

# Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery and Motivation Using Wordwall Games: Implications for Junior High Education

Rury Rubykania, Sholeh Hidayat, Isti Rusdiyani

Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia

e-mail: [7772220027@untirta.ac.id](mailto:7772220027@untirta.ac.id), [sholeh.hidayat@untirta.ac.id](mailto:sholeh.hidayat@untirta.ac.id), [isti\\_rusdiyani@untirta.ac.id](mailto:isti_rusdiyani@untirta.ac.id)


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**ABSTRACT.** This study aims to explore the effectiveness of using WordWall, a game-based learning platform, in improving the vocabulary acquisition of grade VII students at SMPN 5 Pandeglang. A qualitative case study methodology was employed to gather data via observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The results showed that the implementation of WordWall significantly increased students' participation in learning, improved vocabulary retention, and increased learning motivation. A total of 80% of students stated that this method was more fun than the traditional method, while 75% of students reported an improvement in their vocabulary recall. Teachers also found that WordWall helped create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. Thus, the integration of interactive technologies such as WordWall in English teaching can be an effective solution in improving students' vocabulary skills and promoting more meaningful learning. Therefore, the integration of interactive technology in teaching is highly recommended as it can create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience for students.

**Keywords:** Educational technology, interactive learning, learning motivation, vocabulary acquisition, WordWall

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## INTRODUCTION

National education aims to develop students' skills, shape their character, and build the nation's civilization, which ultimately fosters intelligence and competence (Christiana, 2013; Wang et al., 2018; Atika et al., 2019; Zuhdi et al., 2021). Teachers have an important role in this process, not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as designers of effective learning strategies (Huizinga et al., 2015; McKenney et al., 2015). This role is significant in subjects that students often find challenging, such as English language learning (Cozma, 2015; Widayanti & Suarnajaya, 2021). Irawan et al. (2023) stated that English is a challenging subject at school. The monotonous and conventional delivery of material is the reason why this lesson is not favored by many students (Simbolon, 2014). Therefore, integrating skill development into the learning process can increase student engagement and retention, making learning more meaningful and effective.

English is a core subject taught from the primary level to higher education (Hapsari et al., 2017; Yunita & Pratiwi, 2017), but many students find it difficult, mainly to master vocabulary (Nadhira & Warni, 2021; Machfudi, 2022). Williams (2012) states that a strong vocabulary base is essential for reading, writing, and listening proficiency. In addition, according to Alharbi (2019), vocabulary skills are a significant component of language acquisition. However, traditional teaching methods in many schools emphasize passive learning (Yang, 2020), thus limiting students' active participation. At SMPN 5 Pandeglang, this problem is further compounded by the fact that many

students have limited prior exposure to English language teaching at the primary level. As a result, they struggle to acquire and recall English vocabulary effectively.

The incorporation of interactive learning material has been suggested as a remedy for these issues. 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. Merlin and Larekeng's (2018) research findings state that WordWall is effectively used in English language learning. In addition, Rahmawati and Wijayanti (2022) stated that the application of fun learning strategies that can improve students' reading comprehension skills can be through the use of Wordwall applications. The interactive nature of using Wordwall can engage students and help strengthen vocabulary retention through visual tools and collaborative activities (Hasram et al., 2021). WordWall can be accessed through a web browser or mobile app (Harefa et al., 2024), providing an easy-to-use platform for teachers and students to enhance vocabulary learning (Pradini & Adnyayanti, 2022).

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Wordwall in language learning (Merlin & Larekeng, 2018). The study by Prapelia and Fadhilawati (2024) found significant improvement in the reading achievement of tenth-grade students through the application of Wordwall application in recount text learning. These results suggest that the integration of interactive technology such as Wordwall in fun learning strategies is efficacious in improving students' reading comprehension. A study conducted at SDN Kepanjin also revealed that the use of Wordwall was effective in improving grade I students' beginning reading skills, as well as increasing their learning motivation (Wulandari et al., 2024). In addition, a study by Kusumarini et al. (2025) stated that the integration of Wordwall as an interactive learning media can increase students' learning motivation, enrich vocabulary, and facilitate a deeper understanding of the material. Their findings confirm that the integration of interactive technology in learning can contribute positively to the improvement of students' reading and comprehension skills at various levels of education.

Based on these problems, this study aims to explore the application and effectiveness of WordWall in improving vocabulary acquisition among Grade VII students at SMPN 5 Pandeglang. This research is expected to contribute to the improvement of vocabulary teaching in secondary education.

## METHOD

This study uses qualitative research methodology with a case study approach to examine the application of WordWall in English language learning. The research was conducted on seventh-grade students of SMPN 5 Pandeglang, Banten Province.

### *Data Collection Techniques*

Data for this study were collected using three main methods: (1) observation, conducted to examine learning activities, students' engagement, and teacher-student interaction during WordWall implementation; (2) semi-structured interviews, conducted with English teachers at SMPN 5 Pandeglang to gather information on vocabulary teaching and WordWall effectiveness. In addition, selected students from class VII-A were interviewed to understand their perceptions and experiences with the use of WordWall in their learning process; and (3) document analysis, i.e., analyzing learning materials, students' worksheets, and teachers' lesson plans to complement data from observations and interviews.

### *Participants and Data Sources*

The participants in this study consisted of: (1) one English teacher from SMPN 5 Pandeglang, who acted as a key informant to provide information on teaching strategies used in competency

learning; (2) students from class VII-A, who were observed and interviewed to assess the impact of WordWall on their acquisition of acuity and engagement in learning activities.

### *Data Analysis*

The data collected were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Majumdar, 2022). The analysis included (1) data recognition by reviewing observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents; (2) initial coding by identifying recurring patterns and themes in the data; (3) theme development by categorizing data into meaningful themes related to the effectiveness of WordWall; and (4) interpretation by drawing conclusions and linking findings to theory and previous research.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### *Students' Challenges in Learning English*

Based on initial observations and interviews, it was found that English teachers at SMPN 5 Pandeglang still rely on conventional teaching methods, such as lectures, reading, and memorization. This approach results in low student engagement and motivation, especially among seventh-grade students (VII-A), who reported difficulties in learning vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing. Interview results revealed that most students had never received English lessons during elementary school, making it difficult for them to understand Basic English concepts. One student stated: "*Learning English feels monotonous because we only listen and memorize. I often forget words quickly.*" It means that learning methods that only focus on listening and memorizing are often less effective in improving vocabulary comprehension and retention. It is reinforced by the results of classroom observations, where students tend to be passive during the learning process, with limited interaction and participation.

#### *Implementation of WordWall in English Language Learning*

To address these issues, WordWall was introduced in English language learning, a game-based learning platform designed to enhance student engagement and vocabulary learning. During the implementation of learning using WordWall, it was observed that: (1) students showed increased participation and actively responded to learning activities; (2) teachers found WordWall as a helpful tool in making lessons more dynamic and interactive; (3) many students showed better vocabulary retention, as evidenced by improved pronunciation and writing accuracy. In order to reinforce these findings, a teacher at SMPN 5 Pandeglang stated in an interview that "*WordWall keeps students interested by presenting vocabulary entertainingly and interactively. When compared to traditional instruction, they exhibit greater enthusiasm.*" Thus, WordWall can enhance student engagement in learning by presenting vocabulary in an interactive and fun way. When compared to conventional teaching methods, the use of WordWall can increase student enthusiasm, thus contributing to a more effective and engaging learning experience.

#### *Impact of WordWall on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes*

Based on the findings, WordWall impacts the motivation and learning outcomes of SMPN 5 Pandeglang students, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Impact of WordWall on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes	
Aspects	Results
Student Motivation	80% of students stated that learning with WordWall is more fun than traditional methods.
Vocabulary Retention	75% of students reported that WordWall helped them remember vocabulary better through repeated exposure.
Vocabulary Acquisition Improvement	The pre-test and post-test results showed an increase in vocabulary acquisition.

Speaking Confidence	Students who previously had difficulty with pronunciation showed increased confidence in speaking exercises.
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Based on Table 1 above, it is known that the use of WordWall has a positive effect on students' motivation. The responses from the questionnaire show that 80% of students stated that learning with WordWall is more fun than traditional methods, and 75% of students reported that WordWall helped them remember vocabulary better through repeated exposure. The results of the pre-test and post-test also showed an increase in vocabulary acquisition. Students who previously had difficulty with pronunciation showed greater confidence in speaking practice.

#### *Challenges and Limitations in Using WordWall*

Despite its many benefits, the implementation of WordWall faces several obstacles, including (1) limited school resources, SMPN 5 Pandeglang only has one projector, making it challenging to integrate WordWall into daily learning; (2) internet connectivity issues, where the location of the school creates technical difficulties in accessing the WordWall online feature; and (3) time constraints, where the study was conducted in a short period, limiting the ability to measure long-term impacts on student learning.

## **Discussion**

The use of conventional teaching methods, such as passive lectures, reading, and memorization, at SMPN 5 Pandeglang contributes to low student engagement and motivation in learning English. This approach tends to be monotonous and less interactive, so students are more passive and have minimal participation in the learning process. In contrast, the interactive lecture method, which combines material delivery with discussion, questions and answers, and the use of varied learning media, has been shown to be more effective in improving elementary school students' vocabulary mastery than conventional lectures (Andriani, 2019; Taat et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2022). In addition, this approach is in line with the principles of interactive learning, which emphasize the active involvement of students in the learning process so that it can increase motivation and create a more dynamic learning atmosphere (Lukita et al., 2017). Innovations in pedagogical approaches, such as the integration of interactive lectures with technology or experiential activities, significantly enhance student engagement and bolster comprehension and retention of the subject (Bello, 2023).

The lack of English background among grade VII-A students of SMPN 5 Pandeglang, most of whom have not received English learning at the elementary school level, is a problem in mastering basic concepts, vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing skills. Learning approaches that only focus on listening and memorization tend to be less effective in improving vocabulary comprehension and retention (Vidal, 2011; Nabila et al., 2024). In contrast, research by Ulloa Salazar and Díaz Larenas (2018) shows that the use of visual media can improve students' understanding and memory of English material better than conventional methods. In addition, the integration of technology in English learning has been shown to contribute to increased student motivation and participation (Stockwell, 2013; Panagiotidis et al., 2023; Panakaje et al., 2024) while creating a more interactive and engaging learning environment (Gilakjani, 2017; Aflah, 2019).

The application of WordWall in English learning has been proven to increase student engagement and the effectiveness of vocabulary learning. WordWall, as a game-based platform, provides a more interactive learning experience, thus helping students to understand and remember vocabulary better. The results of observations showed that students who were previously passive in class began to show active participation and higher enthusiasm. It is in line with research that confirms that a technology-based approach to language learning can significantly increase student motivation and engagement (Stockwell, 2013; Gilakjani, 2017). In addition, the use of educational games in language learning has been shown to improve vocabulary retention and pronunciation

accuracy (Panagiotidis et al., 2023). Thus, WordWall not only creates a more enjoyable learning atmosphere but also increases the effectiveness of the learning process.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of WordWall in English learning is also supported by its ability to provide repeated exposure to vocabulary through various interactive formats, such as quizzes, word puzzles, and challenge-based games. Vidal (2011) and Nation (2020) revealed that repetition in an interesting context can improve vocabulary comprehension and retention compared to conventional methods that only rely on memorization. In addition, the experience of teachers who stated that WordWall helps make lessons more dynamic supports the findings of Bester and Brand (2013) that the use of technology in the classroom can reduce student boredom and increase learning concentration. Therefore, the integration of WordWall in English learning is expected to be an innovative solution to improve the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary and students' language skills.

The use of WordWall in English learning positively contributes to students' motivation and learning outcomes. As many as 80% of students reported that learning with WordWall was more enjoyable than traditional methods, indicating that a technology-based approach can increase student engagement in learning. These results are in line with research showing that gamification in education can increase students' intrinsic motivation and create a more engaging learning experience (Hamari et al., 2014; Nechifor, 2024). In addition, 75% of students stated that WordWall helped them remember vocabulary through repeated exposure, which is in accordance with the cognitive theory of repetition as an effective strategy for increasing vocabulary retention (Nation, 2020). Thus, WordWall not only functions as an interactive learning tool but also as a means of strengthening students' memory of the vocabulary learned.

In addition to its impact on motivation, WordWall has also been shown to improve student's learning outcomes in terms of vocabulary acquisition and speaking confidence. Pre-test and post-test data showed an increase in vocabulary acquisition, which supports previous findings that technology in language learning can significantly improve students' academic achievement (Stockwell, 2013; Panagiotidis et al., 2023). Furthermore, the increase in students' confidence in English pronunciation suggests that the use of interactive media such as WordWall can create a more supportive learning environment for the development of speaking skills (Gilakjani, 2017; Oliveira et al., 2022). Therefore, the integration of WordWall in English learning can be an effective strategy to improve students' motivation, language skills, and confidence in communicating.

Although the use of WordWall in English learning has shown significant benefits, its implementation at SMPN 5 Pandeglang faces several obstacles that need to be considered. One of the main obstacles is the limited school resources, especially in the availability of technological devices such as projectors. Schools with limited infrastructure and the integration of technology in learning often face obstacles that reduce the effectiveness of its implementation (Berrett et al., 2019; Doringin, 2019). In addition, unstable internet connectivity is an obstacle to optimally utilizing the WordWall online feature (Idzi'Layyinnati, 2021; Suswandari et al., 2022). This technical obstacle was also found in the study of Samane-Cutipa et al. (2022), which found that limited internet access can hinder the maximum utilization of digital learning platforms. Therefore, although WordWall can increase student engagement, its effectiveness depends on the readiness of the school infrastructure to support the implementation of technology in learning.

In addition to technical constraints, time constraints in this study were also a factor that influenced learning outcomes. The short time frame limited the ability to measure the long-term impact of WordWall on students' vocabulary retention and language skill development. Previous research has shown that the effectiveness of educational technology often requires a more extended implementation period to have a significant impact on learning outcomes (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Suyuti et al., 2023). In addition, the effect of WordWall on students' speaking and writing skill development needs to be further studied using a more longitudinal method to gain a deeper

understanding of its effectiveness (Stockwell, 2013). Therefore, further research with a longer duration and in various learning and classes is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of WordWall on English language learning.

## CONCLUSION

The use of WordWall in English learning at SMPN 5 Pandeglang has a significant positive impact on students' engagement, motivation, and vocabulary mastery. This game-based learning method has succeeded in increasing students' active participation, reducing boredom in learning, and strengthening vocabulary memory through interactive activities. Teachers also acknowledged the benefits of WordWall in creating a more dynamic and effective learning atmosphere. Thus, the integration of interactive technology, such as WordWall, can be used as an innovative learning strategy to improve the quality of English teaching at the junior high school level. Further research is recommended to explore the application of WordWall in other aspects of language skills and measure its long-term impact on student's academic achievement.

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