as the observer. He/she does not directly involve in discussion. However, he/she assigns the students into groups of four or more, then allocate a role to each student, for example, as a predictor, clarifier, questioner, or summarizer. Each group must write down the result of their discussion. While students apply the Reciprocal Teaching stages, the teacher would assist and guide them. The guidance would be given for each step if students still do not understand. To make the discussion easier, students with higher ability in comprehending English text are assigned to be in a group with students with lower ability. Therefore, they can perform better at each stage.

1. **Predicting**

After being given the second descriptive text by the teacher, the predictors begin the discussion by giving their predictions. It can be from the title, picture or from the clue words. They perform some predictions based on what have been taught before. Other members of the group can agree or disagree with the predictions given. They are also allowed to give their own predictions.

1. **Questioning**

In generating questions, the questioners form some questions related to the paragraph they just read. They find important information from the text using simple yes/no questions or WH questions. The rest of the group member answer to those questions.

1. **Clarifying**

In clarifying, the clarifiers write down difficult words that they find. Then, they begin to define the difficult words as explained by the teacher before. If other members still unsatisfied with the clarifications, they might discuss it together.

1. **Summarizing**

The summarizer locates the topic sentence or the main idea of a paragraph. They also underline the most relevant sentences to the text idea. They must state the main idea with their own words. Other students might add to the summary.

Even though, the teacher imparts himself from the discussion, he/she still remains actively involved, but only provides the students with evaluative information. The teacher may need only to inform that they are doing well or give more explanation to groups which face difficulties in performing each stage.

Those steps above are flexible to use. Omari and Weshah (2010: 28) says that reciprocal teaching strategies are not essential to follow in order. It depends on the complexity of the text and the characteristic of the learners. It means that they must not apply in order. They can be adapted to the situations and kinds of text that will be read.

1. **Conclusion and Suggestions**
   * + 1. **Conclusion**

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that Reciprocal Teaching Technique can be implemented as one of the techniques in improving students’ understanding and comprehending English text, especially descriptive text. It can be implemented since it actively engages the students in discussion. They could solve the problem together. Therefore, they could understand and comprehend the text more.

The teacher begins by introducing each of the steps to students and telling them the purpose and use of each. There are predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. The teacher is the discussion leader in the initial discussion. She/he models strategy use. Throughout the discussion, the teacher is modeling how to go about applying the strategies when reading. The teacher’s role changes from model to coach as the position of discussion leader passes from teacher to students. Students rotate leading the discussion, initially with considerable assistance from the teacher in the form of feedback and encouragement. Over time, as students gradually acquire proficiency in strategy use, teacher involvement fades and control of the discussions passes to the students. The teachers can use this strategy in improving students’ comprehending a text.

* + - 1. **Suggestion**

The English teacher should be more creative in choosing the activity. She/he should know what students need to improve students’ weakness. If the teacher wants to use Reciprocal Teaching, he/she should consider on the situation of the class so that she can manage the class well. She also should consider on the topic of the text that will influence students’ motivation in reading. More importantly, this activity should engage all the students.

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