

Evaluating KWL Charts Strategy in relation to Iranian EFL Learners' Comprehension of Culturally Unfamiliar Texts

Mona Roozkhon¹, Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri² & Mortaza Yamini³

¹ Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch, Bandar Abbas, Iran

² Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran

³ Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

Correspondence: Mona Roozkhon, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch, Bandar Abbas, Iran. E-mail: roozkhon.mona@gmail.com

Received: February 5, 2013

Accepted: April 4, 2013

Online Published: April 30, 2013

doi:10.5430/elr.v2n1p72

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/elr.v2n1p72>

Abstract

This study was designed to examine the effects of using KWL charts strategy on EFL learners' comprehension of culturally unfamiliar texts. For this purpose, forty two intermediate EFL learners were participated in the present study; all participants were female and native speakers of Persian in Bahar Language School in Shiraz. The participants were divided into two groups: Group 1 as the experimental group and Group 2 as the control group. Group 1 learned reading sections through using KWL charts and group 2 learned reading in a traditional way (e.g., through questioning and summarizing, etc.). The participants were given a pretest in order to check their reading comprehension before the treatments. After the pretest, group one learned reading sections in their instructional book (Summit 1 A) through employing KWL charts as a prereading strategy. Moreover, group two did not receive any treatment. Then, the posttest was given to the participants to see whether the application of KWL charts had any effect(s) on EFL learners' comprehension. The result of study showed that there was no significant improvement on EFL learners' performances on reading quizzes while using KWL charts and KWL charts did not have any positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension. The findings of this study can be useful for English teachers, researchers, and learners. The results of this study refer to the importance of reading strategies and their impacts on students' performances in reading classes. Reading strategies can be considered as a means of helping instruction, enhancing students' reading skill, and facilitating collaboration and interaction within class through making beneficial class discussion and sharing new information. Nowadays, reading skill is instructed through outdated tactics in Iran. So, the results of this study offer new and novel tactics for improving teaching method in educational settings such as schools and institutes.

Keywords: KWL charts, EFL learners, Comprehension, Culturally unfamiliar texts, Prior knowledge, Cultural schema

1. Introduction

Reading skill like other language skills is a process in which individuals activate their background knowledge in order to exchange information from one person to another. In other words, the readers consider reading materials and combine their background knowledge and skills in order to understand the meaning of written materials. Years ago, reading was considered as a passive skill, that is, the readers did not have any message production or active mental process likes speakers or writers (Chastain, 1988).

In the traditional view, reading is known as a receptive skill. Classification of language skills is due to the degree of the brain involvement. On the contrary, in recent years as regards the newest finding, reading is admitted as an interactive process. In other words, in a reading process text readers elevate the meaning of the text through interaction with the written page. Comprehension is the result of reading. Comprehension happens when readers read the words and understand what they have read, if readers do not have access to the meaning of the texts, it means in reality they are not reading (TCM staff, 2008). Reading is an influential process for increasing ones' knowledge of language and it promotes understanding of another culture and other ways of thinking. Thinking ways refer to "any individuals thinking in which the characteristic features of the thinking habits of the culture to which he belongs are revealed" (Nakamura, 1964, p. 5). Grabe and Stoler (2001) investigated reading for academic purposes and they also

provided some guidelines for the ESL/EFL teachers. Their investigation revealed that students read in order to accomplish various purposes. Some students try to obtain only the core concept of the texts so they skim the texts. Occasionally, students establish special information from the written materials by reading. However, reading sometimes takes place for learning the texts' content and learning materials. Eventually, some students want to integrate information from several texts or numeral books in order to evaluate the information in a critical manner. All in all, we read for the sake of understanding, it means we read to get the core concepts and detailed information. Definition of reading revealed that it is an ability to make connection between the texts information and students' knowledge and experience. ELLs should employ several strategies or techniques to become expert readers.

One of outcome of reading is comprehension. In fact, Comprehension happens when readers read the words and understand what they have read, if readers do not have access to the meaning of the texts, it means that they are not reading (TCM staff, 2008). According to Snow (2002, as cited in Park, 2005), one of the most important aspects of reading is getting the meaning of the text.

Familiarity with different cultures is another outcome of reading. Through reading different written materials that written by different people from different cultures, the readers can promote their understanding of another culture and other ways of thinking. Ability to find the meaning of unfamiliar words in a text which is culturally unfamiliar is not sufficient for comprehending. Also, ability to make interaction with the texts is of great importance. In other words, readers should contact with the text to provide a link between the text's contents to their previous experience and their lives. There is a communicative process between the writer and the reader and the result of this communication is comprehension. The present study sought to answer the following question:

1. Is there any significant improvement in Iranian EFL learners' performances on reading comprehension quizzes while using KWL charts strategy?
2. Does KWL charts strategy have any effects on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

In line with the aforementioned questions, the following null hypotheses have been formulated:

- H_{01} : There is no significant improvement in Iranian EFL learners' performances on reading comprehension quizzes while using KWL charts strategy.
- H_{02} : KWL charts strategy does not have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension.

The results of the present study also gave some insight and information on how instructors can aid learners to read successfully in order to learn more about the materials through applying their prior knowledge and knowledge of the world. Thus, it is better that instructors supply some reading strategies in order to promote students interest in learning. One of the goals of the present study was to employ KWL charts by Iranian EFL learners to produce group discussion and get the similar results for improving comprehension.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading Approaches

Over the years, numerous approaches in teaching reading have emerged. Weaver (1994, as cited in Murcia, 2001) stated that approaches in teaching reading categorized into three parts. The first approach is part-center or code emphasis or bottom-up approach and the second one is psycholinguistic or meaning-emphasis or top-down approach ,and the last one is interactive approach.

2.1.1 Bottom up Approach

This approach that introduced by Gough (1972) emphasized that reading construction moves from parts to whole. Al Hossani (2005) believed that bottom up process is a text-based decoding. In this process, text by itself is the great of importance, thus the reader first try to get each words meaning and then interpret the whole text.

As stated by Al Hossani (2005), knowing the meaning of each word is necessary and it can promote learning vocabulary but it is not sufficient for understanding. So, utilizing only bottom up approach cannot be beneficial for increasing students' comprehension.

2.1.2 Top down Approach

This approach that introduced by Goodman (1967) focused on whole text and employing readers and writers' schemata and personal experience. Al Hossani (2005) also defined top down model as reader driven. It means the main factor in reading is reader and when reader starts to read. The researcher refers to a top down model for more description. Dechant (1996) represented top down model in figure 1. The model shows that readers pay attention to

the surface structure in order to get the meaning of the texts. In addition recoding happens when the readers come to the meaning of the text.

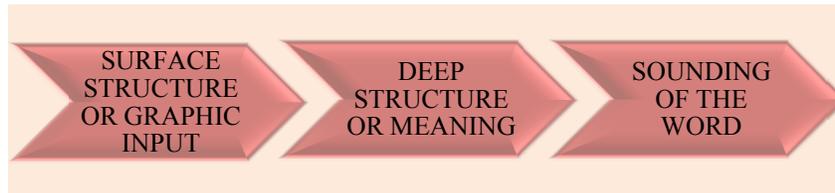


Figure 1. Top-down Approach

2.1.3 Interactive Approach

As Zakaluke (1996) stated “neither the bottom up nor the top down models of reading process totally account for what occurs during the reading process” (p. 6). Zakaluke (1996) also believed that in a reading process, “both syntactic and semantic knowledge bring “together simultaneously to facilitate word identification.” In other words, as mentioned by Al Hossani (2005), interactive model constructed from both interpretation or the meaning of the text and the meaning of each word or text structure as two essential factors in texts’ processing during reading .

Rumelhart (1977) introduced interactive model. This approach helps individuals be independent readers through monitoring their thinking and employing their background knowledge during reading. In addition, Rumelhart (1984, as cited in Donoghue, 2009) believed that interactive model is according to the schema theory.

Based on weaver (1994, as cited in Murcia 2001), interactive approach that is the combination of both part-to-whole (bottom up) and whole-to-part (top down) is better than other approaches. In this approach, individuals not only get the meaning of the text but also focus on linguistic and textual features. As a result, the researcher refers to the following figure. Dechant (1996) represented reading models in figure 2. Shows the differences among all three reading model.

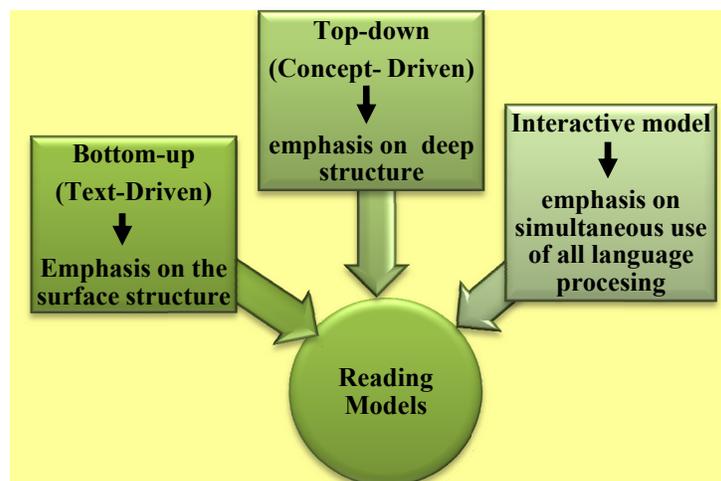


Figure 2. Reading Models

As a conclusion in this area, researcher refers to the Rosenblatt’s view. Rosenblatt (1978, as cited in Donoghue 2009) developed transactional model and asserted that readers employ their environmental, social, and cultural characteristics when they are trying to construct the meaning of the text. These features impact their personal interpretation of the written texts. Kirshrer and Whitson (1997, as cited in Donoghue 2009) believed that transactional model is based on the interactive model. This model points to the fact that students’ intention has a great impact on their comprehension during reading process.

2.2 Reading Components

According to Jacobson (2007), reading consists of four core components: alphabetic, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Nevertheless, the aim of reading is comprehension whether the individuals read for pleasure or for gaining information. In light with this explanation, he also believed that comprehension happens if the four components of reading have been located in reading process. That is, according to Kruidenier (2002, as cited in Jacobs, 2007) when the individuals engage in reading, they should be able to recognize each word (alphabetic) and

make connection between each word and its meaning based on the stored knowledge in their mind (vocabulary). Also, the individuals also should be able to process each phrase and sentence fast in order to recall the information during reading.

Generally speaking, different levels construct a reading process. First decoding, in which individuals concentrate on linguistic features, they can determine the letters and the sounds of each letter. In this level, the individuals would be able to combine letters and make words. So, vocabulary is one of the main components of reading. Then, students should be able to read the words quickly and make relation between the words in order to build meaningful sentences through making phrases and sentences. In this respects, fluent readers are distinguishable. Next, comprehension is the core component of reading. As exemplified by Pardo (2004), there were also other elements like background knowledge and schemata which are described as two readers' characteristics below.

2.3 Reader's Role in Comprehension

According to Pardo (2004), reader is one of the main factors in comprehension. So, reader's characteristics such as cultural schemata and background knowledge which have more influential effects on learners' comprehension were described below.

2.3.1 Cultural Schemata and Comprehension

Karaha (2011) stated that reading comprises from numerous factors that impact readers in order to get the texts meanings. The most important one is schema theory and particularly cultural schemata which are described below briefly. Karahan also believed that a schema is not a new term and it was first employed by Piaget in 1926. Omaggio (2001, as cited in Kreishan & Saidat, 2011, p. 334) defined schema as "the previously acquired knowledge structures accessed in the comprehension process." Bartlett (1932) also defined schema as "an abstract textual structure that the comprehender makes use of to understand a given text." (p. 14)

Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) examined the relationship between L2 reading comprehension & schema theory as a matter of text familiarity. The researcher found that when readers take part in a reading process, they make sense of the text based on the text clues by using their knowledge of the subject matter. In this way, readers combine what they know or their prior knowledge with the texts' information in order to obtain the writers aim of writing. In this regard, the investigators considered the importance of using background knowledge in gaining new knowledge from a text. The results showed that understanding a text or texts' apprehension requires both linguistic knowledge and general knowledge of the world. The results also revealed that content familiarity is so crucial in reading comprehension, therefore, knowing how to select reading materials is so beneficial, and instructors should know how to select reading materials.

Kreishan and Saidat (2011) examined the effect of the religious and cultural schemata on Jordanian students' comprehension of English texts. The researchers found that reading skill acts as a window through which readers can investigate the world around and understand its information that is confidential or unexplained phenomenon. 100 tenth-grade male and female students in Ma'an Directorate of education participated in this study. The results of the study revealed that differences in existent knowledge contents which are known for learners cause differences in individuals' reading comprehension. The results also showed that culturally familiar texts are more comprehensible than culturally unfamiliar texts. And so through using cultural background students can activate their schemata and enhance their comprehension, in this manner individuals can connect their content schemata to new knowledge in the text in order to make it easier to comprehend.

As mentioned above numerous research studies considered the importance of schemata and its role in comprehending. There are three types of schemata: formal, linguistic, and content schemata. A formal schema is a "type of schema which is in relation to the arrangement of texts' structure" Aebersold & Field (1997, as cited in Karahan, 2011). A cultural or linguistic schema is another type of schema. Based on Nishida (1999, as cited in Karahan, 2011) cultural schema is defined in this way: people throughout the world communicate with each other in numerous ways but most of the time they talk about the same topics. However, while they are talking about the similar subjects, some distinct features emerge that clarify "general features of a specific group" or, in other words through repeating some specific topics permanently, the differences between various cultural groups also emerge. Content schema is the "background knowledge of the content area of a text" (Carrell, 1983, p. 83). In this context Karahan (2011) also suggested that content schemata focused on two main portions background knowledge and texts' content. In this definition, texts' content refers to the writers' written materials and background knowledge refers to a general or specific knowledge about the written materials.

2.3.2 The Effect of Prior Knowledge on Comprehension

In an EFL educational setting individuals may have various cultural educational experiences. They may also possess various amounts of topic familiarity. In this way, we refer to the research studies which examine the importance of activation of prior knowledge on comprehension.

Hudson (1982, as cited in Mihara, 2011) noted that employing background knowledge while reading a text helps learners overcome their difficulty in language process. "You can understand the text only if you bring to it relevant experience of discourse and of context" (Fowler, 1996, p. 9, cited in Ghazanfari, 2009). Lots of previous research studies examined the importance of applying background knowledge in reading comprehension process.

2.4 Texts' Role and Comprehension

According to Pardo (2004), during comprehension process the texts structure also impacts transaction. Text's structure means "how well the texts is written, whether it follows the convention of its genre or structure, and the language or dialect it is written in are all factors of a text. The content of a specific text, the difficulty or readability of it, and even the type font and size are factors of a text that can influence a readers' interaction" (p. 275).

2.5 Transaction and Comprehension

Some researchers such as Bainbridge and Pantaleo (1999) used the terms interaction and transaction interchangeably as they said "Readers-response theories differ in emphasis they place on the text or the reader in regard to the creation of meaning, but all believe that readers actively construct meaning as they interact or transact with texts" (p.153). In another definition, Rosenblatt (1973, as cited in Fox, 1996) stated that the act of reading involves 1) the text itself, 2) the situation and environment in which the reading occurs, and 3) the reader herself-her experience, background knowledge, mental schemata, attitudes, and values. These three elements interact, or "transact" with each other in order for readers to construct meaning.

Some researchers such as Pardo (2004) used the term transaction instead of the term interaction. He believed that in comprehension process transaction happens between the reader, the text's feature and the context. In this regard, the researcher first tried to explain the differences between transaction and interaction and then defined transaction in comprehension process. Due to this purpose, the researcher referred to some previous investigation in this area. Cuffaro (1995) mentioned that interaction refers to the function of individual entities as the separate units but transaction refers to transformation not separation. In other words, it refers to both action between and action within. Based on this definition the primary focus is on occurring situation. As a transactional perspective revealed, an "element" is a beneficial and important unit and its specific character clarified from the role that it plays in the transaction. Based on this perspective, it is the transaction that is the goal. In other words a combination of elements that have an independent existence cannot create a transaction. On the contrary, something that is considered as an "element" is dependent on its role within a transaction (Bernstein, 1966, p.83 as cited in Cuffaro, 1995). Some other researchers used both words with each other for example, meaning through an integrative process in which they "interact" and "transact" with the words on the page" (p. 931).

2.6 Using Reading Strategies and Comprehension

Tercanlioglu (2004, as cited in Zare-ee, 2007) noted that in a reading process various strategies have been utilized by readers. Tercanlioglu (2004) also suggested that expert readers can choose alternatives while they are reading. By using reading strategies they overcome their deficiency in comprehension. In reading tasks, different learners employ different procedures but only some of these approaches will be beneficial in better comprehension. It showed that numerous paths lead learners to success but only seldom routes are helpful, so by identifying the tactics that qualified readers apply in reading process the instructors can teach poor readers to enhance their competence in working with strategies.

Allen 2003, Keer and Verhaeghe (2005, as cited in Kirmizi, 2009) have suggested that applying reading comprehension strategies aid learners have effective reading process. Based on their findings, good readers can use some reading comprehension strategies such as making connection between the text context and their previous experience, sum up the text clues, evaluating anticipating questions based on the passage to be read in order to promote their reading comprehension.

Şenay Şen (2009) surveyed the relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies and reading comprehension. The findings indicated that using special reading strategies help learners use their time proficiently. By using reading tactics the period of reading can be easier and continues for learners. Using strategic reading skills aid learners develop their brain power. The results of the research studies on metacognition and reading comprehension showed

that there is a relation between the two variables (metacognitive awareness & reading comprehension). Proficient readers are those who use reading tactics in order to have critical reading. Findings also revealed that learners should inform about critical reading skills. In this way students should learn pre, during and after reading strategies. Learners should be conscious about prereading activities. These tactics aid learners prepare themselves for reading. By using during reading strategies learners can monitor their reading and post reading tactics help learners have an evaluation plan after reading. By using reading strategies students can understand what will happen at the end of the text and find the main idea. The results of this study showed that using metacognitive strategies such as find the main idea and guess the end of the text help students obtain high scores in the reading comprehension process in comparison to the students who instruct with traditional teaching.

2.7 Prereading Strategies

Grabe and Stoler (as cited in Murcia, 2001) defined prereading instruction. They mentioned that prereading instruction constructed from 5 significant goals. First, help individuals achieve some background knowledge about the topic it assists them read the text easily. Second, give students particular knowledge about the topic it helps them to get the texts meaning. Third, increase students' desire to learn. Forth, help students build assumption about the topic. Fifth, introduce some reading tactics that readers can utilized independently.

2.8 Prereading Strategies and Comprehension

Bransford (1979, as cited in Dole et al., 1996) stated that "the presentation of information that helps people activate appropriate knowledge can have powerful effects on their abilities to comprehend, to remember, and to solve problems" (p.141).

According to Hansel (as cited in Taglieber et al., 1988, p. 456), "not only do prereading activities prepare native speakers for the concepts that follow, but by making the reading task easier and connecting the new content more meaningfully to prior knowledge, prereading activities make reading a more enjoyable task". Thongyon and Chiramane (2011) investigated on this title the effects of prereading activities on reading comprehension ability. 60 participants took part in this study. The researchers investigated both guessing story content by pictures and prereading questioning activities. The results showed that employing both prereading activities showed positive effect on students' comprehension but guessing story content by pictures was more effective than prereading questioning activities.

2.9 KWL Charts and Comprehension

Carrel and Ogle (1987, as cited in Mandeville, 1994) believed that KWL charts as its names implies consists of three columns. The first column is known. In this column students should brainstorm what they know about the topic. The second column is known as wonder in this column student's bringing about some questions that they want to answer. Third column is learned. In this column, students respond their questions and add other new information. The researcher believed that adding another column which known as affect column to KWL help learners answer their affective questions by this way through answering some questions the individuals indicate the worth and utility of the information. At last students can manifest their feeling about their understanding. By using KWL chart as a prereading tactic students can establish a plan for reading. They detect what they want to know about a topic and diagnose what they have learned while reading (Dowhower, 1999; Walker, 2000, as cited in Di Tommaso, 2005). As mentioned above, in KWL charts process learners tried to write some questions in the second column to answer after they learned the texts' materials. By considering the importance of using questions before reading different texts the researcher refers to Ajideh suggestion, thus, Ajideh (2006) believed that traditionally some prereading strategies involved questions which the individuals should find answers after reading the text, but in present-day the questions precede the text, in these activities students should find answers previously. In this method, readers read each question before reading the text this method aid learner to predict the rest of the passage.

Previous researchers stated that through using KWL charts, non-native students whose knowledge of vocabulary and syntax were less than natives', could think about the topic and collected more information about that. In other words, they could use their background knowledge or previous experience in order to make a good participation in class (Flippo & Carverly, 2009). So, EFL learners as non- natives could also use the mentioned prereading strategy (KWL charts) when they encountered a text which needed activating prior knowledge. Thus, another goal of this study is that the researcher tries to find the influence of this strategy on EFL learners' activation of prior knowledge like other prereading strategies. Based on the researcher's best knowledge during KWL charts process, the individuals try to converse in order to promote their understanding of the texts and get the texts meaning through sharing their

knowledge with each other. Thus, another goal of the present study is to employ KWL charts by Iranian EFL learners to produce group discussion and get the similar results for improving comprehension.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were composed of a group of 42 EFL learners who had taken a proficiency test (PET). In other words, the individuals were selected based on their obtained scores on Preliminary English Test (PET). That is, those who were in intermediate level were selected by the researcher and they were randomly assigned into two groups: one experimental group and one control group. In order to prevent gender effect all participants were female. Aged 17 to 45, the subjects were selected from Bahar Language School in Shiraz, Fars, Iran. They were all native speakers of Persian.

3.2 Materials

In the present study, several types of instruments were used for the purpose of data collection. The instruments are described below.

3.2.1 Preliminary English Test (PET)

In the present study, the researcher used an international standard test as a pretest in order to evaluate individuals' level of proficiency and ascertain that all individuals who participated in this study were in intermediate level.

The pretest was selected from Insight into PET. Insight into PET is for students who are going to take the Cambridge PET exam. The pretest has been chosen from practice test part. The practice test in Insight into PET contains several tests based on various skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking but based on the purpose of this study the researcher employed only the reading part as a pretest.

3.2.2 KWL Charts Worksheet

One of the trained experts in Bahar Language School in Shiraz, Fars, Iran employed KWL charts worksheet for teaching KWL lesson. During this study reading sections in learners' instructional book were taught through KWL lesson to group A. KWL charts were composed of three columns, the first column was about what I know. In this part the individuals record what they know about the topic. The second column was about what I wonder to know. In this section the individuals wrote what they wanted to know about the topic and finally the third column was what I have learned. The individuals completed this part after reading the passage. Below a sample of KWL charts worksheet that introduced by Ogle (1996) is shown.

Table 1. KWL Charts Worksheet

<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>
<i>What we know</i>	<i>What we want to find out</i>	<i>What we learned and still need to learn</i>

3.2.3 Reading Quizzes

The researcher used 3 quizzes based on the three reading passages in Summit 1A. Each Quiz contained 6 questions. The questions were based on the passages concepts. All questions were free response items or open-ended items.

3.2.4 Learners' Instructional Book: Summit 1A

In this study, the researcher used Summit 1A which was learners' instructional book as a research material. The focus of this study was on reading sections in that book. Summit 1A has been written by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher (2006). This book contains 5 units and each unit has 1 reading section. Summit is a two-level high-intermediate to advanced communicative series for adults that can follow any intermediate course book.

3.2.5 Reading Passages

Three reading comprehension passages in their original form were selected by the researcher and were administered to the participants who were chosen based on their obtained scores on their proficiency test (PET), and as mentioned before to those who were located in three equal groups during this investigation. Passages all being of a culturally unfamiliar kind were taken from Summit 1A. The book was written by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher (2006). Readability of the texts was estimated using the Flesch reading ease formula.

3.2.5.1 Flesch-Kincaid Method

In this study, the researcher used reading plus software in order to determine the grade level of the selected passages in learners' instructional book (Summit 1 A). Reading plus software contains Flesch reading formula. The Flesch/Flesch–Kincaid readability tests are designed to indicate comprehension difficulty. It includes two parts Flesch Reading Ease, and Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level. In this formula, the score between 60 and 70 is acceptable. The following table based on Tan and Tower (1992) and Richardson and Sawyer (1998) shows ease of readability in a document.

Table 2. Ease of readability in a document

90-100 : very easy	50-60 : fairly difficult
80-90 : easy	30-50 : difficult
70-80 : fairly easy	Below 30 : very difficult
60-70 : standard	

The two tests used the same core measures (word length and sentence length) but they have different weighting factors. So, the results of the two tests correlate approximately inversely: a text with a comparatively high score on the Reading Ease test should have a lower score on the Grade Level test. Both systems were devised by Rudolf Flesch.

3.3 Procedure

The researcher used quasi experimental approach as the research method. In this way, one control group and one experimental group of participants were required, group A as an experimental group and group B as one control group. The participants were selected from Bahar Language School in Shiraz, Fars, Iran. In this study, the researcher assessed learners' level of proficiency to check that all two groups of learners were homogenous. So, 42 EFL learners took a proficiency test and individuals who were in intermediate level were selected by the researcher.

The pretest was selected from Insight into PET. It was selected from practice test part. The practice test in Insight into PET contains several tests based on various skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking but based on the purpose of this study the researcher used only the reading part as a pretest.

The test is composed of five parts. The first part is composed of five questions; each question was a brief text and three choices. The individuals read each text and selected the best answer among different options. The second part is composed of five questions again. The questions in this part are about some people who want to choose the TV program and on the opposite page there was a description of eight programs. The individuals read each question and marked the correct letter. In part three the individuals read a text about holidays in Patagonia and then they read some sentences based on the text and finally they circled A if the sentence was correct and if the sentence was incorrect they chose B. In the fourth part the individuals read a text and then they answered the questions based on the text, in other words, they selected the correct choice among different options. Part five was a cloze test. In this part the individuals read a text and selected the correct word for each space. The individuals answered 35 questions in 45 minutes. As mentioned above for doing this investigation the researcher needed two groups of participants. So, selected individuals were divided into two groups. In this study the researcher trained the experimental group's instructor.

Control group's instructor taught in her own way. So, the teacher taught each reading section without using strategy, in other words, passages were taught in traditional way to group B. Therefore, the control group's instructor applied the following procedures in her teaching schedules: first, she wrote the topic on the board. Second, she began a brief discussion about the topic. Third, she asked learners to answer some questions about the topic orally. Fourth, the researcher asked learners to read the text independently. Fifth, the researcher asked learners to listen carefully to the tape in order to understand the text and word pronunciation. Sixth, she wrote difficult words on the board and gave synonym for each word. Finally, she asked learners to answer reading comprehension questions and do some tasks such as summarizing texts or generating some questions. On the other hand the experimental group's instructor instructed their own learners in a special ways. In this regard, the special way was teaching reading sections by using KWL charts process. Thus, the experimental group's instructor used tactics for teaching reading sections in learners' instructional book. Reading sections in learners' instructional book were taught by KWL charts process to group A. So, the experimental group's instructor used the following steps for teaching KWL lesson to group A. First, before reading the teacher gave a KWL charts worksheet to each learner. As mentioned above, KWL charts are composed of three columns. During this study for teaching KWL lesson process the individuals wrote the text's topic on the top

of each page. Second, the instructor began the reading through warm up about the text's topic and before reading the individuals recorded whatever they knew about the topic in the first column. If the topic contains one unfamiliar word the instructor gave a synonym or a definition in order to make it clear. Third, in the second column the individuals wrote whatever they wanted to learn about the topic. They wrote their questions about the topic in this column. Fourth, the individuals read the text independently. If they didn't understand the meaning of one word they asked and their instructor defined the word. Fifth, the last column was completed after reading the text by the individuals. In the last column the individuals recorded what they learned about the topic. After that the teacher collected KWL charts worksheets and the individuals took an exam based on the passage. KWL charts strategy was administered for a period of three sections. In each section the participants received one test followed by one reading comprehension. Each test consisted of six open ended type of questions.

4. Results

4.1 Results Regarding Learners' Performances in Reading Comprehension Quizzes

The first research question tried to investigate if there is any significant improvement in Iranian EFL learners' performances on reading comprehension quizzes while using KWL charts.

In order to answer the first research question, A One-Way Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was carried out in order to evaluate the progressive impact of the treatment i.e., KWL charts on the participants' performance on the three reading comprehension quizzes. The minimum alpha for confirmation of the research hypotheses was .05. At first, the descriptive data (means, standard deviation, and number of participants) are displayed in Table 3. Likewise, the results of One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA are reported in Table 4.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the 3 quizzes in KWL charts group

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Quiz 1	3.3333	.91088	24
Quiz 2	3.3125	.78799	24
Quiz 3	3.4688	.86701	24

Table 4. Multivariate Tests for the 3 quizzes in K-W-L charts group

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	
Quizzes	Pillai's Trace	.022	.243a	2.000	22.000	.786	.022
	Wilks' Lambda	.978	.243a	2.000	22.000	.786	.022
	Hotelling's Trace	.022	.243a	2.000	22.000	.786	.022
	Roy's Largest Root	.022	.243a	2.000	22.000	.786	.022

a. Exact statistic

Within Subjects Design: Quizzes

The mean scores and standard deviations of the three quizzes in the KWL charts groups are presented in Table 3. The difference between the three sets of scores is not noticeable. The mean score of the third quiz ($m = 3.44$) is the highest and the mean score of the first quiz ($m = 3.33$) is a bit larger than that of the second one ($m = 3.31$).

The results of one-way ANOVA, illustrated in Table 4, show that there is no statistically significant difference (Wilks' Lambda = .97, $F(2, 22) = .243$, $p > .05$) between the three sets of scores while students were using KWL charts. In addition, as shown in Table 3, mean scores of the three quizzes are roughly the same in the KWL charts group. Therefore, based on the results illustrated in above, the first null hypothesis predicting that there is no significant improvement in Iranian EFL learners' performances on reading comprehension quizzes while using KWL charts, is confirmed.

4.2 Results Regarding Pretest & Posttest Given to Learners

The second research question addressed the effect of using KWL charts on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension.

In order to examine the difference between the participants' scores on pretest and posttests, ANCOVA and pretests' covariate were used. Table 5 shows the descriptive data of the pretests and posttests in the experimental group and table 6 shows the descriptive data of the pretest and posttest in the control group. The mean scores and standard deviations of pretests and posttests with respect to KWL charts and Control groups are presented in Table 5 and 6. As the tables show, the mean scores for the posttest is greater than the mean scores of pretest in the KWL charts group; while, the mean scores of pretests and posttests are the same ($m = 17.66$) for the control group (see table 6). These results demonstrate that the decrease of scores from pretests to posttests, is not statistically significant.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistic for Pretest and Posttest in KWL Charts

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre	24	6.00	27.00	17.3750	5.50741
post	24	10.00	27.00	18.8333	3.71444
Valid N (listwise)	24				
a. group = KWL					

Table 6. Descriptive Statistic for Pretest and Posttest in Control Group

Descriptive Statistics ^a					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre	18	13.00	24.00	17.6667	2.30089
post	18	8.00	26.00	17.6667	6.53497
Valid N (listwise)	18				
a. group = Control					

Table 7. ANCOVA for Groups' Effect on Posttest

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: post						
Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	Hypothesis	7801.773	1	7801.773	288.318	.000
	Error	905.030	33.446	27.060 ^a		
group	Hypothesis	20.641	1	20.641	.872	.360
	Error	568.175	24	23.674 ^b		
pre	Hypothesis	475.158	16	29.697	1.254	.300
	Error	568.175	24	23.674 ^b		
a. .562 MS(pre) + .438 MS(Error)						
b. MS(Error)						

Table 7 shows that the groups' effect significant level is ($p=0.360$) and it is more than ($\alpha=0.05$), it means that there is not significant differences between posttests' scores in KWL and control groups. So, the second null hypothesis (H_{02}) is confirmed. Furthermore, t -test was run in order to examine the equality of the mean scores of the pretest, the scores obtained from the pretest of both groups were statistically analyzed, using an independent t test. As shown in table 8, the results from the pretest scores show that there is no difference between the means of the performance of both experimental and control groups ($t = -.234$, $df= 32.565$, $\alpha= 0.05$ $p= .817$). Because p value is more than α , there

is no difference between the means of the pretest scores of the two groups. So there was no difference between the performances of the individuals on the means of the pretest scores, and the individuals were considered homogeneous prior to the launching of the study.

Table 8. Independent Sample t Test for Pretest in KWL and Control Groups

Group Statistics						
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Error
pre	KWL	24	17.3750	5.50741	1.12419	
	Control	18	17.6667	2.30089	.54233	

Table 9. Independent Sample t Test for Pretest in KWL and Control Groups

	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Equal variances not assumed		-.23	32.56	.817	-.29167	1.24817	-2.8323	2.2490
		4	5				8	5

The result of study showed that there was no significant improvement on EFL learners' performances on reading quizzes while using KWL charts and KWL charts did not have any positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension.

5. Discussion

According to Rivers (1981), reading is an important and pleasurable activity. It acts as a source of information and plays a considerable role in developing one's knowledge of language. Some ELLs have many difficulties in reading classes. Dole, Brown & Trathen (1996) suggested that for removing comprehension difficulties ELLs could employ some reading strategies.

5.1 Research Question 1: Is there any significant improvement in Iranian EFL learners' performances on reading comprehension quizzes while using KWL charts?

As for question # 1, the data revealed that there was no significant improvement in Iranian EFL learners' performances on reading comprehension quizzes while using KWL Charts. The possible reason for this may be was teacher's unfamiliarity with new strategy. The result of this study is not in accordance with Ajideh (2006) who believed that pre reading activities assist individuals to be active participants in comprehending. It also is in contrast with O'Brien (2007) who stated that KWL charts had significant effect on improving ELLs' comprehension.

5.2 Research Question 2: Does KWL charts have any effects on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

Back to question #2, the results of quantitative and statistical analysis of learners' pretest and posttest exam revealed that KWL charts did not have any impact on EFL learners' comprehension. The possible reason for this may be, in accordance with the previous research studies, was due to the fact that lots of the other factors like vocabulary knowledge as stated by Pulido (2004), Sedita (2005), Tannenbaum and Torgesen (2006), Chou (2011), Chen (2011), has more strong effect on comprehension. They reported that knowledge of vocabulary helps learners decode the words and understand the texts easily. The other reason perhaps was the influence of using more than one strategy in comprehension. As Macceca (2007) found based on Multiple Strategy Instruction in a reading process as a cognitive task reader require employing multiple skills simultaneously. Jetton and Dole (2004) also referred to Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI) as one kind of instructional model that is similar to Collaborative Strategy instruction. This model encouraged teachers to instruct their learners to know when, where, why, and how to use different strategies. In other words, teachers can teach their learners to use multiple strategies, more than one strategy, but not too many strategies. A major limitation would go to the time devoted to this experimental study. In other words, pressed schedule in Bahar Language Center limited the instructors to give enough time for performing KWL charts strategy. In other words, they were limited to include more discussion in reading classes. As illustrated previously discussion was one major part in doing KWL charts process. Because during discussion readers can share their knowledge with each other and it assists them activate their background knowledge more and more. Another striking limitation was

unfamiliarity with KWL charts process. Both teachers and learners did not have any knowledge about the mentioned prereading strategy. Although the researcher trained the instructors and explained the strategy for learners but it was better if they were experienced in using the strategy. The results of this study referred to the importance of reading strategies and their impacts on students' performances in reading classes. Reading strategies could be considered as a means of giving an opportunity to EFL learners to promote their ability in class participation through applying KWL charts process. It was an important implication for this study. Another implication was students learn to plan before starting to read. Therefore, it was one way to instruct students shoulder some responsibility and become more active throughout learning process. Nowadays, in Iran reading skill is instructed through outdated tactics. So, the results of this study offered new and novel tactics for improving teaching method in educational settings such as schools and institutes. KWL charts as a prereading strategy arose learners' curiosity and provided authentic environment in class. Moreover, the mentioned prereading strategy helped students cooperate with each other during class discussion and this kind of cooperation could be useful for all aspects of their lives. KWL charts strategy prevented students to be just passive receivers of knowledge.

References

- Ajideh, p. (2006). Schema-theory based consideration on pre-reading activities on ESP text books. *The Asian EFL Journal, Teaching Articles*, 16, 1-19.
- Al Hossani, H.H. (2005). The development of young learners' reading comprehension skill. [Online]: Available: <http://www.marifa.hct.ac.ae/>
- Armbruster, B.B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2003). *Put reading first: the research building block for teaching children to read*. US: National Institute for Literacy.
- Bainbridge, J., Pantaleo, S. (1999). *Learning with literature in the Canadian Elementary Classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Alberta University Press, Duval House.
- Bartlett, F.C. (1932). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.p. 197, 201, 249)
- Carrasquillo, A., Rodriguez, V. (2002). *Language minority students in the mainstream classroom, 2nd ed. Multilingual matters*. U.S.A: Library on Congress Cataloging in Publication Data.
- Carrel, P.L. (1988). *Interactive text processing: Implications for ESL/second language reading classroom*. In p.l. carrel, J. Devine, & D.E. Eskey (eds.), *interactive approach to second language reading* (pp. 239-259). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524513>
- Chan, C. (2003). Cultural Content and Reading Proficiency: A Comparison of Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Learners of English, *Journal of Language Culture and Curriculum*, 16 (1), 60-69. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07908310308666657>
- Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing Second Language Skills*. U.S.A: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Ins.
- Chen, C. (2008). The effect of background knowledge and previews on elementary native Mandarin-Speaking English language learners' reading comprehension. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Florida.
- Chen, K. (2011). The impact of EFL students' vocabulary breadth of knowledge on literal reading comprehension. *Asian EFL Journal*, 51, 30-40.
- Chou, P. (2011). The effects of vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on reading comprehension of Taiwanese EFL students. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 8 (1), 108-115.
- Cuffaro, H.K. (1995). *Experimenting with the world: John Dewey and Early childhood classroom*. U.S.A: Teacher College Press.
- Dechant, E. (1991). *Understanding and teaching reading: An Interactive Model*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Laurence Erlbaum Association.
- Di Tommaso, K. (2005). Strategies to Facilitate Reading Comprehension in College Transition Students. [Online]: Available: <http://www.collegetransition.org/promicingpractices.research.readingstrategies>.
- Dole, J. A., Brown, K. J., Trathen, W. (1996). The effects of strategy Instruction on the comprehension performance of At-Risk students. *Journal of Reading Research Quarterly*, 31 (1), 62-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.31.1.4>
- Donoghue, M.R. (2009). *Language Arts: Integrating Skills for Classroom Teaching*. Sage Publication
- Fox, R.F. (1996). *Harvesting mind: How TV commercials control kids*. U.S.A: Greenwood Publication Group.

- Ghazanfari, M. (2009). The role of visualization in EFL learners' reading comprehension and recall of short stories. *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 1(1), 1-23.
- Gilakjani, A., Ahmadi, M. (2011). The Relationship between L2 Reading Comprehension and Schema Theory: A Matter of Text familiarity. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 1(2), 142-149.
- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: a psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 2(2), 126-135. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19388076709556976>
- Gough, P.B. (1972). One second of reading. In J.F. Kavanagh & I. G. Mattingly (Eds.), *language by ear and by eye* (pp. 331-365). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Grabe, W., Stoler, F. L. (2001). Reading for academic purpose: guideline for ESL/EFL teachers. In M. Celce – Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (3rd ed.) (pp. 187-203). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Jacobs, V.A. (2010). Pre-, Guided-, and Post- learning purposes & Strategies'. [Online]: Available: <http://www.isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic>.
- Jacobson, E. (2007). reading comprehension research and teaching strategies. *Research Digest: evidence-based Reading Instruction*. No 8. [Online]: Available: <http://www.calpro-online.org/documents/adults>.
- Jetton, T.L., Dole, J.A. (2004). *Adolescent literacy research and practice*. The Guilford Press.
- Karahan, N. (2011). The effects of cultural schema on reading comprehension and supportive applications. *Articles from Çomu Elt-2011*. [Online]: Available: <http://www.comuelt.org/formal-article/article-formal>.
- Kirmizi, F.S. (2009). The relationship between writing achievement and the use of reading comprehension strategies in the 4th and 5th grades of primary schools. *Procedia social and behavioral sciences*, 1, 230-234. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.042>
- Kreisha, R.A. & Saidat, A.M. (2011). The effect of the religious and culture schemata on Jordanian students' comprehension of English texts. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 3(4), 339-347.
- Mandeville, T.F. (1994). Linking the affective cognitive domain. *Teaching Reading*, 47(8), 679-680.
- Mihara, K. (2011). Effects of pre reading strategies on EFL/ESL reading comprehension. *TESL CANADA*, 28(2), 51-73.
- Morton, R.J. (2011). *Phonological awareness and reading ability in children*. unpublished Master Thesis. Southern Illinois: University of Carbondale.
- Nakamura, H. (1964). *Ways of thinking of Eastern peoples. India China Tibet Japan*. East-West Center Press.
- Naylor, H., Hagger, S. (2004). *Insight into PET*. Cambridge University Press.
- O'Brien, k. (2007). *The effect of pre reading strategies on the comprehension of culturally unfamiliar texts for adolescent English language learners*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hamline.
- Ogle, D. (1996). A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 564-570. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1598/RT.39.6.11>
- Pardo, L.S. (2004) what every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *Journal of international reading association*. 58 (3). 272-280.
- Park, D. (2005). *Effect of content area reading strategy on achievement in secondary Agriscience*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Florida.
- Pulido, D. (2004). The relationship between text comprehension and school language incidental vocabulary acquisition: a matter of topic familiarity. *Language Learning*, 53 (3), 469-523. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.0023-8333.2004.00263.x>
- Richardson, M., Sawyer, A. (1998). Complexity in the expersion of New Zealand's taxation laws: an empirical analysis'. *Australian Tax Forum*, 14, 147-182.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1997). Toward an interactive model for reading. In W. Otto (Eds.), *Reading Problems*. Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Saslow, J., Ascher, A. (2006). *Summit I A*. Pearson Education.
- Sedita, J. (2005). Effective vocabulary instruction. *Journal of Insight on Learning Disabilities*. 42 (1), 45-67.

- Snow, C. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R & D Program in Reading Comprehension*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation.
- Stanovich, K.E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360-406. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.21.4.1>
- Taglieber, L., Johnson, L., & Yarbrough, D. (1988). Effects of pre reading activities on EFL reading by Brazilian college students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 455-472. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3587289>
- Tan, L. & Tower, G. (1992). The readability of taxation laws: an empirical study in New Zealand. *Australian Tax Forum*, 9, 355-372.
- Tannenbaum, K. R., Torgesen, J. K., & Wagner, R. K. (2006). Relationship between word knowledge and reading comprehension in third-grade children. *Scientific Study of Reading*, 10 (4), 381-398. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr1004_3
- TCM staff. (2008). *Successful strategies for reading in the content area, Grade pre.k-k*. (2 nd. Ed., 17-22), Burton, M.A.: Shell education.
- Temur, T., Karagan, T., Bayer, S.A., Bayar, V. (2010). Metacognitive awareness of grades 6, 7 and 8 students in reading process. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Science*, 2, 4193-4199. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.663>
- Thongyon, N., & Chiramanee, T. (2011). *The effects of pre-reading activities on reading comprehension ability*. The 3rd International Conference of Humanities and Social Science.
- Wittrock, M.C. (1983). Writing and the teaching of reading. *Journal of Language Arts*, 60 (5), 600-606.
- Zakaluke, B. (1996). The reading process. In A theoretical overview of the reading process: factors which influence performance & implications for instruction. [Online] Available: <http://www.unamitobia.ca/faculties/education/edlab/81529/teopate.html>.
- Zare-ee, A. (2007). The relationship between cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and EFL reading achievement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2 (5), 105-119.