

## Enhancing Reading Comprehension Skills through Small Group Interaction Techniques: A Comparative Study



### Literature

**KEYWORDS :** Reading Comprehension, Cooperative Learning, Jigsaw, Reciprocal

**Arthy. V**

Research Scholar, Department t of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

**Dr.P Nagaraj**

Assistant Professor in English Department t of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

### ABSTRACT

*Reading is the basic foundation on which the academic skills of an individual are built. Several recent reviews and syntheses of research offer key information about effective comprehension strategy instruction. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's to learning. Cooperative learning has been demonstrated to be an effective method for improving reading comprehension. The present study investigates the relative effectiveness of two cooperative learning techniques namely the Reciprocal Method and the Jigsaw method in enhancing the reading comprehension of the Engineering students.*

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is the basic foundation on which the academic skills of an individual are built. The reading education in Technical English has become one of the most important issues in all of educational policy and practice. Reading technical materials involves a complex process of obtaining discipline-specific information and retaining the same for future use and reference. It needs better concentration and motivation, critical analysis, and evaluative understanding. In academic contexts, a student has to read and interpret textbooks, research papers and articles in technical journals, teaching notes, notices, internet resources, technical reports, directories, encyclopedias, laboratory instruction sheets, safety manuals and regulations, and reference materials. Unless the student reads with a purpose and comprehends the text clearly he or she may not be efficient in his or her academic activities as well as in their chosen profession. Hence, it is imperative to identify dynamic and productive grasping techniques to improve reading skills.

### READING COMPREHENSION:

The ability to read well constitutes one of the most valuable skills a human being can acquire. Proficient reading implies clear comprehension of the communication presented in print or writing in a reasonably speeded form.

Fry (1963) remarks, "It is very difficult to define reading comprehension. Reduced to its simplest elements, we might say that comprehension is a part of communication process of getting the thoughts that were in the author's mind into the reader's mind".

Comprehension entered the reading vocabulary in the early 1920's when teaching children how to get meanings from their reading first came to the forefront and it still continues to be an area of major concern in the teaching of reading.

Comprehension is one general component of reading which has a set of interrelated processes. Without the skills of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn, students academic progress is limited (Alvermann and Earle, 2003)

Several recent reviews and syntheses of research offer key information about effective comprehension strategy instruction. These reviews by Alvermann and Moore (1991), The National Reading Panel (2000), The RAND Reading Study Group (Snow, 2002), Carlisle and Rice (2002), Curtis (2002), Meltzer, Smith and Clark (2003), and others examine hundreds of scientific and quasi-scientific studies and conclude that comprehension can be enhanced by teaching a relatively small set of comprehension strategies. The consensus of opinion is summarized well by Noles and Dole (2004):

"Researchers have collected much evidence that supports explicit strategy instruction... The teaching of strategies empowers readers, particularly those who struggle, by giving them the

tools they need to construct meaning from text. Instead of blaming comprehension problems on students' own innate abilities, for which they see no solution, explicit strategy instruction teaches students to take control of their own learning and comprehension" (p. 179).

Numerous factors that contribute to the ability to decode and comprehend texts have been identified; they include general cognitive ability, prior knowledge, decoding fluency, knowledge about reading strategies. Research on cooperative learning is one of the greatest success stories in the history of educational research. Hundreds of studies have compared cooperative learning to various control methods on a broad range of measures, but by far the most frequent objective of this research is to determine the effects of cooperative learning on student achievement. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's to learning. There is considerable research demonstrating that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, more positive relationships among students, and healthier psychological adjustment than competitive or individual experiences. Cooperative learning has been demonstrated to be an effective method for improving reading comprehension.

Cooperative learning is a possible instructional innovation that could be related to the affective aspects of reading. At present there are many cooperative learning methods available. According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), these methods and structures can be categorized into the following methods

- Students Team and Achievement Divisions (STAD)
- Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT)
- Learning Together (LT)
- Jigsaw Technique (JT)
- Group Investigation Technique (GIT)
- Reciprocal Teaching Technique (RT)
- Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI)
- Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)

### RECIPROCAL TEACHING:

According to Doolittle, et al. (2006), the general methodology of reciprocal teaching involves the instructor and students reading a section of the text in small groups. The instructor then leads a discussion of the text, while modeling appropriate reading comprehension strategies. During this dialogue and modeling process, the instructor encourages students to ask questions of both the text and strategies. The instructor uses this dialogue to foster both reading comprehension and strategic cognition. This general process of reading, dialoguing, and clarifying, continues throughout the length of the text. However, as students become more facile with the dialogue process and the reading comprehension strategies, the instructor begins to have students take the role of instructor or dialogue leader. As students begin to lead the dialogue process, the instructor assumes the

role of guide or facilitator, rather than a leader.

Researchers have given several reasons why teachers should choose reciprocal teaching as an appropriate instructional approach to help students comprehend difficult text. Reciprocal teaching allows the students to monitor their progress and assume the ultimate responsibility for their learning from the text regardless of the content covered in a particular class (Slater & Horstman, 2002).

#### THE JIGSAW MEHTOD:

Jigsaw, as Clarke (1994) notes, was initially developed by a team of teachers, administrators, and researchers as a way to develop equal opportunities for participation and achievement in desegregated classrooms. Epstein (1991) examined the efficacy of Jigsaw technique and asserted the advantages of cooperative learning that this technique provides; it increases the student independence, avoids dominance by one group member, creates peer acceptance and understanding, promotes individuals and group responsibility and develops social skill.

Jing Meng. (2010). Through Jigsaw cooperative learning of this term, benefited and also fostered the interest of students' English study, aroused their motivation, and improved their reading ability. Jigsaw method embodies a learner-centered, teacher-facilitated, positive interdependent communication. So, it is safe to say that Jigsaw approach is one of the most effective ways of teaching English reading in college.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to compare the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Method and the Jigsaw Method of teaching reading in enhancing reading skills of the Engineering students. The specific objectives of the study based on the above mentioned major objectives is

To find out the relative effectiveness of the Reciprocal Method and the Jigsaw Method in enhancing the Engineering students' Reading Comprehension

#### HYPOTHESES

There will not be any significant difference between the mean scores of the Reciprocal method group and the Jigsaw method group students in the sub tests on Reading Comprehension

#### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Pre-test Post-test Equivalent-Groups Design was adopted for the study in which the participants were randomly assigned either the Reciprocal Method group or the Jigsaw Method group.

Two groups of 1 year B.Tech. Information Technology students were equated on the basis of pre-test scores to form two experimental groups. One group was treated as Reciprocal Method Group (RMG), which was taught reading through reciprocal teaching method. The other group was treated as Jigsaw Method Group (JMG), which was taught reading through jigsaw method of teaching.

#### SAMPLES FOR THE STUDY

The experiment was conducted on a cluster sample of 60 students of B.Tech Information Technology. They were divided into two equated groups. Both the groups were treated as Experimental Groups.

#### ANALYSIS

From the analysis of the data collected, it was found that the Reciprocal method significantly contributed to the improvement in the reading comprehension of the students when compared to the Jigsaw Method.

#### MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the analysis of data, it was evident that

- Reciprocal Teaching Technique contributed to the improvement of Reading Comprehension of the engineering students in English.
- The results also showed that Jigsaw method also contributed to the improvement of Reading Comprehension of the Engineering students in English but not relatively significant.
- Through out the study, it was noted that Reciprocal Method guides the students to interact with the reading text in more sophisticated ways as it involves specified strategies which lead to a significant improvement in the quality of their reading comprehension
- Form the interpretation, it can be understood that the strategies adopted in these two methods not only contribute the development of reading but also enhance the reading comprehension skills of the students and the demographic variables do not influence the understanding of the reading text.
- Further, both the methods have shown that team learning and student-led discussions not only produce favorable student performance outcomes, but also foster greater participation, self confidence and leadership ability.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The growing knowledge base instruction for reading comprehension is rightly directed toward identifying classroom practices with known effects on specific aspects of reading. Results of the experiment imply that both the Reciprocal Teaching Technique and Jigsaw Technique influence the outcome of reading sessions in terms of Reading Comprehension. This implication helps the formulation of some theoretical guidelines so as to modify the present practice of teaching reading in English at the engineering colleges.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis of data obtained from the study proves the fact that both the methods improve the Reading Comprehension, if used effectively.

As the students recognize the importance of developing good English reading skills both the groups were positive towards both the methods of teaching reading. The present study revealed that both the methods are challenging and helped in peer assisted learning.

#### REFERENCE

- Alvermann, D.E. and Moore, D. (1991). "Secondary school reading." In R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, and P.D. Pearson (eds.) Handbook of Reading Research 2 : 951-983. White Plains, NY: Longman. | Carlisle, J. and Rice, M. (2002). Improving reading comprehension: Research-based principles and practices. Baltimore: York Press. | Clarke, J. (1994). Pieces of the puzzle: The jigsaw method. In S. Sharan (Ed.) Handbook of Cooperative Learning Methods (pp. 34-50). Westport: Greenwood Press. | Curtis, M.E. (2002). Adolescent reading: A synthesis of research. Presentation at the conference "Adolescent Literacy - Research Informing Practice: A Series of Workshops," May 20, 2002, | Baltimore. Sponsored by The Partnership for Reading. | Epstein, Ruth (1991). Literacy through Cooperative Learning: The Jigsaw Reading Technique". In ERIC no: ED 43100 | Jing Meng (2010), Jigsaw cooperative Learning in English Reading. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Vol.1, No.4, pp. 501-504. | Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Holubec, E.J. (1991) Cooperation in the classroom: Revised. Edna, MN: Interaction Book Company. | Meltzer, J., Smith, N.C., and Clark, H. (2003). Adolescent literacy resources: Linking research and practice. Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. | National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. | Noles, J.D. and Dole, J.A. (2004). "Helping adolescent readers through explicit strategy | instruction." In T.L. Jetton & J.A. Dole (eds.). Adolescent literacy research and practice. NewYork: Guilford Press. | Snow, C. (2002). (Chair). RAND reading study group: Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.