

Enhancing EFL students' reading proficiency and engagement through the KWL Strategy in descriptive texts

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Abstract

Enhancing students' reading ability for understanding descriptive texts is a prevalent challenge when learning English. Many students struggle to fully engage with and comprehend the contents of the text. As a result, using the KWL (Know, Want, Learned) strategy could assist students in better understanding the text's main idea. This strategy aims to stimulate students' prior knowledge, guide the reading process, and organise ideas after reading. This study aims to explore whether the KWL strategy can improve students' understanding of descriptive texts while also fostering their engagement in reading class activities. The Classroom Action Research (CAR) method was used in two cycles: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Each cycle included two learning sessions and one reading test session. The study included 30 students, and data was gathered through tests, observations, and interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The results revealed that students' average scores increased from pre-test (42.16) to post-test 1 (60.5) and post-test 2 (67.83), indicating a significant improvement in reading skills. These findings also demonstrated that the KWL strategy encourages students to actively engage in the learning process, such as enthusiasm in completing the KWL columns and participating in class discussions. The pedagogical implication is that instructors may utilize this strategy to create more interactive learning experiences and help students more deeply comprehend descriptive texts.

Keywords:

*Classroom action research,
Descriptive text,
Student engagement,
KWL, Reading proficiency,
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1. Introduction

Reading is crucial for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it assists students in gaining knowledge, understanding cultural contexts, and preparing for professional roles (Castles et al., 2018). However, many Indonesian students continue to struggle with their reading skills. Lack of interest and motivation for reading, exacerbated by the return to face-to-face learning following the COVID-19 pandemic, is a major contributor to low levels of literacy (Pitoyo, 2020; Rojabi, 2021a). Furthermore, students frequently lack effective learning strategies, motivation, and sufficient vocabulary to comprehend texts well, both in offline and online learning.

This study draws on Grellet's (1983) theory, which explains why people read: for pleasure and to learn. Reading comprehension is the interaction between the author's message conveyed through the text and the reader's interpretation of that message (Clinton, 2019; Rojabi, 2021b; Vellutino, 2007). Grellet (1983) also identified components of reading comprehension, such as understanding words, sentences, paragraphs, and the entire text. Literal understanding is the primary aim of the present research, which requires students to identify explicit ideas in the text (Sajid & Fraidan, 2019).

Furthermore, teachers play an important role in developing engaging and enjoyable learning activities that enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Rojabi et al., 2022). Students will be more motivated to read if they deploy an engaging approach, and they will also gain meaningful insights that are applicable to real-world situations. Furthermore, reading activities constructed in an interesting way allow students to understand various cultural contexts, which can increase their interest in exploring various reading sources with different topics (Chapman, 2019; Howard, 2011). Thus, reading instruction becomes more effective when instructors use innovative and engaging strategies.

Engagement in reading class refers to students' level of participation in learning activities, which impacts their comprehension and retention of the material read (Damaranti et al., 2022; Rojabi et al., 2022). In the context of EFL, engagement is critical to encouraging students not only to comprehend the text but also to actively participate in the reading process, which can help them understand more deeply. According to Fredricks et al. (2004), engagement has three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. These three dimensions interact to create a deeper and more effective learning experience. In reading class, engagement becomes more important when students actively participate in the reading process and can connect their knowledge to the text being read. One of strategies that promote student engagement in reading activities is the KWL (Know, Want, Learned) strategy (Chimwong et al., 2024; Puteri et al., 2023), this strategy can assist learners in accomplishing learning goals by not only

organising their knowledge but also encouraging them to engage more deeply with the text they read, thereby improving their overall comprehension.

Engaging in reading activities is critical for students' understanding of various types of texts, including descriptive texts. Descriptive texts, which seek to describe the characteristics of a specific person, object, or issue, follow a standard structure that includes an introduction and a description. Linguistic features in these texts include the use of present simple, action verbs, adjectives, and embedded clauses, all of which contribute to a clear and detailed picture of the subject being discussed (Kusumaningrum & Widiyanto, 2018; Noprianto, 2017). In this case, student engagement is critical for comprehending the structure and linguistic features of descriptive texts. The KWL strategy effectively supports this process by assisting students in activating their background knowledge, predicting the content of the text to be read, and organizing their thoughts after reading. KWL allows students to more easily engage in descriptive texts, connect their knowledge with new information found in the text, and deepen their understanding of the text's content. As a result, studying a variety of texts in reading activities, including descriptive texts, can enhance students' learning experiences, and the KWL strategy can be an effective tool for boosting engagement and comprehension.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of the KWL strategy in improving students' reading comprehension in EFL settings. Vy and Ha (2020) found a positive impact of this strategy on reading achievement, whereas Syafi'i and Fitriingsih (2020) found that junior high school students' reading performance improved following KWL intervention. Other studies, such as those conducted by Nirwan (2020) and Farha and Rohani (2019), have confirmed that KWL successfully enhances text comprehension. Furthermore, Gunawan and Rahmawati (2022) agreed that this strategy increases student engagement in reading. Teachers should adapt the KWL strategy at different stages of learning to create an engaging reading experience and increase student autonomy (Usman et al., 2018; Widiartini & Sudirtha, 2019).

After reviewing several publications, it was discovered that previous research had primarily focused on the use of the KWL strategy for junior and senior high school students, as well as college students. However, only a few studies have explored the implementation of this strategy among vocational high school (SMK) students. Furthermore, despite the fact that the KWL strategy is widely used in reading classes, research into how it assists students in understanding descriptive texts with specific linguistic structures and features remains limited. Most existing research does not explicitly emphasise the role of the engagement theoretical framework in the reading learning process. As a result, there is a significant research gap in determining the successful execution of the KWL strategy in improving vocational high school students' reading comprehension, particularly their understanding of descriptive texts, while taking into account the dimensions of student engagement. This study seeks to fill this gap by

investigating the use of the KWL strategy in the context of learning descriptive texts among vocational high school students and analysing the impact on their engagement and comprehension.

To address this gap, this study poses the following research questions: (1) How can the KWL strategy improve vocational high school EFL students' ability to comprehend descriptive texts? (2) How can the KWL strategy encourage student engagement during the reading process? and (3) What are the advantages of using the KWL strategy in the reading classroom? The purpose of this study is to provide new insights into the implementation of the KWL strategy in the context of vocational high school education in Indonesia, which has been under-represented in previous research. Furthermore, this study provides instructors with practical guidance on how to use KWL strategies to improve student engagement and reading learning effectiveness. Using a classroom action research (CAR) approach, this study provides a focused solution to the challenges that EFL students face when comprehending descriptive texts, while also promoting better interactions between students and teachers in the classroom.

2. Method

2.1 Research design

This study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to modify teaching methods by implementing the KWL strategy to improve students' comprehension of descriptive texts. CAR was chosen because it enables teachers to directly identify and address learning problems in the classroom, as well as implement solutions based on real-life scenarios (Afrizal, 2015; Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Indahri & Djahimo, 2018; Saputra, 2017; Syah, 2016).

This study is divided into two cycles, each of which includes the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the second cycle, the KWL strategy was re-implemented with lesson plan revisions, awards for active students, and additional instructions to improve the effectiveness of the reading teaching process.

However, CAR has several limitations that must be considered. One of them is the possibility of bias in the reflection process, which occurs when researchers subjectively assess the success of an intervention. Furthermore, implementing CAR in real-world classrooms is frequently hampered by time constraints, complex classroom dynamics, and student resistance to new teaching methods. The design of this study is directly related to the research questions, which pertain to how the KWL strategy improves vocational high school EFL students' ability to comprehend descriptive texts, how the KWL strategy encourages student engagement during the reading process, and what the benefits of using the KWL strategy in the reading classroom are.

2.2 Context and participants

This study was conducted at a private vocational high school in Jember, East Java, with a focus on grade X BDP 2 (Business and Online Marketing) students. A purposive sampling method was used to select the 30 students who participated. This class was chosen because it received the lowest English scores, particularly in terms of reading comprehension. Although the purposive sampling method ensures that participants have relevant experience with the KWL strategy, it has limitations, including the possibility of selection bias, which can affect the generalisability of the results. Furthermore, students with poor reading skills may struggle to adjust to new learning strategies, resulting in slower progress. All participants provided written consent to participate in the study. To protect data confidentiality, all names are pseudonyms and assigned codes S1-S30. This means that Student 1 was given the code S1, Student 2 was given code S2, and so on. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time.

By selecting this context, this study not only aims to improve students' reading comprehension but also to provide insight into the implementation of the KWL strategy in a learning environment with unique challenges, such as low reading motivation and limited vocabulary. This is relevant to the research aimed at creating a more inclusive, needs-based learning approach.

2.3 Data collection and data analysis

This study gathered data through four methods: observation, document review, tests, and semi-structured interviews. The instruments were chosen based on the research objectives, which were to investigate how successful the KWL strategy was in improving students' reading comprehension of descriptive texts and increasing student engagement during reading activities. Observation was used to monitor student engagement during the learning process using the KWL strategy. The observation sheet is designed as a checklist to simplify the process of recording student participation and responses to the strategies implemented. Curriculum, syllabus, student name lists, reading scores, and photographs taken during reading sessions were gathered to provide context and support for the observation data. The test was used to measure improvements in students' reading comprehension. Three tests (pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2) were designed to assess students' literal comprehension of descriptive texts, in accordance with the study's objectives. Two experts validated the test instruments for content validity to ensure they met the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to learn about their perspectives on the KWL strategy's implementation, challenges, and perceived benefits.

Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to provide a complete picture of the KWL strategy's successful execution. The quantitative analysis used data from the observation sheets to calculate the percentage of students who actively participated in the

lesson. Scores from the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 tests were used to calculate students' average scores and determine their level of improvement in reading comprehension. Meanwhile, in qualitative analysis, interview data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key themes reflecting students' experiences with the KWL strategy.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1 The KWL implementation in Reading class

During the preliminary study, the reading pretest, observation, and interview were conducted. The pretest revealed that 3 of 30 students exceeded the score of standard minimum criteria, while 27 students did not achieve the minimum learning mastery standard score. The average score for students is 42.16. The students' pretest scores did not exceed the standard minimum criteria for English subjects (the minimum score is 65). Standard minimum criteria are important to measure students' ability to comprehend texts. After evaluating the students' pretest results, it was determined that their comprehension of descriptive reading text (Class X BDP 2) was inadequate.

Moreover, observation was implemented to observe learners' active participation. Students were also interviewed to discover their reading experiences. From the result of the interview, students are still having difficulty interpreting the text and answering text-related questions, such as determining the main idea of the paragraph and discovering the text's specific information. Also, the teacher's teaching method is ineffective in the reading class (X BDP 2). It was possible to conclude that the student's comprehension of the reading was low. Then, actions in Cycle 1 were required.

The meeting's activities were divided into preliminary, core, and closing. Preliminary activities were designed to assess students' general knowledge. Core activities were exploration, elaboration, and confirmation. Closing activities were intended to assess the student's comprehension after intervention (KWL strategy). Three phases of reading were organised during reading activities: pre-reading, whilst-reading, and post-reading. During the pre-reading phase, the students were given a KWL chart worksheet and asked to create a group in each group consisting of 5 students. The next phase was while reading, where the students were asked to make and write questions about the text in the W column. The post-reading phase was oral questions based on the lesson plan.

3.2. The result of cycle 1

Students' reading improvement in Cycle 1 Meeting 1 and Cycle 1 Meeting 2 are displayed in the tables below so that readers can clearly identify the categories and percentage of students' reading improvement in each cycle.

Table 1. Students' reading improvement in Cycle 1 Meeting 1

Categories	Percentage
Students who could fill K, W, and L columns with ideas	83.33%
Students' word Comprehension	3.33%
Students' sentence comprehension	13.33%
Students paragraph Comprehension	16.66%
Students' participation in the class	41.90%

As seen in Table 1, in the first meeting of cycle 1, 83.33% of students filled the K, W, and L columns with three or more ideas. Whereas, from the oral test, only 3.33% of students answered the researchers' questions related to word comprehension. Then, 13.33% of students could answer the question regarding sentence comprehension. Next, 16.66% of students responded to a question related to paragraph comprehension. Also, there were 10% of students answered a question regarding text comprehension. The average percentage of student participation in class is 41.90%. It demonstrated that the requirements for student participation in cycle one meeting 1 are inadequate.

Table 2. Students' reading improvement in Cycle 1 Meeting 2

Categories	Percentage
Students who could fill K and L columns with ideas	86.66%
Students who could fill the W column with ideas	90%
Students' word comprehension	10%
Students' sentence comprehension	23.33%
Students paragraph Comprehension	16.66%
Students' participation in the class	48%

As seen in Table 2, the second meeting of cycle one, demonstrated some improvements. In comparison to the first meeting, the students completed the KWL column with a minimum of three ideas. The percentage of students who completed the K and L columns was 86.66%. At the same time, 90% of students filled out the W column. The number of students who participated in a class increased, with 10% answering the question related to word comprehension, 23.33% answering related to sentence comprehension, and 16.66% answering related to paragraph and text comprehension. Thus, the student's participation in the second meeting was still poor because the mean percentage was 48%.

Furthermore, as the students started adjusting to the classroom, the class started crowding. They, on the other hand, remained eager and enthusiastic to comprehend the material, applying the KWL. The students also actively asked questions about filling in the KWL column. After completing cycle 1, the performance of the learners was assessed with a reading post-test. The overall proportion of learners who succeeded in achieving the required score was 46.67%, while the overall proportion of learners who did not fulfil the requisite standard score was 53.33%. The mean of the student's score was 60.5. It was

inferred that reading post-test one was enhanced from the students' scores on the reading pretest.

To assist students in practicing their understanding of the KWL strategies, the teacher used column W to focus questions. By asking specific questions about difficult sentences in column W, students were guided to find more focused answers while reading. This allowed them to better understand the relationship between clauses and the overall meaning of the sentence. Column L represents reflection, where after reading, students were asked to write down what they learned in column L. The teacher could help them record difficult sentences and discuss relevant structures or vocabulary to improve their understanding of these concepts. The teacher then conducted a class discussion in which students used the findings from column W to discuss difficult sentences with students, allowing for in-depth discussion of grammar and vocabulary.

Looking deeper into the increased engagement in KWL and post-test scores, we can see that in Cycle 1, 83.33% of students were able to complete columns K, W, and L with at least three ideas. However, their active participation in understanding the text in depth remained low, as evidenced by an average score of 60.5 on post-test 1 (after Cycle 1), which remained below the minimum standard criteria.

3.3 The result of cycle 2

The reflection was carried out once cycle 1 had been completed. The researchers updated the next lesson plan, which the English teacher checked, and decided to proceed to cycle, which followed the same pattern as cycle 1. In cycle 2, reading activities were conducted in both Indonesian and English.

As soon as the students responded to the questions in post-test 1, researchers analysed their answers and addressed the challenges they encountered. The learners were eager to pay close attention to and follow the instructions. However, since the classroom was so disruptive, the researchers switched over and discussed the prevalent topic of the passage.

Table 3. Students' improvement in Cycle 2 Meeting 1

Categories	Percentage
Students who could fill K and W columns with ideas	93.33%
Students who could fill the L column with ideas	90%
Students' word Comprehension	13.33%
Students' sentence comprehension	40%
Students paragraph Comprehension	60%
Students' participation in the class	60.45%

Table 3 demonstrates the student's participation in this cycle improved with 93.33% completing at least three ideas on K and W columns, 90% in L, 13.33% in word comprehension, 40% in sentence comprehension, and 60% in text comprehension. In

response to this table, the average percentage of learners who actively participated in reading class was 60.45%.

Furthermore, thematic analysis was used to analyse interview data, revealing three themes: (1) KWL strategy as a trigger for enthusiasm and enjoyment, (2) KWL strategy promotes interactive learning, and (3) ease and accessibility of KWL strategy.

KWL strategy as a trigger for enthusiasm and enjoyment

The KWL strategy has been shown to create an enjoyable learning environment and spark students' interest in understanding the text. The process of filling out columns K, W, and L presents an interesting challenge while encouraging them to actively explore information. According to S27, this statement demonstrates that the KWL strategy not only improves reading efficiency but also provides a more pleasant learning experience. S21 expressed a similar sentiment, describing the KWL strategy as an exciting experience, as it not only serves as a learning tool but also as a catalyst for enthusiasm, encouraging student engagement.

"The experience was a lot of fun. I was able to seek out the information in the text without having to read it all." (S27)

"The KWL strategy was thrilling! I was excited to finish this KWL column and discover the information in the text." (S21)

"It proved to be an enjoyable tactic to figure out the literal meaning of the passage" (S18)

KWL strategy promotes interactive learning

The KWL strategy promotes reading activities that are more interactive and fun. S29 expresses how learners perceive each stage of this process to be similar to an exciting activity. S29's voice demonstrates that the KWL strategy successfully transforms monotonous reading activities into engaging and exploratory experiences. Furthermore, S25 demonstrated that reading learning mediated by the KWL strategy becomes more interactive, with each stage of the process providing its own enjoyment. S25 emphasised that the KWL strategy not only improves reading comprehension, but it also fosters a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

"It turned out to be a game. I learned new knowledge". (S29)

"KWL-mediated Reading learning is very interactive and every stage in the process becomes more enjoyable." (S25)

Ease and accessibility of KWL strategy

The KWL strategy simplifies and facilitates the reading learning process, making it an effective method for understanding texts in a simple manner. Learners feel assisted in organising the information found in the text without having to read the entire content in

detail. As stated by S16. Furthermore, this strategy not only makes things easier to understand, but it also provides a rewarding and impressive learning experience. S14's opinion demonstrates this. S14's voice emphasised that the KWL strategy not only serves as a learning aid but also fosters learners with confidence and satisfaction in their ability to understand the material.

"It offered a simple way to easily comprehend the text." (S16)

"I agreed with this strategy since it helped me understand the text. It was amazing!" (S14)

Table 4. *Students' improvement in Cycle 2 Meeting 2*

Categories	Percentage
Students who could fill K, W, and L columns with ideas	93.33%
Students who could fill the L column with ideas	90%
Students' word Comprehension	20%
Students' sentence comprehension	50%
Students paragraph Comprehension	36.66%
Students' participation in the class	64.72%

Furthermore, the observation result showed that 93.33% of students filled the K, W, and 90% of L columns with three or more ideas. In comparison, 20% answered the researchers' questions about word comprehension, 50% answered sentence comprehension, 36.6% answered paragraph comprehension, and 66.66% answered text comprehension. As a result, the average percentage of learners who actively participated in reading class was 64.72%. This shows that the number of learners participating in the second meeting of cycle two was greater than in the first meeting.

The student's scores on the second reading post-test were also assessed. The scores on the post-test demonstrated improvements. The average score for the students was 67.83. It is possible to conclude that cycle two was superior to cycle one. Thus, this current study could be successful since the learners' average score exceeded the success criteria. This study focused on the aforementioned problems by implementing the KWL strategy to assist learners in enhancing their capacity to comprehend descriptive text. This study aims to explore how the KWL enhances the capacity of learners to comprehend descriptive text, as well as explore the benefits and challenges that learners encounter when using the KWL during reading activities.

The results of this current study displayed the students' reading comprehension enhancement, comprehending words, sentences, paragraphs, as well as text. The student's reading achievement was insignificant for a variety of reasons, including a lack of educational resources and an overemphasis on grammar learning. Since the KWL strategy was only implemented for two cycles, the resulting improvement was also insignificant. When the learners use this strategy for additional meetings in the cycles, their

comprehension and reading scores could improve. Students had difficulty understanding the text. They struggled to understand the meaning of the passages and respond to questions about them as well.

Looking deeper into the increased engagement in KWL and post-test scores, we can see that during Cycle 2, students' engagement in KWL increased to 93.33% for columns K and W and 90% for column L. This contributed to an increase in the average post-test 2 (after Cycle 2) score of 67.83, which exceeded the minimum standard. This increase suggests that increased KWL engagement supports students in gaining a deeper understanding of the text.

There is a correlation between qualitative observations and obtained scores. Observations exhibited that students who actively filled out the KWL column had an easier time finding main ideas and important details in the text. For example, students who recorded more ideas in column K demonstrate a stronger initial understanding of the topic. This helped them answer questions on the post-test. Column W also helped students direct their reading focus, making it easier for them to find specific information. Column L allowed students to reflect and summarise their understanding, which has been shown to improve their ability to respond to enquiries regarding paragraph and text comprehension.

In an in-depth look of improvements in sentence comprehension in Cycle 1, only 13.33% of students were able to answer sentence comprehension questions. However, in Cycle 2, the percentage increased to 40%. Observations indicated that students who used the W column to record questions were more motivated to look for answers in the text. Furthermore, specific improvements in text comprehension. In Cycle 1, only 10% of students were able to answer questions about text comprehension. In Cycle 2, this percentage increased to 66.66%. Column L assisted students in writing better summaries, which improved their overall understanding of the text.

In response to the quantitative findings for sentence understanding, only 13.33% of students in Cycle 1 were able to answer sentence comprehension questions. In Cycle 2, this percentage increased to 40%, but it remained lower than other factors such as text comprehension (66.66%). Factors that contributed to the slower improvement in sentence understanding were students had limited focus on sentence structure. The KWL strategy prioritises understanding main ideas and specific information over detailed analysis of sentence structures; thus, students with limited understanding of grammar or vocabulary struggle to comprehend complex sentences. The second factor was students spent more time in columns K and W, which focused on initial ideas and questions, leaving little time to explore sentence structure. In addition, some students had difficulty analysing inter-clause relationships in complex sentences, so their sentence comprehension improved more slowly.

The teacher made improvements, with an emphasis on sentence analysis in Cycle 2. The teacher began giving more instructions on how to understand complex sentences, such as explaining the subject-predicate structure, clauses, and connectors. The teacher also incorporated specific exercises to help students understand sentences, such as asking them to identify the subject, predicate, and object in sentences from the text being read. The teacher then integrated KWL columns and sentences in which the teacher instructed students to highlight difficult sentences in the W column and discuss them explicitly in class.

Table 5. *Students' improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2*

Categories	Mean score
Pre-test	42.16
Post-test 1	60.5
Post-test 2	67.83

As seen in Table 5, the students improved their scores prior to and following enacting the KWL strategy. The students' mean scores of pretests (42.16), post-test 1 (60.5), and post-test 2 (67.83) showed an improvement in scores in reading.

Table 6. *Participation of students from the first cycle to the second cycle*

Categories	Percentage
The active participation of students in the first cycle meeting 1	41.80%
The active participation of students in the first cycle meeting 2	48%
The active participation of students in the second cycle meeting 1	60.45%
The active participation of students in the second cycle meeting 2	64.72%

The KWL can assist the instructor with developing an environment where students can engage with each other. This theory has been confirmed by this present study. Throughout reading sessions, the learners and faculty could build interactions. This study discovered learners could take an active role in expressing their thoughts and proving their comprehension by responding to the teachers' text-related questions. As seen in Table 6, The involvement of the learners increased from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Learners participated in 41.80% of meeting 1, cycle 1. The following meeting of cycle 1 was 48%. It was subsequently raised to 60.45% in cycle 2 meeting 1. As a result, the enhancement in cycle 2 meeting 2 was 64.72%.

The findings of this study indicated that the KWL strategy improves students' reading comprehension in engaging activities. KWL-mediated reading activities can be implemented in simple and engaging steps to comprehend and complete tasks during sessions. These findings of this study confirm that the KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) strategy is an effective way to improve students' reading comprehension (Hastomo & Zulianti, 2022; Khaira, 2015; Khairunnisa, 2017; Mardiana, 2016). Previous research has demonstrated that this strategy not only helps students understand the text

but also actively engages them in the learning process. In general, Khairunnisa (2017) and Mardiana (2016) agree that KWL enhances students' reading abilities through active participation. Both studies emphasize that the KWL strategy enables students to focus their attention on specific information, increasing the effectiveness of learning. This study discovered a similar pattern, with students not only understanding the text better but also managing their time more effectively. In this case, KWL helped them complete reading tasks with more focus in engaging tasks (Hastomo & Zulianti, 2022; Khaira, 2015).

The findings of this current study revealed that students who actively filled out the KWL column had an easier time locating main ideas and important details in the text. Students who recorded more ideas in column K showed a better initial understanding of the topic. Column W also assisted students in narrowing their reading focus, making it easier for them to locate specific information. Column L allowed students to reflect and summarise their understanding. This current study supports findings of prior studies (Sholeh et al., 2020; Wijaya, 2015) by demonstrating that learners can use this structure to comprehend texts in a more systematic and organised manner. The KWL structure—represented by columns K, W, and L—played a significant role in the success of this strategy. Column K helps students activate their prior knowledge, column W helps them set reading goals, and column L encourages them to reflect on what they have learned.

Furthermore, prior studies (Damaranti et al., 2022; Gunawan & Rahmawati, 2022; Nanda & Pratama, 2021; Sinambela et al., 2015) found that the KWL strategy improved students' concentration and engagement in reading learning. These findings are consistent with the results of this study, which found that using this strategy increased student engagement. However, this study also identified students' lack of good reading behaviours and classroom management challenges, such as students becoming excessively noisy during discussions, which were also identified in this study. This supports prior studies (Chimwong et al., 2024; Puteri et al., 2023; Rusmiati, 2017), highlighting students' lack of good reading behaviours, students' lost interest in reading, and lack of effective classroom management, can reduce the efficiency of the KWL strategy. In this study, the instructor failed to maintain control over classroom management. Following that, the current study suggests that future researchers limit the number of students in effective classrooms. In considering these issues, the position of the instructor within the educational setting is expected to supervise, establish, and manage the course of instruction. As a result, the KWL strategy can be used effectively to provide learners with engaging activities and an engaging classroom environment. This ensures that the course objectives in the reading are met to the maximum extent possible. KWL is not only a tool for understanding texts but also a pedagogical framework that encourages students to engage actively, manage their time, and organise their information. However, the success of this strategy is heavily dependent on the instructor's ability to effectively manage the class and provide clear guidance.

4. Conclusion

This study seeks to determine whether implementing the KWL strategy can improve students' comprehension, particularly in descriptive text. The theoretical framework for this study includes the KWL strategy, an engagement-based approach that allows students to actively interact with the text. The theoretical framework of reading emphasises the importance of text comprehension by identifying main ideas, which is especially relevant for descriptive texts that necessitate a thorough understanding of specific linguistic characteristics and features. On the other hand, engagement theory is critical to ensuring that students not only understand the text but also actively participate in the learning process. In the context of this study, the KWL strategy not only assists students in comprehending descriptive text, but it also encourages them to develop a deeper understanding by asking questions (column W) and reflecting (column L). Thus, implementing the KWL strategy increases students' overall engagement, which improves their comprehension of descriptive text and reading skills.

Applying the KWL strategy can help learners engage with texts and boost learners' participation and ability to grasp text ideas. The findings of the study indicated that there was a significant improvement in how students engaged during reading sessions when the KWL strategy was implemented. Additionally, it resulted in an improvement in students' reading scores as observed in the pretest, post-test 1, and post-test 2. The KWL strategy offers advantages that boost students' proficiency in comprehending descriptive text. The learners possess the ability to readily grasp the content of texts without repeated reading and translation. The students have the opportunity to actively engage and communicate with their teacher during reading activities. More importantly, learners have the opportunity to engage in discussions, which allows them to generate and exchange ideas. Besides, there are some challenges during reading descriptive text classrooms through KWL. The teacher should grab more attention from noisier students. Other than that, the teacher should motivate the learners to engage and participate actively in an interactive classroom.

This study contributes to the array of educational practices where the KWL strategy can be used to promote student engagement, particularly in literacy-oriented classes. This strategy is applicable not only to descriptive texts but can also be adapted to other types of texts, such as narrative, expository, or argumentative, to help students develop critical thinking skills. Teachers can use this strategy to promote active student participation, which is essential in 21st-century learning.

However, this present study has some limitations; data were only collected through interviews and observation from vocational high school students. The material is also limited to descriptive text to measure students' success in comprehending words, sentences, and paragraph comprehension. Further studies are recommended to conduct

the same topic of KWL strategy on students' reading ability with diverse texts for high school or university students. Providing rich data, for instance, a focus group discussion in a qualitative study, is needed to explore deep investigation regarding students' engagement with texts and peers, active participation in individual or group projects, and score enhancement in reading. This study's limitations include the intervention's relatively short duration, which may have influenced the overall results. Future research should use a longer timeframe to assess the long-term impact of this strategy on students' reading comprehension. As a qualitative study, the possibility of researcher bias cannot be discounted. The interpretation of interview and observation data can be influenced by researcher subjectivity, particularly when identifying themes or evaluating student participation. The research material is restricted to descriptive texts, which is a limitation. This limits the ability to generalise the research findings to other types of texts. Longer-term research, as well as the use of more diverse data triangulation methods, such as focus group discussions, can help to reduce bias.

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