



Reciprocal Teaching with ELLs

From:

Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners

by Jane D. Hill and Kathleen M. Flynn

Reciprocal teaching involves four components: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting. For ELLs, it is critical to model each step and check for student understanding. Once the four components are learned, students can use them to monitor their reading for better comprehension.

The following is an adaptation involving the four components of reciprocal teaching that can be used as a whole-class activity or in small groups.

Step 1: Summarizing. After students have silently or orally read a short section of a passage, a single student acting as teacher (i.e., the student leader) summarizes what has been read. Other students, with guidance from the student leader, may add to the summary. If students have difficulty summarizing, the teacher might point out clues (important items or obvious topic sentences) that aid in the construction of good summaries.

Step 2: Questioning. The student leader asks some questions to which the class responds. The questions are designed to help students identify important information in the passage. For example, the student leader might look back over the selection and ask questions about specific pieces of information. The other students then try to answer these questions based on their recollection of the information.

Step 3: Clarifying. The student leader tries to clarify confusing points in the passage. He might point these out or ask other students to point them out. For example, the student leader might say, "The part about why the dog ran into the car was confusing to me. Can anyone explain this?" Or the student leader might direct students to ask clarification questions. The group then attempts to clear up the confusing parts, which might involve rereading parts of the passage.

Step 4: Predicting. The student leader asks for predictions about what will happen in the next segment of the text. The leader can write the predictions on the blackboard or on an overhead, or students can write them down.

I've really loved the reciprocal teaching. We made a simile for each of the different roles, so students had a pictorial representation to cue them for what those roles were. A clarifier looks at things like a magnifying glass, a summarizer wraps things up like a ball of yarn, a predictor sees into the future like a fortune-teller, and a questioner is like a detective. So I would hold up a ball of string, and they would kind of know, "Oh, I'm going to wrap things up, I'm going to summarize it."

I really liked [using reciprocal teaching] with all my kids, and my ELL kids in particular have absolutely thrived with that. They have taken to asking higher-level questions, and they are really digging deep into the text. We've talked about how you can be a reciprocal member and even work on your own, so that some of the students go through the different roles when they read things by themselves now as a method to understand and summarize the text for themselves.

—E. S.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/106009/chapters/Summarizing-and-Note-Taking.aspx>