THE USE OF KNOW-WANT-LEARNED (KWL) STRATEGY IN IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS' ABILITY TO COMPREHEND ACADEMIC READING MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of *Know-Want-Learned* (KWL) strategy to improve English Foreign Language students' ability in comprehending academic reading materials. The subjects of this study consisted of 60 junior high school students in the district of South Kalimantan, Banjarmasin. The researcher adopted a mixed-method and employed a quasi-experimental design. The experimental group was taught by using KWL strategy while the control group was taught by using the conventional strategy. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires, pre and post-test and semi-structured interview. Data from questionnaires were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the students were proficient in reading activity and were interested in using KWL strategy in comprehending academic reading materials. The pre and post-test mean scores were analyzed through paired and independent sample t-tests. The findings of the pre and post-test showed that there was a significant improvement in achievement for the experimental group (M=91.83, SD=5.33) when compared to the control group (M=82.00, SD=6.64), t(58)=6.32, p<0.05. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interview were analyzed based on thematic analysis. As a conclusion, the result of the interviews showed that KWL strategy has increased the students' interest in reading academic texts and helped the students to comprehend those texts. Thus, this study showed that the use of KWL strategy could improve EFL students' ability to comprehend academic reading materials.

PENGGUNAAN STRATEGI *KNOW-WANT-LEARNED* (KWL) DALAM MENINGKATKAN KEUPAYAAN PELAJAR BAHASA INGGERIS ASING DALAM MEMAHAMI BAHAN BACAAN AKADEMIK

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji penggunaan strategi *Know-Want-Learned* (KWL) untuk meningkatkan keupayaan pelajar Bahasa Asing Bahasa Inggeris dalam memahami bahan bacaan akademik. Subjek kajian ini terdiri daripada 60 pelajar sekolah menengah di daerah Kalimantan Selatan, Banjarmasin. Penyelidik menggunakan kaedah campuran dan menggunakan reka bentuk kuasi eksperimen. Kumpulan eksperimen itu diajar dengan menggunakan strategi KWL manakala kumpulan kawalan diajar dengan menggunakan strategi konvensional. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah soal selidik, temu bual pra dan pasca ujian dan separuh berstruktur. Data dari soal selidik dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik deskriptif. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mahir membaca aktiviti dan berminat menggunakan strategi KWL dalam memahami bahan bacaan akademik. Skor min ujian pra dan pasca dianalisa melalui ujian t sampel dan ujian bebas. Hasil ujian pra dan pasca menunjukkan terdapat peningkatan yang signifikan dalam pencapaian bagi kumpulan eksperimen (M = 91.83, SD = 5.33) apabila dibandingkan dengan kumpulan kawalan (M = 82.00, SD = 6.64), t) = 6.32, p <0.05. Data kualitatif dari wawancara separa berstruktur dianalisis berdasarkan analisis tematik. Kesimpulannya, hasil temubual menunjukkan bahawa strategi KWL telah meningkatkan minat pelajar membaca teks akademik dan membantu pelajar memahami teks tersebut. Oleh itu, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan strategi KWL dapat meningkatkan keupayaan pelajar EFL untuk memahami bahan bacaan akademik.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EF EPI	Education First English Proficiency Index
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
KWL	Know Want Learned
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 21)
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1　Introduction

English has become a very important language because it is used by many people from all over the world. Furthermore, English is considered as an international language. All international events held in various countries in the world tend to use English as the medium of communication. Thus, English is taught as a compulsory subject in Indonesia. The English language is taught in Indonesia consists of four skills that include speaking, writing, listening, and reading. One of the English language learning basic skills that must be mastered by the students is reading skill. Reading skills is important to enhance students' proficiency in the English language. In reading skill, it is not about reading the whole text to find out the meaning of each word, but reading skill is about comprehending the message and information of the

reading text during the reading process. But in fact, the students still have difficulties when they read a text. They tend to focus on translating word by word rather than finding the message and information in the reading text. Therefore, the students should find an effective reading strategy to interpret the message and information in the reading text so that they can improve their ability in comprehending the reading text.

1.2   Background of the Study

The teaching of English language has raised global interest as the English language is an international language. As the English language is used at a global level to communicate amongst people, it indicates that English is an important language in the world (Collins & Stefanovicova, 2011). However, in Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language. It indicates that English is not used for daily communication. The Indonesians use their mother tongue to communicate with one another in their daily activities. Nevertheless, teaching English becomes a very important matter for Indonesian students in order to prepare future generation of Indonesia to be ready to face the era of globalization.

Considering the importance of English as an international language, the Indonesian government has set English as a compulsory subject which is to be taught formally in schools. English becomes one of subjects which will be tested in national examination. It is important to do well in the nationl examination as the results will determine the path in which they would be able to continue their education. Thus, the

teaching and learning of English process in secondary schools, junior high schools and senior high schools are immensely important.

Students must pass the national examination if they want to continue their studies. Only two skills in the English language are tested in the national examination for the junior high school. They are reading skill and writing skill. 40 questions or 80 percent is allocated for reading skill by answering the questions based on the content of the texts. 10 questions or 20 percent is allocated for writing skill by completing the incomplete paragraphs and arranging the jumbled sentences and paragraphs. Since most of the questions in the English national examination examine reading skill, reading becomes a very important skill which has to be mastered by junior high school (13 to 15 years old) students in order to pass the English national examination.

In academic setting, reading is "assumed to be the central means for learning new information and gaining access to alternative explanations and interpretations" (Coertze 2011, p. 8). Thus, in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), reading should focus on the students using the English language for several purposes: (1) searching for information; (2) general comprehension; (3) understanding or comprehending current information being read; (4) synthesizing and evaluating the information. But, in fact, those purposes are still ignored in Indonesia so there are many students who face difficulties while reading a text especially in comprehending or understanding the content of the text. This fact was revealed when the scores of the last English national examination was analyzed. The score of the last English national examination took the lowest average score (50.18) among three other subjects such as Bahasa Indonesia (64.32), natural sciences (52.19) and mathematics (50.31) (Kemendikbud,

2017). It has now become a very important matter for English teachers to help their students through appropriate and innovative strategies in order to improve their reading skills in comprehending academic texts.

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, teaching English is not easy for English teachers in Indonesia because they should find out effective strategies, approaches and methods to improve the students' English skills (Laili 2015). Among four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing skills), reading skill needs more attention in terms of effective teaching. This refers to the most questions of English national examination which tests the students' reading skill. Following reading class is often boring as the students must encounter many texts which probably contain many difficult words to be translated in Bahasa Indonesia. If the teachers cannot provide an interesting and effective strategy, the students would not be enthusiastic to follow that class. In consequence, interesting and effective reading strategies have to be found in order to help students comprehend the content of the texts. Otherwise, it is a fact that many teachers in the district of South Kalimantan, Indonesia, tend to use conventional strategies in teaching reading class. Here, the teachers teach the reading class by providing some texts which are followed with some questions based on the content of the texts. After that, they directly give the texts to the students and ask them to read the texts. Then, if the students find the difficult words to be translated in Bahasa Indonesia, the teachers will ask the students to open their dictionary to find the meaning of those words. The students also have to answer the questions based on the content of the texts. This strategy is very boring for the students. Then, it affects the students' performance in reading class. Hence, the students need something new that can make them motivated to join reading class.

In this study, the researcher would like to examine a reading strategy proposed by Ogle in 1986 called as KWL strategy. This strategy is used to guide the students to do through a text. This strategy is chosen since it has several advantages. For example, it can encourage students to be active readers either individually or in a group. It can also improve students' reading interest since it can relate the students' background knowledge of the topic to the reading text. By setting the purpose for reading, it not only lets the students assess their comprehension, but also helps them monitor their comprehension and provide a chance for them to expand their ideas through the text. It can make them get extended reading materials by continuing to read more written materials. Indirectly, this strategy allows the students to become active and highly motivated learners.

Previous studies have also shown that KWL strategy can improve the students' reading skill and give positive effects to the students' reading comprehension. Astiti (2014) and Avila & Torres (2017) argued that KWL strategy could increase the students' reading comprehension mastery. Furthermore, by using KWL strategy on teaching and learning process, it might overcome the students' difficulties in reading class. It was also supported by Hamdan (2014) who stated that KWL strategy was effective in the case of Jordanian male students' reading comprehension in reading class. He said that the students enjoyed reading and they could comprehend the text more easily. Then, Thanh Dieu (2016) also argued that KWL strategy can make passive students become active in following the reading class. Furthermore, this strategy succeeded in promoting active learning that could encourage academic success.

Therefore, by considering these reasons, the researcher is interested in conducting a research related to the use of KWL strategy in reading class. It is done in order to prove whether or not the use of KWL strategy can improve the students' ability in comprehending academic reading materials in the eighth grade junior high school in the district of South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Moreover, this study hopefully can also provide the information whether or not KWL strategy is an interesting strategy that can motivate the students in the district of South Kalimantan, Indonesia, to join reading class.

1.3   Problem Statement

According to Klingner, Vaughn and Boardman (2015) in reading comprehension, the students should achieve some objectives which include: 1) the ability to find out general and specific information from the reading text, 2) the ability to find out the main ideas and specific ideas from the reading text, 3) the ability to find out the implicit information from the reading text, and 4) the ability to understand the meaning of the words from the reading text. It means the students are expected not only to comprehend the message from the writer but also to obtain the important points and the implicit information stated by the writer within the text.

However, in the real situation, most of students had problems in comprehending the reading text, and reading academic reading texts was the most difficult subject that faced by the students. For instance, when the teacher gave a text and asked the students to read, they faced difficulties in comprehending the meanings,

hence when the teacher asked them some questions, most of them could not answer correctly. It indicated that the students had low proficiency level in comprehending the academic reading text. In this case, opening dictionary to look for the meaning of the difficult words was not the best solution if there was no supporting activity that made them happy to follow the reading class. Therefore, there had to be something different that could make the students motivated to join reading class.

There were two factors affecting the students' comprehension; the external factors and the internal factors. The external factors came from outside of the students related to the teaching technique, material, and media while the internal factors came from inside of the students related to vocabulary, interest, and reading strategy (Kilpatrick, 2015). Both of them played an important role in determining the students' performance in comprehending the texts.

Based on preliminary observation by the researcher, some problems were found in reading class at the junior high school students in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia, particularly the eighth grade students, that led to the students to be at low proficiency level in comprehending the academic reading texts. The first problem came from the external factor that was teaching technique. The English teacher in the eighth grade employed conventional technique in teaching reading class. She entered the class and instructed the students to open their handbook. After that, she got the students to read a text in particular page. Then, if the students found difficult words, the teacher asked them to look up their dictionary. After the students finished reading the text, the teacher instructed them to answer the questions related to the text. These happened continuously in my preliminary observation. The teacher

used monotonous strategy in teaching reading class. There was no surprising activity that could make the students feel really involved in teaching and learning process. In this case, the teacher still employed teacher centered strategy whereas in 21st century, student centered strategy really needed to be employed.

The next problems belonged to the internal factors. There were three problems that were included in this factor. The first problem was related to the students' mastery in vocabulary. The students' limited knowledge in vocabulary was the main problem in comprehending the message in the reading text. It could be seen when the students found few difficult words in the text, they directly felt confused and had no confidence to answer the question correctly. They did not try to guess the meaning from the text by connecting with the previous and following words. Some of them skipped the difficult words or asked their friends.

The second problem was about students' interest, this factor was closely related to the students' motivation. It could be seen from the situation when they were involved in a reading activity. Some of the students felt bored and could not focus on the reading text. They sometimes stopped reading and chatted with their friends. They did not give any response when the teacher started to discuss the text. Furthermore, when the teacher asked some questions, the students started reading the text again and some of them gave the wrong answer. It happened because the teacher did not provide the students an activity that could make the students get connected with one another. Nevertheless, they discussed the lesson.

The third problem was their ability in implementing the reading strategy. The students did not use the reading strategy effectively, although they may know some reading strategies to comprehend the text. It could be seen when the teacher gave a test related to the topic, they preferred to ask their friends directly. Actually, they could do skimming or scanning when they read, but they did not use them. They did not know when they should use these strategies to help their comprehension while reading the text. It happened because they felt bored and unenthusiastic to follow the reading class. When one is bored, the only thing one would do is to complete the task as quickly as possible. The students did not think too much about the result. In this case, enhancing the students' interest to read the academic texts was very important.

Considering the problems above, the researcher is going to undertake a quasi-experimental research approach by implementing one of the reading strategies, particularly KWL strategy. There are several reasons why KWL strategy is used in this study. First, KWL strategy is a simple reading strategy in order to comprehend reading text. It is an instructional reading strategy that can encourage the students by stimulating their prior knowledge from the beginning of the reading lesson (Maulida & Gani, 2016). Furthermore, KWL also engages the students' interest as they think about what they want to know and what they have learned. It can be one of strategies including in student centered strategy. It also involves the students to the teaching and learning process since they have to be active to tell their ideas regarding the text. Moreover, each student has the same opportunity to tell their ideas in front of class so it can avoid the students' boredom in reading class.

Based on the above explanations, it is hoped that the KWL strategy would be one of the effective strategy to improve the students' ability to comprehend academic reading texts since this strategy can help the students to comprehend the messages of the short functional texts and essays in the form of descriptive texts. These are the reasons why the researcher would like to examine KWL strategy in improving students' ability to comprehend academic reading materials at eight grade students of junior high school in this study. The researcher hopes the result of this study will be able help students to use reading strategy effectively in reading class.

1.4   Research Objectives

The researcher formulates the objectives of the study as follows:

a)   To examine whether or not the students are interest in using Know, Want, Learned (KWL) strategy to comprehend academic reading materials.

b)   To investigate the effectiveness of Know, Want, and Learned (KWL) strategy in improving EFL students' ability to comprehend academic reading materials.

c)   To examine the students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Know, Want, and Learned (KWL) strategy in improving EFL students' ability to comprehend academic reading materials.

1.5   Research Questions

Based on the research objective, research questions are as follows:

a)   To what extent are the students interest in using Know, Want, and Learned (KWL) strategy to comprehend academic reading materials?

b)   To what extent can Know, Want, and Learned (KWL) strategy improve EFL students' ability to comprehend academic reading materials?

c)   What are the students' perceptions on the use of using Know, Want, and Learned (KWL) strategy in improving EFL students' ability to comprehend academic reading materials?

1.6   Significance of the Study

The researcher mainly focuses on this research for applying of KWL strategy to improve EFL students' ability in comprehending academic reading text. The researcher expects the result of this study to be able to provide additional information to those in the educational field, such as teachers, students, and educational institution.

1.6.1   The Teachers

The researcher expects the result of this study to be able to give information on the reading strategy that can be used during the teaching and learning process and encourage the students to improve their ability in reading. In addition, this study is fully expected to give the English teachers clear insight about the use of KWL strategy in comprehending academic reading materials so that by understanding this strategy, the teachers can integrate KWL strategy for the students.

1.6.2   The Students

The students can use the result of this study as basic to improve their reading comprehension in academic reading materials by applying KWL strategy as one of effective strategies. This study is expected to be able to make the students more interested in reading and also to improve their ability in reading.

1.6.3   The Educational Institutions

The result of this study can hopefully be a recommendation so that KWL strategy can be used to improve students' reading ability in comprehending academic reading materials and also to support teaching and learning process in junior high school in order to get better output.