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Students' Perception of The Effectiveness of The KWL Strategy in Enhancing Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study investigated ninth-graders' perceptions of the KWL strategy in English reading lessons and explored the practical difficulties they encountered when using the strategy. A mixed-methods approach was employed, with data collected from 42 ninth-grade students at Binh Hoa Secondary School through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that the students generally held highly positive perceptions of the KWL strategy, particularly regarding its effectiveness and their satisfaction with its use. The interview findings further revealed that the strategy increased students' interest and active engagement, provided clear purposes for reading, activated prior knowledge, facilitated connections between prior and new knowledge, made lengthy texts more manageable, and supported the retention of vocabulary and main ideas. Despite these positive perceptions, the students reported several practical difficulties, including unanswered questions in the W column, limited prior knowledge, unfamiliar topics, time constraints, insufficient worksheet space, and difficulties in generating meaningful questions. Nevertheless, these challenges did not appear to negatively affect their overall perceptions of the strategy. The findings suggest that appropriate teacher guidance, flexible classroom organization, sufficient time, and well-designed learning materials may help address these challenges and maximize the benefits of the KWL strategy for reading comprehension.

Keywords: *KWL strategy; reading comprehension; ninth-graders; perceptions; effectiveness*

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1. Introduction

English has long occupied a dominant position among foreign languages in Vietnam's educational system. Since the Renovation in 1986, English has gradually emerged as the first and most widely taught foreign language in Vietnamese schools, reflecting the country's

increasing international integration and the growing demand for English proficiency in educational and professional contexts (Hoang, 2020). More recently, the status of English has been further strengthened through national language education policies. Thai (2025) stated that the approval of the national project to promote English as a second language in schools for the 2025-2035 period, with a vision to 2045, marks a significant shift from viewing English primarily as a foreign language subject toward positioning it as a functional second language within the education system. This policy development places greater emphasis on enhancing learners' English competence and, consequently, calls for effective and learner-centered approaches to English language teaching. Within this context, developing students' reading comprehension is particularly important, as reading constitutes a fundamental component of English language learning and provides learners with access to academic knowledge and information.

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process (Birch & Fulop, 2021). Many students experience difficulties in understanding English texts due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, insufficient background knowledge, and ineffective reading strategies. These challenges are especially evident among lower-proficiency learners, who often struggle to identify main ideas, locate specific information, and make inferences from reading passages.

At Binh Hoa Secondary School, reading comprehension has been identified as one of the weakest areas of English learning. Based on the researcher's teaching experience and preliminary classroom observations conducted during the previous academic year, a considerable number of ninth-grade students demonstrated limited engagement in reading lessons and experienced difficulties in comprehending English texts. Their reading performance was generally unsatisfactory, indicating the need for a more effective instructional approach to improve reading comprehension.

Among the various instructional approaches proposed to improve reading comprehension, the KWL strategy has attracted considerable attention because it encourages learners to activate their prior knowledge, establish learning goals, and reflect on newly acquired knowledge throughout the reading process (Ogle, 1986). Although previous studies have demonstrated that the KWL strategy can significantly improve students' reading comprehension (Suciati & Hastini, 2023), research on its implementation in Vietnamese lower secondary schools remains limited, particularly in Grade 9 English classrooms. Furthermore, little is known about how Vietnamese ninth-graders perceive the use of the KWL strategy in reading lessons. Therefore, this study is to explore ninth-graders' perceptions of KWL implementation in reading period. Once the students' perception is properly identified, teachers will have a better understanding of students' attitudes toward KWL and thus can apply this strategy more appropriately with a view to assisting students in improving their reading comprehension.

2. Literature review

2.1. Previous Studies

Under the umbrella of reading comprehension, the investigation into KWL strategy has been a topic of interest for language researchers and educators. In particular, there has been a growing body of studies related to KWL employment in reading. For example, Hartatik and Putri (2015)

found that KWL enhanced students' motivation, interest, peer interaction, and cooperative learning. The researchers also pointed out that KWL could effectively improve students' comprehension of narrative texts, particularly when teaching materials were appropriately selected to activate students' prior knowledge. They suggested that teachers should adapt or adopt the KWL technique to improve students' language learning.

Tran (2016) investigated the effects of the KWL strategy on reading comprehension and students' learning attitudes among 90 Vietnamese pre-intermediate learners from three different learning contexts. The study employed reading tests, questionnaires, classroom observations, and videotaped classroom activities to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy. The findings revealed that students taught through the KWL strategy participated more actively in classroom activities, demonstrated greater confidence, and developed more positive attitudes toward reading lessons. In addition, the strategy effectively activated learners' prior knowledge and created a more engaging learning environment.

Farha and Rohani (2019) examined the effectiveness of KWL in teaching reading comprehension of report texts to 72 eleventh-grade students in Indonesia. The study employed a quasi-experimental design in which the experimental group was taught through KWL, while the control group received a brainstorming strategy. Although the experimental group showed improvement from pretest to posttest, the difference between the two groups in the posttest was not statistically significant. However, students receiving KWL instruction were observed to be more active, motivated, and interested in reading activities.

Damaranti et al. (2021) conducted a study on the use of KWL from the perspective of EFL students' reading engagement. Using a case study design, the researchers investigated three eleventh-grade students at an Islamic senior high school through observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' KWL tables. The findings indicated that KWL facilitated positive reading engagement and self-assessment among the participants. However, the researchers also reported that students experienced difficulties with vocabulary when using the strategy.

Realizing the crucial essence of KWL strategy in reading comprehension, this study aims to examine ninth-grade students' perceptions of the use of KWL in developing their reading comprehension. The findings are expected to provide English teachers with a clearer understanding of the practicality and perceived effectiveness of the strategy when implemented in a Vietnamese EFL context, particularly from students' perspectives.

2.2. Theoretical Background

2.2.1. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to the ability of readers to understand, interpret, and construct meaning from written texts through the interaction between textual information and their existing knowledge. According to Snow (2002), reading comprehension is "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language." This definition emphasizes that reading comprehension is an active meaning-making process in which readers construct understanding through the interaction among the reader, the text, and the reading activity rather than merely decoding written words.

Drawing on Snow's (2002) conceptualization, Koda (2005) argues that successful reading comprehension involves integrating textual information with readers' linguistic knowledge and prior experiences to construct meaning from written texts. Furthermore, Anderson and Pearson (1984) emphasize the role of schema theory, arguing that readers rely on their existing knowledge structures to interpret and assimilate new information. Therefore, reading comprehension can be regarded as an active and interactive process in which readers construct meaning by connecting new information with their background knowledge.

Drawing on the above perspectives, reading comprehension is recognized as an active, constructive, and interactive process in which readers integrate textual information with their linguistic knowledge, prior knowledge, and reading purposes to construct meaningful understanding. Accordingly, successful reading comprehension requires not only linguistic competence but also readers' active engagement in the process of meaning construction.

2.2.2. The KWL Strategy

The KWL strategy, developed by Ogle (1986), can be understood as a structured metacognitive instructional strategy that guides learners through three interconnected stages-Know, Want, and Learned-to facilitate active engagement, purposeful reading, and reflective learning throughout the reading process.

The KWL strategy has been widely recognized as an effective instructional approach for improving students' reading comprehension because it encourages learners to become active participants throughout the reading process. According to Riswanto et al. (2014), the strategy helps students overcome difficulties in comprehending texts by providing a systematic framework that guides them before, during, and after reading. Rather than passively receiving information from teachers, learners actively formulate questions, identify learning purposes, and interact with texts to construct meaning. Consequently, students become more engaged in reading activities and achieve deeper comprehension.

2.2.3. Benefits of the KWL Strategy on Reading Comprehension

The KWL strategy offers a practical and flexible approach to teaching reading by systematically guiding learners through the stages of activating prior knowledge, setting reading purposes, monitoring comprehension, and reflecting on learning outcomes.

One of the most significant benefits of the KWL strategy is its ability to activate learners' prior knowledge before reading. According to Ajideh (2003), activating background knowledge, or schema, enables learners to connect existing knowledge with newly acquired information, thereby facilitating comprehension. This view is consistent with Anderson and Pearson's (1984) Schema Theory, which proposes that successful reading comprehension depends largely on readers' ability to relate new information to their existing knowledge structures. During the Know (K) stage, learners recall their previous experiences and knowledge related to the reading topic, creating a meaningful foundation for understanding the text. As a result, students are better able to interpret ideas, make meaningful connections, and comprehend reading materials more effectively.

In addition to activating prior knowledge, the KWL strategy promotes purposeful and self-regulated learning. During the Want (W) stage, students identify what they want to learn by

generating questions and setting specific reading goals. This process encourages learners to read with clear purposes rather than simply searching for isolated information. Goal setting and questioning also stimulate curiosity and increase learners' motivation to explore the text more actively, thereby enhancing their engagement throughout the reading process (Ogle, 1986).

Another important advantage of the KWL strategy is that it helps learners organize, synthesize, and evaluate information after reading. Ogle (1986) explains that the Learned (L) stage requires students to reflect on what they have learned, compare newly acquired information with their prior knowledge, and determine whether their initial questions have been answered. Such reflective activities strengthen learners' metacognitive awareness because students continuously monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own comprehension. Consequently, learners are more likely to retain information and develop a deeper understanding of the reading text.

Furthermore, the KWL strategy contributes to the development of learner autonomy and higher-order thinking skills. By encouraging students to ask questions, evaluate information, and seek answers independently, the strategy fosters active learning and promotes greater responsibility for learning. Students gradually become more confident in monitoring their own comprehension and extending their learning beyond classroom activities. As a result, the KWL strategy not only improves reading comprehension but also supports the development of independent learning habits and lifelong learning skills.

Accordingly, the KWL strategy provides a comprehensive framework that integrates schema activation, purposeful reading, reflection, and metacognitive regulation throughout the reading process. These characteristics make it an effective instructional strategy for enhancing students' reading comprehension while simultaneously promoting learner engagement, autonomy, and meaningful learning.

3. Methodology

The research examines ninth-graders' perceptions of KWL strategy employed during reading lessons. The participants were between 14 and 15 years of age and were enrolled as ninth-grade students at Binh Hoa Secondary School during the 2025-2026 academic year. All participants had several years of formal English learning experience before participating in the study. Class 9/2 with 42 students was assigned as the experimental group (EG), which received reading instruction through the KWL strategy was asked to complete the questionnaires to investigate their perceptions of the KWL strategy in terms of its perceived effectiveness and their satisfaction with its use in reading lessons.

The questionnaire was used to investigate students' perceptions of the KWL strategy after the intervention. It was presented in both English and Vietnamese to ensure that all participants could understand the questionnaire items clearly. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I collected participants' background information, including gender, age, class, previous experience with the KWL strategy, and years of learning English. Parts II and III consisted of ten statements measuring two dimensions of students' perceptions: the perceived effectiveness of the KWL strategy (five items) and students' satisfaction with the strategy (five items).

The ten statements in Parts II and III were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was administered only to the 42

students in the experimental group (class 9/2) after the post-test. Students were given approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire during class time. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher explained the instructions, assured the participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and encouraged them to answer honestly. All completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion.

The internal consistency of the ten-item questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha before further statistical analyses were conducted. The questionnaire data were then analyzed to examine two dimensions of students' perceptions: the perceived effectiveness of the KWL strategy and students' satisfaction with its use in reading lessons.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions and experiences of using the KWL strategy. While the questionnaire provided quantitative information about the general perceptions of the experimental group, the interviews allowed students to explain their experiences, perceived benefits, difficulties, and suggestions in greater detail.

Six students from the experimental group participated in the interviews after completing the intervention and the questionnaire. The interview questions focused on students' interest and engagement in reading lessons, the perceived effects of the KWL strategy on reading comprehension, difficulties encountered when using the strategy, overall satisfaction, and suggestions for its future use.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Vietnamese so that the students could understand the questions clearly and express their ideas comfortably. With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that the data could be accurately reviewed and analyzed. The recordings were then transcribed and translated into English for analysis and presentation. To protect participants' identities, the six interviewees were coded as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, and S6. The interview data were subsequently analyzed thematically by coding the responses and grouping recurring ideas into major themes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Data analysis of the Questionnaire

4.1.1. Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Before analyzing the students' responses, the reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. This analysis was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the 10 questionnaire items.

Table 1: Reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.852	10

As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the 10-item questionnaire was .852. This value was higher than the acceptable threshold of .70, indicating that the questionnaire had

good internal consistency. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered reliable for further analysis.

To further examine the contribution of each item to the overall reliability of the questionnaire, the corrected item-total correlations and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients if individual items were deleted were analyzed, as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: *Item-total statistics of the questionnaire*

Questionnaire item	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
Interest in reading	.610	.833
Easier understanding	.706	.823
Remember vocabulary and ideas	.796	.817
Active thinking	.820	.815
Reading comprehension	.696	.829
Satisfaction with KWL	.414	.849
Connect prior knowledge	.319	.855
Stay focused	.522	.844
Improvement	.367	.858
Overall satisfaction	.414	.849

As shown in Table 2, the corrected item-total correlation coefficients ranged from .319 to .820. All values exceeded the minimum acceptable level of .30, indicating that all 10 items contributed adequately to the overall scale. Although Cronbach's Alpha would increase slightly from .852 to .855 if the item "Connect prior knowledge" were deleted and to .858 if the item "Improvement" were deleted, these increases were minimal. Moreover, both items had corrected item-total correlation coefficients above .30. Therefore, all 10 items were retained for subsequent analysis.

4.1.2. Overall Students' Perceptions of the KWL Strategy

After confirming the reliability of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics were used to examine the students' overall perceptions of the KWL strategy. The 10 questionnaire items were grouped into two dimensions: perceived effectiveness (items 1-5) and satisfaction (items 6-10). The mean scores and standard deviations of these two dimensions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Descriptive statistics of the two questionnaire dimensions*

Dimension	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Effectiveness	42	3.00	5.00	4.51	.56
Satisfaction	42	3.20	5.00	4.38	.44

As shown in Table 3, the students reported highly positive perceptions of both dimensions of the KWL strategy. The effectiveness dimension obtained a higher mean score ($M = 4.51$, $SD = .56$) than the satisfaction dimension ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .44$). These results indicate that the students generally perceived the KWL strategy as effective in supporting their reading comprehension and were also highly satisfied with its use in reading lessons. Overall, the high mean scores for both dimensions suggest that the ninth-graders had positive perceptions of the KWL strategy after the eight-week treatment.

4.1.3. Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the KWL Strategy

To further explore students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the KWL strategy, the responses to items 1-5 were analyzed in terms of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These items focused on students' interest in reading, understanding of reading texts, retention of vocabulary and ideas, active thinking, and reading comprehension. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the KWL strategy*

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
1. Interest in reading	0.0	0.0	14.3	35.7	50.0	4.36	.73
2. Easier understanding	0.0	0.0	11.9	28.6	59.5	4.48	.71
3. Remember vocabulary and ideas	0.0	0.0	7.1	31.0	61.9	4.55	.63
4. Active thinking	0.0	0.0	7.1	33.3	59.5	4.52	.63
5. Reading comprehension	0.0	0.0	2.4	31.0	66.7	4.64	.53

(Note. SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree)

As shown in Table 4., students generally expressed highly positive perceptions of the effectiveness of the KWL strategy, with the mean scores of all five items ranging from 4.36 to 4.64. No students selected "strongly disagree" or "disagree" for any of the five items, indicating an overall favorable evaluation of the strategy.

Among the five items, item 5, concerning reading comprehension, received the highest mean score ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .53$). A total of 97.7% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the KWL strategy helped improve their reading comprehension, including 66.7% who strongly agreed. This finding suggests that the students particularly recognized the contribution of KWL to their reading comprehension.

Similarly, item 3, concerning the retention of vocabulary and ideas, obtained a high mean score ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .63$), with 92.9% of the students selecting either “agree” or “strongly agree”. Item 4 also received a high rating ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .63$), indicating that students perceived KWL as helpful in encouraging active thinking during reading lessons.

Items 1 and 2 also received positive responses. Item 2, concerning easier understanding of reading texts, had a mean score of 4.48 ($SD = .71$), while item 1, concerning interest in reading, had the lowest mean score within this dimension ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .73$). Nevertheless, 85.7% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that KWL made them more interested in reading. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the students perceived the KWL strategy as highly effective in supporting various aspects of their reading process.

4.1.4. Students’ Satisfaction with the KWL Strategy

To further examine students’ satisfaction with the KWL strategy, responses to items 6-10 were analyzed in terms of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These items focused on students’ satisfaction with the strategy, its ability to connect prior knowledge with new information, maintain students’ focus, improve reading performance, and their overall satisfaction with its use in reading lessons. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Students’ satisfaction with the KWL strategy*

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
6. Satisfaction with KWL	0.0	0.0	2.4	35.7	61.9	4.60	.54
7. Connect prior knowledge	0.0	0.0	2.4	42.9	54.8	4.52	.55
8. Stay focused	2.4	0.0	14.3	40.5	42.9	4.21	.87
9. Improvement	2.4	0.0	9.5	54.8	33.3	4.17	.79
10. Overall satisfaction	0.0	0.0	7.1	47.6	45.2	4.38	.62

(Note. SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree)

As indicated in Table 5, students generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with the KWL strategy, with the mean scores of the five items ranging from 4.17 to 4.60. The majority of students selected either “agree” or “strongly agree” for all items, indicating generally favorable responses to the use of KWL in reading lessons.

Among the five items, item 6, concerning students’ satisfaction with the KWL strategy, obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .54$). A total of 97.6% of the students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, including 61.9% who strongly agreed. Similarly, item 7 received a high mean score ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .55$), with 97.7% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the strategy helped them connect their prior knowledge with new information.

Item 10, which measured students' overall satisfaction with the use of KWL in reading lessons, also received positive responses ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .62$). In total, 92.8% of the students selected either "agree" or "strongly agree," suggesting that most students were satisfied with their experience of learning reading through the KWL strategy.

Although items 8 and 9 obtained the lowest mean scores within this dimension, the results remained positive. Item 8, concerning students' ability to stay focused during reading lessons, had a mean score of 4.21 ($SD = .87$), with 83.4% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing. Item 9, concerning improvement in reading performance, received the lowest mean score ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .79$); nevertheless, 88.1% of the students still selected either "agree" or "strongly agree". Overall, these findings indicate that the students were highly satisfied with the KWL strategy and generally perceived it as a useful and engaging approach to reading instruction.

In summary, the questionnaire findings provided a clear answer to the second research question concerning ninth-graders' perceptions of the KWL strategy. Overall, the students demonstrated highly positive perceptions of the strategy. The effectiveness dimension obtained a mean score of 4.51 ($SD = .56$), while the satisfaction dimension achieved a mean score of 4.38 ($SD = .44$). The findings demonstrated that the students particularly valued the contribution of KWL to their reading comprehension, with this item receiving the highest mean score ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .53$). They also expressed a high level of satisfaction with the strategy ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .54$). Although the items concerning staying focused and improvement in reading performance received comparatively lower mean scores, their values remained above 4.00, indicating positive responses. Taken together, these findings suggest that the ninth-graders perceived the KWL strategy as an effective and satisfactory approach to learning reading comprehension.

4.2. Analysis of Interview Data

To gain deeper insights into ninth-graders' perceptions of the KWL strategy, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six students from the experimental group after the treatment. The interview data were analyzed thematically, with the students' responses coded and grouped based on recurring ideas and patterns. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) increased interest and active engagement, (2) improved reading comprehension and retention, (3) difficulties in using the KWL strategy, and (4) overall satisfaction and suggestions for future use.

4.2.1. Increased Interest and Active Engagement

The first theme emerging from the interview data was increased interest and active engagement. Most interviewees reported that the KWL strategy made reading lessons more interesting and encouraged them to participate more actively in the reading process. Rather than simply reading a text and answering predetermined questions, the students were given opportunities to express their prior knowledge, generate their own questions, and actively search for answers.

For example, S1 described the learning experience as exciting and curiosity-provoking. The student particularly enjoyed the W (Want to know) stage because it provided the freedom to generate personal questions instead of merely answering questions provided in the textbook. S1 explained:

“I felt very excited and curious. Writing down what I wanted to know before reading was like searching for treasure.” (S1)

A similar change in engagement was reported by S3 and S6. Although S3 initially felt some pressure because the strategy required more writing, the student gradually became more comfortable and less afraid of reading longer texts:

“At first, I felt a little pressured because I had to write a lot, but later I felt more comfortable and became less afraid of reading longer texts.” (S3)

Likewise, S6 initially considered the multiple steps of KWL somewhat inconvenient but later became accustomed to the procedure and felt that reading lessons passed more quickly. These responses suggest that students’ engagement with the strategy developed gradually as they became more familiar with its procedures.

The interview data also indicated that KWL promoted active participation and classroom interaction. S6 particularly enjoyed sharing ideas from the K and W columns with classmates and discovering that other students had similar questions. This finding suggests that the KWL strategy not only encouraged individual engagement but also created opportunities for students to exchange ideas and interact with their peers during reading lessons.

The first theme revealed that the KWL strategy contributed to greater interest and active engagement in reading lessons. The students’ responses showed that generating their own questions, expressing personal ideas, and sharing information with classmates made the reading process more interactive and meaningful. Although some students experienced initial pressure or inconvenience, their perceptions became more positive as they grew familiar with the strategy.

4.2.2. Improved Reading Comprehension and Retention

The second major theme emerging from the interview data was improved reading comprehension and retention. All six interviewees reported that the KWL strategy supported their understanding of reading texts and helped them remember vocabulary and main ideas more effectively. The students described several ways in which the strategy facilitated their reading process, including directing their attention to relevant information, connecting prior knowledge with new information, identifying key ideas, summarizing what they had learned, and organizing information visually.

One perceived benefit of the KWL strategy was that it gave students a clear purpose for reading. S1 explained that the questions generated in the W column encouraged focused information searching while reading. Similarly, S6 stated that the need to complete the L column required active attention to the text. S1 explained:

“When I read, my eyes automatically focus on the parts that answer the questions I wrote in the W column.” (S1)

These responses suggest that the W and L stages encouraged students to read with specific purposes rather than approach the text passively.

Another important benefit concerned the connection between prior knowledge and new information. S2 compared the KWL strategy to a map that helped establish a clear relationship between what the student already knew and what was newly learned from the text:

“KWL is like a map. It helps me clearly connect my prior knowledge with the new knowledge in the reading text.” (S2)

This response indicates that activating prior knowledge in the K column may have provided a meaningful foundation for processing new information during reading.

The strategy also appeared to make reading texts more manageable. S3 reported that dividing the reading process into three stages prevented the student from feeling overwhelmed by lengthy texts. Similarly, S4 stated that KWL helped filter out less important information and direct attention towards the core content of the text. As S3 noted:

“It helps me divide the reading process into three stages, so I no longer feel overwhelmed by a text with a lot of words.” (S3)

In addition, S5 emphasized the visual and organizational benefits of the KWL chart. According to the student, transforming information from the text into short keywords made it easier to form an overall picture of the reading passage. The three-column structure also supported visual memory, as the student associated vocabulary with its position in the KWL chart.

The interview responses further revealed that KWL supported the retention of vocabulary and main ideas. S1 reported remembering information more deeply when finding answers to self-generated questions. S2 viewed the L column as a summary stage that helped organize vocabulary and main ideas. S3 also explained that self-generated ideas in the L column were less likely to be forgotten than information learned through rote memorization. Similarly, S4 found the completed KWL worksheet useful for reviewing key ideas, while S5 associated vocabulary with its visual position in the chart. S6 believed that comparing knowledge before and after reading made learning progress more visible and helped vocabulary remain in memory for longer. As S3 explained:

“The vocabulary and main ideas in the L column are things I draw from the lesson myself, so I do not forget them as quickly as when learning by rote.” (S3)

The second theme indicated that the students perceived KWL as beneficial to both reading comprehension and retention. The strategy appeared to support comprehension by providing a clear purpose for reading, activating prior knowledge, dividing the reading process into manageable stages, and helping students identify and organize key information. At the same time, the process of generating questions, summarizing newly learned information, and visually organizing ideas seemed to help students remember vocabulary and main ideas more effectively. These interview findings are consistent with the questionnaire results, in which reading comprehension received the highest mean score ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .53$), while remembering vocabulary and ideas also received a high rating ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .63$).

4.2.3. Difficulties in Using the KWL Strategy

Although the students generally expressed positive perceptions of the KWL strategy, the interview data also revealed several difficulties in its implementation. The challenges reported

by the participants included unanswered questions, uncertainty about prior knowledge, limited background knowledge, time constraints, insufficient space on the KWL worksheet, and occasional difficulty generating meaningful questions for the W column. These difficulties varied among the students and were mainly related to the practical implementation of the strategy rather than to the strategy itself.

S1 reported that some questions generated in the W column could not be answered by the reading text. This sometimes caused disappointment because the student expected to find answers to the questions formulated before reading. This response suggests that students may need guidance in generating relevant questions and understanding that not all questions can necessarily be answered by a single reading text. S1 explained:

“Sometimes the reading text is too short or does not provide information that answers the questions I want to know, so I feel a little disappointed.” (S1)

A different difficulty was reported by S2, who sometimes felt uncertain about the information recorded in the K column. The student was not always sure whether the prior knowledge was accurate and occasionally had difficulty thinking of ideas to write. This response suggests that some students may need reassurance that the K column is intended to activate existing knowledge and ideas rather than assess whether every response is immediately correct. S2 stated:

“Sometimes, in the K column, I am not sure whether what I think I already know is correct, or sometimes I cannot think of anything to write.” (S2)

Limited background knowledge was a particular challenge for S4. When a topic was completely unfamiliar, the student found it relatively difficult to complete both the K and W columns. As S4 explained:

“With topics that are completely new and that I know nothing about, completing the K and W columns is relatively difficult for me.” (S4)

This response indicates that unfamiliar topics may require additional teacher support, such as pictures, keywords, guiding questions, or short warm-up activities to activate relevant background knowledge before students complete the KWL chart.

Time was another challenge identified in the interviews. S3 reported that writing slowly sometimes made it difficult to formulate questions for the W column before the class moved on to the reading stage:

“I write rather slowly, so sometimes I have not finished thinking of questions for the W column when the class has already moved on to reading the text.” (S3)

This difficulty suggests that the use of KWL may require more flexible time allocation, particularly for students who need longer to organize and express their ideas.

S5 identified a practical problem related to the design of the KWL worksheet. The student felt that the paper-based chart was sometimes too small to accommodate longer responses or small diagrams. This finding highlights the importance of providing sufficient and flexible space for students to record information in ways that support their individual learning preferences.

Finally, S6 reported a motivational difficulty related to the W column. Rather than being unable to generate questions, the student sometimes felt reluctant to think carefully about them and wrote one or two questions simply to complete the task. S6 admitted:

“Sometimes I feel too lazy to think of questions for the W column, so I just write one or two questions to finish the task.” (S6)

This response suggests that teachers may need to provide engaging prompts, examples, or collaborative activities to encourage students to formulate more meaningful questions.

The difficulties identified by the interviewees were diverse but largely manageable. They included unanswered questions, uncertainty about the accuracy of prior knowledge, limited background knowledge, insufficient time and writing space, and an occasional lack of motivation to generate meaningful questions. Importantly, none of these difficulties resulted in a complete rejection of the KWL strategy. Instead, the students’ responses suggest that these challenges could be reduced through appropriate teacher support, flexible time allocation, clearer guidance for the K and W stages, and improved worksheet design.

4.2.4. Overall Satisfaction and Suggestions

The final theme emerging from the interview data concerned students’ overall satisfaction with the KWL strategy and their suggestions for its future use. All six interviewees expressed a willingness to continue using the strategy in reading lessons. Their responses indicated that, despite some difficulties, they generally regarded KWL as a useful and engaging approach. The students also provided several suggestions for improving its implementation.

The interviewees’ willingness to continue using KWL was associated with different perceived benefits of the strategy. S1 emphasized its positive effect on classroom engagement, explaining that KWL made reading lessons less boring and created a stronger sense of participation:

“Yes, definitely! It makes reading lessons less boring, and I feel that I am truly involved in the lesson.” (S1)

Similarly, S2 expressed a strong desire to continue using the strategy because it supported independent learning and helped students prepare for lessons more effectively. S4 also supported its continued use, particularly for scientific and historical reading texts, which the student considered especially suitable for the KWL procedure. These responses suggest that students valued the strategy not only for making lessons more engaging but also for encouraging more systematic and independent learning.

In addition to expressing their satisfaction, several interviewees offered practical suggestions for improving the future implementation of KWL. S3, who had previously reported difficulty completing the W column within the available time, suggested that students should be given more time to complete the KWL worksheet. The student also proposed pair work as a way to increase confidence:

“Yes. I hope the teacher can give us a little more time to complete the worksheet or let us work in pairs so that I can feel more confident.” (S3)

S5 proposed using technology or larger materials to make the activity more flexible. Since the student had previously found the paper-based KWL chart too small, the suggestion was to complete KWL activities through computer applications or on larger sheets of paper in groups:

“Yes. If possible, I hope the teacher can let us do KWL on computer applications or use larger sheets of paper for group work.” (S5)

S6 also expressed a willingness to continue using KWL but suggested introducing a competitive element into the activity. Specifically, the student proposed organizing a competition among groups to see which group could find the greatest number of answers for the L column. This suggestion reflects the student’s preference for more interactive and collaborative classroom activities:

“I still want to continue. However, could the teacher organize a competition among groups to see which group can find the most answers for the L column?” (S6)

The interview findings revealed a high level of satisfaction with the KWL strategy. All six interviewees expressed a willingness to continue using it in future reading lessons. Their reasons included increased engagement, greater participation, support for independent learning, and its suitability for particular types of reading texts. At the same time, the students suggested several practical improvements, including providing more time, allowing pair work, using digital applications or larger worksheets, organizing group activities, and incorporating competitive elements.

These findings indicate that the students did not simply accept the KWL strategy passively; they also identified ways in which its implementation could be adapted to better suit their learning needs and preferences. Their suggestions highlighted the importance of flexibility, collaboration, technology, and interaction in future KWL-based reading lessons. The interview findings therefore provide further support for the positive perceptions identified in the questionnaire results and offer additional qualitative insights into how the strategy could be improved in future classroom practice.

4.3. Discussion of Findings

The findings from both the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews revealed that the students generally held highly positive perceptions of the strategy after the eight-week treatment. The questionnaire results showed high mean scores for both perceived effectiveness ($M = 4.51$, $SD = .56$) and satisfaction ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .44$), indicating that the students regarded KWL as both effective and satisfactory for learning reading comprehension. These quantitative findings were further supported and explained by the interview data, which revealed increased interest and active engagement, perceived improvements in reading comprehension and retention, several practical difficulties, and an overall willingness to continue using the strategy.

Regarding perceived effectiveness, the students particularly recognized the contribution of KWL to their reading comprehension. This item obtained the highest mean score among all questionnaire items ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .53$), with 97.7% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the strategy helped improve their reading comprehension. The students also reported positive perceptions of the strategy’s contribution to remembering vocabulary and ideas ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .63$), active thinking ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .63$), and easier understanding of

reading texts ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .71$). These findings suggest that the students perceived KWL as supporting several important aspects of the reading process rather than merely improving their test performance.

The interview findings provided further explanations for these positive perceptions. S1 reported that the questions generated in the W column directed attention towards relevant information in the reading text. S2 described KWL as a “map” that connected prior knowledge with new information, while S3 explained that dividing the reading process into three stages made lengthy texts less overwhelming. S4 perceived the strategy as useful for identifying key information, and S5 emphasized the visual and organizational benefits of the KWL chart. These responses suggest that students valued the strategy because it provided a clear and structured way to approach reading texts.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical principles underlying the KWL strategy. Ogle (1986) proposed that KWL guides students through a structured process of activating prior knowledge, establishing learning goals, and reflecting on newly acquired information. Similarly, Riswanto et al. (2014) argued that the strategy helps learners approach reading texts more systematically by providing clear purposes for reading and encouraging active information searching. The positive responses concerning the connection between prior and new knowledge also support the view of Anderson and Pearson (1984) that comprehension involves integrating new information with existing knowledge structures. Thus, the students’ perceptions in the present study reflect the cognitive processes that the KWL strategy is designed to promote.

The findings also revealed a high level of satisfaction with the strategy. The item directly concerning satisfaction with KWL obtained a mean score of 4.60 ($SD = .54$), with 97.6% of the students selecting either “agree” or “strongly agree.” Similarly, the overall satisfaction item received a mean score of 4.38 ($SD = .62$), and 92.8% of the students responded positively. The interview data reinforced these findings, as all six interviewees expressed a willingness to continue using KWL in future reading lessons. Their reasons included increased engagement, active participation, support for independent learning, and the suitability of the strategy for particular types of reading texts.

The students’ positive perceptions of engagement were also evident in both data sources. In the questionnaire, the item concerning interest in reading obtained a mean score of 4.36 ($SD = .73$), with 85.7% of the students agreeing or strongly agreeing that KWL increased their interest in reading. In the interviews, S1 described the learning experience as exciting and curiosity-provoking, while S6 enjoyed sharing ideas from the K and W columns with classmates. These findings suggest that KWL encouraged students to participate more actively in the reading process and created opportunities for interaction and idea sharing.

This result is consistent with the findings of Tran (2015), who found that students taught through KWL demonstrated greater participation, increased confidence, and more positive attitudes towards reading classes. Similarly, Le and Nguyen (2020) reported that KWL enhanced students’ engagement and understanding of reading texts. The present findings also support Vu et al. (2024), who found that the strategy encouraged active participation and strengthened the connection between prior knowledge and new information. In addition, the

interview findings indicated that the collaborative aspects of KWL provided students with opportunities to exchange ideas, share their understanding, and participate more actively in the reading activities.

Despite these generally positive perceptions, the findings also revealed several challenges. The questionnaire items concerning staying focused ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .87$) and perceived improvement in reading performance ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .79$) received comparatively lower mean scores, although both remained above 4.00. The interview data provided further insight into some difficulties students experienced, including unanswered questions in the W column, uncertainty about prior knowledge, unfamiliar topics, limited time, insufficient worksheet space, and occasional reluctance to generate meaningful questions. These findings indicate that students' perceptions were not uniformly positive in every aspect and that the practical implementation of KWL requires appropriate teacher support.

Importantly, the students' suggestions showed that these difficulties did not lead them to reject the strategy. Instead, they proposed practical improvements, such as allowing more time, using pair or group work, providing larger worksheets or digital applications, and incorporating competitive activities. These suggestions highlight the importance of adapting the strategy to students' needs and classroom conditions. They also suggest that flexibility and teacher guidance may help maximize the effectiveness of KWL, particularly when students have limited background knowledge or difficulty generating questions.

The findings reveal that the ninth-graders generally held highly positive perceptions of the KWL strategy. They regarded it as effective in supporting reading comprehension, retention, active thinking, and the connection between prior knowledge and new information, while also expressing a high level of satisfaction with its use. Although several practical difficulties were identified, the students remained willing to continue using the strategy and offered constructive suggestions for improving its implementation. The convergence between the questionnaire and interview findings therefore provides strong evidence that the KWL strategy was positively received by the students after the eight-week treatment.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicate that the students generally held highly positive perceptions of the KWL strategy. The questionnaire results showed high mean scores for both perceived effectiveness ($M = 4.51$, $SD = .56$) and satisfaction ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .44$). Among the individual items, reading comprehension received the highest rating ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .53$), indicating that the students particularly valued the strategy for its contribution to understanding reading texts.

The interview findings further supported and explained the questionnaire results. The students reported that KWL increased their interest and active engagement, provided clear purposes for reading, helped them connect prior knowledge with new information, made lengthy texts more manageable, and supported the retention of vocabulary and main ideas. All six interviewees expressed a willingness to continue using the strategy in future reading lessons.

Nevertheless, several practical difficulties were identified. Some students experienced unanswered questions in the W column, uncertainty about prior knowledge, difficulty with unfamiliar topics, limited time, insufficient worksheet space, and occasional reluctance to

generate meaningful questions. However, these challenges did not result in negative overall perceptions of the strategy. Instead, the students proposed practical improvements, including providing more time, using pair or group work, offering larger or digital KWL worksheets, and incorporating competitive activities.

It can be concluded that the ninth-graders generally perceived the KWL strategy as an effective, engaging, and satisfactory approach to reading instruction. In order to help students who have difficulty completing the K and W columns when they have limited knowledge about the reading topic, teachers may use pictures, keywords, guiding questions, short videos, or brief warm-up activities to activate relevant background knowledge before students complete the KWL chart. For students who find it difficult to formulate questions or occasionally write questions simply to complete the task, teachers should model different types of questions, provide prompts when necessary, and gradually reduce support as students become more familiar with the strategy. Pair or group discussion may also help students exchange ideas and generate more meaningful questions. Regarding limited writing space for students to record longer ideas or small diagrams, teachers may provide larger or more flexible worksheets and consider using digital applications where appropriate. Appropriate teacher guidance, flexible classroom organization, sufficient time, and well-designed learning materials may help maximize the benefits of KWL strategy for reading comprehension.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the conception and design of the study, drafted and critically revised the manuscript, and approved the submitted version.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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