

**Effectiveness and Students' Perception of the Use of Pre-reading Strategies and
Summaries: A Case Study of Adult EFL Students in a Reading Comprehension
Course**

Abstract

Many students who have taken the course called “Reading Comprehension Strategies in English II” (LM-1032) from the Section of English for Other Majors (SIPOC) at the School of Modern Languages in the University of Costa Rica have complained, in the final course evaluation, about their lack of understanding of the texts analyzed in class due to their low level of language proficiency. Moreover, some learners who enrolled in the course during the second semester of the present year expressed their concern about their performance in it because of their basic knowledge of English. In order to tackle this problem, the teacher – researcher decided to work on pre-reading exercises, especially the adapted version of the K-W-L organizer (K= what I want to know, W= what I want to learn, L= what I learned), as a way to help learners establish a connection between their background knowledge and the texts. Likewise, students were asked to write summaries in order to check their understanding of the gist of the texts after doing the required exercises in different worksheets and tests. Therefore, this study is aimed at providing an answer to two questions: how can the completion of pre-reading exercises and summaries enhance reading comprehension? and, what are their perceptions of the usefulness of these tools to read texts in English?

The theoretical framework includes concepts of reading strategies, reading stages, schema theory and types, the K-W-L method, and summarizing. The review of the literature makes

reference to the benefits of using pre-reading strategies and summaries to better understand texts. Regarding the pre-reading strategies, the advantages and disadvantages of the use of K-W-L organizers will also be pointed out.

This course was taught to a heterogeneous group of thirty-seven adults. Most of them are undergraduates who are registered in different majors. For some of them, LM 1032 is the last requirement to graduate. Additionally, there are two teachers who are taking the course to get a higher academic rank at the university. To collect data, two surveys were administered (one before the interventions and another one after the interventions).

Furthermore, students were asked to complete a worksheet to review the contents studied in the pre-requisite course called Reading Comprehension Strategies in English I (LM 1030); this practice actually served as a diagnostic test. They also completed four worksheets to practice the reading comprehension exercises studied in the course as well as two quizzes and a midterm exam. Before each intervention, they carried out a pre-reading task.

Additionally, they wrote a summary of the text after doing the reading comprehension exercises related to the course-contents. The information gathered shows that learners were able to understand the main ideas of the texts, but some of them still have difficulties to analyze specific details in order to carry out the course-related tasks. The results also indicate students' perception about the usefulness of both strategies to read texts in English before and after the interventions.

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