The Improvement of Reading Comprehension of Secondary School Students Using Web-based Instruction and KWL-Plus

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Abstracts

The growing of technology had contributed to language learning; especially the use of Web-based instruction (WBI) had been increased in the language classroom. WBI has recognized its' effects on the students' language skills such as listening, speaking, writing, and reading. However, technology could not replace teachers in class, for the fact that it was a lack of human interaction and inspiration for the students. The current study attempted to investigate the integration technology and teacher instruction by adopting WBI and KWL-Plus to improve secondary school students reading comprehension at a literal level as well as the students' attitudes towards WBI and KWL-Plus. The participants were seventh-grade students consisted of twenty students in the secondary school in the Northeast of Thailand. The implementation of the current study lasted eighteen hours. The web-based lesson was designed based on KWL-Plus procedures and scaffolding instruction through web-based instruction. According to data collection, the researcher adopted reading comprehension pretest and posttest, questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference between the overall mean scores of students reading comprehension pre-test and posttest at the 0.01 level and students expressed a positive attitude towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus at a very high level. In addition, the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interview indicated that the majority of the students enjoyed performing reading with the integration of Web-based Instruction and KWL-Plus.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension; Web-based Instruction; KWL-Plus

Introduction

Reading is considered an essential skill for English language learning and teaching. It can be viewed as an interactive process between the readers and a text that contributes to fluency in reading. To interact with the reading texts, the readers attempt to comprehend the meaning and elicit various kinds of knowledge. Grabe, W., & Stroller, F. (2002 : 155-157) state that if a person is not trained to read, in one way or another, that person is not able to read. Not only can the readers who can read well in English gain more knowledge, but also they are equipped with the foundation literacy for studying in higher education. Although reading comprehension is considered to be the main outcome of the reading, the majority of students still encounter some difficulties in their reading class. In a typical reading classroom, most of the students translate word by word and get stuck with unknown words which may be essential to the general understanding of the texts. This problem thus prevents the students from grasping the essence of the text (Torki, A. S., Kasmani, B. M., & Valipour, V., 2014 : 37-43). Moreover, Saiyod, P. (2009 : 18) advocates that students tend to pay much attention

to grammar and vocabulary rather than the meaning of the text while the teacher-based teaching environment was assumed to be impractical in teaching reading. This causes the students to lose interest in their reading. Abdulkarim, H. A.-N (2003 : 5) adds that this is because the teaching and learning reading mostly focused on the textbook, and all readings were done in the form of intensive reading, which eventually demotivated students to learn to read.

In my supplementary English reading class, the seventh-grade students also face difficulties with their English reading comprehension. They are unable to identify the fundamental information. Moreover, they do not have the ability to answer what directly asked from the reading passages. To be specific, literal comprehension, which is the ability to comprehend the primary meaning of the texts, is one of the problems in my classroom context. Moreover, a teacher-centered environment and no variety of teaching styles bring about passive and demotivated students (Saiyod, P., 2009 : 23), and this problem is the starting point of this study.

Several studies attempted to investigate the teaching instructions, which raise students' motivation and assist the students with the appropriate approach to improve their reading comprehension (Dehghanpour, E., & Hashemian, M., 2015 : 30-41; Gómez, F. A. A., López, D. C., & Marin, L. F. G., 2011 : 11-28). Web-based instruction approach (WBI) is chosen as the main technology in these studies. Previous studies investigated the implementation of WBI in students of advanced level and found that it could somewhat help promote the students' motivation and enhance their reading skills. However, because of the implementation of only WBI, the instruction did not work as anticipated. argue that though technology offers students rich and authentic resources, it cannot teach students to question and scrutinize the information and inspire them to learn. Therefore, online language teaching and learning lacks the teacher-student interaction, which is generally presented in a face-to-face classroom. WBI should be utilized as a tool because it cannot replace a teacher in class. However, research to date has not yet determined the impact of the integration of Web-based instruction and teacher instruction in improving students' reading comprehension especially in an EFL context like Thailand.

Several researchers have attempted to find an effective way to improve students' literal comprehension using several techniques including KWL, KWL-Plus, SQ3R, strategy-based instruction, metacognitive strategies-based instruction (Mohammad, H. H., 2014 : 2278-2288; Ogle, D., & Carr, E., 1987 : 626-631). One of the interesting techniques is KWL-Plus because the technique has been proved to help elicit the students' prior knowledge, monitor and reflect their understanding. KWL-Plus was initially developed by Ogle, D., & Carr, E. (1987: 626-631). They proposed that the KWL-Plus technique help encourage the students to become better readers and increase the interaction in reading class. Moreover, they also list the advantages of KWL-Plus and suggest that the techniques help encourage the students to gain a better understanding of the topic and encourage teachers to be more interactive in their reading class. The teachers could check the students' understanding, and questioning would be used while and after reading. KWL-Plus is presented with three letters. The letter "K" stands for "What I KNOW," "W" for "What I WANT to know", and the last letter "L" for "What I LEARNED". The last stage is Plus which stands for the summary of the texts in their language, including writing and mapping (Mohammad, H. H., 2014 : 2278-2288).

This research adopts two cycles of action research to carry out the study. The integration of KWL-Plus and WBI are specifically designed (1) to help improve secondary

school students' reading comprehension and (2) to investigate the students' attitudes towards the integration of KWL-Plus and Web-based instruction in enhancing the students' reading comprehension with teacher's scaffolding techniques.

Research objectives

1. Investigate the impact of the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus on the improvement of secondary school students' reading comprehension;
2. Examine the students' attitudes towards the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus.

Research Methodology

1. Participants and setting

The participants whose ages range from 12 to 13 were drawn from one intact classroom of twenty seventh-grade Mini English Program (MEP) at a government secondary school in Northeastern Thailand. The group was selected by purposive sampling procedures. The students in the program are taught in English in three main subjects: English, Mathematics, and Science by foreign teachers with a total number of six hours a week.

2. Research Instruments

To answer the two research questions, the researcher utilized three research instruments, which encompass reading comprehension pre-test and posttest, students' attitudes questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus lesson plans. 1) The reading comprehension tests were given as the pre-test and posttest in this study. The tests, based on Thai Core Curriculum, were administered to all participants before and after the treatment. Each test contained three passages based on the students' proficiency and students' background knowledge. The test included 15 multiple choices items, and 15 for short answer items. Time allocation was an hour. The aims of the overall pre-test and posttest were to assess the students' reading comprehension and to compare the test score to see whether the students have improved their reading comprehension. 2) The students' attitude questionnaire is designed to examine students' attitudes towards learning English reading comprehension based on the integration of the WBI and KWL-Plus technique. The questionnaire of the current study is categorized into three aspects. The first aspect focused on the attitudes towards the use of WBI in class. The second was students' attitude towards scaffolding instruction in reading class. The last aspect focused on the attitudes towards KWL-Plus. Each aspect consisted of five items, including fifteen items. To measure the questionnaire item, the researcher adopted a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). 3) Semi-structured interview was conducted to examine students' feelings, satisfaction, perceptions, opinions, and attitudes towards the integration of web-based instruction and KWL-Plus. The interview lasted ten minutes for each student and was audio-recorded. The semi-structure interview questions were selected based on three aspects of the students' attitudes questionnaire included WBI, scaffolding instruction, and KWL-Plus.
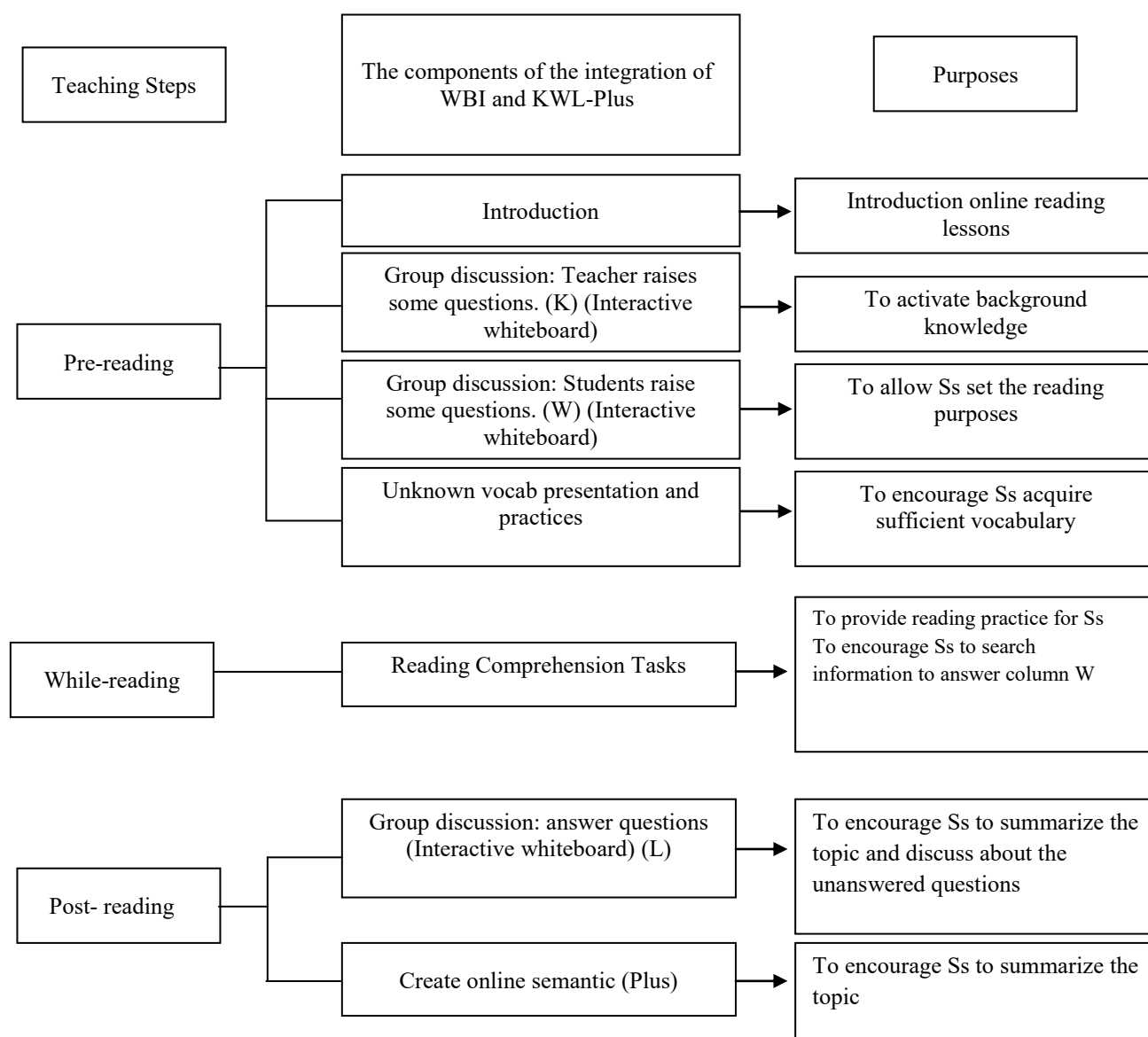
3. Data Collection Procedures

Before the implementation of the study, the class training was provided to inform students of the objectives and what the current study was trying to investigate, and to establish the guidelines for the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus step-by-step. The students became familiar with the pattern of training so that they would not get lost while using it. The

researcher, as a teacher, implemented a pre-test to assess students' prior knowledge and reading comprehension skill.

The reading implementation was subsequently divided into three stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading based on the KWL-Plus concept. In the pre-reading stage, the pre-test was administered to all students in the participants via web-based. The teacher then presented the online reading lesson to the students. Firstly, a set of questions related to the passages were asked through the interactive online whiteboard as a group discussion. Students activated their background knowledge together with shared knowledge with their peers. While they were having a group discussion, the students filled what they had known in the K column in the KWL chart. The unseen vocabulary was presented after a group discussion, which was presented by using images, sound, and their pronunciation. Besides, the vocabulary activities were provided to encourage students to get familiar with the vocabulary.

Then, in the while-reading stage, the students were assigned to achieve online reading. Students found the information from the given topic to answer the questions from the pre-reading stage. The teacher provided the scaffolding for students by preparing a link of dictionary for checking the meaning of unknown vocabulary, and a channel to interact with the teacher and peers for discussing the topic, the search engine for searching for more information. The teacher assigned students to note down some key words and write down the new knowledge they obtained from the passages. Moreover, students were asked to summarize the passages by creating online semantic mapping and shared with their peers through the interactive online whiteboard. Students received immediate feedback from teachers and peers, and other students tried to analyze peers' semantic mapping and seek for the missing information. After finishing creating the semantic mapping, a posttest was administered to check students' improvement in reading comprehension skills in the post-reading stage. In this teaching process, the teacher's roles were to facilitate and guide the students to perform the reading. The teacher used some questions to lead the students to lesson. Likewise, the students conducted their reading with teacher's facilitation.

To examine students' attitudes towards the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus, The researcher collected the data to answer this research question by utilizing five-Likert scales obtained from the students' attitude questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The students' attitude questionnaire and the interview were conducted to all students in class in the last period of the implementation. The data collection procedures are illustrated by the flowchart as follows:

Teaching Steps	The components of the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus	Purposes

	Introduction	Introduction online reading lessons
Pre-reading	Group discussion: Teacher raises some questions. (K) (Interactive whiteboard)	To activate background knowledge
	Group discussion: Students raise some questions. (W) (Interactive whiteboard)	To allow Ss set the reading purposes
	Unknown vocab presentation and practices	To encourage Ss acquire sufficient vocabulary

| While-reading | Reading Comprehension Tasks | To provide reading practice for Ss To encourage Ss to search information to answer column W |

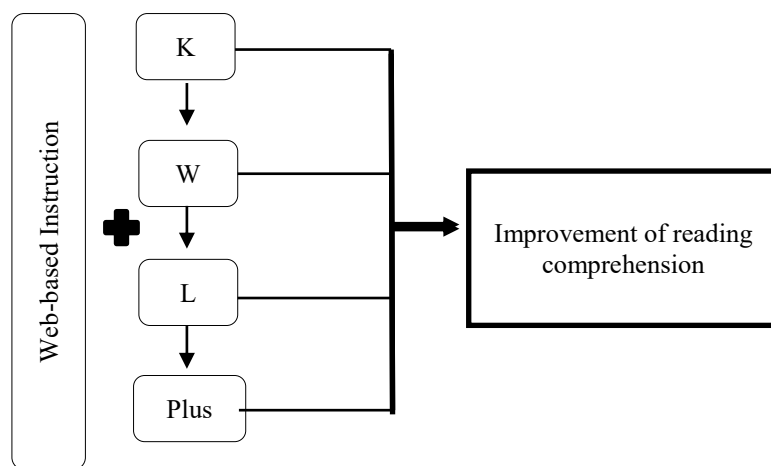| Post- reading | Group discussion: answer questions (Interactive whiteboard) (L) | To encourage Ss to summarize the topic and discuss about the unanswered questions |
| | Create online semantic (Plus) | To encourage Ss to summarize the topic |

4. Data Analysis

To answer the first research question, the collected data from the pre-test and posttest of reading comprehension were analyzed. Firstly, the scores collected from the pre-test and posttest were calculated to examine the percentage and the mean scores, and then the mean scores of the reading comprehension pre and posttests were compared to see whether there was a statistically significant difference by using t-test of SPSS. All participants were required to complete the test before and after the implementation. The participants took approximately an hour to complete the test. The researcher analyzed using the mean scores, whether there was the posttest scores were higher than the pre-test. Secondly, the students' attitude towards the impact of the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus, the self-rating scale was calculated using standard deviation (S.D.), and the mean scores. The result of the data indicated the students' attitudes towards the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus. All participants completed the questionnaire and participated in the semi-structured interview,

which conducted a week after the implementation. The semi-structured interview was conducted in Thai by the researcher and lasted 15 minutes for each participant. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for the data analysis to examine students' attitudes towards the implementation. The data obtained from the semi-structure interview was analyzed using content analysis.

Research Framework

Results

1. Does the integration of WBI and KWL-Plus have an impact on secondary school students' reading comprehension?

This research question determined whether the impact of the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus improved secondary school students' reading comprehension scores. The researcher administered reading comprehension pre-test and posttest to address this research question. The mean score from the reading comprehension pre-test and posttest were analyzed using the t-test. Table 1 below illustrates students' reading comprehension pre-test and posttest mean score.

Table 1: Students' reading comprehension pre-test and posttest scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Pre-test	20	15.55	5.652	6.931	.000**
Posttest	20	22.80	2.949		

* Significant at the 0.01 level (p<0.01)

As shown in Table 6 the overall mean scores of reading comprehension pre-test and posttest of the students are significantly different at the 0.01 level (t= 6.931). The overall mean score of students' reading comprehension pre-test is 15.55 with the standard deviation of 5.652, in contrast, after the implementation; the mean score of the students' reading comprehension posttest is 22.80 with the standard deviation of 2.949. The latter score is significantly higher than the former score. The results of the paired t-test indicate that the

integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-plus helped improve students' reading comprehension, and overall students have developed their reading comprehension.

2. What are the students' attitudes towards the integration of Web-based Instruction and KWL-Plus?

The researcher conducted this research through a questionnaire to collect students' attitudes, opinions, feeling, and comments about the impact of the integration of web-based instruction and KWL-Plus, which improve their reading comprehension. Twenty students completed the questionnaire. 100% of the respondents; 35% were male (7 students), and 65% were female (13 students). The questionnaire consisted of three aspects; WBI, scaffolding instruction, and KWL-Plus. A mean score derived from the students' attitudes was interpreted by the following range: Very low = 1.00 – 1.49, Low = 1.50 – 2.49, Moderate = 2.50 – 3.49, High = 3.50 – 4.49, and Very high = 4.50 – 5.00 (Likert, R., 1932 : 23). The summary of the overall mean score is presented in the following table.

Table 2: The overall mean score of the students' attitudes questionnaire

tems	Descriptions	x̄	S.D.	Results
	Aspect 1: Web-based Instruction	4.52	.64	Very high
	Aspect 2: Scaffolding Instruction	4.50	.63	Very high
	Aspect 3: KWL- Plus	4.50	.66	Very high
otal		**4.51**	**0.64**	**Very high**

N=20

As can be seen in Table 7, the overall mean score of the students' attitudes questionnaire is 4.51, with a standard deviation of 0.64. The result indicates that the students have positive attitudes towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-plus in improving reading comprehension. The highest mean score obtained for the first aspect; it reveals that Web-based instruction help improved students' reading comprehension, and students are satisfied with this aspect at a very high level (4.52). The results also reveal that scaffolding instruction and KWL-Plus help them to improve their reading comprehension as well, the mean scores at very high levels (4.50) respectively. The following section presents the mean score of the students' attitudes in each aspect.

Table 3: Aspect 1: Web-based instruction

tems	Descriptions		S.D.	Results
	I use reference materials (e.g., online dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	.49	594	High
	The lesson provides tables, figures, videos to increase understanding of the passage.	.58	562	Very high
	I can go back and forth in the passage at anytime and anywhere.	.52	651	Very high
	The lesson and activities help improve my reading comprehension skill.	.51	744	Very high
	Online semantic mapping helps me comprehend the passages.	.50	652	Very high
otal		.52	64	**Very high**

N=20

The first aspect of the questionnaire asks about the students' attitudes towards reading via web-based. The overall mean score is (x̄) 4.52, with a standard deviation of .64.

The highest mean score falls into item no.2; it indicates that learning reading via web provided tables, figures, and videos, could increase the understanding of the passages at the highest mean score (x̄) 4.58 with the standard deviation of .562. The students reports that they could go back and forth in the passage at any time and anywhere at the mean score (x̄) 4.52 with the standard deviation of .651. They agree that the lesson and the activities on web-based help them improve their reading comprehension skill at the mean score (x̄) 4.51 with a standard deviation of .744. They report that online semantic mapping help them organize and comprehend the passages at the mean score (x̄) 4.51 with a standard deviation of .652. The students also reveal that they use the reference materials, for example, an online dictionary during reading to assist them to understand what they read at the mean score (x̄) 4.49 with the standard deviation of .594. According to the results, students have a positive attitude towards reading via web-based instruction at a very high level.

Table 4: Aspect 2: Scaffolding Instruction

tems	Descriptions	S.D.		Results
	The teacher always helps me understand difficult concepts in reading.	.54	594	Very high
	The teacher's help makes me feel at ease, comfortable, and less stressed during reading.	.45	627	High
	The teacher assists me when I encounter complicated tasks.	.49	662	High
	Teacher's observation and monitoring help me improve my reading comprehension.	.54	638	Very high
	Clear directions and explanations help me meet my reading goals.	.48	640	High
otal		.50	63	**Very high**

N=20

The second aspect focuses on scaffolding instruction. This aspect aimed to examine the students' attitudes toward the teacher's scaffolding techniques while they were reading via web-based. The findings shows that the students perceive scaffolding instruction as a useful technique in their online reading. The overall result indicates that students have positive attitudes towards the scaffolding instruction with the total mean score (x̄) 4.50 and a standard deviation of .63. Students report that they find teachers' assistance is essential to them in understanding the difficult concepts in reading as well as the teachers' observation and monitoring are found to be useful for them in improving their reading comprehension at the same mean score (x̄) 4.54 with a standard deviation of .594 and .638 respectively. They reveal that when they encounter complicated tasks, teacher always assists and helps them to solve the problems with the mean score (x̄) 4.49, and a standard deviation of .662. Given clear directions and explanations, assists them meet their reading goals with a mean score (x̄) 4.48 with a standard deviation of .640. They agree that teacher made them feel at ease, comfortable, and had little stress during the reading at the mean score (x̄) 4.45 with the standard deviation of .627. The findings present that the students perceive the utilization of scaffolding instruction in an online reading classroom useful since they believe that it facilitates them to understand some difficult concepts and complicated tasks.

Table5: Aspect 3: KWL-Plus

tems	Descriptions		S.D.	Results
	Asking and answering questions about <u>what I have known</u> helps me to form the idea. (K)	.52	651	Very high
	Making questions about <u>what I want to know</u> persues me to read the passage. (W)	.51	653	Very high
	I found that group discussion helps me gain more information about the reading. (L)	.52	616	Very high
	The semantic mapping helps me to organize and summarize a text. (Plus)	.52	699	Very high
	I am willing to continue reading when I have some unanswered questions.	.41	693	High
otal		**.50**	**66**	**Very high**

N=20

The last aspect of the questionnaire is the students' attitudes towards KWL-Plus techniques. The overall mean score is 4.50, with a standard deviation of 0.66. It can be concluded that KWL-Plus helps students improve their reading comprehension. Moreover, they have positive impressions and interests in reading utilizing the KWL-Plus strategy. Students report that asking and answering questions about what they have known help them form ideas, and they find that the group discussion enables them to gain more information about the passages, both are in a similar mean score ($\bar{x}$) 4.52. Likewise, they reveal that, the semantic mapping helps them organize and summarize the passage after finishing reading. They agree that making questions about what they want to know encourages them to read the passages with the mean score ($\bar{x}$) 4.51 with the standard deviation of .653. The latter also illustrates that they are willing to continue reading when they have some unanswered questions with a mean score ($\bar{x}$) 4.41 with a standard deviation of .693. Although the item gets the lowest score, it still is a high positive attitude; it reveals that the students prefer to continue their reading when they still have some questions about the reading.

The results from the semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview was addressed to ten participants to gather the qualitative data to elicit in-depth information from the students towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus randomly. Due to students' low English proficiency levels, the semi-structured interview was conducted in Thai language and the collected data were categorized into ten items. The following table shows the students' attitudes towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus. The data collected from the semi-structured interview suggests that the majority of the students had a positive attitude towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus. The results from the semi-structured interview shows that the students enjoyed performing an online reading. Only a small number of respondents indicate that Web-based instruction is not practical for them. In conclusion, it is indicated that the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus help improved students' reading comprehension.

Discussion

The findings indicated that the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus helps improve students' reading comprehension. The findings suggest that integration has an impact on this reading class, as the students could access to read anytime and anywhere. Moreover, they can improve their reading comprehension through the web by receiving assistance from a teacher, and they can benefit from online reading classes at their convenience.

According to KWL-plus, the students have been trained to think, plan, set a goal, check their thinking abilities, and manage their knowledge before reading through the web, which provided a collaborative environment and reference materials to support reading (Arkorful, V., & Abaidoo, N., 2014 : 397-410). Web-based instruction also allowed the interaction between teacher and students for quick feedback, support guidance directly from the teacher (Moore, G. M., & Kearsley, G., 2011 : 18), the students could exchange ideas and discuss reading about the relevant details. Furthermore, a teacher provided cueing, prompting, and questioning to guide the students while they were performing online reading Dole, J. A., Brown, K. J., & Trathen, W., 1996 : 62-88). Moreover, the findings also reveal that the students performed better at reading comprehension, recommending the advantages of the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL- Plus in reading classes, especially in secondary schools. Before students started reading, a teacher provided the title, unseen vocabulary, and some pictures for them so that they could assume what they were going to read. Moreover, they could guess what the messages conveyed by the writer from the passages were.   Setyawan, A. (2018 : 25-34) proposed that the most effective way to comprehend reading is to see it as a process of active guessing in which the readers use various kinds of clues to understand a text. To make the reading class to be more effective, the passages should be equipped with the media so that the comprehension would be facilitated. The finding is in line with that reading integrated with infographics not only encouraged students to read the passage but also create a better reading performance and allows students to practice their creativity in generating their infographic utilizing online tools.

Moreover, students also claimed that Web-based reading provided reference materials such as an online dictionary, which they could quickly confirm or check the unknown vocabulary by using the online dictionary for both vocabulary spelling and meaning. Moreover, related webs helped them to gain more information about the passage as well as they could practice their reading comprehension in the authentic passage. Students also reported that they could take the advantages of a great number of the reference materials to assist them in comprehending the reading passage. The finding is congruent with that online dictionary facilitates students to recognize the word spelling or meaning, or the related web may encourage them to put reading strategies into practice and develop their reading competence.

Suggestion

The current study attempted to investigated whether the impact of the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus improve secondary school students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the current study examined students' attitudes towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus. Referring to the results of the current study, the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus helped improve students' reading comprehension at the literal level. Besides, the students expressed a positive attitudes

towards the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus. The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structure interview indicated that students had positive attitudes towards the use of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus. The integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus provided the additional features, which facilitated students to improve their reading comprehension. It could be concluded that the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus enhanced students reading comprehension.

Recommendation for further studies

This study investigated the impact of the integration of Web-based instruction and KWL-Plus in improving secondary school students' reading comprehension in the northeastern of Thailand. Through the analysis of the findings. The implementation influenced the students' reading comprehension. The recommendations for the further studies are presented as follows;

1. Further studies should interest students in reading, and the passages should be varied.

2. The researcher should consider that students are equipped with the technology literacy so that the students do not get lost while performing the activities. In addition, the class orientation for the technology class should be suitable for students' technology literacy

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