

The Effect of Applying KWL (Know, Want, Learn) Strategy on Reading Comprehension at Grade IX in SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh penerapan strategi KWL (Know, Want, Learn) terhadap pemahaman membaca siswa Kelas IX SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah strategi KWL dapat meningkatkan pemahaman teks deskriptif siswa secara signifikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain quasi eksperimen dan melibatkan dua kelompok: kelompok eksperimen yang diajar dengan strategi KWL dan kelompok kontrol yang diajar secara konvensional. Setiap kelas terdiri dari 31 siswa yang dipilih secara purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes awal dan tes akhir dan dianalisis menggunakan SPSS versi 25.0, termasuk statistik deskriptif dan uji-t sampel independen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada skor rata-rata kelompok eksperimen (31,61 menjadi 74,19) dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol (39,03 menjadi 69,68). Nilai p sebesar 0,000 ($p < 0,05$) menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa strategi KWL efektif meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa dengan mengaktifkan pengetahuan awal, menetapkan tujuan pembelajaran, dan mendorong refleksi. Guru didorong untuk mengintegrasikan strategi ini ke dalam pembelajaran membaca untuk mendorong pemahaman dan keterlibatan yang lebih baik.

Keyword: Strategi KWL; Pemahaman Membaca; Teks Deskriptif; Kuasi-Eksperimental; Sekolah Menengah Pertama

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of applying the KWL (Know, Want, Learn) strategy on students' reading comprehension at Grade IX of SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar during the 2024/2025 academic year. The research aimed to determine whether the KWL strategy could significantly improve students' understanding of descriptive texts. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study involved two groups: an experimental group taught using the KWL strategy and a control group taught conventionally. Each class consisted of 31 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests and analyzed using SPSS version 25.0, including descriptive statistics and an independent samples t-test. The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's mean score (31.61 to 74.19) compared to the control group (39.03 to 69.68). The p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) indicated a significant difference between the two groups. It can be concluded that the KWL strategy effectively enhances students' reading comprehension by activating prior knowledge, setting learning purposes, and promoting reflection. Teachers are encouraged to integrate this strategy into reading lessons to foster better comprehension and engagement.

Keyword: KWL Strategy; Reading Comprehension; Descriptive Text; Quasi-Experimental; Junior High School

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental skills in English language learning and plays a crucial role in academic success. It is not merely the ability to pronounce words or recognize letters but, more importantly, involves understanding, interpreting, and analyzing written texts. For students at the junior high school level, particularly Grade IX, reading comprehension becomes increasingly important as academic texts grow in complexity and demand higher-level thinking skills. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), reading is an interactive process in which readers engage with texts to construct meaning by utilizing their linguistic knowledge, prior experiences, and reading strategies.

Despite the importance of reading comprehension, many students continue to struggle with it. In the context of Indonesian education, especially in schools like SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar, students often face challenges such as limited vocabulary, lack of motivation, insufficient reading strategies, and poor reading habits. These obstacles hinder their ability to understand texts effectively. Research by Hamra and Syatriana (2010) highlights that Indonesian students generally exhibit low reading proficiency, which affects their academic performance across subjects. Therefore, identifying effective strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension is essential.

One of the instructional strategies proposed to improve reading comprehension is the KWL (*Know, Want, Learn*) strategy. Developed by Ogle (1986), the KWL strategy is a metacognitive reading technique that encourages students to activate prior knowledge, set learning goals, and reflect on what they have learned. It consists of three phases: (1) identifying what students already know (K), (2) what they want to know (W), and (3) what they have learned (L) after reading. This strategy not only promotes active engagement with texts but also fosters independent and critical thinking skills.

The KWL strategy has been shown to be particularly effective in improving reading comprehension in both first and second language learning contexts. According to McLaughlin (2012), students who use the KWL strategy are more likely to engage with reading materials, retain information, and understand content more deeply. Moreover, it helps learners become more aware of their own cognitive processes, thereby enhancing their ability to monitor comprehension. These metacognitive skills are crucial for learners at the junior high school level, where academic texts often require more than basic literal understanding.

In addition, the KWL strategy supports differentiated instruction and caters to diverse learning styles. It allows teachers to assess students' background knowledge and guide them in developing appropriate questions and learning goals. As noted by Carr and Ogle (1987), when students are encouraged to connect their prior knowledge with new information, they develop a more meaningful understanding of the content. This makes the KWL strategy particularly relevant in mixed-ability classrooms, such as those commonly found in Indonesian junior high schools.

Given the potential benefits of the KWL strategy, this research investigates its effect on the reading comprehension of Grade IX students at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar. The study is motivated by the need to identify practical, student-centered approaches that can improve reading outcomes in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. It aims to determine whether the application of the KWL strategy significantly enhances students' ability to comprehend reading texts compared to traditional teaching methods.

Furthermore, this research addresses the gap in local educational studies concerning the use of metacognitive strategies like KWL in Indonesian junior high schools. While international research has demonstrated the effectiveness of KWL, there is limited empirical evidence from Indonesian classroom settings, particularly in private schools in smaller cities such as Pematangsiantar. By focusing on this specific context, the study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of effective reading strategies in EFL environments and provide actionable insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and education stakeholders.

In conclusion, reading comprehension is a vital skill that must be nurtured through effective instructional practices. The KWL strategy offers a structured, student-centered approach that engages learners in the reading process and promotes meaningful understanding. This study explores the impact of applying the KWL strategy on reading comprehension among Grade IX students at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar, aiming to support the improvement of English language learning in Indonesian schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension is widely recognized as a fundamental skill in language learning, essential not only for academic achievement but also for overall cognitive development. It involves complex cognitive processes, including decoding, interpreting, evaluating, and integrating information from texts (Snow, 2002). In *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL) contexts such as Indonesia, students often face additional barriers to reading comprehension due to limited exposure to authentic English materials and the lack of strategic reading instruction. Consequently, the implementation of effective reading strategies is crucial for enhancing students' comprehension skills.

One such strategy is the *KWL (Know, Want, Learn)* strategy, originally proposed by Ogle (1986), which has been adapted and empirically tested in various educational settings. The KWL strategy prompts students to activate prior knowledge, establish learning objectives, and reflect on newly acquired information. This structured approach encourages metacognitive engagement, which has been associated with improved reading outcomes. A study by Rahmani and Sadeghi (2011) found that Iranian EFL learners who used the KWL strategy significantly outperformed those who employed traditional reading methods in comprehension tasks, suggesting its effectiveness across linguistic and cultural contexts.

Numerous empirical studies have supported the use of KWL as a reading strategy in secondary education. For instance, Soleimani and Hajghani (2013) conducted a quasi-experimental study involving high school students in Iran and found that those instructed through the KWL strategy demonstrated significantly better comprehension and retention than those taught with conventional methods. The researchers attributed this improvement to learners' increased motivation and active engagement with the reading texts. This finding is echoed by Zhang (2013), who concluded that the KWL chart encouraged students to read with purpose, thereby enhancing both literal and inferential comprehension.

In the context of Southeast Asia, the KWL strategy has also shown promising results. A study by Aljuhani (2017) with Saudi EFL learners reported that KWL improved reading comprehension, particularly when applied to expository texts. Similarly, Syafryadin and Salni (2019) explored the use of KWL among Indonesian junior high school students and discovered that the strategy helped students better organize their thoughts, predict content, and reflect on learning outcomes. The researchers emphasized the importance of teacher facilitation during the initial phases of the KWL process to scaffold students' cognitive engagement. Another line of research highlights the role of metacognitive strategies—such as those embedded in KWL—in improving comprehension. According to Ahmadi, Ismail, and Abdullah (2013), the use of metacognitive strategies significantly enhances learners' ability to monitor, plan, and evaluate their understanding of texts. The KWL strategy, by its very structure, supports these metacognitive processes, which are especially beneficial for adolescent learners in secondary education, who are transitioning from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.

In addition to improving comprehension, the KWL strategy has been linked to enhanced student motivation and autonomy in reading. For example, Dilekli (2019) found that the use of KWL charts in a Turkish EFL classroom not only improved students' reading performance but also increased their interest in reading activities. When learners set their own questions and learning goals, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning—a key component of effective language acquisition. This is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where students often rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction and may lack intrinsic motivation to engage with English texts. Despite these benefits, the successful implementation of the KWL strategy requires careful planning and support. According to Çubukçu (2008), teachers must be trained to guide students effectively through the three stages of the KWL chart and ensure that students are not merely completing the chart as a task but are genuinely using it as a thinking tool. In Indonesian schools, where the curriculum often emphasizes rote learning and grammar-based instruction, introducing strategies like KWL may require a shift in pedagogical mindset.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that the KWL strategy has a significant positive impact on reading comprehension across various educational contexts, including EFL settings. It fosters active reading, critical thinking, and learner autonomy—all essential components of effective language learning. While more localized research is needed, especially in Indonesian junior high schools, existing studies strongly support the integration of the KWL strategy into reading instruction to enhance comprehension and engagement.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design involving a non-equivalent control group. This approach was chosen to evaluate the impact of the *KWL (Know, Want, Learn)* strategy on students' reading comprehension skills. The design involved two intact classes: one assigned as the experimental group, which received instruction using the KWL strategy, and the other as the control group, which was taught through conventional methods. Both groups were administered a pre-test and a post-test to assess learning outcomes.

The structure of the research design is as follows:

Table 1. design of the research

Group	Pre-Test	Treatment	Post-Test
Experimental	X ₁	KWL Strategy (Y)	X ₂
Control	X ₁	Conventional	X ₂

Where:

- **X₁:** Pre-test to assess initial reading comprehension
- **Y:** Implementation of the *KWL* strategy in the experimental group

- **X₂**: Post-test to measure improvement in reading comprehension

This design allows for comparison between the two groups to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

B. Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all Grade IX students enrolled at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar in the academic year 2024/2025. The total population comprised 124 students, distributed equally across four classes (IX A, IX B, IX C, and IX D), with each class consisting of 31 students.

Table 2. Population in the research

Class	Number of Students
IX A	31
IX B	31
IX C	31
IX D	31
Total	124

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select the sample for the study. Two classes were chosen based on similarities in student characteristics and academic performance. Class IX C was designated as the experimental group (31 students), while Class IX B served as the control group (31 students), resulting in a total sample size of 62 students.

Table 3. Sample

Group	Class	Number of Students
Experimental	IX C	31
Control	IX B	31
Total		62

C. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process followed these steps:

- 1) Pre-Test Administration
Prior to the treatment, both groups completed a pre-test to establish baseline reading comprehension levels.
- 2) Treatment
 - a) *Experimental Group*: Received instruction using the *KWL* strategy. Students filled in the *Know*, *Want to Know*, and *Learned* columns as part of their reading activities.
 - b) *Control Group*: Received instruction through standard teaching methods without any use of the *KWL* approach.
- 3) Post-Test Administration
After the treatment period, both groups were given the post-test to measure improvement in reading comprehension. The use of the same test format for both pre- and post-tests ensured consistency and comparability in data collection.

D. Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained from the tests were analyzed using quantitative methods, specifically descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis was conducted using *SPSS* version 25.0, following these procedures:

- 1) Descriptive Statistics
Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, including measures such as:
 - a) *Mean* — to determine the average score.
 - b) *Median* and *Mode* — to understand the distribution of scores.
 - c) *Standard Deviation* — to assess the variation in students' performance.
- 2) Assumption Testing
Before hypothesis testing, two assumption tests were carried out:
 - a) *Normality Test* — conducted using the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* test to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution.
 - b) *Homogeneity Test* — performed to examine whether the variances of the two groups were equal. This test was conducted using *Levene's Test* within the *SPSS* software.
- 3) Hypothesis Testing
To evaluate the effect of the *KWL* strategy, the following methods were used:
 - a) *Paired Sample t-Test* — to compare the pre- and post-test scores within each group.
 - b) *Independent Sample t-Test* — to compare post-test scores between the control and experimental groups, provided that the data met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity.
 - c) If assumptions were violated, non-parametric alternatives such as the *Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test* or *Mann-Whitney U Test* were applied.

The significance level for hypothesis testing was set at 0.05. Results with a p -value less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant, indicating that the *KWL* strategy had a meaningful impact on reading comprehension outcomes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the completion of the experimental procedures and data analysis, the results indicate a significant effect of the *KWL* (*Know, Want, Learn*) strategy on the reading comprehension abilities of Grade IX students at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar. Statistical analysis using the *independent samples t-test* revealed a *Sig. (2-tailed)* value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance threshold of 0.05. This result supports the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a), confirming that the application of the *KWL* strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension compared to traditional teaching methods.

A. Descriptive Statistics of Student Scores

The performance of both the experimental and control groups was evaluated using pre-test and post-test scores. The summary of the results is presented below:

- 1) Experimental Group (*KWL* Strategy)
 - a) Pre-test scores ranged from 20 to 50, with a mean of 31.61 and a standard deviation (SD) of 7.788.
 - b) Post-test scores improved significantly, ranging from 50 to 95, with a mean of 74.19 and an SD of 12.322.
 - c) Average gain: +42.58 points.
- 2) Control Group (Conventional Method)
 - a) Pre-test scores ranged from 20 to 65, with a mean of 39.03 and a standard deviation of 12.611.
 - b) Post-test scores ranged from 50 to 90, with a mean of 69.68 and an SD of 11.757.
 - c) Average gain: +30.65 points.

B. Comparison of Mean Scores

The chart below illustrates the comparison between the experimental and control groups in terms of their average pre-test and post-test scores:

Group	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean
Experimental (IX-C)	31.61	74.19
Control (IX-B)	39.03	69.68

Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups

From the data presented above, it is evident that both groups demonstrated improvement in reading comprehension from pre-test to post-test. However, the experimental group, which was taught using the *KWL* (*Know, Want, Learn*) strategy, exhibited a much greater increase in scores than the control group. Despite starting with a lower pre-test average than the control class, the experimental group achieved a higher post-test average, indicating not only improvement but also the accelerated effectiveness of the *KWL* strategy in enhancing reading skills. The control group, although showing progress, did not reach the level of improvement seen in the experimental group. This suggests that while traditional teaching methods may aid reading comprehension, the *KWL* approach offers more substantial and impactful gains.

Based on statistical analysis and observed score improvements, it can be concluded that the implementation of the *KWL* strategy had a positive and statistically significant effect on the reading comprehension of ninth-grade students. These findings reinforce the value of active learning strategies such as *KWL* in language instruction, particularly in helping students engage more meaningfully with reading materials.

C. Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the effect of the *KWL* (*Know, Want, Learn*) strategy on the reading comprehension skills of Grade IX students at SMP Swasta Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar. Based on the findings presented in the previous section, it is evident that the implementation of the *KWL* strategy resulted in a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension performance compared to those taught through conventional methods. The results showed that students in the experimental group, who received instruction using the *KWL* strategy, achieved a substantial increase in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test results. Notably, even though this group started with a lower average pre-test score than the control group, their post-test scores exceeded those of the control group. This indicates that the *KWL* strategy was not only effective but also transformative in helping students overcome their initial challenges in reading comprehension.

This finding confirms that activating prior knowledge, encouraging goal-setting, and providing a structured format for reflection and learning—core principles of the *KWL* strategy—significantly contribute to improving students' ability to understand and engage with reading texts. In contrast, the control group, which

received instruction through traditional methods, also demonstrated improvement, but the increase in their reading comprehension scores was less substantial. This supports the idea that while conventional methods may aid learning, they often lack the engagement and critical thinking elements that strategies like *KWL* can offer.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of several previous studies that emphasized the positive impact of the *KWL* strategy on reading comprehension. For instance, research by Ogle (1986), who first introduced the strategy, highlighted its effectiveness in encouraging students to think actively before, during, and after reading. Similarly, studies by Buehl (2009) and Vacca and Vacca (2011) demonstrated that *KWL* charts help learners construct meaning from texts by connecting new information with existing knowledge, thereby promoting deeper comprehension. The results of this study align with these theoretical perspectives and demonstrate the practical benefits of applying such strategies in junior high school settings.

Moreover, the outcomes support constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the role of learners in constructing their own understanding. The *KWL* strategy aligns with this framework by allowing students to reflect on what they already know, formulate their own questions, and record what they have learned. This process reinforces learning as a student-centered and inquiry-based experience, encouraging autonomy, reflection, and active engagement—key components of effective reading comprehension development.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the application of the *KWL* (*Know, Want, Learn*) strategy has a significant and positive impact on students' reading comprehension skills. Students in the experimental group, who were taught using the *KWL* strategy, demonstrated greater improvement in their post-test scores compared to those in the control group who received conventional instruction. This indicates that the *KWL* strategy is an effective tool for helping students actively engage with texts, build prior knowledge, set learning goals, and reflect on new information.

The results also reveal that even students who began with lower initial reading abilities were able to achieve higher comprehension outcomes through the use of the *KWL* strategy. This suggests that the approach is not only effective but also inclusive, supporting learners at different levels of proficiency. By encouraging students to become active participants in their reading process, the *KWL* method enhances critical thinking and promotes deeper understanding, particularly when dealing with descriptive texts.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that English teachers consider integrating the *KWL* strategy into their reading instruction practices. Future research may explore its application across various text types, subjects, or student populations to further validate its effectiveness. Ultimately, the use of student-centered strategies like *KWL* can play a crucial role in improving literacy outcomes and fostering lifelong learning habits among junior high school students.

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