

A study on form four students through a set of comics designed based on the KWLH model to identify the level of reading skills

***S. Shakti**

Department of Tamil Language and Communication, Faculty of Languages and Communication, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

K. Kaaminy

Department of Modern Language, Faculty of Languages and Communication, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

E-mail: shaktisekharjeva@gmail.com , kaaminy@fbk.upsi.edu.my

*Corresponding author: S. Shakti

Received: 05 Nov 2025; **Revised:** 20 Mac 2025; **Accepted:** 20 May 2025; **Published:** 15 June 2025

To cite this article (APA): Shakti, S., & Kaaminy, K. (2025). A study on form four students through a set of comics designed based on the KWLH model to identify the level of reading skills. *Journal of Valartamil*, 6(1), 65-71. <https://doi.org/10.37134/jvt.vol6.1.10.2025>

Abstract: This research study aimed to investigate the reading comprehension levels of form 4 students through a set of comics designed based on the KWLH (Know, want to know, Learned, and How to learn more) model. The study discovered that Form 4 students frequently struggle to understand the context of what they read. Assessing the current reading comprehension level of form 4 students, evaluating comprehension growth through the use of comics designed based on the KWLH model, and getting students' input on the comics were the three primary goals of the study. Students in form 4 who chose Tamil language as an elective participated in this study, which was carried out in a rural school in the Perak state. A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, was adopted for the study. The research tools included pre-tests, instructional activities, post-tests, comprehension-related questionnaires, reading comprehension assessments, and the KWLH model-based comic set. The findings reveal that students' reading comprehension skills were considerably raised when using KWLH model-based comics in the classroom.

Key words: Reading, Reading Comprehension, KWLH Model, Kukku Comics

INTRODUCTION

A key component of academic success is reading comprehension, which enables students to comprehend and critically evaluate texts. Tamil language instruction presents unique difficulties in multilingual settings like Malaysia, where many students find it difficult to interact with conventional reading resources. In rural schools, where resources may be scarce, these difficulties are more noticeable. When it comes to encouraging real comprehension and a love of reading, traditional teaching approaches that frequently emphasize memorization might fall short. The purpose of this project is to investigate whether comics created using the KWLH approach can help close this gap by giving Form 4 Tamil language learners organized, interesting reading materials.

A study on form four students through a set of comics designed based on the KWLH model to identify the level of reading skills

An organized method of understanding that has shown potential in other educational environments is the KWLH model, which focuses on what pupils Know, Want to know, Learned, and How to learn more. Comics, a media renowned for its accessibility and visual appeal, can be used in conjunction with this strategy to help Tamil language learners enhance their reading comprehension abilities. This study explores how KWLH-based comics can enhance students' comprehension while also making learning more interesting and memorable.

Introduction of the study

A well-known teaching technique, the KWLH model helps students actively interact with new material by guiding them through an organized, reflective process (Roberts & Roberts, 2008). It is particularly useful for comprehension activities in the classroom since it enables students to arrange their ideas, establish learning objectives, and evaluate their understanding. Similar potential has been demonstrated by comics in educational contexts. According to research by Garcia, A., & Hatch, K. (2021), comics improve motivation and understanding by simplifying learning by dividing material into digestible, visual chunks. Comics help young readers by delivering words in context, which enhances language abilities in addition to satisfying visual learning preferences (Alkasasbeh, K. a. S., Mohamed, Y., & Ismail, S., 2023). Through the integration of KWLH's organized methodology with comics' captivating format, educators can potentially develop a potent tool to enhance reading comprehension. This study aims to determine whether KWLH-based comics can enhance Tamil language learning comprehension and engagement, particularly in situations where traditional resources have not proven to be very effective.

Problem Statement

Traditional teaching resources for Tamil in Malaysia frequently don't interest pupils enough to inspire them. Pupils usually complain about having trouble connecting with texts, which makes it harder for them to comprehend and remember the material. According to research, by creating an engaging and encouraging learning environment, combining structured approaches like KWLH with visual aids like comics may assist address these issues (Yang, 2008). To solve this issue, this study examines how well KWLH-based comics improve Form 4 students' knowledge of the Tamil language.

Research Purpose

This study is based on three objectives

1. To evaluate the initial reading comprehension levels of Form 4 Tamil language students.
2. To measure changes in comprehension after exposure to KWLH-based comics.
3. To gather students' feedback on their experiences using KWLH comics as a learning tool.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The KWLH model is one model that has been well received in educational circles because of its systematic tendency to develop reading comprehension. KWLH provides students with opportunities to express what they already know and to identify what they want to learn, thereby fostering an active engagement with the literature (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008). This is supported by Fisher, Frey and Hattie (2016) whose study showed that the use of pictures and frameworks of learning leads to increased reading and retention. Comics are a media that works just as well for teaching. This is, according to Sousa (2017), because comics are composed of

a target story and pictures that explain complicated ideas, lower cognitive load and enhance retention. Yang (2008) and Carter (2007) highlight that language through comics can be effective for improving learning as they make reading more enjoyable which is beneficial for language learners. They also observe that comics in the classroom make the child literate as they provide context for language, enhance vocabulary and facilitate understanding (Cohn,N & Ehly,S. 2018). Therefore, an effective solution for reading comprehension difficulties in Tamil language learners can be achieved through the KWLH and comics integration.

METHODOLOGY

Employing a mixed-methods strategy, this research gathers data that is both quantitative and qualitative. The Tamil language students in Form 4 who participated in the study were from a rural secondary school and volunteered for the study. Order of differences regarding understanding changes was evaluated by pre-tests and post-tests, while student's opinions were evaluated quantitatively by publishing the surveys.

Participants

Students of Form 4 in a rural Malaysian Tamil medium school participated in this study. This sample of the subjects was selected because they were willing to participate in the study which aimed at improving reading comprehension through the use of alternate learning resources.

Data Collection

In the course of the data collection phase, students were given a comprehension pre-test to measure their initial level of understanding during the assessment. Subsequently, KWLH-based comics were introduced to the participants who then engaged with these materials for four weeks. A session end post-test was administered to ascertain comprehension level enhancement. Students were also given feedback forms to provide qualitative data on their use of the comics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For this study, three types of data were collected: the preliminary assessment, the follow up assessment, and the feedback assessment. The pretest and posttest scores have shown quantifiable growth in the content knowledge of students and the participants' qualitative opinions provide an insight in their motivation and engagement levels. These findings are in accord with more previous studies on the effectiveness of visual materials and structured models for teaching. The discussion also explores the potential effects of employing KWLH-based comics in Tamil language as a instructional tool, suggesting that this method might be effective in resolving the problems of student participation in traditional text-based lessons.

Pre-test and Post-Test Results

The pre-test results revealed that more than a few students had trouble grasping the subject and would often skip vital concepts and interconnections. However, there were also improvements in both comprehension and recall of information among the students who had been taught using KWLH-based comics after the intervention. The KWLH model whenever introduced into the classroom engages the learners actively by taking them through four stages – what do they already know about a topic, what do they want to know about the topic, what have they learnt

A study on form four students through a set of comics designed based on the KWLH model to identify the level of reading skills

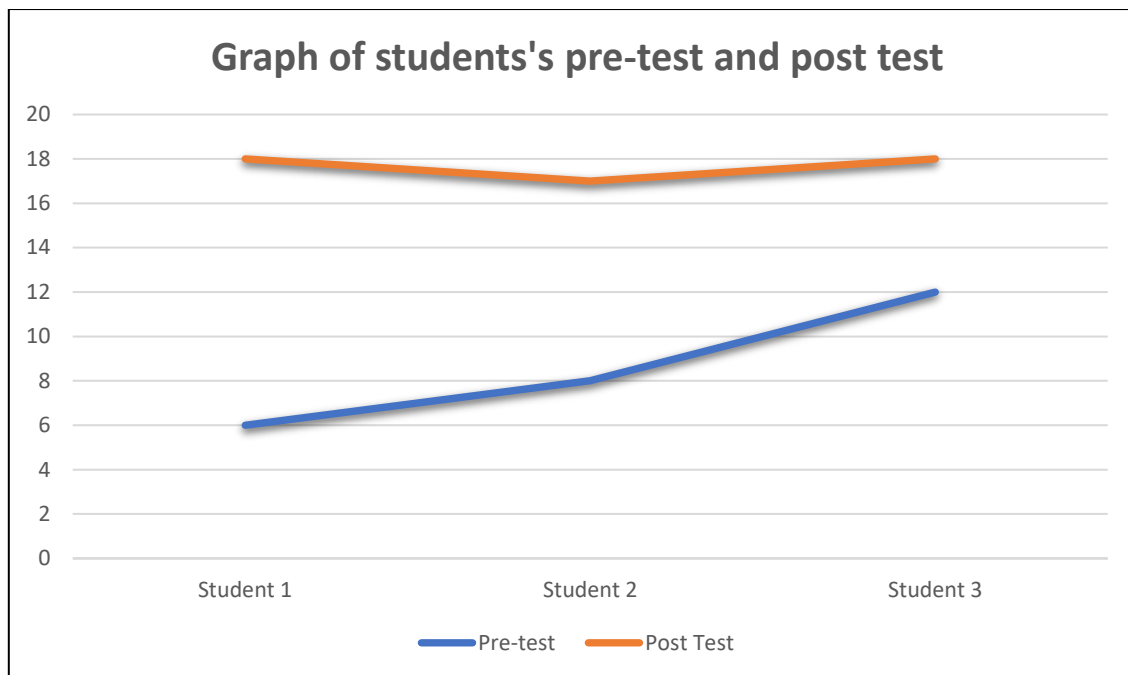
after the lesson and how do they plan to learn about the topic in deeper detail. In the course of defining the learning targets, the metacognitive perspective actively helping students understand how their new learning can expand on what they already know is also captured. Combining it with comics amplifies the impact even further because the story and the pictures automatically draw understanding and attention. Students recall concepts that are already familiar (K), pose questions based on their understanding of new material (W), state what they have been taught (L), and want to look for ways in which they relate with narrative in the texts how (H). Given these results, it is consistent with previous works that have shown that comics have the potential to increase engagement and reduce the texture of the complex material thus allowing it to be understood by students (Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011).

Pre-Test Results

Students	Questions					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	20
1	1	1	1	1	2	6
2	1	1	1	2	3	8
3	2	2	2	2	4	12

Post Test Results

Students	Questions					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	20
1	2	2	2	3	9	18
2	2	2	2	3	8	17
3	2	2	1	4	9	18



After the educational intervention, students reading comprehension clearly improved, as seen by the comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores. Students' pre-test scores were comparatively low, indicating comprehension issues. All students, however, showed notable improvement on the post-test, achieving significantly higher scores that showed a greater comprehension of the subject matter. This overall improvement implies that the employment of comic materials based on the KWLH paradigm improved students' comprehension abilities and made the reading material more approachable and interesting. The improvement in scores demonstrates how well designed, visual-based learning can enhance reading comprehension.

Student Feedback

Feedback from students demonstrated how well KWLH-based comics work to increase reading accessibility and enjoyment. Students reported that the visual components of the comics improved their ability to understand difficult concepts and retain knowledge. The students in this study agreed with Kim, S& Chung, S (2020) that structured approaches like KWLH help students develop personal connections with the content.

NO.	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1.	Students really enjoyed learning with the comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique.	3	0
2.	Teaching using the comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique was a new experience for the students.	3	0
3.	Students' attention was significantly captured when teaching with a comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique.	3	0
4.	Students' interest in reading was sparked by the use of the comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique.	3	0
5.	Students were able to accurately understand new material when they were taught using the comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique.	2	1
6.	Students were taught to read with critical thinking skills through the use of a comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique.	3	0

continued

A study on form four students through a set of comics designed based on the KWLH model to identify the level of reading skills

7.	Students' comprehension improved when they were taught using a comic set created using the KWLH technique.	3	0
8.	Students at all three skill levels—beginner, intermediate, and advanced—benefited from instruction utilizing the comic set created using the KWLH technique.	2	1
9.	utilizing a comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique to teach helped students retain language.	3	0
10.	Students were inspired to think critically when they were taught using a comic set created utilizing the KWLH technique.	3	0

Implications

The study's conclusions highlight the potential of KWLH-based comics as an effective teaching method for Tamil. KWLH-based comics make reading comprehension assignments easier to understand by fusing structured instruction with captivating visual components, especially for students who might find it difficult to understand standard texts. These techniques could be used to improve other subjects besides Tamil language instruction, particularly those that need more help understanding and participating.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that KWLH-based comics can help Tamil language learners improve their reading comprehension. A potential strategy to increase accessibility and engagement in language learning is the mix of visual narrative and organized reflection. KWLH-based comics offer instructors a workable way to promote student understanding and motivation, especially in rural areas where resources may be scarce. In order to support inclusive and interesting teaching methods, future studies could build on this strategy and examine how it applies to different age groups and academic areas. This study supports the use of structured comics to promote and improve reading comprehension while also adding to the expanding field of creative teaching approaches.

REFERENCES

- Garcia, A., & Hatch, K. (2021). "Graphic novels and literacy engagement: Bridging gaps in motivation and comprehension." *International Journal of Educational Research*, 107, 101770.
- Alkasasbeh, K. a. S., Mohamed, Y., & Ismail, S. (2023). use of (K.W.L.H) strategy in improving reading comprehension skills in the Arabic language course among tenth-grade students in the United Arab Emirates. *Al-Azkiyaa : International Journal of Language and Education*, 2(1), 96–112. <https://doi.org/10.33102/alazkiyaa44>
- Yang, G. (2008). Graphic novels in the classroom: From Maus to Marvel and beyond. *Language Arts*, 85(3), 185-192.
- Sari, M. H., Susetyo, N., Noermanzah, N., Wardhana, D. E. C., & Kusumaningsih, D. (2020). Understanding the level of students' reading comprehension ability. *Understanding the Level of Students' Reading Comprehension Ability*. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/mr62t>
- Nirwan, N. (2020). USING KWL (KNOW-WANT TO KNOW-LEARNED) Strategy In Improving Students' Reading Comprehension. *Doaj (DOAJ: Directory Of Open Access Journals)*. <https://Doaj.Org/Article/0ef5f0ffe4774e80be2b4ed10392739f>

- Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2008). Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. The Guilford Press.
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2016). Visible Learning for Literacy, Grades K-12: Implementing the Practices That Work Best to Accelerate Student Learning. Corwin Press.
- Cohn, N., & Ehly, S. (2018). "The vocabulary of manga: Visual morphology in dialects of Japanese visual language." *Journal of Pragmatics*, 127, 33-48.
- Sousa, D. A. (2017). How the brain learns to read (4th ed.). Corwin Press.
- [Alsalihi, N. R. (2020). The Effects of the Use of the Know-Want-Learn Strategy (KWL) on Fourth Grade Students' Achievement in Science at Primary Stage and Their Attitudes towards it. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics Science and Technology Education*, 16(4). <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/115165>
- Alpini, S. (2019, May 31). The effectiveness of using Know, Want, Learned, How (KWLH) strategy in teaching reading comprehension. Alpini Language-Edu. <https://jim.unisma.ac.id/index.php/LANG/article/view/2864>
- Robbani, A. S., & Khoirotunnisa, U. (n.d.). Online English Comics as reading materials for English Language Education Department students. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1307692>
- Senen, A., Sari, Y. P., Herwin, H., Rasimin, R., & Dahalan, S. C. (2021). The use of photo comics media: Changing reading interest and learning outcomes in elementary social studies subjects. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. 16(5), 2300-2312. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i5.6337>
- Manik, R. M. S. (2019). The effectiveness of comic strip as media to improve the students' reading comprehension on Narrative Text of MTs Ar-Rahman Langkat. *KnE Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i19.4918>