



## The Implementation of KWL Strategy in EFL Students' Reading Comprehension

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### Abstract

Reading is one of the fundamental aspects underlying students' achievement yet becomes an activity abstained by students. In fact, EFL learners demand more enjoyable and diverse reading activities. Most EFL students perceive that they are continuously exposed to prevalent reading activities. This qualitative study aims to scrutinize the implementation of KWL strategy in EFL reading comprehension. To answer the research question, twelve higher students of the English department were invited as the participants to be interviewed. The findings reflected that EFL learners encountered reading challenges related to vocabulary, reading comprehension, and attention span. However, KWL strategy assisted them, particularly in setting goal, monitoring reading process, and evaluating reading activity.

### Keywords:

*reading, reading comprehension, KWL strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is considered one of the pivotal keys to students' success in academic achievement. Januarty and Nima (2018) believe that reading skill brings enormous

influence to students' performance. In reading process, students are exposed to information which will be stored and used as their background knowledge (Ahmed, 2021; Pardede, 2022). However, Indonesian students possess a low reading interest, specifically in reading English texts (Iftanti & Shofiya, 2018; Muhassin, Annisa, & Hidayati, 2021). Some EFL students are apt to refrain themselves from reading activities due to complex processes in reading. Moreover, reading English text adds more challenges to EFL students as they are accustomed to read reading text in their first language (Fitriani, 2014; Riadil, 2020). Reading involves intricate processes since students not only decode the meaning of the text but also connect between their prior knowledge and new information stated by the author (Tampubolon, 2017; Septiyana, Safitri, Aminatun, & Mulyah, 2019; Diasti & Mbato, 2020; Manihuruk, 2020; Pardede, 2022). However, connecting ideas in the reading passage, finding out specific information, and relating topics to background knowledge contribute to the main challenges faced by EFL students (Riadil, 2020). EFL students' reading difficulties occur due to students' low cognitive skills (Allen & Zygouris-Coe, 2019). Moreover, Pradana (2017) declares that EFL students tend to be reluctant to engage in reading activities because of teachers' conventional teaching methods and students' lack of reading ability. Therefore, the need to provide diverse academic reading activities should be taken into consideration.

Various reading strategies could be implemented in the classroom to assist students in reading processes. Reading strategies is believed to improve students' academic achievement (Rasinski, 2019; Suprajit, 2019). Some of commonly used reading strategies are predicting, summarizing, monitoring, questioning, visualizing, inferring, and organizing. However, reading strategy that could be used to increase students' reading engagement and comprehension is KWL (Know, Want, Learned) strategy. KWL strategy is believed to help students comprehend the reading passage since it assists students in their cognitive learning activities which results in students' ability to understand textual information (Deliany & Cahyono, 2020). In a similar vein, Ibrahim (2014) emphasizes that reading strategies would be effective if the strategies are carried out before, during, and after reading.

On top of that, there are wide arrays of research investigating the use of KWL strategy in reading class. An experimental study accomplished by Farha and Rohani (2019) showed that KWL strategy increased students' reading motivation. 252 senior high school students were invited to be the participants in their study. They discovered that students who involved in KWL strategy had higher motivation than those who did not employed KWL strategy. Moreover, students in the experimental group were more active in the learning activities. By doing KWL strategy in the reading activities, students could recall the information stated in the passage.

Another experimental study done by Apriliana (2022) sought to find the effectiveness between DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity) strategy and KWL strategy by utilizing DRTA strategy in experimental class 1 and KWL strategy in experimental class 2. This study involved elementary school students as the participants. The results showed that there were no significant differences between DRTA and KWL strategies in increasing students' engagement. Both of the strategies were effective to be implemented in reading activity. She found that utilizing DRTA and KWL strategies assisted students in understanding the text, mentioning the important ideas of the passage, and paraphrasing the whole text. She suggested teachers implement those strategies in

reading classes consisting of different reading interest levels to improve students' reading comprehension.

Furthermore, Gunawan and Rahmawati (2022) explored the use of KWL to engage senior high school students in reading comprehension. Their study showed that the integration of KWL in reading class improves students' engagement. Students participated actively in reading activities. Their study suggested teachers integrate KWL strategy in reading class as it drives students to be more enthusiastic in reading activities. Another research exploring the use of KWL by Muthalib (2021) presents that KWL strategy increases students' reading comprehension. This study was done in blended learning circumstances by involving senior high school students. The results show that KWL strategy affect students' learning outcome, particularly in reading comprehension.

The aforementioned studies seek to find the merits of KWL strategy by involving elementary and senior high school students. They have not touched upon the use of KWL strategy in EFL learners at the university level, especially in post-covid 19 conditions. Thus, this study was done to fill the gap in the literature, especially to add more insight into how KWL strategy assists students' metacognitive process. This research aimed to discover how KWL strategy assisted ELF students in reading comprehension

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Reading***

Reading is one of the receptive skills. It is considered an intricate process since reading involves an interaction between readers' contextual knowledge and writers' ideas (Trehearne & Doctorow, 2005; Akarsu & Harputlu, 2014; Sohail, 2015; Ayu, Diem, & Vianty, 2017; Bria & Mbato, 2019). The idea is in line with Bharuthram and Clarence (2015) as well as Manihuruk (2020) who affirm that students will involve in a conversation within the discourse of a particular discipline. In brief, reading is a process whereby students involves in cognitive stages to connect and construct the meaning stated in the text. with the passage as well as construct meaning Moreover, Manihuruk (2020) states that reading integrate two related processes, namely, word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition involves the process of identifying word's sounds and decoding the words without any difficulties. Whereas, comprehension is the process of making meaning of the text or passage. Successful and efficient readers will use different strategies to comprehend a certain passage. By contrast, poor readers are not aware of the use of effective reading strategies to support their reading comprehension. In brief, the use of different reading strategies will be beneficial for students to assist them in understanding a certain passage.

### ***Reading Comprehension***

Reading comprehension can be defined as an advanced level of reading activity. In this phase, students interact with the text in order to construct meaning from the passage (Ayu et al., 2017). Pardede (2019) accentuated that reading comprehension is an interactive process involving features of the reader, the texts, and tasks. It can also be stated that students are not only required to understand the vocabularies used in the text but also to interpret the meaning written by the author. In reading comprehension, students do not decode the meaning of one sentence. Instead, students are trying to infer meaning from

the whole context (Septiyana et al., 2021). In brief, students scrutinize the meaning from the text. Therefore, students' prior knowledge will be the fundamental foundation to determine their success in defining the passage (Babapour, Ahangari, & Ahour, 2018). However, students often encounter difficulties in reading comprehension. Among the difficulties, text complexity is one of the hardships (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). This is mainly because students do not obtain sufficient exposure to read complex passage. Moreover, advanced vocabulary use and sentence complexity add another burden to the students (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). As a matter of fact, vocabulary knowledge become the most significant proficiency in understanding certain passage (Zhang & Zhang, 2020).

### ***KWL strategy***

KWL strategy is an instructional reading strategy that guides students through a text. It was first introduced by Ogle in 1986. This strategy is believed to help students in reading comprehension by engaging them in activating their cognitive skills (Ogle, 1986). KWL stands for Know, Want, and Learn. In the first step, students activate their background knowledge by questioning themselves about information related to the topic. By doing so, students would grasp author's intention easily. Then, students formulate questions about things they want to know or find out from the passage. The questions would be diverse depends on students' curiosity. Therefore, teachers should not limit students' questions in this phase. The last step invites students to reflect on what they learned from the passage as well as to validate whether they find the answer to the questions they have formulated before. This particular phase could also become readers' evaluation on their reading process whether they do understand the passage or not. Based on the activities, KWL strategy assists students to their metacognitive thinking process (Rahmawati, 2018) since the students will engage in the process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their reading activities.

### **METHOD**

The researchers tried to discover how KWL strategy assisted students in the reading activity. The methodology used was a qualitative method. The qualitative method allows the researcher to interpret and make meaning from the participants' points of view (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). The participants of this research were twelve first-year students who were taking the reading class. The participants were involved in Reader's Log activity in which they worked on biweekly assignments as their homework. To begin with, the students involved in the study were asked to find any article based on a certain topic and read the chosen article by using KWL strategy. The participants had to write what they know and want to know from the topic before reading the chosen article. Then, they reported things they learnt from the topic after reading the chosen article. As part of the assessment, the participants then had to present the written report to the lecturer. To have a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, the researcher conducted FGD to the participants. Three questions were used to delve students' opinion. The questions mainly asked on students' difficulties in reading, strategies to cope with reading difficulties, and benefits students obtained from using KWL strategy in their reading activity. The gathered data were analyzed by using open and axial coding to generate emerging themes

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This part aimed to profoundly elaborate 2 major themes derived from this research based on the participants' perspective, namely (1) EFL reading difficulties and (2) the role of KWL strategy in ELF students' reading comprehension.

### ***EFL Learners' Reading Difficulties***

In this study, students engaged in independent reading activities as their biweekly homework. Students were provided the opportunities to select reading articles based on their interests. According to the FGD results, students encountered varied reading challenges.

*"To concentrate, sometimes I just read it not understand it."* (P1)

*"It is to understand the context. Sometimes, I face a complicated text and it is difficult to connect the information."* (P7)

*"Sometimes I do not know the meaning of some words, because of that sometimes I do not understand the sentence."* (P9)

The above excerpts demonstrate the reading challenges faced by the participants. P1 mentioned how hard it was to stay concentrated in reading. It shows participant's inability to have long attention spans. Various distractions could also occur in reading process which could hinder students in staying focus on reading passage activities. This result is in line with the finding of a study conducted by Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) who discovered that paying attention to the text becomes a crucial element in reading yet EFL students tend to possess low proficiency in this skill. By staying focus on reading activities, students could grasp author's message written in the passage in which later on help students summarize the text.

Different difficulty experienced by P7. Her statements manifested that she experienced hardship in understanding the context of a certain text. It shows that students are not acquainted to read complex passages. This finding is in line with Ahmed (2021) who mentioned that higher education students are not exposed to read complex passage in their daily learning activities. Moreover, connecting new information and prior knowledge contribute to P7's reading adversity. The finding of this study is closely interlinked with Hassan and Dweik (2021) who discovered that one of the primary sources of reading comprehension problems is students' background knowledge. The participants of their research acknowledged that prior knowledge influenced their reading comprehension. In a similar vein, Ramadhianti and Somba (2023) discovered that providing students with diverse text, particularly different from students' culture, created a challenge for them as students did not possess adequate prior knowledge. Riadil (2020) also found that students encountered challenges when reading text different from their culture. Therefore, exposing students to different types of text, specifically involving other cultures, is paramount to help students enrich their background knowledge.

Concerning the vocabulary issue, the participants of this research admitted that many reading texts often encompassed unfamiliar words. P9's statements showed that lack of vocabulary mastery hindered her in grasping the content of a text. Abundant previous research uncovers that vocabulary contributes to reading comprehension problems (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018; Riadil, 2020; Hassan & Dweik, 2021; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). The result of this study also highlights and adds to the fact of poor level of EFL students' vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary knowledge indeed becomes basic

foundation of reading text. In other words, vocabulary knowledge could determine whether the students could interpret the text or not.

### ***The Role of KWL Strategy in ELF Students' Reading Comprehension***

The participants of this research were involved in Reader's Log activity in which they read passage using KWL strategy. Students were invited to elaborate their background knowledge related to the reading topic. Then, students were asked to formulate questions on what they would like to know from the passage. In this stage, students were encouraged to arouse their reading curiosity. In the last phase, students were asked to reflect or evaluate their reading process in order to ensure whether they understand the passage or not. Based on the interview results, the students articulated different ideas on how KWL strategies integrated in Reader's Log assignment help them in reading comprehension.

*"I have to know something from the passage and not just reading it. Get a lot of information from something I find it interesting to read. Moreover, we search the passage by ourselves. So, it must be something that is interesting to us."* (P1)

To begin with, students recall their background knowledge by asking things they know from the topic before reading the selected passage. This phase guide students to comprehend the content of the text. Moreover, P1 articulated that the activities in KWL strategy drove her to expand her knowledge in order to understand a certain passage. Indeed, reading activity requires students to tailor ideas stated by the author and information known by students (Diasti & Mbato, 2020). This finding is also supported by Dieu (2016) who found that KWL strategy improve students' academic achievement as it drives students to connect between their background knowledge and information stated in the articles. KWL strategy indeed require students to hone their cognitive skills as it helps students to thrive their cognitive and critical thinking (Namjoo & Marzaban, 2014). Moreover, the implementation of KWL strategy arouses students' curiosity since they are required to be more active in exploring information related to the passage (Rahmawati, 2018). In other words, KWL strategy assists students to be autonomous learners.

Interestingly, KWL strategy implemented by the participants in this study promotes their reading motivation. Hermida (2022) unveiled that if KWL strategy is carried out properly, EFL students could engage more in the reading activity. Furthermore, the participants of this study acknowledged that KWL strategy elevated their reading motivation. The primary reason underlining this finding is because students could freely choose the passage to read. P1's statements showed that the activity of choosing own's reading passage drove P1 to read willingly without any pressure from the teacher. Students who have high motivation in reading obtain higher achievement compare to those who possess less motivation (Davoudi & Yousefi, 2015). According to P4, she could enrich herself as she gained new information written in the text through the implementation of KWL strategy in her reading activity. She emphasized that this strategy was a great way to encourage her in reading activity. Fuad, Suryanto, and Muhammad (2021) advocated that reading culture should be nurtured at the earliest stage. Undeniably, reading necessitate motivation and interest in order to guide students comprehend the passage. Therefore, providing a proper reading strategy that accommodate students' needs could be a perfect way to boost students' reading motivation and interest. The interview results supporting the framework are reflected as follows.

*“I know some facts that I don't know before and it is interesting to find facts about new things. I also can learn about what a certain person did or what an animal could do. It also made me read articles I would not have read in my free time which is pretty fun to me.” (P4)*

Another indispensable finding of this study is that KWL strategy directs students in the reading activity. KWL strategy aims at cultivating metacognitive thinking process when it was first proposed by Ogle in 1986. Students are engaged in several stages including setting purpose, monitoring reading process, as well as evaluating reading activity. P6's statements showed that KWL strategy guided her in reading activity since she had to formulate questions related to the purpose and evaluation of reading task. It is clearly spoken that KWL strategy helps students find purpose in reading. Therefore, students will read certain passages based on the urge of pursuing reading comprehension. Hermida (2022) discovered that students who employed KWL strategy were more organized in the reading phase compared to those who did not integrate KWL strategy. By using KWL strategy students could be more focused on the reading process as it allows students to read in stages. Students could also evaluate the outcome of their reading process. This finding is in line with Sabouri (2016) who mentioned that the use of effective reading strategies would expand students' text comprehension since they activate their background knowledge while reading the passage. Moreover, the use of several reading strategies, namely, predicting, summarizing, making inferences, and monitoring could also increase students' comprehension of the text (Sabouri, 2016). The excerpts are seen as follows.

*“Speeds us up to get information from the reading we read because basic goals like KWL are the main questions in it and it helps me to shorten the time but still get important information from the articles or readings I read.” (P6)*

Based on the preceding findings, it is worthwhile to be aware of students' reading difficulties. By doing so, teachers could provide diverse reading activities or methods to accommodate students' needs. KWL strategy which has been proposed by Ogle for years could be integrated into the reading activity to facilitate learners in the autonomous learning process. Towards future direction, students have to be ready in the idea of independent learners. Therefore, teachers should provide reading learning environment which could support students to be autonomous learners.

## **CONCLUSION**

To put in a nutshell, it could be stated that KWL strategy progressively cultivates students' engagement in reading processes as it allows room for students to interact with the passage by formulating questions to be asked in every reading stage. The findings of this study demonstrated that students encountered several reading challenges such as advanced vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, and short attention span. However, the use of KWL strategy assisted students to tackle the hindrance. Educators or practitioners are suggested implement this strategy into the reading process, especially in order to provide students with a different reading method. KWL strategy has been known for a long time yet its implementation only limits on senior high school students. Higher education needs to touch upon that as well. Therefore, higher education students need to be equipped with this reading strategy in order to sharpen their cognitive skills. This study is limited in involving the

participants. Future researchers could involve more participants by conducting a study on the correlation between KWL strategy and students' reading achievement. KWL reading strategy usage and gender differences could be an appealing topic to be discussed as well.

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