



HE032

The Use of KWL Plus Strategy to Enhance Reading Comprehension for Grade 8 Cambodian Students

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to compare students' learning achievement before and after learning by using KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension for grade 8 Cambodian students, and 2) to investigate student's satisfaction toward KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension for grade 8 Cambodian students. The samples were 35 grade 8 students who enrolled in the fundamental English course in the second semester of academic year 2017 at Pres Sisowath High School in Phnom Penh city, Cambodia. They were selected by simple random sampling technique by using the classrooms as a sampling unit. A one-group pretest-posttest design of the experimental research was employed in this study. The instruments used in this study were 1) 4 sets of the KWL plus lesson plans; 2) English reading comprehension achievement test, and 3) the satisfaction questionnaire. The statistics used for analyzing the collected data were mean, standard deviation, and dependent samples t-test. The findings were as follows:

1. The students who learned by KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension after learning had higher mean score than before learning at the 0.01 level of statistical significance.

2. The students' satisfaction towards learning by using KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension for grade 8 Cambodian students as a whole was at a more satisfactory level.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, KWL plus strategy, Grade 8 Cambodian students

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Introduction

English language is one of an important language in daily life. It has become crucial language of science, business, aviation, entertainment, radio, air transportation, news, education and diplomacy. English is not only used when people communicate with English speakers, but it is also used when people from different nations meet. English is the most widely spoken language in the world and it has four main skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The basic goal of teaching these skills is to help students interact successfully with native and non-native users of English in a variety of social and academic settings.

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from the text. The goal of all reading instructions is ultimately targeted at helping a reader to comprehend a given text. Reading comprehension involves at least two persons; the reader and the writer. The process of comprehending involves decoding the writer's words, and then using background knowledge to construct an approximate understanding of the writer's message (Kirby, 2006, p .161). When one applies all these ideas on the situation in Cambodia, one finds out that Cambodian students are in short of reading comprehension skills, they lack the ability

to comprehend their reading textbook selections or even to answer the factual questions. It is an important issue for teachers to pay attention to the strategies and techniques of teaching reading for the purpose of comprehension. According to El Kahlout (2010, p. 4), "most teachers conduct methods of teaching which mainly depend on memorizing rules and structures. Students are not given the chance to acquire language skills or to use language effectively. Hence, teachers are in need of new strategies and techniques that interpret language not only as sentences, vocabulary or structures, but also as a practice of thoughts and culture." In this respect, one can safely say that teachers need to employ classroom instructional strategies that facilitate students' construction of their own meanings. Teachers also need opportunities to learn and use new strategies and adapt such strategies to their own situations and teaching needs.

According to the researcher's knowledge, many teachers do not use their background knowledge to activate their students' minds about what they are going to learn; teachers also do not let their students ask questions due to the use of traditional methods in which teachers take the major role to explain everything; do what the student is supposed to do; while



the students role is restricted to only listening to what is inculcated to them by their teacher. In this situation, students are just listeners to what the teacher explains; they do not have a chance to articulate what they know about the topic, what they want to know about the topic, or what they have learned about the topic.

However, Cambodian students' English reading comprehension does not reach a high level of proficiency. This comes from many causes such as the method of teaching reading comprehension and the materials for the reading class. Most students need to improve reading comprehension skill because the method of teaching did not support them to read and think. Moreover, the problem is Cambodian students lacked of practice in appropriate ways and the use of inappropriate reading strategies in the reading instruction. Nevertheless, as people knows in Cambodia, where English language is taught as necessary foreign language but the students performed poorly because the students are lacking of the skill of comprehend the contents of texts, read the details of the texts, and they lacked the critical skill explanation English written texts (Thanbanjersuk, 1983; Wirunhayan, 1987; Torut, 1994). Aksaanukraw (1989) has reported that the dissatisfactory issue of the

students' performance in reading English in mainly due the fact that the teachers focus on the product of the language learning, and they normally skip the important on the learning process.

KWL plus technique or strategy helps students better understand the background knowledge, monitor and reflect the understanding. This technique can help students to lessen their reading problems and it might be an appropriate way to help students to learn to read more successfully because KWL plus can help students understand better. According to Ogle (1986), the KWL strategy is a self-questioning process which helps students develop a personal commitment to guide them through reading process. KWL plus is a reading strategy focusing on the students as a learner. It encourages students to ask question and think about ideas while reading. KWL plus technique activates students 'prior knowledge or recall what is known (K); determine what they want to learn (W); identify what is learned (L); and map text and summarize information (Plus). This strategy also helps teacher and learner to be more interactive in teaching and learning and provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning. Weissman (1997), and Al-Khateeb and Idrees (2010) have showed an effect in helping



students to learn comprehension strategies. Also, the students whose are treated by KWL plus received the benefits using this strategy in their classroom.

As an EFL teacher, the researcher detects this KWL plus strategy in Cambodia as a prospect learning activity that encourages students to read extensive authentic texts in English, group work, with their peers, and critical thought exercise. These initial positive opinions of KWL plus use in EFL contexts impress the researcher to involve further research on KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension in EFL classroom. As a result, the researcher would like to investigate how KWL plus strategy is use in high school and how the students used reading comprehension during such activity.

Research objectives

1. To compare students' learning achievement before and after learning by using KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension of grade 8 Cambodian students.
2. To investigate students' satisfaction toward KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension of grade 8 Cambodian students.

Methods

This study is experimental design. KWL plus reading strategy is applied in the classroom. The following are details of methodologies.

Population and samples

The target population of the study included 175 grade 8 Cambodian students at Pres Sisowath High school, Phnom Penh, Cambodia who enrolled in the foundational English course in the second semester of academic year 2017.

The samples were 35 grade 8 Cambodian students, who enrolled in the foundational English course in the second semester of academic year 2017. They were selected by using simple random sampling technique using the classrooms as a sampling unit.

Research instruments

The main research instruments used to collecting the data were lesson plans, English reading comprehension test and satisfaction questionnaire.

1. Lesson plans for teaching KWL plus reading strategy: The researcher studied the basic education curriculum about version, goals, principle, desirable characteristic, learning standard of foreign languages, learning areas, methodology, theory, principle, and how to teach reading



with KWL plus strategy. The lesson plans were focused on KWL plus strategy, which were constructed by the researcher and based on reading comprehension using KWL plus strategy to comprehend the texts for grade 8 students. There were four lesson plans with four topics instructed through KWL plus strategy.

Lesson plan 1: The History of Cats

Lesson plan 2: No water no problem

Lesson plan 3: The story of Valentine's Day

Lesson plan 4: Going to the movies

2. The pretest and posttest were the multiple choices consisting of 50 items that requires students to choose the correct answer. The test as the pretest and posttest with 4 multiple choices consisted of 50 items. The test questions were based on the WH-question words: Who, What, Where, When and Why.

3. The satisfaction questionnaire consisted of 10 questions and was divided into three parts: personal information, students' satisfaction and open-ended questions. All questions were designed to investigate the students' satisfaction and students' opinions towards KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension.

All three types of instruments were qualified by the thesis advisors and three experts to find out the correctness, appropriateness, validity and reliability.

Data collection

To collect the data, a study was done with a pre-test, the pre-test which was given to all of the samples at the beginning of the study. The samples were orientated to understand the KWL plus strategy, and then they were taught English reading by using KWL plus strategy and did the activities; a post-test was administered with all of the samples after completing all the lessons plans for teaching English reading through KWL plus strategy. After doing the post-test, the samples were asked to fill out the questionnaire focusing on their satisfaction toward learning English reading by using KWL plus strategy.

Data analysis

1. In order to evaluate the students' English reading comprehension before and after being taught through KWL plus strategy, the pre-test and post-test were computed by mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D).

2. Dependent samples t-test was used to compare the difference between



pretest of students' achievement scores to detect a statistical significant set at 0.05 level.

3. The evaluation of students' satisfaction toward learning English reading through KWL plus strategy, the data from five-rating scales were computed for mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D).

Findings

1. A comparison of students' learning achievement before and after learning by using KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension of grade 8 Cambodian students

The first research objective focuses on gaining an understanding of the similarities and differences between pre-test and post-test mean scores employed by grade 8 Cambodian students when they were instructed by KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension. Methodologically, both pre-test, and post-test scores consisted of 50 items. Also, they were compared to find out the statistically significant difference. The significant difference at the level of 0.05 was set for this study.

Table 1: A comparison of the difference between pre-test and post-test before and after learning by using KWL plus strategy of grade 8 Cambodian students

Test	n	\bar{X}	S.D	t-test
Pre-test	35	17.34	3.40	38.86**
Post-test	35	43.80	4.73	

** significant difference at 0.01

As indicated in the table above, the dependent samples t-test was conducted in order to find whether there was a significant difference in the using the KWL plus strategy of the pre-test and the post-test mean scores. The results revealed that there was statistically significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test mean scores in using KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension at a 0.01 level. That means

KWL plus strategy can improve reading comprehension for grade 8 Cambodian students.

2. The students' satisfaction toward KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension of grade 8 Cambodian students

The second research objective is formulated. To address this objective, the researcher used a 10-item of 5-rating scale satisfaction questionnaire, ranging from the



most satisfactory (5) to the least satisfactory (1). Additionally, student satisfaction had been positively correlated to favorable learning outcomes. While this study had all approached this topic from slightly different perspectives, student's satisfaction with the

learning experience was acknowledged as an axial construct in positive learning outcomes. Table 2 presents the satisfaction toward the KWL plus strategy by grade 8 Cambodian students.

Table2: Mean and standard deviation for each satisfaction questionnaire item (n = 35)

No.	Statement	\bar{X}	S.D.	Meaning	Rank
1.	Reading strategy enhances students' reading comprehension.	3.68	1.13	More Satisfactory	6
2.	KWL plus strategy is easy to practice.	3.57	1.08	More Satisfactory	8
3.	KWL plus strategy is fun.	3.94	0.98	More Satisfactory	2
4.	KWL plus strategy is useful.	3.86	1.05	More Satisfactory	3
5.	KWL plus strategy can promote critical thinking.	3.80	0.35	More Satisfactory	4
6.	KWL plus strategy can help me analyze the text.	4.54	1.11	Most Satisfactory	1
7.	KWL plus strategy can help integrate prior knowledge with new information.	3.53	1.14	More Satisfactory	9
8.	I use my prior knowledge to facilitate the reading comprehension.	3.51	1.17	More Satisfactory	10
9.	KWL plus strategy is child-centered learning.	3.66	0.47	More Satisfactory	7
10.	KWL plus strategy can help increase vocabulary retention	3.72	1.18	More Satisfactory	5
Grade Total		3.56	0.62	More Satisfactory	



As shown in Table 2, the grade 8 Cambodian students were satisfied toward the KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension as a whole at “a more satisfactory” level ($\bar{X}=4.54$, S.D.=1.11). When considering at each item, it was found that the three highest mean scores were no. 6 “KWL plus strategy can help me analyze the text” ($\bar{X}=4.54$, S.D.=1.11), followed by no. 3 “KWL plus strategy is fun” ($\bar{X}=3.94$, S.D. = 0.98), and no. 4 “KWL plus strategy is useful” ($\bar{X}=3.86$, S.D. = 1.05), respectively. In contrast, the lowest mean score was no. 8 “I use my prior knowledge to facilitate the reading comprehension” ($\bar{X}=3.51$, S.D.=1.17),

Discussion

1. Difference between before and after learning by using KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension of grade 8 Cambodian students

The results revealed that the grade 8 Cambodian students who learned by KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension after learning had higher achievement than before learning at the 0.01 level of statistical significance. This is because the researcher implies that the group of students who were being taught by KWL plus strategy possessed a higher level of KWL plus strategy development

than the students who never learned at the beginning of the semester. Because the students’ demonstration of his/her knowledge about the topic to be learned then KWL plus strategy helped students to become strategies readers, when they use the components of this strategy during their reading. That is to say that KWL strategy contributes in improving the student’s comprehension level and in achieving meaningful learning through activating previous knowledge related to the reading text. That is even though KWL plus strategy instruction is effective; learning is slow and not efficient for all of the cases, especially for ESL and EFL learners. The finding of this research agrees with the findings of numerous studies related to the effects of KWL plus strategy in helping students to learn more comprehension strategies. Strangman and Hall (2009) mentioned that using KWL strategies could help learners be aware of, and control, their efforts to use particular skill and strategies. It gives the reader an opportunity to find real conceptual relations and not random ones with those concepts previously made while building up a cognitive structure. Students are continuously active arranging and organizing what they have learned, in order to make hypothesis and predictions in relation to the text and its objectives. For



this purpose, they use different intellectual processes such as: comprehension, interpretation, analysis, evidencing and eliciting in order to take appropriate decisions and accomplish their learning goals. In addition, Strangman and Hall (2009) mentioned that using KWL plus strategies could help learners be aware of, and control, their efforts to use particular skill and strategies. Also, a study by Cooper (1997) and Conner (2006) asserted that students who were trained to use KWL plus strategies were better than students at evaluation types of comprehension questions and giving adequate answers. Emphasizing the role of teachers in assisting students to utilize effective KWL plus strategy, Carr and Ogle (1987) urged teachers to teach students to use KWL plus as a tool for monitoring and improving classroom learning and educational performance.

2. Students' satisfaction toward KWL plus strategy to enhance reading comprehension of grade 8 Cambodian students

The finding revealed that grade 8 Cambodian students' satisfaction toward the learning of English reading comprehension using the KWL plus strategy as a whole was at "a more satisfactory" level. This could be said that learning English reading comprehension through KWL plus strategy is

helping students learn how to use more comprehension strategies such as making connections between their background knowledge and new knowledge. The students were agreed with all the statement of the questionnaires. It tends to inform that the KWL plus strategy showed a high positive effect in helping them to learn how to use more comprehension strategies such as making connections between their background knowledge and new knowledge. Most of the students receiving experimental treatment showed their interest and attention during instruction. For example, students in the KWL plus treatment showed their interest in the use of this strategy by their participation and their eagerness to answer the questions. Also, as Jared and Jared (1997) found, students showed satisfaction and delight with this strategy when they were able to use their prior knowledge or experiences. The most important part was the self-question, because students in this strategy ask themselves what they know, what they want to know, and what they learned, which enhanced their attitudes toward learning and developing a purpose for reading. According to Ogle (1986), the KWL plus strategy is a self-questioning process which helps students develop a personal commitment to guide them through reading process. Also, Dewey (1938) noted that self-



questioning influences the formulation of attitudes of desire and purpose, encourages students to self-question, and creates a desire to read critically and purposefully. In order to encourage the students to use English as much as possible, the teacher can explicitly require students to use English during a certain part of the activity (Grellet. 1996; Williams. 1996). While the students showed their interest in the KWL plus strategy, the researcher observed that most of these students did not like to use others techniques. Furthermore, the students mentioned that the teacher in the beginning should introduce the topic, the purpose of discussion, and the students participating in discussion. Encourage students listen other's point of view and then evaluate their own.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the KWL plus strategy motivates active learning and instructing on the parts of both learners and instructors. This study made contributions as follows: 1) it illustrates a detailed process for integrating the KWL plus scheme into Cambodian students; and 2) it shows that such integration involves efforts on the part of both learners and instructors. Moreover, it also has empowered the researcher to explore her personal teaching experiences

and to examine current curriculum reading materials and their application to the EFL English reading curriculum with a new awareness and purpose.

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