

## **The Strategies in Using K-W-L to Improve the Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to improve the seventh-grade students' reading comprehension achievement by using K-W-L strategy at SMPN 2 Kunir Lumajang. Classroom action research design was used in this study with the 30 students of 7C class in Lumajang as the research participants. The data was collected by using reading comprehension test to know the improvement of reading comprehension achievement and using classroom observation field note to know the strengths and weaknesses of the action. The criterion of success is at least 75% of the students got the minimum score of 65 in the test. The findings revealed that K-W-L strategy improves the students' reading comprehension achievement. The students become more active and the activity of brainstorming their background knowledge before reading helps them most to get the gist of the text. Overall, the results imply that K-W-L strategy is good in assisting the students to comprehend the reading text.

**Keywords:** K-W-L strategy; reading comprehension achievement; strengths and weaknesses

### **Introduction**

Language is a tool to express thoughts, feelings and opinions. Among all the language skills, reading is a receptive skill that contains a process of seeing what is being written and understanding what is being read (William, 1984). This process consists of processing records for predictive use, identifying key thoughts, know-how of details, identifying the form of the text, and comparing these different steps to determine the amount of memory. This step is widely known and is intended readers read. The reader, first learns the meaning of content and then integrates previously-discovered material with new know-how (Susanti, Buan, & Suhartono, 2013).

In reading a text, comprehension is a must. In order to get the most important pieces of information from the text easily, it is important for the students to have

background knowledge about the topic in mind. It is in line with Kintsch (2004) who states that understanding means identifying and understanding the core ideas of the text and associating them with background knowledge. Furthermore, Klingner *et al.* (2007), as cited in Bustami *et al.* (2018), also said that reading comprehension is a complicated process which causes interaction between reader's background knowledge and experience towards thoughts of ideas implied in the text. In conclusion, students' background knowledge plays an important role in comprehending a text.

Although comprehending a text becomes the main purpose of reading, yet many students experience difficulties when they read an English text which is not their native language. When it comes to English language teaching and learning, students need to understand the text and give responses when being asked about the content of the text. Kustaryo (1988), cited in Husna *et al.* (2012) states that students' weakness in reading happens because they have lack of prior knowledge that becomes an important foundation in getting the point of the text. This lack of prior knowledge includes less of word recognition in target language, less knowledge of language system such as vocabulary and structure, and other factors from both teachers and students. The teachers tend to use conventional techniques in teaching the students and they tend to get less motivation and positive attitudes toward reading. In sum, lack of background knowledge, motivation, and conventional techniques used by the teachers cause the students' problems in reading comprehension.

In fact, many students still found difficulties in comprehending the text. This condition also happened to the seventh-grade students of SMPN 2 Kunir Lumajang. It was because they did not usually read English texts. When they were reading English text, they had problem to understand the meaning of the sentences in the text. The problem with reading comprehension of a text also might be caused by the strategy used by the English teacher that was only asking the students to read the text and to answer the reading questions. It explains why it is a must for the English teacher to be able to use the appropriate strategies to make their students capable of understanding the content of the text easily.

A strategy that can be used by the teacher to improve the students' reading comprehension is Know-Want-Learned (K-W-L) strategy. It is a strategy that allows the students to fill K-W-L chart, so that it needs active thinking when reading a text. It is in line with Blachowicz and Ogle (2008), as cited in Usman *et al.*, (2018), who said that K-W-L strategy is able to assist students to engage with reading text so that they become active readers since they have to analyze the text in three steps: K for recalling what they KNOW, W for what they WANT to learn more, and L for what they have LEARNED (Usman *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, Ibrahim (2012) states K-W-L strategy is suitable for all stages of education. He also states that this strategy is appropriate with reading skill as it

helps students to know how far they comprehend the text, to get students think more critically, to make the students and the teacher become more interactive by discussing the information that they have known from the given topic, and to raise the purpose of reading.

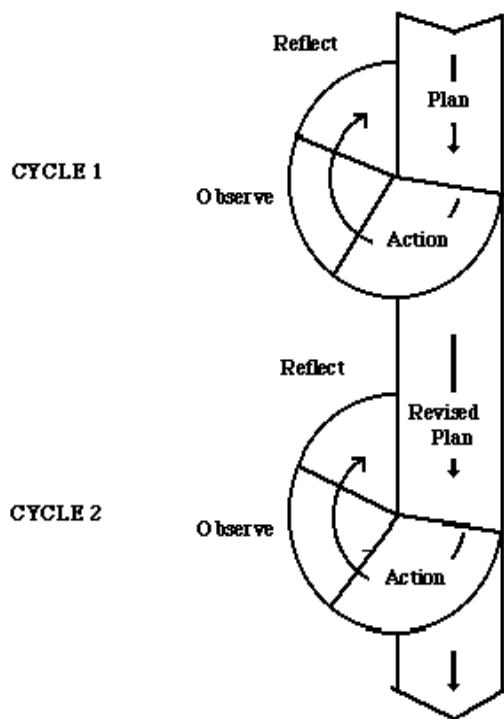
Some previous researchers had conducted the studies about the use of K-W-L strategy in students' reading comprehension. They were Szabo (2007), Sinambela *et al.* (2015), Husna *et al.* (2012), and Rahim (2015). The previous classroom action research for the eighth-grade students conducted by Szabo (2007) revealed that all of the students successfully made improvement in their reading comprehension achievement after applying K-W-L strategy. In addition, Sinambela *et al.* (2015) conducted the experimental research for the fifth semester students of the English Department. The result showed that the experimental group, who were treated by using K-W-L strategy, were more active and their post-test scores were higher than the control group. Another experimental research was done by Husna *et al.* in 2012 who chose the eleventh-grade students as the research participants. The finding showed that using K-W-L strategy was effective for teaching reading comprehension skills. The other experimental research conducted by Rahim *et al.* (2015) showed that K-W-L strategy was effective to develop the students' reading comprehension skill. Therefore, to fill the gap, the researcher intended to do a classroom action research using K-W-L strategy in different schools and levels. The objective of this research was to improve the seventh-grade students reading comprehension achievement by using the strategies in using K-W-L at SMPN 2 Kunir Lumajang.

## Method

### *Research Design*

This research used the classroom action research (CAR) as the research design. A classroom action research is a kind of research conducted by educators in a teaching-learning process aimed to solve the students' problems in the classroom (Gay *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the classroom action research was chosen as the design of this research since this research was aimed to improve the seventh-grade students' reading comprehension achievement by using K-W-L (Know, What, and Learned) strategy.

The diagram of the action research which was applied in this research was a diagram adopted from Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1998), cited in Burns (2010) as follows:



(The Action Research diagram adopted from Burns, 2010)

From the diagram above, it could be seen that the action was done in the cycle model. The cycle consisted of 4 steps named planning the action; implementing the action; doing observation and evaluation, and analyzing as well as reflecting the action. In planning the action, the researcher prepared all instruments that were needed for the research, such as constructing the lesson plans based on Curriculum 2013 for the first cycle (meeting 1 and meeting 2). The criterion of success was also prepared to measure the successful of the action: at least 75% of the students got the minimum score of 65 in their reading test. Then, the researcher implemented the action by teaching the students using K-W-L strategy, while the English teacher became the observer. In each cycle, the actions were done in two meetings with the 2x40 minutes in each meeting. The next step was doing observation and evaluation. During the implementation of the action, the teacher observed the action using field note that was the additional tool in observation. This classroom observation field note was filled to know which part of the action that still needed improvements as well as to know which part that helped the students most in comprehending the text. After implementing the action, the researcher evaluated the result of the teaching-learning process and field note to observe the students' participations and the contributions of K-W-L strategy while the students were doing the reading exercises by using K-W-L chart. Besides, the evaluation of the action was also done through the reading comprehension test given to the students. This reading

comprehension test was used as an instrument to know whether the action was successful or not. The last step was analyzing the data and reflecting the action. In this step, the researcher analyzed the collected data from the observation field note and the students' results of the reading test in the first cycle. The result of the data analysis was reflected based on the criterion of success to make reflection if the K-W-L strategy was effective to overcome the students' problems in reading. From the result of this reflection, the researcher knew about the strengths and weakness of the action in the first cycle.

### ***Research Context***

This research was conducted at one of the Junior High Schools in Lumajang. Based on the preliminary study that was conducted by interviewing the English teacher at the school, it was found that this school uses Curriculum 2013 for all grades. The English teachers also stated that the students, especially the seventh-grade students, had difficulties in comprehending the English texts. It was because they did not usually read English texts. When they were reading the English text, they had the problem to understand the meaning of the sentences in the text because they did not know the meanings of the words in the sentences.

### ***Research Participants***

The participants of this study were the students of 7C consisting of 30 students of 12 males and 18 females. This class was chosen as the research participants because based on the result of the interview with the English teacher there, they had the lowest average score, which was 58.7, in reading text among the other classes. The students of this class had problems in reading English texts. They often did not understand the meaning of the words and the sentences in the texts. Thus, they could not answer the reading comprehension questions correctly. The students' problems with reading comprehension of English texts needed to be solved by teaching the students reading comprehension using K-W-L strategy.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

The research main data were collected by using a reading comprehension test to know the scores of the students' reading comprehension achievement after learning reading through K-W-L strategy. In this research, the students did the reading comprehension achievement test by answering as many as 30 questions in the form of objective test (multiple choices) having descriptive text as the reading material. This reading achievement test was given after the students were taught reading by using K-W-L strategy.

The supporting data were collected by using interview, observation and documentation. The interview was done in the preliminary study by interviewing the English teacher to know the information about the students' problems with reading comprehension of English texts and the technique used by the English teacher in teaching reading. Another supporting data that were collected was observation by applying observation field note to get the data of the students' participation in the teaching-learning process. Besides, documents were also used as the supporting data, such as the names of the research participants, the syllabus, and the previous scores of the students' reading comprehension test from the English teacher.

### *Data Analysis Method*

The results of the students' reading comprehension test in the cycle were analyzed by using the formula below to get the percentage of the students who got score  $\geq 65$ :

$$E = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

(Adopted from Ali, 1993)

Notes:

E = the percentage of the students who got score  $\geq 65$  in their reading comprehension test

n = the number of the students who got score  $\geq 65$  in the reading test

N = the number of the research participants

The criterion of the reading test results was at least 75% of the students got score  $\geq 65$  in the reading comprehension test in the cycle.

### **Findings**

This classroom action research was done in one cycle only which consisted of two meetings. There were three sessions in each meeting (pre-activities, main activities, and post-activities) with the researcher became the one who taught the students and the English teacher became the observer. In pre-activities, the teacher asked some leading questions to activate the students' background knowledge about the topic that was being discussed. Then, the teacher implemented the K-W-L strategy in teaching reading to the students that became the main activities in this research. In post-activities, the teacher recalled what they have learned to make a conclusion and closed the teaching-learning activities. All of the 30 students in class 7C became the participants of the research.

### *The Result of the Observation in Cycle 1*

The observation field note was used to know which part of the steps that still needed revision as well as to know the strengths of this strategy. As the teaching-learning processes were conducted in two meetings, the observation was also be done in two meetings when the teaching-learning process was in progress. The one who became the observer was the English teacher. The observer observed the teaching-learning process on the observation field note by writing the situation in the classroom when the K-W-L strategy was implemented.

In the first meeting, the students did not have any idea of what K-W-L strategy was. The action ran well although some of them were still being shy in telling their ideas. They also got a little confused when they were asked to mention the information that they had known about the topic discussed. To help them, the students were divided into small groups to fill the "K" column of the K-W-L chart. They looked very excited in sharing what they have known about the topic to one another. Although the information varies, they wrote them word by word, not in the form of sentences. Then, they discussed the result of their answers with the whole class. All of the students were active in sharing their thoughts, including the students who were usually passive. After filling the "K" column, the students filled the "W" column with simple questions. After completing "K" and "W" columns, the students read the text. It was easier for them to understand what the text told them about since most of the information had already been mentioned in the "K" column. While reading, they also tried to find the answer of the questions mentioned in the "W" column. Yet, all of them could not find it since the answer of those questions were not stated in the text. Therefore, they only wrote new information they got from the text in the "L" column. They only copied the sentences and did not write it with their own sentences. Then, the students did the reading comprehension questions. The students did the task with their pairs and could do the task well. Yet, they still looked at the text again to find the answer and opened up their dictionary to know the meaning of some words.

In the second meeting, the students have already known about learning reading by using K-W-L. They were excited in mentioning the information that they knew about the topic and could filled the "K" column without any problems. They also began to write the information in simple sentences, not words by words anymore. When it came to filling the "W" column, the students were able to arrange what kind of information that they wanted to know more about the topic. The questions mentioned were varied. After filling the "K" and "W" columns, the students started to read the text. While reading, they also tried to find the answer or the information needed mentioned in the "W" column in the text. Short time was needed to find the information and due to the

variations of the questions, some of the answers could be found in the text. After they found the information, it was the time for them to write all of the information in the "L" column. There were only a few students who were able to write the sentences using their own words, while the rest just rewrote the sentences in the stage of filling the "L" column. After that, it came to after-reading activity. In this step, the students did the comprehension questions in the form of multiple choice given by the researcher. Though they still looked at the text again to find the answer several times, but they could do it well.

### *The Result of the Reading Test in Cycle 1*

Reading test was used to measure the students' achievement after the action was done. In order to know the students' reading comprehension achievement using K-W-L strategy, the reading comprehension test was given after conducting the first and the second meeting. There were 30 questions in the form of multiple choice that covered questions about general and specific information. The time allocation to do the test was 60 minutes.

The percentage of the students who got score  $\geq 65$  in the reading comprehension test was calculated by using the following formula:

$$E = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

(Adopted from Ali, 1993)

Notes:

- E = the percentage of the students who got score  $\geq 65$  in the reading comprehension test in the cycle
- n = the number of the students who got score  $\geq 65$  in the reading test in the cycle
- N = the number of the research participants

Furthermore, the result of the calculation was as follow:

$$E = \frac{23}{30} \times 100\% = 76.7\%$$

It was found that 23 students out of 30 students got 70 or higher. The successful criterion of this classroom action research was at least 75% of the students get score  $\geq 65$  in reading comprehension test. Thus, since 76.7% students got score  $\geq 65$ , this indicated that the goal was achieved. Before applying K-W-L strategy, the percentage of the students who got  $\geq 65$  was 23.3 %, but after applying K-W-L strategy, it became 76.7%. This means that the students' reading comprehension achievement was increased, so the action was stopped.



### *The Result of Reflection in Cycle 1*

Classroom reflection is an effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension achievement among students. By encouraging the students to reflect on their reading experiences, the teachers can help them develop a deeper understanding of the text and improve their overall comprehension skills. In applying K-W-L strategy, the students were divided into groups. This helped the students to share the information that they have known and share it with the whole class.

Students' classroom reflection is useful to make the students activate their prior knowledge, simply means recalling whatever information or experience that related to the topic. It also could make the students think critically and encourage the students to share their information with their groups as well as collaborating their ideas. After that, the teacher discussed the topic with the whole class. Their discussion made the students knew the gaps and the information with the other groups. The teacher also gave the additional information that have not been written before and could not found by the students in the text.

By looking at the students' chart, the teacher knew the point that the students needed to improve and the point that the students had already achieved. By that result of the chart, most of them had already made a good improvement in their reading comprehension ability. This improvement could also be seen from the students' result in their post-test. There were 76.7% of the students got the score of  $\geq 65$ , while before implementing K-W-L strategy, there were only 23.3% of the students got the score of  $\geq 65$ .

### **Discussion**

Based on the research result, the use of K-W-L strategy could improve the students' reading comprehension achievement. There were several factors that made this research result successful.

The first is this strategy facilitated the students to brainstorm their background knowledge by filling the "K" column. Background knowledge is the key factor for successful reading. By developing background knowledge before reading the text, it will be easier for the students to comprehend what the text tells them about. That happened since the more readers knows about a topic, the easier it is to connect new information from reading and increase their comprehension about the text (Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005). It can be seen from the activity of filling the "K" column. In this brainstorming activity, the students collected the information that they had known about the topic being discussed. By doing this, they could acknowledge the vocabularies used and predict what

was being discussed in the text that they were going to read. It was easier for them to connect what they had known with new information they had just known to get better understanding of the text. Therefore, "background knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension" (Cromley & Azevedo, 2007).

The second is K-W-L strategy allowed the students to participate actively in pre-reading, while-reading, and after-reading. As a result, this active reading engagement led to deep reading comprehension (Barber & Klauda, 2020). Furthermore, the students who were passive and shy to answer the questions at first became more active and raised their hands to answer it as well. By looking at this, it could be concluded that this strategy aroused the students' motivation and curiosity in all of the process of reading. It could increase the teaching-learning atmosphere through active discussion between the teacher and the students or between the students themselves (AlAdwani, AlFadley, AlGasab, & Alnwaiem, 2021). Thus, the teaching learning process became more enjoyable and attractive (Sayar & Anilan, 2021).

To sum up, the result of this research revealed that K-W-L strategy was able to improve the students' reading comprehension achievement. This happened due to the fact that it allowed the students to brainstorm their background knowledge and it made the students participate actively in pre-reading, while-reading, and after-reading that led to better understanding of the text.

## Conclusion

Based on the research result, it could be concluded that the implementation of K-W-L strategy could improve the seventh-grade students' reading comprehension achievement in the first cycle. The improvement could be seen from the research result. Before applying K-W-L strategy, the percentage of the students who got  $\geq 65$  was 23.3 %, but after applying K-W-L strategy, it became 76.7%. Thus, this result was considered successful as it fulfilled the successful criterion of the research that was at least 75% of the students got score  $\geq 65$  in the reading test in first cycle.

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## Appendix.

### CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FIELD NOTE

NO.	PROCEDURE	NOTE
1	Brainstorming the students' prior knowledge by mentioning the information that they have known about the given topic	
2	Making small groups to fill the "K" column	
3	Filling the "K" column with the group	
4	Discussing the result of the group work together with the teacher	
5	Delivering questions to the whole class to fill the "W" column	
6	Reviewing the information stated in the "K" column	
7	Reading the text	
8	Finding the answer of the questions stated in the "W" column	
9	Writing down the answer using their own words in the "L" column	
10	Doing the students' worksheet	