

Applying KWL techniques in combination with group activities to propose solutions to develop 21st century skills through 9th grade English reading lessons

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Abstract: *teaching activities in recent years really need to apply and create more methods and techniques to integrate into teaching lessons, especially at the lower secondary level. Realizing the importance of Industry 4.0 and the strong trend of globalization, as well as the foreign language ability of current middle school students, has improved significantly compared to previous generations, so English teachers play an important role in promoting and developing foreign language ability for children. In this article, I would like to present and propose solutions to develop 21st-century skills through the 9th-grade English Reading class, by applying KWL techniques and team working, in order to improve the quality of teaching activities, helping them confidently develop most of the skills required of the 21st century and building a knowledge base to prepare for the 10th-grade entrance exam.*

Keywords: *9th-grade English Reading class, KWL techniques, 21st-century skills, English teachers in middle school, teamwork skills*

Introduction

In the globalization and international integration for English today, Ho Chi Minh City has many foreign language centers and is located everywhere, creating favorable conditions for students to participate in foreign language learning. Many parents are aware and have the conditions for their children to learn English at the center from a young age, so most of the students entering grade 6 under the 2018 secondary program already have good English knowledge and the ability to acquire English knowledge.

However, there are still students with difficult circumstances who cannot learn English from young age, so learning English under the new secondary program is very difficult. Besides, teachers who do not improve methods and do not update knowledge will be very backward. Teachers will not develop all communication skills, making some good English students lose their motivation with English and weak students will get bored of learning. Reading is one of the four skills that students are most afraid of because the reading text is long, the class is boring because reading skills can only be read.

From the practical requirements for English and the shortcomings of an English lesson, teachers need to draw experience in the Reading lesson. By different activities in the reading lesson, the teacher recognizes the part of the language that the students **KNOW**, the students **WANT to KNOW** and

thereby helps the students **learn English well**. **The article presents the experience of “Applying KWL techniques in combination with group activities to propose solutions to develop 21st century skills through 9th grade English reading lessons.”**

2. Research content

2.1. Importance of 21st century skills development

21st century skills used: According to the definition the 21st Century Skills Teaching and Assessment Organization in Melbourne, Australia, comparing with English language teaching activities within within the application unit, there are 3 main groups of skills that have been used as follows. First, the group of thinking and working skills in learning. Including critical thinking, creativity, communication skills and cooperation when working in groups; Second, the group of skills in using tools, including general knowledge of information, technology and communication; Third, life skills, including flexibility, actively learning ability and social skills .

New solutions combining group activities and Know – Want to Know – Learn (K.W.L) technique

Applying group activities in Reading class will develop reading skills, students in small groups will have time and conditions to learn more as well as remember the lesson material longer. Especially, even though their English ability is not equal, weaker students will learn how to read based on their better peers, to recognize their strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers then also have conditions to observe students in each group.

Benefits of K.W.L technique for students and teachers: i) the goal of “Know” helps students recall previous knowledge they have learned, or known knowledge to connect and associate with the topic to be taught. Besides, it allows teachers to assess the extent to which students have known, and have properly grasped the knowledge taught in the previous lesson.; ii) The goal of “Want to know” encourages students to take charge of their own learning, dare to give their wishes after class, helping teachers see what students are interested in; iii) The goal of “Learn” allows students to reflect, synthesize and consolidate knowledge they have learned, helping teachers evaluate the effectiveness of teaching activities during the lesson. Stages:

1. Know stage: Teaching activities in this stage help students develop skills in collecting information according to their understanding, knowledge to make judgments and give the topic of the lesson. If there is a weaker student in the group, this student will learn new semantics and vocabulary from his friend.

Judgment activities accompanied by illustrations will create more excitement in giving opinions, thereby helping students develop skills in thinking, creativity and critical thinking. Besides, teachers need to use pictures and actual materials according to new trends and update to create students interest and attraction. The Knowing stage uses 4 main solutions to guess the topic to be taught: Quiz - Brainstorming - Predicting - Key words. From the long passage given in the textbook, the teacher chooses to use one of the three activities below by providing pictures, documents, and short keywords for students to work in groups and discuss topics during the lesson, and remember the most important details in that passage. Including the following solutions

Solution 1: Quiz – Guessing the title of the reading text: The teacher divides the class into groups of 4-6, gives the material and the group will exchange for the title of the lesson to be studied. The given material needs to be short, short and simple sentences, neither too easy nor too difficult for students to discuss and give answers in 5 minutes of group work. The material can be summarized in 4 to 5 small ideas and include important keywords in each idea.

Solution 2: Brainstorming – Guessing the title through the picture: The teacher divides the class into small groups, gives 3-4 related pictures, asks

questions and lets students discuss and answer why. This solution helps students process information with pictures, make judgments, discuss and make arguments based on the questions raised. This solution helps students not only guess the title but also allow students to express their personal views, practice their English ability and convey their opinions. From there, the teacher assesses the students’ knowledge and ability.

Solution 3: Predicting – Guessing the content of the passage: The teacher gives a brief summary with the title of the passage, asks the groups to discuss and guess what the content of the passage to be learned is. Tabular material will have keywords about time, events, proper nouns, etc. On the existing basis, students can reason and imagine to chain those facts and visualize each paragraph talking about something without having to read the whole passage.

Solution 4: Key words - Predict the title according to the common points: The teacher gives an image that includes all the keywords that are similar to each other, asking students to guess the topic being studied. This is a way to help students have an overview of the words in a topic to improve their vocabulary, by working in groups with other students without spending too much time in the traditional way of learning vocabulary.

2.Want to know stage: The solutions below will continue to develop the skills needed in the 21st century and above all, help the class tactively and lively, students practice structures required for the 10th grade entrance exam. Moreover, it allows students to become active in learning and discovering new knowledge in the subject through group activities.

The Want to know stage includes 4 solutions: Looking for part of speech (n/v/adj/adv), Critical thinking (Race reading), Creating paragraphs (Cut up texts), Sorting paragraphs (Jig saw). reading)

Solution 1: Find part of speech: Each group will be assigned by the teacher to find a part of speech in a certain time of the passage.

Solution 2: Critical thinking: The teacher based on the topic being studied, asks each group to make a question, then answer that question with the evidence found in the passage. This activity is suggested by the teacher how to make questions with the words What, Where, When, Why, How, etc., asking students to grasp the content in that reading, speed up information processing to think and find

evidence and explanations for the question. Teachers from this activity also assess how to make questions, how students select information to give appropriate answers.

Solution 3: Create a passage: The teacher will create the phrases in the reading text to divide into groups. The assigned task will create new meaningful passages. This solution is similar to the complete sentence writing test based on the given words, helping students both practice combining sentences and practice writing paragraphs to have coherence and connection between sentences.

Solution 4: Arrange the passage: The teacher gives each group a passage in which the sentences have been disordered. The task of each group is to arrange the correct sentences in the passage and match them in the correct order with the other groups to make a complete article. This activity not only requires the ability to arrange the materials in a short time, but also evaluates communication skills, works in a large group, when students look for the whole text that has been disordered, helps students remember lessons, create a lively atmosphere and practice sample tests for the 10th grade Enrollment exam in the Word arrangement part.

3. Learning stage: In this stage, students are re-evaluated their wish to learn in the previous stage, and at the same time, reinforce the entire topic they have learned to generalize the important knowledge, the sentence forms in the passage as well as related vocabulary, thereby helping students remember the lesson longer. Teachers in this stage will assess the attractiveness and interest of students through the activities of the lesson, and their ability to acquire knowledge, thereby adjusting the difficulty level as well as allocating appropriate teaching solutions for each lesson.

This stage has 2 solutions: Mind map, Discussion and Critical thinking.

Solution 1: Mind map: Teachers let groups synthesize what they have learned with mind maps, so that students can categorize knowledge, use colors, drawings related keywords in the lesson. After that, the teacher will replay the pre-prepared mind map for students to self-assess, supply the missing knowledge, as well as reinforce the lesson again.

The method of reinforcing lessons with mind maps in class not only helps students remember longer, but also save time when reviewing lessons

at home, creating a sense of excitement because of the brief combination of images, colors and short keywords.

Solution 2: Discussion and criticism: From the knowledge synthesized from the mind map, the teacher will ask common questions for the groups to discuss, present and give critique. This activity requires students to know very well the content they have learned, as well as the ability to memorize the vocabulary contained in the topic to express their opinions. The discussion helps them see many different points of view in the group, thereby synthesizing the best and most coherent ideas to state the views that can start with “I think...” (I think), “My opinion is...” (In my opinion,...), “I see that...” (I see...). The activity will practice important skills needed in the 21st century, helping students be confident when speaking and expressing what they have learned.

Conclusion

In general, teaching solutions that combine KWL techniques and groupwork to develop 21st century skills in the 9th grade English reading class is an urgent topic in the continuously social developing context, in order to overcome the current situation of overcrowded classrooms, teachers cannot assess the ability of each student to feel bored because of reading long passages and answering questions according to textbooks, as well as not being practiced hidden skills that need to be aroused and motivated, making the practice of Reading English difficult, boring. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare carefully for students not only to be confident in knowledge to successfully complete the 10th grade entrance exam, but also to equip themselves with skills as a global citizen, in order to take the initiative to lifelong learning, dare to express opinions, practice critical thinking and shorten the gap between good and weak students, creating a uniformity in skills and knowledge for them to confidently enter high school.

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