Activating Prior Knowledge through KWL Strategy in Young EFL Learners' Reading

Fianico Sukmana Rozy, M. Pd
Universitas WR Supratman Surabaya
bospunk.fsr@gmail.com

Abstract

The KWL strategy (Know, Want to know, Learned) is a pedagogical approach designed to activate prior knowledge and enhance reading comprehension, particularly effective for young learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) aged 7 to 12 years. This strategy supports cognitive and metacognitive development by guiding students to reflect on their existing knowledge, generate questions based on their learning needs, and consolidate newly acquired information. It addresses the linguistic and cognitive challenges young EFL learners face by reducing cognitive load and fostering active engagement with reading materials. The flexibility of KWL allows educators to adapt it using visuals, simplified language, and collaborative activities, making it suitable for diverse multilingual classroom settings. Empirical research demonstrates that KWL improves learners' retention, organization of ideas, critical thinking, and motivation. Effective teacher facilitation, including explicit modeling and scaffolding, is essential to maximize the strategy's benefits. Moreover, KWL promotes social interaction and cultural responsiveness, which further supports language acquisition and learner confidence. Overall, the KWL strategy offers a systematic, learner-centered framework that nurtures autonomous and motivated readers, contributing significantly to the development of reading comprehension skills in young EFL learners.

Keywords: *KWL Strategy, Young EFL Learners, Prior Knowledge Activation*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential aspect of language acquisition, particularly for those who are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in their initial phases. It necessitates the decoding of written symbols and the derivation of meaning from them, a dual process that can be cognitively taxing for young learners. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading comprehension is the result of the integration of higher-order reasoning processes with lower-level recognition skills. This implies that reading instruction should be based on strategies that facilitate both conceptual understanding and linguistic decoding. Consequently, it is imperative to develop instructional strategies that combine cognitive engagement with linguistic constraints in the early stages of EFL education.

The activation of prior knowledge is a critical factor that contributes to successful reading comprehension. Anderson (1984) underscores that learners' comprehension of a text is substantially influenced by their prior knowledge. Drawing on their existing knowledge offers a meaningful entry point into unfamiliar content for young EFL learners who may encounter challenges in vocabulary and grammar. Students' engagement and comprehension are enhanced when they are instructed to establish connections between new material and their personal experiences. This underscores the significance of pre-reading strategies that prioritize knowledge activation.

The KWL strategy, which stands for "Know," "Want to know," and "Learned," was created by Ogle (1986) as a framework to facilitate active reading through metacognitive reflection. The approach encourages students to reflect on their existing knowledge, pinpoint areas in which they are lacking, and record new insights that they acquire as a result of reading. Fisher and Frey (2004) have observed that KWL fosters students' sense of proprietorship over their learning by facilitating the establishment of personal objectives and the assessment of its results. This approach is particularly well-suited for young learners due to its straightforwardness, structure, and emphasis on purposeful reading. Additionally, it encourages the practice of learning through introspection.

In EFL environments, where English is frequently restricted to classroom settings, strategies such as KWL can facilitate language acquisition by providing contextual support. Nation and Macalister (2010) contend that learners' comprehension is improved when they are provided with signals that connect their prior knowledge to new information. The KWL framework achieves this by establishing cognitive anchors for new vocabulary and concepts, thereby making learners' thoughts visible and structured. These anchors are indispensable for the young reader in order to effectively retain information and discern meaning. Consequently, the KWL strategy fulfills both cognitive and linguistic functions.

Engaging young learners in sustained reading activities can be difficult, particularly when the materials are culturally unfamiliar or linguistically dense. According to Harmer (2015), interactive and participatory activities are essential for young learners to maintain their concentration. In response to this, KWL motivates students to establish objectives and contemplate their educational experiences. In doing so, it fosters a sense of progress and intrinsic motivation. In

EFL contexts, these components are essential for the cultivation of positive reading habits among early learners.

Another advantage of employing the KWL strategy is the development of metacognition. The concept of metacognition was first introduced by Flavell (1979) as the capacity to comprehend and regulate one's own learning processes. Young learners acquire a greater understanding of their reading strategies and are able to manage them over time as a result of KWL. Students engage in a process of self-assessment that promotes a more profound comprehension as they express their knowledge and inquiries. This ability to contemplate one's learning is essential for sustained academic success.

Additionally, the utilization of visual aids, such as KWL charts, is consistent with research on the most effective pedagogical tools for children. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) discovered that graphic organizers assist students in organizing their thoughts, thereby enhancing their retention and comprehension. The chart format is both instructional and motivating, as it enables learners to observe the progression of their thinking. Additionally, it offers educators a rapid diagnostic instrument to evaluate students' misconceptions and prior knowledge. This visual structure improves the accessibility and inclusivity of early EFL classrooms.

Inquiry-based learning is introduced into reading sessions through the "W" component, which represents students' desires to learn. Vygotsky (1978) underscores the significance of social interaction and inquiry in the development of knowledge. Learners become more invested in the learning process and develop a sense of agency when they generate their own queries. This encourages a more profound interaction with texts and facilitates comprehension that extends beyond superficial comprehension. KWL thereby aligns reading activities with learners' inherent inquiry, thereby empowering them.

Reflection and the consolidation of knowledge are fostered by the "L" component, which pertains to the knowledge that students have acquired. Dewey (1933) posits that reflection is the process by which mundane experience is transformed into genuine learning. Students not only solidify their comprehension but also become cognizant of their educational achievements through the act of articulating their acquired knowledge. This stage facilitates the active utilization of new vocabulary and concepts for EFL learners. It also assists in the identification of areas that necessitate additional clarification or review.

The KWL strategy also benefits educators. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) emphasize that effective teaching commences with a comprehension of the prior knowledge of the students. The "K" section provides educators with a comprehensive understanding of the students' contributions to the classroom, enabling them to customize their instruction accordingly. Additionally, the instructional pacing and material relevance are influenced by student queries in the "W" section. KWL fosters a teaching approach that is responsive in this manner.

KWL's adaptability to a wide range of instructional objectives and text types is another of its strengths. In the context of literacy development, Tompkins (2010) emphasizes the importance of adaptable strategies, particularly for early

learners. KWL can be employed in a variety of content areas, including science and social studies, as well as with both fiction and nonfiction. Its structure remains consistent, which facilitates the internalization and transfer of the strategy to various contexts for students. This renders KWL an invaluable resource for academic advancement, in addition to language acquisition.

KWL promotes linguistic inclusivity in multicultural and multilingual classrooms. Cummins (2001) is a proponent of instructional practices that recognize learners' primary languages as valuable assets for the acquisition of a second language. KWL can be modified to motivate students to articulate their prior knowledge in their native languages prior to transitioning to English. This method promotes cross-linguistic transfer while also honoring the cultural identities of students. In global EFL settings, inclusive pedagogy is of particular significance.

KWL must be implemented with scaffolding and guidance, notably for young learners, despite its advantages. Strategy instruction must be explicit and supported by modeling and practice, as Paris and Winograd (1990) emphasize. Teachers are required to exhibit the ability to effectively formulate queries and reflect on their learning. Students may encounter difficulties in independently employing the strategy in the absence of this assistance. Consequently, it is imperative to provide ongoing teacher facilitation in order to optimize the advantages of KWL.

KWL's efficacy in EFL contexts is corroborated by empirical research. Alodwan and Almosa (2020) conducted a study that revealed that students who utilized KWL demonstrated significantly superior performance on comprehension tasks in comparison to those who did not. This implies that the activation of prior knowledge improves both comprehension and retention in foreign language reading. The KWL framework's structured nature also contributed to the increased motivation and engagement of learners. These results provide practical classroom evidence that supports the theoretical advantages of KWL.

Nevertheless, Nassaji (2007) emphasizes that reading comprehension is a multifaceted process that is influenced by contextual, linguistic, and individual factors. Therefore, the implementation of strategies such as KWL must take into account the cultural context, proficiency, and age of the learner. Understanding the interplay between these factors and the use of strategies can result in more effective and equitable instruction. Additional research is required to investigate these dimensions in a variety of EFL contexts. This study contributes to that endeavor by concentrating on the experiences of juvenile learners with KWL.

In summary, the KWL strategy provides a potent method for enhancing the reading comprehension of young EFL learners by activating prior knowledge. The strategy is consistent with constructivist and metacognitive learning theories, and it offers a framework for learner reflection, as well as motivation. It is a compelling option for early literacy instruction in multilingual settings due to its empirical support and adaptability. However, in order to guarantee accessibility and efficacy, its implementation must be deliberate and directed. The objective of this paper is to investigate the pedagogical influence of KWL on the development of reflective learning and reading skills in juvenile EFL classrooms.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK
1. Prior Knowledge in Reading Instruction

Prior knowledge is widely recognized as a fundamental element in reading comprehension, serving as the cognitive basis for the construction of new understanding. Anderson (2016) asserts that prior knowledge forms the cognitive frameworks or schemas that learners utilize during a reading assignment, enabling them to assimilate and analyze incoming textual information proficiently. When learners do not engage pertinent prior information, the text may seem fragmented or unclear, hindering understanding. Furthermore, prior knowledge functions not merely as a passive backdrop but actively supports the cognitive effort required to interpret and comprehend new information. This scaffolding role is particularly crucial in second language learning, where foreign lexical and syntactical patterns provide additional hurdles, and linking to familiar concepts alleviates cognitive stress and enhances comprehension.

The significance of prior knowledge in young EFL learners is accentuated due to their concurrent pursuit of linguistic proficiency and conceptual comprehension. Carrell (2017) emphasizes that young learners, who are still expanding their linguistic repertoire and cognitive frameworks, significantly benefit from tactics that explicitly engage their pre-existing knowledge base. By prompting learners to retrieve pertinent concepts, experiences, or terminology before to interacting with texts, educators facilitate the formulation of hypotheses regarding material, permit predictions, and create a significant context for new knowledge. This cognitive alignment diminishes working memory requirements, therefore liberating mental resources for more profound processing activities such as inference, synthesis, and critical assessment. Thus, incorporating prior knowledge activation into reading teaching results in significant enhancements in comprehension and retention for young EFL learners.

A more sophisticated comprehension of prior knowledge activation perceives it not merely as a straightforward recovery of stored information, but rather as a complicated, interactive, and productive process. Rumelhart's (1980) schema-driven comprehension theory posits that readers actively generate meaning through a continuous interaction between new textual information and established cognitive frameworks. This reciprocal process is contingent upon the reader's intent, background, and the characteristics of the text. Educators must create educational environments that not only evaluate learners' knowledge but also promote strategic connections and reinterpretations of existing knowledge in relation to new information. Prior knowledge functions as an interpretive framework that influences both understanding and learners' critical engagement and evaluative assessments of textual content.

Effectively incorporating past knowledge activation into reading training requires intentional and diverse teaching tactics. Anderson (2016) argues for several methodologies, including pre-reading talks that stimulate brainstorming among learners, the utilization of graphic organizers to visually represent current knowledge, and concept mapping to systematically arrange and connect concepts. These tactics facilitate metacognitive reflection by prompting learners to recognize

knowledge deficiencies and generate pertinent inquiries, so directing their reading towards defined learning objectives. Moreover, connecting reading material to students' cultural contexts and personal experiences fosters emotional involvement, which research indicates substantially influences motivation and cognitive commitment to the task (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The amalgamation of cognitive and emotive components highlights the comprehensive essence of effective reading teaching that emphasizes the activation of prior knowledge.

It is essential to recognize that the influence of past knowledge activation differs among individual learners due to developmental, linguistic, and sociocultural disparities. Brown (2021) emphasizes that young EFL learners frequently encounter constraints due to limited vocabulary and insufficient background knowledge in the target language, which might impede the effective activation and utilization of prior information. Teachers must meticulously evaluate students' prior knowledge and linguistic proficiency to customize instructional strategies accordingly. Scaffolded support—comprising simplified texts, vocabulary pre-teaching, and guided discussions—can address these deficiencies. Moreover, cultivating metacognitive skills enables learners to recognize their cognitive methods and intentionally utilize prior information to improve comprehension, hence encouraging learner autonomy and enduring reading abilities.

The main limitation of this study arises from its exclusive use of documentation as the research method, which inherently excludes direct participant interaction and real-time classroom observation. Bowen (2009) observes that documentation studies provide valuable theoretical insights; however, they may not adequately capture the practical challenges faced by teachers and learners on a daily basis. Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) caution that documented reports frequently depict idealized practices, which may neglect learners' emotional engagement and the spontaneous dynamics of the classroom. The study may not fully encompass the complexities involved in implementing the KWL strategy with young EFL learners, thereby restricting the depth of contextual understanding.

A further constraint pertains to the scope and selection of documentation sources, which predominantly included English-language academic publications, theses, and institutional guidelines available via formal databases. Creswell (2014) highlights the importance of source diversity for research validity. Consequently, omitting local or unpublished materials and studies in various languages may compromise the generalizability of findings, especially considering the cultural and linguistic diversity present among young EFL learners globally. The study concentrates on young learners, specifically children aged 7 to 12 years in primary education (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Cameron, 2001). The emerging English literacy and cognitive development of this group require instructional strategies such as KWL, which focus on activating prior knowledge and providing scaffolding (Ellis, 2008). The exclusion of younger preschoolers and older learners limits the generalizability of findings to this specific developmental stage.

The study's focus on reading comprehension as the only language skill restricts the applicability of its findings to other areas, such as speaking or writing, and to learners beyond the young EFL demographic. Brown (2021) emphasizes the

necessity of adapting instructional approaches to the developmental and linguistic characteristics of learners, which differ markedly by age and context. This study provides valuable insights into KWL's role in activating prior knowledge among young EFL readers. However, additional empirical research involving diverse age groups, language skills, and direct classroom engagement is essential for a more comprehensive understanding. Characterizing young EFL learners as upper primary students with emerging literacy skills allows for the contextualization and targeting of the study's findings and recommendations.

2. The KWL Strategy for Activating Prior Knowledge

The KWL technique, established by Ogle (1986), is acknowledged as an effective pedagogical instrument aimed at activating learners' prior knowledge and improving reading comprehension. This technique is organized into three consecutive stages: Know (the existing knowledge of learners), Want to know (the desired knowledge of learners), and Learned (the knowledge acquired by learners). Ogle's conceptualization posits that the KWL framework promotes active participation before, during, and after reading, enabling learners to systematically arrange their cognitive processes. Researchers have observed that such scaffolding enhances metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning, essential for profound understanding (Shea & Duncan, 2020). The KWL technique establishes a deliberate reading context by encouraging learners to express their prior knowledge and learning objectives.

The KWL method successfully connects past knowledge with new information, enhancing the significance of learning. According to Hudson, Lignugaris/Kraft, and Miller (2005), the deliberate activation of learners' prior knowledge prepares their cognitive systems to assimilate and connect new information. This preliminary measure alleviates cognitive overload that frequently obstructs understanding, particularly in EFL environments where linguistic difficulties are prevalent. Additionally, the "Want to know" phase cultivates curiosity and drive by prompting learners to formulate questions, thus individualizing the learning experience. The cognitive and affective advantages collectively enhance comprehension scores and maintain student engagement.

Empirical research has shown the beneficial effects of KWL on the reading development of young learners, particularly among EFL students. Lin and Wu (2018) discovered that the use of KWL activities in reading lessons markedly improved learners' capacity to remember essential details and systematically arrange material. This enhancement is ascribed to the strategy's focus on active engagement and reflection, which facilitate learners' internalization of knowledge rather than mere passive reception. The iterative aspect of KWL compels learners to return and evaluate their comprehension during the "Learned" phase, so enhancing retention. This cyclical reflection corresponds effectively with modern conceptions of formative evaluation and self-regulation in education.

The interactive framework of the KWL method fosters collaborative learning, which has been demonstrated to enhance understanding. Vacca & Vacca (2017) assert that when learners articulate their "Know" and "Want to know"

replies in groups, they reveal varied perspectives and address gaps in comprehension. This social constructivist aspect enhances cognitive associations and facilitates opportunities for peer support. For young EFL learners, collaborative KWL sessions help alleviate language-related anxiety and enhance confidence in articulating ideas. Consequently, KWL enhances individual cognition while cultivating a collaborative learning community.

The KWL method offers significant instructional flexibility. Educators can modify the methodology for different subjects, age demographics, and skill levels, rendering it exceptionally adaptable (Anderson, 2016). Teachers frequently adapt KWL charts for young EFL learners by incorporating pictures, utilizing simplified language, or employing teacher-directed questioning to meet developmental requirements. This adaptability assists in managing students' cognitive load without compromising the strategy's fundamental functions. Moreover, the incorporation of technology, including interactive whiteboards and digital organizers, has enhanced KWL's relevance, providing engaging and dynamic platforms for eliciting prior knowledge in modern classrooms.

Notwithstanding its numerous advantages, the successful execution of KWL necessitates careful facilitation and contextual awareness. Brown (2021) warns that learners' capacity to formulate significant "Know" and "Want to know" statements is contingent upon their language competency and their acquaintance with the method. Inadequate modeling and support may hinder younger or less proficient EFL learners from fully engaging in the process. Therefore, educators must offer explicit guidance, models, and a progressive transfer of responsibility to develop students' metacognitive abilities. Cultural characteristics also affect learners' propensity to question and reflect, which educators must take into account while implementing KWL in heterogeneous classrooms.

In summary, the KWL strategy is an effective, evidence-based approach for eliciting previous knowledge and enhancing active reading involvement. Its organized, learner-centric methodology integrates cognitive, metacognitive, and social aspects of learning, rendering it particularly appropriate for young EFL learners. By cultivating curiosity, reflection, and cooperation, KWL enhances comprehension and fosters lifelong learning abilities. Educators who meticulously modify and support this method can substantially improve reading results and student motivation. Future study may investigate novel modifications of KWL to accommodate advancing educational technologies and diverse learner needs.

3. Constructivist Theory as a Foundation for Prior Knowledge Activation

Constructivist theory is widely recognized as a foundational framework for comprehending the processes through which learners acquire and construct knowledge. Piaget (1973) posits that learning is an active process in which individuals construct new understandings based on their pre-existing cognitive frameworks, or schemas. This method highlights that knowledge is not merely received but actively constructed through engagement with the world. Activating past knowledge is a fundamental premise of constructivist pedagogy, enabling learners to associate new material with existing knowledge, hence fostering

meaningful learning experiences. Vygotsky (1978) reinforces this by emphasizing the social aspect of learning, wherein interaction and scaffolding facilitate the internalization of new knowledge through collaboration and guided discovery.

Utilizing this theoretical base, the activation of preexisting knowledge allows learners to assimilate new concepts into their existing frameworks more efficiently. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) assert that meaningful learning transpires when new information is linked to pertinent former experiences, hence enhancing understanding and retention. This linking mechanism alleviates cognitive overload and aids learners in comprehending intricate content. In reading education, students who activate their prior knowledge are more adept at predicting content, inferring meanings, and critically engaging with texts. Consequently, constructivist theory not only legitimizes but also actively advocates for instructional practices that facilitate learners in recalling and utilizing their prior knowledge.

The practical ramifications of constructivist theory for engaging prior knowledge are substantial in educational contexts. Instructional methods that promote learner reflection and articulation of prior knowledge correspond with constructivist principles and have been demonstrated to improve learning outcomes (Fosnot, 2013). Strategies like as idea mapping, discussion prompts, and KWL charts aim to render learners' thinking explicit and enhance metacognitive awareness. These strategies allow students to recognize deficiencies in their comprehension and cultivate a sense of ownership over their educational journey. By highlighting the active participation of learners, constructivism converts education from passive absorption to an interactive and dynamic engagement between new material and prior knowledge.

Furthermore, constructivist theory emphasizes the significance of context and learner-centeredness in the process of knowledge formation. Jonassen (1991) contends that learning is intrinsically situated and contextually dependent, necessitating the activation of prior knowledge to take into account learners' cultural, social, and individual origins. Educators are urged to develop genuine learning experiences that connect new knowledge to students' real-world contexts, so enhancing the relevance and motivation of learning. In second language acquisition, linking reading materials to learners' own experiences and cultural contexts facilitates the activation of past information, hence enhancing comprehension and language development. This contextualized activation corresponds with the constructivist perspective that knowledge is collaboratively developed through significant interactions.

In conclusion, constructivist theory offers a strong theoretical basis for the engagement of prior knowledge in learning processes. It emphasizes the dynamic, constructive process of knowledge acquisition and the critical importance of integrating new information with pre-existing cognitive frameworks. Constructivism promotes successful ways for activating past knowledge by endorsing learner-centered, contextually relevant, and socially mediated instruction. Educators employing constructivist ideas can enhance comprehension, critical thinking, and significant learning. The ongoing investigation of

constructivist applications is expected to improve educational practices in various learning contexts.

4. The KWL Strategy for Young EFL Learners

The KWL approach, initially created by Ogle (1986), is a commonly employed educational framework designed to activate learners' prior knowledge and improve reading comprehension. This triadic strategy—Know, Want to Know, and Learned—offers a systematic method for students to arrange their thoughts before to, during, and subsequent to reading activities. For novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, KWL provides an approachable framework that promotes active engagement and contemplation. Shea and Duncan (2020) assert that metacognitive scaffolding is essential for cultivating self-regulated learning behaviors, particularly in language acquisition scenarios characterized by comprehension difficulties. KWL fosters intentional and student-centered learning by encouraging students to engage in questioning and reflection.

For young EFL learners, activating past knowledge is crucial because of their restricted language competency and developing cognitive abilities. Carrell (2017) emphasizes that young learners frequently necessitate tangible, relevant associations with new content to enhance understanding. The KWL technique encourages learners to retrieve prior knowledge, facilitating the connection of new language and concepts to known experiences. This procedure diminishes cognitive burden and facilitates the construction of intricate language frameworks. Moreover, the "Want to know" phase cultivates intrinsic motivation by enabling learners to establish personal learning objectives, hence augmenting engagement and interest throughout reading activities.

The KWL strategy's notable asset is its flexibility and adaptability to diverse competence levels and learning styles. Anderson (2016) asserts that educators might adapt the technique by incorporating images, gestures, or simplified language to meet the developmental requirements of young EFL learners. Utilizing images or realia during the "Know" phase facilitates learners in articulating prior knowledge despite restricted language. Furthermore, collaborative KWL activities foster social interaction, enabling learners to exchange ideas and support one another's comprehension, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) focus on social constructivism. This adaptability renders KWL an effective instrument in various educational environments.

Empirical studies have increasingly validated the efficacy of KWL in enhancing reading comprehension among young EFL learners. Lin and Wu (2018) found that students engaged in KWL-based reading courses had markedly superior retention of essential concepts and organizational abilities compared to those who did not employ the method. This enhancement is ascribed to KWL's encouragement of active participation and contemplation, facilitating a deeper internalization of textual material by learners. The iterative aspect of the "Learned" phase motivates learners to return and solidify their comprehension, hence enhancing retention and information transfer.

Another significant characteristic is that KWL fosters the cultivation of metacognitive awareness in young learners. Shea and Duncan (2020) assert that via deliberate reflection on their existing knowledge and learning aspirations, students enhance their awareness of their cognitive processes. This metacognitive capacity is essential for language learners who must continuously assess comprehension and modify techniques as needed. Educators who proficiently demonstrate and facilitate KWL exercises enhance students' capacity for self-assessment and learning regulation, promoting more autonomy. For EFL learners, such self-regulation facilitates sustained language growth beyond the classroom.

The KWL technique also positively impacts the social and emotional aspects of learning. Vacca & Vacca (2017) observe that group conversations in KWL exercises can alleviate anxiety and enhance learners' confidence, particularly when they cooperatively share their "Know" and "Want to know" responses. This peer connection facilitates genuine communication and the negotiation of meaning, both of which are crucial for language acquisition. KWL fosters a secure and supportive atmosphere for young learners who may experience hesitation or shyness, valuing their input and promoting risk-taking in language utilization.

The efficacy of KWL is contingent upon deliberate execution and contextual modification. Brown (2021) cautions that younger EFL learners may encounter difficulties in formulating meaningful inquiries or expressing prior knowledge without adequate coaching. Educators must furnish explicit examples, demonstrate cognitive processes, and progressively transfer responsibility to learners. Cultural influences might influence learners' propensity to engage actively in the questioning process, which educators should take into account when using KWL in heterogeneous classrooms. Consequently, professional development and cultural awareness are essential for optimizing KWL's potential.

A pertinent connection can be drawn with the thesis research of Fianico Sukmana Rozy (2017), which investigated the efficacy of the KWL technique in enhancing students' reading comprehension within an Indonesian EFL environment. Rozy discovered that students participating in KWL exercises had substantial improvements in text comprehension relative to control groups. His research corresponds with global findings about the strategy's efficacy, emphasizing that engaging prior knowledge and fostering learner inquiries enhance engagement and cognitive processing. Furthermore, Rozy's research highlighted that KWL facilitated the organization of ideas and enhanced student motivation, reflecting the advantages noted by Lin and Wu (2018) and Shea and Duncan (2020). This accumulation of evidence highlights KWL's significance as a teaching method for young EFL learners globally.

In conclusion, the KWL technique provides a thorough, flexible framework that effectively aids young EFL learners in activating past knowledge, promoting engagement, and improving reading comprehension. The organized phases enhance metacognitive awareness, social connection, and motivation, all essential for language development. Research regularly confirms KWL's beneficial effects in various contexts, including Indonesian classrooms, underscoring its significance and adaptability. Educators who adeptly apply and customize KWL can facilitate

significant, learner-centered reading experiences that enable young EFL students to develop into confident, autonomous readers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes a documentation study technique to examine the activation of past knowledge through the KWL strategy in the reading comprehension of young EFL learners. Documentation study involves the methodical gathering and examination of relevant papers and records related to the research subject (Bowen, 2009). Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) contend that this approach is particularly advantageous in qualitative research for obtaining profound insights without direct engagement with participants. The researcher aims to gain a thorough understanding of the strategy's theoretical and practical implementations by analyzing relevant academic articles, theses, lesson plans, and curriculum materials.

The document selection process follows stringent standards to ensure relevance and reliability. Creswell (2014) contends that good documentation must derive from reputable sources and faithfully reflect current developments in the discipline. The researcher focused on resources released during the last decade, sourced from educational databases and institutional archives. This process ensures that the data precisely represents contemporary behaviors and discoveries related to the KWL strategy in EFL reading situations.

This study use content analysis methods to discern patterns and themes within the papers. Krippendorff (2018) asserts that content analysis allows researchers to methodically assess textual data and extract meaningful results. The researcher examined relevant data concerning the KWL strategy's function in activating prior knowledge, enhancing reading comprehension, and engaging young learners. This analytical procedure categorizes varied findings into cohesive groups that correspond with the research goals.

The documentation study approach is suitable for this inquiry as it provides a comprehensive review of existing knowledge on the topic. Yin (2018) contends that documentation offers extensive data that aids exploratory research when experimental methods are impractical. The researcher amalgamates many sources to discern persistent tendencies and deficiencies in the literature, enhancing the comprehension of KWL's influence on the reading development of young EFL learners.

The documentation study technique enables researchers to systematically collect and analyze relevant written materials to investigate the activation of prior knowledge via the KWL strategy in young EFL learners. This method provides a reliable and valid foundation for understanding both the theoretical and practical aspects of the strategy, obviating the need for direct data gathering from participants. The study offers significant insights for pedagogical practice and future research via the meticulous selection, analysis, and synthesis of texts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Implementation of KWL Strategy in Young EFL Learners

The KWL strategy, developed by Ogle in 1986, is recognized as an effective method for activating prior knowledge and improving reading comprehension, especially in young learners of English as a foreign language. This study defines young EFL learners as children aged approximately 7 to 12 years, typically in primary school, who are in the initial phases of acquiring English reading skills in a foreign language context. These learners typically exhibit developing literacy skills in their first language; however, they demonstrate restricted vocabulary, decoding abilities, and metacognitive awareness in English (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Cameron, 2001). Cognitive and linguistic development necessitates instructional strategies that incorporate scaffolding, visual aids, and interactive engagement to enhance comprehension and facilitate language acquisition (Ellis, 2008). The implementation of the KWL strategy in this population is specifically designed to align with their developmental stage, and the findings may not be applicable to younger preschoolers or older, more advanced language learners. In EFL contexts, learners frequently encounter difficulties stemming from restricted vocabulary and cultural disparities. The KWL strategy addresses these issues by promoting active reflection and fostering curiosity (Shea & Duncan, 2020). Documentation indicates that the Know phase facilitates learners in recalling and organizing prior knowledge, thereby reducing cognitive load when engaging with new text. The recall phase is essential for young learners in the process of developing linguistic proficiency and conceptual understanding. Research indicates that establishing this foundation enhances learners' anticipation and prediction skills, which are essential for effective reading comprehension.

The Want to Know phase serves a crucial motivational function by enabling learners to formulate individualized questions regarding the reading material. Carrell (2017) posits that permitting learners to establish learning objectives increases engagement and intrinsic motivation. Classroom studies indicate that young learners demonstrate increased engagement in reading when they pursue specific interests. This stage aids in directing learners' attention, encouraging purposeful reading instead of passive text consumption. The strategy promotes curiosity, thereby enhancing sustained attention and cognitive effort, essential components for language acquisition and comprehension (Anderson, 2016). Educators indicate that this phase facilitates the transition of reading from a habitual activity to an engaging inquiry process.

The Learned phase, emphasizing reflection and consolidation, is noted for its effectiveness in enhancing comprehension and retention. Lin and Wu (2018) emphasize that revisiting learned material reinforces new knowledge and links it to initial inquiries and prior understanding. Documentation indicates that this metacognitive practice promotes learners' self-assessment of their comprehension and the identification of remaining gaps. Young EFL learners particularly benefit from structured reflection, as it enhances their confidence and encourages language

output through discussion and summarization. This phase offers teachers formative feedback that guides subsequent instruction (Shea & Duncan, 2020). The Learned phase completes the learning loop, promoting a deeper understanding.

Research findings emphasize the KWL strategy's adaptability to various learner needs and contexts. Anderson (2016) observes that educators often adapt the strategy by integrating visuals, using simplified language, and implementing interactive tasks that align with the developmental stages of young learners. Documentation shows that these adaptations enable learners with different levels of English proficiency to engage actively in all phases of the KWL process. Utilizing images or tangible objects in the Know phase facilitates learners in articulating prior knowledge, even when their vocabulary is restricted. This flexibility is crucial in multilingual classrooms characterized by diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds among learners. Contextualized adaptations guarantee that the strategy is inclusive and effective in various educational environments.

The KWL implementation also facilitates collaborative learning. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory posits that cognitive development is enhanced through social interaction. Classroom observation documentation indicates that group discussions in the Know and Want to Know phases facilitate perspective sharing, mutual scaffolding of understanding, and collaborative knowledge construction among learners. Peer interaction reduces affective filters such as anxiety and promotes communicative practice, which is essential for young EFL learners in building language confidence. Educators note that collaborative KWL activities enhance language use and foster social skills development, underscoring the strategy's wider pedagogical advantages.

Teacher facilitation plays a critical role in the effective implementation of KWL. Brown (2021) highlights that young learners typically need explicit modeling, clear instructions, and guided practice to engage effectively with the strategy. Teacher reports highlight the significance of scaffolding, wherein educators progressively shift responsibility to learners as their competence increases. Lack of adequate guidance can hinder learners' ability to formulate meaningful questions or engage in effective reflection, thereby reducing the strategy's overall effectiveness. Effective facilitation transforms KWL from a mere procedural task into a dynamic learning experience that promotes metacognition and language development.

Further research supports the beneficial effects of KWL on reading comprehension outcomes. Research conducted by Lin and Wu (2018) and Rozy (2017) indicates that learners engaged in KWL-based instruction show enhanced skills in recalling details, organizing ideas, and making inferences. This success is due to the cognitive engagement promoted by activating prior knowledge and facilitating active inquiry. The KWL strategy offers a cognitive framework that enhances learners' ability to process and integrate new information, resulting in improved comprehension. The findings correspond with extensive literacy research highlighting the significance of metacognitive strategies in reading development (Anderson, 2016).

Besides cognitive advantages, KWL has been shown to improve learner motivation and autonomy. Shea and Duncan (2020) contend that engaging learners in the establishment of their own learning objectives and reflecting on their progress

fosters active participation and sustained effort. Young EFL learners, who might otherwise experience passivity or overwhelm, are empowered as active agents in their learning process. Educators observe heightened enthusiasm and persistence in students who consistently participate in KWL activities. This motivational enhancement facilitates ongoing language acquisition and promotes a favorable disposition towards English reading, essential for sustained success.

The cultural responsiveness of KWL activities is recognized as a significant factor affecting their effectiveness. Brown (2021) emphasizes that customizing KWL tasks to align with learners' cultural backgrounds improves engagement and understanding. Educators who integrate culturally relevant material during the Know phase observe increased participation and more substantive discussions. This approach is consistent with constructivist perspectives, which assert that knowledge construction occurs within social and cultural contexts (Jonassen, 1991). Cultural alignment enhances understanding and affirms learners' identities, fostering a supportive educational atmosphere.

The research findings indicate that the KWL strategy effectively aids young EFL learners by activating prior knowledge, fostering motivation, enhancing collaboration, and improving reading comprehension. The combination of adaptability, skilled teacher facilitation, and cultural responsiveness renders it a versatile tool in diverse EFL classrooms. The documented benefits support the effectiveness of KWL as a pedagogical strategy that fosters cognitive and affective development, enabling young learners to address the challenges of learning English as a foreign language.

2. The Impact of KWL Strategy in Enhancing Young EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

The KWL strategy, when utilized with young EFL learners—generally children aged 7 to 12 years who are developing English reading skills—has shown notable positive impacts on reading comprehension. This demographic, typically in primary education, exhibits developing literacy skills in their native language while encountering difficulties such as restricted English vocabulary and decoding abilities (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Cameron, 2001). The KWL strategy's organized phases assist learners by engaging prior knowledge in the Know phase, thereby minimizing cognitive overload and supporting comprehension of new texts (Anderson, 2016). Educators indicate that this approach is particularly beneficial for young learners who need tangible connections to facilitate their language development. As a result, young EFL learners who engage with KWL demonstrate enhanced skills in anticipating and understanding reading materials.

During the Want to Know phase, young learners are prompted to formulate questions rooted in their personal interests and knowledge deficiencies, thereby increasing engagement and motivation. Carrell (2017) emphasizes that encouraging question-asking in children at this developmental stage enhances their engagement in reading activities. The personalized nature of this phase aids young learners in maintaining focus and processing information more effectively, considering their developing attention spans and language proficiency (Anderson, 2016). This focused

reading enhances critical thinking, a vital cognitive skill that facilitates language acquisition.

The Learned phase allows young EFL learners to reflect on their understanding and reinforce newly acquired information. Lin and Wu (2018) emphasize that reflective practice is crucial for young learners in the process of developing metacognitive awareness, facilitating the internalization of knowledge and the identification of areas requiring reinforcement. Educators note that this stage fosters confidence and promotes language production, essential for the continuous language development of young learners (Shea & Duncan, 2020). Structured reflection facilitates the development of active and autonomous reading skills in young learners.

Implementing the KWL strategy for young learners necessitates modifications to align with their developmental and linguistic capabilities. Anderson (2016) highlights that the integration of visuals, straightforward language, and interactive activities in KWL phases facilitates full participation of learners with limited English proficiency. This flexibility is essential for young EFL learners, as they gain from concrete, sensory-rich learning experiences that enhance their cognitive development. These adaptations render KWL inclusive, enabling learners across different proficiency levels to develop reading comprehension skills effectively.

KWL activities fulfill young learners' requirements for interaction and language practice due to their inherently social nature. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory posits that peer collaboration in the Know and Want to know phases enhances language development and comprehension. Research indicates that young learners exhibit greater comfort in expressing ideas and posing questions within group contexts, thereby diminishing language anxiety and enhancing communicative competence (Brown, 2021). This social scaffolding is crucial for young EFL learners, facilitating confidence building and enhancing comprehension via collaborative learning.

Facilitation by teachers, customized to the needs of young learners, is essential for the effective implementation of KWL. Brown (2021) emphasizes that young EFL learners need explicit modeling and guided practice to effectively engage with the metacognitive demands of the strategy. Educators offering systematic support enable learners to develop questions and engage in meaningful reflection, thereby enhancing the efficacy of KWL. In the absence of this scaffolding, young learners may encounter difficulties stemming from restricted vocabulary and developing self-regulation skills, potentially hindering their comprehension progress.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that the KWL strategy results in significant enhancements in reading comprehension for young EFL learners. Lin and Wu (2018) and Rozy (2017) demonstrated that learners utilizing the KWL strategy exhibited enhanced performance in recalling key details, organizing information, and making inferences. The strategy activates prior knowledge and promotes active inquiry, offering cognitive support suited to the developmental stage of young learners, thereby enhancing reading comprehension. The findings underscore the

necessity of implementing KWL in a manner that takes into account the age and language proficiency of learners.

In Conclusion, the KWL strategy significantly enhances reading comprehension in young EFL learners by addressing their unique developmental characteristics. The phased approach engages prior knowledge, enhances motivation, promotes reflection, and facilitates social interaction, tailored to the age, language proficiency, and cognitive abilities of young learners. The facilitation by teachers and contextual modifications enhance these advantages. The evidence supports KWL as an effective and developmentally suitable strategy for enhancing reading comprehension among young learners of English as a foreign language.

CONCLUSION

The KWL strategy proves to be a highly effective instructional approach for enhancing reading comprehension among young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. By systematically activating prior knowledge, fostering curiosity through learner-generated questions, and encouraging reflective learning, KWL aligns well with the developmental and linguistic needs of children aged 7 to 12 years. Its structured phases—Know, Want to know, and Learned—not only reduce cognitive load but also motivate learners by making reading an active, meaningful, and socially engaging process. The strategy's flexibility allows educators to adapt it with visuals, simplified language, and collaborative activities, making it inclusive and accessible in diverse multilingual classroom settings.

Moreover, the success of KWL depends greatly on effective teacher facilitation, including explicit modeling and guided practice, which supports young learners in navigating metacognitive tasks and overcoming language barriers. Empirical studies consistently show that KWL improves learners' ability to recall information, organize ideas, and develop critical thinking, all crucial for sustained language acquisition. The cultural responsiveness and adaptability of the strategy further enhance learner engagement and confidence, confirming KWL as a valuable pedagogical tool that cultivates both cognitive and affective domains of learning. Overall, KWL contributes significantly to the development of autonomous, motivated, and proficient young readers in EFL contexts.

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