

## The Effect of the SWBST Strategy on Reading Comprehension and Writing Skills of Cambodian Fourth-Grade Students

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### Abstract

Reading comprehension is crucial to students' academic achievement; however, some Cambodian primary school students struggle to comprehend written materials. This study investigates the impact of the Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then (SWBST) instructional technique on reading comprehension and writing skills in Grade 4 students in Cambodia. The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, commencing with a quantitative phase and subsequently transitioning to a qualitative phase. A quasi-experimental methodology assessed the effect of the SWBST strategy, while student interviews offered insights into their perspectives on the method. Findings indicate that students who received SWBST instruction outperformed their counterparts in the control group, especially in recognizing main ideas and summarizing texts. A substantial association exists between reading comprehension and writing proficiency, illustrating the intimate connection between two literacy skills. Students demonstrated favorable opinions towards the SWBST method, indicating enhanced engagement and comprehension during reading exercises. The results suggest that broader implementation of the SWBST technique in Cambodian primary schools may enhance literacy outcomes and cultivate a more conducive learning atmosphere.

**Keywords:** primary education, reading comprehension, student perception, SWBST strategy, writing skill

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is widely recognized as a fundamental component of education and personal growth, especially in today's dynamic global environment. It equips learners to acquire, understand, and critically analyze knowledge, fostering adaptability to diverse sociocultural contexts (Babayan, 2019; Gedik & Akyol, 2022). Literacy goes beyond letter and word recognition – it includes comprehension, interpretation, and critical interaction with texts (Brossette et al., 2022; Grainger, 2024; Hansen, 2016). Scholar's highlight reading as the principal means by which students construct understanding through engagement

with written material (Amiruddin, 2022; Meylana, 2019). This enables learners to navigate a range of sources, from textbooks and journals to advertisements, thus strengthening both academic and everyday literacy (Purnomo, 2012). Proficiency in reading is strongly tied to educational attainment, personal advancement, and lifelong learning outcomes (Aghasafari & Malayeri, 2015; Cadiong, 2019; Rombot et al., 2020).

Reading is not only cultural but also cognitive and biological. Blazi (2023) describes it as a process integrating learned cultural skills with innate perceptual and memory functions. Students critically evaluate and structure meaning when interacting with literature. Consequently, developing strategic reading abilities is essential for managing various academic and daily reading activities (Nwe & Aye, 2019). At the core of this skill is comprehension – characterized by Cheon and Ma (2014) as the primary objective of reading and by Moge (2023) as the capacity to extract meaning from text. Effective comprehension requires interpretation, reasoning, and contextual awareness (Abbasi, 2022; Rahmah & Mistar, 2023), supported by vocabulary competency, grammatical knowledge, and the logical synthesis of new and existing information (Elleman, 2019).

Notwithstanding its significance, many students struggle to attain proficiency. Research indicates that primary and secondary students frequently encounter challenges in language acquisition, inferencing, summarization, and motivation (Prasetyo, 2019; Siahaan et al., 2022). A prevalent issue is identifying a text's main idea, which impedes both summarization and comprehension (Siahaan et al., 2022). By fourth grade, children are expected to decode and infer meaning (Kendeou et al., 2016), although many still lack proficient comprehension techniques. Obstacles such as foreign terminology and insufficient summarization persist (Amalia, 2017; Barth et al., 2016; Ramirez-Avila & Barreiro, 2021), while deficient reading skills impede success across multiple disciplines (Chotimah & Rukmini, 2017). Reading proficiency is essential for cognitive achievement, career goals, and adult functional literacy, and it impacts practical abilities such as comprehending medical directives and assessing digital information (Aguilera, 2014; Basar & Gurbuz, 2017; Bruggink et al., 2022).

Global standards highlight this concern. The OECD (2018) PISA-D revealed that Cambodian pupils scored markedly below regional averages – 321 compared to 346 – while hardly 8% achieved minimal literacy standards (MoEYS, 2018a, 2018b; OECD, 2017). Correspondingly, SEA-PLM (2019) data indicated that just 11% of fifth graders achieved minimum proficiency (MoEYS, 2021a, 2021b; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020). These inadequacies, sometimes stemming from limited vocabulary and cultural implications, persist across later educational phases (Annisa et al., 2023; Hoang & Nguyen, 2023; Malinda et al., 2022). The grammatical complexity of Khmer, marked by its intricate vowels and consonants, further constrains fluency and comprehension (Vanna & Thearom, 2019). According to USAID (2017), children in Grades 2–3 average 20–35 words per minute, falling short of the Ministry's aim of 45 words per minute, thereby impeding comprehension development (MoEYS, 2016).

Notwithstanding comprehensive documentation of these challenges, educational methodologies in Cambodia rarely employ evidence-based comprehension methods such as SQ4R, project-based learning, or SWBST (Fuqaha & Wartim, 2023; Kaya & Ulutas, 2022; Ma'sita et al., 2025; Ngonyani et al., 2025). Kemba (2005) emphasizes the necessity for

innovative and structured teaching methods to improve understanding results. The SWBST (Somebody–Wanted–But–So–Then) strategy helps learners summarize narrative structure by identifying characters, motivations, conflicts, resolutions, and outcomes. Research demonstrates that SWBST enhances summarization, comprehension, and writing organization (Anggraini, 2019; Mursyida et al., 2020; Sari, 2020), offering a practical approach for literacy instruction in primary education.

This study, along with Cambodia's national literacy drive, addresses ongoing early comprehension deficiencies that hinder long-term success. Previous studies have primarily focused on older or second-language learners (Behroozizad et al., 2014; Hardianti et al., 2021), hence leaving a gap at the early primary level. This study investigates the impact of the SWBST strategy on the reading comprehension and writing performance of Grade 4 students, as well as their impressions of the method. It aims to address:

RQ 1) Does the SWBST teaching strategy significantly influence students' reading comprehension?

RQ 2) Is there a significant correlation between students' reading comprehension and writing skills?

RQ 3) What do students perceive about the SWBST teaching strategy on reading comprehension?

This study is innovative in employing a mixed-methods methodology to examine the SWBST technique among Grade 4 Cambodian students, a previously underexplored group. The study offers new insights for educators and policymakers by integrating comprehension and writing instruction into an evidence-based, contextually relevant framework that enhances fundamental literacy and fosters sustainable learning in Cambodia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is a multifaceted process involving decoding, comprehension, and the interaction between texts and readers. Fundamental reading theories merge to elucidate how learners acquire and process written language through cognitive, linguistic, and social dimensions (Main, 2023). Cognitive-oriented paradigms, including the Phonics and Dual Route theories, underscore the systematic decoding of letters and sounds, which is fundamental for precise word identification and fluent reading (Faris, 2023; Sheriston et al., 2016). In addition, meaning-centered methods, such as the Whole Language and Interactive theories, emphasize the incorporation of readers' experiences, prior knowledge, and contextual cues in the construction of textual comprehension (Davoudi & Moghadam, 2015; Huang, 2014). Transactional, Constructivist, and Sociocultural theories position reading as a dynamic, socially mediated process in which learners derive meaning through interactions and shared experiences (Behroozizad et al., 2014; Hardianti et al., 2021). These frameworks indicate that reading development progresses from decoding to comprehension and critical engagement, requiring instructional strategies that integrate cognitive and social learning processes (Kharbach, 2024; Nugraha, 2019).

Effective comprehension instruction, therefore, must balance systematic decoding with opportunities for students to engage in authentic meaning-making. Methods including prediction, summary, and visual organizers enhance comprehension by fostering active engagement with texts (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Tayo, 2019). Methodical strategies like SQ3R, Think-Pair-Share, and SWBST (Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then) correspond with interactive and constructivist principles, as they promote collaborative reasoning and assist students in methodically structuring narratives (Jumiati, 2012; Sugiharti et al., 2020).

Despite these educational gains, many children still have difficulties with reading comprehension, often attributed to limited vocabulary, grammatical shortcomings, and insufficient background knowledge (Fitri et al., 2022; Zuhra, 2015). These barriers hinder their ability to identify main ideas, infer meanings, and synthesize information from texts (Achmad et al., 2016; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). Research underscores the imperative for strategic approaches to address these challenges, particularly those that improve summarization and the discernment of main ideas (Sari, 2020). The SWBST strategy has demonstrated efficacy in enhancing comprehension and writing abilities via a methodical approach to summarization and analysis (Mursyida et al., 2020; Preszler, 2006).

Nevertheless, contemporary research predominantly focuses on high school or secondary-level students in English classes (Cahyanti, 2016). A notable deficiency in understanding the functioning of SWBST in primary school exists, where essential reading and writing competencies are still maturing. Moreover, research conducted after 2020 is limited, underscoring the need for new investigations into the strategy's effectiveness.

This study examines the efficacy of the SWBST technique in enhancing elementary students' summarizing abilities, comprehension of main ideas, and writing proficiency, hence extending its application to younger learners.

### Conceptual Framework

The research framework presented in the diagram examines the impact of the SWBST (Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then) teaching strategy on students' reading comprehension, writing skills, and their perceptions of the SWBST approach.

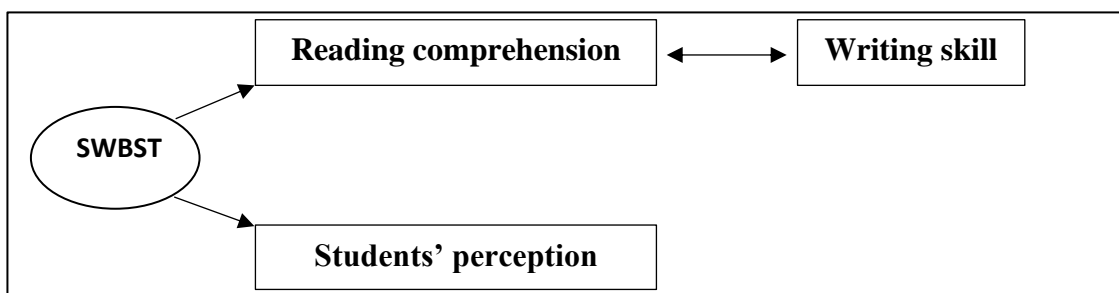


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Research Process

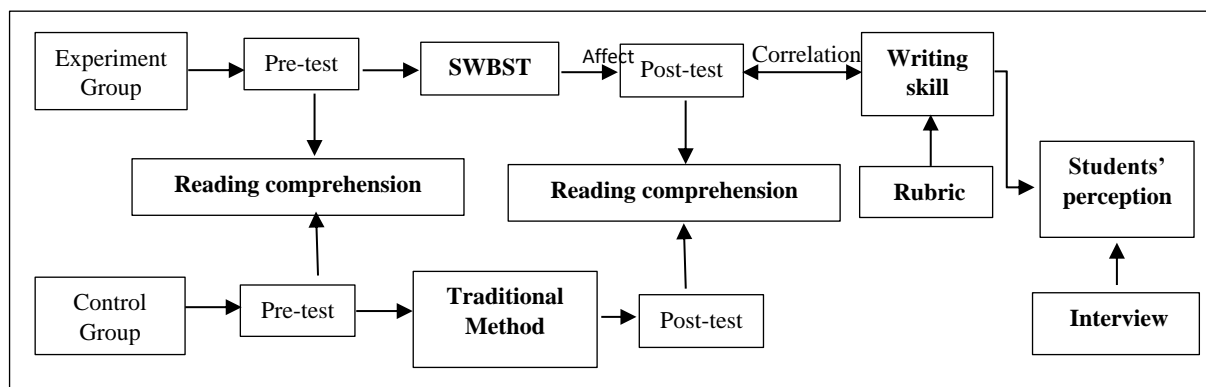


Figure 2: The research processes

## METHOD

### Research Design and Participants

The participants of this study were fourth-grade students from Battambang District, Battambang Province, Cambodia. From a total population of 534 students, including 219 girls aged 9 to 12, two classes—4F and 4L—were selected using simple random sampling, ensuring that each student had an equal and independent chance of being selected (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021). The final sample comprised 92 kids, with class 4F including 46 students (23 females) and class 4L including 46 students (20 females). This representative sample formed the basis for examining the influence of the SWBST strategy on reading comprehension, writing skills, and student perceptions.

### Data Collection

Data were collected from January to March 2025 (academic year 2024–2025) through a combination of reading and writing evaluations and semi-structured interviews. The reading comprehension assessments consisted of 19 items focused on main idea identification and summary, whereas the writing evaluation required students to use extracted main ideas to create new texts. The validity of the instruments was affirmed by three experts, and a pilot test with 41 students yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.903, indicating strong reliability (Ahmad et al., 2024; Izah et al., 2023). Writing assessments were evaluated utilizing a rubric modified from earlier research (Apridayani et al., 2024; Chamberlin et al., 2017). Pre-tests were used to evaluate baseline knowledge and preparedness, whereas post-tests assessed enhancement in understanding after 30 hours of SWBST instruction (Alam, 2019). Subsequently, seven students participated in semi-structured interviews, each lasting 10 to 15 minutes, to provide qualitative insights into their perceptions of the SWBST strategy and its influence on their reading comprehension and writing development. This integration of quantitative and qualitative data enabled a comprehensive understanding of student results and perspectives.

### Research Tools

The study included reading and writing tests to evaluate students' reading comprehension and semi-structured interview inquiries to gather data on students'

perceptions following instruction in the SWBST teaching strategy. The tests consisted of two sections with nineteen questions based on students' reading comprehension (main idea and summarizing the text) and one writing test. Nineteen items and one writing test were developed, and three experts assessed their validity, leading to the adoption of all nineteen items. A pilot test was conducted with 41 participants; Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of internal consistency, was 0.903, indicating strong reliability of the assessment tools (Ahmad et al., 2024; Izah et al., 2023). This elevated number indicated a robust correlation among the items, accurately assessing the same fundamental construct.

As part of the educational experiments, reading and writing tests were used to determine students' learning outcomes and the correlation between their reading and writing abilities. The reading assessments prioritised narrative texts, challenging students to extract main ideas and summarise the information. The writing test evaluated students' abilities to identify main ideas and summarize them to compose a new text. Writing assessments were graded using a rubric adapted from previous studies (Apridayani et al., 2024; Chamberlin et al., 2017). To gather insights into students' perceptions, the study used semi-structured interview questions, which were examined for their credibility in uncovering students' feelings and perceptions after learning to read through the SWBST strategy during 30 hours of teaching experiments. Both quantitative and qualitative data were systematically collected using these techniques.

### **Data Analysis**

The study followed a sequential mixed-methods explanatory design (Creswell, 2014; Dawadi et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2023). Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using inferential statistics, including independent-samples t-tests, means, standard deviations, correlations, and p-values. To address Research Question 2 (RQ2), Pearson's correlation analysis was carried out to examine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between reading comprehension and writing proficiency. These investigations examined the relationship between reading comprehension and writing proficiency. Additionally, qualitative data from the interviews were examined thematically, following the six-phase methodology established by Braun and Clarke (2006): data familiarisation, coding, topic identification, review, theme identification, and final reporting. The analysis of statistical data and the integration of thematic elements facilitated triangulation, yielding quantifiable outcomes and a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions.

### **ETHICAL STATEMENT**

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of 2Thnou Primary School. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants and their legal guardians. Data collection adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, and participants' rights.

### **RESULTS**

This study rigorously adhered to research ethics by complying with APA 7th edition standards. The findings present the results of the SWBST teaching strategy, which aims to

enhance students' reading comprehension, writing skills, and their perception of reading comprehension.

RQ1: Does the SWBST teaching strategy significantly influence students' reading comprehension?

**Table 1. The comparison of the pre-test of the control group and the pre-test of the experimental group**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	D	t-state	P-value	Effect Size
Control	46	5.413	2.172	0.082	0.163	0.44	0.037
Experiment	46	5.495	2.176				

H0 was accepted ( $P=0.44 > \alpha=0.05$ )

Table 1 displays students' reading comprehension scores before the SWBST teaching strategy was applied. The control group ( $M = 5.413, SD = 2.172$ ) and the experimental group ( $M = 5.495, SD = 2.176$ ) exhibited nearly equal performance, with a mean difference of 0.082 and a t-value of 0.163. Despite the p-value (0.037) indicating statistical significance, the minimal effect size (0.44) showed an inconsequential practical difference. Therefore, the groups were considered equivalent in baseline comprehension, implying that any subsequent variation could be attributed to the intervention. The null hypothesis was retained ( $p = 0.44 > \alpha = 0.05$ ).

**Table 2. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test of the control group**

Tests	N	Mean	SD	D	t-state	P-value
Pre-test	46	5.413	2.172	0.261	1.083	0.140
Post-test	46	5.674	2.276			

Table 2 presents the control group's reading comprehension performance before and after the implementation of the SWBST strategy. The average score increased marginally from 5.413 ( $SD = 2.172$ ) to 5.674 ( $SD = 2.276$ ); however, the t-value (1.083) and p-value (0.140) indicated that the difference was not statistically significant. The minimal improvement suggests that the SWBST strategy did not yield a substantial advancement in the control group's reading comprehension.

**Table 3. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group**

Tests	N	Mean	SD	D	t-state	P-value
Pre-test	46	5.495	2.176	2.685	11.879 ***	0.000
Post-test	46	8.179	1.476			

\*\*\*P<0.001

Table 3 demonstrates a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after the application of the SWBST strategy. The average score increased from 5.495 (SD = 2.176) to 8.179 (SD = 1.476), indicating a mean improvement of 2.685. The t-value of 11.879 and a p-value of 0.000 signify a statistically significant enhancement, warranting the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $p < \alpha = 0.05$ ). The diminished post-test variability indicates consistent learning gains, thereby validating the intervention's effectiveness and potential applicability in analogous educational contexts.

**Table 4. The comparison of the post-test of the control group and the post-test of the experimental group**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	D	t-state	P-value	Effect Size
Control	46	5.674	2.276	2.505	6.263 ***	0.00	1.306
Experiment	46	8.179	1.476				

\*\*\*P<0.001; P<0.05; H0 was rejected.

Table 4 compares post-test reading comprehension scores, revealing substantial improvement in the experimental group exposed to the SWBST strategy. Their mean score (M = 8.179, SD = 1.476) notably exceeded that of the control group (M = 5.674, SD = 2.276), resulting in a mean difference of 2.505. The t-value (6.263) and p-value (< 0.001) denote statistical significance, whereas the considerable effect size (1.306) underscores a meaningful practical impact. The statistics corroborate the effectiveness of the SWBST strategy in enhancing student reading comprehension.

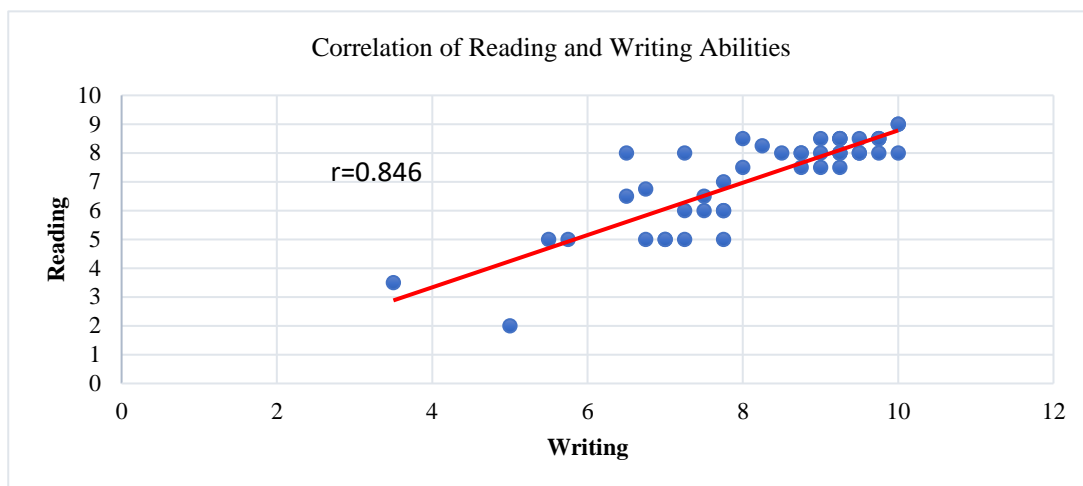
**RQ2: Is there a significant correlation between students' reading comprehension and writing skills?**

**Table 5. The correlation between students' reading comprehension and writing skills**

Correlations (r)	Reading	Writing	Note: Correlation (r=0.1-0.3 small, r=0.3-0.5 medium, r=0.5-1 large) (Schober et al., 2018)
Reading	1		
Writing	0.846	1	

Table 5 demonstrates a robust correlation between students' reading comprehension and writing skills ( $r = 0.846$ ), offering substantial support for the null hypothesis. This link demonstrates that enhanced reading comprehension correlates with improved writing, as students who adeptly discern and synthesize main ideas generally produce more cohesive, polished written compositions. The findings underscore the relationship between these

literacy skills and emphasize the educational significance of integrating reading and writing instruction to foster holistic language development.



**Figure 3. The scatter plot of the correlation between reading comprehension and writing**

The graph demonstrates a strong positive correlation between students' reading comprehension and writing abilities. Each blue point represents a distinct student, and the red regression line illustrates the upward trend. The significant correlation ( $r = 0.846$ ) indicates that enhanced reading comprehension is closely associated with superior writing skills. The closeness of the data points to the regression line reinforces this association, highlighting the educational importance of integrating reading and writing teaching to enhance overall literacy outcomes.

**RQ3: What do students perceive about the SWBST teaching strategy on reading comprehension?**

**Table 6. The students' perception of the SWBST teaching strategy**

Themes	Sub Theme	Quotation
Knowledge	-Read attentively and critically	<i>"...When learning reading comprehension through narrative story, I know much more than before and better understand about the stories..." "...I can identify main ideas in the story because I read the text attentively, analyze each character, review the events in the story, and then extract key main ideas from the story..." "...I can identify the main ideas in the story, which allows me to summarize the plot as well. Not only that, studying through the SWBST method has also helped me learn the writing better..."</i>
	-Identify the story's plot, characters, and key events	
	-Determine the main ideas of the text	
	-Summarize stories effectively	
	-Apply strong writing skills	

<b>Confident</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Accurately identify main ideas and effectively summarize stories</li> <li>-Confidently participate in group discussions</li> <li>-Articulate ideas when sharing within groups</li> <li>-Present and share ideas confidently with the whole class</li> </ul>	<p><i>"...I feel more confident in myself after learning reading comprehension through the SWBST method because it enables me to identify the main ideas in the story...". "...I anticipate that in the forthcoming reading comprehension lesson, I will acquire the ability to analyze characters and events within the narrative collaboratively to share ideas..."</i></p>
<b>Improve Writing Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhance writing proficiency by utilizing diverse vocabulary, efficient sentence constructions, and coherent content arrangement.</li> <li>-Exhibit quantifiable increase in writing proficiency over time</li> <li>-Comprehend and implement suitable context in writing assignments</li> </ul>	<p><i>"...I believe this strategy can enhance my writing skills, allowing me to write more proficiently than previously..." "...I can write better than before through identifying the main ideas, summarizing stories, and analyzing characters while understanding the context..." "...I can write better than before through knowing how to identify the main ideas in the story, summarize the story, and understand important points..." "...I can write better than before through summarizing stories, knowing how to complete exercises related to identifying the main ideas and answering questions..."</i></p>
<b>Satisfaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Express overall satisfaction with the learning experience</li> <li>-Feel positive and happy during the learning process</li> <li>-Enjoy and feel pleased learning through the SWBST strategy</li> <li>-Achieve high scores as a result of effective learning</li> </ul>	<p><i>"...I feel happy because I know much more than before and better understand story..." "...I feel happy because I have learned a lot, understand better, and I can identify more main ideas in story..." "...I am pleased to learnt through SWBST because I can do exercises and get high score..." "...I feel satisfied because I know how to summarize stories..."</i></p>
<b>Pay Attention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen carefully to the teacher's explanations</li> <li>-Concentrate fully when tasks are assigned by the teacher</li> <li>-Pay close attention to identifying titles' meanings and main ideas before writing</li> </ul>	<p><i>"...I pay more attention to my teacher during his explanation how to identify the main ideas in the story while learning reading comprehension through the SWBST..." "...I listen to my teacher when explaining how to summarize the story and what main ideas in each plot..." "...I concentrate when my teacher assigns tasks on identifying the main ideas and summarizing stories for homework..." "...Learning reading comprehension through the SWBST strategy does not only help me to identify the main ideas and summarize the stories, but also enhance my writing skills..."</i></p>

Table 6 presents the qualitative analysis of the themes emerging from students' responses, highlighting their perception of the SWBST teaching strategy for reading comprehension. Among the seven interview respondents, the theme of knowledge indicates

that using the SWBST method has improved students' comprehension skills. Students have gained the ability to recognize the story, characters, and events."...When learning reading comprehension through narrative story, I know much more than before and better understand the stories..." [7]. "...I can identify and analyze each character, review the events in the story, and then extract key main ideas from the story..."[21]. Moreover, they can identify the main ideas of the text, enhancing their narrative comprehension, and they have developed the skill to summarize stories. As a result, by recognizing the main ideas and summarizing stories, students have fostered additional knowledge in writing proficiency. "...I can identify the main ideas in the story, which allows me to summarize the plot as well. Not only that, studying through the SWBST method has also helped me learn writing better..."[7].

Additionally, the theme of confidence demonstrates that students were taught using the SWBST technique for reading comprehension to develop greater self-confidence, as they can effectively identify main ideas and summarize stories with improved accuracy. "...I feel more confident in myself after learning reading comprehension through the SWBST method because it enables me to identify the main ideas in the story..." [7]. Furthermore, students demonstrate confidence in group discussions, exchanging ideas, and sharing with peers during class sessions. "...I believe that in the next reading comprehension lesson, I will learn to analyze characters and events of the story in the group to share ideas..." [24].

Moreover, the theme of improving writing skills shows that teaching students with the SWBST strategy significantly enhances their reading comprehension and writing abilities. As students master reading comprehension through this strategy, they gain proficiency in vocabulary use, sentence structure, content organization, and writing format, despite minor grammatical inaccuracies. This strategy establishes a positive correlation between students' reading comprehension skills and writing abilities."...I think this method can help strengthen my writing skills as I can write better than before..."[7]. "...I can write better than before through identifying the main ideas, summarizing stories, and analyzing characters while understanding the context..."[6]. "...I can write better than before through knowing how to identify the main ideas in the story, summarize the story, and understand important points..."[2]. "...I can write better than before through summarizing stories, knowing how to complete exercises related to identifying the main ideas and answering questions..."[2].

The theme of satisfaction suggests that students express contentment with their learning experience as they improve reading comprehension using the SWBST strategy. Students appreciate this strategy in their studies as it integrates varied, stimulating activities, including character identification, understanding characters' challenges, and conflict resolution within the narrative, enhancing engagement and promoting active participation, dialogue, and knowledge exchange among peers."...I appreciate my augmented knowledge and refined narrative understanding..."[6]. "...I am exhilarated by

my attainment of substantial knowledge, enhanced comprehension, and increased capacity to discern the main ideas in the narrative..."[5]. "... I am pleased to have gained knowledge through SWBST, allowing me to complete exercises and achieve high scores..."[3]. "...I am satisfied because I can succinctly encapsulate narratives..."[3].

Lastly, the theme of paying attention suggests that the SWBST strategy improves students' focus during reading comprehension teaching. "...I observe my teacher closely as she elucidates the narrative summarizing process and delineates the main ideas in each plot..."[1]. "...I listen to my teacher when explaining how to summarize the story and what the main ideas in each plot..."[1]. "...I focus when my instructor assigns homework that requires identifying main ideas and summarizing narratives..."[1]. They can develop techniques for reading comprehension by thoroughly examining the significance of titles and the main ideas to inform their writing. "...The SWBST strategy for enhancing reading comprehension facilitates identifying main ideas and summarizing narratives, concurrently advancing my writing abilities..."[4].

In summary, the students express their perception of how the SWBST teaching strategy strengthens their reading comprehension and writing skills. The interview findings emphasized that using the SWBST teaching strategy positively enhances students' knowledge, confidence, writing ability, satisfaction, and attention.

## DISCUSSION

The results indicated that the SWBST instructional strategy markedly improved students' reading comprehension, writing skills, and attitudes toward learning. Statistical analysis ( $t = 6.263$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) corroborated the rejection of the null hypothesis, thus demonstrating the strategy's effectiveness. Rooted in constructivist theory, which underscores learners' active involvement with texts, SWBST structures comprehension by deconstructing narratives into fundamental components—characters, conflicts, and resolutions (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Juvova et al., 2015; Le & Nguyen, 2024; Reich, 2007). These results align with Cedeno (2022), who emphasized the efficacy and clarity of SWBST in enhancing comprehension, and with Anggraini (2019) and Sari (2020), who acknowledged its role in discerning main ideas. Puspitasari et al. (2024) similarly showed its effectiveness in identifying causal relationships, whereas Cahyanti (2016) confirmed its impact on the awareness of supporting details. Mursyida et al. (2020) corroborated its benefits for vocabulary acquisition, inference, and information retrieval, hence endorsing Preszler's (2006) assertion that SWBST enhances generalization and main idea recognition.

A second notable finding revealed a strong correlation between reading comprehension and writing proficiency ( $r = 0.846$ ), further discrediting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This supports earlier studies by Wijaya et al. (2014) and Prianggita and Habibi (2018), indicating that improved understanding results in greater writing abilities. Simatupang (2018) and Soltani and Kheirzadeh (2017) similarly emphasized the significance of reading in enhancing grammar, vocabulary, and text organization—fundamental elements of writing. Mokeddem and Houcine (2016) and Yang (2015) found that students with superior

comprehension produced more cohesive, thorough writing. The current study agrees, demonstrating that SWBST enhances organization, sentence structure, and vocabulary usage, but minor grammatical errors persist.

Interview results indicated that students possessed favorable impressions of SWBST, highlighting improvements in knowledge, confidence, writing skills, contentment, and engagement. Knowledge emerged as the predominant theme, as noted by Panjaitan et al. (2024) and Michelle and Omar (2024), who observed that comprehension exercises integrate new and existing learning, thereby enhancing understanding. Ozdemir (2018) similarly showed that tale summarization enhances understanding via component analysis. Enhanced confidence corroborated the findings of Ramirez-Avila and Barreiro (2021) about autonomy following the acquisition of summarizing skills, while Sastri (2017) similarly observed that systematic procedures diminish fear and foster confidence. Improved writing abilities, associated with an enriched vocabulary and clear structure, align with the findings of Lin and Chern (2014), Li and Kirby (2014), and Diliduzgun and Genc (2017). Students also reported greater happiness and motivation during reading courses, corroborating the findings of Sinamo et al. (2023) and Friska (2018). Attention and engagement, noted by Sur and Unal (2024), Hukom and Sucita (2022), and Smedt et al. (2015) as critical to literacy success, were also evident; Ozdemir (2018) further showed that attentive summarizers wrote more effectively.

In summary, the incorporation of the SWBST strategy in Cambodian classrooms presents considerable promise for enhancing literacy education and fostering student engagement. Given the bilingual environment and learners' diverse reading proficiencies, SWBST provides a systematic strategy that enhances understanding of both Khmer and English texts. Instructors can enhance logical reasoning and writing skills while encouraging active engagement by helping students recognize essential narrative elements. Furthermore, the strategy's focus on reflection and synthesis aligns well with Cambodia's competency-based curriculum, making it a practical and flexible tool for enhancing language-learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the SWBST strategy significantly improved the reading comprehension and writing abilities of Grade 4 pupils in primary classrooms in Battambang. Participants demonstrated notable enhancements in recognizing narrative elements—such as characters, plotlines, and events—distinguishing main ideas, and producing concise summaries, alongside improved writing skills in vocabulary, sentence construction, organization, and formatting. Additionally, students reported increased knowledge, confidence, contentment, attentiveness, and engagement during the 30-hour intervention.

Thus, in Cambodian primary classrooms, where multilingualism and limited resources impede literacy advancement, SWBST serves as an accessible, low-preparation tool that effectively links reading comprehension with writing proficiency. This approach fosters metacognitive reflection and problem-solving via structured narrative analysis, aligning effectively with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's (MoEYS)

competency-based curriculum, especially in Khmer-English bilingual contexts, and necessitates minimal teacher training for effortless daily implementation.

However, despite these benefits, the study's focus – limited to Grade 4 students in Battambang – restricts its applicability to other age cohorts, regions, or disciplines. The primary methodological limitations are the absence of a control group, the lack of delayed post-tests for evaluating long-term retention, and insufficient analysis of the researcher's perspectives on age-related effects.

Therefore, subsequent studies should examine SWBST's efficacy across grade levels (e.g., Grades 3–6) with delayed post-tests for retention analysis. Comparative investigations against established strategies – such as SQ3R, graphic organizers, or Numbered Heads Together – are recommended, along with extensions to speaking and listening skills and examinations of moderating factors such as baseline literacy or rural-urban disparities.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Each author made an equal contribution to the current study and has read and given their approval to the final published version of the article.

## DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declared that there were no potential conflicts of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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