DEVELOPING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS THROUGH "KNOW, WANT TO KNOW AND LEARNT" (KWL) STRATEGY

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Abstract: The objective of the research is to explain the implementation of KWL strategy in English reading class and the students' responses towards it. The research was carried out at MAN Karanganyar Central Java, from January to May 2016 employing a Classroom Action research (CAR). The subject of the research is thirty students of MAN Karanganyar, twelfth grade. The data were obtained from several techniques including test, observation, in-depth interview, questionnaires and document analysis. The researcher applied a descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative data and constant comparative method to analyze the qualitative ones. The findings reveal that KWL strategy can develop the students' reading comprehension skills in finding the main idea, detailed information, inference, word meaning, and references. This strategy also helps teachers to get students to be more active to participate in the process of learning, expanding knowledge, learning their needs and interests, and activating their background knowledge. It implies that KWL strategy is very useful for developing students' reading comprehension skills. Therefore, it is recommended the English teachers to apply KWL strategy in teaching reading comprehension.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, KWL, CAR

1   BACKGROUND

Reading is a window of the word. It means that reading activity gives more opportunities to students to find a lot of information which they need. The competence to read makes them get closer to wider information from texts, especially English written texts since most scientific books are written in English. By having good reading comprehension, students can get more and better information from the world and they can develop themselves as well

Reading is also one basic way to a better language learning because it gives the big contribution to students to perform their communication skill better. This way, therefore, sets the students to get involve themselves to the grammar, the vocabularies, and the context usage as well.

The more they read, the more their vocabularies grows, the more words they can read, the more reading they can do. This what the so called reading promotes reading. In other words, by having good competence in understanding texts, the students will find it easy to master language skills, since reading comprehension is crucial for understanding and communicating in a written form. In their daily life, students are always related to the written or printed words, for instance: text books, magazines, newspapers, announcements, letters, and also advertisement. By reaching good reading comprehension, the students can grasp the information given by the researcher well.

Considering the importance of reading comprehension aspect in Senior High School, included in *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), the Competency-Based Curriculum

or the curriculum in unit of instruction in the Senior High School throughout Indonesia, puts reading as the main component of national examination besides listening. The percentage of reading material is 70 percent and the 30 percent is for listening test which are all tested in the same time and considered to be the main basic to judge the success of final examination.

However, the students of the twelfth grade in MAN Karanganyar still encounter the problem in reading comprehension especially in (1) identifying main idea, (2) reading for detailed information, (3) mastering vocabulary, and (4) making inference. From the result of the last reading test, it is found that the maximum score among 30 students, the maximum score is 81.25, and the minimum score is 31.25. The mean score (average score) of the class is

57.91 and it is still below the Minimum Requirement Standard (MRS). There are only 5 students who pass the MRS. It means that the achievement of the goal is only 17 %. There are 25 students who get lower scores than MRS. It can also be said that the level of failure reaches 83 %.

The result of the questionnaire and pre-observation shows that the problem in reading comprehension is caused by some factors such as the students' background knowledge, interest and motivation, the method and techniques used by the teacher, and the teaching material. In reading class, the students often cannot understand the detailed information in the text because they have inadequate vocabulary. They are not motivated during the "old style" reading skills activities, and they do not have the background knowledge required for the reading materials.

The researcher is interested to develop students' reading comrehension skills by using the strategy of KWL (Ogle, 1986). This is a reading comprehension strategy that uses three-steps of reading, where K stands for Know, W stands for What You Want to Know, and L stands for What You Have Learnt. By using KWL, students learn to consider their prior knowledge about the topic of their reading to determine what they already know about the topic and what they want to learn from the text. This strategy helps students develop their comprehension monitoring ability, such as their ability to check their understanding of the text. By helping them recognize that, they can use what they know to determine what they want to learn through reading. With KWL, they learn to draw on their prior knowledge about the topic of their reading to aid their understanding of the text, determine their own purposes for reading, and summarize what they have learnt from reading. Therefore, the students will have a chance to answer the questions about what they have read.

From the background above the researcher formulates research questions as follows: (1) How is the implememntation of KWL strategy to develop the students' comprehension skills? (2) What are the students" responses toward the application of KWL strategy to develop their reading comprehension skills?

Reading comprehension is a combined process. Comprehension is critically important to the skill development of children and older people and to the ability to obtain education. Comprehension is defined as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between texts and reader" (Harris & Hodges, 1995: 207). Indeed, reading comprehension has come to be the essence of reading, essential not only to academic learning in all subject areas but also to long life learning as well. Driven by intention to gain meaning from the text they are reading, readers engage in intentional,

problem solving thinking processes (McShane, 2005:71).

The term reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language, which consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading (Snow, 2002: 11). If the reader comprehends, he must bring all his capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experiences to the act of reading. Text, broadly construed to include any printed or electronic text, is to be comprehended.

Grellet (1991), as cited in Omaggio (1986:53), defines reading comprehension as "understanding a written text by means of extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible". Teachers assume that students should do comprehension exercises to improve their reading skills. Students tend not to read a text for overall meaning but rather to read to a point in the text at which a cue word in a question suggests that the answer may be found. In short, the main concern of reading as an activity is comprehension. In other words, a reader reading a written text or printed material reasonably anticipates comprehending the essence of such a text by relating his background knowledge to the researcher"s messages in the text.

According to Heaton (1988: 105-106), in testing for reading difficulties, it would be helpful to attempt to identify some of the specific skills involved in reading. There are nine detailed analyses of reading skills broken down from lower to higher levels in reading. The first skill is the ability to recognize words and word groups by associating sounds with their corresponding graphic symbols. It can be stated as reading aloud. The second is the ability to deduce meaning of words by understanding word formation (roots, affixations, derivation or compounding) and contextual clues. The third is the ability to understand the

relationships within a sentence, especially the elements of sentence structure, negation (reduced clauses), fronting and theme (this helps students in understanding how to recognize information at a sentence level), and complex embedding. The fourth is to understand and perceive relationships between parts of a text through lexical devices (repetition, synonyms, and antithesis), grammatical cohesive devices and connectives (in addition, however or firstly to show sequences of ideas or to link arguments). The fifth is to understand conceptual meaning, especially cause, effect, result, purpose, reason, condition, contrast as discourse makers. The sixth is the ability to anticipate and predict what will come next in the text. The seventh is the ability to identify the main idea and other salient features in a text. The eighth is the ability to generalize and draw conclusions. Finally, the ninth is the ability to skim and scan (looking for general meaning and reading for specific information). Based on this explanation, when a teacher wants to test students" reading comprehension, he/she must state the skills based on their suitability level.

Know, Want to Know and Learnt (KWL), which is the creation of Donna Ogle (1986), is a three-column chart that helps capture the before, during, and after components of reading a text selection. K is the first column telling what the students know about the topic before they read. Here, the teacher asks the students to tell the class what they already know. In other words, in this column, the teacher tries to activate students" prior knowledge before they go further. The second column is W. In this column, the students generate questions about the topic. They tell the teacher about all the things that they want to learn from the topic. Then the teacher can determine what they think is important about the topic. The last column is L; here, after reading the text, the students match

what they knew in advance and what they wanted to know with what they learnt. In addition, this column states for everything that the students have learned about the topic.

With KWL, Ogle (1986) asserts that it helps students become better readers and help teachers to be more active in their teaching. In addition, KWL charts also help students to be active thinkers while they read, giving them specific things to look for and having them reflect on what they have learned when they finished reading. It is also a teaching strategy designed to engage readers in connecting prior knowledge with contextual information. It is used to organize, summarize and integrate knowledge acquired from reading

There are some advantages and disadvantages in the KWL strategy. Ibrahim (2012) listed some advantages of KWL, such as: (1) It is appropriate for all education levels from beginners up to advanced; (2) It can be used for all skills but is most suitable for reading skills; (3) It helps students to monitor their comprehension and knowledge; (4) It encourages students to do critical thinking. It makes teacher and students become more interactive in the teaching and learning process; and (5) It sets out a purpose for reading. This means that readers have some ideas about the text before reading the whole text and focus to find the important points whilst reading.

The shortcomings of the KWL strategy are (Ibrahim, 2012:52): (1) It is difficult for students with no prior knowledge; (2) It takes time to complete; (3) It is not effective for reading fiction materials; (4) It is not appropriate for readers who are not active thinkers; and (5) Students will give up and get bored easily.

Ibrahim (2012:53) further states that some students will find it difficult to complete the KWL sheet on their own by using the steps of KWL; many students

avoid taking the risk of revealing what they know or do not know about the topic. Al-Ataie (2010:384) also mentions that most students use statements not questions in filling the W column. Furthermore, they use their native language when they cannot explain what they want to know in English.

2 METHOD

In this study the researcher uses a classroom action research method. McTaggart (in Richard, 2000: 12) says that action research is a teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teachers' understanding of classroom teaching and learning, and to bring about change in classroom practices. A similar idea is proposed by Burns (1999: 30) saying that an action research is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change. CAR includes four moments of action: planning, action, observation and reflection. These research moments exist interdependently and follow each other in a spiral or cycle form.

The action plan is made before implementing the action. Here is the preparation: (1) Deciding the topic or the material; (2) Making the lesson plan and designing the steps in doing the action based on the treatment carried out; (3) Preparing teaching aids (pieces of paper containing topics of discussion, papers for students to record the process of discussion); (4) Learning how to convey all of the material which had been made to the students; (5) Preparing camera (to take pictures of the teaching and learning process); (6) Preparing sheets for classroom observation during the teaching and learning process (to know the situation of the class, what happen to the students and the process of teaching and learning when KWL is applied.

The action step is the implementation of the plan. Action happens when the plan is put into place and the hope for improvement to reading comprehension

skills. The writer (which acted as both the teacher and the researcher) implemented the action. The writer taught and let the students practice their reading comprehension skills by discussing the topic given.

The third is observation step. Observation in CAR, where the changes as outlined in the Plan are observed for its effects and the context of the situation (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988: 13). In this moment research tools such as questionnaires are utilized to ensure that proper scientific methods are followed and results have meaning. Observation and action often occur simultaneously. This involves a new set teaching strategies and activities and a recycling back into a period of further data collection.

The fourth step is reflection. This is the time to reflect or review everything having been done in the implementation of the action. It evaluates the process, problems, effect, and successful or unsuccessful action. The participants discuss all of the aspects during the implementation of the action. In this case the research participants examine and construct, then evaluate and reconstruct their concerns (Grundy, 1986: 28). Reflection includes the pre-emptive discussion of participants where they identify a shared concern or problem.

The research was carried out at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Karanganyar Central Java, from January to May 2016. The subject of the research is thirty students of MAN Karanganyar twelfth grade, in academic year 2015/2016. The data were obtained from several techniques including test, observation, in-depth interview, questionnaires and document analysis. To analyse the quantitative data, the writer applied a descriptive statistics and constant comparative method for the qualitative data.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Implementation of KWL Strategy to Develop Reading Comprehension.

The researcher applied KWL strategy in teaching reading comprehension to a reading class for six meetings in two cycles. The teaching and learning activities were based on a procedure, which involved three phases: (1) pre-teaching activities, (2) while-teaching activities, and (3) post-teaching activities.

In pre-teaching activities, the researcher and an observer entered the class and greeted the students. She did apperception activities to open the teaching and learning process and attract the students" attention to learning. Then, she checked the student's attendance list.

In while-teaching activities, the researcher first opened the lesson by explaining to the students about the text, about its structure, purpose and language features. Then, she explained to the students about the steps of KWL strategy and how to fill in the three columns of KWL form. After that, she gave the students an opportunity to ask questions related to her explanations.

Meanwhile, the researcher drew the KWL chart on the white board, and asked the students to draw the chart in their notebooks. She then introduced the topic of reading and wrote it on the board above the KWL chart. For the first step is K (Know). Here, she activated the students" background knowledge by asking them to brainstorm for words or phrases they knew related to the topic. This was done to make the students active and focus on what they were going to read. In particular KWL was developed to encourage purposeful reading by activating and organizing students" background knowledge (Ibrahim, 2012:45).

After the students talked about what they knew about the topic based on their prior knowledge, then they wrote it on the K column in their own sheet. The next step of the strategy is W (Want to Know) in which the students were told to say what they wanted to know about the topic. Then the researcher asked one of the students to write the W on the board while the others were directed to write it in their note books. In this step, the students were directed to generate questions, not statements. After the K and W columns were filled in, she distributed the reading text to the students to read silently.

For the last step of L (Learnt), the students were ordered to read the text and to fill in the L column of the chart. The students should look for the answers to the questions in the W column while they were reading. They could fill out the L column on their own chart either during or after reading. And at this stage, the researcher asked some of them to do it on the board. In addition to writing questions in the W column, they were encouraged to write anything they found especially interesting in the L column. To distinguish between the answers to their questions in the W column and the other ideas they found interesting, they were asked to code the information in the L column. For example, they could put a check mark next to the information that answered the questions from the W column. And they could put a star next to the ideas that they found interesting. During these three steps, there was also a lot of discussion amongst the students. This was done based on the procedure carried out by Davis and Byu (2008:54) in which KWL allows the students to share what they learn with others, to learn that there are many sources where information can be found and to summarize their findings.

During the teaching activities, the researcher monitored the students" work. The students looked very enthusiastic in following the three steps of the KWL chart, and they also told about their problems in doing it. She also praised the students if they did their best in doing the steps.

The last activities were post-teaching activities. The researcher asked the students to answer the questions below the text orally. This was done in order to find out the students" comprehension in reading skills. They actively and seriously answered the questions. Later on, she asked the students to draw a conclusion about the reading material and present it orally.

Finally, the researcher tested the students to identify the students" learning results. She also distributed the questionnaire to the students in the second cycle to find out their problems and responses towards the use of KWL strategy for teaching reading comprehension.

The improvement of the researcher's performance in teaching reading was based on the result of her observation sheets. These showed that the percentage of her performance in the first cycle was 58% which was in the *enough* criteria. This increased in the second cycle to be 86% or in the *very good* criteria, which means that her performance had reached the criteria of *success* (>80%).

Another improvement which was measured was the students" participation during the teaching and learning process. It was based on the result of students" observation sheet form concerning their activities. The result noted that the percentage of their participation in the first cycle was 57 % or in the *enough* criteria. A great improvement in the students" participation was seen in the second cycle, where participation was 80 % or in the *very good* criteria. This indicated that it had reached the criteria of *success*. This evidence indicated that the application of KWL strategy in the process of teaching reading comprehension had successfully

improved the students" participation in class.

After using KWL strategy, the students had good results in reading comprehension. This was seen from the students learning results. The first students" result in the pre-test was 62.8. It was not a good achievement for reading comprehension. This result did not meet the criterion of success which had been set earlier, which was 70. After the researcher applied KWL strategy in teaching reading comprehension, the students" result increased to 68.2. The researcher compared the students" learning results of pre-test and post-test given in the first cycle. The average score in pre-test was 62.8. The improvement was shown at the end of the first cycle that is the result of post-test at 68.2. It had increased by only 5.4 points from the pre-test.

Hence, better improvement came in the second cycle. KWL strategy could be used to improve the students" achievement in reading comprehension. It was proved by the students" learning result from the post-test in the second cycle. The students" average score in the post-test after the second cycle was 80.4; it increased by12.2 points from the result of the first post-test in the first cycle. This means that it had reached the success indicator for this research; which was only 70.

Based on the result above, this indicated that the use of KWL strategy was effective in improving the students" achievement in reading comprehension especially in comprehending the descriptive text. Accordingly, Vacca and Vacca (2005: 45) believe that KWL strategy is useful in improving students' achievements in reading comprehension skills.

3.2 The Students' Perception toward the Use of KWL Strategy.

The results of the questionnaire showed that 82% of students found KWL to be helpful, 88% found it activating them in studying, 97% found it motivating, and 82% found it facilitating them to complete the KWL chart. In conclusion, it can be said that the students had positive responses toward the use of KWL strategy in the learning process of reading comprehension in their class. This was proved by the percentage overall of the four factors measured above being greater than 80% or in the *good* criteria. Thus, it could be concluded that the students" responses toward the use of the KWL strategy in learning for reading comprehension had reached the *success* indicator that was greater than 80%.

4 CONCLUSION

The major conclusion of the study is that the implementation of KWL strategy is successful in some ways. First, the implementation of KWL strategy can develop the students' reading comprehension skills in finding the main idea, detailed information, inference, word meaning, and references. Second, this strategy helps teachers to get students to be more active to participate in the process of learning, expanding knowledge, learning their needs and interests, and activating their background knowledge. Third, implementing KWL strategy helped both the researcher and students. It helped the students to become better readers and to be active thinkers while they read, giving them specific things to look for and having them reflect on what they have learned when they finished reading. And for the researcher, it helped her to be more interactive in the teaching and learning process It implies that KWL strategy is very useful for developing students' reading comprehension skills. Therefore, it is recommended the English

teachers to apply KWL strategy in teaching reading comprehension

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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