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By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

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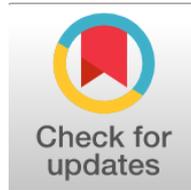
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KWL Plus Strategy Improves Ninth Grade Reading Comprehension Achievement

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Abstract

General Background: Reading is a complex cognitive process requiring integration of linguistic skills, prior knowledge, and comprehension strategies. **Specific Background:** Many junior secondary students struggle to understand English texts, particularly recount texts, due to low interest, limited practice, and difficulty grasping content meaning. **Knowledge Gap:** Although various instructional strategies exist, the KWL Plus strategy has not been implemented at the studied school, leaving uncertainty about its classroom outcomes in this context. **Aims:** This study investigates whether the KWL Plus strategy improves ninth-grade students' reading comprehension achievement compared with conventional instruction. **Results:** Using a true experimental pretest-posttest design with experimental and control groups, both groups showed significant score gains, but the experimental group achieved a higher mean increase (14.040) than the control group (7.083), with significance values of 0.000. **Novelty:** The study provides empirical evidence from a setting where the strategy had not previously been applied, demonstrating stronger gains under structured metacognitive instruction. **Implications:** The findings suggest that incorporating KWL Plus into English reading lessons can support more active learning, deeper text understanding, and improved academic performance in junior secondary classrooms.

Highlights:

- Students receiving the intervention achieved substantially larger score gains than peers in conventional classes.
- Statistical testing confirmed meaningful differences between initial and final assessments in both groups.
- Structured metacognitive activities promoted stronger engagement with recount texts.

Keywords:

KWL Plus strategy; Reading Comprehension; Ninth Grade Students; True Experimental Design; English Language Learning

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Introduction

Reading is an essential component of the teaching-learning process, so it is crucial to cultivate good reading habits in students in their native language when learning English. Moreover, reading is a complex cognitive process that involves understanding words presented in a textual format. It enables readers to expand their knowledge for academic success and personal development [1]. Reading skills include various aspects that contribute to comprehension. Students can express what they read clearly and confidently by honing comprehension, vocabulary, reading fluency, phonic knowledge, and phonological awareness skills [2].

learning reading skills requires a thorough understanding of reading comprehension, vocabulary, general knowledge, and cultural awareness. Students are also required to develop better reading comprehension skills, have better fluency, and demonstrate a higher level of general knowledge [3]. This is where the teacher's role is essential. Since effective teaching methods can spark students' interest and motivation to read, teachers should apply a good strategy when instructing reading. Teachers work with students to help them meet the challenges of teaching English reading comprehension with integrated cognitive skills and talents, including word recognition and linguistic mastery of the text. In other words, readers must become proficient in language to recognize words, decode the text, and comprehend the reading in the future [4].

Reading comprehension aims not to deduce the meaning of individual words or sentences but to comprehend the text as a whole. Gaining the information required from the text as soon as possible is part of reading comprehension, which is the capacity to take in the information in the text and apply it to one's understanding. It also creates a mental image of the meaning of the text in conjunction with the reader's past knowledge of the written text [5]. Students often have trouble with their reading activity, especially when learning recount text [6].

Reading competency requires students to understand interpersonal meanings in recounts, narratives, procedures, descriptions, and reports. However, many struggle with recount texts, students have difficulties to grasp the content, which leads to boredom and decreased interest in reading lessons [7]. Recount texts are texts whose main purpose is to tell the readers about an experience they have had in the past. Recount texts describe "what happened" and are centered on a sequence of incidents that are all connected to the event [8]. A recount text retells past events in order, aiming to inform or entertain. Its structure includes three parts: orientation, events, and re-orientation. The orientation introduces the setting, participants, and when and where the events occurred. The re-orientation, optional, provides a closing or summary. Linguistic features include specific participants, action verbs, time and place references, past tense, and a focus on event sequence [9]. Students are expected to receive resources to advance their comprehension skills in reading. Meanwhile, teachers need to use appropriate strategies that appeal to students and establish a comfortable and joyful ambience in the classroom to create an effective learning environment. Teachers can use various teaching and learning strategies to help students become proficient readers in everyday lessons. The majority of teaching and learning techniques have typically been created to advance [10].

The role of teaching strategies in education cannot be overstated, as they help students understand the subject matter being taught [11]. Using a learning strategy aims to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning [12]. Numerous strategies exist for teaching or learning reading comprehension, such as KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned), KWL Plus, DRAT (Direct Reading Thinking Activity), P2R (Preview, Read, Review), SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), etc. The KWL Plus Strategy is among them [13]. Using the KWL Plus strategy can create a more effective learning environment in the language classroom. It is an alternative to improving comprehension in students by actively involving them in setting learning goals and monitoring progress. KWL Plus Strategy not only aids in text comprehension but also encourages critical thinking and structured summarization, making it a highly effective approach for diverse learning contexts [14]. The purpose of implementing KWL Plus in English learning is to increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. For this reason, teachers need to know reading learning strategies and apply them in the classroom [15].

The KWL Plus strategy, often called the self-scheduling strategy, is a metacognitive technique that relies on information stored in learners' memory. The letter K stands for "What I know," the letter W for "What I want to know," and the letter L for "What I learned." "Plus" refers to students providing a summary of what they learned. Students try to make concept maps, write summaries of the material, and discuss what they learned from the text. As a reading and thinking technique, the KWL Plus approach emphasizes the learner and encourages active participation in information gathering and the development of their various thinking abilities [16].

Therefore, incorporating the KWL plus strategy into reading comprehension skills is a self-reflection that motivates students to evaluate their metacognitive knowledge. The KWL plus strategy is easy to implement with textbooks and engages students, even inactive students [17]. It is crucial to consider how to configure the strategy efficiently to benefit from implementing it in the language instruction [18]. KWL Plus strategy can improve the learning environment in language classrooms. This strategy differs from other strategies that may only focus on learning during the reading process. KWL Plus explicitly integrates the before, during, and after reading stages to increase student engagement and deepen their understanding of the text, which lends support to their use [19]. The main purpose of implementing the KWL Plus strategy for reading comprehension in the classroom is to help students understand more complex texts. It also trains critical thinking skills, increases student engagement in discussions, and helps organize information through concept maps or summaries [14].

Previous studies have shown that KWL Plus is significantly effective. First, M. Suryantini found that applying the KWL Plus strategy is very useful in improving students' reading comprehension and increasing their reading achievement [20]. KWL

Plus is one of the interesting alternative teaching strategies that can encourage students' imagination, creativity, and drive to learn. Moreover, the KWL Plus strategy is combined with mapping and charts. B. Adhinata D highlighted that by emphasizing students' prior knowledge and curiosity, they are engaged to be able to think critically and, through a structured approach, can foster a deeper understanding of the reading text [21]. Third, according to R. Zalisman, the effectiveness of using the KWL Plus strategy improves student reading comprehension and produces positive contributions [22]. Fourth, C. Chimwong argues that the KWL Plus Technique process is effective in helping students comprehend and acquire knowledge meaningfully. Students can create their knowledge and retain it for extended periods [23].

Moreover, according to Sornkeaw J, the KWL-Plus strategy can effectively enhance students' reading abilities, making it suitable for use in the classroom [24]. T.P Ahda Salae mentioned that through group interactions, the students developed close friendships and mutual respect [25]. Not only that, Jittisukpong P claims that the KWL-Plus method has been shown to help students improve their reading abilities by combining experience, fresh information, and motivation to help students identify what they genuinely need to comprehend [26]. This made the students feel energized by the lessons designed using the KWL Plus strategy.

In relation to the present study, the pre-observation was conducted at MTs. Bi'rul Ulum. Based on the interview with one of the English teachers, it was found that the students' reading comprehension skills of the English subject still need to be improved. Low interest in reading makes students reluctant to read English texts, resulting in a lack of training in understanding the content of the text. This is due to many students read only because it is a requirement for their assignments, not because they want to gain knowledge or enjoyment. They do not yet understand that reading can broaden their horizons and improve their critical thinking skills. Through the observation, the researchers concluded that the language acquisition goals are still far from what is desired, especially in English reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the researchers saw an opportunity to maximize the use of KWL Plus to improve students' reading comprehension skills. By focusing on the students' attention of their critical thinking and providing opportunities for hands-on practice, the KWL Plus strategy aims to bridge the gap between students' prior knowledge and what they have learned.

By letting students learn in groups and having internal discussions, the Collaborative Strategic Reading and KWL Plus Technique are educational exercises that focus on intra-group interaction to improve English reading comprehension. The step to create a KWL Plus is Step 1: Preview (K): Students quickly scan the text by glancing at the title or illustration to make connections between the material they are about to read and what they already know

Students will write about what they are reading or how the proceedings should go using the KWL Plus table K (What I know). Step 2: Click & Clunk (W): Students read a text for a short while and use the KWL Plus table to make notes about what they don't understand or would like to know. In addition to exchanging knowledge with other group members, the students ask questions about the subject or challenging terms they are unsure of. Step 3: Get the Gist (L) Students carefully read the passage to identify the main idea and write it down in their own language. The group then discusses the main points and uses the KWL Plus table to form conclusions. L (What I've discovered) Step 4: Wrap up (Plus): Using the KWL Plus, students create a mapping that summarizes the key points of what they have read [23].

Even if the KWL Plus technique has been the topic of some prior research, the study is still essential because the school has not adopted the strategy to help students overcome the difficulties they face when learning English, particularly with regard to their reading abilities. Compared to the study conducted by M. Suryantini [17], which uses Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, pretest-posttest, and questionnaire, the present study employs a quantitative research design. In line with this, the research question is formulated as follows: *Does the KWL Plus strategy have an impact on the ninth-grade students' reading comprehension?*

Method

A. Research Design

The study uses a true experimental design with a pretest-posttest approach in a descriptive quantitative method to investigate the effect of a given treatment on the variable. The design involves randomly assigning research subjects into experimental and control groups. The results of both measurements are analyzed descriptively to describe the changes that occurred due to the intervention by Creswell, which defined as a true-experiment [27]. The research design model is demonstrated in the table below:

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
A1	R	X	O1
A2	R	-	O2

Table 1. Design True-Experiment Study Description:

A1: The group assigned to receive treatment is the experimental group.

A2: The control group was assigned no therapy other than the standard.

R: Random assignment for Experiment and Control.

X: The treatment given is the learning procedure using the KWL Plus strategy for recounting text.

O1: After treatment, the Experimental group was observed.

O2: Control group observation without no treatment.

B. Participant

The participants used in this study are ninth-grade students at MTs. Bi'rul Ulum Gedangan Sidoarjo. This school was chosen as the object of research because it has characteristics that are relevant to the focus of my research, aligns with the objectives of my study and provides a relevant setting to observe the implementation and impact of the KWL Plus strategy on students' reading comprehension. The school implements a curriculum that is in line with the KWL Plus strategy that I want to study, and has students with diverse reading abilities, making it ideal for measuring the effectiveness of this learning strategy. The researchers randomly choose two groups of classes as the subjects. In the control group, namely class 9B, there are 24 students, and the experimental group, namely class 9A, has 25 students. Thus, the total of participants in this study is 49 students. 9A was chosen as the experimental group because the students in this class often have difficulty understanding the deep meaning of reading comprehension exercises during English lessons in their class, which can be seen from their lower scores compared to class 9B. The experimental group were given treatment using KWL Plus.

C. Instrument

The instruments of this research are Pre-test and Post-test. The researchers use a multiple-choice and matching test to check the effectiveness of the KWL strategy and to measure significant achievement differences between the experimental and control groups. In this study, the researchers will collect data from the control and experimental groups. The followings are the data collection steps for this study. In the first meeting, the topic given is Recount text. The following techniques can be used to draw random samples. First, the researchers explain the material about recount text orally. Students pay attention to the explanation related to the recount text material. Second, the researchers provide students with understanding through points related to recount text in writing. Third, students are instructed to summarise their understanding in writing and orally so that they can think critically. Fourth, students are given reading examples related to recount texts and instructed to infer the meaning of the content in the reading text. The researchers here acted as teachers, introducing the lesson objectives and explaining the recount text, structure, and characteristics. Then, the researchers gave a pretest for the experimental and control groups, including 25 multiple-choice questions and 5 matching questions to find implied meanings and connect information within the text. In the second meeting, after the pretest results, the researchers introduced the KWL Plus strategy for the treatment to the experimental group. Students are divided into seven groups, each with 3-4 members. Given a topic about recount text, students used a KWL chart to note what they knew and wanted to know. The researchers provided reading materials, and students worked together to complete their learning. Each group then created a mind map to summarize their understanding of recount texts. Then, the experimental group took the post-test of 25 multiple-choice questions and 5 matching questions. In the control class, the students were exposed to a teacher-centered approach, where the teacher acted as the primary source of knowledge, and the students remained mostly passive recipients of information, with minimal involvement in active learning strategies.

D. Data Analysis

Once collected using a descriptive quantitative method, the findings are compared with theoretical and empirical resources to help understand and interpret the data obtained. One of the researchers acts as a teacher during the study to ensure the study's success. This meant carefully preparing and planning the learning and teaching resources during the treatment. The researchers also created and implemented several teaching approaches to improve students' learning ability. The data collected for this descriptive quantitative research comes from various sources. The researchers analyzed the data once it was collected using quantitative analysis techniques. Specifically, students' reading achievements in the experimental group were compared to those of the control group to evaluate the impact of the KWL Plus strategy treatment. The data is analyzed using Microsoft Excel, which allows calculating various statistical measures using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 (<https://www.ibm.com/products/spss-statistics>) [24].

Result And Discussion

A. Result

This research was conducted on 9th-grade students at MTs. Birul Ulum. The average scores before and after treatment were compared to assess the development of each group, where a significant increase has been proven using descriptive quantitative methods in the table below: