

Exploring the Student Experience in Vocabulary Learning Using the Wordwall Platform

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Abstrak: Di abad ke-21, teknologi bukan hanya alat, tetapi bagian penting dari proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Tujuan sebagai pendidik adalah untuk menjembatani kesenjangan antara rasa ingin tahu alami mereka dan pembelajaran formal dengan membuat pengalaman tersebut interaktif, personal, dan menyenangkan. Penggunaan media interaktif untuk siswa sangat penting. Materi ini secara khusus berfokus pada pemanfaatan platform gamifikasi seperti Wordwall, sebuah aplikasi berbasis web yang mengubah konten standar menjadi aktivitas pembelajaran berbasis permainan yang dinamis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui implementasi Wordwall sebagai media interaktif untuk pengajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya dalam pengajaran kosakata. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus untuk mengeksplorasi penggunaan media pembelajaran secara mendalam. Populasi dalam penelitian ini mencakup seluruh guru bahasa Inggris dan siswa kelas tiga di sebuah sekolah dasar di Mojokerto, dengan sampel spesifik seorang guru bahasa Inggris yang telah mengintegrasikan media Wordwall dalam proses pembelajarannya. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi langsung di kelas untuk mengamati interaksi pembelajaran, serta wawancara mendalam dengan guru terkait untuk menggali informasi lebih detail. Selanjutnya, data yang telah terkumpul diolah menggunakan teknik analisis data kualitatif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data secara sistematis, dan penarikan kesimpulan untuk menjawab fokus penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat banyak keuntungan dalam menggunakan aplikasi Wordwall untuk proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran, khususnya untuk pembelajaran kosakata. Keuntungan tersebut meliputi siswa menjadi lebih perhatian, menganggap pelajaran lebih menantang, dan memandang pembelajaran kosakata sebagai pengalaman yang lebih positif.

Kata kunci: Media Wordwall, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, Daya ingat kosakata, Tantangan dan Strategi

Abstract: In the 21st century, technology is not just a tool, but an essential part of the teaching and learning process. The goal as educators is to bridge the gap between their natural curiosity and formal learning by making the experience interactive, personalised, and fun. Using interactive media for students is important. This material specifically focuses on leveraging a gamification platform like Wordwall, a web-based application that transforms standard content into dynamic, game-based learning activities. This research has goal to find out the Wordwall implementation as an interactive media for teaching English, especially in teaching vocabulary. This research is a qualitative study employing a case study design to explore the use of instructional media in depth. The population of this research consists of English teachers and third-grade students at an elementary school in Mojokerto, with a specific sample of one English teacher who has integrated Wordwall media into the teaching process. Data collection techniques were carried out through direct classroom observations to monitor learning interactions, as well as in-depth interviews with the teacher to gather detailed information. Furthermore, the collected data were processed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which include data reduction, systematic data display, and drawing conclusions to address the research focus. The results showed that there are many advantages in using the Wordwall application for the teaching and learning process, especially for learning vocabulary. The advantages included.

Keywords: Wordwall media, Teaching English, Vocabulary retention, Challenges and Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

When learning a foreign language like English, mastering vocabulary is the most important thing to acquire first. Without having enough words, the language becomes difficult to understand. Vocabulary is what connects a student's ability to sound out words (phonics) to their ultimate goal: engaging the cognitive processes required to derive meaning from what they read (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Then, Graves (2016) asserts that a student's lexical knowledge upon entering and advancing through the educational system holds significant weight. Vocabulary is crucial for developing reading skills, for succeeding across the curriculum, and for securing favourable outcomes in post-school efforts. Vocabulary is essential in English learning since it touches every language skill. Having enough words enables students to fully engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also helps them create sentences easily. Put simply, if students lack sufficient vocabulary, their other language skills can't function properly. This is supported by Schmitt, "because without the ability to recognise or produce a word, any other kind of knowledge and language skill is virtually useless" (2000). According to Nurdini et al. (2017), a person without grammar will have little difficulty in communicating, but without vocabulary, there will be no communication. Therefore, building vocabulary is the most important aim, superseding the focus on grammar. Despite this, students often find classroom English vocabulary study to be uninteresting. The root cause of this disinterest is often the same, unvaried teaching methods being used repeatedly.

This study shows how English is learned and taught, focusing on the difficulty of teaching vocabulary to primary school students. Most teachers currently use dictionaries. When the teacher spends too much time using the dictionary, of course, it often makes the students feel tired and slows down learning. Because of this problem, English teachers must find new, fun ways to teach words, making memorisation an exciting and motivating activity. Thus, in facilitating vocabulary acquisition, English teachers in Indonesia should generate suitable media.

In this era, English learning needs instructional variety that moves from static resources like books and flashcards. In order to make the vocabulary teaching and learning process varied and stimulating, teachers should adopt digital tools. Wordwall can be an interactive, game-based learning platform. Its capacity to offer diverse activity templates allows students to acquire and practice new English words in a context that is fun, encouraging high engagement and deeper mastery.

Tomlinson (2014) suggests that good teaching materials have following characteristics: What is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and useful; Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investments; Learners must be ready to acquire the points being taught; Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use; The learners' attention should be drawn to linguistic features

of the input; Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes; Materials should take into account that the positive effects of instruction are usually delayed; Materials should take into account that learners have different learning styles; Materials should take into account that learners differ in effective attitudes; Materials should permit a silent period at the beginning of instruction; Materials should maximize learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement that stimulates both right and left brain activities; Materials should not rely too much on controlled practice.

Wordwall is an online platform for educators designed to quickly create interactive and engaging class activities. Teachers simply input their content, and the platform uses various templates to automatically generate materials. These templates range from familiar formats like multiple-choice quizzes and matching pairs to unique exercises like anagrams, sorting, and cloze questions. Activities can be used for both in-class assignments and homework. A key benefit for instructors is the ability to track student progress and results. Using Wordwall helps reduce preparation time, makes online learning more dynamic, minimises paper use, and supports student-paced learning.

Wordwall offers versatile features such as customizable templates, interactive games and quizzes that stimulate student engagement, making it a valuable resource for educators working with young learners. Jannah et al. (2020) stated that game-based learning can significantly improve vocabulary acquisition by making learning more engaging and interactive. One promising tool is Wordwall, an interactive digital application that allows students to engage in quizzes, discussions, and competitions in a dynamic learning environment. Wordwall is an application that can be used as an interactive media to create valuable student interactions in teaching and learning activities and as an exciting assessment tool (Hasram et al., 2021). According to Aribowo (2021), WordWall is a website-based application which can be used to create learning media such as quizzes, matchmaking, pairing, anagrams, word randomisation, word search, grouping, etc.

Some studies explore the application and efficacy of word walls as an interactive media for teaching vocabulary. These investigations frequently discuss how Wordwall functions as an interactive, visual learning resource to enhance various aspects of student literacy, often focusing on vocabulary acquisition, spelling, and concept. Researchers commonly investigate the tool's impact on learners, including those in a second language or a foreign language. For example, Ismaya et al (2024), explored "Implementing Word Wall as a Media to Facilitate EFL Students in Learning Vocabulary". Concluding that the implementation of the strategy (like word walls) led to very positive student reactions. Students reported feeling more engaged and finding the material easier to learn, making vocabulary study more enjoyable. The results indicate that this method is an effective visual aid that boosts vocabulary retention and creates a lively, interactive classroom. By using visual cues, students solidified their understanding of new words, which in turn increased their participation and overall involvement.

Similarly, Harmon et al. (2009) found that the Interactive Wordwall strategy is designed to achieve three main goals. Wordwall can connect new word parts and meanings to things students already know (ideas, concepts, and experiences), actively involve students in various and meaningful activities with the words, and emphasise the students' freedom to choose and engage with the material.

Then, Pradini et al. (2022) found that using Wordwall can be a significant improvement. The researchers found that the experimental group (which used the Wordwall application) showed a statistically significant improvement in their English vocabulary mastery compared to the control group (which used traditional teaching methods). Moreover, it concludes that the Wordwall application is an effective, practical, and engaging media for teaching English vocabulary to young learners. This effectiveness is often attributed to the application's ability to increase student motivation and interactive engagement.

METHOD

This research will be conducted at a primary school in Mojokerto, East Java, employing a qualitative case study design. This approach is specifically chosen to gain a profound understanding and to interpret as well as explain the observed school phenomena within their natural context. As guided by the methodology described by Sugiyono (2013), this qualitative framework allows the researcher to act as the primary instrument in exploring the complexities of the teaching and learning environment.

The population for this study includes English teachers and third-grade students at the selected institution. To ensure the quality and relevance of the data, the participants will be selected using a purposive sampling technique. This method ensures that the chosen individuals possess specific characteristics or experiences that are representative of the research objectives. Specifically, a total of three key individuals, including the English teacher who has integrated Wordwall media and relevant school stakeholders will be selected as the primary informants for the study.

Data collection will be carried out through multiple sources to ensure data triangulation. This includes documentation of relevant teaching materials and semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews is intended to provide a flexible yet focused framework, allowing participants to express their perspectives freely while ensuring all research questions are addressed.

Furthermore, the collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This rigorous analytical process involves familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, and searching for, reviewing, and defining themes. The ultimate goal of this process is to identify recurring themes or patterns within the data gathered, providing a systematic and comprehensive interpretation of how Wordwall media is utilized in the English language classroom.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research identified three key categories of student engagement when learning vocabulary using the Wordwall application. First is cognitive engagement. This type of engagement relates to the intellectual investment and mental focus students demonstrate during the learning process. Key indicators include focusing when the students are actively paying attention to the content and tasks presented, concentrating more, and absorbing learning material when the students are effectively processing, understanding, and internalising the new vocabulary concepts. Second is emotional engagement, when the students express enthusiasm, happiness, and enjoy the learning process. Third is behavioural engagement. This is demonstrated through timely task completion and obeying the teacher's instructions.

Before analysing the interview results, a critical step was taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data or member checking. This process involved allowing the participants to review and verify their own interview transcripts. The primary goal of this step, as supported by Harvey & McBean (2015), was to build trust between the researchers and the participants and to prevent misinterpretations of the data. The important thing, the participants had agreed to volunteer for the study and confirmed their willingness to share their experiences regarding vocabulary learning with Wordwall.

Table 1. Part 1

Question/Speaker	Participant Response
Researcher: "Did you like the Wordwall games?"	Student A: "Yes! The game helped me check the words fast."
Researcher: "Was it more fun than reading?"	Student B: "Yes. I liked it too. I was really focused because I wanted to win."
Researcher: "So, did the games make you feel happy?"	Student A: "Yes."
Researcher: "Did the games make you feel excited about learning?"	Student B: "Sure."

The table illustrates that the students' experience with Wordwall is characterized by active engagement and increased focus. The competitive nature of the platform ("wanted to win") acts as a catalyst for concentration, while the immediate feedback ("check the words fast") reinforces their vocabulary retention.

Table 2. Part 2

Speaker/Question	Participant Response
Researcher: "Did the pictures and the games help you	Student A: "Yes. When I matched the word 'laboratory'

remember the new vocabulary?"	to the picture of the science room, I knew it right away. That's easier than a book."
Researcher: "Did the pictures and the games help you remember the new vocabulary?"	Student B: "I learned the word 'auditorium'. It's a hard word, but I remember it now."
Researcher: "Can you each tell me two words you learned well today from the Wordwall?"	Student A: "Canteen and Science."
Researcher: "Can you each tell me two words you learned well today from the Wordwall?"	Student B: "Library and cupboard."

Based on the transcript above, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the use of Wordwall in the classroom: Positive Reception: Participants reacted positively to Wordwall, consistently describing it as an engaging and appealing medium. Visual Interest: The diverse and colorful visual displays served as a "hook" that captured the students' interest far more effectively than standard printed materials. Cognitive Ease: By using visual-verbal association (matching pictures to words), students found the material easier to understand. This is evidenced by Student B's ability to retain the word "auditorium," which they previously perceived as difficult. Immediate Recall: The ability of both students to list specific vocabulary words (Canteen, Science, Library, Cupboard) immediately after the activity proves the medium's efficacy in vocabulary retention.

Table 3. Part 3

Speaker/Question	Participant Response
Researcher: "Did the games make you want to finish all the tasks quickly? Did it make you want to participate more?"	Student A: "Yes, I finished everything because I wanted my name to be number one on the score list! It made me want to learn and finish on time."
Researcher: (Same question as above)	Student B: "I usually stop paying attention fast, but with Wordwall, I kept working until the end. I was always busy typing or moving things."
Researcher: "Do you want your teacher to use Wordwall again for other topics?"	Student A & B: "Yes!" (together)

The table illustrates the positive impact of Wordwall on student motivation and engagement during English lessons. The responses from Student A and Student B highlight three key psychological drivers in a gamified learning environment: competition, sustained attention, and overall satisfaction. Motivation through Competition: Student A expresses a strong drive to complete tasks quickly and accurately because of the leaderboard feature ("I wanted my name to be number one on the score list"). This indicates that gamification encourages students to meet deadlines and achieve higher learning standards. Increased Focus and Attention Span: Student B

admits to usually losing focus quickly in traditional settings. However, with Wordwall, the student remained actively engaged until the end. The interactive nature of the platform, such as "typing or moving things", provided the physical and mental stimulation needed to prevent boredom. High Student Satisfaction: Both students responded with an enthusiastic "Yes!" when asked if they wanted to use the media again. This collective response proves that Wordwall creates a favorable learning atmosphere that students find rewarding.

Discussion

The research findings highlight the significant role of Wordwall in supporting students' cognitive engagement with vocabulary learning. All participants shared the view that Wordwall is crucial for gathering and expanding their English vocabulary. Wordwall proves effective in representing learning material. When asked to recall the vocabulary, students were not only able to mention the words they had learned but also state their meanings. This ability to retain and recall vocabulary supports the findings of Arafah and Ahmad (2020), who noted that Wordwall aids students in remembering vocabulary, not just learning new words. Then, the study supports the idea that using a suitable learning tool like Wordwall can lead to optimal results in students' understanding of the study material (Komara, 2022). This perspective aligns with previous studies, such as Rahman et al. (2023), which concluded that learning using Wordwall enhances students' English vocabulary and helps them acquire a more diverse range of words. So, Wordwall really increase motivation and engagement, as stated that gamified learning environments significantly boost intrinsic motivation and engagement among young learners. The element of fun, challenge, and reward encourages sustained attention and participation (Deterding et al., 2011; Hamari et al., 2014).

The research strongly indicates that students display a positive emotional reaction toward learning vocabulary with Wordwall. All participants shared the consistent view that Wordwall is a valuable and captivating tool for vocabulary acquisition. The platform's appeal stems from its variety of interactive activities (such as quizzes, 'find the match,' flashcards, and matchups), which successfully capture student interest and make the learning process more enjoyable than traditional methods.

This high level of student interest is crucial for academic success, as students who are highly engaged tend to achieve better learning outcomes. This finding is reinforced by a related study from Hidayaty et al. (2022), which found that using Wordwall for vocabulary learning can boost student interest and learning outcomes.

Increased Motivation and Engagement: Studies consistently show that gamified learning environments significantly boost intrinsic motivation and engagement among young learners. The element of fun, challenge, and reward encourages sustained attention and participation (Deterding et al., 2011; Hamari et al., 2014)

CONCLUSION

Based on the students' feedback, the research concludes that Wordwall is a highly effective medium for increasing student engagement in learning English vocabulary.

Integrating Wordwall into the classroom provides students with engaging activities, diverse access to materials, and opportunities for collaboration with both peers and the teacher. Wordwall successfully improves vocabulary learning by making the material easier for students to understand and by helping them acquire and retain more English vocabulary. Participants reported that Wordwall is very fun and captures their interest due to its various interactive designs, such as flashcards, matching games, picture guessing, and quizzes. This ease of use and enjoyment mean students face no difficulty while utilising the platform. Students consistently displayed positive behaviour, marked by active participation, timely submission of assignments, and a willingness to discuss difficult material with friends and the teacher. In summary, Wordwall offers an effective solution to enhance student engagement, creating a vocabulary learning atmosphere that is interesting, efficient, and easily comprehensible.

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