IMPLEMENTING KWL STRATEGY IN TEACHING READING
FOR NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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Abstract: Teaching English for non-English department students is challenging. English is taught for the sake of using it in order to be able to communicate within particular professional settings since it is treated as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Basically, ESP focuses more on teaching English in particular contexts rather than merely teaching its grammar and vocabulary. Reading is one of the most required skills by students of Management of Informatics at State Polytechnic of Malang, along with speaking. It is needed at work especially to interpret user manuals and tutorials about latest and updated software and hardware, as well as at present, specifically to get information and ideas from articles and books for their final projects. However, in facts, the students are reluctant to read an English text even though it is relevant with their subject and feel that they have lack of vocabularies. Accordingly, a strategy named KWL may be implemented. KWL (Know-Want-Learn) is a strategy usually applied in reading where students are geared to construct their knowledge, first, by activating their prior knowledge or what they Know, questioning what they Want to know, and concluding what they Learn about a certain topic. The present paper aims at describing how KWL strategy can be used to teach reading for the students of Management Informatics at State Polytechnic of Malang. The strategy may also be used to motivate them to read extensively and have positive perception toward reading activities respectively. Besides, it may lead to the improvement on their speaking and writing skills.

Keywords: KWL strategy, reading comprehension, non-English Department students, ESP

Introduction

Reading is, seen as a channel of language processing, a form of communication between writers and readers which is mediated through a written text (Sulistyo, 2011). In this process, a writer communicates and delivers his/her messages through a written text where a reader tries to grasp the intended meaning by reading the text. Therefore, eventually, the goal of reading emphasizes on the comprehension of written texts. In Sulistyo’s words (2011: 24) “the output of reading should be reflected in the success of negotiating meaning or recreation of meaningful messages intended by the writer on the part of the readers”.

Reading for such researchers as Carrell, Devine, and Eskey (1988) and Richards and Renandya (2002) as stated by Amirian (2013) is considered the most important skill of all four skills in a second language especially English as a second or foreign language. Furthermore, for such college students as those studying Management of Informatics at State Polytechnic of Malang, reading is essential skill to master to successfully completing all level of their course (Kim and Anderson, 2011). It is the skill that helps them to obtain information and ideas especially within academic contexts. They need to read a lot of references such as articles and books for their final projects. Moreover, reading skill is also needed at workplace such as to interpret user manuals and tutorials about latest and updated software and hardware, which are mostly written in English. As it is emphasized by Saskatchewan Learning (2004) the students are supposed to be competent readers; otherwise, “they are at risk for academic, behavioral, social and economical difficulties”.

The teaching of English in this institution is treated as English for Special Purposes (henceforth, ESP). The main concern of ESP according to Amirian (2013) is “needs analysis, text analysis, and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or work situation. During the teaching-learning process, instead of provided with some reading texts in the applied textbook, those students are encouraged to read a lot more texts relevant with their academic background. Yet, in fact, most of them tend to read a text just because they are instructed to do so. In other words, there is a tendency that the students have lack of self-autonomy in reading activities.

Moreover, it is found out that some students do not understand the content of the given texts even though the texts are within their own subject or content area. They feel that they do not understand the texts just because they are written in English. They also think that reading an English text is a matter of merely knowing the meaning of vocabularies and the grammatical structures used in the text. Jafari and Shokspour (2012) indicate that “the students only learn to read a language by studying its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, not by actually reading it”. Therefore, when assigned to do reading activities, the students tend to use such applications or translating machines (Sulistyo, 2011) as Google translate or Transtool to help them.
understand some of the lexical meanings found in the text. Yet, those applications are only successful in word-to-word translation.

Some researchers also show other problems often encountered by college students. Benson (1991) describes that the students have less ability to selectively read texts: to distinguish between what is significant and insignificant for the purpose of reading. What is surprising is that Kletzien and Bednar (1989) as cited by Syaifulloh (2013) states that students often read academic texts with no idea of why they are studying or reading them. In addition, Goodwin (1996) in Kim and Anderson (2011) argues that “the lack of a reading habit in capable readers” or “aliteracy” is cited as a growing problem among college students which leads to the discouragement, or the reluctance, of the students to read.

Based on the above description, it is necessary for the students of non-English department as those of Management of Informatics at State Polytechnic of Malang to understand reading strategies that help them overcome the problems in reading comprehension. Moreover, they need to be encouraged to read English texts within their content area, beyond literal translation, which hopefully may lead to their reading autonomy. They should also know that reading comprehension is much more than decoding. Furthermore, Jafari and Shokspour (2012) highlight that reading comprehension results when the students as readers know appropriate strategies and understand how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose.

The proposed strategy presented in this article is KWL (Know-Want-Learn). The strategy, first introduced by Ogle in 1986, is an instructional strategy designed to help students learn from non-fiction texts in any content area (Fengjuan, 2010). Accordingly, it may be specifically purposed for reading comprehension of ESP students since Ogle in Fengjuan (2010) claims that the strategy helps students become better readers of expository texts, which mostly are dealt with such students. Thus, the present paper aims at describing how KWL strategy can be used to teach reading for the students of Management Informatics at State Polytechnic of Malang. The strategy may also be used to motivate them to read extensively and have positive perception toward reading activities respectively. Besides, it may lead to the improvement on their speaking and writing skills as well.

**KWL Strategy**

KWL strategy comprises three basic concepts: Know, Want and Learn. The strategy was first developed by Ogle in 1986 on the basis of the idea that language learners gain knowledge by constructing meaning. As pointed out by Ogle, some researches (Anderson, 1984; Steffenson, Joag-Dev, and Anderson, 1979, Taboada and Guthrie, 2006) agree that good learners relate their prior knowledge to new information, reorganize it, and create their own meaning. Furthermore, she emphasizes that KWL strategy provides a framework for learning which can be applied across content area to help them construct meanings. In addition, the strategy is designed to be used by a teacher and group of students working together. It later may directed to a method for students’ independent study. In implementing the strategy, the teacher initially conducts an oral discussion of each of the components of KWL and let the process continue to students’ individual writing of their own ideas and questions on a personal worksheet.

The process of constructing meaning, using this strategy, starts with recalling what the students know, continued to jotting down what they want to know, and ended with listing what they have learned and is yet to be learned. By doing this strategy in teaching reading, Ogle (1986) argues that the teacher is likely to actively involve students, firstly by using their prior knowledge and relating it with the information that will be found in a text. In this stage, before reading, the teacher guide the students to brainstorm everything they know about the topic. Then, they specify what information they want to know, usually in forms of questions. It may be done either before or during reading and intended to stimulate the students’ interest and to help provide with the purpose for reading. Finally, during and after reading, the students give remarks about what they have learned and still need to learn to link between questions asked and information encountered. All of those ideas coming from the students should be recorded in the provided sheet (Table 1). By the end of the teaching and learning process using this strategy, the students not only improve their speaking but also their writing skill as well since the scheme of KWL also works efficiently in writing instruction (Fengjuan, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> - What I Know</td>
<td><strong>W</strong> - What I Want to Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. KWL Strategy Sheet
KWL Strategy in Reading Comprehension

From the references, it can be summed up that reading is a process of recognition, interpretation, and perception of written or printed material. Moreover, reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from the text. The process of comprehending deals with decoding the writer’s word and then using background knowledge to construct an approximate understanding of the writer’s message. Accordingly, it is in line with one of the reading theories described by Sulistyo (2011) that is top-down theory. Unlike the other theory, called bottom-up theory where a reader is likely to successful in understanding a text if s/he is able to “analyze the text on the language elements visually being used in the text”, the top-down theory emphasizes that reading comprehension initiated from the reader’s prior knowledge stored in her/his schemata which will be activated whenever s/he encounters similar incoming information during reading activities. Therefore, a reader is considered successful if s/he can activate her/his schemata to infer meanings in the text. Supporting those ideas, then, KWL strategy may be implemented.

KWL strategy (Ogle, 1986) is used mainly to develop student’s reading comprehension on information texts. Basically, the strategy as cited at www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/_to_/kwl[1].pdf encourages students to use prior knowledge of the topic of the text and set a purpose of reading while filling in the What I Know column ($K$ column), monitor their comprehension while filling the What I Want to Know column ($W$ column), and assess their comprehension of the text, and expand ideas beyond the text while filling in the What I Learned column ($L$ column) (see Table 1). Moreover, the table 2 below is the brief example of implementing KWL strategy in teaching reading comprehension especially to such ESP students as those of the first year of Management Informatics at State Polytechnic of Malang. In teaching about Website topic, the students are asked to do a webquest project and given some links to read and understand. After that, they have to complete a chart showing their comprehension about types of websites and their purposes.

Table 2. The Example of the Implementation of KWL Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s Activities</th>
<th>Student’s Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Explain about KWL Strategy.</td>
<td>- Listen and understand the teacher’s explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Introduce the students with the topic (Website) and the task, i.e. finding out types of websites and their purposes.</td>
<td>- Get and read the sheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide the students with the KWL Strategy Sheet (Table 1) and the worksheet.</td>
<td>- Activate their prior knowledge (from the previous different subjects such as the Introduction of the Internet and Website Basic) to brainstorm the ideas about the topic as well as to make prediction about the articles they are going to read. Then, fill in the K column on the sheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Guide the students to brainstorm the topic based on their schemata and ask them to fill in the K column.</td>
<td>- Go online, open the given inks, read the articles, and filling in the W column.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask the students to read some articles from the given links related to the topic and to fill in the W column as they read them.</td>
<td>- Continue their reading and fill in the L column after finishing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask the students to fill in the L column after they finish reading the articles.</td>
<td>- Complete the worksheet based on what they have learned from the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask the student fill in the worksheet to sum up their understanding about the topic.</td>
<td>- Read the summary and get the feedback from the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask the students to read their summary and evaluate it.</td>
<td>- Find out more information about the texts if there is still information need to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage the students to find out more information about the texts that they still do not understand or need to know.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the KWL strategy may help ESP teachers to improve the students’ reading ability, especially in activating the students’ background knowledge to comprehend non-fiction texts in any content area. Moreover, the strategy helps the students to know the purpose
of reading information text, so the students are encouraged to be critical readers. Besides, applying this strategy can also provide good impact to the improvement of other language skills namely speaking and writing.

Teaching reading by using the KWL strategy has several procedures. They are briefly listed as follow: (a) choose a text, (b) create KWL sheet strategy (c) ask students to brainstorm word, terms, or phrases, they associate with a topic and write in K column, (d) ask students what they want to learn about the topic and write in W column, (e) have students read the text and fill out the L column of their charts, (f) discuss the information that students recorded in L column, and (g) encourage students to research any question in the W column that are not answered by the text.

References


Biodata

Atiqah Nurul Asri has been a faculty member at Management Informatics and Informatics Engineering Study Program at State Polytechnic of Malang since 2005. She earned both her undergraduate (1999) and graduate (2010) degrees in English Language Teaching from State University of Malang. She has been actively presenting papers and participating at seminar and conference both national and international ones. Her fields of interest are mostly about integrating technology especially computer and the internet into her ESP classes.