

Unlocking Reading Comprehension: The Power of the Reciprocal Teaching Method for EFL Learners

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: 22 May 2026

Publish: 1 July 2026

Keywords:

Reciprocal Method;

Reading Comprehension;

Abstract

This research aimed to examine the power of the Reciprocal Method on teaching reading comprehension to first-grade students at Senior High School SMAN 1 Batulayar during the 2025/2026 academic year. The study employed a pre-experimental design with pre-test and post-test assessments. The research involved all first-grade students in one class, consisting of 26 students. A reading test with 20 items was used as the instrument. The scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean, mode, median, and standard deviation, while inferential analysis was conducted to compare the t-test value with the t-table. The results revealed that the t-test value of 3.8962 was greater than the t-table value of 1.729. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that the Reciprocal Method was effective to unlock reading comprehension among first-grade students at SMAN 1 Batulayar during the 2025/2026 academic year.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill in learning English, as it allows individuals to gain information, experience, and knowledge. By using the Reciprocal Teaching method, the researcher aims to motivate students to engage with different texts, enabling them to acquire more experiences and knowledge. Reading, one of the four key language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), is essential for everyone to master, as it provides a means of acquiring written information. According to Grabe and Stoller (2016), reading comprehension involves constructing meaning through interaction between the reader's background knowledge and the text, where understanding and interpretation are essential for gaining information and knowledge. Reading comprehension is a vital skill that goes beyond just decoding words; it involves the active process of understanding, interpreting, and analyzing written text. It requires readers to interact with the text, using their cognitive skills to construct meaning. Several key components are essential for effective reading comprehension. Word recognition is the foundation, as students must quickly and accurately decode words to make sense of the text. Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role; a broader vocabulary allows students to better understand context and nuances within a passage. Fluency also enhances comprehension by enabling students to read smoothly, focusing on the meaning rather than struggling with individual words. Additionally, background knowledge helps students make connections between new information and what they already know, deepening their understanding. Metacognition, or the ability to think about one's thinking, is also important—students who actively monitor and adjust their

strategies as they read, such as re-reading or summarizing, are more successful in grasping the text's meaning.

Reading comprehension also involves active engagement, where students ask questions, make predictions, and evaluate the material they read. These strategies help them gain a deeper understanding and improve their overall comprehension. Two prominent models of reading comprehension shed light on its complexity. The Simple View of Reading (SVR) emphasizes that comprehension is the result of two crucial factors: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension (understanding). Both elements are essential to fully understanding a text. Meanwhile, the Interactive Model of Reading highlights the dynamic interplay between top-down (using prior knowledge and context) and bottom-up (decoding and understanding words and syntax) processes. Readers rely on both their background knowledge and the information presented in the text to construct meaning.

For high school students, mastering reading comprehension is essential for academic success across various subjects, from literature to science and social studies. These skills not only improve exam performance but also foster critical thinking, enabling students to engage with texts more deeply. Ultimately, strong reading comprehension skills help students become lifelong learners, equipped with the ability to analyze and synthesize information in a meaningful way.

During an observation conducted in April 2025 at SMAN 1 Batulayar, several issues were identified, such as students' difficulty in understanding text meanings, determining the main idea, and finding both explicit and implicit information. They also struggled with identifying exceptions, locations of information, making inferences, and paraphrasing sentences. Additionally, students often read and took notes without following the teacher's instructions, which led to difficulties in comprehending the text. Given these challenges, the researcher decided to apply the Reciprocal Teaching method in teaching reading comprehension, hoping it would enhance students' focus, active participation, and attention to their classmates, thereby boosting their confidence in asking and answering questions, and ultimately making the learning process more engaging.

The Reciprocal Method is an instructional approach that prioritizes collaboration and active engagement in learning, fostering critical thinking and comprehension skills. According to Kagan (2016), the Reciprocal Method promotes peer learning by involving students in discussions, where they alternate between the roles of "teacher" and "learner." This active participation encourages deeper engagement with the material, as students are not merely passive receivers of information, but contributors to the learning process. O'Connor (2016) supports this by stating that such peer interactions, combined with teacher guidance, help students build their comprehension through questioning, clarifying, and summarizing techniques. Furthermore, Pressley (2016) highlights the effectiveness of this method in developing higher-order thinking skills, as students are required to evaluate and discuss the content critically. By creating a dynamic environment where students engage with the material and each other, the Reciprocal Method promotes a deeper understanding of texts and nurtures communication and problem-solving abilities. However, the method does come with challenges, such as the time needed to manage multiple group discussions and ensuring equal participation from all students. Despite these challenges, when properly implemented, the Reciprocal Method proves to be an effective tool for enhancing comprehension, encouraging collaborative learning, and improving critical thinking skills in high school settings.

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulated the following research question: Does the Reciprocal Teaching Method have power to unlock reading comprehension among EFL learners at SMAN 1 Batulayar during the 2025/2026 academic year?

The researcher formulated the hypotheses for this study as follows:

1. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):
It is believed that the Reciprocal Method has power to unlock EFL learners’ reading comprehension at SMAN 1 Batulayar during the 2025/2026 academic year.
2. Null Hypothesis (Ho):
It is believed that the Reciprocal Method does not have power to unlock EFL learners’ reading comprehension at SMAN 1 Batulayar during the 2025/2026 academic year.
These hypotheses will serve as the foundation for testing whether the Reciprocal Method leads to significant power to unlock EFL learners’ reading comprehension.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study uses an experimental research design with a pre-experimental setup. The effectiveness of the Reciprocal Method in teaching reading comprehension is explored using a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The design includes administering a pre-test (T1), applying the Reciprocal Method as the treatment (X), and giving a post-test (T2). The aim is to assess the change in students' reading comprehension following the intervention.

Table.1
The Scheme of Research

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
T1	X	T2

Where

T1 = pre-test

X = treatment

T2 = give post-test

Theoretical Framework

The Reciprocal Method is grounded in contemporary educational theories, notably Vygotsky's Social Constructivism and Piaget’s Constructivist theory. Vygotsky (2016) emphasized that cognitive development is largely driven by social interaction and cultural context, which aligns with the Reciprocal Method’s focus on peer discussions and collaborative learning. According to Vygotsky, learners develop higher cognitive functions by engaging with more knowledgeable peers, which in this method, occurs during group discussions and shared problem-solving. This process of co-constructing knowledge facilitates deeper understanding and reinforces reading comprehension.

Piaget’s Constructivism theory (2017) also supports this method, emphasizing that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and peers. The Reciprocal Method encourages students to engage critically with the material by discussing it with classmates, helping them to refine their comprehension and apply their knowledge effectively. Piaget’s framework suggests that such active learning processes enable students to assimilate new information into their existing cognitive structures, leading to more robust and meaningful learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the Reciprocal Method promotes active engagement, which is a key principle of contemporary constructivist approaches, as highlighted by scholars like Sweller et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of active learning in cognitive development. By promoting peer interaction and self-directed learning, this method aligns with modern pedagogical strategies that prioritize student-centered, collaborative learning environments.

Variables

Independent Variable: The Reciprocal Method used in teaching reading comprehension.

Dependent Variable: The students' reading comprehension scores.

Research Instrument

The study employs a 20-item multiple-choice test as the research instrument. Each item is scored based on correct answers (5 points) and incorrect answers (0 points). The tests are administered before and after the treatment.

Data Collection

Data is collected through pre-test and post-test scores. The pre-test assesses students' initial reading comprehension levels, while the post-test evaluates the impact of the Reciprocal Method on their comprehension skills.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Analysis: The mean, median, and mode of pre-test and post-test scores will be calculated to identify central tendencies and dispersion.

Inferential Analysis: A paired t-test will be conducted to determine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant, indicating the effectiveness of the Reciprocal Method.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This research aimed to evaluate the power of the Reciprocal Method in teaching reading comprehension among EFL students at SMAN 1 Batulayar during the 2025/2026 academic year. Pre-tests were administered on August 27, 2025, and post-tests on September 10, 2025. The statistical analysis included calculating the mean, mode, median, and standard deviation for both pre-test and post-test scores.

Descriptive Analysis

No.	Student	Pre-test (X1)	Post-test (X2)	Deviation (D)	Deviation ² (D ²)
1	A	35	55	15	225
2	A	30	45	15	225
3	AS	55	65	15	225
4	AG	35	50	15	225
5	G	35	60	25	625
...
Total	-	835	1180	345	6525

Statistical Measures

Mean Pre-test:

The mean score for the pre-test was calculated as 41.75.

Formula:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum X_1}{N} = \frac{835}{20} = 41.75$$

Mean Post-test:

The mean score for the post-test was 59.

Formula:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum X_2}{N} = \frac{1180}{20} = 59$$

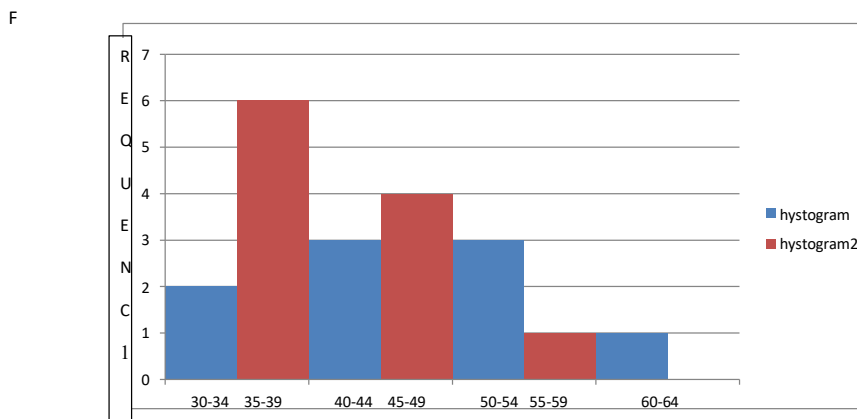
Mode and Median Scores:

The mode for the pre-test was calculated as 22.57, while the post-test mode was 65.75.

The median for the pre-test was 32.91, and for the post-test, it was -27.8.

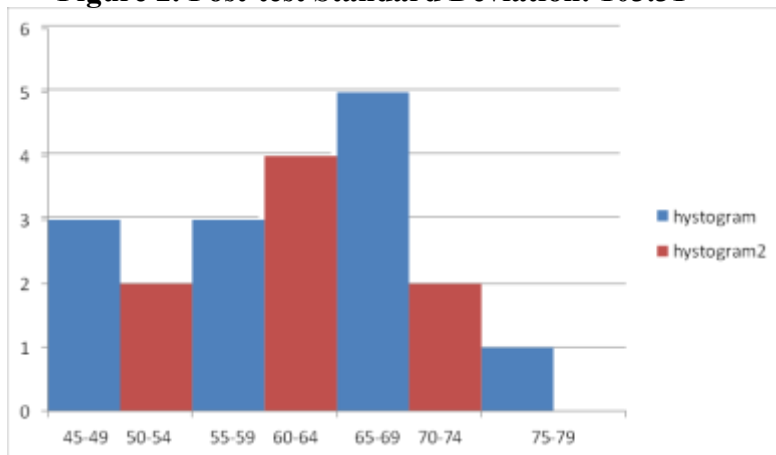
Standard Deviation

Figure 1. Pre-test Standard Deviation: 71.51



For a more detailed analysis of the score increase, the pre-test results show that two students scored between 30-34, six students scored between 35-39, three students scored between 40-44, four students scored between 45-49, three students scored between 50-54, one student scored between 55-59, and one student scored between 60-64. Therefore, it can be concluded that the lowest score in the pre-test was achieved by two students in the 30-34 range, while the highest score was attained by a student in the 60-64 range.

Figure 2. Post-test Standard Deviation: 103.31



For a more detailed analysis of the score improvement, the histogram and polygon for the post-test results show that three students scored between 45-49, two students scored between 50-54, three students scored between 55-59, four students scored between 60-64, five students scored between 65-69, two students scored between 70-74, and one student scored between 75-79. Therefore, it can be concluded that the lowest scores in the post-test

were achieved by three students in the 45-49 range, while the highest score was obtained by a student in the 75-79 range.

Inferential Analysis

The t-test was used to determine the statistical significance of the results:

$$t = \frac{md}{\sqrt{\sum D^2 / N(N-1)}}$$

- **t-test:** 3.8962
- **t-table (df = 19, 0.05):** 1.729

Since the t-test (3.8962) is greater than the t-table (1.729), the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, confirming that the Reciprocal Method has a significant effect on improving reading comprehension. The null hypothesis (H_o), stating no significant effect, is rejected.

Discussion

According to Whoolley (2011), reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from the text. Oczkus (2017) further supports this by explaining that the Reciprocal Method serves as a scaffolded discussion technique, incorporating strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing to help readers comprehend text. These strategies aim to facilitate a deeper understanding of the text by encouraging flexible and interactive engagement with the material.

Based on the teaching and learning experience, the researcher concluded that students enjoyed the learning process. The Reciprocal Method not only helped students solve problems but also allowed them to take on the role of a teacher, promoting active participation. Students developed new skills as predictors, summarizers, clarifiers, and questioners. When encountering difficulties in understanding the text, such as unfamiliar vocabulary or unclear concepts, students were encouraged to discuss these challenges with their peers, fostering collaborative problem-solving.

The Reciprocal Method was particularly effective when applied in teaching recount texts. It enabled students to become more engaged and provided solutions to their comprehension challenges. This method helped students identify key elements of reading comprehension, such as the main idea, supporting details, and inferences. By applying the Reciprocal Method, students were able to make inferences by predicting content and using evidence from the text to guide their understanding.

Additionally, the method helped students summarize texts by identifying main ideas and supporting details in both single and multi-paragraph texts. Students also practiced comparing and contrasting different parts of the text, which enhanced their ability to understand the text's overall structure.

The connection between reading comprehension indicators and the Reciprocal Method lies in how these elements complement each other. By following the steps of the Reciprocal Method, students unknowingly strengthened their understanding of the text, which ultimately led to improved reading comprehension.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and discussion regarding the control group, the researcher drew several conclusions and suggestions. First, the study results were significant, as the t-test value of 3.8962 exceeded the t-table value of 1.729 at the 0.05 significance level. Second, the reciprocal method proved to be effective, which was evident from the students' score improvements. Finally, the study's hypothesis testing showed that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_o) was rejected. Therefore, it can

be concluded that the reciprocal method is effective to unlocked reading comprehension of EFL students.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to God Almighty for the guidance, strength, and blessing throughout the completion of this study. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my partner for their invaluable guidance, patience, and constructive feedback that greatly contributed to this research. My deepest appreciation goes to my family for their endless support, motivation, and encouragement throughout the study. Finally, I would like to thank everyone who directly or indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

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